Chapter 5

FRESH WATERS ARE EVER FLOWING

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You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in on you.

—Heraclitus

ALDER CREEK

Alder Creek, where the North American continental tectonic plate rubs against the Pacific plate, and the San Andreas fault runs out to the Pacific Ocean, is about five miles north of my home in Point Arena, California. I love to take daily walks along the creek and out to the sea with my golden retriever, Mazi; together we have seen three years of the creek's transformations. Walking along the fault feels dangerous, as if we are daring the earth to split again. At the same time stepping on ground where tectonic plates meet infuses a simple daily experience with a sense of the planet as a whole. Though the creek is not spectacular and there are many more dramatic beaches in our area, a daily visit to Alder Creek has become part of my life, much as writing and teaching have.

Taking daily walks, stealing an hour from work to stretch and

simply breathe without an agenda or purpose, is a recent phenomenon in my life. For the first fifteen years I lived in Point Arena I probably walked by the ocean or went to a beach less than once a month, and then only when Judy or my children dragged me or when some guests just had to be taken to see the ocean. I realize now that I had imposed certain limits on my own freedom because of my obsession with getting work done, being "relevant," and "making a difference." It took an encounter with potentially life-threatening high blood pressure to make me realize that everyday speed was a threat to lifelong effectiveness, and that the energy and intensity I wanted to bring to every moment would be better gathered up and parceled out sensitively over time. Walking every day, listening to the ocean, watching the changes the creek lived through in its yearly cycles were not a waste of time that could be better spent writing, teaching, or agitating for change. Rather, this was proportioning time, time to meditate—to ruminate, as one of my high school philosophical heroes, Spinoza, put it, *sub specie aeternitatis,* "under the aspect of eternity," as if one could step out of time and observe all of history, fixed and ended once and for all. From this metaphysical distance everything one does or dreams of doing is final: important on a moral scale and insignificant on the level of ego.

What I love most about Alder Creek is the way it changes *and* remains the same, much the way writing and teaching for me over thirty-five years are always different and the same. As I became a regular at the creek, the words of Heraclitus, another philosopher whose ideas have fascinated me for years, took on an inner life and at times echoed in my head like a trite melody or phrase that's impossible to get out of the mind:

> You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in on you.
>
> We step and do not step into the same river; we are and are not.

During the course of a year the mouth of Alder Creek changes from a small, almost stagnant lake that reaches toward but never spills into the Pacific Ocean to a roaring stream that sweeps silt and uprooted trees, sometimes even second-growth redwoods, into the sea, which in turn tosses driftwood and logs back onto the shore or

shoots them—and occasionally the bodies of dead birds, seals, or even a dolphin—up the creek during high tide. In the midst of summer there are lovely warm swimming holes nestled in caves created by cracks in the rocks along the north bank of a gently flowing stream. During a winter storm descending from Alaska there is no discernible creek; the ocean rushes over the beach, obliterating it and tossing all the driftwood onto what nsed to be its far bank. So I walk and do not walk along the same creek over the conrse of a year.

I first visited Alder Creek about nineteen years ago, during summer. About half a mile upstream, some of the local high school students had made a delightful short film about summer love and one of the actors took me to visit their shooting locale. At that spot the stream flowed gently through some alders and around a gravel bar with a touch of grass growing over it. For years that was my fixed image of the creek. Compared to my present dynamic sense of the creek as the total of all of its cycles, moods, and variations over the course of time, this image is merely a snapshot, one momentary step into an ever-changing environment. And I know that even my daily experiences with the creek are inadequate to grasp the fullness of its being. The tectonic plates move apart three inches a year; the earthquake fault responds to underground pressnre; the frequency and intensity of storms hitting the shore vary from year to year; and the silt coming down the creek, which affects its banks and the life it supports, changes according to various conditions upstream ranging from logging and land development to annual rainfall and gravel mining.

The reason I have been so drawn to Alder Creek and obsessed with its changes these days is that now, at sixty, I've been thinking a lot about the paradoxes of identity and change in my own life and work. Like the creek, I've experienced small and easily understood changes, more subtle long-range changes in patterns and strategies, and wild storms that prodnced major diversions or disruptions. Beyond my own personal changes I've been thinking about the changing faces of the students I work with and the continual shifts in their environment. Most recently I've also been thinking about the dangerous ways in which schooling seeks to suppress organic change and force growth into artificial channels that not only control learning but actually shrivel the imagination and impoverish life.

For many educators, planning for a school year consists of setting a time schedule, fixing on the course sequence, deciding beforehand what to evaluate, and determining the norms of acceptable performance. If yon took a cross section of any day of the school year you would find the same structure and the same kinds of activities, especially on a secondary school level. The content might differ according to some preset sequence of learning, but the rhythms of the day and the life surrounding learning would be the same. It would be as if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, coming in to normalize Alder Creek, enclosed it in a large tunnel, turned its bed into a concrete chute, and set up computer-controlled water flow. The result would be the spiritual and physical death of the creek. A similar dissolution of imagination and spirit takes place in the channeled and constricted learning environments characteristic of most schools.

In the spring of 1986, when my son Josh was a junior in high school, he and a number of his friends certainly felt that way about their own schooling, and they let the staff know it. As troublemakers, they were peculiar. They had no problem with the formal demands of schooling; with a minimum effort—in some cases, *no* visible effort—they did as well as they cared to do in the boring and nndemanding environment of Point Arena High School. This gave them the freedom to think about what was wrong with schools without having to agonize over whether they were stupid. They reminded me of the original Other Ways students—of Fred Perry, Jena, Jennie, Katy, the Johns.

Josh and his friends Abel, Oona, and Sean first focused their critique of the school on "Senior Slave Day." One day toward the end of each school year, the seniors would hold a mock slave auction to raise money for their class trip. Each senior was auctioned off to an underclass person and made to do silly things. Most students and the entire faculty thought it was a harmless, fnn event.

"Senior Slave Day" was not unique to Point Arena High. The writer Alice Walker lives in a neighboring school district whose high school did the same thing; she wrote a powerful and angry letter to the local newspaper saying that the event was an insult to African American people and an example of the subtle ways in which school rituals make light of racism and therefore reinforce it. The local

school board and principal defended the students, and the event continued for several years, creating rancor and divisiveness in the community.

Josh and his friends took Alice Walker's letter to their principal and student council. The issue created serious debate among the students, a rare and refreshing event. During the event about a dozen students held a protest with the explicit support of Judy, me, and a small number of other parents. Two friends of Josh's who were seniors refused to participate in the auction. For that, the principal told them they had to pay extra to go on the class trip—they hadn't raised their share of slave money. Reuben and Bryce decided to stay home instead of pay up and to this day feel that they did the right thing.

The next year the name but not the structure of the event was changed. It became Senior Service Day and the "services" of the seniors were auctioned off. Josh and his friends became even angrier at the school.

Josh, Abel, Oona, and a friend of theirs, Ian, who had graduated from Point Arena several years before, had a reggae band, which practiced several nights a week in our living room. Both Judy and I loved their music and the energy they put into creating a wonderful sound, so for the most part having the practice in our house was a privilege. During one band break, Oona jokingly complained to me about having to take civics, sociology, and economics during senior year. She said that economics was nothing more than learning how to borrow money, use credit cards, and write checks. Josh added that sociology at Point Arena meant safe-sex and drug and alcohol education. Either Ian or Abel added that civics was all about obeying the law aud conforming. Oona, who was a brilliant straight-A student, added that she would love to have a challenging and interesting course for a change, and Abel suggested that I teach sociology, civics, and economics the next year.

It was an intriguing idea. My plan for that year was to write in the mornings and figure out a way to work with young people in the afternoons. I knew I was not welcome at the high school, having been part of a group of parents and educators who had tried and failed to reform it, and I did not feel like teaching in a hostile environment. If I could teach at home, have a class of reasonable size, control the curriculum, and structure the time so that my mornings were free to write, maybe it would work out.

Several things made it possible for the class to go ahead. Judy and I live on eleven acres, which we share with a small education and development center we created, the Coastal Ridge Research and Education Center. In addition to our house and Judy's studio, we have three cottages. One is a residence for visiting educators, a second my office and study. The third and biggest building is a library and seminar room, ideal for a class of about a dozen people.

Consequently I had fully insured, comfortable facilities in which to hold the class. I had the appropriate teaching credentials, so there was no problem with state and local education codes. In addition, it was possible to schedule the classes for a double period at the end of the afternoon so the students wouldn't have to run back and forth from school to our place, about three miles outside of town. Civics was a year-long class, and economics and sociology each lasted a semester so the double period in the afternoon would suffice.

The major problems were the curriculum and the approval of the principal. To my surprise, he was open to the idea of my taking eight students for special sections of sociology, civics, and economics. I'm not sure why, though I believe a number of factors played a role. An advantage of a small-town school (there were only 128 students, with about thirty-two in Josh's whole senior class) is that there's no school bureaucracy to worry about. The principal and I could talk things through, and as long as he had the approval of the school board he was free to make decisions about adding classes. That left the curriculum. There were course descriptions for all three classes, and I had to find a way to cover the material they outlined. The principal and I agreed to give the class an advanced-studies designation; I agreed to cover the course descriptions—and add more complex material as well, if he would let me do it my way. In addition, we agreed that I would write out class descriptions showing how my sections would cover the required material, as well as an additional description of how my sections would differ from the usual classes.

I had no problem with these requirements. My goal for the class was not to reform the high school so much as to experiment with different ways of teaching mandated curriculum. I looked at the official class outlines and at the list of educational materials usually used to teach them. Each class had a commercial textbook. The class outline was no more than a summary of the text's chapter outline. It was not clear what came first, the text or the outline of the class. In

fact, according to students who had taken the course before, anyone who'd read the text and the teacher's manual and passed the classes with a B or better could probably have taught the classes. It was strictly by-the-book teaching, with an occasional optional research paper for people who wanted to get extra credit or make up for missed homework or failed exams.

I didn't want to use a textbook. Instead, I wanted to use original sources, to put the students in touch with the thinking and writing of people who had shaped sociology, made and interpreted the Constitution, and reflected upon economics. In addition I wanted to set the three classes in the context of the world, not just the United States.

Many critics of educational reform worry about the erosion of standards that they claim accompanies progressive curriculum reform in general and integrated, theme-based teaching in particular. But doing things differently does not mean doing them less well or making fewer demands upon the students. High standards don't trouble me. What does is how the adoption of specific standards becomes an excuse to regulate the form and structure of education as well. However, there are many routes to the same goal; some are linear and fit into a textbook, step-by-step curriculum. Others take meandering paths, pausing for conversation and the exploration of topics and themes that are not in the curriculum per se but that illuminate the ideas being taught. Creative teaching and learning need the freedom to find a route to the standards that suits the students' and teachers' knowledge, experience, and interests. I knew I wasn't going to use the textbooks but rather find a way to actively engage my students in a project that could lead to a working internalized understanding of civics, sociology, and economics.

In Point Arena, with Josh and his friends, I took the "Aims and Objectives" straight from the standard curriculum and worked them into a creative curriculum that, to return to my Alder Creek metaphor, became part of teaching within a moving stream.

The final approval for the classes came in June, so I had the summer to finalize my list of students and plan the class. Josh, Oona, and Abel decided to join; since he was interested in teaching, I hired Ian to be my teaching assistant–apprentice teacher. Thus we involved the whole reggae band in the class.

Ilana, the school valedictorian, who was a good friend of Josh and Oona, also signed up, as did our next-door neighbor Amanda and her friend Sage. Another friend of theirs, Melissa, indicated interest and joined us for a while but dropped out. There was Dominique, an exchange student from Belgium who insisted on coming to class despite considerable opposition from her host family, which was extremely conservative and had been overtly hostile to my educational work in the past. Also with us was Sean, a friend of Josh's who had the reputation of being extremely smart and relentlessly resistant to authority. From third grade through sixth, Oona, Ilana, Josh, Amanda, and Sean had all come to a summer camp Judy and I ran and been in plays I directed. Sage and Dominique were new to me as students, though I knew Sage's mom from the days when Sage and Josh were on the T-ball team I coached.

Some friends in New York didn't believe me when I said I'd volunteered to teach a public high school class for nothing and even paid for a teaching assistant out of my own pocket. In addition, they worried about what this implied for the union. That wasn't a problem: as when I'd taught at Hillside Elementary, I didn't take any teacher's job or prevent any new teacher's hiring, and the regular classes were still offered. Basically, I absented eight students from the high school for two periods five days a week for one school year in order to set up a laboratory of learning. My goal was to explore, in a somewhat ideal setting, how learning could take place; later I'd try to apply what I'd learned to more usual public school settings.

