



Boston Union Teacher

The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union

AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO • Democracy in Education • Volume XL, Number 7 • February, 2008

African American History is My History Too!



See Berta Berriz's letter on page 6

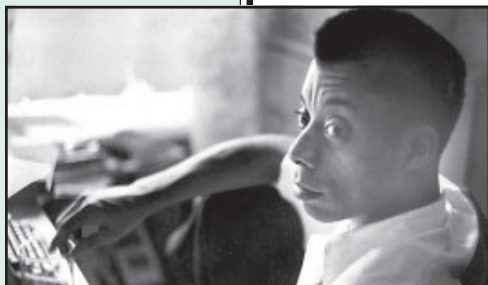
Excerpts from...

"A Talk to Teachers"

By James Baldwin

Historical Context: When James Baldwin gave his talk for teachers it was 100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation. Much of the civil rights legislation had yet to be passed. George Wallace, Governor of Alabama, was barring black students from the state university. Martin Luther King, Jr. had been jailed in Birmingham and four teenage girls had been murdered in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

On the positive side, the March on Washington and King's "I Had a Dream" speech had inspired a nation. President John F. Kennedy had called for an end to "Jim Crow Laws." Malcolm X had brought together urban forces in protest. Martin was the conscience of the movement. Malcolm was the passion of the movement. And James Baldwin embodied the anger and the memory of an oppressed people. There was hope and there was possibility.



"Ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have."
- James Baldwin

Let's begin by saying that we are living through a very dangerous time. Everyone in this room is in one way or another aware of that. We are in a revolutionary situation, no matter how unpopular that word has become in this country. To any citizen of this country who figures himself as responsible - and particularly those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young

(continued on page 7)

BTU and BPS Sponsor a PD Activity For Our Own Members: What Does the BPS Offer?

Answer: A Good Variety of Sound Programs

By Richard Stutman
BTU President

In early January, the BTU and the School Department held a joint meeting at the BTU office to discuss how the school system can do a better job of promoting itself to students who might otherwise leave the BPS to attend charter schools. Each student who leaves the BPS and goes to a charter school costs the city approximately \$10,000 in money that would otherwise be spent on our students. The route to charter schools is highly traveled in both directions, with hundreds of our students going back and forth yearly to charters. This year, the city is spending \$44 Million to pay tuitions at 14 Boston-housed charter schools. By the way, if that \$44 million dollars stayed in the city budget and went to our schools, there'd be a per pupil increase in the neighborhood of \$800 per pupil per year.

Some of the students enrolled in charter schools have never been enrolled in the BPS. Others are former BPS students who leave the BPS for a variety of reasons. It has long been thought that the

BPS does a very mediocre job of promoting itself to its own students, particularly to those who are in transition grades. Making matters worse, charter schools do an excellent job of recruiting our students. At \$10,000 per student it's little wonder they recruit our students!

This year, the BTU and the school department decided to do something about the loss of students by providing an informational session for key middle school personnel to learn about the



Lael Lucia receiving High School Choice Applications for Grover Cleveland 8th Grade Students.



BTU President Richard Stutman and BPS Superintendent Dr. Carol Johnson co-host the High School Review event.



Special Assistant to the Superintendent Kathleen Mullin and BTU Secondary Field Rep. Caren Carew.

wealth of high school programs available to our students.

We decided to target the 8th-to-9th grade transition because it is a significant juncture in each child's life. Next year we intend to expand this program to other grades. We'd like to bring elementary school personnel over to listen to middle and K-8 personnel, and so on. Each of us in every school throughout the city can benefit from knowing the wide scope of programs spread throughout our 144 schools.

(continued on page 4)



Amarillis Garcia receives High School Applications for the Irving Middle School.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Boston, MA 02109
Permit No. 52088

BOSTON TEACHERS UNION
LOCAL 66, AFT
180 Mount Vernon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02125



Dimensions of Effective Schools: Know Content 2

Japan Educational System: Findings 5

Get In On the Act for National Certification 8

Commentary: Garret Virchick

The Dimensions of an Effective School System: Know Content

The 5th Dimension of Effective Teachers is to **Know Content**. If we are to educate our students it is imperative that we are well versed in language, mathematics, literature, the sciences, history, geography, health, and the arts. It is equally true that the school committee that sets this standard be well versed in and listen to teachers about what we know best: teaching and education.

As teachers we are expected to: *Teach factually correct, current content based on appropriate standards. Models the use of sophisticated vocabulary for the content and requires students to use that vocabulary in discussions, schoolwork and homework.* Highly effective teachers use comprehensive knowledge of subject matter to ensure that all students understand key concepts, themes, multiple perspectives, and relationships within and across subject areas.

A highly effective school committee needs to educate that public about the facts of teaching. Many of us in the Boston Teachers Union have been urging the school committee for years now that multiple forms of assessment are needed to truly evaluate our students. Where has the school committee been in the public debate around standardized testing and MCAS? We fought against the enactment of the Unz amendment and the dismantling of bilingual education because we know that children who are literate in their own language do better when it comes to learning a second language. This is factually correct. Where was the school committee during the public debate on this issue? As teachers we are constantly taking courses to learn more. Perhaps the school committee needs to do the same.

When looking at the 2nd expectation under this dimension there seems to be a disconnect between what the school committee expects from teachers and how they define innovation. On the one hand we are expected to: *Design a school-year instructional plan based on BPS curricula and scope/sequences, pacing guides, mate-*



Garret Virchick

rials, and assessments. But they also define innovation as teachers who analyze, adapt, and create a wide range of relevant instructional materials and resources to extend students' understanding. On the one hand we

must bow to standardization and on the other we need to analyze, adapt and create.

It is not enough for the school committee to pay lip service to progressive educational reform. We need a school committee that stands up to the backward educational policies of those who want to turn schools into factories. They must also ensure that there are systems in place to encourage creative teaching. There are hundreds of examples of great teaching throughout the Boston Public Schools. These teacher leaders need to be encouraged and given the time and resources that are necessary to popularize what they are doing. The resources that are spent on standardization and testing can be better put to use replicating the expert practices that already exist in our school system.

