

2004

Creating an anti-bias children's book

Leslie Ian Stewart Jenkins
California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes

Recommended Citation

Jenkins, Leslie Ian Stewart, "Creating an anti-bias children's book" (2004). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 382.

https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes/382

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. Unless otherwise indicated, this project was conducted as practicum not subject to IRB review but conducted in keeping with applicable regulatory guidance for training purposes. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

Creating an Anti-Bias Children's Book

By Leslie Ian Stewart Jenkins

©2004 by Leslie Ian Stewart Jenkins. All Rights Reserved.

Acknowledgements

My wife and my son deserve the greatest thanks for living with me on a day-to-day basis when I was often very stressed. I came to be known Daddy/Ogre. I'm so grateful that when I was acting like the latter, they treated me with love and patience. I'm also deeply grateful to my parents who have supported me every day and made me feel like I could accomplish anything.

My professors each provided me with invaluable insights and highly useful "friendly criticism". Dr. Christine Sleeter modeled for me what it means to be both happy, well-adjusted, and optimistic and at the same time a hardcore progressive political activist. Her sharp criticisms of discriminatory practices in the United States helped me develop a more critical eye and balanced view of the United States. Dr. Patty Whang helped me look into the complexities of the United States educational system and come up with my own conclusions about what was right and what wasn't. Dr. Claudia Peralta-Nash explored rich multicultural texts with me and helped me create a framework for judging whether a children's book was truly multicultural or merely the writing of a white author about someone else's world. Dr. Elizabeth Meador helped me finetune my thesis topic and how to go about realizing my goal. Her invaluable advice, by way of an article, was start writing now, regardless of whether you've finished your research. Finally, I would like to thank my MAE classmates who's valuable insights, honesty, and integrity have made me a better, more thoughtful person.

Title: Creating an Anti-Bias Children's Book

Author: L.I. Stewart Jenkins

California State University, Monterey Bay

date: May 2004

Abstract This paper describes how different forms of prejudice, especially racism, develop in children. Children learn prejudice from their environment: their families, other adults, peers and older children, and the media. The author also details a number of practices that adults and other mentors can use to help children either overcome the prejudices that they are hearing or experiencing or recognize prejudice in other people in order to strengthen their own resistance to it. Prejudice is learned behavior, which means that children can be taught to reject prejudice. After interviewing diverse families and anti-bias educators, the author wrote a children's story to be read by adults and children together in order to discuss different forms of prejudice. The story centers around a white boy coming to terms with his racist, classist, ableist ideas as he moves to a new, more diverse neighborhood and has to make a whole new set of friends.

Table of Contents

Front Matter

Chapter One.....	page 5
A Children's Book about Prejudice	
Chapter Two.....	page 11
Review of Literature	
Chapter Three.....	page 23
Methodology	
Chapter Four.....	page 29
The Project: a children's book called <i>the Neighborhood</i>	
Chapter Five.....	page 53
Action plan	
References	page 54
Appendices.....	page 56
A: Interview Questions	
B: Assent and Consent forms	

Chapter One: A Children's Book about Prejudice

Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) reminds us that books can be windows into other people's worlds, showing us what it is like to have brown skin in a white world, to feel an attraction for the same sex in a straight society, and to view America's big cities through the eyes of a newly arrived immigrant. The United States of America has the potential to be the world's most equitable multicultural society. The diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and viewpoints that intermingle in the small towns and metropolitan areas of this country create an unparalleled synergy that if nurtured and supported could result in a nation that rejects bias and celebrates all her cultures.

The problem: The United States is a Discriminatory Nation

Unfortunately, the reality in the United States includes institutionalized racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia. We live in a corporate and consumerist culture that worships wealth and fears poverty where the media misinforms and spreads prejudiced ideas in order to make a profit. How can we change this and start to realize our potential? I think if we can reach the children we can affect gradual, long-term changes.

Many educators have pointed out that we know when and how children develop prejudices and we know how to counteract the influences of prejudiced adults and a prejudiced media machine. We know that prejudice is learned behavior and that adults perpetuate prejudice by modeling prejudiced ideas and behavior for their own children and any children in whom they come into contact. We know that the media presents prejudiced ideas and stereotypes in order to sell content to the public.

Why don't we make more progress as a society in reducing the racism, sexism, classism, and all the other "isms" that plague our country? Some would argue that the capitalist system relies on a system of racism and other forms of prejudice to create competition between potential workers thus keeping wages low and worker's rights in check. Furthermore, those holding the political and financial power to dismantle all forms of prejudice in the United States actually rely on these different forms of prejudice to create a smoke-screen that diverts people's attention away from the real issue: an oligarchy of the rich which does not promote democracy, justice or freedom. Instead, various groups of people see other groups of people as "the problem"; think

Blacks vs. Whites, gays vs. straights, immigrant vs. “natives”. While I agree with this assessment of the United States, I am not in favor of the violent revolution and mass massacre of the ultra-wealthy that many leftwing theorists espouse.

If the True Revolutionary is motivated by Love then Parents are an Untapped Source of Revolutionary Zeal

Instead, I wish to produce a peaceful revolution that helps individuals wake up to 1) their own self worth, 2) the importance of valuing our multicultural society, and 3) the power of uniting across difference to use the very political institutions which the rich control to overthrow them and recreate a new American society. I think the most untapped source of political power that could be used to change the dominant racist, classist, sexist paradigm in the United States is the mothers and fathers of children. All parents wish for their children to grow up in a world that offers their children love and support and safety and a world full of prejudices does not offer these things.

I think one of the central reasons we have not made more progress as a society is that mainstream white parents profit from our system of inequities and so they cast a blind eye both intentionally and unintentionally to the prejudice and discrimination that support their status in society. However, I also believe there is a “silent majority” of white parents in America who believe more strongly in equality than in their own powerful positions. They wish to raise children who question bias and uphold justice because in the long run, this will lead to less violence in the United States.

White Parents: If you're not part of the Solution, You're part of the Problem

Unluckily, many of these white parents have never learned how to examine and overcome their own prejudices which is the essential step in helping their children do the same. Many of these white families see the topic of prejudice as a “can of worms” that they are not capable of addressing and that they will have little impact on changing. I think that parents were taught as children not to discuss race; and they were also taught, as was I, that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's solved most of our race-based problems. Facing one's racism, homophobia, sexism, and other “isms” is a very hard, painful act. Parenting in itself is a very difficult act. When faced with the amount of work and the amount of pain that they will encounter when they confront their own biases, most parents that have the option (white, wealthy, protestant parents) choose to keep their biases and perpetuate prejudice. So, parents

give up and teach their children that “we don’t talk about race, or gays, or peoples whose culture is different from ours...” because the process for finding the right words to discuss race, class, gender, and sexuality is too difficult for them.

Confronted with a list of the historical atrocities perpetrated by white Americans against African Americans, Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Asian Americans, gay Americans and immigrants to America, white Americans react with defensive anger, retreating inside an emotional shell that avoids staring the truth in the face. No doubt, our government, powerful politicians, and ultra wealthy business people hold some of the power to affect change and seek justice in the United States. People that control newspapers and have millions of dollars could create a powerful nationwide anti-bias campaign to teach kids to reject prejudice. But they have no interest in affecting this change. Parents, however, who love their kids, and wish for them a healthy, supportive world have a large stake in reducing the prejudice that leads to violence between people.

If kids are going to learn to accept others and not act out the biases that surround them, parents are going to have to face their own prejudices and acknowledge their own mistakes as well as the atrocities of other white Americans in the past. This means acknowledging their own biases, and confronting others who are acting prejudiced in order to begin to change the status quo. Reviewing American history with a critical eye to the racism, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia that dominate in this country will help all children come to a balanced view of America’s history and the experiences of its diverse peoples.

It’s not just White People; Everyone needs to Confront their Prejudices

So far I have pointed out the problems that white people perpetuate. But prejudice and discrimination is everyone’s problem. Just because you are the target of racism doesn’t mean you don’t perpetuate other forms of oppression like homophobia or classism. All citizens of the United States have biases that could be reduced if a person chose to concentrate on reducing them. I concentrate many of my statements on white people, because in this country they hold the most power to effect change. White men are always elected President, white people hold many powerful positions in the business community as well as in all levels of government. If a large percentage of white people were to face their own prejudices, it could create an entirely different atmosphere in this country. But the problem of prejudice is not exclusive to the white

community. In fact, if we look at power as a pyramid, with white men on top, there are still many more layers below the top that unthinkingly oppress people below them on the pyramid. Thus my thesis project, a book about prejudice, is for all Americans; but it is particularly for white people and perhaps it is most of all for me. In writing a book about prejudice, I am forcing myself to look at my own prejudices and to start a process for overcoming them.

My Own Journey as a White Person, a Disabled Person, and a Parent

I am a white, male, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon, protestant living in the United States of America. I am also a father raising a two-year-old Spanish-bilingual son. I want my son to embrace the beautiful differences of language, culture, skin color, disability, gender, and sexuality that make up the U.S. I want him to feel comfortable reaching out to people who are African American, who are gay, who speak with an accent, who worship at a mosque, so that he may build friendships, alliances, and working relationships.

I had a series of awakenings in college after having been indoctrinated into embracing many subtler forms of racism while growing up in my all white, upper-class community. I felt vague fears when visiting a nearby city of predominantly African American people. I was convinced that everything I received in my life with such ease: good grades, acceptance into elite colleges, and economic security, were the result of my meritorious behavior. Kind friends, roommates, and political comrades were courageous enough to educate me about the racism, sexism, and bias that support a few and take away from many more. I learned by about my own white privilege and about the day-to-day discrimination, injustices, and hurtful words that my college mates who are not straight, not white, not native English speakers, not able to move without a wheelchair endure. Later, while working for the Service Learning Institute at California State University, Monterey Bay, I was able to put words to concepts such as “white privilege” and “systemic racism”. I was perhaps more open to many of these concepts than other white males for two reasons: my disabled body that made it impossible for me to ever fit the mold of the “American Man,” and the recognition of my own brother’s homosexuality that opened the door to the many social worlds that exist both secretly and simultaneously as the “Leave it To Beaver” world depicted by the United States media machine.

My parents were generally unwilling to explore the painful information of white privilege and systemic oppression with me. Perhaps my zealous self-righteousness blocked open

communication. This has, at some level, separated us and will separate us for the rest of my life. I don't want this separation to occur between my son, Javier, and me. I want to talk with him as he confronts these painful realities.

Research tells me that my son will learn the majority of his attitudes about people of other races, classes, genders, and sexualities from his parents and the people to whom he is closest. Knowing that I am going to have to model tolerance and openness to difference, while at the same time *learning* tolerance and confronting my prejudices in front of him has me worried. I'm already concerned about the mistaken words I will speak because I'm in the process of learning and teaching simultaneously myself.

The Power of Books

Books offer me hope that I will find the right words. We spend a lot of time reading books together and I've seen firsthand how much my son learns from the information in these books. We both can be affected by the words of a good book. I feel if I have a book we can read together, I will slow down and take the time it does to give him a meaningful answer that also offers some hope, even on those days when I feel too tired to find the right words, or too tired to face a subject that demands all my attention and clear thinking.

Even before these situations arise I'd like to be able to introduce him to the realities of racism and other "isms" in the United States so that he can begin to develop a critical mind and an anti-bias stance from an early age. Having a book to read means I don't have to pull the subject out of thin air.

If we were an African American family, perhaps this topic would naturally come up as we were the targets of discrimination. But since we benefit from this system of white, middle class, Native English-speaking advantages, it would be easy to never discuss racism, sexism, xenophobia, and classism. My son, Javier, has a gay uncle so eventually we will be talking about my brother and the fact that his partner is a man and not a woman. But many of these other subjects could be dismissed or "silenced" because we are in the privileged category. I hope by writing this book I begin to uncover and confront some of my biases and model for my son that we all must work on these issues all our lives. Was there a book like this I could use?

Research into Multicultural Literature

I wanted to find out if there existed a book that we could read together that would explore the different facets of bias so that when he came home with questions about bigoted words, or

when he was confused by someone's prejudiced actions, we could talk about it and read about it together. I read many different books that gave me advice as a parent about how to raise a non-racist child, and I read many stories for kids about racism only, or about sexism only, or about forms of prejudice that were designed to teach the reader about the negative impact of a particular form of bias. But I did not find any books that were designed for an adult and a child to read together and that discuss the multiple forms that prejudice can take. I decided that I needed to create for myself and for other adults who interacted with children (teachers, parents, daycare and social service workers) a book that would allow adults and children to discuss the many different forms of prejudice.

Overall, the research and writing of this book will have the most profound impact on me. I chose to write a book, knowing that it would force me to confront some of my prejudices and begin to deal with them. I hope that I write a book that others find powerful and useful. I would be happy to hear that it opened people's hearts and minds. But, in the end, if it only impacts me, that will be enough.

The Final Project: A Book for parents and children that discusses Prejudice

I chose to write a book because I felt it was a resource that I, as a parent, would appreciate and use, if it were thoughtfully written. Books can be consulted and discussed again and again as incidents of prejudice arise in the life of a family. Also, kids can seek out a book to read by themselves when they're older. The book's primary audience is white middle class families. There were several reasons for targeting white middle class families: the institutional racism, sexism, and classism in America most directly benefit white families and they are also most incapable of seeing the advantages, or white privilege, that American society gives them. If longstanding discrimination against Americans of Color, poor Americans, gay- and lesbian-Americans, and immigrants to America is going to be dismantled, the cooperation of white middle class families is essential. The organization of these disadvantaged groups to protest injustice or demand full equality often scares white America and so I'm hopeful that if a white parent writes this book, those with closed minds will be a little more open. Besides, I feel compelled, as an ally, to demand justice for my brothers and sisters of other races, classes, sexualities and physical abilities.