In addition to being small and off campus, this class differed in another way from most urban public high school classes, even those in small, experimental high schools. If you have children of your own in a small town like Point Arena, it is almost impossible not to know everybody else's children too. Teaching Josh and his friends was very different from teaching in other circumstances, because with the exceptions of Dominique and Sage, I had watched all the children grow up and had worked with them in one way or another for about ten years. I could talk to them over the summer and find out about their current concerns and interests. And I could inform them, as my own process of planning the class developed, of what to expect from me.

What came across in my summer discussions with the kids was that they were bored in school and looking for an intellectual challenge. The problem was not to keep them from playing around but to fulfill their expectations of being exposed to new and exciting

ideas. One of the main demands on educators' ingenuity is how to be serious and challenging with adolescents without boring them or creating discipline problems that interfere with learning.

I didn't want to waste my students' time with textbooks that they could easily read themselves if they chose to. On the contrary, I wanted to create a class during which they would be drawn into an understanding of citizenship and get a feel for how money and work were intertwined and how resources were shared or hoarded throughout the world. I also wanted to help them understand culture and class and to work toward some useful definition of the health of society that could be used to weigh the quality of one's life. Most of all, I wanted them to feel that the class was a voyage, an exploration of fundamental human issues that connected them with the intellectual traditions and academic knowledge involved in building a democratic society. I wanted them to become engagé—that is, passionately concerned with understanding and shaping the world they lived in.

In structnring the class, I had to overcome the separation of content and process. What we studied and how we were to study it were not two separate or separable aspects of learning. By 1986 I had developed an integrated planning process; for once, I would be able to implement and test it in a learning environment I was free to modify however I wanted.

Snch ideal settings, which cannot easily be reproduced within a public school, are important if we are to expand our notion of what young people can and will do. We have to extend our knowledge of how learning takes place beyond what happens within the confines of a classroom and the social and academic constraints of a school. This extended sense of the possible can lead to a rethinking of the relationship between context and content in education. Institutionalized expectations and imposed limits on what is offered to students trivialize the process of learning and inhibit intellectual aud personal growth. Having a place of my own to teach, and the freedom to plan within the incredibly wide parameters set by agreeing that the focus of the class would be civics, sociology, and economics, led me to spend the summer of 1986 obsessed with the unity of process, content, and place, and with the creation of an environment for *these* students, at *this* time in history, in *our* community, using the resources we could scare up.

I started by clearing the planning wall in my study. That wall,

which is about five feet long by nine feet high, starts out as a blank slate and over the course of my thinking through the structure of a book or an educational project gradually fills up with notes, ideas, and suggestions. At the beginning of a project the wall is very loosely organized. Anything relevant that occurs to me is noted on the wall. I don't try to impose a premature structure on the material I'm gathering. The idea is to achieve a snfficient density of possibilities before beginning to group the material under categories, which emerge from the material itself rather than from some preconceived structure.

As an example of how these categories develop, one of the first things I began thinking about and making notes on was the strengths the students brought to the class. First, there was the reggae band, whose members were beginning to realize that it had to be run as a small business as well as an artistic group. Clearly they had a personal interest in understanding the economics of small business. A note to this effect went up on the wall: "Bands as small businesses." And another raised the question: "How could the band develop a spreadsheet?"

Sean, who was a surfer and a skater, could make and repair surfboards and skateboards; he was skilled with epoxy and wood. That led to several notes on making things out of wood, on epoxy modeling, and on the public order and safety issues relating to surfing and skating.

Oona was an excellent writer; her interests led me to think about desktop publishing and, once again, home businesses and small businesses.

Before the band became his passion, Josh had been a model builder; he had spent several years obsessed with making a perpetual-motion machine. Again I noted model building, and began to think about the kinds of models students could build for a class on sociology, civics, and economics. The analogy of physical models with economic models was obvious, so a note stating that went up on the wall. Then it occurred to me that architectural models, and perhaps a model of a society, could also play some role.

My thoughts about models and building something with the students were reinforced by the fact that Amanda, whose mother made and sold beautiful one-of-a-kind dolls, was a skilled artist and craftsperson; she had worked on her mother's dolls and her own line

of crafts since she was about ten. Amanda could take an idea and create a marvelous physical representation of it. "Dolls" went up on the wall. Through free association, so did notes about masks, social roles, pretense, stigma, and, by extension, role models, socialization, peer pressure, fashion, and popular culture.

I also considered major events that had taken place during 1985 and 1986 and reflected on how they might be used to illuminate the snbjects we were studying in class. I noted events like the Tower Commission report, the protests and strikes in South Africa, the coming Bork confirmation hearings, and Surgeon General Everett Koop's congressional testimony supporting condom distribution and warning about the danger of AIDS. These events could spark discussion of important sociological, civic, and economic ideas.

In addition I started stacking up resource materials and pasting up notes on how I might use them for our reading and discussion. Among the dozens of things I posted and gathered were the following:

Plato's dialogues, in particular the following Socratic dialogues, which everyone concerned with democracy and issues of conscience ought to have au opportunity to read and discuss: *Phaedo, Crito,* and the *Apology.* I also included the "Allegory of the Cave" section of *The Republic* as a possible reading assignment.

Jefferson's drafts of tbe Declaration of Independence (from historian Carl Becker's book *The Declaration of Independence*) along with the document as adopted; we'd use these to study the process Jefferson and others went through as they tried to articulate their notion of a democratic society and government.

The Constitution and the drafts of the Bill of Rights. The U.S. Government Printing Office was a prime source for these. For example, they provided a document called "The Making of the Bill of Rights," which reprinted the original drafts, containing fifteen proposed amendments, as well as the final Bill of Rights.

A collection of national constitutions from Namibia, the Soviet Union, and France as well as selected parliamentary papers from England. My idea was to contrast parliamentary democracy with our system of the balance of powers and to illustrate how a country without a written constitution (Great Britain) could develop democratic forms of government.

An assortment of human rights documents, including the United Nations International Declaration of Human Rights, the Emancipation Proclamation, the French Declaration of Human Rights, and the "Declaration of Sentiments" of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention on Women's Rights.

A similar collection of essays and excerpts from works on sociology and economics, as well as a stack of cartoons, quotes, charts, and graphs and reproductions of posters, paintings, and photos related to the various topics we might consider. I included many essays that examined culture and community from a multicultural perspective.

Poems and short stories, by a variety of writers representative of the many peoples of the United States, that illuminated the subjects we were studying.

Documents from the civil rights and women's movements and from struggles over freedom of speech and other Bill of Rights issues.

U.S. Department of State Post Reports, one for the Bahamas dated August 1985, and the other for Saudi Arabia dated May 1986, which I discovered at the GPO on a visit to Washington, D.C. These documents, produced by the State Department, are given to diplomats and their families being posted to different parts of the world. They provide practical information on how to dress, behave, shop, get settled, treat local people, and understand local government and politics. What made them particularly interesting for my purposes was that they were specifically intended to inform U.S. government officials how to behave in various cultural and political contexts.

I organized all this material into what I call a casebook, by analogy with a legal casebook. Each student was to produce an individual casebook that would include her or his owu work, copies of some of the work of their classmates, and the readings we actually used. Instead of having a fixed textbook, we would have an evolving one, specific to what we studied that year.

After a month of accumulating ideas and materials my wall and floor were a mess. Nevertheless, clusters of ideas had begun to develop, and some overriding themes and broad concepts began to emerge. They promised to unify the class while giving it the unpredictable and creative nature of a flowing stream that keeps its identity within difference. My overriding concern for the class was to make sure that my goal of having the students learn about citizenship, society, and economics would not crowd out the students' creative

input or take on a didactic character that would prevent them from thinking through important issues and developing their own well-reasoned and sincerely held beliefs. The themes of model building, small systems, autonomous institutions, local power, and conflict resolution recurred over and over in the material I selected. The problems the students faced—AIDS, drugs and alcohol, feelings of alienation and powerlessness, sexual identity, economic security, trust—all occurred in the context of defining a world for oneself, of making a meaningful place in a hostile environment.

This wasn't surprising. Point Arena is a complex community, many of whose people have retreated from urban living to try to create small, convivial communities. The parents of more than half the students (Amanda, Sean, Oona, Ilana, and Abel) had moved to the country to find some succor and freedom that they couldn't find in the city. At some point in their lives, they had been dreamers, flirting with alternative lifestyles and learning, during their years in the country, how to be self-sufficient. Their children had grown up around Point Arena and were comfortable with country living but also encountered local conservatism in their school and in their social lives. In addition, they didn't accept all of their parents' ideas and values. Some of them, as I found out in the course of the class, quite thoroughly disagreed with their parents and had much greater faith in the larger society and the opportunities it provides than their parents did.

Sage and Melissa were what might be called crossovers; they came from a more conservative part of the community but were open to all kinds of ideas and people. The bridge between them and the other students was Amanda who, though she came from a "craft" and somewhat bohemian environment, was also very comfortable with people whose lifestyles were more mainstream.

Judy and I do not fit comfortably in any of the usual categories that Point Arena people use to describe themselves, and we are about ten years older than most of the other youngsters' parents; we're closer to the civil rights movement and the beat generation than to the Haight-Ashbury generation many of them belong to. And, having worked in poor urban communities most of my adult life, I am still a city dweller, a Bronx New Yorker, learning to live in the country and get on with my work. Josh reflected this history; he'd lived in Berkeley until he was six, and he was comfortable in both the city and the country. He got along with many different types of kids and, through the band, had a bridge to almost all of them. In keeping with the social and political struggles for justice Judy and I were involved in outside the community as well as within it, Josh had a keen sense of partisanship. During 1984, when we lived in London, he had been a member of the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and participated in many antinuclear and antiracist demonstrations. Issues relating to decency and justice were very much on his mind as was the pacifism he adopted when he was twelve (and still, at twenty-six, conscientiously maintains).

Ian brought a number of other concerns to the table. He lived with his grandfather, who'd been one of the Tuskegee Airmen, and he was very interested in issues of culture and dignity. Abel, equally concerned with these issues, was beginning to explore his Cajun roots at that time.

I decided to integrate sociology, civics, and economics through the following scenario:

> There has been a major earthquake and people are unsettled throughout the state of California. The class has been designated as one of many Resettlement Authorities throughout the state. A population of 8,500 people must be resettled on land assigned to the class. The land is located in the same geographic zone as Point Arena but is not on the coast. It measures twenty miles by fifteen miles and has a river running through it and some hardwood forests. Animal life and plant growth are what they were before communities were settled by European Americans. The land was to be considered uninhabited.

Here I made a mistake, which I would correct for the next time I taught the class. I should have recognized that the land would not have been uninhabited. Later in the year I included discussions of how to work with the Native American population on any resettlement program. This slip of mine shows how easy it is to fall into racist ways of thinking and by neglecting the reality of other people's lives, set up a learning situation that misrepresents and denigrates them. I wanted reality in my students' imaginings, but neglected a significant part of it myself.

The goal for the class was to design this community as realistically

and exactly as possible, and to set up a scenario for the resettlement of the people. I knew that this was impossible to achieve in the time we had, but I was also confident that all the aspects of civics, sociology, and economics covered in the high school curriculum would be dealt with in challenging ways. Our last day should, if the class succeeded, find us in the midst of the project, raising new questions and figuring out new directions for our explorations in the design of a deceut community. This was to be a flowing stream in one season of its existence, the same and different, substantial and yet fluid, always subject to the creative input of the participants.

However, I didn't want to step into the water the first day of class and let everyone be swept away by their first impressions and wildest ideas. I believed the students ought to have certain tools before they embarked on the planning, and some conversations about the issues we'd be considering. I wanted, in other words, some more formal learning to precede focusing primarily on the project.

Many child-centered and progressive educators would disagree with me ou this issue, believing that all the skills of thinking and researching should emerge from project learning and the students' expetiences. I find it easier, more systematic, and more effective to do direct teaching once in a while or to set a topic for conversation that none of the students could possibly decide on.

The first text I chose for group reading during the first class was *Crito*. None of my students had ever encountered Plato ot would have suggested we study these texts. But the death of Socrates seemed like a wonderful way to introduce dialogue, argument, and logic while at the same time going directly to issues of democracy, conscience, and responsibility.

The students needed a number of skills if they were to develop a sophisticated understanding of the subjects. These skills all centered on the ability to analyze a text and to discuss ideas and write about them. The challenge was to provide my students with a vocabulary of ideas and to acquaint them with question-raising skills and the art of serious intellectual conversation. Iu addition, their writing skills had to be honed. This meant taking advantage of what I'd learned when I taught in Harlem in the 1960s and at Other Ways; I would provide, almost daily, short writing exercises to develop fluency in writing about the ideas that I hoped would develop through classroom conversation. During the summer I created a list of central

concepts in economics, sociology, and civics, which I derived from college texts, academic journals, current discussions of issues, and my working knowledge of the fields.

