

“WEAVING OUR COLLECTIVE STRENGTH”!

2003 Conference Now a Fond Memory

Bob Johnson

The 2003 conference is over, and remarks such as these still linger: “One of the best,” “Such scholarly presentations,” “The speakers were eloquent.” Conference Chairs John Tsuchida (NAAPAE and California State University, Long Beach [CSULB]), Dorothy Chu (Pacific Asian American Caucus, California Teachers Association [PAAC-CTA]); and Kim Oanh Nguyen-Lam (Center for Language Minority Education and Research and CSULB), along with their many helpers and supporters, served up a pot pourri of speakers, presentations, entertainment, luncheons, and banquet that enlightened, stimulated, and even inspired.

Featured speakers were Warren Furutani, Trustee of the Los Angeles Community College District; Bonita Chamberlin, Institute for Continuing Education, San Diego; Robert Underwood, former US Representative from Guam; Bob Suzuki, President of California Polytechnic University, Pomona; Ming W. Chin, Justice of the California Supreme Court; and Wayne Johnson, President of the California Teachers Association. (Texts of Chin’s and Chamberlin’s speeches are in this newsletter.)

More than 100 presenters participated in 66 presentations. Conference attendees were also treated to entertainment by a string quartet from Long Beach Poly High School, Cambodian dances, Vietnamese dances, Hmong dances, and an American guitarist who was born in Viet Nam.

Committee Members who helped plan the conference were Jenny Chomori (PAAC-CTA and Los Angeles Unified School District); Sally Chou (NAAPAE and Compton Unified School District); Cliff Kusaba (PAAC-CTA and Long Beach Unified School District); Bruce Lee (PAAC-CTA and Los Angeles Unified School District); and Terpsi K. Tan (NAAPAE and CSULB).

Congratulations to everybody who helped plan and participate in this stimulating conference.

Heard at the Conference...

“We must teach children to speak up for themselves, not just accept everything a teacher says. Parents must be advocates for their children.”—Warren Furutani

The ability to speak well in public is an important leadership skill.”—Bob Suzuki

“If a teacher describes the world and you are not in it, you can be devastated.”—Robert Underwood

“A refugee camp in Afghanistan consists mostly of strips of cloth and blankets stitched together.”—Bonita Chamberlin

“Americans of Asian-Pacific Ancestry must prepare themselves to be political leaders.”—Bob Suzuki

“We must build willingness to become involved in politics. Only six members of the US House of Representatives and Senate are of Asian-Pacific Ancestry.”—Robert Underwood

“In the bottom 10% of California schools, 90% of the students are from poor families. In the top 10%, 3% are from poor families.”—Wayne Johnson

“The American dream is built on the principles of democracy, tolerance, and individualism.”—Justice Ming Chin

“We must see all cultures and colors of the world as a tapestry. We all win from diversity.” —Bonita Chamberlin

“Teachers are the only soldiers in democracy. Others can describe, but only teachers can make it happen.”—Bob Suzuki.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mutsuko Tanouchi

Dear NAAPAE Members,

Congratulations to Dr. John Tsuchida, who has just successfully conducted a wonderful 26th Annual NAAPAE conference in Long Beach, CA! His leadership won the cooperation of the Pacific Asian American Caucus of the California Teachers Association and the Center for Language Minority Education and Research at California State University, Long Beach. He had a splendid team of hard workers on his planning committee. Just to mention a few names, there are Dorothy Chu, Kim Oanh Nguyen-Lam, Jenny Chomori, Sally Chou, Cliff Kusaba, Bruce Lee, and Terpsi K. Tan.

The general membership meeting at the conference attracted over 20 people even though it was after the long day of continuous sessions and just before the conference banquet in Little Saigon. It is the only chance for interaction between the NAAPAE Executive Council and the general members. I hope many more members will plan to participate in this forum in coming years.

We are planning the next conference on the East Coast. Two chapters in Region I—Greater New York and Metro Washington, DC—are planning the conference together, along with NAAPAE members in Philadelphia. Please look forward to our announcement and call for papers in the fall.

