

Toward Social Justice

Literature to Promote Multiple Perspectives

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to investigate the struggles of teacher education students when confronted with establishing a social justice curriculum. Our work focuses on using multicultural literature as a starting point for the critical conversations that drive curricular changes. Education students from culturally insular backgrounds face difficult challenges in today's classrooms, clearly uncomfortable with the thought of making changes to established curriculum and often struggling to find their place as culturally responsive educators.

An example of this ideology appears in *Revealing the Invisible* (Marx, 2006). "Because contemporary White Americans have been conditioned not to think about race and, especially, not to talk about it, facing the topic can be a challenging, frustrating, and even frightening experience for many" (p. 21). We find preservice teachers need explicit instruction and guidance to face these challenges. Introducing ideas of culturally responsive pedagogy into this environment has the potential to increase resistance and pushback; however, when multicultural literature is introduced, we have found that undergraduate students are better able to conceptualize concrete methods for improving the multicultural social justice approach to their classroom.

Providing models of lessons which highlight the necessary tools, language, resources, and pedagogy for our students to actively engage in culturally responsive pedagogy has proven to be highly effective. Teacher education students struggle when establishing a social justice curriculum,

but our work has provided opportunity for students to better understand how to approach this challenge.

The ideology for multicultural education was drawn from and grounded in the work of Banks (2008) and his "Levels of Integration of Multicultural Content." The levels require increasingly sophisticated commitment to curricular change. The first two levels, Contributions Approach and Additive Approach, are not seen as desirable for social change. Both approaches add material to the curriculum in isolation, often increasing stereotypes, tokenizing, and not creating engagement on critical issues.

The third level, Transformation Approach, brings to the curriculum multiple perspectives, giving students a lens for questioning the status quo and engaging in transformative discussion. Level Four, Social Action Approach, challenges teachers to engage students in taking charge of their process in social justice as active participants in community change. The contributions of key theorists such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, and Sonia Nieto, along with Banks, also guided our work and will be discussed in greater detail.

The Community

Our teaching community is predominantly White with classrooms comprised of 97% to 100% White students. The majority are from small rural towns or farming communities, although a few enter from diverse backgrounds including living near an American Indian reservation or from diverse schools in urban centers. Growing up in rural Wisconsin, our students' knowledge of people of color, racism, inequality, and privilege generally comes from what they have seen on television or read in the news.

Students often come from a curriculum void of people of color, but more importantly one which also teaches dominance of White culture. Most enter the classroom without

the language or experience for quality discussions and are often uncomfortable when asked to participate. They often fear offending so they stay silent. "Prospective teachers are likely to be in programs filled with White, middle-class students...And teacher preparation is likely to be directed by White, middle-class professors and instructors" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 3). Our students generally fall into what Marx (2004) describes as those who enter preservice programs without the skills or the resources needed to engage themselves in these discussions, much less engage their students in these discussions.

Examples noted from our informal and formal observations, discussions, and written reflections in our classes reinforced Ladson-Billings' (2001) descriptions of our university's typical preservice teacher candidate. These examples include students who claim to have never spoken to a person of color until entering college. We found students often share the "racist" views of their parents, most of them admittedly so. One stated she left our class upset because she had been called White. Students often admit they do not call a person Black because they are not sure if that is offensive.

Many complete their coursework not fully understanding the need for change. We discovered, however, the use of quality authentic literature supported by lessons that show the basis for the themes and characters, their hopes, flaws, and life lessons has opened a new world for our students. Literature is something they can relate to and helps give them a basis for beginning to gain a language and understanding for the needed conversations.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum

It is our belief that quality literature has great potential to provide insight to readers in shaping ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. Promoting a culturally relevant

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pedagogy requires incorporating more multicultural literature into classrooms. "Literature provides a window to ethnic and global cultures through in-depth inquiries into a particular culture and the integration of multiple cultural perspectives into every classroom study" (Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson, Short, 2011, p. 215).

Students need to see themselves reflected in the books they read, the curriculum they study, and the classrooms where they learn. This is likely to regularly occur for students from mainstream, European-American families. Culturally responsive curriculum focuses on the need to develop teaching strategies and materials that are more consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically and globally diverse students. Geneva Gay (2010) points out that using the cultural knowledge, experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students makes learning more relevant and effective.

Multicultural education, as used in this work, is defined by the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) (2003) as "a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity..." ("Multicultural," para. 1):

It affirms our need to prepare students for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice. (para. 1)

This definition is further substantiated by Gorski (2010), who notes schools are essential to laying the foundation for the transformation of society and elimination of injustice:

Multicultural education is a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and responds to discriminatory policies and practices in education...grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, critical pedagogy, and a dedication to providing educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally. ("Working definition," para. 1)

These definitions helped guide us in literature selection, discussion generation, reflection writing, and progress monitoring.

Our Goals

Our work was guided largely by that of Nieto, Ladson-Billings, Gay, and Marx. Teachers in training must understand the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy as an appropriate and necessary approach to education. It is not enough to develop a unit on African Americans for delivery in February or one on Native Americans in November and call it culturally relevant. This paradigm shift serves as the focus of the work of these theorists and proved to be the challenging factor for our students.

Ladson-Billings (2000) contends that a more expansive approach is needed to prepare preservice students to meet the needs of diverse learners. In coining the term culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (2001) developed a set of propositional notions about the successful teaching of African-American students. Classroom teachers deemed successful by Ladson-Billings incorporated notions of *academic achievement*, with teaching and learning as exciting, symbiotic events, *cultural competence*, with teachers fostering and supporting the culture of origin, and *sociopolitical critique*, wherein teachers help students understand the ways that social structures and practices help reproduce inequities.

In our work, we focused on these three notions, emphasizing that teacher education must deal with social justice issues of race, class, and gender—"and not just in superficial vicarious ways. Rather, an important component of preparing to be a teacher is interrogating the way status characteristics like race, class, and gender configure every aspect of our lives" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 5).

