THE JOURNAL OF

Ecology, Culture & Community©

A PUBLICATION OF THREE CIRCLES CENTER FOR MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Summer 1999, Volume 2, $ 5.00

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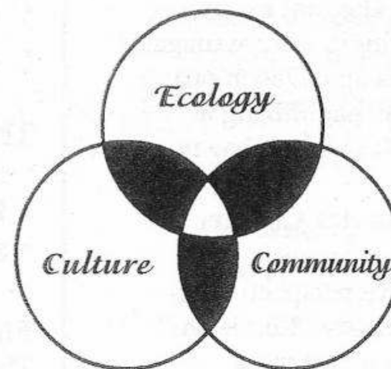
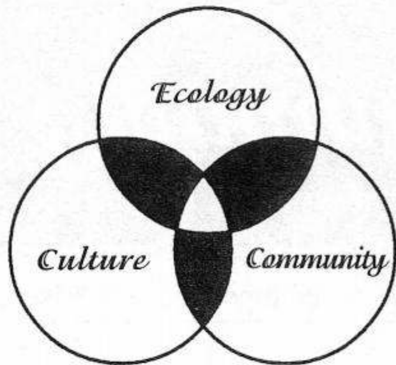


Three Circles Center

introduces, encourages, and cultivates multicultural perspectives and values in environmental and outdoor education, recreation, and interpretation.



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El Centro Tres Circulos
sirve para introducir formentar y desarrollar perspectivas y valores multiculturales en la educacion del medio ambiente, la recreación y su interpretación.

Three Circles Center
nagsilsil bi para itakilala sa kagitingan at payamanin, buhayin, alagaan, maraming uring patingin sa kabyrungang panglabas ng ta hanan opang kau kasan, paglilibang at pagintindi sa isa ng bagay.

Three Circles Center
introduz, promove e desenvolve perspectivas e valores multi-culturais em educação na natureza ambiental, lazer e interpretação.

Three Circles Center
三育中心之宗旨在於宣傳、鼓勵和培養在環境及戶外活動上的教育、康樂活動及其意義上之多元化的體會及價值觀念。

Three Circles Center

About Three Circles Center

The "Three Circles" of our name refers to the three interdependent systems of ecology, culture and community. Ecology is the total of the myriad relationships between organisms and their environment; culture is the dynamic total mores, values and traditions to which people relate as their own; and community is the network and context in which culture flourishes and ecology and culture meet.

Three Circle Center suggests that ecology never stands alone as an isolated system but as one always connected to the sociocultural worlds of humans. The epistemological implications of this are intriguing. Ecology can thus be viewed as a text with a broad range of interpretive possibilities expressed through the cultural lives of humans in relation to the lives of plants, animals and other living beings.

Thus the notion of a gestalt of interdependent systems—where the totality is greater that the sum of the parts— can serve as a useful and necessary starting point to rethink environmental education and the paradigm of environmentalism in general.

Three Circles Consulting

Three Circles consults with organizations and programs nationally on issues of multicultural communication, staff development, curriculum and program design and evaluation and authentic community outreach and involvement in educational and interpretive programming. Our clients have included:

- *Audubon Canyon Ranch, Stinson Beach, CA*
- *National Science Teachers Association, Arlington, VA*
- *Urban Habitat Program, San Francisco, CA*
- *Lawrence Hall of Science, Berkeley, CA*
- *Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA*

Three Circles offers custom training in three competency areas:

- Multicultural organization and program assessment and change
- Personal and professional development on multicultural diversity
- Strategies, designs and tools for multicultural environmental education

Financial Disclosure

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For more information about our programs, consulting, Journal and/or membership, please contact us at Three Circles Center, P.O. Box 1946, Sausalito, CA 94965 or e-mail us at: circlecenter@igc.apc.org.

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Cover Photo by Running-Grass.
Students from rural Sonoma county reflect during an urban interpretive hike in the San Francisco Mission District.

Three Circles Center welcomes letters, comments, articles and art work for future issues of the *Journal of Ecology, Culture & Community*

Three Circles Center is not responsible for damage or loss and reserves the right to edit for considerations and space. Unsolicited submissions should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Teachers must learn "about the brilliance the students bring with them 'in their blood.' Until they appreciate the wonders of the cultures represented before them.....they cannot appreciate the potential of [their students], nor can they begin to link their students' histories and worlds to the subject matter they presesent in the classroom." —Lisa Delpit

Other People's Children, The New Press, 1995.

The Journal of Ecology, Culture & Community

A Publication of
Three Circles Center for Multicultual Environmental Education

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Special Thanks to:
Gabrielle Klein
Urban Habitat Program

This issue of the Journal of Ecology, Culture & Community *has been printed on 100% recycled paper using soy-based ink by Dolphin Graphics in San Francisco. Please Reduce, Reuse, & Recycle.*

Dr. Betty Shabazz

"While I am conscious
of all the earth's peoples,
I recognize my responsibility
to my own ethnic group.
Having known Malcom,
I embrace humanity.
I have changed, and it is
my responsibility to change
not only myself but my part
of the world."
—Dr. Betty Shabazz.

The world mourned the death of an extraordinary woman and educator in June of 1997. Dr. Betty Shabazz is a role model to many striving young and old Americans. Through her subsequent involvement in the movement for social, political and religious freedoms Dr. Shabazz has paved a road of hope for many peoples of the earth. This vibrant, energetic lady will be sorely missed by many. We at the Three Circles Center would like to dedicates this issue of *The Journal of Ecology, Culture, & Community* to our heroine and role model, Dr. Betty Shabazz.

"The lady who walked with queens and kings, presidents and heads of state, always came home to walk with the ordinary people, her people. For that she will always be remembered by her Medgar Evers College Family."
— Medgar Evers College Press Release.

"She often spoke to students about the need for them to develop a worldview and challenged them to define their own place in the global village."
— Medgar Evers College Press Release.