We have some new faces in the Executive Council even before the election of officers takes place. The Metro Washington D.C. chapter elected Constance Lee as its new president after Jane Woodburn, the founder of the chapter and its first president stepped down. Grace Fung-Arto became president of the Greater New York chapter (Grace was the chapter's first vice president). We are hoping to form a chapter in Philadelphia soon.

The chapters have their own by-laws to select their leaders. In alternate years when the election of the NAAPAE Officers does not take place, members in each Region select their representative.

I must apologize for the delay of the NAAPAE Election of 2003. I could not line up the slate of candidates on time. The ballots will be mailed on May 9th along with a short biography of the candidates. Please return your vote to me by May 31, 2003. The results will be published in the summer issue of our newsletter.

You will be finishing up another successful school year. I will end my 31-year career in public school education at the end of June. I will also step down from the NAAPAE Presidency. I am deeply moved by the support I received during the four years I served as the NAAPAE president.

With appreciation and love,

Mutsuko (Mitzie) Tanouchi



APA PERSPECTIVES

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Send your submissions for the next newsletter by

August 1, 2003

MY JOURNEY AS AN ASIAN AMERICAN

Justice Ming W. Chin,
California Supreme Court

(Address presented at the joint conference of the National Association For Asian And Pacific American Education and the Pacific Asian American Caucus of the California Teachers Association . April 4, 2003.)

We live in dangerous, uncertain, and challenging times. We are now at war. Over 200,000 of our combat troops are fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom. As I watch the constant images of war on the nightly news, I am reminded of my Army service in Vietnam. In the corner of my garage at home is stored an old Army footlocker filled with memories. Over 30 years ago when I returned home from Vietnam, I sent that footlocker ahead with all of my worldly possessions.

I opened that footlocker the other day. Memories of my youth flooded back. I remembered the brave men with whom I served, some of whom did not return home. I remembered the family I left behind. I remembered that the burden of my Army service was much harder on my parents than it was on me. Shortly after I returned home, my father suffered a paralyzing stroke. He never spoke again. He never walked again. Today, my thoughts go out to the families of our combat troops. For their sake, however you may feel about this war, or war in general, it is my hope that all of you support the men and women we have placed in harm's way.

On September 11, 2001, yet another day that will live in infamy, each of our lives changed forever. We watched in horror as American flight 11 struck the North Tower. When United flight 175 hit the South Tower, we knew it was terrorism. We knew we were at war. We knew that the liberty and the freedom we cherish so dearly were under attack.

What was our response? We pulled together as a nation. We helped one another get through it. We buried the heroes who gave their lives to save others. We remembered the thousands of innocent souls whose lives were instantly extinguished. The President said—this attack on our liberty and freedom will not stand. Instantly, those two words—"liberty" and "freedom"—took on a new urgency, a new importance. The tragic events of 9/11 are a grim reminder that our liberty and freedom must be defended.

General Omar Bradley once said this about "Freedom"—"No word was ever spoken that held out more hope, demanded greater sacrifices, needed to be nurtured, blessed more the giver, damned more its destroyer, or became closer to God's will on earth. . . . [That's worth fighting for."

This evening, I am going to speak to you for a few minutes about liberty and individual responsibility. Let us begin with liberty and freedom. Because my concept of liberty is very personal, I am going to share with you today a bit of my personal background, my journey as an Asian American.

PROVERB

An old Chinese proverb tells us that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. My father took that first step 90 years ago. He left his small village in South China. As he stepped aboard a ship, destined for the USA, he began his odyssey in search of the American dream. The year was 1913. He was only 18 years old. He came without family, without funds, and without language.

He sailed the vast expanse of the Pacific by himself. When he arrived at that magical spot where the Pacific meets the San Francisco Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge had not yet been constructed. Yet the view was still majestic. In this wonderful land of hope and opportunity, he was able to carve out a remarkable life for his family: but it was not without pain, it was not without disappointment, it was not without sorrow.

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(“My Journey as an Asian American” continued from page 3)

My father came to an America that was not at all friendly to Chinese immigrants. In 1902 the U.S. Congress had extended the Chinese Exclusion Act indefinitely. My father ignored the hate—he ignored the hostility—he ignored the discrimination. He truly believed the words of Eleanor Roosevelt when she said, “No one can take away your self-esteem unless you let them.” He truly believed the words of Mahatma Gandhi when he said, “No one can make you feel inferior unless you let them.”

