

## From the Editor

By Lyn Miller-Lachmann

Last December Karigon Elementary School in Clifton Park, New York, lost a gifted teacher and *MultiCultural Review* an eloquent feature writer and reviewer when Linda Crump-Stenberg succumbed after an eight-year battle with ovarian cancer. Six months earlier I had attended a rally with Linda in support of equitable state funding for education. Though already weakened by her illness, she led our contingent of teachers, students, parents, and community members to Albany to join 40,000 other supporters of education from around the state. She returned to the classroom last September and continued to teach until just weeks before her death.

In the broad spectrum of what we define as multiculturalism, Linda's life and career reflected an important element—the person raised in a homogeneous European-American world who reached out to others in pursuit of a rich diversity and a common humanity. Her dedication to social justice never wavered, from her solidarity work with civil rights organizations while a high school student in the early 1960s to her advocacy on behalf of students with disabilities in her second and fourth grade classes at Karigon. Her commitment to multicultural education existed alongside a deep appreciation for her own culture. She designed costumes and performed annually for a folk dance troupe at Winter Solstice and First Night celebrations. A student of quilting, she explored with her classes the quilts of Appalachia and upstate New York as well as the role of quilts in guiding the way for slaves on the Underground Railroad. Her article "Second-Grade Journeys on the Underground Railroad," which appeared in the December 1999 issue of *MultiCultural Review*, describes an award-winning multidisciplinary unit that she designed; her rationale for creating this unit deserves repeating in this era of increasing intolerance and polarization:

I felt that the students in my classes in Clifton Park were much farther removed from any awareness of African Americans and issues of racism than I had been. I also felt it is an educator's duty to provide children with the knowledge that will dispel racism and hatred. I wanted to see each of my students learn to treat all people with dignity and respect. I also wanted them to become aware of our country's history, even the negative parts, and the courage of those of all races and ethnic groups who devoted their lives to righting the wrongs. Finally, I wanted my all-white students...to put themselves in someone else's place and to see events from that person's perspective.

This issue of *MultiCultural Review* was conceived before I learned of Linda's passing, but it seems fitting to me that all the feature articles focus on books for children about diverse cultures. The lead article, Kathryn Mora's "Multicultural Children's Publishing: A Family Affair," highlights three long-standing independent publishers that have incorporated a second generation into the business. Wade and Cheryl Willis Hudson founded Just Us Books in 1988 to provide authentic, affirming titles about the African-American experience for their own children, Katura and Stephan, for all black youngsters, and for young people of all races and cultures looking for the perspectives of cultural insiders. Today, Katura and Stephan have joined the press, as a publicist and a book designer respectively. Lee & Low Books celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2001 as a publisher of books embracing a diversity of cultures. Founders Philip Lee and Thomas Low, who began the press as second careers, have passed the reins for day-to-day operations to Thomas's two sons, Jason and Craig. Finally, Cinco Puntos Press, set to celebrate 20 years of publishing about the Latino experience in 2005, has incorporated a multigenerational family into what founder Bobby Byrd calls "the house that *La Llorona* built."

The second article in this issue, "Paul Laurence *Who?* Invisibility and Misrepresentation in Children's Literature and Language Arts Textbooks," is a call-and-response between an African-American teacher and writer, Mary Jackson Scroggins, and a white education professor, Jane M. Gangi. This article highlights both the importance and the continued relative invisibility of the independent multicultural presses featured in Mora's piece. Scroggins describes her difficulties in getting mainstream presses even to consider for publication her series for children about an African-American girl growing up on a Southern plantation, written in the style of the popular *Little House on the Prairie* series. Gangi examines recently published children's literature textbooks and finds that, despite the attention given to multicultur-

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al education in school districts and academia, the work of writers and illustrators of color and the publications of independent presses continue to be slighted in these "authoritative" sources. Even the best sources—and Gangi has endeavored to find fresh and unique titles—contain inexcusable gaps. If textbooks, teachers, and school districts fail to embrace a wide variety of writing by culturally diverse authors, it is no wonder that authors like Scroggins will continue to collect rejection letters praising their stories but ultimately calling them "unmarketable."

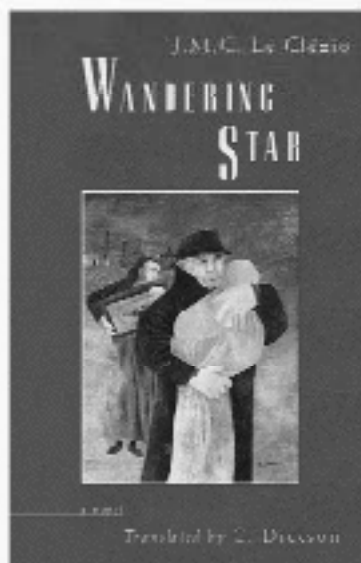
Beverly Slapin, co-founder of the acclaimed organization Oyate, devoted to the promotion of authentic and sensitive children's books about American Indians, has teamed up with Abenaki educator Judy Dow to challenge ten common myths of the "First Thanksgiving." Dow and Slapin quote from often-used children's books—none by Native authors—and offer facts that uncover the inaccuracies, stereotypes, and culturally dominant worldviews embedded within these titles. The authors also recommend sources for both teachers and students that can be used as the basis for more accurate teaching about Thanksgiving and more broadly about the American Indian experience from before the First Contact to the present day.

The final feature article, "The Golden Triangle: Helping K-8 School Librarians and Educators Understand Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar (Burma) Histories, Culture, and Literature" by Frank Alan Bruno and Patricia F. Beilke, focuses on a culturally rich part of the world that has received little attention in mainstream bibliographies. There are a surprising number of books, including compelling works of fiction and memoir, about people living in this region, as well as people from this area who have made the United States their home. The authors offer an introduction to the religions and cultures of each country, and readers will find the comparisons fascinating—to see, for instance, how common holidays such as the New Year feature distinct practices or variations on practices that reflect subtle differences in each country's history, social relations, and worldview.

Our "Parting Words" column features Chilean poet and essayist Marjorie Agosin on one of her principal sources of inspiration—Pablo Neruda. The year 2004 marks the centennial of Neruda's birth, and Agosin's tribute celebrates a life and words that have bridged space, culture, and time. He was, as she points out, the ultimate multiculturalist—a person from one of the most isolated countries on the planet, who in his travels and poetry embraced the entire world.

My friend Linda Crump-Stenberg inhabited the same world as Neruda and lived by the same principles. And as we find beauty and inspiration in the entire diversity of human experience, as we seek to right injustices and defend the dignity of all human beings, so do we. 

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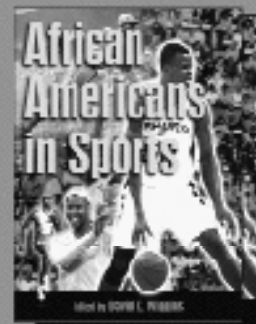
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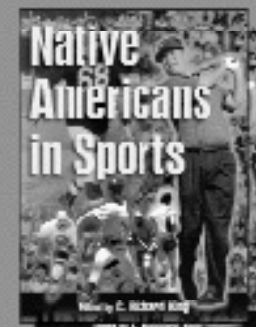
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