Environmental Justice

By Tonia Rivera
(Participant in S.L.U.G.'s Environmental Justice *Youth Leadership Program*)

Environmental Justice to me is a movement for the low-income communities.
It teaches these communities to speak out and fight for their rights.
Environmental Justice is important because it lets people know
that money is not everything. Especially justice.
People of color should have just as much power as any other race.
At least that's what the Constitution says.
So now people of color are now realizing how much power they actually have.
And they are now taking things into their own hands.

Building a More Inclusive Environmental Movement

By Running-Grass

When I first viewed the film, *The Color Purple,* I was particularly moved by some early scenes in which two young black girls were running, playing and laughing through the beautiful countryside. It was not until after the film that I realized that my emotional response was so strong because I had never before seen an aesthetically appealing depiction of black people happy in nature. All other "pictures" I had seen of blacks in nature were as naked "savages" as in National Geographic, or as slaves or destitute sharecroppers engaged in brutal physical labor, hardly happy circumstances.

What I found remarkable was how I could have lived for thirty years, been educated and involved so deeply in the environmental movement, and never have come across images of African-Americans at home and joyous in their natural surroundings. The more frequent and accessible images of savagery and slavery were counter to my own feelings of connectedness with the natural world, yet those images became the background against which I judged my own "abnormality" of being a person of color *and* an environmentalist. Encouraged by the culturally homogeneous environmental movement, I accepted this "abnormality" as a given, until my stereotype was challenged by powerful counter-images in the opening scenes of the film.

The absence of positive images of people in the natural world was not an accident but is central to the creation of a world view called "environmentalism." My internalization of negative images was a complex dynamic involving my professional goals and sense of self. My professional encounters with environmentalists reinforced the idea that I was an anomaly, different in some way than "others" of my kind. In addition, the environmental movement had so totalized the definition of the "environment" that there was no validation of experiences outside the parameters and norms it had set. There was no validation of African, Chinese or Arab-American environmental experiences, ethics or traditions; no representations or reflections of urban environmental experiences or low income and female experiences of and relationship to the environment. All such cultural experiences and relationships, buried beneath the surface of mainstream beliefs and values, were marginalized, discredited or painfully trivialized through the use of stereotypes.

The environmental movement is reminded, often in stereotypic fashion, that its origins can be traced back to the efforts of visionary white men to make the natural world safe from the predatory interests of industrialists and also from the enjoyment and use of the masses. Such an uncritically accepted, limited and partial history has left environmentalism open to the charge of elitism, insulated from the needs, aspirations and experiences of most "normal" people. Today, the environmental movement is being confronted with its limited history as people of color discover and assert their cultural ties to the natural world, redefine the notion of "environment" to include the city as a significant environment, and reveal the social justice dimensions of environmental issues.

By defining the environment as exclusively the *natural* environment (itself not a clear term) environmentalists have structured an environmental agenda that effectively excludes other "non-natural" environments. The marginalization and trivialization of those places, and the people who live there, has resulted in the phenomena of environmental racism.

Environmental racism is defined as systematic discrimination, based on race, in the distribution of environmental degradation and amenities. This includes the discriminatory formulation, implementation and enforcement of environmental policy, regulations and laws, and disproportionate compensation and remediation of environmental degradation.[1] In response to environmental racism, the *environmental justice movement* has challenged the stereotypes of mainstream environmentalism.

During a seminar on multicultural environmental education that I recently gave at the University of Michigan, the topic of the lack of people of color in the environmental movement and professions came up. I critiqued some of the typical answers frequently cited as explanations for the glaring absence of people of color from the ranks of environmentalism: "They" are simply not interested; or (a version of the Maslow hierarchy of needs) "they" are so busy trying to survive and get ahead that "they" don't have time for pursuits such as hiking, enjoying sunsets and saving rare and endangered species; and (reflecting, perhaps, the dubious science and reactionary arguments

Continued on page 6

of the Bell Curve) "they" do not have the intelligence to understand the complexity and moral significance of the issues. One of the seminar participants asked me why those explanations sound so good if they are obviously *not* true.

These appealing explanations are based on widely held stereotypes of who "they" are and function, as stereotypes do, by providing attractive and simple explanations to save us from the complicated task of thinking critically about our experiences. The persistence of such stereotypes is in part due to a history of discrimination and violence against people based on class, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and other distinctions and our naiveté of the power of pictures and media to construct and reinforce particular images which sometimes serve regressive social purposes.

An Etiology of Stereotypes

A stereotype is a usually negative, overly broad and inaccurate generalization attributed to a group or class of people or species. Most people know stereotypes are inaccurate and hurtful, but frequently rely on them as a widely accepted and simplified explanation of reality. The origin and reproduction of stereotypes are frequently disguised and are communicated either nonverbally, or by specific words or phrases which depend on the prior understanding and shared background of those in the act of communication. Stereotypes are often directed towards groups of people (targets) and function to reinforce misinformation about them: "welfare mothers," "bureaucrats" and "elitists" are all code words for the target groups which mean to described young, unwed mothers in poverty; civil servants; and liberal intellectuals, respectively.

Stereotypes have a powerful ability to limit the range of thinking, perception and activity of people in subtle ways. As such, they not only diminish the targeted group but the person who holds and applies the stereotype as well. Stereotypes are also frequently unconsciously held and applied. This means that some people may not know that their "picture" is a biased one or that they are applying false information as though it were true—an action which can have an uncanny ability to create what it assumes.

As important as it is to focus on the individual using stereotypes and on the specific stereotypes themselves, it is also essential to understand the function of stereotypes in the context of systematic oppression which is designed to assure specific outcomes for classes or groups of people. Stereotypes marginalize, trivialize and discredit. Ricky Sherover-Marcuse created an analysis called the cycle of oppression in which she reveals the critical role of stereotypes in systems of discrimination and oppression.[2] She defines oppression as the systematic mistreatment of a group of people based on some shared characteristic.[3] This oppression relies on misinformation which becomes institutionalized as popular values, assumptions, and as the terms of discourse in society. These in turn become justifications for further oppression and the cycle continues anew.