He was a proud pioneer who believed that hard work and determination would bring his family a better life. He worked long, hard days in potato fields. He saved the little money that he made to support his family in China. In 1917, he returned to his village to marry my mother. It was a marriage that was to last a lifetime.

My parents did not have an easy life, but it was certainly a good life. They were hardworking, persistent, and, above all, patient. They waited for 30 years—until 1943—for the U.S. Congress to decide that the Chinese Exclusion Act was wrong and, at long last, to repeal it. They waited for 30 years for Congress finally to permit Chinese immigrants to become U.S. citizens. That made it possible for my parents to enter a courtroom for the first and only time in their entire lives to take the oath as American citizens. It was one of the proudest days of their lives. In spite of the discrimination they endured, they loved their adopted country. They loved the freedom and liberty it gave them in such great abundance, and that so many of us so often take for granted. Why? Because they knew from first hand experience what it was like to live without it.

In their 59 years together, my parents raised eight children—I am the youngest—my brothers’ and sisters’ names are Mary, George, Joe, Betty, Jack, Jeanne, and Tom—I have no idea where Ming came from. In the United States, my parents were free to raise and educate their children—to give us the education they were denied. They were our first teachers, and though they never went to grammar school or high school, much less college, they were among the very best teachers I have ever known. They taught by example, never by edict or demand. They taught us to respect and care for our elders. They taught us to live life to its fullest and remain loyal to our family and our friends. They taught us the importance of giving back to the community. They taught us the importance of education, optimism, determination, and hard work. They taught us to celebrate freedom.

When my father began his struggle for freedom in 1913, he could not have even imagined that his youngest son would one day sit on the California Supreme Court. Because of his hard work, his determination, and the lessons he taught me, I have the privilege of living the American dream.

CONSTITUTION v. DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

That American dream is built on the principles of democracy, tolerance, and individualism. The American dream was born of the marriage of two important historical documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The first was written in 1776, while we were at war with England. It begins with these words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

The second was written in 1787, after we had started building the institutions of government that would make this new idea of democracy work. It begins with these famous words: “We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.”

Note the differences in the language of these two documents. The Declaration of Independence gave us the sobering rhetoric of war and the passion to pursue excellence and perfection. The Constitution has less passion, less certainty, and no reference to the creator; it gave us the dry discourse of governance—the structure, the road map for a working democracy. The Declaration was the promise; the Constitution was the fulfillment. The Declaration gave voice to high ideals; the Constitution put those ideals into practice. Both had as their purpose the protection of liberty. Our allegiance to their principles is the very foundation of our freedom, which enriches all of our lives.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Now that we have the framework, the structure, and the institutions of government, what is our duty as citizens in this experiment called democracy?

The flip side of the liberty coin is individual responsibility.

When Justice Anthony Kennedy addressed the American Bar Association in San Francisco, he used the theme of liberty and responsibility. He said, “Law cannot live in the consciousness of a people without an abiding belief in the principles of individual responsibility, rationality, and civility.” “Liberty,” he said, “was born in protest, but it survives in civility.”

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("My Journey as an Asian American" continued from page 4)

Justice Kennedy's words remind us that in a democracy, we must have respect for each other's opinions, even if they differ from our own; that a reasoned, rational, and civil discussion of those differences will better enable us to solve the difficult problems the post 9/11 world has brought to our shores. Justice Kennedy closed with these words: "In the end, when our heroes are counted, they will be the ones who recognized that individual responsibility is a celebration of freedom, not its denial."

As teachers and professors, what is your role and what are your responsibilities as indispensable participants in this experiment we call a democracy. You are in a unique position to teach these constitutional principles to our young people. You can ensure that they are aware of their rights, as well as their corresponding responsibilities, as citizens. After all, the progress Asian Americans have made by asserting their constitutional rights in court began with basic knowledge of those important rights. The duty to pass this knowledge on to our young people has taken on new meaning and new urgency since 9/11. As General Omar Bradley said, "Teachers are the real soldiers of democracy. Others can defend it, but only teachers can make it work." For the teachers of our young people, that is an important and awesome responsibility.

