

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute 1996 Volume I: Multiculturalism and the Law

# Why Do We Suffer From The Rights Of Others?

Curriculum Unit 96.01.14 by Carolyn C. Smith

The diversity of the population across the nation has created problems which are the same for all communities. When we open our newspapers, read educational magazines and listen to the nightly news, the headlines about education are all the same: poverty, crime, academic performance, school safety, substance abuse and parental involvement. These issues are not confined to any particular community nor ethnic group. These communities can be inner city or suburban, large or small, rich or poor, the same question prevails: "What can we do for our children?"

The major difference involving all communities is that inner city school receive more space in these publications for the negative things that are happening in their communities, while the suburban communities receive space for the positive things they are doing. When negative things do happen in the affluent neighborhoods, it is the minorities or that community who are usually blamed.

We live in a democratic society where interest citizens must put forth every effort to produce an educational system that nurtures the respect of the public. We as professional educators, parents, community leaders, and entrepreneurs must come together to foster the type of environment that we will feel comfortable to live in.

We as American are always looking for new ways to approach the same problem. Many times we have the solution to the problem in the palms of our hands, but bureaucracy of red tape keeps us from acting quickly or getting to the core of the problem.

Through the years certain ethnic groups have been stigmatized to be low achievers, trouble makers, and other negative titles which promote failure in society. Recently the subject of racism has hit the surface like a ton of bricks. Regardless as to how the victims feel because of the action, there is always a legitimate reason as to why the person said or did what he did. It appears that society has a bag of excuses for every given statement or action. The minority is usually on the receiving end of racial remarks thus making matters worse.

This unit will be concerned with developing strategies which will explore the attitudes and behaviors that students can used in a positive manner when they are the direct victim of racial remarks and situations.

When this unit is complete the students will be able to:

1. identify and give examples of the meanings of racism and discrimination.

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- 2. know how to use appropriate behavior in and out of the school environment when dealing with racial and nonracial tensions.
- 3. know what economic, social, political and personal factors to use to reduce conflicts with racism.
- 4. identify barriers which are associated with children at risk and what they can do to reduce and/or eliminate these barriers.

The unit is designed to integrate all subject areas of the K-8 curricula of the New Haven Public Schools. The completed unit can be used in full or in parts as a supplement for academic instruction as the teacher sees fit for a particular grade level as well as special disciplines such as art, music, and physical education.

#### Introduction

A growing conviction that the United States faces a crisis in black-white relations has inspired several writers to revisit the race question in search of new perspectives and solutions. Major studies or current public opinions offer some grounds for hoping that racial equality and harmony can be achieved on the basis of shared commitment to a set of traditional American values or the so call American dream. Most Blacks and Whites agree in principle that everyone in this society should have a fair chance to get ahead. One of President Clinton's statement is, "If you work hard and play by the rules you should be given a chance to go as far as your God-given ability will take you."

### Far From The Promised Land

Blacks are beginning to loose faith in the American dream because there are too many factors which do not lend themselves to justice for all. Although some Blacks are in positions which they feel that they are treated equally in the ideal itself, a larger number are not hopeful that it can ever apply to them. Disillusionment with the prospect for equal opportunity is more advanced among the relatively successful members of the Black middle class, who believe that they still face day to day discrimination. The poor, to a surprising extent, blame their lack of success on their own shortcomings. Unless the dream can be shown to work for Blacks, the nation is in danger of losing its soul and disintegrating. Despite the dream's limitations, especially its invitation to self-seeking and callous attitudes toward those who fail to get ahead, studies view the only conceivable basis for a just and harmonious America. Without it, whites will revert to racism and blacks will embrace a divisive ethnic separatism. We all remain hopeful that the implications of the America dream can be reemphasized to inspire an effective assault on racial inequality and disunity.