In fact, I believe that all classes for all age levels could profitably begin by providing students with a core conceptual vocabulary that would help them navigate the subject matter and learn how to speak intelligently within the field. I don't mean we should provide students with jargon to use mechanically. Rather, the goal is to be specific about concepts that will allow students to be more thoughtful in their engagement with a subject.

Here's a sampler from my list of the core vocabulary of Civics, Sociology, and Economics. I clustered some of the words in order to introduce students to continuums and clusters of ideas:

right / obligation / entitlement / duty / privilege / radical / liberal / conservative / moderate / reactionary / progressive
free market / socialist / communist / communitarian / capitalist
thesis / antithesis / synthesis / dialectic
alienation / anxiety / angst
necessary / sufficient
rage / anger
proof / justification / excuse / reason
caste / class / race
commodity / profit / ownership / value / labor / means of production / capital / inflation / recession / wages / stocks / bonds
matrilinear / patrilinear / matrilocal / patrilocal

I didn't begin with all the concepts on the list at once. I did, however, give the students the complete list and tell them we would cover the ideas. And, I urged them, if I or another student used the words and someone didn't understand the nuance of meaning or particular weight we were giving the concept, he or she should speak up.

One of the most frustrating habits students learn from test-obsessed and textbook-oriented schooling is to acquiesce in their own lack of understanding. Students become conditioned to get through a chapter rather than think it through. They are always swept off to the next quiz or test, and when they don't understand something they learn to fudge it. This is partly because they are afraid

to display their ignorance to the teacher. If they read the text and don't understand a concept, that's their problem. Instead of being a challenge, "not knowing" is internalized as a sign of some inner deficiency that should, at best, be hidden from public view. What I try to do is encourage my students to feel comfortable enough with me and with the rest of the class to let their lack of knowledge show. When this freedom to struggle toward understanding becomes part of the class mentality, a vibrant and challenging intellectual life begins to thrive.

In conjunction with an understanding of concepts and a respect for the weight and power of words, students need to develop a tight, thoughtful way of writing about ideas. Again, old habits of learning interfere with the development of complex skills. Students are accustomed to writing for a grade, not to writing as an exploration of ideas. They cut the subject small, try to be certain about issues that are elusive, and attempt to tie everything up at the price of simplification and overgeneralization. My short writing exercises were designed to lead to discussion, not to be graded and then forgotten.

Finally, I combined a heavy dose of propaganda analysis and critical reading of texts with the vocabulary and writing exercises. These were all tools for understanding the core issues of living and working in coherent and convivial groups—that is, sociology, civics, and economics.

I had never before tried to teach such a multilayered class and was lucky to do it in such a modest and congenial setting. Here are the main components I tried to weave together into a coherent educational whole:

a large-scale community-planning project;
a series of skills-building lessons;
class readings and research relating to issues of community building;
lectures and briefings from me and guests on civics, sociology, and economics, and also about problems relating to community planning; and
student-initiated and student-developed group and individual work relating to community planning

To understand how I went about organizing these different strands of learning, the Alder Creek metaphor becomes useful. I was fully prepared for a school year that would be an adventure without a clear, determined shape or content. However, I did have goals, the central ones being these:

to have my students engage the pressing social, economic, and civic problems in our society in an intelligent and personal way;
to help them understand something of the historical and international contexts of these problems;
to get them to dream up solutions and then think through ways to turn parts of these dreams into concrete action; and
to give them a working appreciation of the privileges and obligations of being part of a society struggling to become a working democracy that serves all of its people well

BUILDING A WORLD

I began with Plato, returning for the first time since 6-1 to Greek culture—but this time in the context of a curriculum that was multicultural and honored the insights and wisdom of the Greeks as some among the many contributors to our knowledge and development.

We began with the trial and death of Socrates. I knew the material was new to all the students, so none of them would have an academic leg up. In addition, the dialogic nature of the pieces was a model for the class. Serious discussion about issues of life and death, in which living and dying were intertwined with principle, conscience, the rule of one's inner voice, and the decisions of the majority would sound all the major themes for our year together. I could think of no better way to open up dialogue than through an encounter with the pleadings of Socrates' friends and his stubborn insistence on dying.

During the first few classes I gave a short lecture on Socrates, the Greek polis, and Athenian democracy with its small voting citizenship, its slaves, and its disenfranchisement of women. I refused to romanticize Athenian democracy and provided a short selection from I. F. Stone questioning Socrates' belief in democracy and pointing out Socrates' derision of the masses. The contradictions of life in classical Athens would illuminate our study of similar antidemocratic elements in the U.S. Constitution.

Then we read the *Crito* out loud, going around the table taking turns reading a few paragraphs at a time and discussing them. Reading a text out loud, word by word, and then examining what has been read both slows people down and begins to develop the habit of comprehension, which is the internalized refusal to read something through without understanding it. It means querying the claims of the author, looking up strange words, and slowing down when the text gets tough. This out-loud close reading and conversation, with its emphasis on comprehension and elaboration of the text, has been at the center of all of my teaching throughout my career.

The two Socratic dialogues were perfect. *Crito* begins with a bribe (the jailer is tipped and lets Crito into Socrates' cell in the middle of the night). The setting is dramatic and the conversation personal, philosophical, and moral at the same time. We went through the dialogue, taking our time, talking not merely about what Socrates and Crito meant, but about the issues themselves. The discussion was a model of the class as a whole. I didn't have a set number of questions that the students had to respond to, nor did I have intended outcomes or specific issues. I teased questions out at times, but mostly followed what interested the students. Occasionally, when someone went off on a tangent (a personal discussion of someone who was stubborn like Socrates, for example), I brought attention back to the text.

At first things were a bit awkward. Ilana and Oona tried to auticipate what "Herb" wanted, and had a hard time listening to or thinking about the text. Sean became really engaged, but then went off on a tangent meant not to illuminate the text but to anger Amanda by some personal reference I didn't get. Sage jumped in to defend Amanda, and I had to jump in on Socrates' behalf.

While this was going on I gave the students a specific commentary on the class, a meta-commentary meant to help them understand this new, nonjudgmental yet highly critical way of functioning as a group. We spent several classes on the *Crito* and then Ian, my assistant, conducted a class on the *Phaedo* while I stepped back and observed. The discussion of Socrates' death was quite emotional and its rhythm and tone made me more confident that we were moving in a sensible direction.

Here are some informal notes on that class and the assignment I created to follow up on the discussion of Socrates:

9/18/87: We went over *Phaedo* today. We brought up the points of spirit leaving the body at death; who is responsible for political murder, the person giving the orders or the person carrying them out; and Socrates' satisfaction with death because he could finally be well and through with his life on earth.

Assignment: Write a Platonic dialogue. It should contain the following:

1. more than one character, and conversation between them
2. a setting in which the topic they discuss has significance
3. personal as well as intellectual drama
4. a questioner with seemingly greater knowledge
5. a learner
6. a question with no simple clear answer
7. doubt at the end of the dialogue

We discussed the nature of the assignment and I linked it to the special character of the Socratic dialogue as a form of education we would use in the class. I managed to save Josh's dialogue:

Josh

Nathan Crito is a young man of 24, who lives in a small town in Georgia. He is white, and was recently arrested in a large fight, that was inspired by racial tension. Socrates, the legend, appeared to him one evening while he was brushing his teeth, about to go to bed. He was out on bail and trial pending.

CRITO: Hey who are you? what are you doing in my house?

SOCRATES: Oh I thought I'd stop by, we have something to discuss.

CRITO: Who are you, what do you want?

SOCRATES: My name is Socrates, I don't believe we've met.

CRITO: What am I to say? A great cloaked and quite ancient seeming man with flowing white beard and all appears before me! A ghost I would assume! If you are a ghost tell me and leave! I've done nothing! Don't stand and haunt me.

SOCRATES: I am no ghost, and to haunt is not my intention. But you say you have done nothing. Have not we all done something or another at some point in our live surely you've done something sometime?

CRITO: Well yes . . . this questioning interest me what are you saying?

SOCRATES: you are in legal trouble are you not my son?
CRITO: Yes I am that is correct. Something tells me to proceed cautiously.
SOCRATES: I have been in legal trouble myself you know. What is your crime?
CRITO: Well, it isn't really a crime, but it is illegal.
SOCRATES: We will get in to that latter. What was your action?
CRITO: Just me and a few friends beat some sense into a couple niggers who were drunk and needed a bit of learning.
SOCRATES: These men you spoke of as "niggers" where did you find this name?
CRITO: Niggers? why that's what they are!
SOCRATES: A name. Isn't a name given by oneself or parent, or a community as a whole, naming itself?
CRITO: Yes, I guess, whatever.
SOCRATES: Would it be new to you to learn that this "nigger" you use is not only not a self given name, but an insulting name. Like if I was to call you an asshole and not only you. your "nigger" mothers, parents, children, fathers, unborn children. Your own child would be iusulted every time that chilling word was heard if you were black. Did that occur to you?
CRITO: No. It did not.
SOCRATES: These men you beat sense into what happened? What was the circumstance?
CRITO: Well, A couple nig. . . . uh guys were going home after a late night at the bar, and so were we (me and my friends that is) and we see them walking, a bir tipsy and we ask them which way they were headed "home word" they tell us. A couple of wise guys, so me and the others (there were 5 of us) jump them. Beat em up good. It would have been good and safe hadn't that old rich nigger been watching. Makes me sick they let the rich ones take a white man to court.
SOCRATES: you were yourself a bit tipsy at the time I assume?
CRITO: Well a hit.
SOCRATES: and that is no crime, correct?
CRITO: course not!
SOCRATES: Thaii may I assume that you did not beat the men because they were tipsy?
CRITO: Well; . . . no I suppose not.
SOCRATES: And I presume they held no threat against you.
CRITO: No threat.

SOCRATES: than more than anything else, you beat them for their blackness.
CRITO: Rightfully so.
SOCRATES: You then support there being wrong in blackness, and every black person is had
CRITO: Certainly.
SOCRATES: If a black child was brought up in a white family, would they be bad?
CRITO: No of course not.
SOCRATES: If a white child was raised by hlack parents, would the child be bad?
CRITO: Most definitely.
SOCRATES: Then may we assume upbringing and not color influence a character?
CRITO: Well, I suppose.
SOCRATES: Black and whites alike are raised to hate each other, yes?
CRITO: Uh . . . I guess.
SOCRATES: Then what makes them different?
CRITO: Uh . . . Nothing I suppose. Not in those circumstances.
SOCRATES: Nor in any other, correct.
CRITO: I have nothing further to say Mr. uh . . .
SOCRATES: Socrates!
CRITO: Oh yes. . . . Socrates.

There were about two weeks of class before we turned to the resettlement project. During that time we read several case histories from *Sanity, Madness and the Family* by Jules Henry. Each had to do with a person who was driven mad by others—that is, whose every act or word was negated, undermined, misrepresented, or contradicted by every member of her or his social circle. I chose these cases because they led to detailed discussion of how people affect each other in social situations, and to an understandmg of the influence of context and situation on behavior. In addition, Judy ran several classes on gift giving, sharing, and communication, and their relationship to social organization among the !Kung people of the Kalahari desert.

All these class sessions were designed to help the students distinguish sociology, economics, and civics, and at the same time understand that they overlapped. For me, these subjects are ways of parsing

experience, which has many dimensions and, in itself, is unified in the everyday lives of people. I wanted the class to see that the academic organizatiou of experience and of the world is a consequence of human choice and interest. My goal was to set a critical tone for the class, which would question the nature of the concepts we used as well as using those skills to examine particular cases. For example, I wanted the students to be able to understand the cultural dimensions of racism while at the same time understanding that many racist attitudes have economic origins. This means acknowledging that while racism might be part of the cultural life of poor whites in the South, that cultural hatred might have economic roots and be inseparable from the dynamics of poverty in the United States.

These first few weeks were fairly formal. They were run like graduate seminars I had participated in and taught myself. There were no grades, no critical evaluation of the participants. The center of energy and concern was the subject matter itself. All of the studeuts participated and began to feel comfortable being part of an intellectual community, one in which learning became the focus. For some students, fear of being judged dissipated. Others forgot their internalized opposition to formal schooling. The seduction of the subject began to take over. People being driven mad, a man who died for his ideals, a culture whose values were fundamentally different aud in some ways more humane than ours were all intriguing things to learn and speculate about. The power of learning about a world larger and more problematic than usually presented in school was my best ally in creating a community of learners.