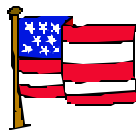
CONCLUSION

The tragic events of 9/11 gave us many heroes—the fire fighters—the police officers—the emergency workers? and now our armed forces in Iraq. When responsibility called, they answered with guts, courage, inexhaustible strength, and devotion to duty. Let us honor their memory by our steadfast commitment to our families, to each other, and to the promise of the Declaration of Independence.

President Eisenhower once said: "History entrusts the care of freedom to people of strength and vision."

Let us face the challenge of our time with the same courage, conviction, and resolve as the "Greatest Generation" faced the challenges of World War II.

I am going to close with the words of Abraham Lincoln. These words were true when spoken. They are equally true today. ". . . [W]e here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain? that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom? and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."



CIVIL RIGHTS LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST THE U.S. MARINES

In 1989, a Marine Corps review board in Quantico, Virginia told Bruce Yamashita, formerly a Honolulu attorney, that he had been "washed out" of a nine-weeks Officers Candidate School (OCS), just two days before graduation. In 1994, after many legal battles, the Navy and Marine Corps were forced to apologize and to commission Yamashita as a captain. This event took place in the U.S. Capitol.

Now Yamashita, a criminal defense attorney in Washington, D.C., is bringing a class-action lawsuit before the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing "that the military administrative process is ineffective, and service members should be granted the same safeguards other civilians have under the Civil Rights Act."

In a story titled, "Marines face civil rights lawsuit," Gregg K. Kakesako, writer for the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (April 20, 2003, p. A16), described the racial harassment that Yamashita was subjected to in OCS. Kakesako also wrote that the Marine Corps' statistics showed that, between 1982 and 1990, minority candidates at the Marine OCS were washed out at a rate of 41 percent, compared with 34 percent for white candidates. "In Yamashita's class, 60 percent of the minority candidates never were allowed to complete the course, compared with 28 percent of white candidates." The differences are far greater statistically than would occur simply by chance.

Hawai'i filmmaker Steve Okino is developing a documentary about Yamashita and plans are to air it on Hawai'i Public Television this fall if funds can be found to complete the project. Yamashita's autobiography, *Fighting Tradition*, will be published in July by the University of Hawai'i Press and the UCLA Asian American Press. For more information, see the website <www.unlikelyhero.org>. (Quotations and content in this story are reprinted with the permission of Gregg K. Kakesako.)—Bob Johnson

CULTURES ON THE EDGE: AN OPEN LOOK AT CULTURAL DIVERSITY AROUND THE WORLD FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Bonita Chamberlin
Institute for Continuing Education

(Address presented at the joint conference of the National Association For Asian And Pacific American Education and the Pacific Asian American Caucus of the California Teachers Association . April 4, 2003.)

Seven years ago, a man came up to me and gave me a gift. As I opened the present, I was astounded to pull out this beautiful purple shawl. The man smiled shyly while his partner told me that he was a weaver and had woven it for me. Then he told me why. The year before, I had given a presentation about weaving together our masculine and feminine sides, acknowledging that we have both and honoring them. It had touched this man in a deep way beyond the analogy of weaving. It had touched his need to be affirmed in the completeness of his being as a gay man, in the face of all society tried to tell him about himself. He had found affirmation that day, in such a profound way that he felt compelled to give back his gratitude in this gift.

We all seek affirmation. We want to be accepted for who we are rather than judged by preconceptions and prejudice based on the color of our skin, or the gender of those whom we love, or the socio-economic level in which we find ourselves, or our age, sex, ethnic origin, or by our physical ableness.

Diversity is like this multicolored purple shawl. All the different colors, sizes, and textures are woven together to form a whole. As a whole, the shawl can be used for different purposes, such as warmth, or covering, or adornment, and its beauty and strength come from the integrity of its weaving. If we remove some of the strands because we don't like their color, or they don't look good beside another, or they're too skinny, the integrity is weakened, and the shawl may even begin to fall apart. Every individual strand contributes to the beauty and strength of the whole, just as in life, wherein every person contributes to the truth and wisdom of our interdependent existence.