Stereotypes are that form of misinformation which become ingrained in the popular consciousness and become a part of society's "normal" and frequently unquestioned consciousness. Stereotypes become structured in the institutions of society and become policies and practices which regulate the lives of citizens. The often repeated observation that there are so few people of color in the environmental field and movement—beyond being merely an observation—is really a charge that the field is structured in exclusionary ways, and that there exists institutionalized discrimination in the field. One of the key and electrifying moments in the environmental justice movement occured in February 1990 when activists charged that the environmental advocacy organizations were *practicing* discrimination because they employed few people of color in any positions of responsibility and had a long history of ignoring environmental issues of people of color.[4]

Models and solutions seeking to explain and prescribe antidotes to facilitate the entry of people of color into environmental careers which don't take on the structures and institutionalized practices of discrimination do not go far enough in solving the problem. In fact, they can divert attention from the deeper causes and issues—so in that sense operate as adjuncts or auxiliaries to the discriminatory structures they purport to change.

Internalized Stereotypes

Stereotypes can also be internalized in a process known as internalized oppression, which causes the target to believe the misinformation and act as if it were true, thereby reinforcing its apparent truth and credibility. This particularly destructive form of oppression closes the circle and makes challenging misinformation all the more difficult.

As a local environmental professional of color, I once participated in a museum program where predominantly African-American 7th and 8th graders attempted to guess my profession. The students were aware that I was involved with the environment but had to discover my specific job by asking one question per round before venturing a guess. After a number of questions and

wrong guesses, one girl's face lit up and she raised her hand excitedly: "I know what you are" she exclaimed, "A janitor!" I think it may have been difficult for her to conceive that an African-American male could be professionally involved in an environmental career. After all, images of and contact with such professionals for children of color are rare. The lack of such powerful experiences and counter images can cause stereotypes to have an appealing and seemingly indisputable truth-value, especially for children. These are then internalized and define the parameters of conceivable experience creating a situation where people enforce their own limitations to experience and possibilities.

Internal stereotypes of this kind often function as an excuse for people of color not involving ourselves and participating in an environmental discourse which intimately involves us as "silent partners" (or silent victims). When environmental issues were raised in San Francisco, a youth of color said, "Ecology? That's the White man's problem!"[5] When he was shown an unfenced toxic waste dump that he and his friends walked across several times a day he grew significantly more interested in the "White man's problem".[6] He discovered, in this case, that this environmental problem was actually the Black man's burden.

The Environmental Movement as Target

Environmentalism has itself been a target group towards which stereotypes have been leveled. This has been, and continues to be, an effort to marginalize, trivialize and discredit not only environmentalists and our agenda, but the natural world as the subject of our concern.

What are some of the stereotypes or misinformation propagated about environmentalists and about the environment?

- Trees: seen one seen them all; they are renewable; they cause pollution.
- Oceans: the solution to pollution is dilution; limitless resource.
- The West: its a frontier; never ending vistas; we won it.
- Environmentalists: tree huggers; Communists; extremists; special interest group.
- Insects: they carry disease; dirty; lower life form; need to be killed.

The truth in each of these situations is more complex than the stereotypes allow.

Building Inclusive Communities Means Challenging Stereotypes

In the mid and late 1970's I worked extensively in the antinuclear movement in New England, particularly on the Seabrook power station. When I heard that the station would be powered by uranium imported from the then apartheid South Africa, I immediately understood the relationship between the oppression of people and the destruction of the natural world. When I took this back to our local affinity groups, however, most members saw no connection between the two issues and felt no need to join ranks with the anti-apartheid movement then gathering strength in our region. The stereotype that social issues and environmental issues are not connected was too powerful to overcome. Challenging that stereotype required breaking out of isolated perspectives that pit people and issues against one another.

At a recent conference, an environmental educator demonstrated an activity for children. After he had gone through it, he cautioned the audience of educators that it would be necessary to adapt the activity for "inner city kids" of the same grade level. It would have to be made much simpler, he said, so they could understand it. There were no people of color present to counteract the stereotype. The challenge was provided by a white educator who has done years of work investigating race in the context of her personal life. Environmental educators have a special responsibility to get beyond such stereotypes and prejudices. Such challenges need not be ideological—they can be simple as noticing and calling attention to the stereotype and challenging its veracity. Yet, without the presence of people of color in the environmental movement and professions, certain stereotypes may not receive the strenuous and vigorous challenge they require. This single fact is one of the best arguments for diversifying the environmental field.

If we don't challenge our values and behavior—permeated by racism, sexism and classism—any discussion of building the coalitions essential to our success will be lip service, and have no substantive value. It is only by confronting ignorance and looking inward at our own prejudices that we can build a more inclusive environmental movement, and turn the tide in favor of what we hold most dear. We truly need one another.

Notes

[1] First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit.Conference proceedings, 1991.

[2] Ricky Sherover-Marcuse, Ph.D. Materials distributed by "Unlearning Racism Workshops," Oakland, CA

[3] See note 2 above.

[4] *New York Times*, 1 February 1990, p. 1.

[5] Leonard Pitt, founder of EcoRap, 1993 conversation.

[6] See note 2 above.

What the Tule House Has to Teach Us

By Malcom Margolin

From: *News From Native California,* copyright 1997 with permission from the publisher, Malcom Margolin.

Running-Grass interprets a redwood bark house with elementary school children at Miwok Village in Point Reyes National Seashore. Photo courtesy of Hostel Adventure, AYH.

One of the biggest challenges in teaching youngsters about California Indian life is to get them beyond the facts and fantasies, beyond the rote responses. It is easy enough, for example, to tell them that the Indians of the San Francisco Bay Area lived in dome-shaped houses made of tule (bulrush); getting them to imagine what life would have been like in a tule house is somewhat more difficult.

As a special favor to an old friend, I found myself in front of a group of fourth-graders one day describing a traditional tule house. I explained how the framework of willows was erected and tule was cut, aged, bundled, and tied onto the framework to form a watertight covering. I tried to evoke the texture of the tule and its distinctive smell-earthy and musty, a bit like Lipton tea. I asked them to envision what it would be like to crawl through the doorway into the cool, dark interior of the dwelling, to touch the earthen floor packed hard, almost to a polish, and strewn with sleeping mats and rabbit-skin blankets.

