

From the Editor

By Lyn Miller-Lachmann

Isolation breeds suspicion. While this generalization is not always true—open-minded individuals can develop in the most isolated of situations, and stories are a good way of learning about distant peoples and places—a lack of face-to-face contact between people, cultures, and countries often leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes and hostilities. This issue of *MultiCultural Review* addresses the topic of isolation and how people throughout the world have bridged cultural, religious, and ideological differences.

The lead article addresses one of the most horrific periods of recent history and the courageous efforts of some to challenge the hate that swirled around them. The Righteous Gentiles—non-Jewish men and women of all ages who risked their lives to save their Jewish neighbors during the Holocaust—are beginning to receive the recognition they deserve. Vladimir F. Wertsman's "Righteous Gentiles Among Nations: A Selected Annotated Bibliography" highlights four dozen notable works that depict the heroic acts of Righteous Gentiles throughout Europe. Some of the titles highlight the work of a single person or a small group of individuals; others survey the activities of Righteous Gentiles in a number of European countries; still others explore the motivations of these noble individuals and the specific ways in which they saved Jews from the Nazi killing machine. A unifying theme of these works, however, is the empathy the Righteous Gentiles felt for their fellow human beings, which allowed them to reach out to those who did not share their religious beliefs and whose religion and culture had been demonized in Nazi propaganda.

Two articles examine the benefits of international travel. Business school professor Scott Ballantyne writes about a program of travel to Cuba, a country that most Americans are prohibited from visiting. He accompanied students from the Master of Business Administration and Master of Education programs at Alvernia College on an eight-day trip and afterward surveyed these travelers, as well as students in the two master's programs who did not make the trip. He reports that the participants in the international travel component had many of their misconceptions about Cuba's economy, the role of tourism, and race relations challenged, and they came back enthusiastic about the ways in which international travel can transcend ideologies and break down cultural barriers. Virginia elementary school teacher Marla Muntner also discovered the benefits of international travel for both herself and her students when she won a Fulbright grant to visit Japan with a delegation of American teachers. There, she observed similarities and differences between the elementary school climate of the two countries and how the culture of the Japanese school reflected broader values and norms. This experience made her a more critical observer of her own school and of schools in Japan, and by incorporating what she felt were the best aspects of the Japanese school system into her own teaching, she enriched her students' educational experience and improved the climate of her class.

In our December issue, we regularly feature Isabel Schon's recommended list of books in Spanish for children and adolescents. These books—some translations of titles first published in other countries and others original creations of Spanish and Latin American authors and illustrators—open windows on different cultures and ways of seeing the world. Language does affect the way a person perceives and describes the world, and these titles offer Spanish-speaking students informational or imaginative texts in a familiar language and give Spanish learners a deeper understanding that goes beyond the words themselves.

Christine McDonald's annual roundup of the Native Forum at the Sundance Film Festival reviews three films that address conflicts between the government and indigenous peoples in Canada and Australia. In one of the films, *Beneath Clouds*, two young people of mixed heritage in Australia find solidarity and friendship in a journey to discover their past, but their quest brings them into conflict with racist police officers.

▼ continued on page 11

Editor-in-Chief
Lyn Miller-Lachmann
mcreview@aol.com

Managing Editor
Valerie Shea

Layout and Design
Wendy Hummel

Advertising
The Goldman Group, Inc.
Lauren Correia
lauren@ggpubs.com
(813) 264-2772

Publisher
The Goldman Group, Inc.
Todd Goldman
todd@ggpubs.com
14497 N. Dale Mabry, #205N
Tampa, FL 33618
(813) 264-2772

**African/African-American
Studies Editor**
Itibari M. Zulu

Art Editor
Betty Kaplan Gubert

**Asian/Asian-American
Editor**
Jennifer L. Wu

Book Review Editor
Sean P. Maloney

Editor's Shelf Editor
Larry Shea

Education Editor
Dennis E. Showalter

Film/Video Editor
Christine McDonald

**Internet/Electronic
Products Editor**
Frank Alan Bruno
bruno@coleman.pvam.edu

Juvenile Editors
Oralia Garza de Cortés
Ginny Lee


Latina/o Studies Editor
Danilo H. Figueredo

**Native American
Studies Editor**
Joel Monture

Serials Editor
Renee Rude
rrude@stcloudstate.edu

study and affected the course of Caribbean history. The EWMC has been touted by Colin Palmer, Dodge Professor of History, Princeton University, "as a model for similar archival collections in the Caribbean" and "a national treasure."