Research shows that fear is one of the biggest deterrents to beginning the work of welcoming diversity. Frederick Douglass understood this fear and addressed it well:

Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation are people who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the awful roar of its waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand; it never did and it never will.

Happily, research also showed that, though fear of problems is what keeps us from trying, once we become intentional about our programs toward diversity, we tend to succeed. Furthermore, the results indicate that "for real change to occur, diversity must be put on your agenda."

I ask you to do that with me this weekend. I ask you to put diversity on our agenda, that we might truly become the welcoming people we envision, profess and desperately need in this multi-cultural world, in this global village, this interdependent web of which we are a part. Let us weave with all the colors, sizes, and textures, a world of integrity, strength and beauty which shall surely become imbued with wisdom and truth.

Is World War III, the event we've all been waiting for, yet trying to prevent, finally approaching? How many more must die? How much blood must spill? How many mothers and sisters, fathers and brothers will mourn the unbearable loss of loved ones? A glistening thread of sorrow weaves through the hearts of our species. It is as old as the ancestors, who also unite us.

The world has been grieving, counting her losses. But now the clock ticks louder as the eleventh hour comes abruptly to an end. The bully has been throwing some powerful, precise punches. Working people, giant buildings, and invincibility have been sacrificed.

People at the bar smile and ask how it's going. I look around at all of us as if we're splayed out on some lost beach. The tide has gone out, sucking up all the water this time. The underbelly of our false security, our sense of who we are and our place in the world lies tousled, naked, and exposed. Shelled creatures scramble aimlessly for familiar cover, but somehow the ocean is different now. A giant wave prepares, almost invisible on the horizon.

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(“Cultures on the Edge” continued from page 8)

We drink our cocktails. We talk about the Time Magazine article. We strategize our next event for peace. We assess the media, both the progressive and the conservative angles. We take our positions. We pose in odd shapes in our respective furniture, arranged, re-arranged. No one mentions our trajectory or the speed this ship seems to be moving.

A woman tells a friend how much we are despised in Indonesia. I hear a thousand other countries quietly murmuring, wondering if finally the big, bully will get a taste of his own medicine, wondering who else will suffer the results of hate begetting hate, fear breeding fear. How many more bodies will be counted in the final toll. The heartache is as tangible as the taste of the forthcoming unknown. We are united by expectancy as new ageless fears unearth.

But there is another web being woven. Many of the millions of weavers, don't even know we are weaving, but the fabric grows, defying large bodies of water, ignoring ideologies, religions, even names. It is this unnamable tapestry that transcends hope. It is life herself breeding life through us, her children. Like all children, we ask the unknowable questions and give them answers when we can't wait anymore. All we can do is to awake to our weaving and behold the edges of beauty's vastness. Hopefully, by then we are trembling in awe and singing in gratitude for being allowed to be a part of the unfolding.

In America, attention has turned from the rescue effort in New York to the revenge operation against Afghanistan, already one of the most difficult places in the world to live. This meeting creates a context of mutual support for individuals who are likely to be alienated. It creates a safe place to be able to express the sensibilities rooted in our particular cultural experience. Here there is no need to choose between remaining silent or carefully explaining things so as not to provoke hostility or defensiveness—one doesn't have to choose between self and group identity.

In this setting, you share the same cultural norms and an unspoken understanding of the day-to-day difficulties faced on the outside. This weekend you can let down your guard. Instead, your difference becomes a source of strength and the particularity of your cultural experience is affirmed and energized. Our connectedness with one another is strengthened when you share your stories which bring out differing sensibilities, and engage openly and completely in creating common goals, values, and visions.

We help create an atmosphere that
 Evokes a spirit of generosity
 Reclaims wholeness
 Builds trust
 Draws out mutual support
 Where differences widen horizons
 Inspires integrity and respect
 Fosters principled relationships
 Establishes democratic processes
 People enjoy one another
 Is innovative
 Is productive
 Is visionary

It is perhaps prophetic that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose anniversary of his death is today, said “our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.”