Finally, knowing content means teachers that: *Explain material in a clear and focused manner and consistently communicates how curriculum connects to key concepts, themes and essential questions within and across disciplines.* Likewise we need a school committee that can explain to the citizens of Boston the complexities of education. We need leaders who refuse to succumb to political pressures that bash teachers and teacher unions as the problems in our school system. We need a school committee who acknowledges that the tax structure in this society needs to change to support public education. And then in a clear and focused manner consistently communicate that to parents, voters, the media and the legislature. Then, when we evaluate them, we can say that they KNOW THEIR CONTENT!

I Was Thinking...

By Jenna Fitzgerald
Paraprofessional/Substitute Field Rep.

It's amazing when your home recuperating how your mind works in a much slower fashion. You're not caught up with six to ten different problems at once. You have time to sit and think, and I was thinking how many of my 1,400 paras know what the Union was like way back when...

Aides, as we were known in the late 60's, early 70's were 1,400 strong, including transitional aides, and with no representation. The BTU, in their wisdom, conducted a secret ballot election with the results that the BTU was recognized as the exclusive collective bargaining agent for all aides. On May 9, 1972, aides were officially welcomed into the Boston Teachers Union.

Aides were dues-paying members who moved gradually trying to find their niche. There was no training at this point and quite frankly teachers were as inexperienced as we aides were as to what role we were to play. Some good relationships were made, while in other cases it was a disaster.

After four to five years of floundering and having no guidelines, I took it upon myself to take the next step: If we were to be part of the Union then we must show our desire to become involved. I had meetings with aides on Sundays over on Martin Luther King Boulevard. One of our aides lived in a building where she had access to a meeting room. It was at these meetings that it was decided an aide should run for the Executive Board of the BTU, because that is the board where policy is made. After many weeks of deliberation, it was decided that I would be the one to run.

I took out my nomination papers, and when the word was out that an aide was running, it caused quite a stir.

The election was held and the count was in. I had come in second, only outnumbered by my dear friend, **Jean Carr Walsh**.

The next step was to get the aides their own Field Representative – after all, 1400 aides deserved their own representative. That took a little persuasion and a few more years. In December 1979, seven years later, a first time Field Rep for Aides was elected at the BTU – A banner day for aides, with many more to come.

Oh! I forgot to say that ten people ran for the office, including one fellow who said, and I quote, "I have never been to a union meeting, but if I am elected, I will attend all union meetings." Of course, he didn't get elected.

I was very fortunate to have the aides remember me, and the struggles we faced together. So, 28 years ago this December, I was elected as the Aides Representative and have been re-elected every two years since. I quickly settled in and was working diligently on issues when one day I was called out of a staff meeting for an urgent call from the AFT in Washington D.C. I took the call from an AFT staffer who wanted to know if I was the person in charge of 1,400 aides in Boston. I answered "yes" and he continued his conversation with, "How did you ever get a handle on 1,400 people with AIDS?" My flabbergasted answer was, "Hold on, you have it all wrong. These aides are teacher helpers in the Boston schools, not people suffering from a disease!"

Needless to say, that was the day we changed our name from aides to *paraprofessionals*.

It took a while to get everyone on the same page with the new nomenclature. For instance, on a certain Friday, no para in the city got paid, and when I called around to the district offices, I was told no checks came in for paras – the only

(continued on page 7)



Jenna Fitzgerald

Boston Union Teacher

Published by the Boston Teachers Union AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO

The *Boston Union Teacher* is published eleven times a year September - July, inclusive.

President

RICHARD F. STUTMAN

Vice President

PATRICK CONNOLLY

Secretary-Treasurer

EDWARD A. WELCH

Co-Editors

MARY F. GLYNN

GARRET VIRCHICK

Editorial Board

Caren Carew

Angela Cristiani

Jenna Fitzgerald

Robert Jango

Michael J. Maguire

Michael McLaughlin

Eileen Weir

EDITORIAL NOTE:

The opinions expressed in the *Boston Union Teacher* do not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Teachers Union, or those of its members.

WHEN WRITING:

All correspondence to the *Boston Union Teacher* must be typewritten and signed. All articles must be appropriate to the publication, and in good taste.

Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@btu.org.

DEADLINE:

The Deadline for submitting articles for the March edition of the *Boston Union Teacher* is February 12th.

All copy should be e-mailed to mfglynn@comcast.net and g.virchick@verizon.net

This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

180 Mount Vernon Street ♦ Boston, MA 02125
617-288-2000 ♦ 617-288-2463 ♦ Fax 617-288-0024 ♦ www.btu.org

Seminar on Retirement & Estate Planning with BTU Secretary-Treasurer Edward A. Welch

Thursday, March 27, 2007 ♦ 4:00 pm ♦ BTU Hall

- ♦ Retirement Rules and Regulations
- ♦ Group Health Insurance Plans (Pre & Post Retirement)
- ♦ Social Security vs. Public Employee Pension
- ♦ Medicare vs. Medicaid
- ♦ The Four (4) Basic Estate Plan Documents
- ♦ Tax Consequences for All of the Above

Retirement & Estate Planning Seminar with Edward A. Welch

Name _____

School/Dept. _____

Home Tel. # _____

Yes, I will attend the Retirement & Estate Planning Seminar.

Yes, my spouse or a friend will attend with me.

Please Remit to: Jeanne Turner, Boston Teachers Union
180 Mt. Vernon Street, Dorchester, MA 02125

Commentary: Michael Maguire

BTU Members Get a Thank You from Superintendent Johnson: What a Difference a Year Makes!

This time last year, we in the BTU were gearing up for a strike vote. Tempers were high and the mercury was low. As you'll recall on Valentine's Day 2007 we had one nasty storm. But instead of canceling school, the powers-that-be decided to keep them open; not because the roads were safe for travel, but because an eleventh hour proposal was part of the then-superintendent's negotiating tactics.

The snow was heavy and icy that day and the streets were barely passable. We had been given accurate and ample warning by the forecasters that such a storm was coming. Yet the city chose to hold school in spite of such foul weather. The focus that day was clearly not on children.

Now let's fast forward to December 13, 2007. The city suffered a storm of historic proportions. Snow fell at the rate of two inches an hour. The Commonwealth made the dual mistake of not pre-salting the roads and asking for the early release of employees. Rush hour thus began at 2:00 p.m., which, ironically, was the height of the storm.

Traveling was a nightmare. Commuting times quintupled. Some poor students and staff didn't reach home until 9:00 p.m. or later. Some busses couldn't even report to their schools due to the absolute gridlock citywide.