At the end of September I opened the class up a bit by introducing the project. The students' response, however, turned a gently flowing creek into a rushing stream. I handed out a small map of the land we were to resettle, as well as a description of our task. Then I suggested that we translate the map into a plaster of paris model of eighteen inches by three feet. That way we could have a visual image of the terrain as we planued the density of settlements, the placement of houses and public facilities, the development of commercial places and farms, and so on. Sean said the idea was dumb and that the model was too small to have fun with. Ian, Josh, Amanda, Abel, and Sage agreed with him. Ooua, Dominique, and Ilana thought my idea of a small model was better.

Sean said if we made a model it should be large enough to put in details. Abel followed with the suggestion that we should make small houses and docks and boats to put on the model, as if we had already built it and had planned for them. Ian suggested that Sean's idea was feasible, that we could build an epoxy model on top of a four-foot-by-eight-foot sheet of roofing insulation. Amanda suggested we paint it and maybe even add channels so water could actually flow through it. Sage added that we could build a table for it outside the classroom and even make a shelter to cover it during the rain. Even Ilana, Dominique, and Oona caught the fever. They added that we could experiment with the placing of settlements and land divisions and have many models of what was possible instead of just one.

It was Friday and I was nervous. I had no idea how to work with epoxy, wasn't sure about taking up so much space and time with a model, and wondered if what could be learned from doing this would be worth it. Instead of making a decision, I told the class that I would think through the issue over the weekend.

I spent Saturday and Sunday in an internal struggle, the teacher in me wrestling with the educator.

The teacher had been conditioned from the time I entered kindergarten: School was for learning. Time must be filled up with measurably meaningful activity. Work must be demanding and have an edge that proves it's serious. The goals of learning must be set out clearly and measurably. Part of me has not been able to escape the feeling that if I can't control learning and know what my students are doing, then learning isn't taking place and I'm not doing my job.

The educator in me knows that the teacher is often misguided when it comes to understanding how learning takes place. Trusting students, letting things move toward goals in diverse and frequently digressive ways, following enthusiasms, and responding to events and experiences are not diversions or wastes of time. Rather, they are the essence of substantive learning. From the perspective of the teacher, the four-by-eight model was a digression, a potential waste of time. For the educator, it was an opportunity—indeed, not one opportunity but many. It meant learning about epoxy and model building from the experienced surfers, skaters, and craftspeople in the class. It meant giving the students real ownership of the community-shaping

project. And it provided time to speak casually of where we might go with the project as hills, mountains, valleys, rivers, creeks and streams were shaped.

Leaning toward the educator in me, as I usually do, I prepared for the adventure. However, I could not completely silence the teacher in me, so I tried to think of how the students could do much of the construction outside class time. That old demon efficiency was still bugging me—but obviously not the class. Josh told me that Sean and Abel had gotten the epoxy and tools, Amanda had come up with the paints and brushes, and everyone had agreed that we would start on the model Monday. Josh just wanted to know if he could take our truck to the lumberyard and charge the insulation board, plywood, and other materials needed to build a table for the model. Abel, Oona, and Ilana would be coming over in the afternoou and they planned to have the table finished by Monday's class.

So much for my decision making. I confessed my hesitancy, and Josh told me not to worry, reminding me that the students had initiated the class because they wanted a learning adventure. My resistance crumbled and on Monday we began to build the model—or, more accurately, the students began to build the model aud collaborate ou designing the physical world that would frame our planning. My map had indicated only a river with an island in the middle, some flat land, and some forested hills. The model developed to include a watershed, a logical unit for the development of a sustainable environment. This meant studying how a river might actually flow through the land, where its source and its mouth might be. It meant getting specific about the climate and the flora and fauna. And it also meant, for each of us, becoming familiar with the characteristics of the land in a way that I had not anticipated. As the model developed over a week we had a chance to talk about swimming holes, good places to camp, places we wanted to preserve from people's compulsion to develop and overplan. The rhemes of the rest of the class were sounded informally, without any pushing from me or attempt to organize them.

The next Mouday I took advantage of the discussions we were having and the common focus model building had created. I suggested we have a brainstorming session, putting down everything we could think of that might have to be considered when planning a community. We generated a list of variables that represented about a hundred different aspects of planning and then grouped them together into tasks. The next step was to set up planning committees. We formed a Commission of the Whole divided into five planning groups: Surveying, Land Development, and Finding Resources; Laws and Government; Transportation and Housing; Water Usage and Waste Disposal; and Communication, Economic Development, and Entertainment. Each committee generated questions they had to answer, taking account of scientific knowledge and social theory. Then they did the research, reaching out to experts in the field and using library and computer-based resources for suggestions for the development of the community. The committee work took up about half of the class time. During the other half we read resource materials, tackled some shared questions, and read and discussed materials I had selected to enrich our discussions. There also were weeks off to investigate some issues in depth as a group. One of these investigations was on the role of the arts in society. We also took time to read coustitutions and bills of rights and to draw up our own governing documents.

Here is a sampler of the questions and issues the committees decided to work on:

Surveying, Land Development, and Finding Resources. (Much of the committee's work lay in determining specific aspects of the land, based on the geography and geology of actual land in a similar zone.) What kind of vegetation grows here? What kind of soil conditions are we working with? Where is the tree line? What is the annual weather cycle? What kind of power might be developed? What part of the land should be developed for human habitation? Should it be clustered or spread out? What kinds of land allocations should be made? What would ownership be? What about land for agriculture? Should farming be done communally or individually, and how much land should be allocated to it? How deep is the river? What are its resources? What natural gas, metals, minerals, and so on, are available in what quantities, and how are they to be preserved or exploited? How has the earthquake that necessitated the resettlement affected this land?

Laws and Government. How should we enforce laws? Who votes, and who is voted for? What hasic freedoms or rights do we have? What basic rights pertain to the following areas: marriage, children, gays and lesbians, minorities; questions of education, leadership, the

First Amendment, food, health care, housing, transportation, animals, entertainment?

Transportation and Housing. Housing codes? Planned communities or just live where you want? Bikes; kinds of fuel; roads, paths, and trails; water vessels, tolls or free transportation; public or private transportation; parking; commercial vehicles; provision for transportation to and from the outside world and for trade.

Water Usage, Waste Disposal, and Environmental Protection. Common water systems, wells, sharing of water resources, environmental protection of watershed, rules to govern use of resources, common or private ownership of natural resources, import/export regulations, recycling, composting, human waste recycling, intelligent usage of resources and sustained development, prohibition of pesticides or other forms of pollution, balance of development versus preservation. Questions: How much land and water does it take to feed one person? What does this depend upon?

Communication, Economic Development, and Entertainment. Community TV and radio, community-owned presses, computers, and copy machines, newspapers, what kind of press and publishing businesses to develop, a poster brigade, telephones and other communications with outside world. Art studios, concert halls, availability of instruments, art supplies, and so on, free or for pay entertainment. What kinds of public and private businesses should we have? What happens with profits? Taxes? Do we allow outside development and large corporations, or is self-sufficiency a major goal?

After the committees met and sketched out these various themes for investigation we all met together. The students read out their lists and I wrote down their suggestions on butcher paper. Soon every wall in our seminar room was covered with the makings of a small community, mirroring the planning process I'd used during the summer for the class itself. The bewildering options displayed by this brainstorming provided us with a vision of the miracle of everyday life, in which the simplest and most ordinary activity presupposes that many complicated structures are in place and functioning. It was a dramatic illustration of how we are surrounded by culture, by social institutions, and by norms of organized behavior, and yet are not explicitly aware of how much we are part of this nexus of structured

interactions. The vocabulary word that described these semivisible underpinnings of everyday life was "infrastructure."

Recently I asked Josh what, if anything, in the class influenced the way he looks at the world these days and he said it had to do with infrastructure. From the time we stripped off the covers of everyday life and exposed the infrastructure, he has taught himself to look beneath the surface into the hidden structures of things. Of course, he may be atypical, given that he's a contemporary classical composer and builds complex structures in his music all the time, but it's nice as both a father and a teacher to think that our class enriched his perception of the world.

As the class reflected on the infrastructures of social life it became clear that we could not adequately deal with everything in the space of one year. We had to develop priorities. I pointed out that this need to make sense out of bewildering complexity is what leads to theory making. Here was a marvelous and unexpected opportunity to dig in intellectually and study some aspects of the relation between theory and practice.

I had had no intention of studying the process of planning and the nature of theory when the class began, so I had to rethink where we were going just when I thought we would get down to working on specific aspects of community development. However, since I think of my teaching as participatory research I felt free to range far in my search for intellectual tools for community planning. With so many factors determining the shape and character of a community, we needed a sensible way to sort them out.

Instead of beginning with a lecture on theory versus practice I asked everyone to read through the lists and look for common themes. I believe it was Josh or Oona who pointed out that some things were contradictory. For example, if we wanted all the houses clustered in one place, people wouldn't be free to choose to live where they wanted. If we wanted to develop agriculture, we would have to destroy some of the natural habitat. If we wanted radios, TVs, computers, and so on, we would have to sacrifice economic self-sufficiency, and also find a way to establish economic relationships with the outside.

During our discussion of these dilemmas the following general points emerged: One, we needed some agreement on overall princi-

ples about what kind of life we wanted to have within the community before we could go ahead with the plans. Second, we had to let facts —that is, what is possible according to current science and knowledge—also determine what we included in the final draft.

This latter came out in the vegetarian wars. Josh had managed to include in one of the lists a stipulation that the community would be vegetarian. He was a philosophical vegan and, at that stage in his life, was also a proselytizer for that cause. Sage pointed out that she didn't want to live in any community where she couldn't have a hamburger. Others felt that with a well-stocked river it was foolish not to eat fish, and that with so much land it was equally foolish not to raise chickens. Sean felt that hunting should be permitted as well, and that deer and wild pig should be consumed. The tension over this issue diverted attention from all other planning issues. I decided to let it play itself out as a way to introduce some theory and order.

First, everyone agreed that maximum self-sufficiency should be an overall principle guiding community planning. From there came the problem of hamburgers. Philosophical arguments about keeping cows, slaughtering animals for human purposes, beef and health, a good diet and the right to eat yourself into the grave went on for a few classes. Then Dominique raised a simple question: Could we afford cows? What would raising beef to feed the population cost by way of resources and the environment? I remember the students turning to me for an answer and I replied that we hadn't raised cows in the Bronx. Research was in order; we needed facts to inform our moral and philosophical musings.

A temporary working committee on cows was set up. I love to use temporary structures as in organizing my teaching. A small group for welcoming guests, a committee to solve a problem, a standing team ready to be the research branch for someone writing a paper, a temporary construction or model-building crew, a music or art brigade—all these temporary and usually invisible structures add to the whole group's learning resources. They also make it possible for everyone to have a chance to be the boss, the leader of a team, the expert in a particular task, or the director of a certain activity.

Josh and Ilana were assigned to call the California Department of Agriculture and find someone who could tell them about raising beef cows. Abel, Sage, and Dominique were to visit local dairy farms and find out how much land they used per cow and why they were

in the milk business rather than the meat business. Sean was to call the Meat Council or the Cattlemen's Association or whatever professional organization he could find, explain our class project, and ask them what was needed for a cattle ranch.

I reminded the students that, if self-sufficiency was one of the main values in our community building, then they had to find out about fattening the cows, slaughtering them, distributing the meat, and so on. At that point I turned to the concept of wayfinding. This is a planning strategy that takes into account both the space in which an activity occurs and the time and processes it involves. When planning a football or baseball stadium, you have to plan for more than the playing field. Among other things, you have to consider how people will find their way from home to their particular seats in the stadium. The path from the parking lot to the seat, if not taken account of in the planning, can lead to frustration and chaos. The same is true in planning airports, transportation systems, and recreation and shopping facilities. One must be specific about such things such as what facilities are needed and how paths should be designed. Wayfinding also means paying careful attention to seemingly simple aspects of design such as where signs should be and how they should be designed.

I suggested that the concept of wayfinding should be applied to the production and consumption of beef and that we should draw a diagram of the path from a cow's birth to its consumption, noting all the facilities, resources, and processes needed along the way.

Pursuing the vegetarian wars was much more than a diversion. It gave the students content to wrestle with at the same time that they were struggling to define themselves through diet and philosophy. Food wars are not minor matters; people have killed each other over eating habits. Here was a concrete opportunity to integrate scientific information with struggles over health, style, and culture. The subject involved hard knowledge and research but was shaped by philosophy and tinged with passion.