I tried to get them to picture what it would be like to sleep in one of these houses shoulder-to-shoulder with brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, parents and grandparents; what it would be like to wake up on a cold winter morning to hear the elders, who would have stayed awake all night to keep the fire lit, talking softly among themselves; or to look through the entrance on a bright spring morning to see the welcome sunshine.

"Now what do *you* think it would be like to live in a tule house?" I asked in my most ingratiating manner. A dozen hands shot up. I pointed to a little girl with dreamy eyes and a charming smile.

"Yucky!" she said, with unexpected clarity and force. "Why?" I asked, shocked and completely taken aback.

I *like* having my own room. I *like* how big my house is. I don't *want* to live on a dirt floor with tule walls and sleep with my whole family."

I was amazed and in truth delighted with the response- I realized that she had indeed been picturing life in a tule house. Her real, deeply felt answer, free of piety or politically correct platitudes, was a wonderful beginning for a discussion about tule houses. So without trying to "convert" her, I led the discussion along a different track. Here are some of the topics we considered:

What would it mean if all the materials for building a house were free and readily available to everyone?

It costs tens of thousands of dollars to buy the lumber, plumbing, wiring, tiles, and fixtures needed for a modern house. What if all the materials you needed was growing all around you, free to anyone who wanted to gather it? The first thing that dawned on everyone was that under these conditions there would be no homelessness. (I was

surprised at how deeply concerned these youngsters were with the problem of homelessness.) We also discussed how when you are an adult, you end up spending a quarter to a third of your waking hours earning enough for housing, not to mention the huge amount of time spent dusting, mopping, sweeping, painting, mowing the lawn, and fixing up. Living in the tule houses might have its inconveniences, but it would free up a lot of time. "What would your parents do with the time?" we wondered. Would they, like native people in traditional cultures, put more time into the arts, religion, ceremony, socializing, or even play?

We also touched upon the self-sufficiency of a society that has had no need for the far-flung political and economic ties and massive transportation networks that ensure our access to housing materials, no need for our lumber and mining industries; tule and willow grow locally and in such abundance that they can be harvested without damaging the environment. Under such conditions, we would have a peculiar freedom -the freedom to develop our own languages, customs, set of beliefs and ways of doing things.

... we had accomplished something that afternoon—a recognition of the social and moral expenses of our way of life, and a recognition of the value of other peoples' choices.

What would it be like if all the houses in your village were made of the same material and were more or less the same size?

This question was loaded and we edged gingerly around it, because what it kept leading to was a discussion of class—of how our culture creates distinctions between people based on wealth, and it makes a difference whether you live in a mansion in the hills, a rented apartment, or in a trailer park. We discussed, at least circumspectly, the implications of living in a society where the differences between being poor and being wealthy are not so dramatic as in our own.

What would it be like to live in a society where houses were not a major form of wealth?

Owning a house in this culture gives people a huge piece of wealth, a way of providing for their old age, something to pass along to their children. What if you lived in a society where houses were not a form of wealth? How would your parents store wealth? In regalia? In baskets? Or would people redefine "wealth" more in terms of their relationships and connections to others?

Is privacy a good thing?

Most of the youngsters either had their own room or shared one with only one sibling, and they liked it that way. In traditional times, it is true, there wasn't much privacy. Tule houses were used primarily for storing things in and for sleeping. The rest of life—cooking, washing, entertainment, etc.—was carried on outdoors and in a more or less communal atmosphere. We considered the possibility that the privacy modern life affords us is a mixed blessing—does it bring an element of isolation, selfishness, and mistrust with it?

We discussed many other things as well, and in the end I asked the question again: "How many of you would like to give up your houses and live in an old-time tule house?" Still no takers. But we had accomplished something that afternoon—a recognition of the social and moral expenses of our way of life, and a recognition of the value of other peoples' choices. While no one in the class wanted to take up residence in a tule house, it was clear that at least some aspect of what it means to live in a tule house had taken up residence in us.

Malcolm Margolin is publisher of *News from Native California.*

Toxic Waste Recycler: A Town Meeting

By T.R. Amsler

Tucked amidst the redwoods and chaparral of the Santa Cruz mountains and only ten miles from the coast, San Mateo County Outdoor Education School is an ideal environmental education center. By Friday of this one week residential program, fifth graders have learned a great deal about forest and coastal ecosystems, cycles and interdependence. Having geographically and often times culturally dislocated these children from their homes, neighborhoods and communities the question arises whether their lessons about community diversity and interdependence will still seem valuable. To help these students make a jump from the "green" environmental education of birds and trees to issues of human health and community development, we developed a specific Town Meeting. Through the following role play about the City of Incorporated Cooperation and TWR, the Toxic Waste Recycler, students learn ways to bring their environmental education experience home.

By the end of this one and a half hour activity the students should understand what toxic waste is and some of the issues surrounding its disposal. They will have practiced using critical thinking and problem solving skills and should understand more about democratic processes. We usually work with 50 to 70 students and two teachers, but if you had less students, all the better. The format is very student centered and relies to a large extent on students' ability to work in small groups.

As we progress through the steps, the Town Meeting may at first seem confusing, and I admit it is challenging. But here also lies the reward. While this town meeting's outline flirts with the open ended chaos of too many options and a great deal of student control, it opens the conversation and allows students greater involvement in the creation of solutions and the decision making process. Leaving the binary and teacher led model of many other activities, we have instead fueled many students' creativity, enthusiasm, and empowered them as problem-solvers.

The meeting begins with an introduction to role playing, and we emphasize the importance of imagination and high drama. Since the students are assigned to several different interest groups, we want to encourage them to fully take on their roles. To this end, we usually do a brief "improv" scene to encourage creativity and enthusiasm for their new identities.

The Players

When the students enter the room, they find a card on their seat which assigns them to a group and gives them a brief description of their new outlook. The several groups are: Students, Parents, Home Owners, Workers at Plant, City Council Members, Citizens for Environmental Action, Downtown Business Owners and Owners of the Toxic Waste Recyclers.