I was one of the lucky few who made it home relatively quickly. I spent the afternoon shoveling and stacking snow in ever growing piles. Late that night I was outside in my driveway preparing my car for the next morning's commute. I assumed we'd have classes the next day. After all, we had school on the wretched Valentine's Day.

Well, to my utter astonishment, my wife called to me from our kitchen window to tell me that the city had cancelled classes for the next day. Hallelu-



Michael Maguire

jah! Then I got the superintendent's telephone call.

OMG, my wife saved the message on the answering machine and I had to play it twice to make sure I had heard it correctly. Dr. Johnson's message was as sincere and heartfelt as it was shockingly unexpected. In her message, Superintendent Johnson thanked the staff for staying until all hours so that all children were cared for. A "thank you" message from a BPS superintendent! Unprecedented! Her message also said that schools would be cancelled because too many students and staffers got home so late they'd need a day to recover from the ordeal.

As good and decent as Dr. Johnson's efforts were – and I do believe they were genuine – we in the teaching profession still have a long way to go in our fight for equality with other professions. How many of the teachers who stayed late with their students received overtime pay? How many of the police officers who were called to work late on that same day got overtime pay?

I think we all know the answers to these questions. Here's another one: How many of the employees who were sent home early have to make up the time without compensation? In a way that's what happens to us with a snow day. You can either look at it that we did not get paid for staying home on December 14, 2007 or you can look at it that we'll work for free on June 23, 2008.

In short, we teachers need to be as mindful of our professional treatment as we are of our students' welfare. Many a good teacher did not leave a child out in the cold, likewise we must not leave ourselves out there either.

(Michael Maguire teaches at Boston Latin Academy.)

Just Ask Caren...

by Caren Carew
Secondary Field Representative



How do I transfer out of my school?

Permanent teachers are eligible to participate in the transfer process. Human Resources projects that the transfer list will be on the MyBPS (www.boston.k12.ma.us) intranet system February 25 – March 10, 2008 for 10 working days after it is posted on the website. This website will be the only means of posting said positions. Teachers must apply online and may do so for up to five [5] positions. Please see Superintendent's Circular HRS-HS-7; 'Staffing, Reassignment and Hiring for School Year 2008 – 09' located on the regular BPS website for specific details of the Human Resources timelines, procedures and applications in this regard. The contract states, "Positions held by provisional teachers with a letter of reasonable assurance shall be eligible to apply for transfers to their own positions under the transfer process. However, any permanent teacher who seeks a position to which a provisional teacher has applied under this section will be granted an interview by the School Site Council Personnel Subcommittee." **It is mandatory that the SSC Personnel Subcommittee of each school screen and interview candidates from the transfer list.**

Contract language details, "Teachers may be considered for transfer in any subject area in which they recertify... even if they do not hold an active Boston program area; however, a school's Personnel Subcommittee shall not be required to select any such individual." ... "In cases where there is only one applicant for a vacancy in the transfer posting, the personnel subcommittee will not be required to hire that single applicant, and the vacancy will go into the excess pool." ... "Transfers will take effect the following September, unless the posting otherwise provides." ... "In the event that a position sought through transfer no longer exists on the effective date of transfer, the person seeking the transfer shall remain in his/her position as if the vacancy had not been posted."

The transfer list is the opportunity for candidates inside BPS to apply for other BPS teaching jobs. Applicants fill out the on-line data which is transmitted to HR, screened and then sent to each respective school. I suggest in addition to the mandatory on-line process, you also actively pursue these job(s) by contacting the principal at the prospective school by crafting a strong cover letter highlighting your specific skills as they relate to programs at their school. Do some homework about the school and reflect that knowledge in tailoring your cover letter emphasizing your attributes and their applicability to the specific job opening at their school. Principals see their school as the most important, and as a result, want to know how you as a skilled team player will help raise those test scores and contribute to a positive school culture going forward. Update your resume. Send/bring copies of it to the interview. I've heard teachers 'assume' that Court Street sends the prospective school 'all of their info' so that they arrive empty handed to interviews. Court Street does not send any info other than the data you fill out on-line to apply. If you have a portfolio, it is a good idea to bring it along as well. If you haven't developed one, start to collect exemplary examples of student work, projects you've done, curriculum you've developed, etc. and bring this along with you to interviews to help illustrate your attributes and to distinguish you from the pack.

What is the difference between the transfer list and regular job postings?

The transfer list is the first list of positions known to be available for the upcoming year which will be posted for internal BPS candidates only. The transfer list is posted on the School Department MyBPS website (www.boston.k12.ma.us) for 10 school days. "All applications for vacant positions must be submitted no later than 10 school days after posting on the website." This year, the list the Human Resource Department projects the transfer list will appear February 25 – March 10, 2008. The contract reads, "The website shall be the only medium for posting vacancies. Internal candidates must use the MyBPS intranet system for submission of applications, including data information, form and resume. Human Resources will not accept paper applications." Other job posting lists appear in an ongoing basis reflecting the current positions available to apply for as they become open. These positions are open to any applicants from the BPS website, internal candidates are not given preference. Excess pools this year are projected by the Human Resources Department to be held the week of April 14 - 18.

Transfer candidates must be interviewed by the school based School Site Council's Personnel Subcommittee. The contract states, "The role of the Personnel Subcommittee of the School Site Council shall be:

- to approve the hiring of new BTU teacher's bargaining unit staff and in staff transfers of BTU teacher's bargaining unit staff from other schools in the system and the choice of teachers from the excess pools.
- To approve the selection of Lead Teachers, Mentor Teachers, and new athletic coaches.
- To determine the schedule and procedures for reviewing candidates for positions.
- The decisions of the Personnel subcommittee are not subject to the approval of the School Site Council."

The Personnel Subcommittee consists of the Principal, two SSC teachers, and one SSC parent. SSC teachers select their own SSC reps for the Personnel Subcommittee.

Who's responsible for plowing school parking lots?

The contract states, "The School Committee shall guarantee that snow is plowed from school yards used for parking at no expense to bargaining unit [BTU] members."

When do programming preference sheets come out?