Sonia Nieto (2004) notes that linguistic and cultural diversity are the norm, and multilingual and multicultural students are the mainstream in classrooms around the world. She promotes work that places multicultural education in its "larger personal, social, historical and political context" (p. xxv). Nieto indicates there is an "urgent need for all of us, including students in school, to look at issues from multiple perspectives, critically assess evidence, and strive for a just global society" (p. xv).

In a powerful statement about how schools with a multicultural philosophy might be organized, Nieto (2010) notes:

The curriculum would be completely overhauled and would include the histories, viewpoints, and insights of many different peoples and both males and females. Topics usually considered 'dan-

gerous' could be talked about in classes, and students would be encouraged to become critical thinkers. Textbooks and other instructional materials would also reflect a pluralistic perspective. Families and other community people would be visible in the schools because they offer a unique and helpful viewpoint. Teachers, families, and students would have the opportunity to work together to design motivating and multiculturally appropriate curricula. (p. 76)

Geneva Gay (2010), a foundational proponent of culturally responsive teaching, highlights the need for caring and communication when asking teachers to understand the needs of responsive teaching. Gay addresses the strengths of using ethnic fiction which "can provide valuable and otherwise unavailable insights into the social consciousness, cultural identity, and historical experiences of ethnic groups" (p. 141). Using ethnic multicultural literature with predominately White students creates an environment for teachers and students to expand their knowledge and multiple perspectives. Gay encourages the use of literature to "cross cultural borders and improve understanding of insider and outsider perspectives on cultural, ethnic and racial diversity" (p. 142).

Understanding the sociopolitical critique of how social structures perpetuate inequalities is central to the work of Sherry Marx (2006). She focuses on why the educational system allows for the perpetuation of hidden assumptions about students without guiding teachers to see inequities. Although issues of White privilege are central, Marx focuses on preservice teachers who are educated on their "passive racism and the potential impact it could have on their students" and how to be critical of both content and pedagogy. Marx's work highlights the need for early intervention in teacher preparation so students are culturally competent and positive conduits of multicultural literature.

Reading Response

Reading response theories also contribute to our work, highlighting the strong connection between reader and text. Readers respond to literature in different ways and react differently to the text if read again, interpreting text through their own personal history, knowledge, and systems of beliefs. This theory, introduced by Louise Rosenblatt in 1938, considers two sources of information interacting—the personal processing of the text and the reader's experiential

knowledge. Both sources interact and modify one another (Rosenblatt, 1969).

Education students may need greater exposure to diverse situations to have the types of transactions described above. Ladson-Billings (2001) highlights the importance of providing future educators with examples of culturally relevant teaching in theory and practice. Although literature depicting diverse races and cultures is only one part of a culturally responsive classroom, it can be a powerful tool for challenging a wide range of stereotypes (Singer & Smith, 2003).

The potential for literature to engage readers toward new discoveries about the world and their varied roles in that world should not be underestimated; however, simply reading the literary selections does not automatically guarantee new insights for the reader. Reader response opportunities must also be provided.

New knowledge acquisition feels uncomfortable—particularly because it challenges an individual's previously held assumptions and biases. Cognitive dissonance causes uncertainty. The types of negotiations that occur in peer-group discourse create opportunity for future teachers to discover new insights, solidify or question beliefs and create new meaning, helping them move beyond uncertainty and discomfort to a better sense of understanding.

Lynch-Brown et al. (2011) contend that culture influences how we think about ourselves and the world around us.

Students from all cultures, including the mainstream, must recognize that they have a particular perspective on the world in order to value as well as critically examine that perspective. This understanding, in turn, supports them in exploring other cultural perspectives. (p. 215)

It is this very focus that helped our students to engage in the types of discourse that caused dissonance, discomfort and, eventually, the drive to make significant changes in their classrooms and schools.

Our Approach

As social justice educators and instructors of literature courses and multicultural education, we discovered resistance when trying to have open, honest classroom conversations about books that deal with controversial issues such as race, prejudice and privilege. The resistance comes in both the physical and the emotional reaction to the use of words many of our students have been taught not to use. Students look

down, look at each other for confirmation of their discomfort, cross their arms or roll their eyes. There is also silence.

Students are often afraid to respond for fear of offending the one student of color who may be in the classroom or, more importantly, saying something that will isolate the instructor. These are not new or unique reactions, and the pushback from those not ready to move toward socially just practices is also not new. Ladson-Billings (2000) noted, "Teacher educators who have attempted to bring issues of race and racism to the forefront of their preparation programs have been subjected to resistance and harsh criticism from students" (p. 211). Our goal is to make preservice teachers far more comfortable as they face these issues.

Students have varied learning experiences upon which to build some expertise in selecting quality literature, understanding the concepts of a culturally relevant curriculum, and putting these notions together in promoting social justice. These concepts are introduced and reinforced in a sequence of courses we teach in the undergraduate program, including Literature for Children, Multicultural Education, and Multicultural Education Materials.

At the heart of our work with preservice teachers is our drive and desire for students to understand the need for a culturally expansive curriculum. In the courses noted above, emphasis is placed on the criteria for selecting quality literature that goes beyond the cultural identity of the future educator. Our curriculum provides varied resources with established criteria for quality literature selection, each meant to guide students in a consistently thoughtful approach to this important task.

Students learn how to find materials that are relevant to the lives of the children they will teach, ensuring that the school and classroom collections reflect the cultural diversity of their classrooms, school, community and the world. They also learn that in addition to having high literary merit, multicultural books must be examined for cultural authenticity. Book awards are one guide preservice teachers can use in their search.

We also guide students to explore available resources that provide reviewed, quality, award-winning lists of literature for use in classrooms. One example of a quality selection resource for our own book selection is the Cooperative Children's Book Center. The CCBC (www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/) includes Bibliographies of

Recommended Books. This resource serves as our primary guide in selecting titles we recommend for individual, small group and whole group reading in our courses. In addition to the books discussed in the Lesson Plan section, a themed list with brief annotations (Appendix A) is included with representative titles we have used.