Guided Visualization

Twenty years have past and although you have traveled you find yourself living again in your own home town, in the City of Incorporated Cooperation, where you grew up. A few of you have mysteriously remained 5th/6th graders and just finished your week at outdoor ed. The rest of you, however, have homes, jobs, and some of you even have families. Your city has grown bigger but thanks to conservation efforts you can still see green hills rising behind the City of Incorporated Cooperation's skyline and watch birds migrating through salt marshes in the spring and fall. You are lucky to live in a very diverse town where most people know more than one language and every year there are festivals celebrating the city's many cultural roots. But unfortunately your city has come upon difficult economic times with high unemployment and a small city budget. Everyone in the city is looking for new ways to grow as a community while living up to the values, always sacred in the City of Incorporated Cooperation, of fairness, cooperation, respect, and tolerance.

A reporter then bursts onto the scene exclaiming the possibility of a Toxic Waste Recycler (TWR) moving into the city. After the reporter's news the mayor begins to voice his point of view. It is important that both roles stay moderate since their biases are not openly discussed. Thus it is important that their comments must stay true to facts so that they are trust worthy and reliable "experts" during question sessions.

Phase One

The mayor and reporter field questions and keep a list on a chalkboard or overhead of the possible concerns and benefits. While some students may have a lot to contribute, it is important to create solid lists then move onto the interest group discussions. These smaller settings help insure greater student involvement in a less intimidating atmosphere. Before these groups break up the mayor explains the work sheet and the student roles of facilitator, reader/writer, and spokesperson. The facilitator makes sure only one student at a time speaks and that the group moves through the questions. The reader/writer does just that by making sure everyone hears the interest group card and the questions. The spokesperson will speak at the next town meeting, representing their group's concerns.

The groups then unravel their circles and the spokes people go to the front of the room. The mayor explains the City of Incorporated Cooperation will shortly hear from the interest's groups' spokes people and that it is important for everyone to listen because in the final decision everyone will be effected. Also the mayor may ask the residents to judge what solutions best answer the city's concerns while achieving the benefits already listed. One of the teachers will be writing down interest group's suggested solutions.

Phase Two

After the spokes people share their answers, the mayor introduces the next student discussion period. This one should be much faster than the first. At this time the teachers should hand out option cards with some brief explanations. These are meant to give some students structure, but an imagined fantastic engineering feat surely allows the students greater intellectual and creative freedom. So emphasize the "make up your own" option and the options already suggested by interest groups. Provide the set options if you think the group needs that type of structure. It is here in the second group discussion that the students will come to a final conclusion and have listed the reasons why.

After their final discussion, the students reconvene and the spokes people explain their decisions; one vote going to each. The highest votes hold the future for the city, but we also list the various solutions, for next you may give the students a chance to individually choose one option.

Phase Three

The mayor then concludes and the news paper reporter exclaims how the City of Incorporated Cooperation worked together to insure a safe and economically healthy community and upheld its values of cooperation, respect, tolerance, and fairness. All citizens are then ceremoniously returned to their fifth grade bodies, and the naturalists begin a wrap up. We have found some of the following questions useful for reinstalling the lesson's objectives:

1. How did you feel at the end of the city meeting?

2. What could you have done before the vote to sway community opinion?

3. What were some of the challenges facing your particular group?

4. Are these real issues that affect our communities?

5. Do these sort of Town Meetings really happen?

6. How old do you have to be to speak at one?

At this time we share a couple of stories to once again instill the objectives, and empower the students. We tell the story of the Toxic Avengers from New York City and sometimes mention the situations in East Palo Alto (where there is indeed a toxic waste recycler, Romic Environmental Technologies) and the current situation in Daly City (where the government has finally acknowledged that some residents are living on and near harmful toxic waste). Our students have been consistently excited and challenged by this town meeting, and I believe we have made a concrete step in connecting our program to the lives and challenges of our student body.

T.R. Amsler is a naturalist at the San Mateo County Outdoor Education School.

Problem-Posing Dialogue: A Process for Multicultural Environmental Education?

By Jean Frederickson

La gente hablando se entiende—A Mexican proverb
People understand each other by talking.

What Makes Dialogue, Dialogue?

First and foremost, dialogue deals in "voices." Through using our voices we give expression to all that we are- our class, gender, racial, cultural, and linguistic identities, as well as our assumptions, values, and ideologies- all of which have been constructed in social relations with others both similar and different from ourselves. Depending upon our position in the social order and the specific context of the moment, our voices are given ample time and ways to be heard and therefore frequently affirmed, or given few opportunities to be heard and therefore regularly silenced. By creating a context where people give voice to their own stories and knowledge we are affecting power relations.

Before we can expect to hear anything worth hearing, however, the power dynamics of the social actors and the space must be acknowledged and examined. This aspect of the process is important, because dialogue is about taking differentially positioned people and creating a safe space where talk can occur among people who are willing to recognize, no matter how tentatively at first, each other as subjects who have come together to both learn and teach. In dialogue we admit that we each know something, no one knows everything, together we will know more, and together we will learn how to know more (Maguire, 1987, pp. 37-38). To engage in authentic dialogue, then, entails a power shift among people who hold differing status positions in society. An example is the teacher-student relationship- one of the most basic relationships people experience. By shifting from the customary power relations of "power over" to "power with," teachers and students move from a subject-object relationship to a subject-subject relationship.

Another dimension of dialogue is its authentic meaning-making potential. Unlike discussion, dialogue is not about "understanding" the meaning of another person or about "finding" the right answer to a question. Instead, it is about engaging the voice of another with your own voice, and creating shared meanings and interpersonal connections from the different interests being represented in each voice. Dialogue works from the premise that we come to know ourselves more fully by reaching toward the Other, by using our differences to reveal assumptions that have been hidden and to create meanings, knowledge, and relationships that have liberating and transformative potential.

Although dialogue is a questioning and challenging sort of talk among people who may or may not inhabit symmetrical relations of power, it is not hostile or polemical talk. Rather it is a loving, hopeful, critical, respectful, humble, and trusting talk that calls upon and cultivates the use of mutual empathy and connection (Freire, 1990, pp. 77-81). For bell hooks, dialogue is speech that "challenges and resists domination," and because of that it is "humanizing speech" or "caring talk" (1989, p. 131). Importantly, caring talk also involves the emphatic holding of anther's anger "without collapsing in fear, shame, or guilt" and the "capacity for healthy resistance" to pathologizing or shaming messages (Surrey, 1995, pp. 9-10). In other words, if we want someone to tell it like it is, we have to hear it like it is.