An essay written by Bell Hooks titled "Killing Rage" is an angry book that pulls no punches. The essay recalls the author's intense fury when a white man, assigned the same first class seat on an airliner as Hook's Black female traveling companion, pulled rank to get the already seated companion consigned to coach class. This was on a day filled with incidents of white rudeness and insensitivity. Hooks uses her reactions to such experiences to explain and justify black rage against white arrogance and abuse. She takes the press and television to task for their assumption that when blacks get angry and strike back, they are being "pathological." Although Hooks disassociates herself from what she considers to be the dominant values of the black middle class, her reactions to discriminatory treatment might have provided supporting evidence that middle class blacks feel the sting of racism more directly and acutely that do the more isolated members

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of the lower class. A poor black woman would hardly ever be in a position to be bumped from first class.

Many Blacks have been eagerly embracing the American dream of wealth and power which is an obstacle to racial justice rather than an avenue for equality.

Coalitions for radical change between blacks who have become aware of their true situation and other people of color in this society who also suffer from "neocolonial" which supremacist dominate must be dealt with now. It is time that Blacks and Whites make alliances to combat racism.

According to (Marable 1989) the concept of race is based on changing power relationships rather than on biological fact. It calls for cooperation between Blacks, Latino, and Asian American. If Blacks and Whites are caught up in the ideology of the American dream then Marable refers to this move as a "left of center paradigm" as an alternative means to express conservatism and would not be well received by many people of this society.

### **Racial Discrimination**

Is racial discrimination a serious problem in American society? If so what are we going to do about it? There has been a problem with discrimination since the beginning of times. The above two questions have been addressed for the past 80 years, yet there is no sound solutions for them.

The traditional and still dominant understanding of the relationship between race and liberalism in American political culture holds that consensual liberal value have worked over time to combat and ameliorate inherently non-liberal practices of racial discrimination in America society. One might argue that the policies of race have systematically worked to shape American political culture by reinforcing the dominance of exceptionally conservative varieties of liberalism within the sociopolitical mainstream. Specifically, racial policies have served to constrict the scope of American political life by undergirding a particularly narrow conception of the meaning of citizenship, or a relatively misunderstanding of the conditions necessary to establish a legitimate standard of civic equality in a liberal democratic society.

If we were to take a look at the Urban League, we can readily see how major events of this organization has changed the lives of many African Americans during the last 80 years. During the years of 1816 through 1830, this organization's first role was to provide some means of socialization for black migrants to adhere to the social and work habits required by the industrialists. It was during this era that it also tried to find jobs, shelter, health provisions, recreational fulfillments for blacks who had migrated from the south to the north in hopes of improving their living conditions and to obtain equality in this land of great opportunity. Although times were better for most Blacks, those years found racial attitudes very difficult to change. The opportunities for social progress were inconceivable because there were those persons who made the laws and they were not ready to equalize this nation. However, during the late 1930s through 1850s the organization developed pushed harder for civil rights of Blacks. Other organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began to join forces with the Urban League addressing racial issues. Today, there are hundreds of organizations who have as their main focus a vision to provide equal opportunity for ail in this United States of America, the land of opportunity.

The Washington Bureau of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was established on June 1, 1941 for the purpose of correcting and fighting racial discrimination and social injustices perpetrated against Blacks. Today this organization continues to fight for the civil rights of Blacks and other minority ethnic groups.

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There is evidence that there is racial discrimination in the housing market. In many cities throughout the country, agents with an increased number of housing units in their files will not inform blacks about available housing. Racial composition of the existing neighborhoods within a given city makes one wonder what are the contributing factors of ethnic groups of certain neighborhoods. However, there is evidence that agents act based on their perceptions about the preferences of their black and white customers.

Moral implications for public school policies of the racial discrimination that exist in this American society are unbelievable. The case of Brown vs the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas was one of the first legal document which brought educational discrimination to the forefront. The plaintiffs were Negro children of elementary school age who reside in Topeka. They brought this action in the United States District Court for the District of Kansas to enjoin enforcement of a Kansas statute which permits, but does not require, cities of more than a population of 15,000 to maintain separate school facilities for Negro and white students. The Topeka Board of Education elected to create segregated elementary schools while other public schools in the community operated on a nonsegregated basis. The initial ruling of the case was based on the fact that Negro and white schools were substantially equal with respect to buildings, transportation, curricula, and educational qualifications of teachers. That was over 40 years ago and we are still dealing with discrimination in the public schools. In most cases, the courts across the country are finding that schools where there is a large minority population, those schools are inferior to the schools where there is a large white population.