I created a children's book about fictional neighborhood and the multicultural kids in it that helps parents and children develop a vocabulary for talking about difference. The book

gives children and adults tools for living in multicultural America: talking to solve problems instead of resorting to physical force, learning to recognize that we look different on the outside but share many characteristics on the inside. The book has stories that offer kids ideas about how we as humans treat other people and ways we hurt people unintentionally based on our own fear and ignorance. This book challenges all parents to recognize the fact that their own children learn prejudices from them. It holds white parents accountable for how they act and what they say. But, this book also holds parents of color, gay parents, disabled parents, and anyone working with children accountable for prejudices their children may learn from them.

This book is also for classroom teachers who frequently find themselves teaching students about words that hurt and how to learn to communicate with those who are different. The book takes the point of view of children but presents them as wiser than their parents. Hopefully this book will impact all those who read it. Maybe this book will influence a white parent who might not be overtly racist but who carries around some prejudices about people of other races that he or she hasn't acknowledged. Maybe a person of color who is not necessarily racist but who has prejudiced beliefs about gays and lesbians will be affected. I feel I have a very personal stake in creating an America where trust and brotherhood overcome fear and prejudice: his name is Javier and he's two-and-a-half years old. I hope to reach other parents who wish a peaceful world for their children.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

“Children do not learn prejudice from open, honest discussion of differences”

-Louise Derman-Sparks, Maria Gutierrez, Carol B. Phillips (1989)

I began my literature review by reviewing the research on how children learn prejudice, how children form their identity, and how adults can help children form an anti-bias persona. I read texts that described how children developed their views about race, class, and other ways of categorizing people. I read scholarly articles about the experiences of people of color and whites who were raising children in the United States and who either fought the influence racism and other prejudices on their children or, in the case of many white parents, became more aware of the racism that surrounds non-white children in this country. I read books written for parents about how to raise children who were not racist. I discovered that the most important aspect of helping children develop anti-bias personas was to openly acknowledge my own biases and work to eliminate them openly, in front of everyone I encounter.

So, I also had to look at my own identity including the white privilege and prejudice which shaped some of my conscious as well as unconscious beliefs. I also researched how an adult white person goes from being racist to becoming an anti-racist. Part of my own journey to improve my self-knowledge was reading how whiteness developed into an idea disassociated from race in the United States. I read articles asking, “Does reading multicultural literature impact the ideas and attitudes of children? Can reading multicultural literature reduce prejudice in white children and improve the self-image of children who are the targets of racism, ethnocentrism, classism, ableism, and other forms of prejudice?” Finally, I read children’s books that addressed various forms of prejudice and ways of celebrating difference (a subcategory of multicultural literature) for audiences aged 2 to 18.

The first part of this literature review begins by examining both identity development, especially race identity, and the development of prejudice in children and is organized to follow a person developmentally from the age of two to adulthood. Next, I examine what actions parents and other adults can take to interrupt the development of prejudice in children.

Throughout this literature review, the form of prejudice most often examined and discussed is racism. The eradication of racism is not more important than the eradication of

Stewart Jenkins
MAE Thesis May 2004

other forms of prejudice, but it remains the most persistent and pernicious form of prejudice to my mind. To learn how to honestly face racism is the task that has the potential to have the greatest impact on the white-controlled United States. People of color need to face their homophobia, gay men need to face their sexism and misogyny. Able-bodied Muslims need to face their able-ism. You can be the target of one or several forms of prejudice in this country and still perpetuate prejudice and discrimination yourself. But the over-arching prejudice in this country, that is like a “white” elephant in the room is racism.

Part One: Children’s Identity Development and what Adults can do to reduce prejudice

Prejudice is learned behavior: you’re not born with it.

It is important to start this discussion about prejudice by stating that the assumption underlying this project is that prejudice is learned behavior, it is not a part of our genetic make-up. Children learn concepts of how to feel about their own identity as well as how to treat people with different identities from their environment: their families, their peers, the events of their life, and the society in which they live (Bergen, 2001; Holmes, 1995; Mathias & French, 1996; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). The same is true with regards to a person’s race and gender and other aspects of their identity (Holmes, 1995). These are socially-constructed concepts and cannot be explained through mere descriptions of biology or heredity. It is impossible to say exactly how a girl, a homosexual, a Latino, an obese person will think and act, since each person is unique and their behaviors are based on their experiences and how they are taught by parents and other mentors. Having said this, I will be using the terms white person, black person, homosexual, disabled person and so on in categories as they are commonly understood in the United States today even though these categories are arbitrary. I will be describing how institutional as well as cultural racism impacts all people in this country regardless of their perceived race (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2002).

Identity Development

Identity development is the process by which a child becomes aware of their own race, gender, class, physical ability, ethnicity, etc. and also becomes aware of how different races, classes, ethnicities, etc. are seen in a positive or negative light by the people around them and by U.S. society. Louise Derman-Sparks (1980) writes about the different stages that children’s identity development goes through using Piaget’s theories of children’s cognitive development

as a framework for discussing their developing awareness of self and others and their attitudes toward the differences that people have.

In the 1960s and 1970s a number of studies were done describing the development of race awareness and self-identity in children. In one study, African American children frequently chose to play with and admire white dolls over dolls that had similar skin tone to their own. There was a growing awareness that non-white children in the United States were not developing a healthy self-esteem because of the racism they encountered in the media and in society (Bonvillain & Huston, 2000; Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Sparks, 1980).

Identity Development: Ages two to Five

As early as the age of two, children begin to notice differences in skin color and other physical attributes. Researchers describe part of children's identity development as a process of differentiating self from "others" and forming categories of "us" and "them". They identify *their* group (race, gender, age) also known as their *ingroup* versus the groups of others, or their *outgroup*. For example, "I'm brown so I'm a part of the African Americans group, all whites are not in my group." They cannot understand the concept of a biracial person as they think that you can only belong to one group at this age. At this point they often have more positive feelings about their group than people in other groups. This is not necessarily a sign of prejudice but is a part of naturally developing an identity (Byrnes, 1988). At this age children express confusion about real colors like "black" and the racial category "black", i.e. why aren't black people the same color as black crayons (Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Sparks, 1980)? They also cannot think of a person as belonging to two or more different groups simultaneously, i.e. "Black" and "American".

Over time as their intellectual sophistication develops, the "us" category expands to include lots of people with different races, genders, ethnicities, *if* they are exposed to positive interactions with these different types of people. Preschool children will also attach positive thoughts to a person of a different race that they know well and at the same time describe the whole race as "bad" because it is an out-group. As children meet more people from that out-group and have positive interactions, they may change their negative views of the whole category (Holmes, 1995).

If children of any race have very little interaction with people from a different race or races, than they will form their opinions and assumptions about that other race based on the few

interactions they have had. They will believe the things said to them about this culture even if this information is totally inaccurate. For White children to develop an understanding that not all African Americans are the same, those children need to encounter lots of different African Americans (Byrnes, 1988; Mathias & French, 1996).

Preschool children are much more likely to group themselves by gender first and race second. It is not until they get older (aged 5-8) that they start to pick up on the signals from their environment, most importantly the words and actions of their parents and older peers, that let kids know that race and cultural difference is a sensitive topic and gives a person information about another person's social status. Preschool children also categorize people by perceived skin color more than racial categories at this age: they will put people into the same categories if they have similar skin color, often ignoring people's different races (Holmes, 1995).

Positive Fantasy life versus negative Self-esteem

When very young children talk about wanting to change the color of their skin or their hair, it is not an indication of low self esteem as was once thought but more a reflection of the child's rich fantasy life (Bergen, 2001; Wright, 1998). Later in elementary school, fourth or fifth grade, if children want to look like their lighter-skinned friends, this can be an indication that the message has been reaching them that darker skin is ugly. As children's views of themselves and others develop, images in books, magazines, and on TV shows, and the attitudes of peers and adults in their lives do influence them either for the better or for the worse. Most of the messages about darker skinned people are negative messages. Parents of color spend much of their time trying to reverse the impact of these messages whereas White parents are usually oblivious to the ubiquitous messages that proclaim white racial identity as superior (Reddy, 1996).

Identity Development: Ages 6-8

As children enter kindergarten and first grade they may experiment with using derogatory words for different races and for kids whose appearance is different in order to see what reaction it provokes in adults. Throughout the elementary school years children's views about themselves, others, and the differences in people are slowly crystallizing. This is the time they will begin to express prejudiced ideas and this prejudice will become a part of their permanent personality only if supported by adults or left unchecked by adults.

Influence of a child's Community

Children absorb the attitudes of their community. If a child grows up in a community where Latinos are considered lazy and dirty by their parents and neighbors, this is the attitude the children will eventually adopt (Byrnes, 1988). Some families teach prejudice overtly: as children get older they may be told not to mix with former friends because of a difference in race or class. Byrnes (1988) says, "Our sense of personal identity comes in large part from membership in groups. Children learn early that certain human qualities are valued and associated with a particular group membership, whereas the qualities of others are demeaned and degraded" (p. 268). Being friendly to an out-group may expose a person to criticism from members of their in-group if the in-group shares prejudiced views. In addition to the influence of community, the media may present stereotypes of people of color, immigrants, the disabled, or poor people and for some children this is their only exposure to these groups (Bergen, 2001; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001).

Identity Development: Ages Nine to Twelve

In the later elementary years, kids can start to understand that people can be members in several different groups simultaneously. They understand you can be Asian *and* be American *and* be of Chinese descent. Children at this age deepen their understanding of factors that define racial and cultural identity. They can see racism and react to it, often expressing sophisticated political understandings of the racism they encounter. They also begin to understand the historic and institutional aspects of racism that define its current existence. Children develop an awareness that we all have differences but at the same time we all belong to a larger group, called humans. Finally, children at this age can develop their specific anti-prejudice views by participating in actions and "consciousness raising" exercises that support an empathetic view of differences in people (Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Sparks, 1980). The authors emphasized three important aspects of learning prejudice: 1) children pick up attitudes and behaviors from their parents and siblings and community, 2) young children will experiment with using prejudiced words but becoming prejudiced takes longer and is absorbed over many years, 3) young children's beliefs are malleable, especially ages three to six; as they grow older prejudiced attitudes can solidify into a prejudiced personality if no adult intervention counters them.

When Prejudice becomes permanent

What causes children to make speaking and acting in a prejudiced manner part of their permanent identity? Children who hold dogmatic or dichotomous views of the world may be more likely to develop prejudiced personalities. Children who are allowed to speak in generalizations and stereotypes without being told that what they are saying is untrue, end up believing them as the truth. Probably the strongest factor in developing a prejudiced personality is self-esteem. Low self-esteem puts kids in the position of putting down others in order to feel better about themselves. Prejudice is the crutch that boosts their low self-esteem. A child who feels good about herself does not need to put herself in a “better than/less than” relationship with other children (Byrnes, 1988; Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Sparks, 1980). Following is a discussion of what parents and other adults (teachers, social workers, mentors) can do to stop the development of bias in children.

Adults Helping Children reject Prejudice

What not to do; what not to say.

Children are naturally curious about other people, especially people who appear different. As children grow older they notice more and more details about people’s differences. They will point out and ask about these differences without hesitation. Louise Derman-Sparks (1993) explains that children become intensely interested in people’s appearance (including skin color, size, shape of eyes, physical disabilities, and hair) by age three or four. Children will use the language that they know to talk about these differences and they will not necessarily speak in what an adult would consider polite language. A parent may react in horror and silence their child if she or he describes a black man’s skin as dirty. They may not answer a child who asks why a person is sitting in a wheelchair because they are embarrassed that their child is saying something right in front of the person. Silencing a child with “Shhhh! Don’t say that”, avoiding their questions, and giving false answers to a child’s questions are three ways that parents promote future prejudice in children. Children interpret this avoidance to mean that something is wrong with the people to whom they are referring.

Similarly, if a parent uses different language, different body language, or exudes nervousness around certain people, a child picks up on this and internalizes it. A parent’s reaction is what a child remembers. If there is a negative reaction to a child’s words or curiosity about someone with different skin or a different accent or a different lifestyle, the child will

interpret that reaction to mean that there is something wrong with the person encountered (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Derman-Sparks, Gutierrez, & Phillips, 1989).

Negative Self images

In America if you are white, thin and wealthy, you're sent the message by T.V., movies, magazines, and newspapers that you are happy and you deserve to be. To **not** have these qualities on TV and in other media outlets is to be "less than" or "lacking something". People of color are often depicted as criminals, poor people, or somehow "unbalanced" on American TV and in American movies. Children are exposed to hundreds of these images every day and there are very few accurate images to counter-balance this misinformation (Bonvillain & Huston, 2000; Derman-Sparks, 1989).

Children of color absorb negative images from the media and American society and may eventually express a desire to be another race or gender. If children express this wish in the mid- and late elementary years an unhealthy self-image is developing. In order to avoid having children internalize these messages and believe them, parents will need to bolster the self-esteem of their children and present them with lots of positive images and role models who share their same identity (Reddy, 1996). A positive reaction to the child's curiosity which values their interest and seeks to find answers to their questions tells children that it's okay to talk about human differences. Parents can seek out people who they know will listen to the child's questions and not get offended.

Children prone to Prejudice

Even though all children are exposed to biased messages from their larger community, certain children are more capable of rejecting these messages: children with higher levels self-esteem, children with greater cognitive sophistication, and children who show an openness to other points of view (Bergen, 2001). Frequently exposing kids to people different from themselves and treating those differences as a positive attribute can interrupt the development of prejudice in children. Being exposed ideally means that children are given the chance to physically interact with children of different races, physical abilities, cultural backgrounds, and socio-economic classes on a daily basis throughout their childhood (Mathias & French, 1996).

Parents and other adults can reverse the development of prejudice by responding to biased comments and actions in their children with corrective information and alternate ways of expressing awareness of differences. A parent should always speak up when a child offers a

stereotyped comment about a particular group and explain why this is wrong and should model how we speak respectfully about people who are different. Parents can also teach them how outer appearances have nothing to do with a person's real self-hood: their hearts and minds. However, parents' comments like, "I'm colorblind," and "I don't see color," are not helpful because they send children the messages that there aren't differences between people or the message that notice and discussing differences are bad. This can lead children to not discuss difference or seek out kids who are different which then misleads children, especially White children, to think that everyone is like them (Byrnes, 1988; Derman-Sparks, 1993).