Incorporating multicultural literature into a classroom filled with preservice students without prior knowledge or a scaffolded forum for discussion can lead to misperceptions. An example arose when, working under the assumption that the themes in Sharon Flake's *The Skin I'm In* are fairly obvious, students were to independently prepare for a literature circle discussion by reading an assigned set of chapters prior to the next class meeting.

Instructor observation at the next session showed students had not fully engaged in the text. Literature circle discussions ensued with students mistakenly believing many of the characters were White, never mentioning racial issues, and not engaging in conversations about power, privilege, or color. This literature circle becomes an example of what Gay (2010) refers to as "cultural tourism" (p. 145). Student conversations were unauthentic and tokenizing. The passive racism discussed by Marx (2006) clearly surfaced in the students' inability or unwillingness to ask the tough questions.

Moving beyond this type of passivity meant greater emphasis had to be placed on teaching our students how to read and discuss literature. We begin the semester in these courses by requiring students to read a specifically assigned title, allowing for a shared experience in reading, reviewing, understanding, discussing and evaluating a text. Our students are introduced to critical readings, and actively participate in literature circles, genre studies, small discussion groups and literature-based lesson plan development.

Throughout the semester, students read a variety of literature, listen to varied viewpoints on issues of power and privilege, censorship, social justice, and sensitivity to differences, and develop reflective writings. Students participate in these activities to better understand experiences they can meaningfully include in their future classrooms. As students progress through the sequence of courses we teach, they are guided to move beyond the passive cultural tourism to a social justice focus.

This is not necessarily an intuitive processing for our students. Understanding the plot, theme, characters, writing

style, etc. of a literary selection is one thing. Taking the concepts of the selection to the Social Action Level of Banks' Levels of Content Integration is an entirely new concept. It was no great surprise to us that many of our students had difficulty taking that important step.

To remedy this problem, we developed sample lessons for several of the assigned multicultural books in order to model for preservice teachers the critical use of the Social Action Level of James Banks' Levels of Content Integration. These lessons highlight the necessary tools, language, resources and pedagogy to actively engage in culturally responsive pedagogy.

Students use our models in creating their own lessons, incorporating concepts they have learned in this and other courses taken in their teacher education program. We learned that preservice teachers in our courses are open to the idea of developing lessons that move them into Banks' Transformative Level of curriculum development even though they come in wrestling with numerous preconceived notions and engrained perceptions. With sample lessons and a strong background in responding to literature, they were ready to face this challenge.

Lesson Plans

To better guide student understanding of Banks' work, we started to provide carefully developed unit plan models for using literature as a foundation upon which to build social action. Each unit has multiple learning experiences geared toward social action. Following are elements of some units that provide greater illustration of our modeling.

A Heart Divided (Jeff Gottesfeld) helps students view multiple perspectives because it is from the White perspective. Too often when the topic of multiculturalism is brought center stage there is a sense of "other." Multicultural is seen to be about "them" not us (Marx, 2006). In order to be truly multicultural, all perspectives need to be included. Thus, using a text with a white protagonist struggling with issues of race and the White character's role in perpetuating inequities allows White students to begin the discussion relating to the protagonist while not being placed at odds with the character and storyline.

The focus of this lesson is hate crimes and steps students can take to participate in eliminating them in their school and community. If the lesson simply focused on the text, then the history of the Ku Klux

Klan and the Confederate Flag would tokenize the topic. Using the Hate Map from *Teaching Tolerance* grounds the topic in the present and makes the material relevant to students, a key theme to creating a culturally relevant classroom (Gay, 2010). Ending the lesson with a call to action creates a learning opportunity for students to engage in social action. These are the components of the lesson that highlight Level Four of James Banks and the heart of culturally responsive teaching, relevance and engagement.

The Skin I'm In (Sharon Flake) introduces White students to issues of what we refer to as "colorism" in other communities. We believe, like Nieto (2010) that color blindness, when used by Whites, may "result in refusing to accept differences, and therefore, accepting the dominant culture as the norm" (p. 145). Students not exposed to color-on-color racism need to not only become aware of its implications but must have the language and knowledge to guide a discussion on this sensitive topic. *The Skin I'm In* addresses issues of color among African Americans, peer pressure, and bullying. The central theme of the text, learning to love oneself, resounds with students.

This lesson is written to engage students in discussing race, bullying, and the impact of media on stereotypes and personal self-esteem. Having students engage in open discussions about something they know—movies, television and music—will enhance the opportunity to make the learning real (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Helping students see how they are surrounded by stereotypical images that privilege some and oppress others will create an environment open for discussions of change. Putting students at the center of creating a plan for change will empower them, a key component to culturally responsive teaching.

Giving students an understanding of the relationship between assimilation and identity is essential to understanding inequities. In a written reflection, one student commented,

Books have given me extra knowledge about different types of students, which helps me feel more comfortable because I have some ideas of how to deal with some situations and a more general idea about a variety of cultures and other differences.

Students whose parents emigrated from Europe often do not understand the difference of assimilation when you are a person of color who cannot "hide" your identity from

the majority persona. Using the text *When My Name Was Keoko* (Linda Sue Park) not only emphasizes the psychological impact of assimilation but also expands the discussion both historically and globally. This text allows students to explore the relationship between the term "holocaust," forced assimilation, and the enormous impact of these ideas historically and currently.

The activities in this lesson ask students to look at Native American boarding schools and learn about the impact of forced assimilation on Native Americans' education. Starting with Native Americans as opposed to the Jewish Holocaust gives students multiple perspectives of the term "holocaust" as it relates to issues of power, privilege, and forced assimilation or annihilations. The lesson is formatted to bring the ideas of historical genocide into the present and give students an opportunity to become actively involved in global issues. The idea of exposing students to global issues and multiple perspectives increases their opportunities to become involved in both culturally relevant curriculum as well as a curriculum grounded in social change (Banks, 2003).