Josh was set against killing cows, no matter what. This drove Sean, Amanda, and Sage to hard positions in support of beef. The food wars drifted over into culture and environmental wars—reggae versus country music, clearcutting versus sustainable-yield agriculture. We had some intense disagreements over these issues; I let them play themselves out, choosing an explicitly Socratic role for myself. I

tried to question everyone equally and lead them to produce reasoned defenses of their positions rather than fall back on their emotions. I wondered whether there is a place in the strong vegan position for the possibility that plants have emotions and that therefore neither animals nor plants should be consumed, a consequence that would lead to lethargy and slow death for human society. To the beef eaters, on the other hand, in the wicked spirit of Socrates I raised the question of cannibalism. If people can't eat each other, what about eating pets? Or cute domestic animals they knew? Say, Wilbur the pig in *Charlotte's Web*?

The research proceeded as the arguments raged. However, we did finally come to an agreement, one which was very important for how the rest of the class proceeded. It was that we would honor the most current reliable factual information on a subject of our deliberations. We accepted the principle that scientific evidence had an important regulatory role in the development of ideas.

This decision, as obvious as it might seem, had important implications for our deliberations. First, it implied that we needed to do some research and find out what was known about an issue before we began arguing about it. Our food wars would have been much clearer, and perhaps resolvable, if we had known more about beef before the shouting began.

Second, it implied that we had to think about the reliability of information that claimed the authority of science. Are polls reliable? Does a medical or psychological test done on three people justify concluding something about how all people function? Does science extend to the judgment of quality in art, music, and literature?

The food wars led us to a short and profitable digression on the role of evidence in argument and the scientific grounds for making claims. We agreed that there were many arguments that could not be resolved by science or decided through observation, but that it was easy to get lost in vague argumentation or end up in shouting matches if evidence was ignored and research not pursued.

Awareness of the need to prepare for reasoned argument rather than simply fall back on emotion was one of the aspects of critical thinking I had hoped would emerge in class. I had prepared some wonderful curricula to illustrate this point later on in the school year, but our discussions over beef made them redundant. Once it's clear to me that students understand something, I try to move on to more

complicated content rather than stick with plans or use prepared lessons, no matter how clever they are or how much time I've invested in them.

When the results of the beef research came in, everyone, myself included, was astonished by the quantities of land and resources needed to raise cattle for meat. It was clear that wooded areas would have to be cleared for pasture and for places to grow feed. The waste-management problem meant we had to plan for the protection of the streams. The squeeze on space meant that we had to cluster people, give up a diversified crop base, and devote a disproportionate amount of resources to beef processing and storage facilities.

On the basis of these facts, the argument over food changed. We would not have beef. But that didn't solve the vegetarian wars so much as shift the grounds of the argument. Sean, Amanda, and Sage, now with the agreement of Ilana, Oona, and Dominique, advocated for raising poultry and fishing as well as farming vegetables. Josh and Abel held out for pure vegetarianism in the community, though they agreed that research shows that well-managed fisheries and free-range chickens could contribute to the community's food self-sufficiency.

At this point Ian took over the Socratic role: So, what was the problem? Were Abel and Josh holding out as a matter of health? Or of some other moral stance? Abel held out for health. He was countered by many arguments about the nutritional value of fish and poultry. Josh had more metaphysical and spiritual arguments. The discussion was finally resolved by a question Oona directed to Josh and Abel. She asked them if they believed in democracy and went on to suggest that they were trying to turn the community into a dictatorship of the righteous. She specifically asked whether Josh felt he had a right to tell other people how to eat and whether he believed he could decide other things about people's lives against their will.

Josh backed down and the group agreed on a mixed food economy, referring the matter back to the economic and land-development subcommittees. However, I insisted we keep open the question of how far the community could go to restrict the rights of individuals. This issue became a central concern as we developed a bill of rights.

Before beginning work on our bill of rights and constitution, we read the U.S. Constitution and all its amendments, the French Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations Declaration

of Human Rights, as well as several articles on the lack of a bill of rights in Great Britain. We also looked at Amnesty International material on human rights violations and studied the work of Amnesty. Some of the Amnesty national briefing books and case histories made very moving reading about the consequences of violating human rights.

In addition, we had the hearings on Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court, which were broadcast live on radio, to dramatize the notion that political and judicial struggles over the meaning and scope of personal rights were living issues that affected the students' own freedoms. Actually the stndents didn't "have" the Bork hearings, except for Josh, who was part of our family conversations on the hearings. None of the others even knew there were hearings going on until I brought them up and had the class listen to testimony I'd taped from the radio. I was shocked at the indifference of the high school teachers and the larger community to such important matters; it took quite a bit of prodding and selective taping of the proceedings to convince the class that the Supreme Court was a living institution. Something at home, in their schooling, and in the media made government, in all its aspects, seem remote, hostile, and not worth knowing abont.

The Bork hearings provided an occasion to help students develop and articulate their own views on rights, responsibilities, and the role of government. Bork has very strong and controversial views on the right of the government to regulate private acts and on the relationship between morality and government. I felt a strong need to inject the larger national reality into my students' lives. The Bork hearings were an ideal opportunity. I introduced a tape of a long session concerning sexual privacy, in which the qnestion of the government's right to bar certain kinds of sexual activity was raised. Soon we were swept up into debates on abortion rights, gay and lesbian rights, and the role of government in guaranteeing health care. We even considered questions of whose obligarion it was to financially support the rights granted ro people.

It was interesting how, as the students discussed questions of specific rights, read human rights documents, and made up their own bill of rights, almost every subject in the regular school's civics curriculum description was covered, only in greater detail and with

thorough and often passionate class involvement. The sixteen articles of the bill of rights the students developed provided a vision of a democratic society with participation open to all who cared to be part of the political process, and where the basics of a simple though decent life were guaranteed. This bill of rights interminged personal, political, and economic rights, with the economic component being much more prominent than it is in the U.S. Bill of Rights.

Our Bill of Rights

Article 1. Freedom of religiou, press, speech, assembly, and petition.

Article 2. Freedom from unwarranted search or seizure of person or property.

Article 3. The right to a trial by a jury of peers who are registered voters.

Article 4. The right to breathe clean air.

Article 5. The right to be cousidered innocent until proven guilty.

Article 6. All persons of the age of seventeen and older may vote, and those younger who have successfully participated in a course in political awareness may also vote. Those however, who are extremely emotionally or mentally disturbed whose disturbance prevents them from having the ability to be politically aware cannot vote. However at any time they can take a course on the political and voting system and show they can understand the material they are eligible to vote.

Article 7. All people are equal and are to be treated in the same way by the community consistent with the rights and responsibilities spelled out in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution.

Article 8. The right to as much education in the field of choice as desired at public expense.

Article 9. The right to free birth control, abortion, and adoption with the infant's future secured.

Article 10. Freedom from slavery or involuntary servitude unless the service is the sentence by a jury for a criminal act.

Article 11. The right to free medical, dental, and orthodontic care, except for frivolous and unnecessary cosmetic surgery.

Article 12. The right to a private residence which adequately satisfies the needs of the household, at puhlic expense.

Article 13. The right to unpolluted water and to food that meets nutritional needs at public expense.

Article 14. The right to free and safe day care for working parents.
Article 15. The right to care and a decent life for those unable to work for physical, psychiatric, or mental reasons.
Article 16. The right to freedom of movement within the community and to and from the community.

The making of this bill of rights coincided with the students' discovery of themselves as citizens. Every article was cause for discussion, research, and reflection. It was fascinating to see the class raise questions about county politics, examine the issues before the Point Arena City Council, and talk about how they would vote and even how they might more actively participate in government as they got older. This curiosity led to discussions about national political issues, about current happenings in the world. The class could go anywhere. It was like Alder Creek during a winter storm.

Toward the end of the school year we held a constitutional convention. We had divided up the land and set up areas for agriculture; for government and community affairs, including a center for the arts and entertainment; and for dwellings. We had determined some general principles of a mixed economy with a strong safety net and a place for small businesses. The group responsible for public utilities (roads, electricity, water, waste) decided to work with the housing group and not put in a utilities grid until people decided where and how they wanted to live. One of the main principles of community design that the students came up with was that human issues, wherever possible, would determine design and the use of technology. Thus, instead of putting in a sewer, electricity, and water grid first, the students determined that housing choices would take precedence and determine how utilities were organized. This is the opposite of large-scale development principles, but is consonant with many of the principles of appropriate technology, which we were studying.

In the course of the year, we did not try to plan a utopia but to resettle real people, with all of their history of decent and imperfect behavior. Therefore we had to deal with issues of taking in people with criminal records; of dealing with people with AIDS; of whether we wanted prisons, what substances to legalize, whether to develop a police force, and how to deal with public safety.

The right to vote was one of the most difficult and contentious issues we faced. The question of qualification for voting, which I think was never fully resolved, had to do with whether people who didn't understand the political system and espouse the community's goals should have the right to vote. Some of the students held that would-be voters should have to pass a citizenship course; others objected that the class could be controlled by special interests. A few of the students wanted universal suffrage from the age of twelve, while others felt that there should be a cutoff age. The arguments over voting tights wete the most charged we had all year. I think the reason was that the class consisted of people whose opinions, such as advocating pacifism and opposing U.S. support of the Nicaraguan Contras, caused them a lot of trouble from the many students at the high school who were less well informed and who took an unthinkingly militaristic and chauvinistic attitude toward anything Reagan's administration advocated.

The school year ended with a partially finished constitution. Here's what the students came up with:

Constitution

Preamble: Dear Reader,
It is not the intent of this constitution to tell you what to do or to suggest you live like the founding members of this community.

Act on your own consideration of each situation and change the rules when they become obsolete.

Always remember that everyone and everything deserves to be closely evaluated before being judged.

Most importantly, don't let anyone mess with you!

Section 1: The Structure of the Government

1a. There will be a local council consisting of 5 people for each 100 registered voters, to be elected by those voters. The local council will be determined on the basis of geographic proximity of the votets, and new zones will be created if the number of registered voters increases.

1b. Each 1,000 registered voters (10 councils) will constitute a horough. The borough will be governed by a legislative body consisting of one elected representative chosen from each council by the 5 elected representatives who serve in that council. The borough will consequently be governed by a body of

10 representatives each of whom is accountable to their own council.

1c. There will be a body entitled the FUNKADELIC which will make the laws and rules for the community as a whole consistent with the BILL OF RIGHTS and the powers reserved to the boroughs and other local political units. This body will consist of a congress of all of the borough representatives.

Section 2: Constitutional Conventions
There will be a constitutional convention every 5 years. Three representatives will be chosen from each borough and a two-thirds vote of the representatives is needed to pass a change to the original Constitution or to the Bill of Rights.

Section 3: Citizen Initiatives
Petition by 50 percent of the voters can put an amendment to the constitution or the bill of rights on the ballot. Two-thirds of the registered voters are required to pass the amendment.

Section 4: Any Violation of a Person's Constitutional Rights Is a Crime.

Section 5: A Vote of 2/3 of the Funkadelic Makes a Bill a Law.

Section 6: The Funkadelic Has the Right to Set Up Trade and Commerce with the Outside World.

Section 7: The Government Will Provide Protection for the People on a Community and Borough Level.
Public safety people will be accountable to the boroughs and the community at large. Police officers will be full-time employees that will be trained. Firefighters will also be trained but would work on a rotating basis.

Section 8: Everyone Accused of a Crime Will Be Entitled to a Trial by a Jury of Peers.
There will be a group of people called *mediators* who will preside over the trials and give a voice to all parties concerned. The jury will judge guilt and determine penalties.

This is one class that I have been able to evaluate, since I am still in touch with the students ten years after teaching it. Only one of the students lives in Point Arena at present. All say they are registered voters and have voted in local as well as national elections since they qualified to vote. They attribute their engagement, in large part, to many of the things we did and discussed in the class. All of them also claim that it played an important part in their intellectual development and connected them with learning and intellectual discussion in a positive way. It played a role in negating their alienation from education, and opened a number of them to continuing their education. Josh is a contemporary classical composer and conductor who lives in Seattle. Sean is a carpenter in Seattle. Abel does computerized comic-book coloring and his work has appeared in comics published by all the major comic book publishers. Oona is in graduate school. Ian is the drummer of a successful reggae band, and Ilana is a real estate agent. Dominique is a lawyer in Belgium; Amanda runs a nursery school. Sage is married and living in a small city about fifty miles from Point Arena.

I have described the work of this class to many teachers and administrators. One common response is hostility to the idea that what could be done with eight stndents in a rural setting, off campus and with no administrative constraints, is irrelevant to public education and particularly to the problems of urban schooling. Another response is a grudging acknowledgment that many of the ideas and exercises of our class are useful and that in minor ways they can be applied to enrich the regular curriculum.

