Equity and Education in the Age of New Racism: Issues for Educators

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Our national motto, *E pluribus unum*, or "one from many," is an expression of hope that unity will come from diversity. It is being severely tested at the close of the 20th century. Although we owe our strength and uniqueness as a society to our diverse origins, we are not dealing well with that diversity at present. Our diversity divides rather than unites us. The goal of a truly united, multicultural society does not look like anything we are going to achieve soon, given the grim social reality we currently face with respect to that diversity. There is a tremendous struggle taking place in our society, a struggle over American ideals and over our society's soul. Not that this struggle is new: it has been building up over the past several years. Some major changes in social policy and in the public mood have taken place in this final decade of the 20th century. Harsh new stances toward diversity are reflected in changes in the welfare legislation, particularly with respect to immigrants; in California's 1994 passage of Proposition 187, the referendum to deny rights and services to undocumented immigrants; and in the 1996 passage of Proposition 209, the referendum to end affirmative action. These actions signal the emergence of a new racism, one that mocks our society's most fundamental ideals.

The first indication of this change was the unprecedented media attention[1] given to the publication of a volume that otherwise would have warranted little public notice: *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1994). The claims made in this work were hardly new. The first is that human intellectual potential as measured by IQ tests is biologically determined; the second is that there are inherited and enduring IQ differences across racial and ethnic groups that largely determine how well members of those groups are likely to fare in school and in their jobs, earnings, and social adjustment (see especially Chapters 14, "Ethnic Inequalities in Relation to IQ," and 16, "Social Behavior and the Prevalence of Low Cognitive Ability"). The work suggests that the genetic differences that result in humans having more or less melanin in their skin are also responsible for them being in high or low IQ groups (see especially Chapter 13, "Ethnic Differences in Cognitive Ability").

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Members of lower IQ groups are not only less likely to do well academically and economically, they are also more likely to engage in criminal activity, produce large numbers of illegitimate children, become dependent on welfare, and be a drag on society. The media have focused on this book's claims regarding differences between blacks and whites primarily, but other minority groups in our society also figure in this dismal prognosis of human potential.

As noted above, these are hardly new ideas. They have been around since the 1930s, when psychologists (most notably, Lewis Terman) presented test data purportedly showing the role of heredity over environmental influences in determining intellectual capacity and the ability to learn. These ideas were hotly debated and contested during the 1970s, when educational psychologists argued that the persistent academic underachievement of African Americans could be traced not to a lack of educational opportunities, but instead to inherited deficiencies in the ability to learn (see especially Arthur Jensen, 1969). Jensen argued that compensatory education programs such as those funded under the War on Poverty during the 1960s had not ameliorated the academic problems of Blacks because their problems stemmed from deficiencies in ability and not from a lack of access to education.

For a decade or more, it appeared that arguments such as those embodied in Jensen's "genetic deficit theory" were no longer regarded as topics worthy of serious public or academic discussion, having long ago been discredited by thoughtful scholars and researchers (see especially Kagan, 1969; Kamin, 1974; and Gould, 1981). Given the interest in the *Bell Curve*, however, it appears that they were merely suppressed, but not forgotten. The revival of this issue is more than a reconsideration of some ugly old ideas: it is far more dangerous than that. The authors use their interpretations of IQ test data as the basis for policy recommendations. They argue against intervention programs like Head Start and Chapter I[2] for children who are educationally at risk because of low family income, on the grounds that not much can be done to improve the educational potential of children from low-ability groups. They argue against the provision of welfare for people from low-ability groups on the grounds that it only encourages them to have more low-ability babies. They assert that any addition of low-ability members to our population, whether through birth or through immigration, drags down the society and should therefore be controlled through changes in social policies. Moreover, they argue that affirmative action programs are wrong-headed because they give job and educational advantages to low-ability people who neither deserve nor are able to make good use of these advantages.