The contract states, "No later than February 1st, programming preference sheets shall be distributed to all teachers." For High and Middle School teachers it reads, "Programming preference will be honored to the extent consistent with the provisions of this Agreement [contract]. All preference sheets shall be returned by March 1." This means that a 'preference' is just that, it does not mean that the teacher is guaranteed their choice as submitted. The contract also details, "On or before February 1, a list of all non-teaching assignments for which administrative periods are given in a teachers' program shall be posted in each school. These assignments may be applied for in the teacher's program preference sheet as herein [within the contract] provided. An applicant for such a non-teaching assignment who does not receive the assignment shall, upon his/her request, be given the reasons for not having been selected by the Principal or Headmaster."

Know your rights!

I'm fighting for you, let's stand up together! BTUnity!

BTU Phone Numbers

Office	617-288-2000
Taped Message	617-288-2463
Health & Welfare	617-288-0500
AFT Massachusetts	617-423-3342
Function Office	617-288-3322
Lounge Office	617-288-3322
Vision Center	617-288-5540
Tremont Credit Union	781-843-5626

BTU and BPS Sponsor a PD Activity For Our Own Members: What Does the BPS Offer? Answer: A Good Variety of Sound Programs

(continued from page 1)

About 175 BPS staff people attended this session held at the BTU. The session lasted three hours during which a few themes surfaced repeatedly:

- Our schools do an excellent job of educating all of our students, but we do a sketchy job of advertising same.
- The breadth and scope of our academic programs is deep and unsurpassed by charter schools.
- Our schools offer a variety of creative programs and themes, supported

by a vast network of partners and outside resources.

- We work hard to keep our students enrolled and engaged, and for those who slip through the cracks, we provide a wealth of other alternative opportunities.
- Some Charter Schools offer attractive 'come-ons' but often do a terrible job of retaining students. The much-heralded MATCH school, for example, has a drop-out rate of close to 70% from 9th grade to 12th grade. Many of those students forced

out of the MATCH school in grades 9, 10, and 11 are former BPS students who left our schools in the 8th grade only to return to the BPS before their senior year. The MATCH school's high forced attrition rate is not unique among charter schools. MATCH constantly takes pokes at the BPS while bragging about its own alleged 100% student acceptance rate at college. What MATCH doesn't brag about is its incredibly high eviction rate of students. Nor does it brag about what happens to them.

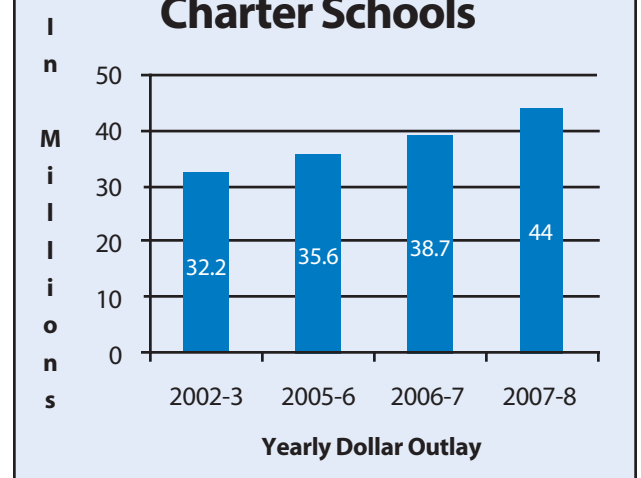
We would like BPS personnel to better understand the wealth of high school programs available, and towards that end, a letter from the BTU will go out shortly to all middle school and K-8 personnel explaining this issue. We ask that our members better familiarize themselves with the wealth of offerings in our schools. A couple of things we can do:

- Call the different high schools and programs and invite them out to your school to explain the nuances of their programs.
- Read for yourself the ins and outs of each program, as well as the student assignment process, which started last week and runs for months.

The best place to start checking out what our high schools provide is to look at the BPS website <http://www.highschoolrenewal.org/schools/default3.asp>.

The BTU intends to work closely with

City's Dollar Loss to Charter Schools



the school department to educate our own student populations as to the breadth and scope of our own high school offerings. We have a good number of reasons for doing so. First and foremost, our schools provide a better education than charters. We do students a disservice by passively allowing some of them to leave to charters without explaining more fully our in-house alternatives. Secondly, our schools can use more resources, and the loss of \$44 million really hurts.

We are committed to this effort, and we urge all of our members to learn about our school system. The next time a student says "I'd like to go to the MATCH school," a good response might be "Let me show you a list of other good Boston public schools, that not only will offer you a better education, but will work hard to keep you in school until you graduate."



Amy Jackson and Sharon Hayes of the Harbor School.

Why is the Achievement Gap The Only "Gap" We Hear About?

Other Gaps that Adversely Affect Children of Color

Heritage:

- Of the 246 million acres distributed to homesteaders in the 19th century less than 1/2 of 1% went to African-Americans.
- Discriminatory practices of the Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration from the 1930's thru the 1960's negatively affected asset accumulation of African-Americans.
- Only 7.7% of African-Americans can expect an inheritance compared to 28% of white people.

At birth:

- African-American babies are more than twice as likely to die at birth.
- African-American life expectancy is 6 years less than whites.

Youth:

- 34.1% of African-American children grow up in poverty compared to 14.3% of white children. 29.7% of Latino children grow up in poverty.
- If arrested twice as likely to be processed as an adult compared to white youth.
- When arrested the first time African-American youth are 9 times more likely to be sent to juvenile prison. When arrested on a drug charge 48 times more likely to be sent to juvenile prison.

Employment:

- African-Americans are more than twice as likely to be unemployed.
- During a recession African-Americans are almost twice as likely to lose their job compared to whites.

Income:

- Median family income - \$34,369 (African-Americans) \$34,272 (Latinos) \$55,768 (whites).
- African-Americans are more than twice as likely to experience food hardship.

Housing:

- African-Americans and Latinos are more than twice as likely to experience housing hardship.
- African-Americans are 50% of the homeless while being only 12% of the population. Whites are 35% of the homeless while being 70% of the population.
- 60-90% of housing units show to whites are not made available to blacks.
- African-Americans are twice as likely to be turned down for a mortgage or home improvement loan.

Health:

- 86% of African-Americans, 87% of Latinos, and 92% of whites are considered to be in good health.
- 67% of Latinos, 79.8% of African-Americans and 88.3% of whites have health insurance.
- 50% of Latinos, 67% of African-Americans, and 80% of whites have a regular doctor.
- African-Americans are more likely to suffer from hypertension and diabetes and more likely to die from coronary disease, stroke, prostate and breast cancer.
- African-Americans are 6 times more likely to be a victim of homicide
- African-Americans are 7 times more likely to die from AIDS.