Intolerance is one focus of a lesson created for Marlene Carvell's *Who Will Tell My Brother?* It provides for a better understanding of how a behavior can victimize an individual on the basis of that person's race. In the book, that action is the continued use of an American Indian mascot. This idea of "passive racism" (Marx, 2006) is an important element in the storyline, allowing readers inside the mind and heart of a mixed-race teenager attempting to persuade high school officials to remove an offensive mascot while being met with absolute indifference.

The lesson helps students define intolerance, recognize acts of intolerance in their schools and communities, and develop action plans to eliminate such acts. The action planning helps students take steps to improve what they actually can change, determine who would be responsible and the specific steps needed. Guiding students through the Transformative Level of Banks (2008) to the all-important Social Action Level is the ultimate goal of the lesson as students become active participants in community change. Our sample units include important lesson extensions to help students address action steps within their scope and power.

To provide further illustration of our lesson expectations, a sample unit is included in its entirety for Gottesfeld's *A Heart Divided* (see Appendix B). This unit,

entitled *Symbols Can Hurt*, can be used and altered for grades 6-8.

Our Students' Voices

Having the opportunity to teach many of the same classes at the same university allows for exciting conversations about what our preservice students must know and be able to do. We take pride and pleasure in continuously improving our program to create strong teacher candidates. We are especially moved to develop future teachers who embrace the concepts of a socially just curriculum.

Our informal observations went a long way in guiding many of our conversations toward such improvement. It was these informal conversations that led us to collect anecdotal data in a more systemized way to reinforce what we believed to be happening as a result of our new approach to teaching about social justice. We listened carefully to the conversations, both small group and whole group, formal and informal, in our classrooms.

We carefully scoured students' required reflective papers. We read and re-read each on-line discussion. We graded lesson plans developed for the specified number of literary works. While we did not conduct a formal qualitative study, we did complete a content analysis of the various written assignments to give us direction in improving our teaching and toward developing potential research topics for the future.

Through this analysis, we found student responses fell into three distinctive categories: (1) comments about an increased sense of awareness about acknowledging culture in their future classrooms, (2) comments about the importance of carefully selected literature to help their future students reach the same types of understanding they had come to, and (3) comments about the importance and/or challenges of establishing a social justice curriculum. We have provided samples of each.

Students commented frequently on culture in the classroom:

I realized you cannot just ignore culture in the classroom. Before this, I had views that there would be no differences no matter what the culture. I thought I wouldn't see a color difference in my classroom. Everyone would be equal. When in reality, having that view on culture means I would just be ignoring the differences in my students and treating them all the same. I have to recognize cultural differences in my classroom in order to give the students the education needed.

My experience with people of a different race has been very limited. I don't understand many of the cultural influences and social pressures of being a minority.

Prior to my classes at the university, I was extremely naive and paid very little attention to other cultures. I grew up on a farm, in a rural community. Growing up, my peers and teachers were predominately White. I learned about historical events through one perspective, the White European.

Literature as the basis for critical conversations was commented upon also, as highlighted in these examples:

This class really helped me understand how books can truly help me be prepared for all students that will be in my room. Books have given me extra knowledge about different types of students, which helps me feel more comfortable because I have some ideas of how to deal with some situations and a more general idea about a variety of cultures and other differences.

I have no doubt that my classroom will be diverse no matter where I decide to teach. I will need to make sure my students understand these differences and one of my key tools to that understanding will be literature. Quality literature like the texts we have been reading for class allows students to look at topics through a different perspective, gain insight about others as well as their own lives, and become more familiar and comfortable with people of different ethnic, socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds.

As comfortable as I thought I was, I have some growing to do. Reading *The Skin I'm In* helped me realize this. I also realized that it's important to have books like this for my future students to read. Books can help open their eyes as they have different experiences in school.

Finally, students responded to new ideas about establishing a social justice curriculum:

I learned a great deal from my undergraduate education classes about establishing critical thinking and multicultural education—especially in rural schools. My classes and projects have truly changed my life and the way I will address issues in my future classroom.

My classes taught me how to use literature to educate students about diversity, acceptance, and other cultures. Now I understand how to engage students in life changing discussions about diversity and other cultures.

I always knew it was important to teach children about accepting differences, but I wanted to do so without discussing race. I

was too worried about offending someone or possibly delivering the wrong message. My classes have provided me with more knowledge on the importance of implementing effective multicultural education in the classroom.

Concluding Thoughts

Future teachers need a wide range of tools to help them successfully guide student learning. This is especially true for students who have not been exposed to diversity in their own learning experiences. As instructors of students who are often from culturally insular backgrounds, we have found carefully selected, quality multicultural literature to serve an important purpose. Literature provides a lens through which preservice teachers can visit diverse neighborhoods, view life from a different perspective, and develop a better understanding of how all students learn and grow.

Becoming competent and caring mentors for a broad range of students...means developing specific skills and competencies for teaching students who speak languages other than English and whose cultural and racial backgrounds differ from their own. But these competencies are not acquired out of the blue; they need to be developed and nurtured. Teachers and prospective teachers, especially those who have not had extensive experience with students of diverse backgrounds, need to learn to understand human differences in order to tap into the intelligence and capacity of all students. (Nieto, 2010, p. 215)

We remain encouraged that we are on the right path in guiding our students to be highly effective, culturally responsive classroom teachers for their future students. We are encouraged because we are able to observe the differences in how our students talk about difficult topics and how they write about them. One of our students clearly summarizes these critical changes when she writes about her eye-opening experience with *Freedom Summer* by Deborah Wiles and how she developed into a preservice teacher who understands the importance of developing a socially just curriculum:

The cover of the book has two adolescent boys. One is white and the other boy is black. There really isn't a whole lot else on the cover. When we were asked in class what we noticed about the cover, we mentioned *everything* about the cover except the most *obvious* aspect. I felt I was being polite by saying, 'One boy is wearing a yellow shirt and other boy is

wearing a white shirt.’ One student even talked about the red strip on the diving board. We thought we were so courteous and ‘not racist’ because we didn’t see color. I honestly tried convincing myself that I just saw two little boys. In reality, color was the first thing I noticed. I just didn’t know *how* to communicate that idea and I didn’t think I *should* communicate that idea. I believed that noticing color was racist. I thought that as a future educator, I should only see two children and not the color of their skin. That day I learned one of several valuable lessons. That lesson was to see color. Not seeing color or being colorblind is offensive, because we are ignoring one’s culture and the color of their skin is a part of who they are.