- ?? We gather today to join in the sharing of our songs, stories, music, and creative energy.
- ?? We gather today to feel the sense of community that is created when we come together.
- ?? We gather today in the strength of our diversity to stand in oneness with our brothers and sisters throughout the world.
- ?? We gather today in the recognition that when one suffers, all suffer.
- ?? We gather today knowing that from this day forward, we will feel the strength of our connectedness and from that strength we will step forth in power and love with the determination to take the actions needed to create the change we wish to see in the world.
- ?? We gather today knowing that on this day the weaving of a new world has begun – a world of balance, partnership, justice, and peace.

As we leave our gatherings on this remarkable day let each of us make a commitment to take some type of on-going action that will move us closer to achieving our mutual goal of a balanced and peaceful planet. (Bonita Chamberlin can be contacted at <bonita@ceu.org>.)

Reflections on Learning

SOME THOUGHTS ON HUMAN LEARNING

Yukiko Inoue

Associate Professor Of Educational Research
College Of Education, University Of Guam.

I believe that learning is not so much a gradual revelation of truth as a self-reinforcing process that deepens and embroiders knowledge. According to Kolb's experiential learning model (1984) and the cognitive approach to learning, students actively discover knowledge, gain insights into learning problems, organize and process information, and direct their own learning.

Although Kolb's model originated in the business world, it can be applied to all kinds of learning disciplines. Beginning with the assumption that learning occurs through the uniting of two dimension—the taking-in of information and the processing of information—Kolb conceived learning as a four-stage cycle: (i) concrete experience (engaging in new experiences—that is, *feeling*); (ii) reflective observation (perspective experiences—that is, *watching* and *listening*); (iii) abstract conceptualization (creating concepts to integrate observations into theories—that is, *thinking*); and (iv) active experimentation (utilizing theories to make decisions and solve problems—that is, *doing*). Kolb's model can be extrapolated to broader applications in the field of education, including how students learn, how teachers teach, and how teachers and students interact.

However, despite the applicability of such broad-based theories, it is important for college teachers to recognize individual differences in their students. In particular, it is important to recognize the differences in individual *thinking styles*—otherwise teachers can confuse a student's thinking style with the quality of a student's ability to think. It might, therefore, be useful, at the beginning of a semester, for teachers to conduct a learning-style inventory for each student. This can be used to divide students into group activities or projects based on the types of learning style (for example, "diverger," "assimilator," "converger," and "accommodator"). It is well known that most students know very little about how learning is influenced by their own individual role-actions and capabilities.

In today's technologically sophisticated society, educational technology has a vital role in expanding human capacities for learning and for enhancing human reasoning abilities. One of the central metaphors of the information age is to posit the human mind as a computer. Just as the human mind has functions that receive data, store them in memory, and retrieve them as needed, so a computer has functions that accept data, process them, and display information.

A computer can certainly handle enormous amounts of data quickly and accurately. Nevertheless, a computer operates under the control of software, and people programmed the software. Computers are certainly adept at the tasks they perform, but only insofar as those tasks do not require insight or intuition. The human capacity for insight and intuition, and individual differences in learning styles, demonstrate how truly remarkable the human capacity for learning really is!

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

via "Betty Jeung, [NEA]" <bjeung@nea.org>

On April 30, the House passed an updated 'Individuals with Disabilities Education Act' (IDEA) -- the federal special education law -- after rejecting efforts to add a voucher provision.

The House also rejected an amendment that would take education personnel out of the process for identifying learning disabilities. Essentially, only medical personnel would have been able to make such determinations.

Representative Tim Murphy (PA), a psychologist who has done many student evaluations, told his House colleagues that physicians are not qualified to make these determinations. They can identify brain damage, he said, but not learning disabilities.

The NEA opposed both amendments.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS TO BE PUBLISHED

Conference Chair John N. Tsuchida has announced that the ten to twelve best papers presented at the NAAPAE/CTA-PAAC Conference will be published as Conference Proceedings. Presenters who are interested in submitting their papers for possible inclusion in this anthology should contact John by May 31, 2003, for more information.
<jtsuchid@csulb.edu>

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

NAAPAE does not send reminders to renew your membership, so please check the date on your mailing label and renew before your membership expires. Thanks.



