

From the Editor

By Lyn Miller-Lachmann

The 11,000 librarians and 7,000 exhibitors and guests who attended the 2006 American Library Association conference in June made history, as we took part in the first major conference to be held in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Like my son, who preceded me in witnessing history by going to Mardi Gras in March, I saw a city struggling to recover from a natural disaster compounded by governmental ineptitude and apathy. People were grateful to see us and worked hard to insure that our conference went well. I would have liked to see more people on the exhibit floor and at sessions, but those who attended were passionate about their work and believed they could make a difference. I certainly got that feeling at the panel on ethnic publishing for which I was a speaker.

Co-sponsored by EMIERT and the Alternatives in Print Task Force, the panel, officially titled "The Ethnic Press, Libraries, and Community: How Can We Strengthen the Ties?" pulled together educators and representatives of ethnic periodicals and nonprofit organizations. Joining me were Carol Gulyas, a professor at Columbia College in Chicago; former ALA president Nancy Kranich; George Curry, editor of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service and *The Curry Report*, both information clearinghouses of African-American news and opinion; Juana Ponce de Leon of the Independent Press Association; and Renette Dejoie Hall, editor of *Louisiana Weekly*, the oldest continuing African-American newspaper in southern Louisiana.

Hall's story was particularly compelling. Her grandfather began the newspaper 81 years ago, and throughout the years, it has been a voice of the New Orleans Black community, chronicling, among other things, antilynching struggles and the community's involvement in the civil rights movement. Since little news of the African-American community, outside of crime reports and the activities of well-known political figures, has received coverage in the mainstream (white-owned) media, *Louisiana Weekly* has for nine decades highlighted the day-to-day work of ordinary people, the contributions of African-American businesses, and the opinions of those who have otherwise been disenfranchised and powerless.

Hurricane Katrina closed the offices of *Louisiana Weekly* and destroyed Hall's home. It scattered the newspaper's many subscribers, most of whom have been unable to return. For the past year, the newspaper has existed mainly online, though attendees of the ethnic publishing panel and the Alternatives in Print Task Force—sponsored Free Speech Buffet were able to pick up an eight-page special print edition. The extended diaspora of New Orleans's Black community means that *Louisiana Weekly* will continue to publish online, where it also serves an important mission in keeping people in touch with each other and connected to their place of origin. The health of those forced to relocate and their hope of reestablishing their sense of place and community depends on the continued survival of their newspaper, which has served for generations as their source of information and their voice.

I asked Hall how we could help. She urged those at the panel and at the Free Speech Buffet to visit the newspaper's web site, www.louisianaweekly.com. Those who are in a position to advertise can do so in the online edition, where they will reach a national readership of those displaced by the hurricane. And simply getting the word out to a wider audience will help. The newspaper serves—now as during the civil rights movement—as an alternative to mainstream media outlets that have presented reconstruction proposals from the wealthy and politically powerful only and characterized the hurricane's survivors as malcontents and criminals or forgotten them altogether.

This fall issue of *MultiCultural Review* continues our annual focus on K-12 education with several articles on drama and education. For many years Daniel A. Kelin II has worked with English as a Second Language students in Hawaii, primarily students of Samoan,

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Micronesian, and Filipino heritage. He is also an award-winning young adult writer and the author of a recently published guide to collecting and performing oral histories. His article, "Integrating Drama into the ESLL Classroom," explores how drama can contribute to the education of immigrant students from Asia and the Pacific and enrich the classroom community as a whole. His program is based on the collection of stories from elders and the performance-through movement as well as through words-of these traditional stories. For teachers who wish to replicate his program in their own ESL classrooms, he offers specific steps and guidelines.

Tina Ruggirello and Lucia Yiu Matuk, professors of drama and nursing respectively at the University of Windsor in Ontario, developed an innovative program that involved university students in these seemingly disparate fields as well as urban and rural elementary school students. The urban students in Windsor came from a variety of cultural backgrounds, while the rural students were predominantly white. Students from the University of Windsor interviewed these youngsters about their cultural heritage, cultural conflicts in schools, ways in which students feel "different" and feel connected to each other, and how they have acted to resolve conflicts in positive ways. From these interviews, the university students wrote an interactive play that they performed for additional classes and elicited discussion from the students. Ruggirello and Matuk's article, "Drama Education Empowers Students as Social Action Leaders: The Culture Connection Project," describes the semester-long program, its achievements and challenges, and ways that other school districts can build on their work.

This issue also features our annual roundup of electronic products, "Mixed Media." In this installment, Frank Alan Bruno highlights software for elementary school students about world cultures, the Underground Railroad, and the Cherokee Trail of Tears. Among the web-based products featured are a program on the African-American Great Migration, a geography resource for older students, and eBooks of dictionaries and classic world literature from Project Gutenberg.

With the fall issue, we welcome aboard a new Subject Editor specializing in fiction. Himilce Novas is the author of two novels and several reference sources on Latin American, Latino, and Asian American cultures. She is also the author of the summer 2006 "Parting Words" column, entitled "Queer Is Multicultural," which contains links to her exhaustive web list of GLBT persons who changed the course of history from antiquity to the present. To access the list and read more about Himilce Novas, visit her web site, <http://supernovas.org>. 

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