It is important that we build upon this experience in conducting future research. One research project that will help us in strengthening our program includes a qualitative study with a systemized data collecting method (content analysis in a grounded theory approach) of our students’ reflective writing assignments over the

course of a semester. A broader approach to this study would be to conduct the study over the entire sequence of literature and multicultural education courses we teach. Such a study will help us more fully gauge student growth and development and determine which learning experiences are most effective in ensuring such growth.

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Appendix A Summary of Sample Literary Selections

Brief Summary

Title: <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i>	Arnold Spirit, known as Junior on the Spokane Indian reservation where he has always lived, has always been teased and picked on by his peers because of his multiple physical disabilities. Only his family and his best friend, a tough kid named Rowdy, understand that beneath Junior’s odd exterior there is a brilliant, artistic, athletic, and extraordinarily witty kid. When Junior decides to start ninth grade at the nearest white high school, 22 miles off the reservation, he is thought of as a traitor by those he left behind on the reservation, and as a weird Indian kid by the kids in his new school. But Junior is smart and resilient, and manages to prove himself to the students and staff at his new school through his academic prowess and basketball skills. The reservation kids, however, are not so quick to accept Junior’s new life, especially Rowdy who feels rejected and betrayed. Sherman Alexie’s first novel for young adults is hilarious and touching at the same time. With occasional cartoons, frequent self-deprecating humor, and unwavering depth, Junior struggles with his cultural identity as an Indian teenager who wants a different kind of life from his that of his parents and friends.
Author: Sherman Alexie	
Focus: Native American	
Title: <i>The Flight of Red Bird: The Life of Zitkala-Sa</i>	In 1884 eight-year-old Gertrude Bonnin was taken from her family on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota and placed in an Indiana boarding school run by Quakers. Her experiences there were similar to those of many native boys and girls removed from family, language, and culture to attend government-run or private boarding schools. In most instances the children learned English, were taught a trade, and were immersed in Euro-American and Anglo-American values. Some returned to their reservations and families ashamed of who they were and what they had become. In adulthood some, like Gertrude, discovered they were caught for life between both cultures, unhappily belonging to neither. Gertrude changed her name to Zitkala-Sa, meaning “Red Bird” in Dakota. She died in 1938 in Washington, D.C., “questioning the worth of her life work.” Rappaport has excerpted long passages originally written in English from Zitkala-Sa’s memoir. Where there were gaps, Rappaport developed sections based on interviews with people who knew this activist and accounts by others to create what she calls an “autobiographical biography.”
Author: Doreen Rappaport	
Focus: Native American	
Title: <i>Rain is Not My Indian Name</i>	Rain’s excitement on the eve of her 14th birthday turns to grief when she learns that her best friend Galen is killed in an accident. From that moment she shuts everyone out. But after six months pass, Rain has a reason to pick up the pieces of her life again: there are people in their small midwestern community that want funding cut off for the Indian Camp where Rain’s Aunt Georgia lives. Rain, an enthusiastic photographer, is hired by a local paper to take pictures of the campers. Rain is forced to confront her heritage and decide where she stands with it.
Author: Cynthia Leitich Smith	
Focus: Native American	
Title: <i>The Heart of a Chief</i>	Chris Nicola lives on the Penacook reservation with his grandparents and younger sister. Observant and thoughtful with a dry sense of humor, Chris has learned from both his father, who is currently seeking treatment for alcoholism, and his grandfather the importance of patience, of listening, of learning, but he doesn’t know if this understanding will help him survive his first day of sixth grade, let alone the entire year. He is worried about starting at a new school off the reservation and worried about fitting in without making waves. But Chris soon finds himself making waves regardless, both in town, where he leads the fight to get his school to stop using an Indian mascot, and at home, where a proposed casino supported by some of the tribal leaders threatens to develop land that Chris and his family hold sacred even as it promises economic opportunity for the impoverished people living on the reservation.
Author: Joseph Bruchac	
Focus: Native American	