Source: *The Cost of Privilege* by Chip Smith, Camino Press



Reginald Verdieu of the Mission Hill School.



Rich Webber of the Brook Farm Academy.



Participants in the High School Review Meeting engage in small group discussions.



Mission Hill School students.

Japan's Educational System: Findings from the JFMF Study Tour for Teachers

By Jessica Penchos

In Japan, students sit in straight rows and absorb information in class gladly, without any disruption or disrespect for their teachers. Right? That was about all I had heard or read about the Japanese educational system before I was accepted to the Japanese Memorial Fulbright Fund program this past summer. Open to any American teacher, the Japanese government pays for recipients' hotels, airfare, local transportation, food, and cultural experiences for three weeks in this incredible program.

In my application I described how I would learn all the innovative ways in which Japanese teachers inspire their students to love math and science, and bring those ideas back to share at my school and within the district science department. Little did I realize that, despite having spent two weeks in Japan previously, my expectations were very far from reality.

The 200 teachers in the program met up in San Francisco where we went over the basics such as our itinerary and meal stipend, and the more interesting questions such as how to properly use the bath during our Japanese homestay. We were instructed to dress conservatively, professionally, and never be late. We started to make new friendships, and then boarded our plane to Japan.

During our first sessions in Tokyo, in lectures and workshops with top Japanese educational officials and researchers, I quickly started to see where my assumptions had been flawed. For years, the Japanese educational system had been very rigid and very successful, churning out business professionals, engineers, and scientists. However, an event had occurred in 1997 which would have a surprising impact in the field of education – the Asian market crash which, for the first time in modern history, meant layoffs for thousands of disbelieving Japanese salary men.

Let me provide some context. Historically, Japan is a very closed-doors society, partly due to its island location, and partly due to a long history of family-related clans. Japan was so displeased by the arrival of Western missionaries in the 1600's that it closed its ports to all foreign visitors in 1636. This insider-group mentality was so severe that foreign fishermen, shipwrecked and washed ashore, were locked in jail indefinitely. When Commodore Perry of the U.S. Navy arrived in 1853 and forced the opening of the ports, Japan slowly began to accept that globalization (or at the time, Westernization is a more accurate term) was inevitable. As the Shogunate fell and industry grew, the Japanese corporation evolved as a new clan-like structure in Japan. The corporation essentially replaced ancient clans by offering alliances and an almost family-like organization within the business world.

In modern times, Japanese youth have been encouraged to do well in middle school so they can test into a good high school, at which point they spend four years in school and then "cram school" (*juku*) at night to get into the best universities. Once in college, they simply have to pass. Entrance into the best university is a ticket to get hired by the top companies – the ultimate goal of the child's entire educational process. And in this tight-knit corporate-clan Japan, accepting a job was typically for life. Switching jobs was unheard of, and it was nearly impossible to get fired. Jobs included benefits that covered the whole family, including vacations and gifts – for life. So for a Japanese student, succeeding at school was essential to get into the right "track" to get the right job, because that literally determined the rest of his or her life. Mid-life career changes and returning to school, common in the U.S., did not exist as options.

Then the Asian stock market crashed in 1997. Suddenly, Asian companies were facing fiscal disasters and, while Japan was actually one of the least-affected countries, it did not escape harm. Japan had been facing economic difficulties for some time, and by 1998 bankruptcies had increased, the yen had dropped, and Japan had entered a recession. For the first time in modern Japanese history, having that job you had worked so hard for was no longer a guarantee. People faced with layoffs struggled to support their families in a society where the only white-collar hiring was done right out of college, making it virtually impossible for an older businessman to find a comparable job.

How did this affect the educational system? The students in school in Japan today are the first generation to have witnessed this transformation in corporate culture. Many children having grown up in homes that were affected by this economic change means that this generation is skeptical of the conventional wisdom that prevailed for so long – work hard and you'll be set for life. Additionally, there is a dropping birth rate in Japan, with less young Japanese getting married and having children. A young adult in Japan will most likely live with his or her family until marriage, which means there is significantly less financial pressure. As a result, there is a growing trend in Japan where young adults living at home after graduating high school or college will work part-time as needed to earn their disposable income, mostly spent on clothes and technology. These individuals, called "freeters," are quite alarming to the Japanese officials who monitor job growth and education, and for whom this way of thinking is quite untraditional. Another factor facing Japanese educators is that students are now showing "less respect" (according to educators and parents) for authority than was typical in Japan's past, which is affecting children's behavior both at home and at school.

In other words, Japan is changing. In the classrooms I visited, I saw students tracked by ability from an early age, and a world where "differentiated instruction" is never considered. Information is presented almost exclusively in lecture style at the high school level, and lectures make up the majority of the middle school day. While schools do spend much more time on art, music, and physical education than American schools typically do, when it comes to the core subjects, lecture and rote memorization prevail.

Some of the key questions we ask ourselves as American educators are how to best reach our diverse populations, particularly English language learners and Special Education students. However, Japan has a virtually non-existent immigration rate, so accommodations within schools are never considered necessary. Special education consists of special schools for physical disabilities or separate classrooms for the few students who are diagnosed with learning disabilities. There is no such thing as an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) in the sense that it exists in American schools, meaning parents have few options and no recourse if they feel their students needs are not being met, though there are some activists who are gaining momentum in working to change this. The end result is that the lecture, memorization, and tracking of students from an early age are prevalent throughout Japan, for now.

Educators in any country constantly question how to improve the way they prepare the nation's youth for their futures. How will Japan respond to the societal shifts they are now facing? What will the effects be in their job market as qualified employees shift goals and expectations? It's impossible to predict, but after my visit to Japan and my experiences first-hand in the country, I look forward to watching Japan's future and seeing what lessons we can learn from each other.

To apply for the JFMF Teacher Program, visit: www.iie.org/jfmf/ To see lesson plans and artifacts related to Jessica's Follow-on project, visit: www.freewebs.com/jpenchos

(Jessica Penchos teaches at the Timility Middle School.)



Jessica and her host sister, Suzaka, in traditional yukatas.



Students at Koyo Junior High School.