Finally, parents can interrupt the formation of prejudice in a child by continuing to strengthen their child's self esteem, correcting negative words and stereotypes with honest answers, and persistently voicing positive recognition of differences in people (Bonvillain & Huston, 2000; Derman-Sparks, 1989; Mathias & French, 1996).

Part Two: Helms' Racial Identity Development Theory

If a prejudiced parent leads to prejudiced children, I decided it was important to research what it takes and what it means to be anti-prejudiced. I chose to look at race because for me it is probably the hardest bias to acknowledge in myself. Janet Helms' Racial Identity Development Theory addresses the question, "How do racist people become anti-racist allies?" There are other Identity Development Theories but I chose this one because I grapple with racism in myself and because race is one of the most contentious topics in the United States.

Helms (1992) describes the stages a white person who holds racist views goes through. The first stage, called *the contact stage* is when a person holds racist views that are similar to the views of the community where that person lives; the views go unquestioned until an event occurs that disrupts these beliefs and calls into question assumptions that person had made about other races. After that event, the person enters the *Disintegration* stage in which feelings of guilt and anger surface at the realization of, "one's own advantage because of being White and the acknowledgement of the role of Whites in the maintenance of a racist system," (Tatum, 1992, p.13). During the disintegration stage, Whites become more sensitive to the racist remarks of friends and family that before they hadn't noticed. Eventually a white person has to make a choice: either continue to delve into this newfound knowledge and seek ways to overcome one's own racism, or ignore what one knows in order to reintegrate oneself back into their racist

communities. If they feel too isolated and need the support of their community no matter how racist it is, they enter the *Reintegration* stage and intentionally stop noticing the systemic and cultural racism all around them. This is made easier for them if they can isolate themselves from interactions with people from other races.

If they continue to question their own racism and go in search of a white identity that does not include racist beliefs and white racial superiority, they enter the *Pseudo-Independent* stage. They may continue to ask that people of color supply the answers they need or look to others to support their search. A White may try to define herself as some other race during this stage or identify with another racial/cultural group. If that person seeks out and tries to identify with other Whites who have taken on an anti-racist persona, he or she has entered the *Immersion/Emersion* stage. This stage is characterized by developing a persona that is fully aware of what it has meant to be White in the past, the historical implications of White identity, and how to be White and anti-racist.

Eventually, a person may reach the final stage: *Autonomy*. Autonomy is an perpetual process of internalizing a “newly defined sense of oneself as White and anti-racist” (Tatum, , p. 17). This final stage is an on-going commitment to be an ally to people who are the targets of racism and to constantly examine oneself for bias and to root it out. If racist parents want to raise children who are free of biases, they will need to go through these stages that Helms described. Not dealing with prejudice is a message your children will easily see and imitate.

I did not choose to research identity development from other perspectives, for instance from the perspective of gender or disability. I think they are somewhat similar to Helm’s stages with certain exceptions. In terms of gender, men may become more aware of the sexism in the world if they have daughters or if they become close to a woman as a friend or life partner. When I discovered my brother was gay, I went through a series of stages.

Here I will describe Jenkins’ sexual identity development stages. The first stage was ignorance: assuming my brother was straight since I had no way of reading “the signs” of his own sexual identity development. Having grown up in a society that only projects positive images of straight people and images of gay people who are strange, dangerous, and unbalanced, it was natural for me to assume he was straight. Assuming my brother was gay would be tantamount to calling him deviant, even though I was in contact with gay members of our extended family. Stage two included finding out that he wasn’t straight and realizing my first

reaction was negative: “It’s okay if anyone wants to be gay but not my brother. I don’t want him to be gay.” Stage three had two sides to it: one side was anger and confusion that there was this part of my brother that I never knew about and that he “hid” from me, the other side was a newfound awareness that a gay culture existed and thrived despite being ignored by mainstream culture. Stage four was beginning to explore “gay culture” to find out more about my brother’s life. Stage four and five were very similar to Helms’ immersion stage: in order to understand my brother, I grew fascinated with gay culture and I became friends with a lot of gay people, hung out with them and was often confused for a gay person since I was seen with so many gay friends and participated in gay social events and political causes. During this stage everyone I met who was gay was a hero in my eyes for dealing with the discrimination against gays. This stage included becoming an ally to gay people by marching in Pride parades and pointing out homophobia when I saw it.

Stage six was marked by the recognition that being gay doesn’t mean you’re necessarily better or more sensitive than other people. There were a number of gay men I met in my immersion stages who were small-minded and misogynistic. Stage six involved realizing that gay people could be prejudiced as well as be the targets of prejudice. Stage six included being at peace with my brother’s gayness and trying to keep abreast of current gay news and culture. I support him by supporting gay causes and speaking openly of his gayness. It involves talking with him about his lifestyle and making sure he develops a close relationship with my son and that my son understands that his uncle is gay. When the time comes for my son Javi to ask questions about this, I look forward to the three of us sitting down and talking about gay life. Helms theory about racial identity development and my own discussion of sexual identity development helped shape for me some of the central white character’s thoughts and actions in the book I wrote for this thesis, *The Neighborhood*.

Part Three: White Privilege and the De-racialization of “Whiteness”

White privilege

Part of the self-examination that white adults need to go through if they are going to model positive attitudes toward difference must include an examination of white privilege in America. White privilege is the hidden privilege afforded to all White people in this country and the corresponding devaluation and marginalization of all others. White privilege is what allows White families to ignore the systemic racism that gives them a leg up when seeking employment,

applying to colleges, buying goods and property. It is invisible to most White people either because they do not want to recognize it or they have not been trained to see it. McIntosh (1988) describes this white privilege as “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks.” (p. 71) This privilege creates a society where only one group of citizens has all the power, all the understanding, all the knowledge, and all the “*Get out of Jail free cards*” (remember the policemen who beat Rodney King *on videotape?*). Without an awareness of white privilege, many white men and women continue to believe the myth of America as a meritocracy and to believe they are superior to Blacks, Asians, and Latinos. They see the political power and economic power of Whites as deserved, not as created on the backs of others.

The Concept of Whiteness in the United States

Valerie Babb (1998) describes the process by which the concept of *whiteness* became enshrined in the minds of Americans as representing all things virtuous. At the same time it was deracialized and universalized so that whiteness was equated with being an “American”. Thus to be White was to be American and all other racial categories of people were excluded from “American-ness.” In order to achieve unity between different classes of Whites, the United States popular media depicted African Americans, Native Americans and later other immigrant races and cultures as barbaric, servile, savage, and ignorant. This view of other races legitimated the practice of using them as slaves and removing them from their ancestral homelands. The spread of White power across the continent was labeled Manifest Destiny and seen as Christian progress. When Virginia Hamilton was asked whether she considered herself a black author she replied, “How many times has a European-American author been asked, ‘Do you consider yourself a white writer?’ Not often enough. We ignore the construction and historical development of whiteness as equivalent to ‘American.’ Everyone else is the exotic, the different, the ‘Other’ stripped of any symbolic designation of ‘American.’” (as quoted in Fondrie, 2001 p. 10).

McIntosh and Babb make a clear, convincing argument that to be White in this country is to have every advantage and that the greatest advantage of all is that this privilege seems invisible and those who partake of it on a daily basis can claim ignorance and innocence and still perpetually benefit from it. Parents who are aware of the historical racism in America and aware of their own white privilege can begin to speak honestly with their children about why some

People of Color are so angry in this country and why Whites continue to hold positions of power and prestige despite the rhetoric of equality and slogans such as “land of opportunity”.

Part Four: Multicultural Literature’s Impact on Children of all Races

Multicultural literature is a response to the negative environment and misinformation about race that children of color face in America. It is attempting both to lift up the self-esteem of non-white, non-male, non-able-bodied, non-straight children and to open the eyes of “mainstream America” to the existence and value of these children. Adults can bolster their efforts to raise open-minded children by reading to them books which feature main characters who represent the broad array of America’s people: people of all races and classes, women, immigrants, otherly-abled people, gays, lesbians, and people who speak with an accent. Multicultural literature alone cannot create open-minded children, but it can help. If a child is in an environment that espouses prejudice, they will be more strongly influenced by that than any book they read. Thus, white children should not only read multicultural literature, they also need to have multicultural experiences with other children. A survey of the current books, movies, television shows, and music stars still show a preponderance of white people as main characters but, multicultural literature is changing the definition of “American” and making it reflect the diversity of colors, shapes, and ancestry of the people who really are America (Fondrie, 2001; Harris, 1997; Lehr & Thompson, 2000). Daphne Muse (1997) tells us that the future of multicultural literature may be in books that show white characters acknowledging, examining and over-coming their prejudices. I hope she is right.

I have attempted to offer a broad survey of the books I read in preparation for writing my book, *The Neighborhood*, but I’m sure that there are topics I’ve left out. Children’s books that accurately depict America and that deal with marginalized subjects are still at the fringes of both the publishing world and public libraries. The most important idea I learned was that parents must model behavior. They cannot expect to hold on to their racist views and prejudiced thoughts and expect their children to grow up with open minds. I am trying to carry this idea with me everywhere I go, so that I will be a model of tolerance for my son. I hope I will always communicate with him honestly about people’s differences and my own stereotypes and biases.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter I present the process I went through to create a children's book focusing on issues of prejudice. I start by discussing the process of identifying the audience and subject of the book: I decided to write a book about prejudice that was for parents, primarily white parents, to read with their children. I then describe the part of my research that involved interviewing families. Next, I discuss the actual writing of the book and its original structure. I describe the complete about-face that I did when I read my first draft of the book and found it uninspiring. Finally I describe the process for writing the manuscript as it is today: the story of a fictional white character coming to grips with his own prejudice after he moves to a multicultural neighborhood. I finish up this chapter with a discussion of my efforts to get the book illustrated and published.

An Anti-bias handbook for parents and kids to read together

My original idea for this thesis was to examine the research concerning the impact on multicultural literature on children. I was trying to answer the question, "Does reading multicultural literature improve the self-esteem of children of color and reduce prejudice in white children?" I thought this was the perfect thesis for me because I love reading children's stories and I was interested in anti-bias education. After finishing the literature review I realized that rather than reading other people's multicultural literature, I wanted to write my own. My eye was caught by a quote from Daphne Muse(1997) who edited an anthology of multicultural literature. Basically, she was saying that today there was a broad selection of books that showed the experiences of people of color coming to terms with their identity but there were very few books showing white characters coming to terms with their identity and especially the white privilege/prejudice that being White in America often encouraged. In discussing my thesis topic with Dr. Sleeter, she also pointed out that a book describing a white character confronting her or his own racism would be interesting and did not exist for young children to the best of her knowledge.

I decided to write a book for white children and parents that would give them the vocabulary and the tools to examine their own identities and perhaps start to dismantle their prejudices. For my model, I was thinking of the book, "*Where did I come from?*" by Peter

Mayle(1977). This book tackled the difficult subject of human sexuality with candor and humor. It was a cross between a chapter book and a picture book as there were numerous comic images of sperm, babies and other sex related subjects.

Interviews with Multicultural families and Anti-bias Educators

My research for the book concentrated in three areas: reading books and articles, searching websites, and interviewing parents and teachers. My review of books, articles, and documents from the web is contained in my literature review.

I conducted a series of interviews with families and educators who were targets of prejudice based on their race or ethnicity or who were educating others about prejudice. The purpose of these interviews was to familiarize myself with the discrimination that different families experienced, and how they dealt with it. I did not want to limit my research to reading the words of so-called experts because I wanted to deal with the stories and situations of the real-life parents around me. I thought the book should reflect real life experiences more than “expert knowledge”. I was going to use these interviews to base stories illustrating how different people have dealt effectively with situations where they have faced prejudice. I also wanted to speak to families with gay parents and families who had been discriminated against because of their religion but I was unable to locate families that fit these descriptions. In the end, I spoke with three multicultural families and two white anti-bias educators.

One of the educators I interviewed was a white mother who had raised a biracial child on her own and who was also an early childhood educator in a very “racist town” (her words) in Southern California. This woman spoke extensively about the racism she and her daughter faced because they were of different races. She also described some of the stages of her daughter’s identity development as an African American young woman. I interviewed an early childhood educator who was Jewish American and who was married to a Native American man. Her expertise was helping teach parents about bias and how to raise children who resist bias. She shared a number of stories about helping parents recognize their own prejudices for the very first time.

I interviewed an African-American mother of five and grandmother of two. This woman shared some very interesting stories about how her children faced discrimination when they went

to girl scout camp in another area of California and how one of her daughters developed into an activist who exposed racism in her job as an administrator at a prestigious university.

I also interviewed a Mexican immigrant family with a 20-year-old daughter, an 18-year-old daughter, and a 13-year-old son about how they and their children discussed and dealt with xenophobia and discrimination. This interview was conducted mostly in Spanish because the parents were much more comfortable speaking Spanish. They described how they modeled for their children the attitude of rising above the prejudice they encountered. I also interviewed a Mexican American mother and Chicano father (how they identified themselves) about the actions they were taking to raise their six-year-old daughter to have an anti-prejudiced personality. Their experiences growing up were very different. One parent grew up as an immigrant in a town where Whites controlled the government, the businesses, everything. The other parent grew up in a Southern California, having positive racial experiences since he was surrounded by Latino families and African American families. Now, raising their daughter means trying to fulfill her wishes to watch Disney movies, and at the same time educating her about the prejudiced images and assumptions in some of these movies.

The interview questions for parents, children and teachers which can be found in my appendix, were developed to draw out of people actual experiences of prejudice. I tried to elicit from them both experiences when they were the target of other people's prejudices and any prejudices they themselves might have. I was unsuccessful at getting people to discuss their own prejudices. This was probably because there was not enough trust between us and they didn't wish to show this side of themselves with me. For my part, I did not push very hard and found myself avoiding asking about their attitudes toward homosexuality if I sensed they were uncomfortable with it. So I learned some things from the interviews but not as much as if I had been able to coax the interviewees out of their comfort zones.