Additional information on the EWMC and an offering of

greeting cards for sale to benefit the collection may be found at the University of the West Indies web site, www.mainlib.uwi.tt/eric.html. A web site maintained by the University of Florida, <http://palmm.fcla.edu/eew>, provides general information on Williams as well as a selection of speeches. 

▼ from the editor continued from page 4


Another film, *Is the Crown at War with Us?*, by the prolific Abenaki director Alanis Obomsawin, explores the Canadian government's persistent attacks on the fishing and land rights of the Mi'gmaq people. In her interview with McDonald to be published in June 2004, Obomsawin describes her purpose in the film as uncovering a 300-year history of indigenous community rights and struggle. Conflicts continue over Native rights because, in Obomsawin's words, "the population and the country have never been educated in terms of what the real history is...if the history was taught the way it [happened] and recognized the rights...of the first people of the country...the rest of the country would have respect for Native people."

Information. Education. Travel. Personal contact. All key components of reducing hatred and increasing understanding. At a time of terror, war, and growing suspicion and polarization within the United States, we need to stop and take another look at the path we are pursuing, a path in which ideology has overshadowed empathy and common sense. In my September editorial I wrote about the American Library Association's opposition to the USA PATRIOT Act, particularly Section 215, which lowers the evidence bar for official seizure of library and bookstore records. Recently, the attorney general labeled his librarian opponents as "hysterics" and declassified records to show that no library records were subpoenaed under Section 215 in the course of a terror investigation. (However, library records and computer equipment have been seized under other types of investigations, such as drug trafficking, fraud, and identity theft, since the passage of the PATRIOT Act.)

At the American Library Association conference in Toronto and in various publications afterward, MCR Editorial Advisory Board member Sanford Berman has called attention to a parallel issue in Cuba. In March 2003, 75 dissidents against the Communist government of Fidel Castro, including 10 "independent librarians" or owners of private libraries, were arrested and tried as U.S. government agents. In echoes of other draconian provisions of the PATRIOT Act, these dissidents were tried in secret with only their families permitted to observe the proceedings. They have been sentenced to up to 28 years in prison. In its 57-page report entitled "Cuba: 'Essential Measures'? Human Rights Crackdown in the Name of Security," Amnesty International describes the 75 dissidents as "prisoners of conscience" and concludes that their conduct was "nonviolent and seemed to fall within the parameters of the legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms as guaranteed under international standards." As part of its action against the dissidents, the Cuban government confiscated books, letters, fax machines, and typewriters.

Defenders of U.S. sanctions against Cuba—sanctions that include the travel ban—would seize on this action to prove the evil of the Castro regime and to justify stronger measures, including war. Berman instead calls on librarians to write

directly to Fidel Castro to urge the release of the prisoners. (His letters to the American Library Association and to Castro may be found in their entirety in *Counterpoise*, volume 7, number 3, page 2.) He also continues to oppose the travel ban and other sanctions that he feels have led to the hardening of an already paranoid regime.

I agree with Berman. A lot of good things have come from a travel program like the one Scott Ballantyne describes—intercultural and interracial understanding; an openness to establishing trade and contact across borders and ideological systems; a belief that Cuba can move toward democracy and capitalism through contact with Europe, Canada, and the United States; and a willingness to see beyond the narrow view of our own government. The opposite is isolation, and—as we see in the case of Cuba and may well be seeing in the United States as well—such isolation breeds not only suspicion but also repression. 

Coming in the March issue of

MCR

- Special Issue on Cultural Competency: Teaching Latino and Filipino-American Students
- The Literature of Immigration
- Interview with Poet Martín Espada