

# From the Editor

By Lyn Miller-Lachmann



Were it not for Ronald Takaki, E.J. Josey, and E. Lynn Harris, we would not be where we are today. All three were multicultural pioneers—in education, librarianship, and literature, respectively.

Takaki, who died in May 2009 at the age of 70, began his career as both a student and a participant in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Born in Hawaii of Japanese heritage, he joined with African Americans seeking an end to segregation and discrimination. He then turned his attention to his own community, authoring groundbreaking studies of Asian immigration to the United States. His *Strangers from a Different Shore* is a classic work of Asian-American history, but he also devoted himself to presenting to young readers the history of various Asian-American groups. Facts on File and Chelsea House published the surveys of Japanese-American, Korean-American, Chinese-American, and South Asian-American history that he wrote for students at the middle and high school levels. Along with his writing, Takaki expressed his commitment to building an understanding and appreciation of diversity through his work to establish the University of California–Berkeley’s ethnic studies program and the implementation of an ethnic studies requirement for all UC–Berkeley undergraduates. This issue of *MultiCultural Review* offers a “Parting Words” tribute to Takaki, written by William A. Howe, a Connecticut-based diversity educator whose career choice and approach were profoundly influenced by Takaki’s work.

Shortly before the start of the American Library Association’s (ALA) annual conference in Chicago this July, we lost E.J. Josey, the first African-American man to serve as ALA president. Josey, who died at the age of 85, was a co-founder of the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT), which began in 1969 and which served as the initial sponsor of the Coretta Scott King Awards for outstanding writing and illustration in children’s books by African Americans. (Like SRRT, the Coretta Scott King Awards also celebrate their fortieth anniversary this year.) Josey, who spent most of his career teaching in the library school at the University of Pittsburgh, also founded the Black Caucus of ALA, which organizes programs and recognizes—through the BCALA Literary Awards—outstanding writing and scholarship for adult readers by African-American authors. Working with founding editor Brenda Mitchell-Powell, Josey helped to launch *MultiCultural Review* in 1991 and remained on the journal’s board of directors until his death.

I write and speak often about the development of independent ethnic publishing, and every time I do so, I tell the story of E. Lynn Harris, the IBM executive-turned-author who, when rejected by every major publisher in the early 1990s, self-published *Invisible Life*, his sexually honest novel with African-American characters and urban settings. He packed copies into the trunk of his car and drove around the country selling his novel in beauty parlors and other nontraditional outlets. His creative marketing alerted publishers to the fact that African-American women were avid readers and publishers needed to make the effort to reach this audience. Thus, an entire genre of urban popular fiction, as well as urban gay fiction, was born. Harris went on to publish about a dozen other novels with mainstream publishers, and many successful African-American authors today owe their careers to Harris’s efforts. But in late July of this year, Harris died suddenly on a business trip. He was 54.

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

Managing Editor  
Deb Goldman

Creative Director  
Ed Luiso

Copy Editor  
Jane Lerner

Advertising Director  
The Goldman Group, Inc.  
Deb Goldman  
deb@ggpubs.com  
813-949-0054

Publisher  
The Goldman Group, Inc.  
Todd Goldman  
todd@ggpubs.com  
PO Box 270  
Lutz, FL 33559  
813-949-0054

African/African-American  
Studies Editor  
Itibari M. Zulu

Asian/Asian-American Editor  
Jennifer L. Wu

Editor’s Shelf Editor  
Kathryn Mora

Education Editor  
Dennis E. Showalter

Fiction Editor  
Himilce Novas

Film/Video Editor  
Christine McDonald

Internet/Electronic  
Products Editor  
Frank Alan Bruno

Juvenile Editors  
Oralia Garza de Cortés  
Ginny Lee  
Beverly Slapin

Latina/o Studies Editor  
Danilo H. Figueredo

Serials Editor  
Pamela M. Salela

Tributes like the one in this issue of *MCR* and the many tributes online to Takaki, Josey, and Harris remind us not only of these individuals' greatness but also that their work continues through the many people they inspired, mentored, and influenced, and for whom they created opportunities. Their presence has enriched us all.

In winter 2005 the lead article in *MultiCultural Review* featured an annotated resource list on the Kindertransport, which in 1938 and 1939 brought thousands of unaccompanied German Jewish children to safety in England. Many of those children never saw their parents again. The Kindertransport was not the only time unaccompanied children and teenagers left their homes and moved to a new land in search of freedom and safety. After the 1959 revolution in Cuba, thousands of parents sent their children to the United States to avoid having them drafted into the Cuban army or indoctrinated in schools under a Communist regime. The airlift of these children to Miami and other U.S. cities was named Operation Pedro Pan, and while most of the Cuban children were later reunited with their parents, the experience of exile, alone, had a major impact on the lives of both the younger and the older generations. In "Fly Away...Home?" journalist Arlene Geller interviews more than a dozen children, parents, and other relatives involved in Operation Pedro Pan during the 1960s. Among those interviewed are *MCR*'s Latino Subject Editor Danilo H. Figueredo, whose wife came to the United States through Operation Pedro Pan, and Florida's U.S. Senator Mel Martinez, who arrived alone at the age of 15 and spent months in an overcrowded refugee camp.

The experiences of those who stayed behind and suffered under despotic regimes is the subject of Patricia Goldblatt's essay, "Books That Describe Oppression." For this article, she examines two historical novels set at the same time in history—one in Stalinist Russia, and the other in Germany under the Nazi regime. Published in 1967, Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* is a fantastical encounter involving a poet, an institutionalized writer known as the Master, a censorious editor, the evil stranger Woland (interpreted as the devil and as Stalin), and a mysterious woman, Margarita. A more recent novel, Jenna Blum's *Those Who Save Us*, also uses fairy tales and the supernatural to present a mother's struggle to survive and save her infant daughter during the Holocaust. Like Bulgakov's idealistic writers in the Soviet Union of the 1930s, Blum's female characters find themselves in the constant presence of evil as Anna, the mother, saves herself and daughter Trudy by becoming the mistress of a psychopathic Nazi commander. In examining these works of adaptation and perseverance in the face of evil, Goldblatt observes that "[l]ike canaries in coal mines, artists and writers are the beacons of a society in which divergent perspectives must not only be tolerated, they must be encouraged."

And these writers and artists must be celebrated. That is

what Jane Mahar achieves in her interview with the prolific African-American children's author Tonya Bolden, whose historical and biographical writing, as well as her work with prisoners, urban students, and other underserved populations have made her an inspiration and role model for young people. In the interview, Bolden talks about her upbringing in Harlem, her parents' encouragement of her reading and of her attending the elite Chapin School and Princeton University, her decision to become a full-time writer, her research process, and the challenges of writing biographies for young people, especially of Martin Luther King Jr. who has been covered so many times, and W.E.B. Du Bois, whose life and work were so extensive.

Nonprint materials receive attention in this issue as Frank Alan Bruno, back in the States after two years as a university library director in Saudi Arabia, offers advice on creating multicultural wikis in "Bridges on the I-Way." 🌐

## ad index

Curbstone .....	37
Hyperion.....	Back Cover
Peachtree Publishers .....	10
Penguin .....	42
ProQuest.....	Inside Back Cover
Random House .....	Inside Front Cover
Rethinking Schools .....	26
Teen Voices .....	94
VOYA.....	96

### Lyn's Blog and Web Site

Editor-in-Chief Lyn Miller-Lachmann has a new web site and blog! Please stop by for a visit at <http://web.mac.com/lynml>.