RABBIT-PROOF FENCE

Reviewed by Jean L. Johnson
Director of Community Training and Outreach, Center on Disability Studies
College of Education, University of Hawai'i

This highly acclaimed film, based on a true story, is a *must see* for all educators who work with Pacific Islander children and for anyone who has any doubt about the impact of culture on children. It is the story of three little girls (born to Aboriginal mothers and white fathers), taken by force from their mothers, and driven to a government school 2,400 kilometers away.



But these little girls, longing for their mothers, do the “impossible”—a daring escape from the authorities and a long trek through the wilderness to home. The vivid cinematography takes the audience along for their epic return journey across the harsh, stark desert landscape. Their only resources for their journey, as they trudge through some of Australia’s most inhospitable outback country, are their tenacity, determination, ingenuity, a few friendly settlers along the way, and each other. Their one hope—find the rabbit-proof fence (the world’s longest artificial barrier, stretching north-south across Australia) that will guide them home. Few stories exist of young girls who have accomplished such feats of courage and survival.

The film is a realistic portrayal of shameful racist policies from the not-too-distant past. Between 1900 and 1970, official policy of the Australian Government decreed that all ‘half-caste’ children should be taken from their families to be ‘made white, to breed out the color.’ In Australia, these children are called the ‘stolen generation.’ The children were denied their identity, taken away to orphanages, boarding schools, and foster homes where they were to be prepared for a new life in white society, largely working as domestic servants. Official documents from that period portray the poor food, rudimentary education, and harsh discipline the children endured. The film portrays the unconscionable-genocidal evil that can be directed by misguided people who believe they are doing right.

Beyond the story of the three girls, the story speaks something to us all. The film’s Director stated that half way through reading the screenplay, the children ceased to be black or white, they were just children wanting to return to their mothers. The story shows how compelling is the call of “home—to return to where we belong.”

The film is cinema at its best, masterly crafted, harsh cinematography, and haunting sound-track, telling a story that needs to be told. Not a morality tale, the movie is an emotionally-charged good film that grabs your heart and mind, leaving you knowing that what you have seen is important, true, and of lasting value. Without preaching or condemning the official policies, the film delivers a profound message by letting history speak for itself without cheap sentimentality. This is one of those rare movies whose scenes will be long imprinted on your memory. Finally, this is a thoroughly enjoyable movie of heartbreak—hope—and triumph of an extraordinary spirit.

The Director, knowing the movie needed “raw” talent, spent three months traveling through the outback, interviewing 1,200 girls. Three young Aboriginal girls with no prior acting experience were cast, and they dominate the screen with their presence. Everlyn Sampi plays Molly; Tianna Sansbury, Daisy; and Laura Mongahan, Gracie. Not only had Sampi never acted, she had never been to a movie!

The film is based on the book written in 1996 by Molly’s daughter, Doris Pilkington Garimara. Garimara was herself taken from her mother Molly at the age of four, and had to wait 25 years to see her mother again. Another decade passed before Garimara heard the story of the rabbit-proof fence and of her mother’s trek. After hearing her Aunty Daisy tell the story, Garimara believed this historical event should be shared. The movie’s finale is moving, when the real Molly (age 85) and Daisy (age 79) deliver a poignant epilogue to the tale.

The movie was produced by Phillip Noyce and Christine Olsen for Rumbalara Films, Olsen Levy Production in association with Showtime Australia. Released in 2002, it is now available at Blockbusters and other video outlets. To learn more about the film, visit its website, <<http://www.rabbitproofence.com.au>>.

“They came and took us one day. Couldn’t even say goodbye. They told us this is our new home. They told us not to speak our language. The told us we had no mothers. I knew they were wrong.”

“The policeman came and took us, Gracie, Daisy, and me, Molly. They put us in that place. We run away. Long way from there. We knew we find that fence, we go home.”

“We just kids. We walk a long way. There’s a fence somewhere. If we find that fence, we go home.”

“Those other kids that were taken, they were much younger. They didn’t know mother. But I knew mother. I wanted to go home to mother.” Molly Craig (85), Jigalong, Western Australia.

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