In addition to the characteristics described above, dialogue is also a fluid sort of talk. Ideas move around as they both are affirmed and challenged, boundaries shift as thoughts intermingle, and ambiguity abounds as potential options are explored and new meanings come into being. By braving the fluidity, however, connections can be made, power relations can be equalized, and voices from the center can ebb to the margins while voices from the margins can flow to the center (Surrey, 1995, p. 10).

I should note at this point, however, that my experiences with all the foregoing characteristics of dialogue have shown me that for people accustomed to a "banking approach" to education (which is most of us), dialogue can be an unsettling engagement at first. Most often, dialogue does not proceed in the orderly and controllable fashion people typically favor, but unfolds in a somewhat untidy manner around issues that are power sensitive. This dynamic unfolding tends to make people anxious, as no immediate answers or solutions seem forthcoming amid the perceived, but surface, turmoil.

A metaphor that helps me work with the novelty and wrinkles of dialogue is what is called the "edge of chaos" in complex systems theory. According to this theory, complex systems, such as my encounters with dialogue, function in a spontaneous, disorderly, and fluid fashion. At the same time, there is some self-organizing cohesiveness to its function and structure (Waldrop, 1992, p. 12). Like complex systems, I have found that dialogue can somehow bring order and chaos into some special kind of interactive balance.

Dialogue debunks what Donna Haraway has called the "God trick...that mode of [thinking and] seeing that pretends to offer a vision that is from everywhere and nowhere, equally and fully" (1988, p. 584). Through use of the "God trick" the power elite, in whatever domain they occupy, seek to sell universal truths while denying the privileges, interests, and politics of oppression. Interestingly, dialogue appears to be very compatible with the concept of "risk communication" which operates on the "rhetorical notion of dissensus, the willingness to explore the reasons for differences rather than enforce an artificial consensus" (Herndl & Brown, 1996, p. 16). The result of dissensus is an ongoing cycle of collective reflection and action similar to what I have been attributing to dialogue.

What Joins Problem-Posing to Dialogue?

It is through adopting a dialectical theoretical base that we can speak of seeking the "problematic" in problem-posing dialogue. The problematic refers to all the elements that are entangled in making almost invisible the relationship between our everyday lived experiences and the social arrangements of the broader society. By focusing on the problematic, we are directed to making conspicuous the set of almost imperceptible mechanisms that keep us innocent as to exactly how we are shaped by the larger social context, and how in turn, we give shape to that same context. This requires that we intentionally and continually look for internal contradictions within our own unique experiences, as well as the contradictions between our own interpretations and the privileged interpretations placed upon our experiences by members and mechanisms of the dominant culture.

By revealing and unraveling how our taken-for-granted life experiences, interpretations, and contradictions are tied to the extended relations and conditions of the larger social world- a world comprised of specific political, economic, cultural, and linguistic systems- we can discover the politics of our voices, the transformative possibilities that lie latent in them, and the energizing feedback of taking informed actions as we remake, or transform, ourselves and society.

Importantly, if an authentic dialogue has transpired, transformation is always aimed in the direction of personal and collective liberation from oppressive, exploitative, and antidemocratic conditions. From a dialogical perspective, personal and social transformation are flip sides of the same authentic union of reflection and action, an encounter called praxis. Through praxis, we participate in the creation of critical literacy and move into critical consciousness.

By now it must be apparent that problem-posing dialogue is not the same as problem-solving research. The later takes the world at face value, with technical and managed solutions to be found within the existing relations of power, institutional structures, and elite body of knowledge. Problem-posing dialogue, on the other hand, engenders critical curiosity and engages the imagination in creating alternative ways of being in the world, one thought and one action at a time. Simply put, it strives to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar.

What Are Some Important Concepts?

What follows is the naming and brief description of but a few of the concepts embedded within and giving definition to problem-posing dialogue. Critical consciousness, a significant one, involves becoming aware of ourselves and all other people as knowing, empowered subjects capable of executing liberating conditions for ourselves and others. Critical literacy functions when we are able to engage in authentic praxis as the normative approach to reflecting, making meaning, and taking transformative actions. Emancipatory knowledge (also called liberatory knowledge) refers to such aspects as the conditions necessary for critical consciousness to emerge, the kinds of questions in need of being posed about power, privilege, and oppression, how it is that society and people are mutually and dynamically created and re-created, and the character of the actions to be taken for personal and social transformations.

Although emancipatory knowledge differs from the favored technical (can be measured and quantified) and practical (descriptive and qualitative) knowledge's of the dominant culture, these two forms of knowledge must also be acquired, but not at the expense of ignoring the acquisition of emancipatory knowledge. Rather, emancipatory knowledge can be used as the context for learning the other two kinds.

Within existing conditions, the knowledge of those in power is privileged over those who hold a subordinate position in society.

Importantly, in the activity of dialogue, knowledge is theorized as always being in process of becoming, therefore it is always unfinished, incomplete, unstable, and plural. Since knowledge is always being created and re-created in social relations through the use of various symbolic systems, it is always historically situated, culturally mediated, and ideologically based (Walsh, 1991, pp. 12-15). It also is bound in complex ways to our own positions in society, thus rendering our personal knowledge somewhat limited and prompting such questions as, "What does it mean to say my knowledge is partial?" and "How is knowing and accepting this limitation liberating for me and life in a multi-cultured society?"

Within the theoretical framework of dialogue, knowledge and power are intimately related. Within existing conditions, the knowledge of those in power is privileged over those who hold a subordinate position in society. Such privileging, however, does not automatically give "truth value" to the knowledge of the elites, as if "truth" existed somewhere "out there," discernible by a set of "natural and absolute laws." Nor does this claim make all truth relative, meaning that there are many real truths that are all equal in their effects. Rather, truth is determined relationally and interactively on the basis of whether it is oppressive and exploitative or empowering and transformative.