Appendix A - continued

Brief Summary

- Title:** *The Watsons go to Birmingham—1963*
Author: Christopher Paul Curtis
Focus: African/
African American
- In an impressive literary debut, Christopher Paul Curtis recounts events in the life of a 10-year-old Kenny Watson, the middle child in a middle-class African-American family living in Flint, Michigan, in 1963. A smart, sensitive boy, Kenny refers to his family as the “Weird Watsons,” because each member stands out as an individual when Kenny just wants to blend in with the crowd. Much of their family life revolves around 13-year-old Byron who is a self-confident, sarcastic, rebellious adolescent. When Dad and Momma decide that Byron needs to spend some time down home with relatives in Birmingham, the whole family goes along to deliver Byron into Grandma’s hands. During their brief stay in Birmingham, tragedy strikes when a bomb explodes at Grandma Sands’ church one Sunday morning, killing four little girls, an experience that deeply affects Kenny. On a symbolic level this funny, provocative novel mirrors events in the life of our nation in 1963, a year when the United States, like Kenny, lost its innocence as hope turned to cynicism.
- Title:** *If You Come Softly*
Author: Jacqueline Woodson
Focus: African/
African American
- If You Come Softly traces the relationship of two teens. Ellie is Jewish and white. Jeremiah is black. Both are from well-to-do families where it’s sometimes hard to be yourself, and both are new students at Percy Academy. It was Jeremiah’s father, a well-known African American filmmaker, who wanted Jeremiah to attend a private school. Jeremiah doesn’t let anyone know who his father is, though, or his mother, an accomplished novelist. For Ellie, Percy was her own choice—made because she liked the sound of the name. Ellie lives with her parents in a large apartment that still echoes with the emptiness of her mother’s leaving. It happened twice, and twice her mother returned, but the feeling of abandonment still haunts Ellie, even when she sits in the very same room as her mother harboring the secrets of her heart. One of those secrets is Jeremiah. Ultimately, however, it is not secrets and silence that separate Jeremiah and Ellie, it is the racism of our society, racism that makes a black teenage boy running with a basketball in a white neighborhood too quickly assumed as suspect, too quickly mistaken for a “tall, dark man” being pursued by the police.
- Title:** *Tulsa Burning*
Author: Anna Myers
Focus: African/
African American
- The day he buried his pa, Nobe Chase lost everything—his father, his home, and his dog, Rex. Worst of all, he had to move into town to live with Sheriff Leonard—dog killer, wife stealer, and secret law-breaker of all sorts. That day, Nobe found a new purpose for his life—revenge. Hate takes over his life, burning out of control inside him. Nobe learns how dangerous hate can be when it is unleashed in a fury of fire and gunpowder during a race riot in nearby Tulsa. When the violence spills over into his hometown, Nobe must decide what kind of man he is going to become—one driven by vengeance or one driven by courage. This novel is based on true events in Tulsa, Oklahoma, during May of 1921.
- Title:** *Out of the Shadows*
Author: Jason Wallace
Focus: African/
African American
- Set in Zimbabwe in the 1980s, just after the war for independence, a young English boy, Jacklin, is torn between his black friends at school and his sympathy for the colonial whites after witnessing the compulsory land seizures by Robert Mugabe’s government. But with an imminent visit by Robert Mugabe to the school, Jacklin realizes that Ivan, his white supremacist schoolmate, plans to assassinate the black leader. The novel leaves us with the moral dilemma — in hindsight, should Jacklin have killed Ivan or let Ivan kill Robert Mugabe?
- Title:** *Taking Sides*
Author: Gary Soto
Focus: Hispanic/Latino
- When 14-year-old Lincoln Mendoza moves with his mother from a working-class Latino community to a white suburban neighborhood, his main concern is that he make the basketball team at his new junior high. Once he does, life gets even more complicated as he tries to come to terms with his feelings about playing on the new team against his old junior high school. An appealing, fast-paced novel about divided loyalties and ethnic identity has many moments of humor and poignancy in addition to a credible, down-to-earth teen protagonist.
- Title:** *So Hard to Say*
Author: Alex Sanchez
Focus: Hispanic/Latino
- When 13-year-old Frederick moves from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, to California, his blond hair and blue eyes make him stand out in his new, predominantly Latino middle school. But soon enough, he fits right in, thanks largely to Xio and her clique of friends known as Las Sexy Seis. From the beginning, Xio is attracted to Frederick and his shy, quiet humor, but as it turns out, the attraction isn’t mutual. Although Frederick soon considers Xio to be his best friend, he is just beginning to realize that he’s much more attracted to boys than to girls. His gradual coming-out process – first to himself and then to his peers – is handled realistically and sensitively. Because the story is told in alternating chapters from the points of view of both Xio and Frederick, readers are able to see his coming out from both the inside and the outside, which adds a great deal of depth to the story. We also see the characters respond in different ways to the sorts of homophobic name-calling that is common in middle schools across the United States, as well as changes in their attitudes as they come to accept Frederick for who he is.
- Title:** *Lolo & Red-Legs*
Author: Kirk Reeve
Focus: Hispanic/Latino
- When Lolo finds a tarantula near the fort that he and his two best friends have built in their East Los Angeles neighborhood, his grandfather helps him catch it. His mother won’t let him keep it at home, but with the help of a nearby pet store owner, Lolo makes a suitable den in an oversized pickle jar and keeps the spider at the fort. Lolo is quiet, but he enjoys the interest that others take in Red-Legs, and in him by association, from his sixth-grade classmate Lisa to the pet store owner, Mr. Verdugo, who asks if he can take Red-Legs to the county fair and invites Lolo to go along—an invitation that will mean Lolo’s first trip out of the neighborhood in which he has spent his entire life. But when some older boys whom Lolo and his friends taunted destroy the fort, Red-Legs disappears. Lolo doesn’t know if she was stolen or if she is dead, only that his heart is broken. A novel set in the Latino neighborhood of East Los Angeles known as Las Lomitas is distinguished by its appealing characters and strong sense of place.
- Title:** *La Linea*
Author: Ann Jaramillo
Focus: Hispanic/Latino
- Fifteen-year-old Miguel and his thirteen-year-old sister, Elena, have been waiting to join their parents in California for years when they finally set off from their small, impoverished Mexican village. Neither teen knows what a harrowing journey they are about to undertake. Because they will be crossing the U.S. border illegally, the obstacles they face on both sides are huge and often deadly. In their own country, there is the threat of soldiers as well as bandits, who attack the trains on which the would-be immigrants desperately cling, riding atop the cars. And then there is the desert crossing. In those desperate heat-dazed days, a fellow immigrant who had become Miguel and Elena’s protector dies of thirst and sickness, while their guide is shot by self-appointed militia members patrolling the U.S. side of the border. Miguel and Elena made the journey to change their lives, and it changes them in ways they could not have imagined.