What kind of effect can a work such as this have on our society? Perhaps if our society were more of a multicultural one, the *Bell Curve* would be ignored as the off-the-wall rantings of some retrograde thinkers. But we are not a multicultural society; we are a diverse one that is quite divided along race lines now. Herrnstein and Murray's contentions in this work have been heard and are being heeded in

Washington. Their claims are being used to justify the abandonment of the progressive social agenda adopted as a result of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, an agenda that is needed now more than ever.

Over the past few years, the racial divisions in our society have become conspicuous and overt. These divisions are especially evident in our schools — despite our best efforts to integrate them. In this article, I will argue that the kind of thinking exhibited in the *Bell Curve* has maintained the divisions between groups and undercut all efforts to make our schools more equitable for all children. Our society and schools give enormous importance to individual differences of the sort putatively measured by IQ tests. Although such tests are not commonly used in the schools,[3] children are nonetheless categorized by a variety of checklists, behaviors, or prognostic tests on "cognitive ability" and, depending on how they fare on such measures, are provided educational experiences that are different enough to exacerbate and even create the differences in life outcome that the authors of the *Bell Curve* regard as inevitable. This practice is so firmly entrenched that few people question it, even though there is powerful evidence that it favors only those who are judged to have high ability and is downright detrimental to those judged to have low ability.

In a landmark study on schooling in the 1980s, John Goodlad (1984) and colleagues (see, especially, Oakes, 1985) found that ability grouping and tracking were prevalent practices in the 38 schools surveyed across the nation. Children are grouped by ability, sometimes based on test scores and sometimes on teacher judgments, for instruction in basic academic areas such as reading and mathematics. Although these groupings are purportedly based on cognitive ability, a clear ethnic pattern was found in the distribution of low socioeconomic status and minority background students across groups:

> Consistent with the findings of virtually every study that has considered the distribution of poor and minority students among track levels in schools, minority students were found in disproportionately large percentages in the low track classes of the multiracial schools in our sample. Conversely, disproportionately larger percentages of the white students in these schools were found in classes identified as high track. This dual pattern was most pronounced in schools where minority students were also economically poor (Goodlad, 1984: 156).

In such segregated classes and "ability groupings" within heterogeneous classes, students were found to receive dramatically different instructional treatments and materials, resulting in gaps of as much as four years in performance by the time children are in the fourth grade. Students in low-ability groups were found not to be given access to materials; neither were they provided the instructional support that might have allowed them to move to a higher group. Membership in these groupings or tracks was adjustable only for a brief time in the earliest years of school:

once children are beyond the first grade, they have little hope of moving out of the ability groups to which they have been assigned (Goodlad, *Ibid.*; Oakes 1985).

How such instructional practices figure in maintaining and exacerbating racial divisions in our society was portrayed in a troubling two-hour television documentary. "Frontline," which features documentaries on important social issues, broadcast a program on race relations in schools entitled "School Colors."[4] It was shown on PBS at about the same time that the *Bell Curve* was receiving attention from the media. This documentary was made at Berkeley High School (BHS),[5] as a part of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown* v. *Topeka Board of Education* against racially segregated schools.[6] Berkeley High was noteworthy, not simply because of its location in one of the most liberal communities in the country or because it is one of the more highly regarded public high schools in the country (80% of its graduates go on to college, many of them to the most prestigious institutions in the country). The most noteworthy thing about Berkeley was that it was the first school district in the country to adopt bussing voluntarily to achieve full integration in the decades following the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown*. Over the past decades, Berkeley has brought African Americans and Latinos from the low-income flatlands together in schools with the largely white children of the academic and professional elites who live in the hills east of the San Francisco Bay.

The documentary was made over the course of a school year to see how well integration had worked in Berkeley after several decades. No one who saw it could help being depressed. Far from being integrated and attending school in harmony, the diverse student body of Berkeley High was about as divided as the Balkans or the Middle East. Or American society, perhaps. The students were segregated in every way possible: racially, academically, socially, and economically. Although the students all spoke English regardless of their primary languages, they were linguistically segregated.