One of the most recent cases in the state of Connecticut is Sheff vs O'Neill. The suit which was filed in 1989 against the state by 17 parents and school children from Greater Hartford, charges that the racial isolation between Hartford and its suburbs creates inequities in the schools that violate the state constitution's guarantee to an equal education. Will we ever have the right to attend the school of our choice without going through a mass of legal red tape? Will we ever be able to join hands, share the same classrooms, share the same cafeteria, and share the same teacher, and administrator with a feeling of true equity? If we are still searching for the answers to the same old questions after 40 years, the answers to those questions are No!, No!

### **Racial Slurs**

Ethnic groups not only have to deal with racial discriminations. They also have to brace themselves for racial slurs. Information about speech play in the form of positive and negative nicknames calling and labeling, shucking, stuffings, ribbing, rapping and more are seen in cartoons, magazines, newspapers and heard on the television and radio. Although it has not been mentioned, I'm sure that racial slurs will soon become popular on the internet.

The social and psychological effects of these types of remarks have a lasting emotional feelings on the persons who receives these statements. Within an ethnic group, the racial slurs may not be as deep rooted because that culture or family may use some name calling and labeling to show affection. Outsiders most frequently use name calling as racial slurs and insults.

Minorities have been accepted into a group only for the purpose of meeting a state or federal guidelines of a particular program. If this is not the case, then the inferences are that the guidelines are written to benefit a certain group of people and that group just happens to be of a minority culture. Regardless of the reason, the minority can end up as a winner or a loser.

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### Religion

Religion is often part of attempts at cultural domination through schooling. Even in countries with a single religion, differing sects will attempt to impose their point of view in the schools. Religion is a major source of political conflict in the United States as well. Problems regarding culture and religion date to the beginning of the common-school movement in the 18th century. Many educators and researchers argue that the primary reason for establishing the common-school system was to ensure that the Protestant republican culture would prevail over the Catholic immigrant culture. Resisting this attempt at religious and cultural domination, Catholics organized a system of schools that more closely reflect the cultural values of new immigrant groups. Through out the 19th century and into the 20th century, both Catholics and Protestants often referred to the schools in the United States as "Protestant schools".

By the middle of the 20th century, political elites were no longer primarily Protestant but included a mixture of religious groups. Consequently, there was a growing movement to remove ail religious content from the schools and achieve religious neutrality. In part, these changes in attitude resulted in the school prayer and Bible decisions by the U. S. Supreme Court in the 1980s. These decisions declared it unconstitutional to read the Bible in schools for religious purposes and to conduct school prayer.

Some religious groups were infuriated by the Supreme Court decisions. They argued that American public schools had always emphasized Christian morality. Multicultural religious education has neglected the fundamental reality of race in American society. The sociohistorical denominations of Euro-American racism has failed to note its attitude to victimize people of color. As we take a look at Jewish, Christians, Chinese Protestants, Asians Buddhist, African America Christians we are confronted with the issues of marginality, identity, and community. Here again we can see that various cultures are suffering because of the rights of others.

As we look at the conflicts in the religions of the citizens of America, you can't overlook the fact that there are dark clouds plaguing black churches in the south. The frequency of the number of churches being burned throughout the country has the Federal government involved in trying to solve the problems. Are these acts the plans of a national terrorist group, or are they the rippling affects of arsonists who are aroused by what is happening in their neighboring states? The Federal Bureau of Investigation have pledged to use every agent at its disposal to bring to just anyone who dares to burn a church, mosque or synagogue. If those persons are caught, what penalty will they have to pay? Will true justice be served? Again, the questions is, "Why do we have to suffer for the rights of others?".