However, over the years I've concluded that you take the teaching as the opportunity presents itself, that all young people have the same hunger to learn, and that good teachers can take a sensible idea and make it useful wherever they teach. One of my former students from Hamline University in St. Paul confirmed this about a year ago when he sent me a document from his Minneapolis junior high class. It was entitled "An Anti-racist Constitution: An Interdisciplinary Exercise on the Nature of Political Thought for Urban Middle School Students." I had shared my casebook with him and conceived of using the creation of a constitution and bill of rights to help students deal with issues of racism and political power. Here is a brief excerpt from one of the constitutions his students created. It illustrates that we do

not know the limits of what young people can do and that it is up to us as teachers to push the envelope. Wherever you work, do something different when what is mandated does not work for the children.

The Preamble of Spenlin

We the people of Spenliu promise to serve and protect the citizens of our country. Our purpose of government is to make sure everyone is pleased with the job that the government is doing. We are a government that cares and listens to what the people say and want. In our governinent our power is split up, no person has the right to govern the whole government. The people in our society have civic vittue and will pay taxes. They will be good citizens. All of us here on Spenlin will protect each other.

Our collective view on what society should be like is:

1. People who are in gangs that hurt people will be put in a reform school.
2. For everyone to have equal rights and to be treated the same.
3. We will not have any pollution. All of our air, lakes, and rivers, etc. will be free of pollution.
4. Everyone will have a home, they will have a bed to sleep in, and a table to eat on. Everyone will have an education, at least they will have a high school education. No one will steal from one another. If someone wants something, instead of stealing it they should ask the person if they can borrow it. There should be uo child abuse, or family abuse. Families will argue, but there will be no hitting. There will be no drugs, even if there is, people wouldn't take. It because they know it will kill them. No one will be an alcoholic. People can drink a few beers but no one will be addicted to it.
5. There will be no racism. Everyone will be treated equal and they won't be judged on what their race is. There will also be no sexism. It won't matter if you are a boy or a girl.
6. Our taxes will be lower than In America. People will have enough money to pay their taxes
7. We will lower prices on food so everyone has food to eat, will also lower prices on transportation and other things.

8. You must have a permit to own a gun. You must also have gone to hunting safety or to know how to use a gun, before you can actually own a gun.
9. The people in our country will be loyal, hardworking, they will pay taxes, and most of them will have civic virtue. Overall they will be good citizens.
10. Every one will have a Job so they can have money. If they have money then they can have a home and food.

CULTURE SKIRMISHES

It is easier for creative teaching to flourish in kindergarten than in college, though teaching five-year-olds is no less challenging than teaching twenty-year-olds. When I taught kindergarten in the 1970s and again in the mid-1980s, class time was mine to shape; the content of learning could be almost anything that engaged the children in reading, math, science, and the arts. There was no pressure for tests, and time was available for discussion and play for its own sake.

The transition to first grade, however, meant a major change in structure and the demands on teachers and children alike. Test results and specific increments of achievement became overriding concerns. Each subject had to be given its proper amount of time. The first and last day of the school year had to be equally crammed full of doing. And compared to the flexibility still left in teaching elementary school, where you have your own classroom and can close the door and shape things more flexibly than the lesson plans suggest, college teaching is an enormous challenge to the creativity of any teacher.

In college you don't have your own classroom and have no walls to decorate or space to leave things behind. In the humanities there are no lab centers where experimentation and play can take place. The bells ring and classes change even more relentlessly than in high school; students learn to expect little of their teachers. With the notable exception of some self-motivated lovers of learning, students tend to feel on trial all the time. Self-esteem is tied up in every little response, and for some students the fear of failure is so great that it paralyzes all creative activity.

Yet these days, college teaching—that is, working with young people in their late teens and early twenties—has become a delight

to me. I feel drawn to it as I did to teaching fifth and sixth grade in the early 1960s. It may be a matter of age. My own children are all out of college, but I spend time with them and their friends and am intrigued and impressed by how they are trying to make sense of the cynical times in which they are growing to adulthood. Their company is a challenge and a source of renewal for me. And I recently realized that my sixth-grade students were closer in age to me in 1962 than my current college students are. Consequently I teach college with the same energy, curiosity, and commitment, though with more craft, than I remember having when I taught at P.S. 103/79.

In the spring trimester of 1995 I taught a class on multicultural education at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. There were fifty students in the class, mostly juniors and seniors, and about a third of them were young people of color. The students all brought to the table their own vision of what culture meant and their own strongly held views about the value of multiculturalism.

When Judy and I arrived on campus in late March, we walked into a university-wide event that transformed my expectations for how the class would be structured. The experience was the equivalent of meeting Larry and reading Fred's Leibowitz essay at P.S. 103. Charles Murray had been invited to the college to talk about his book *The Bell Curve* (coauthored with the late Robert Herrnstein) and discuss it in a public forum with the African American psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint. There was a campus uproar. A number of faculty members objected that Murray's scholarship was questionable and the conclusions he drew about the intellectual inferiority of African Americans as a group were racist. They said that the university should not dignify his work with a public debate. A group of students were even more forceful in their objections to Murray's appearance on campus and had formed a group to plan a response to it.

Many of the college's students of color were furious and felt pushed out of the college community. The anger was not limited to African American students but was felt just as keenly by Latino, East Asian American, and Asian American students. They claimed that by paying Murray (whose lecture fee was rumored to be $20,000) to appear at a campuswide event, the administration was calling into question their status as legitimate members of the college's intellectual commnnity. The pain felt by many of the students, who said they

were deprecated as affirmative-action babies no matter how well they performed in class, was intensified by the event.

Certainly I could not avoid dealing with that issue in my class. At the same time, I did not want to make Murray the topic of my class. So, in the few days before the class began, I looked at my reading list, restructured the order of the readings, and planned a responsive class that would deal with complex issues of multiculturalism and not get lost in the general tension created over Murray's visit. Murray's visit did have one bonus: the issue of racism was on the surface when I arrived at Carleton, and no preliminaries were needed to tap into my students' fears, rage, confusion, and despair.

I began by assigning a paper designed to evoke a personal rather than an academic response. I wanted my students to understand that, from whatever background, ethnicity, or class they came, they were all products of respective cultures in which they were raised. I wanted to establish at the beginning of the class, in a way that students would internalize, the idea that multiculturalism was not the study of "them," the minorities, by "us," the majority. For the majority students, the idea was to level the field, so that every student would think about herself or himself as culturally shaped and realize that the culture she or he belonged to was no more permanent or special than other cultures. As for the other students, I wanted them to see themselves as parts of a whole, not separate from it or marginal to it. And for all the students, more than any other thing I wanted to hear their voices—not in academic prose, but with the inflections and images of their childhoods. I hoped that the responses would have the power and conviction of the P.S. 103 "My Block" essays.

The assignment was to respond to the following:

> Remember yourself as a young child before you ever went to school. Think and write about: how you learned to ask questions, what kind of questions you asked, and how the people around you answered the questions you raised and asked you questions in return.

I explained that the responses could be written, taped, painted, sung, danced, or collaged. I also made it clear that I would react personally to the students' work, and not with a grade. Given that Carleton is a

school where there is a great deal of competitive academic pressure, it was clear that the students would suspect my motives. Their entire college experience had taught them to feel that I had some ulterior intent and was testing them in some subtle way. I wasn't. The educational studies department had agreed to let me deal with student evaluation in nontraditional ways; I had decided that every student would begin with an A and wonld have to do some pretty irresponsible things, such as fail to turn in papers or to make any effort to write well or to attend classes, to uneatn that grade. My preference would have been to eliminate grades altogether and enter into an agreement with the students that they had to attend classes, do the reading, and submit work in order to get credit—period. The rest would be dialogne and response. However, the A was a concession to Carleton's system; as it happened, several students did work their way out of that grade.

My major goal was that the students grapple with issues of multiculturalism and racism on both a personal and an intellectual level, and that they come away from the class with informed opinions on cultural differences and the problems of social cohesion in our society.

Several of the students were bold. I got one taped response to the question, one collage, and several illustrated essays. The rest of the fifty-two students wrote papers, which took hours to read and respond to. I had underestimated the time commitment it would take to teach this class well and respond to the voices of all my students. However, reading these first papers was like being let into the lives of fifty-two interesting and complex people whose ideas and opinions had to be taken seriously.

I shared the papers with Judy just as I had shated the papers of my thirty-six students in Harlem; our conversation enabled me to think through how to respond both to the voices of my students and to the issue of racism, which informs all attempts to discuss mnlticulturalism but is not identical to it. Here is one of the responses that provoked thought and conversation throughout the duration of the class:

A Childhood story to treasure

Ge Vue

Growing up in a refuge camp along the border of Thailand and Laos, I remembered sneaking out onto the porch at night to sit on rice sacks with other children from the village and listened to folktales that men young and old were telling. Some of them were great orators and told elaborate tales about ghosts, love, wars, and broken promises. Other story tellers tend to be more cunning and told series of funny tales about a goofy but extremely intelligent court jester who constantly made a fool out of the emperor by playing tricks on him. Yet, othcrs would recall tales about the innocent sufferings of orphans. In a rigid clan system where one's worth was measured by the size of one's clan and the parent (more specifically the father) was one's intrinsic link to the community, an orphan child with no parent was disconnected from the commnnity and dangled at the bottom of the social status. However, because of the orphan boy's kind hcart, Shoua, the all powerful being who overlookcd all living creatures on earth rewarded him with a beautiful wife and richcs. Although the orphan boy tales always have a happy ending, such tales would grab me and drown me in my own sopping nonetheless. I was about four or five years old then, but I already could locate myself in the stories because many of my village friends whom I played with every day lost their father in the war. Altbough my family was "safe" in the refugee camp, every day my dad still attended meetings with the Nationalists who were determined to regain the home country back. As a child with a wild imagination, it frightened me to see my dad leave every day; for I feared he may not return.

I don't remember the exact circumstances surrounding this story I am about to tell. May be my brothers and I got into a fight so Dad set us all down to tell us this tale so we would understand tbe power of kinship. May be Dad noticed my weeping eyes one morning as I watched him leave and told me this tale to comfort me. May be he thought that as a quintessential five year old, I was old enough to internalize something consequential or as the feeble child who was deprived of his mother's milk, I must learn to be astnte. Whatever the reasons, this is the tale Dad impart with me when I was a little child.

There once was a huge elephant. He was the biggest, "bad-

dest," most feared creature in the jungle. Where ever he went, animals, trees, and rocks would move out of his path. Because the elephant was so powerful, he became very arrogant and all the creatures of the jungle despised him. Every day, the elephant would marched tall and proud through the jungle recklessly knocking trees down and ripping branches from here and there to eat. One day as the arrogant elephant was about to tear a branch off with his powerful trunk, he heard a mother bird cried out from behind the leaves.

"Mr. kind elephant! Please don't eat the branches from this tree. My little baby birds have just hatched and they are too young to fly to safety. If you eat this branch, my nest will be knocked down and my fragile babies will surely die. There are many trees in the jungle and around you that are just as good or better than this one. Please spare my babies and don't eat this tree. If you must, at least wait a few days until they are strong enough to fly away."

The mother bird pleaded and pleaded with the elephant, however, being such a pompous elephant, her persistent pleading only infuriated him more. He was the king of this jungle, yet this frail, tiny bird was trying to tell him what he should and should not do. Furious, the elephant torn the whole tree down and stumped on the mother bird's nest killing all her babies. Horrified but helpless, all the mother bird could do was weep aud weep.

When the father bird came home and saw the mother bird weeping, he knew what had happened and tried to console her, "Please stop crying. Your tears cannot bring them back nor will it solve anything. I have a friend who might be able to help us. Why don't we go find him instead."

So the mother gathered herself together and they both flew out to find their friend, a large bird with broad, powerful wings and could see far and sore high—a falcon. When they told the falcon their story, the falcon was appalled but she was not surprised because she had heard of this elephant and the atrocity that he has committed before. The falcon was very eager to help them and told them that she has another friend who would willingly help them too once they told him their story. With that the falcon brought them to another bird.

This bird was very colorful and had a very sharp, sturdy beak which can peck holes in the toughest tree in the forest—a woodpecker. After the mother and father bird told the woodpecker about the elephant and what had happened, the woodpecker also acknowledged that he knew that contemptuous elephant and would be more than willing to aid them.

The woodpecker also had a friend who shared their grievance and he was confident his friend would help them too. Thus the woodpecker led the mother and father bird to the edge of a pond to meet his friend—a big, fat, and ngly frog. After hearing their tale, the frog agreed to help them and also introduced them to yet another friend, a fly this time.