There were distinct differences in the dialects of English spoken by the various groups. The segregation shown in this documentary is real: it is visible when one visits Berkeley High both in and out of class. Although there was an experimental untracked history course at the school, and a semi-untracked English class,[7] there was little else in the academic program that was not tracked. The high-track classes, offering high levels of instruction in academic subjects, prepare students to compete well at any university in the country. The classes, especially those designated as AP, were about as demanding and interesting as any at the university. The students in those classes were serious and enthusiastic. They were also mostly white or Asian. There were few African Americans or Latinos in those classes. The lower-track classes shown in the documentary were more diverse: along with the various minorities, there are some whites and Asians. The lowest tracks were almost exclusively African American and Latino. In those classes, teachers were seen struggling valiantly to get students interested in their studies,

to participate in classroom activities, to come to class. The documentary also showed the Afro-American studies program in which African-American students participated eagerly and enthusiastically in a program of studies that focused on their own culture, history, and experience.

Outside the classroom, the students were even more segregated socially.[8] The white students congregated on the steps and in the area in front of the little theater. The Blacks congregated in another area, the grassy slopes on the school grounds, and the Asians and Latinos in still other areas. Students described these segregated areas as Europe, Little Africa, Asia, and Mexico. Although there were some intergroup friendships, the young people generally avoided them and regarded such relationships as signs of disloyalty to their own groups. A Latina who dated a Caucasian was described as a sellout. An African-American youth said that his friendships with whites made it hard for him to become friends with other Blacks.

There were also intragroup divisions. The Chicanos kept themselves socially separate from the Mexicanos, and both of these subgroups had little to do with the Central Americans. Among the Asian kids, there were the same divisions, Vietnamese versus Cambodians versus Chinese, ABCs versus FOBs.[9]

Not surprisingly, there have been many objections from Berkeley High students to what was shown in the documentary (Mahoney, 1994). The producers showed only the bad side of things. They selected the worst things to make their point that school integration has not worked. There were a lot of good things that were left out. They were racist in their orientation: they showed only unmotivated, uncooperative African-American students, and only the brightest white students — again, to make things look as bad as possible. There are bright, motivated African-American students, and unsuccessful, uncooperative, and unmotivated whites and Asian students, but the producers did not feature them in the show.

For anyone who has spent time in racially mixed junior or senior high schools, however, the picture shown of race relations, of great disparities in educational programs by tracks, and of the awful effects of such disparate educational treatment was no exaggeration. Berkeley High is hardly unique in that regard. For that reason, "School Colors" provides a frightening picture of the future of our society. The viewer saw young people divided in every possible way: in their enthusiasm for school, in the issues they cared about, and in the way they looked at the world. They had little understanding of, or interest in, one another and they tended to assume the worst about each other. They were hostile, angry, and combative. They were also quick to characterize everyone else as racists. All of them. Racism. Why should that surprise anyone? The school is a microcosm of society and though adults tend to be more careful in their speech, there has been much talk about race recently and a renewal of the discourse on racial differences that we have not heard for quite a while.

Is there a connection between Herrnstein and Murray's incendiary treatise on the innate superiority of some groups over others and the snapshot of society we

get in schools like Berkeley High, which are divided along color, economic, social, and academic lines? Does “School Colors” indeed support a central thesis of the *Bell Curve,* which is that our society is becoming segregated into unequal caste-like groups on the basis of intellectual capacity, and color — and that there is little hope of bringing things together (see, especially, Chapter 21, “The Way We Are Headed,” in Herrnstein and Murray, 1994)? Or is it possible that the divisions we find in society are the logical outcomes of the kind of thinking that is exemplified in the *Bell Curve*? Let me explain.