### **Value Changes**

Value is defined as the relative worth, importance, or usefulness of a person or thing. It is the beliefs, standards, principles, or ideas of a person or persons. Children learn at a very early age that they must share everything, play fair, don't hit people, and don't take thing that aren't theirs. As these students enter kindergarten, those behaviors are enforced over and over again. However, over the years the American values have changed. The following are a few of those values which have changed and will be later discussed in the development of this unit.

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<sup>\*</sup> The concept of duty. Less value is placed on what one does to others as a matter of moral obligation.

<sup>\*</sup> Respectability—Less value is placed on symbols of correct behavior for a person of a particular

social class.

- \* Social morality—Less value is placed on observing society's rules.
- \* Expressiveness. Higher value is placed on forms of choice and individualism that express one's unique inner nature.

Although there are values which are changed, there are some which are still written as they were years ago. However, through the years there are controversial effects of their interpretations. Those unchanged values are listed below.

- \*Freedom Values—political liberty, free speech, freedom of movement, freedom of religious worship, and other freedoms from constraints to the pursuit of private happiness.
- \* Equality before the law. There is high value on having the same rules of justice apply to one and all, rich ad poor, black and white. (A discussion of Brown vs. Board of Education, Sheff vs. O'Neill)
- \* Equality of opportunity. The practical expression of freedom and individualism in the market place, which help to resolve the tensions between the values of freedom and equality.
- \* Fairness. There is much value placed on people getting what they deserve as the consequence of their individual actions and efforts.
- \* Democracy. A belief that the judgment of the majority should form the basis of governance.
- \*Caring beyond the self. There is high value placed on a concern for others such as family or ethnic group, neighborhoods, and the community.

Each of these values, changed or unchanged, has a rich and complex heritage that is not is misinterpreted by the citizens of this American society because of the diverse population.

(After each of the values is discussed, using current documents such as newspaper articles, books, or personal experiences to provide pros or cons of the stated values.)

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## CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS

Various forms of popular culture serve to educate and socialize as well as influence human behavior. In a discipline such as criminal justice, little is known by the general public about the individuals involved with the system: the law enforcer, the victim, and the offender. Therefore, the construction of reality for most is likely to come from media representations. Depending on the city, state, and reporter, the message can be damaging to individuals. Our children need to be taught at a very early age the appropriate behavior which would keep them from the criminal menaces of society. Teaching them this behavior is not enough, we must make sure that they are constantly utilizing the appropriate behavior.

Problem solving techniques are an intricate part of our daily lives. They can provide children with a focus for learning through play especially if they are done during group time activities. It is a way teachers introduce children to the world of creative and critical thinking, both as individuals and as part of a group. Problem solving can create and encourage cooperation because it teaches children to learn to hear and support each other's ideas.

Problem solving is a process of identifying a problem or goal, generating ideas to solve or reach it, then testing out the ideas. Listed below are several steps to guide children through the process, though not every problem follows these steps exactly or has a definite solution.

- 1. Define the problem. Use open-ended questions to encourage children to talk about what they are doing, thinking or feeling. When children can't verbalize the problem clearly, they should be helped to find a few key words, and build from there.
- 2. Brainstorm solutions. Instead of finding one "right" answer to a question or problem, it is important for children to think of several options. Open-ended questions such as, "What's another way you can do this?" or "What would happen if we tried a different way?" encourage children to expand their thinking. Remember brainstorming is to be used for coming up with many possible solutions, not to evaluate the solutions.
- 3. Decide where to start. After brainstorming, choose which ideas to test. It's important to remember that problem solving is a fluid process. We often think of one thing to try, then reshape it, modify it, or abandon it altogether in order to try something new. It's not important to stick to the original plan.
- 4. Select or create tools. During this step it is important to decide what is needed in order to try out the solutions. If the problem is a conflict between people, words can be carefully used as the best tools to solve the conflict.
- 5. Experiment with solutions. This step in the problem solving process teaches the students a sense of independent that they will gain from testing their ideas. When acknowledging all ideas as experiments, it reinforces the idea that problem solving is a process.

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These five steps to successful problem solving skills should be used as frequently as possible whenever a conflict arises. The frequency of their use will make them a part of the students' daily routine at school, home and in the community. This action will bridge the gap which has become so detrimental to the well beings of all members of this society.

