

# From the Editor

By Lyn Miller-Lachmann



This is my final “From the Editor” for *MultiCultural Review*, as I am leaving the journal this summer after 16 years to attend graduate school in pursuit of my Master’s in Fine Arts in Writing for Children and Young Adults at Vermont College. I’d thought about pursuing the MFA on and off for three decades, most seriously after 2000, when I returned to writing fiction after a hiatus of 10 years.

In fall 2002, around the time Sandy Taylor at Curbstone Press accepted the manuscript of my adult novel, *Dirt Cheap*, pending revisions, I attended a weekend conference at Vermont College. After that, the possibility of going back to school full-time remained at the back of my mind, but even a low-residency program seemed impossible given my work and family responsibilities. When my oldest child left for college, I discussed with Sandy my thoughts about the MFA, but he said he didn’t think spending the time and money was necessary, given that I had the support of a respected literary publisher and seemed to be growing as a writer.

Sandy Taylor’s death in 2007, when my young adult novel *Gringolandia* was in production, left me without my most dedicated teacher and advocate. Still, I was reluctant to make the significant investment in a degree program, given the long odds of success that writers face.

When *Gringolandia* was chosen for the 2010 American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults list, I decided that developing my craft and career as a writer was something worth pursuing. I have many more ideas for stories, including a companion to *Gringolandia*—little sister Tina’s story—that I just finished and will be submitting to publishers this summer through my new agent. I look forward to this new chapter in my own life and think that *MultiCultural Review* will also benefit from new ideas and leadership. Change is inevitable and thus something to be embraced rather than feared.

I would like to thank all the people who have helped me to make *MultiCultural Review* the go-to source for diversity-oriented books and media for the past 16 years: Brenda Mitchell-Powell, my predecessor who founded the journal in 1991; Lynn Taylor and Gerry Katz at the Greenwood Publishing Group, *MCR*’s owner from 1991 to 2002; copyeditors Meg Ferguson, Valerie Shea, and Jane Lerner; Todd and Deb Goldman at the Goldman Group, *MCR*’s owner from 2003 to the present; my former book review editor, Sean Maloney; *EMIE Bulletin* editor Roberto Delgadillo and the folks at the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT), who have trusted *MCR* to publish the *Bulletin* from December 2005 to the present; and all of the advisory board members, subject editors, feature article authors, and reviewers who have offered their wisdom and insight over the years. Even though I will no longer be editor-in-chief, I will take my place among the dozens of *MCR* reviewers who without monetary remuneration have made the publication of this journal possible.

In looking back over the past 16 years, I am proud of the journal’s many accomplishments, including two Virginia Hamilton Essay Awards and special recognition from *Library Journal*. *MCR* was an early and tenacious advocate for the Pura Belpré Awards and other awards that recognize diverse authors and their books. *MCR* was also one of the few trade review journals to review works by alternative presses—a direction championed by Mitchell-Powell, who edited *Small Press* magazine before founding *MCR*—and self-published books. Some of the self-published books championed in our pages—Zetta Elliott’s *A Wish After Midnight* and Raúl Ramos y Sánchez’s *America Libre* are recent

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examples—have gone on to wider acclaim and major publishers. To the extent that self-publishing and e-publishing are the wave of the future, *MCR* has been there from the very beginning.

It is time, then, to move forward, and what better way than to discuss the excellent articles in this summer's issue. Two of my fellow debut YA authors from 2009, Bethany Hegedus and Kekla Magoon, have created an innovative program to teach about the civil rights movement. Titled "Two Books, Two Authors," the presentation for students at the middle school level builds on the themes of Hegedus's *Between Us Baxters*, recognized by the Bank Street College of Education on their 2010 Children's Books list, and Magoon's *The Rock and the River*, winner of the 2010 Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Award. Through Hegedus's presentation of life for Whites and Blacks in the South in the 1950s, and Magoon's depiction of an African-American teenager torn between his father's commitment to nonviolent activism and his older brother's growing involvement with the Black Panthers in 1968, students learn how the movement evolved over two decades.

A second article in this issue, Michael Kyne's "Love in Action: A Healing Art Workshop in Chapala, Mexico," focuses on a hands-on program that crosses cultures. The Healing Art workshops are the brainchild of Turkish-born visual artist Metin Bereketli, who encourages children facing traumatic events—life-threatening illness, abuse, and abandonment—to express themselves through art and to have fun. Kyne's text and photos portray one such workshop at an orphanage near Guadalajara, Mexico.

Loriene Roy, who interviewed the multi-talented Joy Harjo for the winter 2009 issue of *MultiCultural Review*, returns with an interview of Mexican-American poet, novelist, memoirist, and activist Jimmy Santiago Baca. Baca discusses his prison literacy project, his memoir *A Place to Stand*, his new novel *A Glass of Water*, and the role of libraries in his life.

Our final two articles focus on the experiences of Arabs and Muslims in the United States and around the world. Weam Namou, an Iraqi-born Christian, vividly demonstrates how those of different faiths can understand each other through her interviews with Muslim women in her article "Muslim Women Empowered by Their Religion." Her three interviewees talk about gender relations and divorce in Muslim societies, the women's dual roles as economic providers and mothers, the way in which the *hijab* (headscarf) can serve to liberate women, and education as a means of creating opportunities for Muslim women of diverse nationalities.

Vladimir F. Wertsman brings us an interview with Saad Abulhab, an Iraqi-American information specialist who has invented and patented a simplified Arabic typography that has facilitated electronic communication. He talks about his invention and about his interest in Arabic calligraphy in general, an interest that has motivated him to adapt an ancient and beautiful handwritten script to a modern era.

We are fortunate to have the second part of James C. Jupp's "Parting Words" series on "White Erasures." In the first part, published in the spring 2010 issue of *MCR*, he critiqued dominant approaches of White Studies from his perspective as a White person living in Mexico, married to a Mexican woman. In this installment, he discusses the importance of reflexivity—defined mainly as a quest for self-awareness—among teachers who serve culturally diverse students. He offers himself as an example, describing his years of teaching in Latino communities in South Texas and in a racially and ethnically diverse inner-city school in Austin.

This issue's "Continuing Diversity" column discusses a tribute to the Argentine poet Juan Gelman and the late translator Hardie St. Martin, which appeared in the summer 2009 *The Café Review*. Edited by Paul Pines, the special issue represents his effort to bring Gelman's work—very little of which has been translated into English up until now—to an audience in the United States.

In closing, I would like to thank all of the readers of *Multi-Cultural Review* for your support over the past 16 years. It isn't often that one can honestly say, "I love my job," but you have made my work a joy, and I look forward to staying in touch. ☺



## 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>.

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