Our fascination with the idea of the IQ reveals some beliefs that are fundamental to American culture. Peoples differ in their beliefs about teaching and learning — such differences being important aspects of their cultures. One of the ways in which they differ is in their beliefs and assumptions about individual differences in the ability to learn, in how people learn, in how much help they need from others in order to learn, in what people can learn, and under what kind of circumstances different people can learn. A familiar instance of such beliefs about learning ability can be seen in cultural assumptions on male versus female capacities and capabilities. Although most groups recognize at some level that some individuals are more capable than others, *they differ widely in what they do with the recognition of those differences.*

As an ethnic Chinese, I belong to a cultural group that does not give much weight to individual differences. We may recognize that one child is smarter than another, but *we do not accept the possibility that all of our children will not do equally well in whatever endeavor we engage them in.* The Chinese believe that when children are born, they are filled with possibility, but that’s pretty much it — cute protoplasm with a lot of potential. We believe that it is up to the adults in the infant’s world, most especially its parents, to take that potential, and to make something of it. It is the parents’ responsibility to teach, to guide, to shape the child in every way, so that it gradually takes the form we expect our children to have, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and culturally. To the Chinese, the only thing that really differentiates children in competence and ability is how much effort their parents first and their teachers later have put into the job of teaching them. When children do not turn out well, it is not because they are incapable of learning or are incompetent, it is because their parents or teachers did not do a competent job teaching them. That teaching must be constant and consistent. Anything less than that is regarded as evidence of inadequate parenting and teaching. What is important here, as a point of comparison with the beliefs about individual differences exemplified in *Bell Curve,* is that as far as most Chinese are concerned, whatever innate differences might exist across individuals in cognitive ability *do not much matter*. Anyone can learn anything — we believe — as long as there is teaching. Effort is the key — the learner must make an effort to learn, and the parent and teacher must make an effort to teach. The only difference between *can* and *can’t* is *effort*, my mother used to say when one of her children would try to avoid work by pleading incompetence.

With little modification, that is how schools in many Asian societies like China and Japan operate.[10] There is no tracking or ability grouping there, at least up to the secondary level (Stevenson and Lee, 1990). Everyone is taught everything, the same thing — and everyone is expected to learn and to keep up. Children are given the help they need, but the curriculum materials and the expectations are the same for all children. Years ago, when the People's Republic of China was first open to outsiders, a group of linguists and educators were invited to visit. Something that really surprised them was the report that there were no "reading problems" in China.[11] Chinese, with its intricate logographic writing system, which requires the memorization of a more or less different symbol or symbol configuration for each word or concept, is a daunting barrier to anyone who thinks learning to read is difficult. Nonetheless, Chinese children learn to read, and with few problems, they were told. Knowing Chinese beliefs and instructional practices, this did not surprise me. The same thing seems to be true in Japan. Japanese children are not grouped by ability for instruction, at least not within a given school. Parents compete for their children to be admitted to the more prestigious schools, but within these schools, children are given the same education, regardless of the differences that might exist among them. The children are given as much help as they need to keep up with their classmates; if they need more, their parents hire tutors or put them in after-school schools. The operating assumptions are:

1. That children can learn whatever the school has to offer, because
2. It is the teacher's job to teach it to them, and
3. It is the parents' job to make certain the children and the school do what they are supposed to do.

There is undoubtedly as much variation among Chinese and Japanese children as there is among American children in cognitive endowment; the difference is in the weight we give such variation (for a discussion of Asian views on innate abilities, see Stevenson and Lee, *Ibid*.: 101–103). As I have said, Asians may recognize that there are inborn differences across children, but they do not regard them as limitations. Little is made of such differences at least up to secondary level in school.