Appendix A - continued

Brief Summary

- Title:** *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*
Author: Francisco Jimenez
Focus: Hispanic/Latino
- Jiménez's memoir of his childhood and adolescence is presented as a collection of 12 hauntingly spare short stories that can either stand alone or be read as a continuous narrative. A poignant, childlike voice is consistently maintained throughout, even as he writes of the subhuman living conditions and constant fear that were realities for his migrant family.
- Title:** *Weedflower*
Author: Cynthia Kadohata
Focus: Asian/Asian American
- Sumiko is the only Japanese student in her sixth grade class, and she often feels lonely and isolated at school. At home, she takes comfort from both the predictability of family routines and unexpected beauty as she works on her aunt and uncle's flower farm. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, however, beauty and predictability seem like impossibilities. Sumiko's uncle is arrested almost immediately and sent to a prison camp in North Dakota. Then Sumiko, her younger brother, aunt, and cousins join thousands of others of Japanese descent on the west coast who are interred. They are sent first to the San Carlos Racetrack, and later to the relocation center in Poston, Arizona. There, in the midst of the barren desert, Sumiko reluctantly starts a small garden. As she nurtures the flowers, grown from seeds she brought from home, she also nurtures an unexpected friendship with Frank, a Mohave boy living on the nearby reservation who often visits the outlying areas of the camp. Like many, Sumiko is also frightened at the thought of leaving when the opportunity finally arrives--at least the camp keeps them safe from people who would do them harm for being Japanese.
- Title:** *Tangled Threads: A Hmong Girl's Story*
Author: Pegi Deitz Shea
Focus: Asian/Asian American
- Thirteen-year-old Mai has spent most of her entire life living with her grandmother in a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand. Life in the camp is hard, and she dreams of joining her uncle and cousins who immigrated to Providence, Rhode Island, five years earlier. When she and her grandmother finally get the chance to resettle in the United States, they find that life in America has its own challenges: there's a new language, a new way of life, and it's unbearably cold. Grandma has such a difficult time adjusting and is so terribly homesick that Mai feels obliged to take care of her as best she can. One of the ways she can do this is by helping stitch and then sell pan dau story cloths and other traditional Hmong embroidery, at which both Mai and her grandmother are skilled. Mai has her older cousins, Heather and Lisa, to teach her the customs of American teen life, but she soon begins to suspect that Heather's disrespect for her elders goes way beyond what's acceptable for American teens.
- Title:** *Blue Jasmine*
Author: Kashmira Sheth
Focus: Asian/Asian American
- There are a lot of adjustments for 12-year-old Seema when she moves with her family from India to Iowa City. Her family must adjust to a new language, a new culture, new ways of doing everyday things like grocery shopping, and, most especially, the cold weather. The most difficult thing for Seema, however, is living half-way around the world from extended family she left back in India, particularly her cousin Raju who resents that she left him. But her new life in an American public school soon begins to crowd the corners of her mind, both academically and socially, as she begins to feel she is fitting in. Socially adept in both cultures, she is even able to deal with the classroom bully with aplomb.
- Title:** *American Born Chinese*
Author: Gene Luen Yang
Focus: Asian/Asian American
- The Monkey King is tired of his second-class status. Adored by his own subjects, he is snubbed by human deities until he perfects his powers and literally beats them into submission. "I am not a monkey" he proclaims. "I am the Great Sage, Equal of Heaven!" Jin Wang is the only Chinese American student at his school. When Wei-Chen Sun arrives from Taiwan, Jin Wang thinks, "Something made me want to beat him up." Still, it's not long before the two boys become best friends. Blond-haired Danny's life would be perfect were it not for his cousin, Chin-Kee, who embodies every offensive stereotype of the Chinese, from buck teeth and braided ponytail to mispronunciations ("Harro Amellica!"). Gene Luen Yang's brilliant graphic novel moves back and forth between these three separate narrative strands, each one exploring issues of identity, belonging, humility, and friendship as the storylines develop.
- Title:** *Born Confused*
Author: Tanuja Desai Hidier
Focus: Middle Eastern
- Seventeen-year-old Dimple Lala is a first generation Indian American living in New Jersey. The end of Dimple's junior year of high school marks the start of a summer of self-discovery for this young woman who loves taking photographs but doesn't think of herself as a photographer. She fails to claim her passion just as she fails to embrace her Indian heritage as a positive part of her identity. Dimple's parent seem determined to hook her up with a suitable boy, and they believe they've found one in Karsh, the son of an old friend from medical school in India. At first, as Dimple tells her best friend, Gwyn, she is seriously uninterested in Karsh. But just as she's taking a second look, tall, thin, blonde-haired, picture-perfect Gwyn, who's just been dumped, looks too, complicating Dimple's feelings for both her best friend and this young man who has begun to intrigue her. It's hard for Dimple to navigate her changing relationship with Gwyn, especially after discovering that her best friend, whom she thought she knew so well, has been holding back a lot from her. But perhaps the greatest revelation she has by summer's end -- beyond her own newfound ability to embrace who she is and what she cares about -- is that her parents are so much more complex and extraordinary than she ever imagined.
- Title:** *A Stone in My Hand*
Author: Cathryn Clinton
Focus: Middle Eastern
- Set in the Middle East in 1988, eleven-year-old Malaak's story centers around the disappearance of her father, who left to find work in Gaza City a month ago, and has not returned home. As Malaak closes down, turning inward with her worry and grief, her brother Hamid finds comfort in action, and joins the Islamic Jihad against the wishes of his mother and sisters. Meanwhile, although the family attempts to maintain some level of normalcy in their daily lives, they are under constant strain. Soldiers patrol the neighborhood, schools are closed, curfews imposed, and children throwing stones may provoke gunfire in retaliation. Malaak's story contains no easy answers, but offers compassionate insight into individual lives impacted hugely and constantly by the conflict that surrounds them.
- Title:** *The Breadwinner*
Author: Deborah Ellis
Focus: Middle Eastern
- In the first book of what is now called "The Breadwinner" trilogy (which includes "Parvana's Journey" and "Mud City," Deborah Ellis introduces readers to Parvana, a girl living in Kabul, Afghanistan, under the rule of the Taliban. After her father is arrested, 11-year-old Parvana begins posing as a boy to earn money to help support her family. Once well-off, they are now struggling to survive, living in one room. Her mother and older sister are not allowed to work--part of the oppressive rules the Taliban have imposed on women and girls. Parvana's ability to pass as a boy gives her a freedom her mother and older sister cannot enjoy, but it also places enormous responsibility and pressure on her. Ellis's narrative is particularly strong in depicting the underground effort of women and girls to resist the oppressive regime.