The first book: *Celebrate You! Celebrate Me!*

After I had read many different articles and books and after interviewing various individuals and families, I wrote a draft of the book, which I entitled *Celebrate You! Celebrate Me!* over a period of a week. I had decided on a chapter format so that parents could choose a specific chapter if an incident came up relating to a certain form of prejudice. The original structure of the book was as follows:

Chapter 1	What is bias? Prejudice? Bigotry?
Chapter 2	Race, Racism, and White privilege
Chapter 3	Sex, Gender and Bias toward the two
Chapter 4	Xenophobia, Religious bigotry, and Cultural Imperialism
Chapter 5	Physical beauty and Ableism
Chapter 6	Self Esteem and Coalition Building
Chapter 7	Thoughts for Parents
Resources, Glossary, Notes, Bibliography	

I started writing the various chapters. Often I found myself repeating what I was saying in one chapter compared to another. This was partially a result of attempting to spiral the information so that readers would encounter information several times in slightly different formats so that it would really sink deeply into their consciousness. I ended up avoiding humor because it was too difficult to come up with humorous ways of depicting this difficult subject. I decided that rather than using humor to deflate parents' and children's nervousness about talking about this subject, I would use honesty. By stating directly and clearly what prejudice is and why it harms people, I hoped to empower parents to address the issue head-on.

After writing nearly three-quarters of my book, I printed it out and read it. I was struck with one over-arching impression: It was Bor-ring! I looked at what I'd written and decided it was more like a dry dull textbook than a fun children's book. It was words, words, words, and there was no human interest. I decided that no kid on earth would want to read this book and therefore no parents would want to read it either. In retrospect, I think I had to go through the process of getting some of these ideas down on paper before I could get to the next stage...

A New Book, New Characters, and New Inspiration: *The Neighborhood*

The next stage was to write completely different book. I started by writing a series of chapters, each one introducing a different fictional character. Each character had faced discrimination or harassment because of one or several aspects of their identity. The book was like having a conversation with these characters that were challenging the reader to look at some of their assumptions about people and identity. The book was tentatively titled *The Neighborhood* and offered the reader a tour of a multicultural neighborhood where differences were valued.

For instance, on one page a character named Joey was introduced. Through a written description, the book led you to believe that Joey was an able-bodied boy but when you turned the page you saw a picture of Joey: she was a young Latina tomboy in a wheelchair. I worked on these chapters creating a rough story line. Finally, I let my brother read the book and he gave me some valuable advice about trying to tell the story from one point of view. He pointed out that it was hard to follow who was talking to you, the reader, because the point of view kept changing.

So I created the character of Steven Jones and the book became a story of how Steven moved to a new neighborhood and went on a journey of self-discovery where he learned not to judge people. In meeting the different people of the neighborhood, Joey's assumptions about race, gender, physical ability, and sexuality were challenged. In the end, Joey ends up being rescued from a bully by the multicultural band of friends that he had spurned.

I found as I was writing this new book that I was searching the web for photos, clip art and graphics with which to illustrate the book. Originally these photos helped me to create composite sketches of the characters in my mind and put down in words what I thought the character might be like, based on their photo. However, I realized I was leaning too heavily on the pictures to tell the story and make up for a weak plot line and poor writing. So I created a text only version so that I could force myself to make the text as strong as possible and then later enhance it with images. After writing a first draft of the book, rather than passing it out to my friends and acquaintances, I kept trying to rewrite it. I realized one Sunday at church that I was afraid that my friends would think some of the characters were depicted in a racist manner. I realized I was afraid of being accused of being racist myself. And I realized that if I was ever going to make a better book, I needed to put it out there and see what people said. If there were parts that were unintentionally racist than I needed to face that fact. This was the most important lesson I had learned from my review of literature on the subject: parents need to own up to and face their own prejudices. Because I completely rewrote the book in the last week of April and early May, I was not able to get lots of feedback on it before turning a draft into my advisors.

The



Neighborhood

By Stewart Jenkins

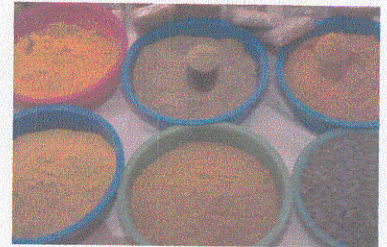
May 2004

This book is dedicated to my wife Sofia and my son Javier.

Stewart Jenkins
MAE Thesis May 2004

Introduction

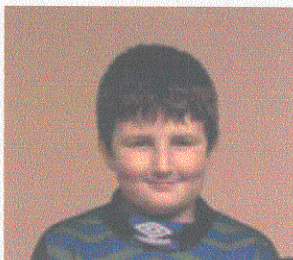
You may never have thought about it, but you look a certain way to people who don't know you. For instance, I didn't think about the color of my skin until I moved to a place where all the other kids had skin that was different colored from mine. I definitely noticed their skin was different from mine. Do you notice kids who have different skin from yours? Here's some skin colors: dark chocolate, peanut butter, cinnamon, cooked pasta, peach skin, and ginger tea. Are you getting hungry? Me too!



Do you notice kids whose hair is different from yours? Hair can be straight, curly, kinky, knotted, long and short. It can be brown, black, red, blonde, white, and grey. Do you ever notice the size of other kids? There are big kids, little kids, chunky kids, and skinny kids. There are muscular, boney, small, tall, and even tall, tall kids.

How about the way some kids speak English? Have you noticed that it may be different from how you speak English? Maybe you speak with an accent because you learned another language before you learned English. Maybe other kids speak a different form of English than you're used to hearing with lots of slang and spoken very quickly. Maybe you speak very quickly and don't understand why there are kids who can't understand you. Maybe they only speak one or two words of English and the rest of the time they speak another language like Spanish, or Vietnamese, or Russian.

Hello. My name's Steven Jones. I live with my mom and my sister Kimmy in that house over there. I moved to this neighborhood last year. I'm eleven and a half and I'm in the sixth grade. I like playing basketball and playing tag in the empty lot. My family moved here from my old neighborhood last year. When we moved to this neighborhood I had a really hard time making friends in my neighborhood.



I used to hate living here. I wanted to go back to my old neighborhood. Now I love it here: this is a great neighborhood! But I had to learn a few things in order to see what a great place this was. I had to learn *the Rules*. **The Rules** are kinda' like the laws that the kids of this neighborhood live by. You want to hear the whole story? Okay, you've got to pretend that we're going into a time tunnel. I want to tell you from the beginning so pretend we're traveling back two months in time...

Chapter One What's wrong with me?

"I didn't want to move to this stupid neighborhood anyway! I hate it here! I want to go back to my old school. I want my old friends back!" I yelled this in my mom's face as she dragged me into the apartment, pulling on my shirt so hard that the collar ripped a little bit. My cheek was already starting to swell up where JayJay had hit me. He stood there in his yard watching me get dragged away. His arms were still raised and his fists were still clenched.

"It's not okay to solve your problems with your fists, mister." My mom held my face between her hands and forced me to look at her eye to eye. Her hands wouldn't let me look away.

I started to cry. Between the sobs I complained,

"I don't understand any of the kids here. They're all different from Brian, and Phillip. Why can't I get along with them?"

My mom pulled me into her arms and started talking softer,

"It's gonna take some time to adjust to our new place, sweetie. Maybe you can start by telling me everything that happened before you and that other boy started fighting."

I started thinking about what had happened. I wasn't sure what had happened. I was talking to him and all of a sudden he started swinging at me. I tried to think back about what we had said, or if there was something I did that made him angry.

"We were goofing around, shooting baskets and talking. I told him about Kimmy and you and dad. I told him how we moved here 'cause of the divorce; and about where I used to live and that I was in sixth grade. He told me he moved here from some little island in the Caribbean. He spoke English funny. I told him he spoke English funny. He told me, 'You speak English funny too.' I guess I made fun of his accent. I told him I spoke English fine because *my parents spoke good English* and I guess I reminded him that his parents could barely speak English. Then out of nowhere he started pushing me. So I hit him and he started hitting me.

My mom looked at me but didn't say anything. She was giving me the "Don't you know what you did wrong?" look. I hate that look. It always makes me start yelling or it makes me cry. Maybe because I feel like I disappointed her. She reached out for my right arm and held it gently in her hands like it was a newborn kitten.

"How do you feel when people make fun of your arm? Do you laugh when someone makes a joke about it?"

“No.”

“What?” said mom

“I *said* NO.”

“That’s what I thought. Maybe that’s how that other boy felt when you made fun of his accent. What did you say his name was?”

“JayJay.”

Mom said, “Let’s go over and talk to JayJay. Maybe you could apologize and we could invite him over for a snack. What do you say?”

I hate apologizing. I hate admitting I’m wrong. But, JayJay was the closest boy to my house and I’d been in the neighborhood for a week now and didn’t have any guy friends.

Kimmy had already made some good friends and was always asking mom if she could go out and play with them. It made me mad. I used to be the one with all the friends. Kimmy would try to hang out with me and my friends. How did I end up being the one with no friends?

I started to think about the different kids I’d met. There was Joey. I felt weird being her friend. I just wanted someone to run with. There was Paloma. She always had something interesting to say. But she was really my sister’s friend. Her and Veronica. Veronica Jones. Her last name was ‘Jones’, just like ours. That was kind of weird. I mean how could white people and black people have the same last name?

I started to think about the first time I met each one of them...*why didn’t they want to be friends with me?* Joey was the first person I met, because I saw her ‘Wanted’ poster on a telephone pole.

Chapter Two *Insides and Outsides*

After we’d lived in the neighborhood for a about a week I was getting really bored because I didn’t have anything to do and I was tired of playing with my sister. One day I noticed a flyer on a telephone pole in front of our house that read:

Wanted: basketball partners.
Hi my name is Joey. I love to play basketball, hang out at the park, and play with my dog Burrito. Call 734-4558 and ask for me to set a time to meet at the basketball courts on Garden Street.
NO Beginners!

I begged my mom to let me go. Finally, she agreed that it was okay for me to go if I brought Kimmy along. I called Joey and we set a time to meet that afternoon. I was so excited that I made Kimmy run all the way to the courts with me.

When we got to the courts, there was only a Mexican girl in a wheelchair shooting baskets. When she saw us, she rolled up and said,

“Are you Steven? Nice to meet you, I’m Joey.”

I didn’t know what to say. All I could do was stare at her. In my mind I was thinking, “A girl??!? ...in a wheelchair?!?!?”

Joey said, “What? You look surprised...Oh, I guess you were expecting someone else. Someone who isn’t in a wheelchair, right?”

I said, “Listen, I’m not gonna play you. It wouldn’t be fair. I’d easily whip you on the court.”

Joey glared at me and then threw the ball at my chest and said, “Prove It.” So I took the ball and started dribbling it toward the basket. I was dribbling all fancy, showing her my stuff, when something horrible happened... Somehow Joey wheeled around me and stole the ball from under me! She dribbled the ball with one hand and steered her wheelchair with the other. Before I knew what was happening, she was at the free throw line and taking a shot. Swoosh! The ball went in! Joey rolled over to it, picked it up, passed it to me and said, “Two to nothing. Loser’s ball.”

Kimmy laughed and I told her to shut up. Joey and I played for another ten minutes. I played hard after that. I started scoring against her, but every time Joey got the ball she scored. She was able to put the wheelchair between me and the ball so I couldn’t steal it from her. She was up 14 to 10 when I sort of grabbed her wheelchair while she was heading for the basket.

“Hey!” she said, “That’s a foul, you can’t grab my ‘chair!”

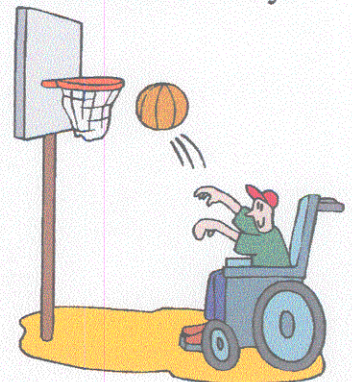
I glared at her and shouted, “What are you talking about? I didn’t grab your chair. You must be blind as well as crippled!”

“You’re just mad that a *girl* in a *wheelchair* is beating you. Don’t call me a cripple. I’m not crippled I’m *otherly* abled.”

I pointed at her, taunting in a sing-song voice, “To me you look crippled.

Crippled. Crippled. Crippled.” After I said this, she grabbed her basketball, called her dog, Burrito, and rolled away from us. After rolling about 20 feet, she turned around and said, “It’s too bad you’re such a jerk. I was starting to have fun...” Then she rolled away.

Kimmy said, “Steven, that was *wrong*.”



I said, "Shut up." And then I turned to walk home.

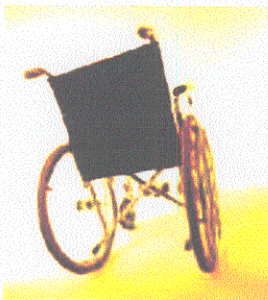
Joey here. Were you expecting the typical American boy who could run around the basketball court? I guess that's what Steven was expecting too. Well, that's not me. Me, I'm a girl. My family's Mexican American. And yes, I am in a wheelchair.

Listen, I'm here to tell you that I *am* the typical American kid. I'm so tired of everyone treating me like I'm some fragile package or looking at me like I was the strangest thing they'd ever seen. I may not be able to walk but I still love playing basketball with my friends, eating pizza and ice cream, and dreaming of summer. I want to talk to Steven and tell him about how we see ourselves and how others see us.



When I think about who I am, I think about how much I love to make tamales with my mom. I think about watching basketball games on TV with my brothers Francisco and Pablo. I think about drawing with markers and singing Corridos with my dad. Corridos are songs from Mexico that tell stories. Another word for them is ballads.

Now let's talk about what Steven saw when he looked at me: the first thing he noticed was probably my wheelchair, then the color of my skin (I'm pretty dark brown), then the fact that I'm a girl but I like to dress like a boy. Almost every day I wear old jeans, a T-shirt, and a baseball cap. If he had come to my house, he would have seen that it's small, that the paint is peeling and the roof is patched in lots of places.



Here's the difference: When I think about myself I think about what's *inside* me. But when other people see me, especially if they don't know me, then all they think about is the outside of me. They think of me as my outside, but I'm really about my inside. Steven definitely measured me by my outsides. How do you think we should measure people: based on their outsides or on their insides?