In contrast, enormous attention is given to them in the culture of American schools. We take seriously the idea that people differ in their abilities and aptitudes and believe that such differences require different treatments in school. A lot of attention is given to sorting children by ability as early as possible, as soon as they enter school, in fact. Children entering kindergarten are given readiness tests to determine which of them meet the developmental expectations of school, and which do not. In some schools there are classes designated as "junior kindergartens" for children who are not quite ready for prime-time kindergarten according to their performance on readiness tests. Children in many kindergartens are grouped by "ability" for instruction on the basis of such tests. If they are not

grouped in this way in kindergarten, they certainly are by first grade. Thus, well before children have had a chance to find out what school is about, they are declared to be fast, middling, or slow learners. Once sorted, they receive substantially different instructional treatment and materials; eventually, they become the kinds of learners one would expect to find in such groupings — the kinds of learners seen in the Berkeley AP and skills classes as described above.

This practice of sorting children into ability groups and providing them with a differentiated educational experience is inherently undemocratic and is contrary to the spirit of equality that is so important to Americans. The sorting that begins at the time children enter school does not stop there. Among those who are judged to be fast learners, there are other cuts to come. Who among these children are "gifted" or "talented"? Why do we need to find out? The reason is obviously so we can make the most of those talents. Children with musical talent should be given opportunities to develop it. Children with special intellectual gifts should not be held back in classes with merely bright children. They should be in special programs that challenge them intellectually. Likewise, in the slow groups, there are some who are not only slow, they are also learning disabled. They need special help, too; they cannot be expected to keep up with even their slower-than-average classmates.

In those ever more "select" settings, moreover, the instructional experiences children receive, whether they are designated gifted or learning disabled, further widen the gaps between them and children in other groupings. This kind of differential treatment hurts some children more than others. Jomill Braddock (1990) has shown that it is especially negative for African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians — in other words, those who are most likely to be placed in the lowest tracks. It has a positive effect especially on those tracked in the higher tracks, as one would expect. What would happen if we did not do this kind of sorting or did not pay attention to individual differences? What if we simply treated every child as if he or she had gifts and talents to be developed? Interestingly, the Suzuki method of teaching violin, in which hundreds of little Itzhak Perlman wannabees saw away skillfully on their half and three-quarter-size violins, suggests that if children are given a chance and some instruction, most of them can rise to it, talented or not. In art, it is much the same. In groups that believe that painting, drawing, and pottery-making are nothing more than skills that can be learned, practiced, and perfected, many people can do these things well. Artistic creation is an everyday skill — not an extraordinary one as it is in cultures like ours, where we believe one is either born with such talents or one is not. Visitors to Indian communities in New Mexico are impressed by the artistry and skill manifested in the pottery produced in Pueblo communities such as Acoma and Cochiti. They would be even more impressed to know that in these tiny communities of fewer than a thousand persons, there are among them sometimes as many as 20 or 30 museum-quality artists and artisans.[12]

Not surprisingly, the outcome of an educational system like those in Asian societies is far greater uniformity in academic achievement than we get from American schools. The evidence found in various international comparisons of academic achievement doesn't require comment. American students generally do not do nearly as well as their counterparts in societies such as Taiwan, Japan, and Korea (see, for example, the "1991–1992 International Assessment of Educational Progress Study," but also consider David Berliner's [1993] criticism of such comparisons). Interestingly, American students at the high end of the scale (for example, Asian Americans and advantaged urban whites) perform better than their counterparts in other countries, but the Americans at the lower end (African Americans, Hispanics, and disadvantaged urban students in general) do far more poorly than students at the low end of other societies. In other words, we do a good job educating children who are judged to be capable; we do much worse than most nations with students we judge to be not very promising. It is a fact that poor and minority group students in this society are far more likely to be at the lower end of the educational scale than at the higher.