Voice, and the stories externalized through it, is another basic concept in problem-posing dialogue. Contoured by our particular personal and cultural history, our voices must be heard and affirmed frequently, as well as be analyzed and challenged, for the particular values and ideologies they represent and the habits they hold for both empowering, disempowering, and oppressing both ourselves and other people.

What Makes Dialogue a Transformative Process?

Dialogue is a transformative process in many ways, and the concepts described previously can be included in this section. However, I will mention three more, due to the significance they have for me.

We all can agree provisionally, I expect, that our subjectivity- our sense of ourselves and our way of understanding our relation to the world- is crucial to all of life's activities. If we feel capable of living with and reaching out to difference, of staying in dissensus rather than rushing into false consensus, and of finding autonomy within relationship, we have an empowering subjectivity. If we find ourselves regularly reflecting on and acting to transform the world, then again, we have an empowering subjectivity. In my experience, empowered individuals are too rare yet so needed.

An empowering cultural identity is also necessary for active participation in a multi-cultured society. Because culture can be conceived as both a "self-contained box of enduring characteristics" and as a porous array of intersecting, often conflicting, yet mutually constitutive actions within the midst of

cross-cultural encounters, it is not improbable to speak of problem-posing dialogue as a means for both generating and examining how bicultural identities are created and rejected. As Antonia Darder has pointed out, subordinate group members' mode of engagement interacts with their cultural response pattern to produce cultural identity patterns of alienation, dualism, separatism, and negotiation (1991, pp. 53-60). Only in patterns of negotiation, similar to the praxis occurring in problem-posing dialogue, does an empowering sense of bicultural identity emerge.

In my experience, empowered individuals are too rare —yet so needed.

Finally, dialogue is transformative because it makes possible a sense of self-in-diversity which is connected to the notion of cross-cultural mutuality. In short, self-in-diversity speaks to a profound shift away from self-centeredness to a relationally centeredness as a way of being. This move creates the potential for working with difference without the filter of self-reference that sees Other as different from me, thereby placing me at the center of meaning-making. In cross-cultural mutuality defined as a creative process of active engagement, authenticity, empathy, relational responsibility, and reciprocal commitment- we generate the resolve to stay connected through conflict. By remaining in the conflict, relational growth occurs as we stretch to understand each other's experiences of the discord (Surrey, 1995, pp. 9-10).

What Next?

In closing, I leave you with three challenges that I hope you will accept gladly. First, I encourage you to carve out the time from your hectic schedules to form your own dialogue group which meets on a regular basis. Secondly, I ask that you take-up and pose questions to what I have tried to present in this essay, in particular asking, "What does this have to do with multicultural environmental education?" and "How is it a guiding process for enacting multicultural environmental education?" Thirdly, I ask you to consider the question of building alliances with other social action groups and to ask specifically. "How can those of us who are privileged, like I am by the invisibility of my whiteness, construct the necessary subjectivities to truly collaborate as allies with the oppressed?" Now there's a vision worth having. And here's a quote worth reading.

"The most exciting thing we can remember is going into the classroom and having one of those deep and powerful dialogues. If we had known that sharing and looking so closely at our cultures, our lives, and our society was so transforming, we would have done it sooner. "

—Adriana and Rosalba Jasso, Students at Channel Islands High School, Oxnard, California.

Jean Frederickson is an educator and consultant who has her roots in bilingual-bicultural education, critical pedagogy, critical multicultural environmental education, and radical ecofeminism.

This article is dedicated to Paulo Freire who died on May 2, 1997.

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~ Educator Profile ~

Ernesto Galarza 1905-1984

By Jose Antonio Burciaga

This article was taken from *Drink Cultura Chicanismo,* by J.A. Burciaga. Published by Joshua Odell Editions, 1993, Santa Barbara, CA. Copyright permission from the editor Joshua Odell.

"I'm calling to tell you Ernesto has left us. Please tell those people who loved and cared for him..."

With those calm and resigned words of grief, Mae Galarza notified Cecilia and I of Ernesto's passing on the morning of June 22 in their San Jose home. Their beautiful marriage of 55 years had finally come to an end. He also left two daughters, Karla and Eliu. "He was tired," said Mae. "He worked since he was five years old." Ernesto was 78.

Those people who loved and cared for him extended far beyond his immediate family to those he never met. Ernesto Galarza, a sort of dean of Chicano educators and activists, was loved and admired by people everywhere, but by Chicanos especially, for it was this pioneer who inspired us through his legacy and writing. In the sixties, when Chicanos fought for social justice in the fields, barrios, and classrooms, he seemed to be the only model we had. We read *Barrio Boy* and the *Tragedy at Chualar*: He spoke and wrote with authority and authenticity, two elements we so painfully lacked then.

He became a mentor to hundreds of Chicanos who all wanted guidance. And Galarza found time to give that most precious of commodities to them: time and individual attention.

His accomplishments are too many, his words too numerous to list, and they overshadow the person that he was- quiet and unassuming, yet articulate and outspoken.

In 1943 he received Bolivia's highest honor; the Award of the Condor, for his work with organized labor there. And a few years ago, he still found time to help save Alviso, a poor barrio just outside of San Jose, from being converted into a dump site.

Galarza organized and championed the causes of farm-workers when Cesar Chavez was still a youngster. His book, *Merchants of Labor*, was the first authoritative and crisp analysis of the *bracero* program. He wrote about the thousands of Mexican laborers who came to "lend and arm" to the agribusiness of the Southwest. He spoke with conviction and compassion about the injustices they suffered.

To us Galarza was a giant. We had read his work as college students. My wife, Cecilia, was fortunate to have been loaned a carbon copy of *Merchants of Labor* in 1963. In 1972, Stanford University acquired the complete collection of Galarza's farm labor research.

In a speech presented at San Jose State University, December 19, 1973, Ernest Galarza spoke on the Chicano Experience. No one has ever expressed more eloquently what a Chicano is.