I want people to talk to me about basketball. I want them to taste my delicious tamales. But most people don't stop to talk to me: they see the wheelchair and look away from me, or pretend I'm not there. Or they act like Steven. They get all mad if I'm just as good as them at something even though I'm in a wheelchair. I hope when you finish reading this book that you'll try harder to see inside me and other people in wheelchairs and not pretend we don't exist or act like we're some sort of charity cases.

up and ask me about last night's basketball scores. I guess things are different in this neighborhood. We're all friends even though we're all really different.

Chapter Three - The Rules

Later that same day, the day that JayJay and I had gotten into a fight, I went back over to his house with Kimmy in tow, to try to patch things up. I wasn't really convinced I'd done anything wrong, but I wanted to get my mom off my case. When we got over there, Paloma was just walking up with Veronica. They were looking for Veronica's brother, Cam. We found Cam and JayJay in JayJay's backyard.

They were in JayJay's fort. The fort was an old gardening shed with treasure maps on the walls and old pieces of carpet on the dirt floor. There were also crates filled with old copies of *National Geographic* and travel magazines that they'd gotten from the doctor's office.

Cam and JayJay were sitting on the ground, leaning over box that they were using as a table, and writing something on a piece of paper. The paper looked really old, it was golden and wrinkled. When we showed up at the door, JayJay grabbed the paper off the box and stood up to face us. He looked right at me and said: "You. You need to leave unless you're going to obey *the Rules*."

Veronica said, "The rules? What rules?"

JayJay said, "I wasn't talking to you, I was talking to him." He pointed at me. "You guys can all come in. Everyone, except for Steven. If he wants to come in then he needs to read the rules and then sign that he's going to obey them."

"He and JayJay got in a fight this morning." Cam explained to Paloma and Veronica.

I pointed at JayJay and said, "I don't have to obey your stupid rules." Then I turned to go home.

"Wait." It was Kimmy, holding my arm. She wasn't letting me leave. She continued, "He didn't say you couldn't come in. He said you couldn't come in if you weren't going to obey the rules. We need to at least listen to them. Maybe a set of rules is what we all need. We all have to obey the rules, right everyone?"

"I guess so. As long as we approve the rules as a group," said Veronica. She went on, "I guess it could be like a secret that we all have and that we have to obey when we're together."

"What's going on?" It was Joey, rolling up to the group who were crowded around the entrance to the fort. Everyone backed up a little and formed a circle so that Joey could see what was going on.

“What’s going on?” It was Joey, rolling up to the group who were crowded around the entrance to the fort. Everyone backed up a little and formed a circle so that Joey could see what was going on.

“JayJay and Cam have written a set of rules and we’re going to listen to them and decide if we all agree on them. If we do, then we all have to obey them,” said Paloma.

“**Are these rules from our parents,**” asked Joey?

“No, they’re our rules. Rules made by kids for kids,” said Veronica.

Cam started telling us the rules. I have to admit they were better than I thought they would be. I thought they were going to be something like, **Rule 1: Steven is a Jerk. Rule 2: Never play with Steven.** And so on. But they weren’t like that at all.

Jay cleared his throat like he was making an important announcement and held the paper with the rules out in front of him.

He said “**rule number one** is: we’re all different, and that’s a good thing. In this neighborhood some of us speak different languages with our parents. We speak English different from people who speak English all the time. We eat different foods for dinner. Our skin is cinnamon, dark chocolate, peanut butter, peach and many other colors that are darker and lighter. We’ve got different colored hair, different eyes and some of us are tall, some short, some of us are thin and some of us are large. Some of us are in wheelchairs, some of us wear glasses, and others can run really fast and don’t need glasses. Some of us live with a mom and a dad, some of us live with two dads, and some of us live with only our moms and our grandparents. Some of us have grandparents who’ve lived in the neighborhood since they were kids. Others, like me, have just moved here from far away.”

“It’s true we are all very different. I know when I see some of the things you guys eat for dinner, I think they’re pretty weird. But you probably think what I eat is weird. ” This was Paloma talking.

“Here’s **rule number two**: when we’re all together playing in the street or on the empty lot, we’re all equals. No one gets to say they’re better than the others just because they can run faster, or talk smarter, or cause their parents have more money. Everyone obeying the rules means we’re equals.”

“Here’s **rule number three**: when you got a problem, you talk about it. We don’t let our fists do the talking around here.” (Cam looked at me and at JayJay when he said this.) “We all speak English kinda’ different and that makes for some confusion. Occasionally there are misunderstandings between us. You know what I mean?” (This time he looked around at everyone as he said this.)

“Miscommunication is a frequent problem in the neighborhood.” Reminded Paloma. Everyone nodded and there were little laughs floating around the circle.

Cam went on, “But if we talk about it, we can usually work it out. It was fighting that led to the rules in the first place, now we’re gonna use talking to create rules and solve our problems. Hopefully with the rules we’ll spend a lot more time playing and a lot less time arguing and pushing each other around. What do you guys think of the rules?”

Veronica said, “Read the three rules again.”

JayJay read them this time,

“Rule one, We’re all different, and that’s good.

Rule two, we’re all equals.

Rule three, talk about problems, don’t fight about them.”

“I like them,” said Paloma.

“Me too,” said Kimmy.

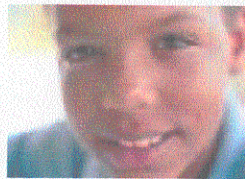
So we took a vote and the rules were voted in with unanimous support from the group.

“Sorry about the misunderstanding,” said JayJay as he held his hand out to me.

I said, “I’m sorry about what I said,” while shaking his hand.

Meet JayJay

Hey there! I’m JayJay. My real name’s Antoine Josef, but everyone calls me JayJay. You look new. Welcome to the neighborhood! Steven’s showing you around? Fantastique! It wasn’t so long ago that we were trying to show Steven around. At first he didn’t want to be shown around. He just sat in his yard and played all day. He wouldn’t come to the fence and talk to any of us.



Let me tell you about myself. I love to cook and eat all kinds of food, especially seafood. I play a mean game of bones, you know dominoes, and my family is Caribbean American. We’re from a little island in the Caribbean Ocean called Martinique. My folks speak French with me. I’ve lived here in the United States for six years now. I learned English at school.

Chapter Four (not to be confused with Rule Number Four)

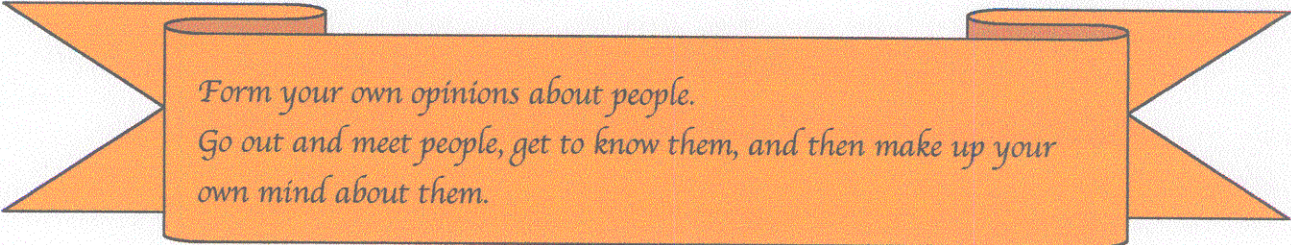
JayJay and Cam and the rest of us hadn't made up Rule Number Four yet. Here comes JayJay, he'll tell you about it. "Hey there JayJay. Can you tell the new kid about Rule Number Four?"

JayJay said, "Rule Number Four? You want to hear about Rule Number Four? Listen, did Steven tell you about the rules? Good, I'm glad he told you about them. If you're a kid here and you want all of us to respect you, than you gotta respect *the rules*."

"Okay, the final rule we wrote was Rule Number Four. It's the most important rule. We call it **Rule Number Four** (That's right, it *always capitalized!* It's that important.) Don't worry, you'll hear about **Rule Number Four** almost every day. When someone says something mean to another kid you'll hear the other kid yell out "Rule Number Four!" When someone acts superior to another kid or judges a kid, the offended kid might just say, "Number Four!" In a pinch, a kid will yell, "Cuatro!" That means "four" in Spanish. **Rule Number Four** is the glue that holds this neighborhood together. What? Oh yeah, you want to know what **Rule Number Four** is... Sorry, I forgot that I hadn't told you yet. Okay here's **Rule Number Four** ..."

"Wait! There's one more thing. You can tell your parents about rules **one**, **two**, and **three**, but you might want to keep Rule Number Four to yourself. Some adults don't understand it. They want you to not trust people who are different."

"Okay here's **Rule Number Four**."



Form your own opinions about people.

Go out and meet people, get to know them, and then make up your own mind about them.

"Another way of saying **Rule Number Four** is don't believe what another person says about someone who's different until you've verified it for yourself. This includes your parents. Sometimes they say something bad about a person who is a different race or comes from a different country or who has a different kind of family and you want to believe it, because they're your parents. **Rule Number Four** says you gotta check it out before you believe them."

"Maybe your mom is White and she says that Blacks are lazy and like to sit around and eat watermelon all day. Well, you got to go to the source: go talk to

Veronica or come talk to me and ask us whether we like watermelon and ask us if we're lazy. If your older brother tells you that being gay is a disease that you can catch from gay people, than go talk to Cam and Veronica's parents and ask if you can "catch" their gayness from them if they sneeze on you. If your grandparents say that poor people steal and aren't working hard enough, go talk to Joey, Francisco or Pablo and ask them if their parents work hard."

"See, adults sometimes get too busy for their own good. They start to hear rumors about different kinds of people and they start to believe things they've only heard about people and they don't check out whether these rumors are true or false. We kids take the time to get the truth. That's why we can trust each other, because we don't just believe everything we hear."

"Most of the time adults tell the truth about others. When Paloma's dad said that Cam and Veronica's dads were just like everyone else's parents we didn't believe him. So we decided to check it out. That's **Rule Number Four** in action. If you think some adult's not telling you the truth, or the whole truth, or even the whole story, you go and investigate."

"So after Paloma's dad said that Cam and Veronica's family was just like everyone else's, even though their parents are gay, we all went over there and watched them up close. They ate hamburgers and fried rice for lunch. (That was some good fried rice....) Cam and Veronica had to make their beds and clean their rooms just like us. We found out they went to the movies together as a special treat just like us. And when Cam fell off his skateboard and got a cut on his elbow, both his dads hugged him just like one of our parents would do. If you want to know more about Cam and Veronica's parents and what it means to be gay, check out Chapter Six."



"Do you get it? Do you understand Rule Number Four? We need to find Paloma. She'll tell you the whole story: how Rule Number Four became the most important rule. I'll go look for her... "PALOMA!!!"



Steven here. Rule Number Four was really hard for me because at first I didn't believe in it. You see I was raised to listen to my parents and believe what they and other adults told me. All of us are supposed to listen to what our parents say, right?

Well, what are we supposed to do when they say bad things about people that they don't really know? That's what I had to understand about Rule Number Four. It wasn't saying: Don't listen

to your parents. It was saying: Don't listen to rumors from anyone, including your parents, about people of other races, people from other countries, and people with disabilities.

I know it's important to listen to my parents and other people to learn about things that could help protect me; like not crossing the street without looking both ways, and not doing something dangerous just because your friends told you to do it.

The other part of Rule Number Four is remembering the part that says, "Check your facts." It doesn't say: don't believe everything that an adult tells you about someone from a different race. It says: when you hear something about a person who is different, try to find out if it's true before you believe it. Our parents tell us lots of things every day about other people that help us to make wise decisions. But my parents also didn't grow up amongst African Americans and Latino Families. So they believed things about them that weren't true.

There were some things my family said that were wrong. When we sat around the dinner table at night, my dad and sometimes my uncles would tell jokes about black people, or Muslims, or gay people. They would say things like, "There goes the neighborhood," if a black family moved into our neighborhood or "all those Mexicans are stealing our jobs," when we saw a Latino family at the supermarket. I didn't understand everything they were saying but I got the message that anyone who wasn't white or who wasn't born in America was either out to steal something from us or somehow couldn't be trusted. If I had known about Rule Number Four, I might've waited to get to know some of these people instead of believing what my dad and uncles said.

That's one reason my mom left my dad, she didn't like it when he talked like that in front of us. But even my mom was acting weird when we moved here. She would say things like, "Don't talk to kids you don't know," and "You two have to stay in the yard where I can keep an eye on you." She said that we needed to be careful because it wasn't safe in our neighborhood and we were never allowed to go into other people's houses without her permission. She never said directly that we couldn't trust the people in our new neighborhood but she sure did seem scared to be living here herself.

I had to learn the hard way that you can't judge a person on their outside until you know them on the inside.

Meet Paloma



Hi, my name is Paloma. Paloma means "dove" in Spanish. I'm named after my grandmother. Maybe my parents named me

Paloma because doves are symbols of peace and they knew I was going to be a peacemaker.

One way that people judge others on their outsides is based on their race. Your race is like a combination of the color of your skin, and other physical things like your hair and the shape of your eyes. You get your race from your parents. If both your parents are Asian American, then you're Asian American. What if your parents are different races? Then what race are you? This question is very important to me. Everyone's always trying to make me choose one race and that's not who I am.

What race do you think I am? *African American*? Nope. Good guess. Want to guess again? *Hispanic*? Well, yes, I am Hispanic, although I prefer to be called Chicano. Chicano means I'm from Mexico originally but now I'm both Mexican and American. *Asian*? Yes, I'm part Asian. You see my parents are a mixture of races and so I'm a mixture of races also. If you're a mixture of races we say you're "multiracial."

Here's my story: My mom's from Mexico and racially she's a mixture of White and Black. My Dad's from the Philippines, and he's all Asian. People look at me and wonder what race I am. I look a little Asian, a little Latino, and a little African American. Like I said: I'm multi-racial. I'm part Pilipino (Asian) part Mexican (half European, half African descent).