Much has been said which appears to point us in the right direction to become united as a society and as a nation. Everyone is incorporating diversity and multiculturalism as a major part of the curriculum. What does this mean for the future. Are we really developing a general attitude of acceptance and caring? Are we really developing a positive expectation for success? Are we really valuing differences of cultures? With the hostility and inappropriate behavior plaguing our nations the answers to those questions is one word. NO! Although we have come a long way, we still have a long way to go because we are yet to accept reality. We are different, and we will remain different as long a we are on the face of the earth. We will continue to treat those who have values different that those we were raised by as outsiders. We will accept anyone into our culture on a temporary basis. Even as we think of the tragedies which happened with TWA flight 800 and the World Olympics in Atlanta the questions of "Why would anyone want to harm innocent people?", ad "Who did this horrible act?" will go for years without answers. When the person or persons who are responsible for those acts are caught, will they be given justice or will they be labeled with a reason for their act which we, the public, will be expected to accept? As we prepare ourselves for tomorrow, we will always ask the question, "Why do we have to suffer for the rights of others"? Answer: "We don't know, but we will continue to search for the answer."

## Let's Get Started

### **Brainstorming Activity**

Objective To provide an opportunity for the students to reflect on their early years of experiences associating with different ethnic groups.

Procedures Using the essay "All I need to know, I learned in Kindergarten", have the students to share their social skills building experiences of nursery school, day care, and/or kindergarten classes which are mentioned by the author, Robert Fulghum.

Brainstorming Questions The following questions can be used to ascertain more detailed experiences of the students.

- 1. Was kindergarten classes fun? Why or Why not?
- 2. Did you have a special friend in your kindergarten class?
- 3. Was this special friend of your race or cultural background?
- 4. Was this special friend of a different race or cultural background?
- 5. Are you still friends today?
- 5. If you are no longer friends, what happened to break you apart?

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Related Activities Pretend that you are a kindergarten student for a day. List three things you would do with or for your classmates. Explain why you would enjoy doing those things.

## All I Really Need To Know I learned in Kindergarten

Most of what I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in Kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountains, but there in the sandpile at Sunday School. These are the things I learned: Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life-learn some and think some. And draw and paint and sing and dance. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic. Hold hands and stick together.

BEWARE OF WONDER. Remember the little seed in the styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the styrofoam cup—they all die. So do we. And then remember the Dick and Jane and the first word you learned—the biggest word of all-LOOK. Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and sane living. Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm. Think what a better world it would be if we all the whole world had cookies and milk at three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blanches for a nap. Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess. And it is still true, no matter how old you are when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

Robert Fulghum

# Activity # 1

### What do I do about Fighting?

In a whole group setting, talk to the students about fighting. Define discipline: Discipline is a slow, bit-by-bit, time consuming task of helping children see the sense in acting a certain way. Though it might seem easier and faster to scold, threaten, or punish children for fighting, your real goal is to develop abilities for students to solve their own problems.

Actions to look for and and a possible recommendation for a positive solution to the action.

- 1. Anticipate problems that might occur.
- 2. Hesitation to tell who initiated the conflict. (Stand back for a moment and watch the persons involved.)
- 3. Investigate what led to the conflict. (Be careful not to put the blame on either child.)
- 4. Communicate with the students involved. (Talk about what happened and ask what could have been done to avoid the conflict.)

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NOTE; Use your creativity to constantly search for other ways to help children express their feelings verbally.

# Activity # 2

### What do I do about Racial Slurs?

- 1. Look at your environment.
  - A. Do you have multicultural books?
  - B. Does your bulletin boards reflect different races?
- 2. Things to do:
  - A. Find a variety of ways to reinforce how each child is special.
- B. Invite guests into the classroom to help children learn about one another's families, customs, and heroes.
  - C. Read and discuss passages from Carla and Annie.

NOTE: You cannot eliminate racism in the world, but you can work within your own environment to make things better.