So between the five of them, they devised a plan. The falcon with her keen eyes and powerful wings soared high and far to search for the elephant. Once she located the elephant, she flew quickly back and tell the group. The woodpecker then sneaked upon the elephant and with his sharp and fierce beak, pecked furiously at both the elephant's eye blinding him. Next, the fly flew over and laid hnndreds of tiny eggs on the elephant's bleeding eyes infecting both immediately. Blind, terrified, and in pain, the elephant rampaged aimlessly throughout the jungle. After the elephant was worn out from his reckless running, the frog hopped to a steep cliff and began croaking loudly. Upon hearing the croaking sound, the elephant was misled to believe that there was water nearby. Remembering how thirsty he was, the elephant rushed toward the croaking noise. Instead of finding water to quench his thirst however, the elephant plunged to his death instead.

At different stages in my life I find myself reflecting back on this tale. And each time, the story takes on new meaning. The true power of stories does not lie solely in its context. Stories are powerful because they are personal. When someone imparts with you parts of his life experience, when he shares with you something from his heart, it touches your heart. Words especially when spoken eloqnently as story tellers often can do, paint images in your mind that are difficult to forget, and therefore you will always remember a tale once it touches you.

The papers made it clear that, across culture and class, all of my students had raised questions when they were children. This seems like an obvious fact, but the ability to question can be honed and encouraged or manipulated and diminished. In some children it can even atrophy or become latent, only to explode later in life when the

whole world can seem meaningless and the question of the value of life itself becomes urgent.

Childhood questions are often attempts to understand patterus in the world. As those questious were answered (even silence is a kind of response), a view of the world begins to take shape, not merely in the answers adults provide, but in the way they provide them. In addition, the students not only asked questions and got answers but themselves contributed to shaping and interpreting the responses. However, self-questioning skills rarely become central to the process of formal or informal education. Culture, with all of its strengths and biases, as well as its bonding and alienating characteristics, is most often antagonistic to questioning itself. And yet understanding the role of culture in oue's life and the subtle ways in which every person, above and beyond her or his individuality, also filters the world through uuquestioned cultural modes of perception is ceutral to cross-cultural understanding and communication. The study of multiculturalism—to say nothing of the forging of ties across cultures—has to origiuate with the continual and profound questioniug of culture, one's own as well as other people's. And this requires specific attention to the skills of questioning and to tbe development of an awareness of others as questioning beings who are trying to understand the problems of your culture while you question theirs. I wanted to complicate my students' understanding in order to open the door for them to communicate across cultures. To do so required that each student feel that her or his voice would be heard in the class.

Culture is not a matter of something some people have and others don't. We are all accculturated. Developing an understanding of this was a central goal of my class, and meeting it was more difficult than I imagiued.

In the days before my class began I asked several white Carletou students not in the class what they thought multiculturalism was. The responses tanged from "the study of minorities" to "how we [the white majority] relate to people who are different" and "how to get rid of prejudice toward them." These responses were giveu by iutelligeut, sensitive, academically sophisticated college students. Despite their success at a very fine college they had a blind spot toward their own cultural identity and its place among other cultural identities. Because of this, they framed the dialogue about multiculturalism

in us-them terms, with the "us" an unquestioned given, under assault by a "them" that had to be studied, understood, or placated. This was very different from the situation in the sixties, when many of the white youngsters I taught felt they were on the side of "minorities" and in struggle alongside them. Now the situation has shifted to a subtle yet nevertheless distinct sense on the part of most of the white students I worked with, including liberal ones, that there is an opposition and antagonism between them and minorities and that they are the ones under siege.

One student in my class at Carleton failed to show up for discussions or hand in assignments but tried to get credit by writing a long paper at the end of the semester. In the first paragraph, the student defined multiculturalism as the study of minorities. To avoid misconceptions like that one, my idea for the class was to explicitly introduce the proposition that everyone has culture, and that people make and transform culture over history. That meant being able to question culture and understand its development and modifications. Events like the Murray presentation were cultural and had to be examined in their cultural and historical context. Certainly it made sense to respond to Murray on a personal level. However, to refine that response with a cultural analysis of how Murray's presence at Carleton fit into current cultural, political, and economic skirmishes made more sense for a class whose goal was to understand multiculturalism and the nuances of racism. Murray's presence was an epiphenomenon, an event on the surface of deeper cultural disturbances that we had to understand. Setting up for the students a context in which Murray could be understood without letting the class be dominated by that event meant introducing students to the idea of multiple narratives—that is, to the concept that cultural actions and historical events are often viewed through the dominant culture, in what the scholar Nathan Irvin Huggins has called "the distorting mirrors of truth."

Huggins's work tried to correct those distortions with a call for an African American narrative view of American history to inform aud correct the distortions of a European narrative. My goal was to have my Carleton students understand and articulate their own narratives and begin to find a way to do what could be called narrative shifting: looking at the same events as if they, the viewers, were culturally other than who they are. This might mean, for European

American students, attempting to undetstand Latino or African American narratives, and for African American and Latino students, trying to understand the many faces of white narratives (labor, women, poor whites, the wealthy, Italian or Jewish Americans as well as Scandinavian Americans, and so on).

The goal was to understand that there is not one way to look at events in the world, not one single history, but rather a multitude of possible narratives within which history is created and judgments of events and people are made. I wanted my students, for example, to think of statements such as "The 1950s were the best times in U.S. history," "American children have too many possessions," and "In the past, the schools taught all children to read and write" from within different narratives. Was a given statement as true for African Americans in the South or poor whites in Appalachia as for white middle-class Americans? What could it mean to Latinos or Japanese Americans on the West Coast? How did it privilege one narrative and neglect others? And how does a consideration of multiple narratives modify the kinds of statements one makes abont events?

This was not to say that all narratives are equally valid, or even that within one cultural group there is a single narrative. Rather, my goal was to help people see that within our society, composed as it is of many peoples from many different cultural traditions, understanding cannot come from within a single narrative perspective, and therefore complex thinking and shifts of perspective are essential tools of intelligent living.

My first assignment achieved two things. First, it got me engaged in the lives of my students. They were all interesting, and that made it impossible for me to fall into the mistake of saying "The white students think this" or "The Latino students think that." It also gave me a sense of the diversity within the class, a diversity I wanted to emphasize rather than minimize so that the students would feel how strong the pull of their own culture is despite how neutral they may think themselves.

Second, the assignment got students to write in their own personal voices rather than the academic voices they used for their other classes. Carleton teaches its students academic prose quite effectively, but there is a danger of loss of voice when all the writing one does is confined to a nonvoiced genre. The papers provided a way for my students to learn to write about ideas in intelligent, sophisticated, and at the same time personal ways.

I responded to the papers as a whole in class, trying to portray the range and variety of responses. Some students' papers indicated that their parents encouraged them to ask any question whatever; others were told that they should keep their questions to themselves. There were cultural clusters among the personal responses, but these did not diminish the power of the individual responses so much as add an illuminating cultural dimension to our analysis of the work.

Since this was a class in multicultural education and many of the students intended to become teachers, I tried to connect everything we did in class to similar things they might do at work. With respect to this assignment, I also suggested that when they became teachers they think of how groups of papers as well as individual student assignments can be pedagogically interesting, and I pointed out that a powerful teaching technique is to give a general response to a set of papers as well as individual responses to each student.

I intended to write extended personal comments for each student and suggested we reproduce and share all of the papers. Two unexpected events intervened. My mother died after a long and difficult illness, and I had to go to New York for the funeral. I simply could not concentrate on the students' writing enough to make fifty-two individual comments, though I was able to do that later in the semester. Also, we had an unanticipated blowup in class after the Murray lecture. A student group opposed to his visit held an alternative event at which staff and students spoke out about issues of racism and provided a critique of Murray's scholarship. In my class, several of the white students who had participated in the alternative event mentioned that it felt wonderful for them to be able to express their concerns about tacism in public. Several others said that they believed Murray's presence on campus was healthy because it forced many students who avoided the issue to think about racism. At this, several students of color exploded, expressing rage at the idea that it was acceptable for an academic forum to consider whether people of color were inferior. They accused the white students of expressing liberal racist ideas, of believing that the university existed for the pleasure and intellectual delectation of whites at the price of the dignity and self-respect of people of color. One of the students sug-

gested that the white students wouldn't need to confess their own racism or proclaim their antiracist sentiments if they had the guts to directly confront the racists on campus.

Just before the end of the class I jumped in to say that the most important thing about what was happening at that moment was that the wounds of racism on campus were open and bleeding: since racisin was a poison in the system, we had to let the bleeding continue, keep the issue open, throughout the year. The pain everyone in the room felt had to become the generative source of learning for that class. I stuck to my private resolve that despite evidence to the contrary prejudice is a disease curable by good teaching.

I was both troubled and relieved hy what had happened in class —troubled becanse of the pain expressed by the students of color and misunderstood by most of the white students, and relieved because having a problem on the table is always better than having it hidden and unspoken. As a class we had a common experience, one to reflect upon from multiple perspectives but nevertheless to come back to as a group. It was a bond that I had to figure out how to use positively.

A few days after the blowup in class, two white students—the students who had said they felt that Murray's visit was a good thing for the school—came to see me during office hours. They told me that they felt silenced, not only in my class but in many of the classes they took. And they wanted me to know that they weren't racist, but that they did feel that all views should get an airing. We discussed the difference between all views being expressed and examined and one view being given institutional sanction. However, these students' problem was much larger than Murray's visit.

Like many other white students, they felt, and then allowed themselves to become, silenced. The silence led to resentment and suspicion, and iny intuition was that these in turn would plant the seeds of racism.

Not all of the white students shared this experience. A few had fought explicitly against racism in student groups and had consequently developed ftiendships across ethnic boundaries as well as confidence in dealing with issues of racism.

On the other hand, the students of color who had reacted with such vehemence also felt silenced and discriminated against; they spoke their minds only when they were pushed or felt safe. A number

of students of color expressed exasperation at having to live with the presence of race and ethnicity as an issue. They wanted to be *students,* to learn chemistry, biology, and literature, but found themselves depersonalized, picked out in class to speak as representatives of their group or asked to listen to white students' confessions of confusion over issues of race. They sensed the uneasiness of many of the white students, and some faculty as well, who acted as if students of color were not members of the college community. Thus they felt a constant strain on their ability to function well academically (though a number of the students in my class managed to graduate Phi Beta Kappa and with high honors).

The issue of race and ethnicity affected everyone, yet there were few explicit discussions of racism at the college. As a visiting professor, most of whose teaching time is spent with younger people in urban public schools where integration is not an issue and never was, I was surprised and troubled by this sad tension between white students and students of color. I have since discovered that the situation I found at Carleton is common at colleges and universities across the country: interesting and lively young people act stereotypically because they have no precedents for dealing with the issues of race, and no older people around who had such experience either. Most of the professors were as inexperienced and frustrated as their students; they simply wished the problem would go away, perhaps even wished that students of color would simply disappear from their classes.

It was not a situation of the guilty and the innocent, the right and the wrong. I saw the situation as a trap that inhibited learning and led to unspoken hostility and unarticulated self-doubt for just about everyone. By taking the position of being explicitly and unambiguously opposed to racism in all its manifestations, I adopted a goal that was perhaps impossible to achieve.

I knew how to provide an environment in which students who felt stigmatized by racist attitudes would feel safe to learn and free to express what they thought and felt. I also knew how to pick up signals and gestures and read faces, a skill that enabled me to minimize hurts and to tease responses out of shy and reluctant speakers. While I knew how to create dialogue over sensitive issues, I did not yet understand the specifics of why the white students acted so threatened or why they allowed themselves to be passive in the class

and yet walk away still feeling in control as soon as they left the classroom and could avoid students of color.

In the case of my class at Carleton, I first had to overcome my ignorance of what the students, and especially the white students, were thinking. The chat I had with the two young women who had welcomed the Murray visit affected me profoundly. One of them believed she understood the effects of racism and was not in any way a racist herself. She felt attacked and intimidated by the students of color and those white students who supported the alternative event, even though no one had said anything directly to her. The other young woman was angry, as a woman and as a scholar, at being silenced by anyone. And yet both of them admitted that they had learned to stay quiet whenever such issues arose in "mixed company"; they informed me that what happened in my class, even though I went out of my way to ask people to express their feelings and opinions, was no different. Yet they did come to me, and I listened, not knowing what to do but understanding a need to rethink once again the nature and structure of that class with those particular students at that moment in the history of their educational careers and personal development.

Understanding the need to make such adjustments and to shape the content of a class to fit the pedagogical needs of the moment as well as the demands of the subject is what I have come to call situational teaching. Situational teaching requires a teacher not only to plan the reading and the organization of content, but also to raise and find tentative answers to the following questions: Who are my students? What is happening in the world, the nation, the community, and the cultural and social lives of the students that can be brought to bear upon their mastery of the subject? How can the class help develop the students' minds, their imaginations, and their ability to deal with complex issues as well as hone their skills?