Everybody wants me to fit into just one racial box. When I fill out the forms at school, I can only be white, or African American, or Asian. How can I tell them that I'm a mixture of all three if I can only check one box??

You know what? All these racial categories: White, Black, Red, Yellow, Brown, were made up by people. They don't have any logical rules. In the past, more than one hundred years ago, there were many white people from Europe who were traveling all over the earth and trying to take things from people who weren't white. They would travel to a country with Blacks and force the black people to become slaves or die. White people went all over the world hurting people and taking things away from black, brown, tan, and yellow people. The white people thought they were better than everyone else. They thought that God told them they could treat other people like animals. That's one reason that race is a very touchy subject in the United States.

Do your parents like to talk about people's races? Do they ever talk to you about racism? Steven's dad made racist comments about black people and Mexican Americans, remember?

Chapter Five *How we created Rule Number Four thanks to Steven*



What's that? Rule Number Four? Oh you want to know about Rule Number Four...That's a good story...Here comes everyone. There's Veronica and her brother Cam. Here comes Steven's sister Kimmy. And you already met Joey. Those are her two brothers Francisco and Pablo behind her.

"Don't forget me!" JayJay said running up to the group who were gathering to sit in a circle in the shade of the Loquat tree in Paloma's front yard.

*How we created Rule Number Four
as told by Paloma and her helpers from the Neighborhood*

Come and sit over here next to Joey. All the kids are here because they love to hear this story. It all started a few weeks ago when Steven Wells and his sister Kimmy moved in. Paloma nudged Steven with her elbow and said, "He thought he was God's gift to the neighborhood. Well, it turned out the neighborhood was God's gift to him." Everyone laughed at Paloma's joke, even Steven.

"See, we've always been hanging out as a group even though we're all really different. There was no one else to play with so we had to hang out with each other or be bored all day. We didn't pay much attention to what our parents said about not talking to people that are different because we'd already become friends. I guess we were already obeying the rules that Cam and JayJay created even though they weren't in words yet. Even though our parents were telling us strange things about people's skin color and gay parents, and why you couldn't trust a person who spoke English with an accent, we were getting to know each other and learning that what they were saying wasn't necessarily true."

"Then one day, this big moving van pulled up in front of that house over there," Paloma pointed to the little green house across the street, "and Steven, his mom and his sister Kimmy got out and stretched their arms and legs. I remember Veronica and I stopped playing for a second and watched them get out of the van. The first thing Steven did was look all around the neighborhood. He had this weird look on his face. It was like half a smile and half a frown."

"I was trying to look tough even though I was a little afraid," said Steven. "See, I came from a neighborhood where everyone looked like me, same skin, same language. I'd seen other kinds of people on TV and around town, but I never lived *with*

them. All of a sudden I was living *right next door* to black people, brown people, yellow people, and people who didn't even speak English. The only thing I knew about you was what I'd heard in my old neighborhood and what I'd seen on TV."

"Don't worry Steven, we don't bite." joked Cam. Everyone giggled.

"I know that now, but at the time the only thing I knew is what grown ups and older kids had told me." responded Steven. "Since I didn't know any of you, I believed what the boys in my neighborhood said: that all of you carried knives and were going to fight me because you were all in gangs. My uncle told me not to trust anyone who wasn't a white person. My dad told me that poor people were living in the neighborhood where we were moving and that they might try to take my toys or threaten me. Even my mom said that me and my sister couldn't leave the yard 'cause she wanted to keep us in her eyesight, 'in case anything happens.' I was really scared after they'd told me all these things."

While Steven was talking everyone started murmuring words under their breath. The words got louder and louder: "Rule Number Four"..... "Rule Number Four".... "Rule Number Four"... "Rule Number Four" . . . "Rule Number Four!"

Paloma continued, "Are you starting to understand where **Rule Number Four** came from? Steven was afraid of all the other kids in our neighborhood because of what grown-ups and other kids had told him about us. Kimmy wasn't as afraid as Steven because no one sat her down and told her to fear us. She saw her mom and Steven acting strange but it didn't change the way she acted. Right Kimmy?" Kimmy nodded. "When she saw Veronica and me playing with our dolls, she brought hers out and we all introduced our dolls."

"I was a little surprised because I'd never seen a doll with dark skin like theirs," offered Kimmy.

Veronica stood up to tell me, 'My sister can't play with kids like you. yanked Kimmy away by the



with her hands to show how Steven had dragged Kimmy away.

Everyone said at the same time, "What you'd do? What'd you do 'Rica?"

Veronica waited for everyone to be quiet and then she said, "Well I couldn't just let him talk to me like I was some kind of *freak*. So I caught up to them and stood in his way and said, 'What do you mean *people like me*?!? I'm just the same as you and your sister. Only difference is my skin is the color of milk chocolate and yours is the color of white chocolate. You folks are new in this neighborhood and it *seems to me* like you could use some friends right now. You ain't going to have any

her part of the story. "He to look all tough and said to you again. Mom says we Come on Kimmy.' Then he wrist." Veronica gestured

friends around here if you only play with white kids.’ Then I switched on my attitude, turned to Kimmy and told her, ‘You *better* talk to your *brother*. You can bring him around when he’s straightened out.’ Then I walked away.”

The kids cheered when Veronica finished talking. She was their hero for standing up to Steven and “telling it like it is”.

Chapter Six **Meet Veronica**



Hi, my name’s Veronica Jones. I wanted to talk to you to let you know who I am, because I come off as kind of tough girl in that story that Paloma’s telling and I wanted you to know me better. I’m not that tough, but I will stand up for myself. My friends all call me ‘Rica’. That means like a tasty food in Spanish. I’m thirteen years old and I love computer games, playing basketball, and doing math. I’m African American and I’m adopted. I’ve

never met my real mom.

I have an eleven-year-old brother named Cam who’s also adopted. Our daddies adopted both Cam and me when we were babies. You see I have two dads, Ron and Elvin. That’s right, I’ve got *two dads* (...and no mom). I have a mother who gave birth to me but I consider my daddies my parents. My dads are gay; that means they are men who fall in love with other men. When someone asks us about my two dads, my daddy Ron says, “Some boys marry the woman of their dreams, I married the man of my dreams.” I have some friends who have two *mommies* and no daddy.

My dad Elvin is Asian American, he’s an accountant, and he loves to ride bicycles as a family. My daddy Ron is African American, he’s a house painter and he’s pretty sick right now. He’s got a disease called AIDS, which could eventually kill him.

Some religious people in America have said that my daddy got AIDS because God was punishing him for being gay. How could they say such a thing about my daddy? If God’s punishing anyone, he’s punishing me because I might lose him. Does that mean that God is punishing everyone who is dying of a disease? When little kids and babies die of AIDS is he punishing them too? I refuse to think that.



Me and Daddy Ron

My daddies taught me that God loves all people and God never makes things happen that would hurt people.

Here's a picture of my dad Ron with his brothers all dressed up on the day that my daddies got married. My dad's the man in the middle of the photo with the red tie and beard. His beard scratches me when he gives me a goodnight kiss. (I don't mind.)



My brother Cam is half Asian and half Caucasian. His mom is Vietnamese and his dad is American. I'm all African American. In my family we're all different: different races, different ages, and we each have different favorite flavors of ice cream but we all love each other. When people try to tell me that a family should be made up of a man and a woman, not two men, I tell them: Love makes a family, not a man and a woman.

Just because my parents are gay doesn't mean I'm gonna be gay. I think I'm straight. I like boys. I'm not really ready to date anyone but when I do I'm pretty sure it'll be a boy.

Paloma here. I bet you're wondering how it all worked out, how we all became friends, how Steven learned to give people a chance before he judged them and how **Rule Number Four** came into existence. Read on...

Chapter Seven

Whoa!! This chapter is waaay too long.

Take it a little at a time or it will turn around and swallow you whole(!)

"Keep going Paloma, you've got everyone's attention," said Joey as she adjusted her position in her wheelchair. So Paloma continued the story...



So you see there was this kid named George. He really wasn't a kid, he was more like a little baby bully in a big person's body. He liked to go around and scare all the kids in the neighborhood. We think it was because his dad was always yelling at him. Sometimes

he would come to school with bruises on his arms. He was in the eighth grade for the second time, and he didn't have any friends.

"Of course he didn't have any friends, he was always trying to pick a fight with anyone he came across!" interrupted JayJay.

"Anyway," Paloma went on, "One day, while coming home from school, Steven was unlucky enough to cross George's path. I think Steven thought they would get along since they looked alike. I was sitting on my porch and I saw what happened."

Steven nodded and said, "He was the first kid who looked like me that I saw in the neighborhood. I'd already met Joey, JayJay, You, Veronica, and Cam. I didn't think we were gonna be friends. I guess I was thinking that my friends were going to be people that looked like me. I figured I'd go introduce myself to him and try to be his friend. Boy, was that a mistake."

Steven kept telling the story as he remembered it, "I remember, I waved to George and called out, 'Hey Dude.' He was across the street when he saw me. He immediately crossed over and blocked my path and glared down at me. I'm telling you he was a BIG kid. I held out my right hand to shake hands with him and said, 'Hi, I'm Steven Wells.' George didn't shake my hand; he just stared at my right arm. He said, 'I'm George. This neighborhood is filled with trashy people. None of them talk normal English. You're the first non-trashy person I've met.' I laughed and said, 'You're tellin' me. You're the first normal person I've talked to, too.'

"George said, 'People like us got to stick together cause all these Mexicans, foreigners, and homos are tryin' to take over our neighborhood.'" I laughed and said, "That's right." I was thinking to myself, *Finally, I'm meeting someone like me. Hopefully we can hang out and be friends.*

"George kept staring at my arm. Suddenly he said, 'What's wrong with your arm?' I didn't say anything. A lot of times other boys make fun of me because of it. Most kids just stare at my arm, but they never say anything or ask about it," Steven held out his arm as he said this. It was clear that it was somewhat paralyzed and it was smaller and thinner than his left arm.

"After he started asking me about my arm, I started to feel a little sweat on my palms. All of a sudden, he grabbed me by the shirt collar and said, 'Are you some kind of fag? Why do you hold your arm like a fag? My dad says fags should all be beaten up and kicked out of this country. What about you *fag*? Should I beat you up?' "

"I didn't understand what was happening, *I thought we were gonna be friends.* All of a sudden I realized that George wasn't looking for friends. He was just looking for someone he could harass. I didn't bother telling him about my arm since I could tell he wasn't really interested in it. I knew I needed to get away from him. So I said, 'I just remembered, I gotta go... Well, see you later.' and I tried to walk

around him. But George wouldn't let me pass. He pulled me by the collar and threw me on the ground.”

Paloma jumped in, “From where I was, I saw things getting worse. It looked like George was about to whack Steven so I ran out of my house and across the street. I remember calling George's name as I ran, ‘Ge-orge! Oh, Ge-orge!! Don't bother hitting Steven. Look, I've got *cookies* for you.’ I dangled some tired-looking Fig Newtons in front of George's face. I was trying to distract him. George glanced at me for a second and then remembered he was in the middle of beating up Steven.”

“Luckily, at that moment, a big group of kids turned the corner and saw the two of them and me. It was Veronica, JayJay, Cam, Joey and her brothers Francisco and Pablo. They all ran toward Steven, George and me. (Well, I guess Joey rolled toward me.) Veronica got to us first since she's a fast runner. She stood right in between George and Steven and said, ‘What d'you think you're doin' George?’ ”

“George snarled, ‘Stay outta this Ver-RON-Ica. Besides what're *you* gonna do about it.’ Veronica motioned to all of us and said, ‘*We* are gonna ask you *once* to walk on George. And after that *we* are gonna enforce that command, if you know what I mean.’ She looked George in the eye. Her face was really close to his. I guess you could say she was *in his face*.” Everyone laughed at Paloma's joke.

“Even though Rica was a lot smaller than George, she could look really tough when she wanted to. George looked around at Joey's brothers and then back at Veronica. You could almost smell the fear start to rise up inside him...He got up, and shot one last comment at Steven: ‘You got lucky fag!’ And then he walked away quickly without looking back. While he was walking away Veronica yelled after him, ‘He's not a fag George. You wouldn't know what a fag was if one dropped out of the sky and kissed you!’ ”

Paloma continued, “Rica helped Steven to his feet and Francisco and Joey wiped the dirt off his jacket. We all stood around Steven in a circle, looking at him. Nobody knew what to say. Finally, Joey broke the silence, ‘So what's up with your arm?’ ”

“I remember Steven said ‘I don't want to talk about it,’ through clenched teeth. He was shaking a little bit and it looked like he was about to start crying.”

Joey interjected, “That's when I told him, ‘Hey, if you don't want to talk about it, I understand. Sometimes, I get really tired of telling people why I'm in a wheelchair. Anyway, if you told us about your arm, we're not going to make fun of it. Right everyone?’ And everyone nodded after I said that.”

Paloma resumed the story, “After that Steven let out a big sigh that sounded like a tire with a leak in it and his whole body looked like it was deflating. What were you thinking about?”

Steven said, "I remember being really confused. You all were supposed to be the one's I shouldn't trust and you'd just rescued me from someone I thought I could trust. Everything was backwards from the way my parents had told me it should be. My mind was so mixed it up it was like a fog was making it hard for me to think straight. Then, all of a sudden, my mind cleared and I had a new idea. I remember thinking: 'These kids are just like me. They just want to be friends and not have people pick on them.' All of a sudden I realized that I'd been the one acting like George up to this point. That's when I looked around at all of you and said, 'Thanks everyone. Listen, I misjudged all of you. I shouldn't have believed what other people said about you who didn't even know you.' "

Joey said, "Yeah, that's when I said, 'Hey, we know all about it. My dad's always talkin' trash about Rica and Cam's dads because they're gay. Well, you know what? When I stopped listening to him, I went over to their house and I ate one of the best meals of my life. I found out they were really funny and nice. And I didn't catch any diseases. I didn't start rolling around wanting to kiss girls just cause I talked to their dads.' "

Paloma spoke, "After Joey talked about her dad, I remember talking about mine. I said, 'Yeah and when my dad told me not to look at Joey 'cause she was in a wheelchair, I never could get to know her. How can you get to know someone if you can't even look at them when you're talking to them? Finally, I looked into her eyes when we were talking one day and she got this big old smile on her face. I realized she *wanted* me to look at her. She didn't want me to pretend I didn't notice her wheelchair, right Joey?"