Appendix B Sample Lesson Plan

Symbols Can Hurt

This lesson can be used and altered for grades 6 through 8

Based on the book

A Heart Divided by Jeff Gottesfeld

Symbols Can Hurt

Symbols can carry extreme connotations. They invoke pride such as a nations flag. They can create empathy and communities such as the Breast Cancer Ribbon and they can raise extreme loyalty and hatred such as the Confederate Flag. The Confederate Flag has a deep meaning within many families and communities. But like many symbols, the meaning of the Confederate Flag does not represent the same thing to all people and the emotions surrounding the impact of this symbol often gets in the way of respecting individuals heritage, culture and the impact of racism on our society.

Goals:

- Students will engage in discussion on semiotics and the impact of symbols on cultures and individuals.
- Students will learn how difficult change is.
- Students will engage in a social justice activity

Objectives:

- Students will study the history of the confederate flags.
- Students will be able to understand multiple perspectives of the confederate flag.
- Students will engage in debate on the impact of semiotics
- Students will study change
- Students will carry out a plan of action.

Materials:

- A Heart Divided by Jeff Gottesfeld
- Sample Letters to Editor

Resources:

- Confederate Flag
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~class/am483_97/projects/sarratt/intro.html
- Southern Poverty Law Center
<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map#s=Wl>

Local/State Standards: [insert as appropriate]

[Insert appropriate standards]

Introduction:

Place "You can never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." on a board where all students can see it. —Quotation by Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Place kids in groups and have them discuss the meaning of this quote. Have them make a list of issues in their school where students/teachers see things from a different perspective.

Focus Area #1

- Share with students the Hate Map from Teaching Tolerance. Spend some time looking at the symbols, at what states have the highest concentration of groups and some of the recent hate activities by the groups.
<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map#s>
- Discussion with class
 - What is the definition of a hate crime?
A hate crime is usually defined by state law as one that involves threats, harassment, or physical harm and is motivated by prejudice against someone's race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation or physical or mental disability.
<http://definitions.uslegal.com/h/hate-crime/>
 - What are some of the different symbols?
 - Why do you think some states have more active groups than others?
 - What are some of the recent hate crimes?
 - Find a relationship between the groups "symbol" and their hate crimes
 - Return to the opening quote and make a list of the different perspectives of some of the hate crimes found on the map
- Share with students information about the history of the Confederate Flag(s)
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~class/am483_97/projects/sarratt/intro.html
Discuss the reasons for the selection of the Flag and the purpose behind the war
What is the Flag a symbol for?
Why is the Flag considered by some to be racist?

Appendix B - continued

Why, when some see the Flag as racist, are there groups that still use it?

Debate the relationship between flying the Confederate Flag and free speech and the legalities of harmful speech

<http://www.uscourts.gov/EducationalResources/ClassroomActivities/FirstAmendment/WhatDoesFreeSpeechMean.aspx>

The First Amendment (1791)

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances."

- In *A Heart Divided* students take action to remove The Rebels and the Confederate Flag as the School Symbols. The Confederate Flag is currently displayed at several locations throughout the area. To practice implementing a social action plan students will practice writing an effective letter to the editor asking for community support for the removal of the Confederate Flag from the community. This may be done in pairs.

Think of new ways to discuss the topic and present unique solutions to the problem.??

Write clearly and concisely following the limitations usually given on the editorial page or letters-to-the-editor page.

Include your major points within the first few paragraphs.

Type your letter and double space between lines.

Use your spell check and then proofread.

Sign your name and include your phone number and address if required.

http://www.ehow.com/how_8921_write-letter-editor.html#ixzz1b5sc0Trq

- Students should choose the strongest letters of the class and submit them to the local paper. Submit as many as the class would like to.

Focus Area #2

- Everyone is raised with different values and cultural practices. When one privileges their culture over another's dissonance occurs. In *A Heart Divided* the obvious dissonance is about the Flag, but the deeper dissonance is the emotional pull of Jack between his culture and his heritage, his family and what he feels is the right thing to do. The struggle of Jack highlights how difficult change can be.
- What are some changes you would like to see in the school?
Are there places where power is in control?
What symbols are used to perpetuate the power?
Are their places where some have privilege and others don't?
What symbols allow the privileges to be continued?
Are any of these power and privilege issues intentional?
Can you name some power and privilege issues that can be changed?
- Have the students choose a power/privilege issue in the school they would like to change.
This change can include
 - a symbol such as a race-based mascot or logo
 - stopping the use of inappropriate language by students/teachers
 - improve the inclusion of multicultural curriculum
- Divide the list into things they want to change and things they can change
- As a class implement the changes

Focus Area #3

- One of the strengths of *A Heart Divided* is the play written by the main character. It addresses all perspectives of the Confederate Flag issues including the Ku Klux Klan, the high schools students both black and white, a black minister and Jack.
Have students map out the various perspectives of the play
Have students perform the play for the school and then lead a discussion with the audience.

Conclusion:

- The play is the conclusion of the unit. Following the play production have the class share skills they have learned to understand how symbols have different meanings and are often used to perpetuate racism and hatred. Set a class goal of one behavior students are going to work towards eliminating, whether it be the use of hate language, the wearing or display of hateful symbols or the inadequate addressing of these issues in their curriculum.

Extensions:

- When discussing other themes in the classroom, allow the class to discuss ways they can help and make a difference outside of the classroom.
The activities do not always need to be carried out as part of the curriculum, but simply reflecting gives students initiative to take action on their own.

Lesson Assessment:

- Students will be given an exit slip with an issue on racism. They will be required to create an action plan.

Exit Slip:

At your school there are students who use hateful language. Hateful language is a form of bullying. What plan of action can you create to help alleviate this issue?

1. What resources will you need?
2. List the steps you will take to carry out your plan.