"I call him Chicano, in the first place, because that is what he wishes to be called, and respect for self-identity is a universal right. I call him a Chicano because he is a historical presence within an ethnic minority that is already different because of him. He is, furthermore, a Chicano because of his posture in which belligerence, a particular quality of social awareness, a distinct kind of romanticism, are unmistakable. There is also a Chicano style which cannot be mistaken for that of any other in American society today. If in some important respects his passion is pledged to a dream of Aztlan, he can and does argue that at least his is a passionate style of life. Feeling robbed of an ancestral cultural endowment he currently lives and acts according to symbols that outrage his detractors much more than they subdue their arrogance or reduce their power.

"But these Chicanos are not the first social beings to be driven to passion by their past in order to contend with the realities of their present. When the wells of emotion are filled only by resentment, a crying sense of injustice, racist affronts, deliberately designed frustrations to personal development and social worthiness, it may be suspect that the gods are making mad those they would destroy- the gods of power whose safety depends upon keeping the despairs of their various minorities apart. This, I think, is where the Chicano currently stands."

"... respect for self-identity is a universal right." —Galarza

We have vivid memories of meeting Galarza for the first time. We were in awe of him at first, but Galarza had that quality of a truly great person- he asked about our work in art, writing and education. He listened to the voices in the Chicano community-workers and professionals- and thoughtfully pondered what he had heard. He had long ago discovered that there were no easy answers to the complex and diverse nature of our communities. He became a mentor to hundreds of Chicanos who all wanted his guidance. And Galarza found time to give that most precious of commodities to them: time and individual attention.

He spoke with legitimacy. He was educated through a B.A. from Occidental, and M.A. from Stanford and a Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University. He spoke with authority because he had lived the life of a farm-worker before his educational accomplishments led him to work as a consultant to OEO/Whitney and the Ford Foundation.

Galarza inspired joy. He looked at each day with a sense of renewed energy and he never lost his sense of wonder- that quality we so often lose as adults conquered by daily routine.

We will always hold dear a luncheon invitation we received from Mae and Ernesto. We sat at their table along with our two children. Their home was serene and we were typical nervous parents with a six-year-old and toddler, hoping they wouldn't touch or break anything. Mae and Ernesto opened their home and hearts to all four of us. Both of them focused on the children. They showed us their garden, which had provided virtually everything they had served for lunch. Galarza spoke about a peach tree as one would talk about an old friend. The tree was now old and no longer bountiful, but the Galarzas had decided to let it preside over their garden until it decided to wither away on its own.

He gave us a collection of his children's books for our own. They are a poetic treasure of Mexican childhood rhymes. We sensed he had immensely enjoyed writing them.

He became a mentor to hundreds of Chicanos who all wanted guidance. And Galarza found time to give that most precious of commodities to them: time and individual attention.

A month-and-a-half before his death, Galarza was invited to speak before a group of Chicano graduates from Gilroy, California. He had to decline due to his poor health. The Gilroy committee then decided to invite Cecilia and I to serve as keynote speakers. It was ironic. He went away on that day of celebration for the precious young Gilroy high school and community college graduates. At that time only 40 percent of the Chicano students in that town received a high school diploma.

At that reunion, we paused for a moment of prayer in memory of Ernesto Galarza, friend and inspiration to so many of us. We also remembered another great writer and educator, friend, and colleague, Thomas Rivera, the late chancellor of the University of California at Riverside.

They were sad and trying times for Chicanos everywhere, having lost two great writers and educators, two friends, in the span of five weeks. We faced challenges that seemed overwhelming: the Simpson-Mazzoli Immigration Bill, a Supreme Court decision on affirmative action, the threat against bilingual education and bilingual ballots. These were causes Galarza had championed.

He encouraged me as a writer. We exchanged poems. From his poetry book *Kodachromes and Rhyme*, we found a verse that gave strength and comfort:

I only sang
Because the lonely road was long;
and now the road and I are gone
but not the song...

~ Program Profile ~

SLUG's Environmental Justice Youth Leadership Program

By Elizabeth Tan

SLUG, The San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners is a non-profit grassroots organization with 14 years of experience empowering local communities through education and employment. Our gardening and greening projects sow the seeds of social justice, community, economic development, and ecological sustainability. Our goal is to improve the quality of life through urban gardening. We believe in the power of the garden to transform individuals and communities. Anyone who wants to should be able to garden. SLUG makes this possible through community gardens, job training, youth programs, horticulture education, landscape construction, open space maintenance, and membership services.

With support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Public Health's Tobacco Free Project, SLUG is running an environmental justice youth leadership program for young people in Bayview Hunter's Point. Youth meet twice a week to participate in activities in and out of the classroom.

This year, the program is focusing on three main issues:

1. **The local and global impact of tobacco and its connection with environmental justice.**
2. **Solid waste and recycling.**
3. **Community food security.**

As youth learn about environmental justice issues, they work hard to become stronger leaders, community organizers, public speakers, and critical thinkers. Our work includes designing and conducting community surveys and actions around tobacco and environmental justice, and a variety of projects in the garden. The poems at right and the mission statement below are some of the youth participants work.

Environmental Justice

By Kenny Osborne

Environmental Justice,
Ohh what a sophisticated name.
Saving communities of color,
that is the E.J. game.

Environment means surroundings,
you know like the hood.
Justice means to undo,
to put what's wrong to good.

Now put those words together
to find what E.J. means
to make the neighborhoods good
to make them safe and clean.

To build up your courage
keep this next line in sight
I will stand up and fight
I will not go silently into the night.

The Ghetto

By Julius Mazion

Good kool-aid that has too much sugar
How much chili cheese fritos cost
Every 1st and 15th
The top ramen on the stove
The big fork and spoon on the kitchen wall
Outside, nowhere to play but the ghetto

Environmental Justice Youth Leadership Program Mission Statement

We are the Environmental Justice Youth Leadership Program from Bay View Hunter's Point. Our goal is to educate and empower people from our communities. We want people to learn to speak up for themselves and teach them that they don't have to wait for someone else to change our communities. We want to educate people about environmental justice and make low income communities and communities of color better and safer places to live.

Elizabeth Tan was SLUG's Environmental Justice Program Director when this article was written. She is now a fellow at the San Francisco Foundation