Substitute Teachers and the Union

By Jenna Fitzgerald
Paraprofessional/Sub Field Rep.

All substitute teachers after 60 days of employment are subjected to union deductions. Most subs feel they are automatically union members. Not so, unless the individual has signed a union application, according to the 1986-1988 union contract under Article I.E.2 and 3. A union agency service fee deduction is applied. Once an application has been filed with the BTU, the amount deducted is called union dues.

My suggestion for substitute teachers is to go to any building representative and ask for a union application, fill it out and send it post haste to the BTU address on the back of the application. Or, you can call the BTU office and ask to have an application mailed to you.

After completing the application you will then become a Union Member, ready to enjoy all the benefits of being affiliated with the AFT (Washington DC), the AFT Massachusetts (Statewide), AFL-CIO, Mass. and Greater Boston Labor Council.

On a local note, you will receive a BTU membership card and you will be on our mailing list and receive any BTU letters, monthly newspapers, etc. You will also be eligible to vote in BTU elections. You may sign up for our weekly e-mail bulletins by logging on to www.btu.org and clicking on the box to subscribe to BTU e-news. In addition, we invite you to attend our monthly membership meetings held the second Wednesday of every month here at the BTU at 4:00 p.m. All policy is set by the membership at these monthly meetings, so it would behoove you to join with us.

Every fall, the BTU staff holds a reception for all new members. This includes teachers, subs, nurses and paraprofessionals. It's a great get together for all, and very well attended.

I urge you as a substitute teacher to become more involved in your union. We are here for you and are waiting to hear from you, with all of your ideas and comments.

Some of the questions I get are: When can a sub look for a contract? Your contract says that if you are in a long-term position on December 1st and the person you are covering for has put in writing that they will not be back for the rest of the school year, then you are entitled to a contract. With nothing in writing (just verbal), no contract.

Another question is regarding the 18 hours of Professional Development: What subs attend and get paid? Only Long Term and Cluster Subs are required to attend and be paid. Have your school secretary call me if this doesn't happen.

Long term and cluster subs accumulate one sick day for every 20 days worked. Only cluster subs are included in the BTU Para Health and Welfare Fund Benefit, which includes dental and eye-care for you and your dependents. Sign up at the BTU Health and Welfare office.

Per diem subs receive an annual bonus of \$1,000 after working at least 120 days by the end of June, and \$1,500 if they work 150 days by the end of June.

I must say we have really moved forward with our substitutes. When I look back over the years and remember a sub salary was \$38 a day, and long term made up to \$45, it makes me proud to say that by the end of this contract a per diem will be making \$125.75 per day; a cluster \$153.05, and a long term sub after 25 days will get the highest rate of \$253.05 per day.

It's been a struggle and we have a package now we can be proud of. We will continue to fight for all our members and look forward to hearing from you with your ideas and comments.

African American History is My History Too!

Berta Rosa Berriz



"The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible, is to examine society and try to change it and to fight for it — at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change."
—James Baldwin (1963)

Dear Fellow Teachers,

The editors asked me to write a letter about Black-Latino solidarity during the celebration of African American History month. As a Latina educator, this is both an honor and an opportunity I could not pass up. I feel this sense of solidarity deeply — personally, professionally, and politically.

Almost daily, I relive my own story in the unfolding lives of the immigrant students who I teach: like when Frederico, a bright third grader in my pre-Unz bilingual classroom decided to change his name to "Frederick." As an eight-year-old third grader born in Cuba, I've also experienced this social pressure — often from my teachers — to surrender my name, identity, and language in order to fit in, to become "more American."

But I was also a child of the 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement became my teacher. African Americans struggling for dignity, respect, and recognition were my inspiration. I came to realize that along with my name, I had lost a sense of my place in — a sense of belonging to — the democratic society my parents had chosen for me. The sacrifices of African American people helped me to understand how being labeled "white" or "not-white" had serious, and life-altering, consequences. As a Latina immigrant raised in Miami, I recognized that my social location — my "place" in this land — was among the "not-whites." My personal yearning for dignity and respect was part of the much broader struggle for justice and equity being led by African Americans.

Professionally, my first classroom was situated in the school's special-ed ghetto. I was a new teacher armed with methods courses and the latest theories on arts and learning, and my students were a small group of Latinos, six boys and a girl, each labeled "behaviorally disordered." Across the hall, the African-American teacher of similarly "behaviorally disordered" black students welcomed me. I soon discovered that the four classrooms along this basement corridor were set aside for students considered incapable of mainstream placement due to language, physical or emotional problems. This blatant ghettoization shocked me — how could a learning environment that routinely segregated children claim to provide equitable access to a quality education? Clearly, it did not, it could not, but no one would even discuss the matter.

Today, I teach a fifth grade SEI class at a school named for Charles Sumner, the lawyer, abolitionist, and member of Congress who argued the nation's first school desegregation case, *Roberts v. City of Boston* in 1849 — a full century before *Brown*. Sumner violated the conventions of his time, crossing the color line to work with Robert Morris, a black man, as co-counsel on *Roberts*. Sadly, at the Charles Sumner School, *de facto* segregation is the everyday experience of our immigrant and special education students.

In expert testimony before the Supreme Court in 1954, sociologist Kenneth Clark used dolls — black and white — to demonstrate the emotional impact of segregation on Black children:

"The conclusion which I was forced to reach was that these children in Clarendon County, like other human beings who are subjected to an obviously inferior status in the society in which they live, have been definitely harmed in the development of their personalities; that the signs of instability in their personalities are clear, and I think that every psychologist would accept and interpret these signs as such. ... I think it is the kind of injury which would be as enduring or lasting as the situation endured, changing only in its form and in the way it manifests itself."

Most of my students have been segregated in a language ghetto since kindergarten. And while I've always believed in providing native language support for academic study while teaching English, these students are denied both the native language support (thanks to the Unz Amendment) and access to mainstream physical education, music and art classes, and computer instruction — even lunch and recess. Obviously, segregation limits opportunities for exposure to social English, the foundation for academic English, and further impacts students' sense of belonging in the school itself.

