

## From the Editor

By Lyn Miller-Lachmann

A

year ago, my daughter ended one educational journey and began another with her Bat Mitzvah. This summer, it is my son's turn, as he graduates from high school. Like most seniors, he is happy to be done and excited about the challenges that await him, but he is also concerned about the friends he will leave behind. He is going farther away from home than all of his friends, most of whom will be attending colleges within four hours' driving distance. Derrick's college choices reflected his desire to start fresh, in an environment very different from that in which he grew up. He applied only to universities located in cities, including one in Canada and three in the southeastern United States. His ultimate choice, Emory University, will lead him to Atlanta, a city noted for its ethnic and cultural diversity.

While Derrick and I have had our disagreements over the years, I am proud of his open-mindedness, his love of adventure, and his willingness to embrace conflicting points of view, cultural difference, and change. When he was still in elementary school, my husband and I urged him to attend summer camp. We'd both enjoyed our summers in the outdoors swimming, hiking, and playing sports (as would our daughter years later). But Derrick wouldn't budge. We feared he'd never go away, that he was anxious about parting with us for so long. Then, in sixth grade, he received an invitation to travel with a student group to Australia and New Zealand for three weeks. He was ready to pack his bags on the spot. He had finally found his type of summer program.

Derrick's graduation allows the rest of the family to make a long-awaited move from the suburbs into the city of Albany. While he enjoyed his school experience, particularly in his child-centered elementary school, and had many friends throughout his years here, I found it often frustrating to advocate for diversity in a community all too satisfied with its insularity. Several years ago, when *Once Upon a Cuento*—the collection of children's short stories by Latino authors that I edited—came out, I met with the local librarian. She described a favorable review that the book received but then told me the library would not be acquiring it because "we don't have any kids like that here, and the other kids won't read about them." As a local author, I offered to donate a copy, but the librarian refused even that, saying, "We don't have the space."

My friend Linda Crump-Stenberg taught for more than a decade in an elementary school in this community. She succeeded in making history come alive and getting students to "walk in the shoes" of another through her award-winning unit on the Underground Railroad, described in the December 1999 issue of *MCR*. Linda passed away in December of 2003. I miss her inspiring example of local activism. And while I have the luxury of working at home, my husband has suffered through a lengthy commute and, now, record-high gasoline prices that have focused our attention on the unsustainability of our car-oriented suburban lifestyle.

All this is a roundabout way of asking readers to please note the editorial office's change of address. All editorial correspondence, materials for review, and manuscripts should now be sent to 194 Lenox Ave., Albany, NY 12208. The e-mail address remains the same: [mcreview@aol.com](mailto:mcreview@aol.com).

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In the past decade, publishers of young adult fiction have offered an increasing number of books for older teens. In large part, this is a response to the maturing of the baby boomlet. It is also a response to many older teens' interest in reading adult books as well as adults' interest in reading books once published exclusively for teens. The success of the Harry Potter series is in large part due to adults reading the books, and it has revealed a secret about many adults who have not given up the genre they enjoyed in their youth. Crossover books, in other words, cross both ways.

Children's literature professor KaaVonia Hinton-Johnson addresses this crossover phenomenon in her article, "Subverting Beauty Aesthetics in African-American Young

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Adult Literature.” Her analysis encompasses classic works of both adult and young adult literature, focusing on poetry and novels by Gwendolyn Brooks, Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison, and others, and their young adult counterparts Angela Johnson, Rita Williams-Garcia, and Jacqueline Woodson. Hinton-Johnson argues that African-American young adult literature offers complex and nuanced considerations of body image that complement and challenge those set forth by authors of books for adults. While adult fiction may explore situations inappropriate for younger readers, the young adult novels described in the article are significant literary works with much to say to readers of all ages.

The Spring 2005 issue of *MCR* focused on writing and multiculturalism. The topic, of interest to both educators and general readers, could fill a number of issues. Two articles here address additional aspects. Patricia Goldblatt’s “Changing the Image of Teachers Through Cases” explores the contributions of teachers who write about their work in the form of eloquent, compelling, and revealing case studies. These case studies, which describe challenging situations, spark discussion and thought among colleagues and reveal to a wider world, more accustomed to media stereotypes of teachers, what their professional lives are really like. Many of the cases address intercultural conflicts or meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations. One case, presented here in a special box accompanying the article, takes place in a school serving recent immigrants to Toronto and a situation in which teachers’ needs come into conflict with those of their students.

Most people would not find teachers who write to be unusual or surprising; after all, writing is part of the curriculum in a growing number of subject areas. However, some may be shocked by the existence of elected officials who write anything more than memoirs or political treatises. Representative Major R. Owens of Brooklyn is African American, a former librarian, and a writer of rap poetry and plays on a variety of historical and contemporary subjects. Several months ago, he sat down with Alice Bernstein, an author and publisher from the Aesthetic Realism movement (which uses creative expression to address social and political conflicts) to talk about his own education, his work as a librarian, his decision to enter politics, and his play about Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings.

As the case study accompanying Goldblatt’s article indicates, meeting the needs of immigrant children continues to be a challenge for educators. Isabel Schon’s regular feature on recommended books in Spanish for children and teens can help teachers choose appropriate materials, while Vladimir Wertsman’s “Romanian Jews in America: Early American Vignettes” provides inspiration and a historical perspective.

Our “Parting Words” column for this issue honors the life of an artist, storyteller, historian, and musician taken too soon. Many will remember Michael Lacapa’s work from his acclaimed picture books *Antelope Woman* and *Less Than Half, More Than Whole*. Joseph Bruchac surveys Lacapa’s multifaceted work and its impact on his community of White Mountain Apache as well as on the children of all backgrounds whose lives Lacapa touched through his books,

recordings, and school visits. As Bruchac writes, “He was graced with so many talents that he made me think of something I’ve heard (far too often) in Indian Country: Those most blessed and beloved by the Creator are only loaned to us for a short time.” Bruchac’s words endeavor to keep Lacapa’s work and example alive for generations to come.

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Along with changes in the editorial office come staffing changes for *MCR*. Having served as the Art Editor since the journal’s founding in 1992, Betty Kaplan Gubert has decided to retire. I thank her for her valuable guidance and contributions and wish her well in her future activities. Larry Shea, who has written the “Editor’s Shelf” column for the past three years, is also stepping down. Kathryn Mora, author of the article “Multicultural Children’s Publishing: A Family Affair” in the Fall 2004 issue of *MCR*, will be taking over, beginning with this issue. Larry will continue to contribute occasional reviews for “Editor’s Shelf” through the end of the year. 