# Activity # 3

## What do I do about children Rejecting Others?

It's hard for children to understand why some children get angry or start fighting. They can't comprehend the frustration of a child who cannot communicate his feelings or needs, nor the confusion and fear of a child who appears to be completely different from others in the class.

What to do?

- 1. Have a group discussion about why people are different. (Talk about size, color, hair, eyes, height, etc.)
- 2. Discuss the word friends, honesty, respect, different, alike.
- 3. Put students in small groups for various activities in the class and rotate them about every 3 to
- 4 days for the purpose of encouraging students to work together on projects to get to know one

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another.

NOTE: Use the book *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* to discuss how people are different even within the same family.

### **Related Activities:**

- 1. Create a family portrait bulletin board for the purpose of noting likes and differences in people. Change pictures every two weeks.
- 2. Invite members of the community to talk about to the students about friendship and honesty.
- 3. Play the decision dial game in small group settings.

# **Activity #4**

### Affirmative Action: Race and Rage

### Scenario:

All Janice Cararena wanted was to attend English at the local *college*. She was a young student working to pay for her college *tuition* and the only time she could attend class was at 11 a.m... There was a problem. She was white and the class was *reserved* for African-Americans. The class was for writing, career counseling and mentoring. She couldn't sign up.

After a week Janice sued. Now she is a test case for those who want to remove any trace of *racial preference* in the community college system. She felt that everyone should have an *equal* chance to attend any class they chose regardless of the color of their skin.

Let's Discuss The Situation

- 1. Define and discuss the underlined words in the situation.
- 2. What is affirmative action?
- 3. How does affirmative action help or hinder ethnic groups?
- 4. What would you have done if you were Janice?
- 5. Write a 100 word essay to explain your action.

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Related Activities Invite some one from the community who is familiar with the rules governing affirmative action to discuss local situations such as: school choice, equal employment opportunity.

Choose a current event, investigate background information and have the students to debate their findings.

Read passages from, Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954- 1965. for discussion.

# Activity # 5

## **Changes in Attitude**

### Scenario:

As students move from elementary to middle school, they too often lose *interest* in their studies. Research shows that a positive school environment can help smooth the bumpy *transition*. It has been argued that middle schools are a lot more *ability-focused* that elementary schools. What are your feelings .

- 1. Define and discuss the underlined words.
- 2. Divide the students into groups of 4 or 5 to generate a list of concerns that students would have as they prepare to enter middle school.
- 3. Compile the list from the groups and come to a consensus as to their priority.
- 4. Choose a concern to discuss during weekly class meetings.

### **Related Activities**

- 1. Invite students from middle schools to share their positive experiences with the students.
- 2. Build a relationship with a class or students at the middle school level and become pen pals. (Pen pals could be local or a neighboring town.)
- 3. Build a relationship with a middle school to set up visitation privileges at least twice a year.

NOTE: Read passages from, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" for the purpose of making students aware of the actions they need to take in order to become successful in their endeavors.

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### VOCABULARY

**ancestors** —people from whom your family came way back in time, like your grandparents' grandparents.

**conflict** —represents the power of one individual or group over the other for the purpose or emerging to the top to gain control.

**culture** —a group's beliefs regarding acceptable behaviors, manners, styles of dress, and patterns of speech. It also include historical traditions, religion, literature, and art of that group. **cultural group** —people sharing a similar way of life, which may include such things as beliefs, customs, values, foods, arts, language, etc.

**descendants** —people who trace their families back to a particular person or group.

**ethnic groups** —people sharing a particular racial, national religious, and or language heritage.

**generation** —referring to the time between the birth of parents and the birth of their children. Your parents are one generation and you're the next generation.

**heritage** —things and customs handed down from earlier generations.

**minority** —a group of people who are unable to achieve equal status in society. Usually these people lack political powers as a group.

**multiculturalism** —a variety of cultures grouped for the purpose of learning and respecting each others heritage as a means of reducing racial prejudices.

**prejudice** —an attitude formed without enough previous knowledge or thought.

**race** —a group of people who share the same ethnic background.

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This book emphasizes the differences among four billion people found living on earth.

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