Politically, the struggle for equity for our African American, Latino, and special needs children is far from over. Professor Clark's research findings compelled the Court to rule that "separate is never equal," overturning the legal basis for racial segregation in the south. But northern segregation, grounded in social fact rather than public law, persisted. In 1974, 125 years after *Roberts* and 20 years out from *Brown*, a federal district court found that Boston's schools were "substantially racially segregated." Many of us remember how the social and political upheaval that followed changed the faces of our students, but did little to address glaring disparities in the resources allocated for teaching them. As a result, immigrant, low-income, and special needs students are still being denied educational and social experiences afforded "mainstreamed" children.

The misdirected obsession with meeting arbitrary federal goals and deadlines, enforcing stifling student discipline policies, and stretching limited resources for professional development merely underscore existing patterns of student segregation. Yet, far too many teachers and administrators seem resigned to sorting and separating children by academic or linguistic ability, and by physical or emotional condition. Today's segregation is sanitized, deemed an expedient and necessary tool for school/classroom management in resource-poor urban school districts like Boston. And if we all agree not to talk about it, we can pretend that a problem doesn't exist, and shift the blame for poor educational outcomes onto "underperforming" students, their "incompetent" teachers, "uncaring" parents, and "dysfunctional" communities. This is accountability?

So what is a Latina teacher, inspired by the example of African American History, politically bound to do? Within my tiny sphere of influence (Room 204), I plan to celebrate the tradition of African American resistance to injustice by every means available. For example, the midyear writing assessment requires each student to draft a persuasive essay. In my classroom, I'm using the story of Ruby Bridges, the first black child to integrate an all-white elementary school in Louisiana, as a catalyst for an essay on how Ruby's story speaks to their own experiences. In order to assign meaning beyond the assessment exercise, my students' persuasive essays will be addressed and delivered to our new BPS Superintendent, Carol R. Johnson, and to Massachusetts Governor Deval L. Patrick.

I want my students to learn from the courage and contributions of African Americans. I want them to feel responsible for changing society by Speaking Truth to Power. And, lastly, I want them to carve out their own places in the history of this country where we are also "Americans."

Berta Rosa Berriz
Charles Sumner Elementary, Roslindale

“A Talk to Teachers”...

(continued from page 1)

people – must be prepared to “go for broke.” Or to put it another way, you must understand that in the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, you will meet the most fantastic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. There is no point in pretending that this won’t happen.

... Now the crucial paradox which confronts us here is that the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society... The paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated. The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society...

Now, if what I have tried to sketch has any validity, it becomes thoroughly clear, at least to me, that any Negro who is born in this country and undergoes the American educational system runs the risk of becoming schizophrenic. On the one hand he is born in the shadow of the stars and stripes and he is assured it represents a nation which has never lost a war. He pledges allegiance to that flag which guarantees “liberty and justice for all.” He is part of a country in which anyone can become president, and so forth. But on the other hand he is also assured by his country and his countrymen that he has never contributed anything to civilization – that his past is nothing more than a record of humiliations gladly endured...

All this enters the child’s consciousness much sooner than we as adults would like to think it does. As adults, we are easily fooled because we are so anxious to be fooled. But children are very different. Children, not yet aware that it is dangerous to look too deeply at anything, look at everything, look at each other, and draw their own conclusions. They don’t have the vocabulary to express what they see, and we, their elders, know how to intimidate them very easily and very soon. But a black child, looking at the world around him, though he cannot know quite what to make of it, is aware that there is a reason why his mother works so hard, why his father is always on edge. He is aware that there is some reason why, if he sits down in the front of the bus, his father or mother slaps him and drags him to the back of the bus. He is aware that there is some terrible weight on his parents’ shoulders which menaces him. And it isn’t long – in fact it begins when he is in school – before he discovers the shape of his oppression...

... I began by saying that one of the paradoxes of education was that precisely at the point when you begin to develop a conscience, you must find yourself at war with your society. It is your responsibility to change society if you think of yourself as an educated person. And on the basis of the evidence – the moral and political

evidence – one is compelled to say that this is a backward society...

Now if I were a teacher in this school, or any Negro school, and I was dealing with Negro children, who were in my care only a few hours of every day and would then return to their homes and to the streets, children who have an apprehension of their future which with every hour grows grimmer and darker, I would try to teach them – I would try to make them know – that those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies by which they are surrounded, are criminal... I would teach him that there are currently very few standards in this country which are worth a man’s respect. That it is up to him to change these standards for the sake of the life and the health of the country. I would suggest to him that the popular culture – as represented, for example, on television and in comic books and in movies – is based on fantasies created by very ill people, and he must be aware that these are fantasies that have nothing to do

with reality. I would teach him that the press he reads is not as free as it says it is – and that he can do something about that, too. I would try to make him know that just as American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it, so is the world larger, more daring, more beautiful and more terrible, but principally larger – and that it belongs to him.

(Delivered October 16, 1963, as “The Negro Child—His Self-Image”; originally published in *The Saturday Review*, December 21, 1963, reprinted in *The Price of the Ticket. Collected Non-Fiction 1948-1985*, Saint Martins 1985.)
(Historical Context from *TydePass of Work For Quality Schools*.)



James Baldwin

Melissa Aybar at the microphone surrounded by Lisabeth Pimentel, Oscar Brazoban and Kenneth Emiliano.



Students Push for Campaign for Civics Education

By Mary F. Glynn

Representatives of the Hyde Square Task Force and Boston Public High School students: **Melissa Aybar**, **Lisabeth Pimentel**, both of Boston Latin Academy, **Kenneth Emiliano** of Tech Boston and **Oscar Brazoban** of Snowden International High School lobbied the Boston Teachers Union at the January Membership Meeting for an endorsement of their initiative *Campaign for Civics Education*. The initiative seeks to include Civics as a mandatory

course of study in the BPS high school curriculum. The rationale being that young people need to learn to become active members in their communities and exercise their right to vote in order to make this a better country.

The students articulated their proposal well and with confidence. The initiative was endorsed unanimously and the students were given a standing ovation. There was a great feeling of pride in the room. Isn’t this what public education is all about!

I Was Thinking...

(continued from page 2)

checks there were the aides’ checks waiting to be picked up. So be it! We scrambled to get all checks delivered to the paras before they left their buildings – another day in our struggle for recognition.

It’s been a long road, but it has its rewards. I have watched aides become paraprofessionals move on to be teachers, and some even principals or headmasters. We

have come a long way, but we must continue to move forward. All I want to see is the day one of my paraprofessionals is named Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools.