Joey said, "You got it! It's not like I can hide it. So it might as well be out in the open." While Joey was telling the story, the group looked at Joey and at each other. They tried not to look at Steven's arm, since he didn't want to tell them about it.

"It happened when I was born," said Steven almost under his breath.

"What's that?" said JayJay. Everyone looked at Steven.

"I said: It happened when I was born.

My arm, that is." Steven pointed to his right arm as he was talking. He held it out so everyone could see it while he was talking. It was clearly different from his other arm. But if he held it in certain positions, it looked normal. He wasn't able to turn it over so that the palm of his hand would be facing up. He could only turn it halfway over. "I can't control all my fingers. They sort of move as a group." He moved the fingers of his right hand: you could tell the fingers couldn't really move independently. "I don't really notice it most days unless someone points it out."



Everyone was listening to Steven and looking with interest at his arm. To his surprise, Steven found himself enjoying telling these people about his arm.

"I know what you mean. It's not like I'm constantly thinking about being in a wheelchair." said Joey.

"That's true." said Paloma. "I don't go around all day thinking, 'I'm part Black, part White, and part Asian.' I only think about it when someone looks at me funny or says something stupid like, 'You must be some new kind of race. Are you from earth?'"

"When people make fun of our accents ees when we get really mad." This was Joey's brother Pablo. Francisco nodded approval.

Paloma continued the story, "That's when Steven asked, 'What about the rules? Isn't there some kind of rule to deal with times when you've been told lies about other people? People told me I shouldn't trust any of you; that I needed to find friends that looked like me. Well, George looked like me, but he was NEVER gonna be my friend.' Everyone thought about the first three rules. While everyone was talking about the existing rules, JayJay interrupted."

As Paloma spun the story, it was like everyone traveled back in time to when it really happened. Here's how it happened...

"Ahem. Ahem. I want to propose a new rule," said JayJay. Everyone stopped talking at once.

"A *new rule*?? Are you sure?," said Cam.

"Listen." JayJay went on, "We need a rule about what grownups and other kids tell us about other people. Steven might've tried to be our friend a long time ago if all the adults and kids in his life had said nice things, true things about us and about our families. It only needs to apply to bad things that grownups say. If an adult says a good thing about a person we can just believe them."

Joey chimed in, "Yeah. But if an adult tells you something about one of us kids or our families that seems weird or makes you not want to trust us, then you got to go to that person and ask them the truth before you believe what was said about them. *Ask me if I don't want you to look at me and my 'chair, okay?*"

"Ask me if our parents are dangerous because they're gay," said Veronica

"Yeah, and ask me if you can get infected with 'gayness' if you talk to our dads," added Cam

"Ask me what race I am." said Paloma

"Ask us about our accents when we speak," said JayJay as he put his hands on the shoulders of Francisco and Pablo, who were standing on either side of him.

"Ask us whether our parents work hard," said Francisco.

“Numero Cuatro. Regla Numero Cuatro.” said Pablo. Kimmy asked what Pablo was saying.

Paloma said, “He’s telling us that it should be called *Rule Number Four*.” She said the three words with emphasis like they were special.

“Rule Number Four,” everyone repeated it reverently.

Veronica turned to Steven, held out her hand and asked what the rest of the group was thinking, “Friends?”

Steven reached out and took her hand, “Friends.” he said, a big smile spreading across his face....

Paloma finished the story, “Ever since then Steven and Kimmy have been friends with all of us. Steven told his mom and his uncles that we’re all friends. He told his dad to not say bad things about his neighbors until he really tried to get to know them.”

“Mommy’s getting better about what she says,” offered Kimmy. “But sometimes you can tell she’s still afraid of new people.”

Paloma said, “All of our parents have some kooky ideas about people who are different than them in some way. Maybe that’s why we’re here on this earth: to remind our parents how to make friends.”

Chapter Eight Cam explains Identity

Hi everyone! Cam here. I’m sure my sis’ already told you about our two dads Ron and Elvin. Let me tell you a little about myself. I love Japanese Animation, it’s called Animé, riding bikes with my dads, and hanging out with friends from the neighborhood. My birth mother named me “Cam” which means “sweet” or “beloved” in Vietnamese. Veronica forgot to tell you about people’s identities. So I’ll tell you about identity.



Cam and his dad Elvin.

Your *identity* is the different aspects of who you are that help shape how you see yourself and how others see you. Your identity includes the color of your skin, your appearance, your race, your cultural background or *ethnicity*, which means what country your family originally came to America from, the languages you speak, whether you’re a boy or a girl and whether you’re gay (like our dads) or straight. Here’s my identity: I’m a biracial Vietnamese American boy who’s probably straight (I don’t really like boys or girls yet). I’m biracial because I’m part

White and part Asian. My ethnicity is half Vietnamese because my birth mother was Vietnamese and half American because my birth father was American. I've never met either of them, I've always known Ron and Elvin as my parents. We're middle class, which means that we're neither rich nor poor. We're in the middle. What's your identity? What race are you? If you are more than two races you're multiracial. My friend Paloma is multiracial. What's your ethnicity? That means what countries did your family originally come from? Are you disabled like Joey or Steven? Are you rich or poor or middle class? Do you ever wonder, "Why does all this identity stuff matter?"

I wonder why it matters because we're all basically human. I'm just like you: I like to eat my dessert more than my vegetables. I like to watch TV and play with my friends. Maybe your identity matters because you live in a neighborhood where everyone looks like you, acts like you and speaks like you and you see someone who looks different or talks different and you think that they don't like dessert. We are all different because our families are different. Some of them speak Spanish and English, some of them speak Tagalog and English, and some of them speak English only. We're all different because we eat different foods and celebrate different holidays depending on what countries our families consider home.

Conclusion

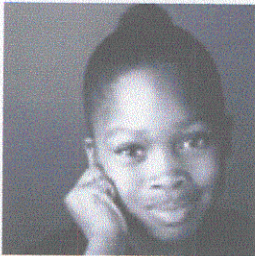


I've learned a lot from everyone in the neighborhood. Take Joey, for instance. She's right it's much better to get to know a person's insides than just looking at their outsides and thinking you know about them. I'm happy to say that we play basketball everyday after school now. And sometimes I even win!

Paloma taught me a lot about race and racism. Before I met her, I thought everyone was only one race. It had never occurred to me that if you have an African American Father and a Native American mother that you'd have to be two races.

JayJay taught me that I can't make fun of people and expect to make friends. And he showed me why the rules are important. He's right; it's better to talk about our problems than to use our fists.

For me, Veronica was the hardest to understand. Of all the kids in the neighborhood, she was the hardest to become friends with. I guess it was because she didn't believe I was anything special and she always argued with me because of the things I said. She made me mad and also confused because she could always point out how I'd said something rude or stupid even though I didn't mean to. I guess I learned a lot the day that she saved me from getting beat up. All of a sudden, when George was getting ready to hit me because of what his dad had told him about people who are different, I finally understood what I'd been doing and saying to Veronica and others in the Neighborhood. Thank you Veronica, I've learned a lot from you and everyone else in...



...The Neighborhood.



The End

Chapter Five: Action Plan

Action Plan: Revisions, Illustrations and Publication

After finishing a rough draft of the book, I passed out electronic copies of the manuscript to various “critical” friends: fellow MAE students, my MAE advisors, and friends from a broad array of cultural backgrounds. I asked people to comment on clarity, level of entertainment or enjoyment, and any inaccurate, confusing or disturbing parts. I asked people to point out any omissions as well as additions they would recommend. I incorporated the feedback when I heard back from these friends. After revising it several times, I printed out several final versions with added illustrations to display at the Capstone festival.

The next step is to take *the Neighborhood* to various friends and colleagues who work with 6th thru 8th graders. I’d like to circulate a number of copies of it to families and classrooms and then go and visit the places where it was read and get feedback. Did it seem real? What did the students learn? What did they think of the rules? Would they follow these rules? Are there further questions that the book brought up for them? I’m not sure if this book would be interesting to kids in the sixth grade. I’d like to find out. If it isn’t engaging, I’d like to find out how I need to change it in order to make it so to them. Over the summer, I want to have kids look at the book to see if they enjoy reading it and learn something from it.

Eventually, I would like to get the book published if people respond well to it. I think it would be great to make the neighborhood into the first of a series of books about this neighborhood where diversity exists and where the kids are constantly grappling with issues of prejudice and justice and equity. This book’s main character is Steven Jones, a white boy. I think it would be interesting to write books from the point of view of the other characters in the book. These books could form the backbone of a curriculum for sixth or seventh graders that emphasized reading, writing, and tolerance.

Publishing prospects

I consulted websites such as NAEYC’s and Heinemann Publishers for submission guidelines for manuscripts. If I submit this book to be published, I will learn about what it takes to get a book published and hopefully what mine was missing. I have also emailed a friend of mine, Hilary Price, who writes a comic strip called *Rhymes with Orange* to ask her to illustrate the book.

She wrote back: "I'm interested but you have to do all the legwork." So when my final draft is done I'll send her a copy along with a list of suggested scenes to illustrate.

I'm interested in a career in writing children's books. I would love to write books that opened kid's and adult's eyes to new ways of thinking about diversity and the richness of the United States' cultures, races, sexualities, etc. I already have started working on a number of books including a re-write of *The Three Little Pigs* and a book called, "Why are all the Farmers white men with mustaches?"

References

- Babb, V. (1998). *Whiteness Visible-The Meaning of Whiteness in American Literature and Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bergen, T. J. (2001). The Development of Prejudice in Children. *Education*, 122(1), 154-162.
- Bonvillain, J. F., & Huston, A. C. (2000). *Development of Racial Attitudes and Identity in Children: A Review of the Literature*. Unpublished Literature review, University of Kansas.
- Byrnes, D. A. (1988). Children and Prejudice. *Social Education*, 52(4), 267-271.
- Derman-Sparks, L. (1989). *Teaching Young Children To Resist Bias: What Parents Can Do*. District of Columbia: National Association for the Education of young Children.
- Derman-Sparks, L. (1993). Empowering children to create a caring culture in a world of differences. *Childhood Education*, 70(2), 66-71.
- Derman-Sparks, L., Gutierrez, M., & Phillips, C. B. (1989). "Mommy, Why is She Different?" *Parents*, 64(December), 120-123.
- Derman-Sparks, L., Higa, C. T., & Sparks, B. (1980). Children, Race, and Racism: How Race Awareness Develops. *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 11(3/4), 3-15.
- Derman-Sparks, L., & Ramsey, P. G. (2002). "What if all the Kids are White?" *Multicultural/Anti-Bias Education with White Children*. Retrieved Feb 26, 2004, 2004, from http://www.rootsforchange.net/index.cfm?Group_ID=2&wtm_language=0

- Fondrie, S. (2001). "Gentle Doses of Racism": Whiteness and Children's Literature. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 27(2), 9-13.
- Harris, V. J. (1997). Why are You always Giving us that Black, Latino, Asian, Gay, Woman's Stuff? In D. Muse (Ed.), *The New Press Guide to Multicultural Resources for Young Readers*. New York: New Press.
- Helms, J. E. (1992). *A Race is a Nice Thing to Have*. Topeka, KS: Content Communications.
- Holmes, R. M. (1995). *How Young Children Perceive Race* (Vol. 12). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Lehr, S., & Thompson, D. L. (2000). The Dynamic Nature of Response: Children Reading and Responding to Maniac Magee and The Friendship. *Reading Teacher*, 53(6), 480-493.
- Mathias, B., & French, M. A. (1996). *40 Ways to Raise a Nonracist Child*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Mayle, P. (1977). *Where Did I come from?* : Sagebrush Education Resources.
- McIntosh, P. (1988). *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Accounting of Coming to See Cortrespondences Through Work in Women's Studies*. Unpublished manuscript, Wellesley, MA.
- Muse, D. (Ed.). (1997). *The New Press Guide to Multicultural Resources for Young Readers*. New York: New Press/W.W. Norton.
- Reddy, M. T. (Ed.). (1996). *Everyday Acts Against Racism: Raising Children in a Multiracial World*. Seattle: Seal Press.
- Sims Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors. *Perspectives*, 1(3), ix-xi.
- Tatum, B. D. (1992). Talking about Race, Learning about Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom. *Havard Educational Review*, 62(1), 1-24.
- Van Ausdale, D., & Feagin, J. R. (2001). *The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism*. Oxford, England: Rowman & littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Wright, M. A. (1998). *I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla* (290 ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Appendices

A: Interview Questions

For Parents, Teachers, and youth ages 10-18

B: Assent and Consent forms

Interview questions for Parents

Stewart Jenkins, CSU Monterey Bay
Phone: 831-761-3246

Although many of the people I will be interviewing are friends or acquaintances, I may interview some people whom I don't know. For all interview subjects, I will be sure they understand what the topic of the interview is and have them sign a consent form.

Introduction: Hello, my name is Stewart Jenkins, I live in Watsonville with my wife Sofia Sorensen and our son Javier. I'm working on my master's thesis in Education at California State University at Monterey Bay in Seaside. I'm going to ask you a series of open-ended questions about your experiences with different forms of prejudice (for example racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.). The purpose of these questions is not to judge you or change your behavior in any way. I will be using these interviews to inform my own ideas about how to teach children to value difference and reject prejudice. I'm pursuing a master's degree in education and I've chosen to write a book about prejudice as my thesis project. I'd like to write a book that will allow parents and children to openly discuss the many forms of prejudice, how acting prejudiced hurts people, and how we can overcome prejudice. I have no experience discussing this with my son because he's only two years old, but I know some day we will need to have these conversations.