In referring to how works of art develop, the painter Ben Shahn said, "I would not ordinarily undertake a discussion of form in art, nor would I undertake a discussion of content. Form is formulation —the turning of content into a material entity, rendering a content accessible to others. . . . Form is the very shape of content."*

* *The Shape of Content* (the 1956 Norton Lectures at Harvard), Harvard University Press, 1956, p. 53.

I remember sitting in the Hayes Bickford Cafeteria with Shahn and others very late at night, sometime during Shahn's residence at Harvard that year, and discussing the meaning of that last line: "Form is the very shape of content." We dealt specifically with the applicability of that idea outside the arts. I was curious about whether form, in that sense, was essential to the expression of a philosophical position or the development of a mathematical idea. Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* had just been published in English, and many of us in philosophy were trying to get through the puzzle its form provided. The book consists of loosely connected paragraphs clustered around themes or ideas, punctuated with aphorisms, enigmatic statements, asides, and anecdotes. The whole was an attack on the very enterprise of philosophical system building, and its form embodied that intention. In mathematics, we were studying Gödel's incompleteness theorem; its form, too, could be interpreted as the shape of its content.

Shahn was intrigned by this notion and suggested it could be taken even further into the realm of process. Could the form of a society be meaningfully interpreted as the shape of its cultural content, or the form of history and economics be meaningfully studied as the shape of material content? No conclusions were drawn, but the phrase "Form is the very shape of content" has stayed with me over the years and helped me conceptualize some of the educational work I do.

Situational teaching involves the shaping of content. It means taking the particular subject one is teaching, or the theme or problem one is addressing, including all the texts, information, and resources available, and creating an educational form in which that content is embedded in the lives and concerns of the students and in the social, cultural, and historical situation in which one is teaching. The goal is to shape the class so that life and learning are convergent and students' voices and responses contribute to the specific way in which the subject is examined.

In the case of my multicultural-education class at Carleton College, situational teaching meant finding a form that would allow students to express their own understanding of multiculturalism, feel free to articulate their views on race and culture, and begin to communicate across culture. Consequently I decided, for the first half of the course, to deemphasize the question of teaching multiculturalism

and concentrate on the nature of culture and the ways in which racism functions in our society. Murray was the negative experience that framed the class, and I wanted a positive one to balance that. Fortunately, during the spring of 1995 there was an exhibit at the Walker Art Museum in Minneapolis entitled "Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art." Judy and I had visited the show and were moved by the range and variety of expressions about being Asian in the United States that the artists conveyed. There were sculptures, constructions, environments, paintings, illustrations, and multimedia installations. The artists' families had originated in Southeast Asia, India, Pakistan, China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. It was impossible to stereotype the art or the artists. The diversity of response to the American experience was compelling and complex, full of bitterness and hope, disappointed expectations, experiences of racism, material success, and cultural devastation—as well as cultural affirmation.

What was perhaps most lacking in the experience of almost all my Carleton students—a lack that contributed to their difficulty in communicating with each other across cultures— was lifelong friendships with people who were culturally and ethnically different. The great majority of white students had come from homogeneous communities where neither they nor their parents had friends of color. Some of the students of color had lifelong white friends, but most of them had grown up in barrios or ghettos with few white residents or none. As a group, the students in the class were victims of residential segregation. The opportunity to communicate with peers whose experiences were different first arose in college.

My white students in particular—and perhaps the majority of white teachers in the United States—were likely to continue the patterns of segregation in their residential and social life after college, even if they ended up teaching in schools where the students were predominantly children of color. As I saw it, developing peer relations across ethnicity was the major educational challenge in my class, not learning techniques for teaching what the African American scholar Lisa Delpit called "other people's children."

Judy suggested that the exhibit at the Walker might help all the students approach cross-cultural understanding. Many of the artists in the show belonged to the same generation as my students, and all of them spoke about part of the experience of being American in the

1990s. I arranged for the class to visit the show. The assignment was to go through the exhibit three times, first looking at all of the works without looking at titles or reading any accompanying material; second, reading all the annotations and the artists' biographies; and third, looking for one piece that spoke to you particularly intimately. After choosing a piece, the students were to sketch it, not with a view to the artistic quality of their own work, but to become more familiar with what the artist was doing and saying.

To judge by my students' responses, the experience created the opening I wanted. We discussed some of what people saw and felt, and I tried to get the class focused on the effort it takes to listen when you feel attacked. Specifically, I wanted to develop the idea that what people hear, they filter through their experience. There are times when people who come from a dominant culture and people whose lives have been characterized by oppression or inequality have different perspectives on the same conversation or lecture. What are cool intellectual discussions for some people are matters of respect and dignity—even life and death—for others.

The museum experience was a beginning. However, I still had to do more to understand my students and help them learn how to listen and learn across cultures if they were to become good teachers. Consequently I decided to have an hour's talk, individually, with all fifty-two of my students.

These conferences paid off in ways I had never anticipated. A theme common to many of the white students was their anger at being held accountable by many of the students of color and some of the "radical" white students for the racism of the past. They did not feel guilty about what had happened before they were born and did not believe they themselves were racist. They hated being called "white students," which is just what I'm doing here. In a society in which race is so intertwined with identity and every aspect and detail of life, it's impossible to deal with some issues without categorizing people, and yet to be put in small boxes is infuriating to the people so categorized.

Many things that white students did or said were perceived as racist by students of color, sometimes creating impossible binds for both. For example, if white students claimed that they understood the experience of African American or Latino students, they would be considered racist for assuming the ability to fully comprehend the

nuances of the injuries of race. If, on the other hand, they said they didn't understand, they would be accused of indifference to and complicity with racism.

Often the students of color complained that they were constantly being asked about race and told how welcome they were at Carleton, with the underlying assumption that they were guests at a white institution. Either neglected or overindulged, they felt that they were always on display.

Two of the most poignant conferences occurred on the same morning. One young African American woman, Roberta, told me that she had grown up in Scandinavia and attended international schools with the children of diplomats from all over the world. She had not experienced racism, having grown up with diversity and equality among people with power. Her first U.S. experience was at college, and there she learned what race meant in America. For the first six months she was shell-shocked. She had not been a participant in racial politics before; at home she had been looked upon not as a minority but as an American among Europeans. It was hard for her to learn that she wasn't considered the full equal of white Americans. Roberta had come to college to be a *student,* but found herself forced to be a *student of color.*

After that conversation I wasn't prepared for what Michelle, a European American student, brought to the table. She had grown up in a welfare family that struggled to get her to a good college. At Carleton she became painfully aware of what it meant to be poor among youngsters of privilege. The other students made simple assumptions about being able to afford to hang out in restaurants, go to the theater, or buy new clothes or CDs. That Michelle could not afford these things separated her from the majority of Carleton's students, a very affluent group. She resented some students of color —who, she felt, trivialized the things she had to go through to make it at college and acted as if they were the only ones with difficult lives. At the same time, she expressed personal abhorrence of racism and complained about how frustrating it was to be unable to be understood and to focus her opposition to racism on some common struggle. She had discovered, through the responses of the students of color, that she was "white," and was annoyed by the label.

Michelle wasn't alone in being angry at discovering that she was "white." Many of the students had come from upper-middle-class white communities. Before they reached college they had never been identified ethnically or racially. They were simply "normal" and were always treated as individuals rather than as members of a group. Initially, they welcomed the diversity at college as a way of broadening their experience. However, in considering themselves as "normal" and students of color as "different," they fell into the trap of treating students of color as less than individuals, as exotics to be encountered as a learning experience. I heard white students refer to other students as "African American," "Asian," "Asian American," or "Latino" with no self-consciousness and yet take umbrage at being called "white." They didn't understand that placing themselves outside so-called multiculturalism and creating a fictive zone of normality is a form of racism.

During the many hours of conversation I had with my students it became clear that all of them were pained not only by issues of racism but by issues of categorization in general. For many of them, college was the first time they found themselves forced to deal directly with some of the contradictions of class and culture inherent in American society.

One of the hardest things for the white students to deal with was that they were beneficiaries of white privilege, which manifested itself most notably in their being considered as individuals and allowed the freedom of casual association and easy access to community resources. Many had a hard time understanding that not being treated in a special way was a privilege.

One particularly sensitive young man confided to me that he was feeling intimidated because of his conservative Christian beliefs. He was opposed to racism on strictly Christian grounds. I found his argument compelling and his efforts to speak out admirable. There was a general attitude at the school that Christianity did not have a place in discussions of serious intellectual issues. I hoped, in a small way, to provide an opening for his voice. We had a number of conversations about the relationship between religion and politics, and I came to respect the sincerity of his views despite my fundamental disagreement with the substance of much of what he believed.

Perhaps the most difficult meeting I had was with an African American student who was not a member of the class but came because he had heard from other students that it was okay to talk with me. All he wanted was for me to listen to what was happening

to him in an advanced physics class. Until the Murray lecture he had been doing fine, struggling along through the problem sets like everyone else. Since the focus on *The Bell Curve,* he'd found that despite the strongest resistance he could muster, when faced with a difficult problem he began doubting his own intelligence, and found himself giving up rather than diving in as had been his habit before. The debate itself had eroded his confidence and invaded his consciousness. He wanted to be reassured that he wasn't going mad with rage and self-doubt. I listened and tried to reassure him, though with what effect over the long run I can't predict. But the horror of it is still with me.

None of my students was explicitly racist, and I believe that every one of them believed in the possibility of a multicultural society at peace with itself. However, they had no way out of the social and cultural traps of a racialized society. We, as a group, had to work our way out of racism to multiculturalism, and that is what I tried to help students do, both in the private couversations and in class.

Learning how to say what you actually feel and mean is difficult when so much of speech is judged and monitored in school. A high regard for the content of what you say is one route to effective communication. As the class progressed, I could see students both slowing down to thiuk about what they contributed and becoming bolder and more willing to take a stand they felt comfortable defending. I encouraged the students to open themselves up to criticism and opposition. My feeling was that if they couldn't feel safe disagreeing in the classroom, where else would they feel safe making public statements that might oppose popular thinking?

The goal was to deal with fear and rage, to allow fear to be expressed and rage channeled into intelligent argument. I wanted the class to become a forum for airing the most sensitive issues of race and culture, which are so dominant in education these days. And, indeed, I felt that the silence of some of the students was slowly being broken, while the rage of others was beginning to be understood as well as expressed in ways that opened rather than closed dialogue.

Then came the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, and the ugly face of racism became public once again. One of the students, Irum, who was a Pakistani American Muslim, came to the class distraught. I feel terrible classifying her in such a cold way, but it was precisely because of those classifications that she

was so enraged. The first response to the bombing was that it was done by "Middle Eastern Muslim terrorists"—and Muslim Americans, no matter how long their families had lived in the country or what part of the globe they had come from, were the enemy, strangers, not "real Americans." So it wasn't only me who turned her into a "Pakistani American Muslim," but also the media and the other students.

Irum picked up on other students' responses, listened to the newscasts, and then had to endure the incredulity of the same people when they found out that the act was done by a "real American." Whether or not the terrorist was a Muslim, she *still* wasn't a "real American." When we discussed this she screamed at the class, "I'm sick and tired of people asking me where I'm from. I'm from Des Moines, goddamm it!"

The other students could not ignore this outburst. We all had distinct and explicit proof of how the representatives of white culture manufacture and perpetuate racism. The challenge to everyone was to feel the world as Irum felt it at that moment, to understand what it was like to be a Muslim in the United States, to be of Pakistani origin in the Uuited States and immediately become defined as the other, one of "them" rather than one of "us." There is no way of soothing these wounds.

I was lucky enough to have many conversations with Irum during my time at Carleton and to work with her on issues of racism within the sciences. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude, so obviously she was not crippled academically. It was her heart and soul that were assaulted, and my concern was to offer her support and work with her against racism. My hope was that many of the other students in the class would analyze their responses and stand with her. I also hoped that in the future, no matter what their careers or vocations, they would choose to fight against racism and embrace inulticulturalism. Ultimately, of course, this was their choice and nothing I could—or would even want to—compel.

Throughout the changes that happened during the trimester, the class still covered the reading list I had planned at the beginning (and I added a few essays that seemed particularly relevant). I kept on coming back to the central concepts that I had intended to teach. We explored the meaning of culture, the complexities of communication across cultures, the complex of culture, class, and ethnicity, and the

interplay between individual voices and cultural conventions. Toward the end of the class we considered how to use the process the class had been going through in an elementary or secondary classroom, and how to design a school.

The class ended as an unfinished conversation. We didn't solve the problem of racism or figure out the best possible way to teach multiculturalism. But I felt, at least, that we had achieved the goal of opening up serious educational discussions on the nuances of multiculturalism and the problems of class and race. It's up to the students to evaluate the effectiveness of the experience. I came away with great respect for how all of these young people wauted to face and overcome the most intractable problems within our society.