It can happen! Just look at those New England Patriots and what they accomplished!

Go You Paraprofessionals!

Retired Teachers News

RTC ALERTS

1. Information and applications for the RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM will be available the second week in February and can be picked up at the RTC office or by contacting **Marie Broderick** or **Donna Cooley-Hilton** at the RTC.
2. A reminder that the RTC’s DAY ON THE HILL is scheduled for May 13, 2008. This year it is important that our members and their friends make a strong showing at the State House to protect our pensions and lobby for an increase in our COLA. Save this date to join us as we lobby our state legislators.
3. Applications for membership in the RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER OF THE BOSTON TEACHERS UNION can be obtained by calling the RTC Office at 617-288-2000.
4. Reminder that Retirees may now join COPE and have their dues automatically deducted from their retirement checks if they wish applications may be obtained at the BTU Office.

Working For You!!!

By Dave Donovan
RTC Chairman

As we launch into the year of presidential politics and spend what seems like endless time listening to and watching “THE DEBATES” we also get some insight into the deplorable condition of the economy in our country and wonder how do we keep current with what is happening. We further wonder who can best address these issues on our behalf and even more important what we can do to help ourselves. It is our hope that over the next few months we will be

able to, with the help of Teacher Retirement Solutions, provide our members and our active colleague with a wealth of information concerning tax issues, retirement planning, investment fundamentals and debt management.

We think that providing information vital to our economic situations will help us all to weather these difficult times. If you have a particular issue you would like to see addressed please let us know by dropping a line to us either by mail at the RTC Office or by e-mailing ddonovan@btu.org.

Take One! Get In On the Act for National Certification

By Maggie Hoyt
and Maureen Roach

Want to raise your salary by 4% and be singled out as an expert in your field? The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has a new program which can start you on your way.

NBPTS has a recent offering for educators called *Take One!* which is a classroom-based professional development program available to all teachers and school counselors regardless of their experience level.

Take One! participants are expected to study the NBPTS Standards, complete one portfolio entry in their area of certification using their classroom, and submit the entry to NBPTS to be scored in accordance with the deadlines and policies of the current NBPT assessment.

The classroom-based portfolio entry requires that participants provide video recordings of interactions between themselves and their students,

and collect particular kinds of student work. The entry also requires a 10-12 page written commentary which describes, analyzes, and reflects on the evidence of teaching and learning contained in the submission.

Take One! can be ordered now for the 2008-09 cycle, which means that the entries will be scored in the summer of 2009, with scores released no later than December 31, 2009. Portfolio entries will be due back to NBPTS on April 15, 2009.

Take One! provides a job-embedded and sustained staff development experience that helps build learning communities in schools, and strengthens professional collaboration among teachers in the same learning community.

Take One! provides an opportunity for teachers who have been considering seeking National Board Certification to enter the process and begin to see themselves as highly qualified practitioners.

★★★★★

Added Bonus—Subsequently, those who choose to become candidates for



4 week intro course
toward NBCT

1 In-service
credit

Contact:
mhoyt@boston.k12.ma.us

**Winter Thoughts
Think about
Take One!**

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards option for entering the teacher certification process

Mondays
March 24, 31, April 7 & 14
from 4-7 p.m. at the
West Roxbury Ed. Complex



**CLD/BTU
National Board for
Professional Teaching Standards**

National Board Certification (within a three-year window), and who have submitted their portfolio entry in accordance with policies of the current NBPTS assessment program, can also choose to transfer their *Take One!* score and simply complete the remaining three entries of

the portfolio and take the six hour assessment center test to finish their pursuit of National Board Certification.

Further information about *Take One!* is available on the National Board website (nbpts.org).

Tents of Hope for the People of Darfur

www.tentsofhope.org

The ongoing genocide in Darfur, Sudan is a disaster of global proportion. While our leaders seemingly ignore this disaster educators have taken up this issue through a project called **Tents of Hope**. Participation in **Tents of Hope** uses artistic expression for:



- Teaching your class or group about current events in Sudan, particularly Darfur with curriculum materials, films and/or a speaker
- Giving participants an opportunity to do something to alleviate suffering

The Tent: You will create a simulation refugee tent and transform it into a hopeful work of art.

The Hope: You will let desperately isolated and vulnerable families know that the world is watching and trying to support them in their time of need.

Tents of Hope is a one-year project that will culminate in a collective action as local communities bring their tents and delegations to **a national event in Washington DC in October, 2008**. As many tents as possible, will then be sent to Sudan and/or Darfur to house people uprooted from their homes. Other tents will be used to raise awareness of the plight of people in Africa displaced from their homes by extreme violence.



There are two ways for schools in Boston to participate in Tents of Hope.

1. Larger schools or schools with a whole team of interested teachers/administrators can buy and paint an entire tent as a school project. The cost of the tent and paint can be offset by fundraising, ideas for which are available from the Massachusetts Coalition to save Darfur. A student from Mass. College of Art will volunteer to be the artistic director if that is needed.
2. Individual or small teams of teachers can take part in the 'squares' project. Each class will get [free of charge] 10-15 one-foot square canvas panels. Students will design and paint the individual panels. These panels will then be sent to Darfur where Sudanese children will paint the reverse side of each panel. All 300 tent panels [from all BPS] schools will be stitched together in to a tent to be displayed at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.

Note: there are only 300 panels available for this.



Tents of Hope is a project which allows students and teachers to learn about the genocide which has been going on in Darfur and to do something about it. It can be done with students at all levels. One teacher can do it in her/his school or several can do it together. We will provide you with a curriculum, maps, timelines, and other information you can use to learn about Sudan - and can help you get a speaker or film if you have time for them - either for your class or for a larger portion of the school. This project is being done all over the US and in several countries of Europe and is spreading. It will culminate in a tent city on the Mall in Washington, DC next fall with the possibility of some of your older students attending.

Black History Month would be an excellent time to start this project. If you think your school might want to do this contact Judith Baker who will do everything she can to help you decide, get you started, and perhaps get you artistic help from Mass College of Art students. Judith can be reached at judithbaker29@comcast.net or 617-653-2705 before February 19 when she heads off to Africa. After February 19 you can contact Leena Pradham at pradhanleena@gmail.com.

(Judith Baker is a retired teacher from Madison Park Technical Vocational High School.)