[From the little research I've done, I've learned that parents of color or parents who are different from "the mainstream norm" may have to start having these conversations with their children at a very early age because of experiences that the family encounters based on race, class, or sexual orientation of the parents. I'm aware that many white parents may or may not ever have a deeply substantive conversation about prejudice based on their SES and where they live. I feel it is very important for white parents to work hard to raise anti-bias oriented children and stand in solidarity with parents who are the targets of prejudice. That's why I want to write this book: to help white parents do what I believe they ought to do.]

I'm well aware that all of us are on our own journey in relation to this topic. For myself, the mistakes I've made with my son have taught me more than my successes. When dealing with issues of prejudice I imagine I will make more mistakes. I may be asking you to describe some of your mistakes if you feel comfortable doing so. For some questions you may be asked to describe an instance when you felt you were on the receiving end of prejudice (the victim) in others you may be asked to reflect on examples when you might have acted in a prejudiced manner toward someone. There are NO right answers. There is only your experience and I stand to learn an enormous amount merely by hearing your experience. You are always free to decline to answer a question because you don't feel comfortable. Also, there may be times that I probe you for more information. You may choose to not answer any of my questions at any time. This entire interview is confidential. Your name and any other identifying characteristics will never be attached to what you said. I may write up an approximation of your answer. This approximation may be a brief story in the book I'm writing, it might be part of a larger story or chapter of the book. I'd like to tape this interview so that I don't miss anything you say. You may ask me stop the tape at any point. Finally, let me say I'm deeply grateful you agreed to be interviewed; I know this is a difficult, painful subject.

First collect interviewee info

Interviewee Info

Name _____ Age _____ Gender M F

Race/Ethnicity _____

Race/Ethnicity of partner _____

Name/Age of children: _____

Gay / Straight / Bisexual Otherly Abled: _____

Socio Economic Status _____

Other Info: _____

1. When did you first become aware of prejudice as a child? Can you describe any specific memories?
2. What did your parents teach you about prejudice? Is there anything that particularly sticks with you? A situation? Something they said?
 - 2B. Were there school teachers or other community members who helped you deal with prejudice?
3. What is your first memory of having to discuss some form of prejudice with your child? (Circumstances, what was said, child's reaction, would you do it differently)
 - 3B. Can you think of a time when you were you the target of prejudice in front of your kids? What happened? What did you say/do?
 - 3C. Have you encountered other parents exhibiting prejudice? What would be a way to teach those parents about their own prejudice?
 - 3D. Are there specific conversations you have with your children to help them develop an anti-bias persona.
4. What other forms of prejudice have you had to discuss with your child?
 - 4B. Have your children ever asked you to explain what prejudiced words mean (nigger, spic, faggot, etc)? What did you say?
5. All children may experiment with using prejudiced or hurtful words or may even act out a prejudice as an experiment in their on-going development. Has your child exhibited prejudiced behavior? How did you react? What was the result?

6. Can you think of a time when you and your child discussed an example of prejudice and you wished you'd spoken differently/used different words/tactics?

7. I have an on-going struggle with my own racism that is a legacy of growing up in an all-white upper class community. I notice it when I'm around people of different races who I do not know, I may find myself trying to be overly friendly and acting out of a feeling of nervousness. Are there certain areas where you feel you might have some prejudices lurking? Can you think of an instance when you might have acted in a prejudiced manner in front of your children? What happened?

8. What is your most positive memory linked to teaching your children about prejudice? Is there an example when you were particularly proud of them or yourselves for oyour actions or words?

9. Did you ever have the chance to be an ally to a person who was being the target of prejudiced behavior by another? What happened?

10. What would you like to see in a children's book that you could read with your children about different issues of prejudice?

11. Do you think humor could be used or is it better to have a strictly serious tone?

12. What is one topic or question you would like to see answered in such a book.

13. Do you have any other wisdom you'd like to share with me?

Introduction: Hello, my name is Stewart... similar to parents intro except for below:

Your perspective as a teacher is invaluable to me. I'm interested in experiences you've had teaching about prejudice in your classroom either formally or informally. I'm well aware that all of us are on our own journey in relation to this topic. For myself, the mistakes I've made with my son have taught me more than my successes. When dealing with issues of prejudice I imagine I will make more mistakes. I may be asking you to describe some of your mistakes if you feel comfortable doing so. For some questions you may be asked to describe an instance when you felt you were on the receiving end of prejudice (the victim) in others you may be asked to reflect on examples when you might have acted in a prejudiced manner toward someone. There are NO right answers. There is only your experience and I stand to learn an enormous amount merely by hearing your experience. You are always free to decline to answer a question because you don't feel comfortable. Also, there may be times that I probe you for more information. You may choose to not answer any of my questions at any time. This entire interview is confidential. Your name and any other identifying characteristics will never be attached to what you said. I may write up an approximation of your answer. This approximation may be a brief story in the book I'm writing, it might be part of a larger story or chapter of the book. Finally, let me say I'm deeply grateful you agreed to be interviewed; I know this can be a difficult, painful subject.

Interviewee Data (race, gender, class, etc.)

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Do you teach children who are similar to yourself (SES and race) or different?
3. Do you formally teach your students about prejudice? How do you go about this?
4. Are there informal situations when you teach children about prejudice?
5. What is something you feel you teach particularly well when teaching about prejudice? Are there any activities that you find very powerful?
6. Do you use children's books to teach about prejudice? Which ones?
7. What do you do when you encounter prejudice in front of the kids (maybe from a parent or another teacher or an outsider while on a fieldtrip)?
8. What experiences do you remember as child in terms of dealing with prejudice?
9. Do you remember how your parents taught you about prejudice?
10. Do you remember anything your teachers taught you about prejudice?
11. Any other wisdom you'd like to share with us?

Interview questions for children (aged 10-18)

P.I. :Stewart Jenkins CSU Monterey Bay Phone: 831-761-3246

Intro: After getting signed copies of the consent and assent forms from the parents and children, I will explain to them about who I am, My master's thesis, and the topic of the interview. Beforehand I will ask their parents whether it is okay to talk about homophobia or if they'd prefer I not discuss that with their children. The beginning of the interview will be to help them understand what the terms racism, sexism, xenophobia, and ableism mean. I will gladly let parents sit in on the interview, especially with any younger children.

1. You've heard of racism right? That's called prejudice. It's when one person thinks badly about another person based only on the color of their skin. There are other forms of prejudice (like sexism, and able-ism) Do you understand what sexism is (discuss)? Do you understand what ableism is? (discuss) Repeat discussion with homophobia, xenophobia, and bigotry if parents feel comfortable.

Can you remember a time when someone said something prejudiced to you or acted prejudiced toward you? What happened?

Did you talk to your parents about the event afterwards? Did that help?

Any other experiences that you can remember?

2. Did you ever talk to your parents about _____ (racism/sexism/etc different topic from #1)?

3. Is there anything you can remember that they said to you about _____?

4. What about your teachers? Do they ever talk about different kinds of prejudice? What do they say?

5. What questions do you have about prejudice?

6. Do you have questions about words you've heard people use?

7. Have you ever encountered kids your age who are acting prejudiced? What do you do when you encounter kids at school that are prejudiced?

8. Have you ever seen a student who started out prejudiced against others but who changed? What do you think made that student change?

9. Is it hard to talk to your parents about sexism? What about racism? What would make it easier to talk about these topics?

California State University, Monterey Bay

Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects Human Subjects Assent Form

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Creating an Anti-bias Book for Children and Parents

1. My name is Stewart Jenkins and I am a student at CSU Monterey Bay.
2. I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to learn more about how parents teach their children about different forms of prejudice. Prejudice includes racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and bigotry. Basically it means treating someone differently because of the color of their skin (racism), because they are a woman or a man (sexism), because they are gay or lesbian (homophobia), because they are an immigrant or maybe they speak with an accent (xenophobia), or based on their religion or cultural beliefs and practices (bigotry). I want to write a book that will help parents and their children talk about these things so there is less prejudice in our world.
3. If you agree to be in this study I will be asking you a series of questions about times you can remember when you saw someone acting prejudiced toward someone else or maybe someone was acting prejudiced toward you. I want you to tell me the whole story and how you and your parents talked about it. I want you to tell me anything your parents did or said that impacted how you think about people with different skin color than you, people who are from other countries, or people that maybe different from you because of something they say or do. I want you to tell me what your parents taught you about how to treat people from other religions and people who may be gay men or lesbians. What did you learn from teachers and friends about prejudice? Do you think many Americans are prejudiced and why? These are the types of questions I'll be asking. **You can always say "Pass" if you don't feel answering a question.** I would like to tape record our conversation so I don't forget any part of it. I will be using your information to help me write a better book. I will not use your real names and will keep your personal information confidential. No one that reads the book will ever know I interviewed you.
4. You might feel uncomfortable or sad when you recall some of these memories. When someone is treated badly by a racist or sexist person, it may make them feel bad for a long time and you may not want to bring up these painful memories.
5. The result of this research will hopefully be a book that I write that can be used as a resource by parents, children and teachers to talk about difficult subjects related to different forms of

CSUMB CPHS Number:
Expiration Date:

bias people may encounter in the U.S. You may feel more comfortable talking about prejudice with other people. You may have a clearer understanding of how to teach other people to be anti-bias (that means to not be racist and not be prejudiced in any way.) All interviewees will receive a copy of the book in its final form.

- 6. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. We will also ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. **But even if your parents say “yes” you can still decide not to do this.**
- 7. If you don’t want to be in this study, you don’t have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don’t want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.
- 8. You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn’t think of now, you can call me at home at 761-3246 or ask me next time.
- 9. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

Please mark one of the choices below to tell us what you want to do:

No, I do not want to be in this project.

Yes, I do want to be in this project.

Study subject _____ **PRINT NAME**

Study subject _____ **SIGNATURE**

_____ **DATE**

PERSON OBTAINING ASSENT

I have read this form to the subject and/or the subject has read this form. I have provided (or will provide) the subject with a copy of the form. An explanation of the research was given and questions from the subject were solicited and answered to the subject’s satisfaction. In my judgement, the subject has demonstrated comprehension of the information.

_____ **PRINT NAME AND TITLE**

_____ **SIGNATURE**

_____ **DATE**

CSUMB CPHS Number:
Expiration Date:

10/08/02

California State University, Monterey Bay
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects
Human Subjects Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Creating an Anti-bias Book for Children and Parents

We are asking you to participate in a research study. We want to make sure that you know all about the project, its possible risk and benefits, safety, privacy and confidentiality issues, and your right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Please read this consent form carefully and ask the researcher any questions before you decide whether to give us your informed and willing consent. Thank you.

This study will be conducted by **Stewart Jenkins** from the Education Department at California State University Monterey Bay. The results will contribute to a master's thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experience as a parent or teacher who has discussed or taught your children/students about prejudice.

• **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Despite the fact that the United States is one of the most diverse nations in the world, prejudice against every form of difference besides the White, protestant, heterosexual male model, labeled "normal," is prevalent. Teachers and parents need a way to talk with kids about hateful words and hate-filled actions that occur all around them. Bias is passed to children through their environment or when children observe the actions of those around them. Parents, especially white parents, may struggle to explain the prejudice that their children will inevitably encounter or see being perpetrated against a friend of theirs. White parents may avoid discussing the issue of prejudices because they're not sure how to tackle it. The wisdom for how to find the words to talk with our children about bias rests with teachers and parents who have confronted these issues in their own life and this wisdom could be shared in a book. By interviewing parents and teachers I hope to gain information that is accessible and meaningful to other parents. I hope to use this information to write a book that is accessible and comfortable for parents and children to read together. I think a book offering an "expert's" advice can be off-putting or intimidating to many parents so I would rather focus on the real-life

experiences of other parents as a means of teaching parents how to discuss prejudice with their children.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

Participate in one to three interviews about your actions as a parent or teacher. You will be asked a series of questions. Questions will focus on your experiences with prejudice. I will ask you to relate stories/anecdotes about discussions you've had about prejudice with your children/students.

If your child is asked to participate they will be asked about memories they have of when you taught them about prejudice. They may be asked to recall events when they or a friend or even a stranger was a target of a prejudiced action or prejudiced speech. I would like to talk with them about: racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, homophobia, and bigotry. Do you feel comfortable with me talking to them about all these subjects or are there certain subjects you'd like me to refrain from talking with them about?

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

You (or your child) may be discussing very painful memories. Instances of prejudice that people have lived through may have left deep wounds. **I only want you to share that which you feel comfortable sharing.** Much of the focus of the conversation will be on the positive actions you took or that you think someone can take in order to combat prejudice. All of these conversations are to inform me as an author and help me to be a person who resists bias in every form. You or your child may be sharing embarrassing stories of their own struggle with prejudices inherited from family or peers. **I am not here to judge you or your children** and that your honesty can only increase my knowledge and lead to a more meaningful, honest children's book.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The result of this research will hopefully be a book that can be used as a resource by parents and teachers to talk about difficult subjects related to different forms of bias people may encounter in the U.S. You may feel more comfortable talking about prejudice with your children. You may have a clearer understanding of how to teach your children to be anti-bias. All interviewees will receive a copy of the book in its final form.

- **NATURE OF RECORD KEEPING**

All interviews will be taped. Informants' identities will be kept confidential at all times. Cassette tapes will be kept in a secure location with the researcher and will eventually be destroyed. . I will be using your information to help me write a better book. I will not use

your real names and will keep your personal information confidential. No one that reads the book will ever know I interviewed you.

- **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

No one will be paid for their participation in these interviews.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Interviews will be audio taped and the only person to have access to these tapes will be Stewart Jenkins. The tapes will be kept in a secure location at all times and will be destroyed after the book is written by Stewart Jenkins.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact

Principal Investigator: Stewart Jenkins (831) 761-3246

Faculty Sponsor: Christine Sleeter (831) 656-9759

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Chair of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, Linda Rogers at California State University, Monterey Bay, 100 Campus Center, Bldg 15, Seaside, CA 93966; 831-582-5012.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the procedures described above and that I am over 18 (eighteen) years old. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I freely agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject or Legal Representative

Date

OR

I have read the contents of this consent form, asked questions, and received answers. I give permission for my child to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

Parent/Guardian (if applicable)

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

In my judgment the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Investigator

Date