

From the Editor

By Lyn Miller-Lachmann

This issue, the first of 2003, also marks the first issue of *MultiCultural Review* under new ownership. Since the magazine's inception in 1992, it had been published by the Greenwood Publishing Group, a publisher of academic and reference books based in Westport, Connecticut. *MultiCultural Review's* association with Greenwood had been a long and productive one that predated my own appointment as editor beginning with the March 1995 issue. However, the economic crisis facing the publishing industry since the end of 2001 has led Greenwood, like many presses, to concentrate on its core business—in its case, reference titles for schools and libraries. As of January 1, 2003, *MultiCultural Review* passed to the Goldman Group, a dynamic publisher of trade and professional magazines in a variety of fields.

The Goldman Group brings extensive experience in magazine and journal publishing for a broad range of audiences, including librarians and educators. Readers can expect a continued high quality of design along with streamlined processing of subscriptions and increased availability of back issues and single copies. The editorial team remains in place. Regular features that readers have come to count on—reviews of serial publications; annual roundups of multimedia and electronic products, children's books about Latinos, and books in Spanish for children and teens; and the report on the Native Forum at the Sundance Festival along with filmmaker interviews—will continue as well.

Readers may observe a few changes. Over the next few issues, we will be implementing new cover and interior designs and welcome input from you on their appeal and readability. We will also reduce slightly the number of feature articles in order to include more reviews in both the "Editor's Shelf" and regular review sections. Since I have edited *MultiCultural Review*, the number of reviews per issue has increased gradually from an average of 40 in 1994—the year before I took over—to more than 150 today. Another 50 books—new editions, reissues of out-of-print works, translations into Spanish or other languages, new volumes in series, new versions in other media, and a new category, U.S. publications of works appearing abroad in English—are reviewed more briefly in "Editor's Shelf." All of these make *MultiCultural Review* a principal source for information on recently published books and other media about diverse cultures in the United States and around the world.

Our decision to focus on reviews has been dictated by the realities of the publishing world—specifically, the loss of other respected review sources and the virtual abandonment of reviewing on the part of newspapers and magazines across the country. Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, for instance, have cut the size of their Sunday book review sections. The chains that publish most local newspapers nationwide (including the "alternative" entertainment-oriented weeklies in big and medium-sized cities) have also cut back the size of review sections and eliminated local reviewers sensitive to the distinct cultural environment of each area. The paucity of reviews and the tendency of overwhelmed reviewers to focus on the most hyped books has contributed to the "star system" in publishing, by which a few blockbuster books (and not necessarily the best!) flourish while diverse voices and perspectives go virtually unnoticed. Here at *MultiCultural Review*, we would like to challenge the star system and the blockbuster mentality. While our reviews are not long, they offer the reader a taste of the rich offerings that exist under the hype radar. Many of these books, audio recordings, and video/DVDs are the products of independent presses that reflect the ethnic, religious, and political diversity of the United States and Canada.

Yet while we will focus on our book and media reviews, we will continue to publish interesting and well-written feature articles that highlight aspects of cultural diversity and that will help teachers and librarians do their jobs better. We will not shy away from controversy in this enterprise. The lead article for this issue, "'He May Mean Good, But He Do So Doggone Poor!': A Critical Analysis of Recently Published 'Social Conscience' Children's Literature," critiques stereotyped characters and situations in recent children's books by white authors that feature African-American characters. The article's author, Jonda C. McNair, draws on and extends the research of Dr. Rudine Sims-Bishop, who analyzed books published in the 1960s and 1970s. McNair observes a backsliding into stereotypes following a period in the late 1980s and the 1990s in which many talented African-American authors broke into children's publishing and offered more nuanced and culturally conscious portrayals.

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(not reviewed here) the Republic of Georgia. Overall, the series provides an informative introduction and reference source for the countries included.

PEOPLE'S HISTORY

Finlayson, Reggie. *We Shall Overcome: The History of the American Civil Rights Movement*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 2003. 96 pp. ISBN 0-8225-0647-5, \$25.26.

Previous titles in this series for middle school readers have focused on such varied subjects as the history of American food, American whaling in the nineteenth century, the American conservation movement, and the working children's crusade. This latest addition is a well-written overview of the civil rights movement. The major people, places, and events are all carefully yet concisely described, in a tone that comes across as matter of fact but still manages to convey the racial tensions, the longstanding hat-reds, and the violent acts that pervaded the era.

The book begins with the story of how "We Shall Overcome" became an anthem for the movement. Most of the rest of the book covers the 1950s and 1960s. A final chapter, "Solving the American Problem," describes more recent developments such as affirmative action, the Bakke case, the Rainbow Coalition, and President Clinton awarding a Congressional Gold Medal to the Little Rock Nine in 1999.


Black-and-white photos accompany the text. The book concludes with a time line, *In Their Own Words* (excerpts

from two primary sources), a selected bibliography, suggestions for further reading, web sites, and an index.

READINGS ON EQUAL EDUCATION

Brown, M. Christopher, II (ed.). *Volume 18: Equity and Access in Higher Education: Changing the Definition of Educational Opportunity*. New York: AMS Press, 2002. 228 pp. Pamela S. Angelle, managing editor. ISBN 0-404-10118-6, \$79.50.

This series was formerly known as "Educating the Disadvantaged." The present volume collects 10 articles by various scholars on ways to provide greater opportunity in postsecondary education for diverse disadvantaged groups. The first five articles explore what can be done at the college and university level. Later articles consider wider social initiatives and controversies such as the backlash against affirmative action.

In response to that challenge, the volume's editor states unequivocally in the introduction, "Should we treat people unequally in the pursuit of universal access? The answer is yes." In the view of the editor and, in general, of the contributors to this volume, reaching the goal of a just educational system does not require treating all people and groups with no distinctions whatsoever. The articles here attempt to uncover the best ways to define and create educational opportunities that are equitable for all. 

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Our focus on children's books continues with Angela C. Leeper's article, "The 'Other America': Looking at Appalachian and Cajun/Creole Resources." Too often, the definition of multiculturalism in the United States excludes persons of European-American heritage; yet distinct cultures have developed and flourished in Appalachia and on the Louisiana Gulf Coast, areas with strong family and community ties and relatively little migration in or out. The article highlights a variety of children's books—picture books, fiction, folklore, and non-fiction—as well as resources for teachers and librarians.

"Selecting Children's Books with Positive Native American Fathers and Father Figures" is the fifth and last in Craig Heller's award-winning series on culturally diverse fathers and father figures in children's picture books. Heller passed away in August 2002 [see "Parting Words" in the December 2002 issue of *MultiCultural Review* for more information about his work and his life], and his wife, Hannah, along with his colleague Bruce Cunningham, completed the article on his behalf. While they include some well-known titles, their work high-

lights the wealth of books depicting Native American families that have been published by small Native presses in both the United States and Canada over the past 20 years.

Each December we publish Isabel Schon's annual roundup of recommended books in Spanish for children and teens. However, a library's ability to acquire quality books in Spanish is only one step in the process of meeting the needs of Spanish-speaking library users. These books must be made accessible through the catalog, and, as Bruce Jensen points out in "The Monolingual Cataloging Monolith: A Barrier to Library Access for Readers of Spanish," entries for Spanish-language materials tend to be less accurate and detailed than their English-language counterparts. Jensen interviews public and academic library administrators who have confronted this issue, and he suggests a number of solutions that can be applied with little monetary investment, an important consideration in today's difficult economy.