It should be a matter of interest to us that at the same time that some people in the field of education are seeking to detrack schools (Brewer, Rees, and Argys, 1995; Wheelock, 1992; Bellanca and Swartz, 1993; Oakes and Lipton, 1993) and make them more equitable and democratic, a work like Herrnstein and Murray's *Bell Curve* should come along with all of the attendant media coverage and public interest we have seen over the past two years. As I have said, theirs is not exactly a new argument and they are not presenting new evidence. What do we make of evidence that some groups score an average of 15 points higher than others? What do IQ scores tell us, except that it is how people fare on tests that measure whatever IQ tests measure? Is it intelligence or is it cultural knowledge? Like the SAT and GRE, tests of IQ are supposed to predict how well people will do in academic settings. Yet as we know, one can hardly get an accurate fix on just how well they do predict academic achievement since individuals are sorted on the basis of these tests and, as a result, do not receive equivalent sorts of educational experiences. A person who scores low on the SAT or the GRE is not likely to get into a top university, or into one at all. A child who scores low on an IQ or placement test is unlikely to be given the kinds of academic experiences that would develop his or her potential to the fullest.

The timing of the arguments in the *Bell Curve* was intended to justify not only the differential treatments people receive in our educational and economic systems, but also the outcomes. It is part of the game plan to justify cuts in programs that aim to make education more equitable for all children regardless of who they are or what they bring to school. It is part of the game plan to justify the abandonment of social programs that are meant to help those who have been disadvantaged by the society. It is part of the game plan to undercut affirmative action programs that are meant to increase the participation of all groups in the

society through education. The proponents of the *Bell Curve*'s view of human potential would argue that it is a waste of time and effort to invest in that portion of the society that has no talent or aptitude for learning. They would argue that the normal curve being what it is, there are a few winners, some losers, and a great many who are simply average in the great genetic sweepstakes. It does not disturb them that entire racial or ethnic groups are consigned by their tests to one or another skewed position on the curve. It does me. I am troubled because I know what a big part culture plays in learning, and how our beliefs about people's potential for learning affect how we treat them educationally. As educators, we really need to examine that conflict and resolve it.

We live in a society of great inequities. There are social, political, and, above all, economic inequities across groups. The people at the bottom are becoming increasingly numerous, a point the *Bell Curve* makes and with which we can hardly disagree. There is a greater and greater concentration of wealth and control in a smaller and smaller layer at the top. Race is a part of this division, but that is not the whole story. Many whites in the society are not all that well-off. The American middle class has lost considerable economic ground this past decade or two, and is a lot less well-off than it was a decade or two ago. The economic situation in this country has been thinning out the ranks of the middle class, while expanding greatly the ranks of the working poor and the just plain poor. It is perhaps no surprise that there is so much resentment and enmity in the air. And there is fear of others.

People are looking for convenient scapegoats. California voters focused their attention on immigrants in the 1994 elections when they passed Proposition 187 by a two-to-one margin. In 1996, these same voters passed Proposition 209 by a similar margin, a vote to end affirmative action in all areas of public life. People in the society's lower economic strata will be next — especially people of color. That is the aim of the *Bell Curve*.

What do I propose we do about it? As educators, we must consider what we can do to break down some of the barriers that have developed between groups in our society. By doing that, we promote unity — and the schools are the best place for this process to begin. Researchers and educators have studied the need for anti-racist education and have considered the forms it could take (Banks, 1995; Cummins, 1989; Cotton, 1993; Slavin, 1985; Sleeter and Grant, 1987). Children must be educated in ways that develop greater understanding between groups. Educators must think about how to combat segregation in our schools — whether it be physical or social. The habits of mind and the attitudes of separation that divide people must be addressed early enough to make a difference. Our children live in a society whose foundations were built by slave labor. We don't talk about racism much because that view of ourselves conflicts with American ideals of equality and fairness — but racism in our society is real and it must be dealt with.

What constitutes an anti-racist education? Not only do children need to learn about other people and their cultures, they also need to learn to live and work with them. A real beginning would be to remove some of the disparities they see at school: grouping practices, tracking practices where children are divided, often by race, for quite differential instructional treatment. Another is to tackle racism head-on, using instructional materials like those developed by organizations like the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.[13] Kids need opportunities to discover that although people may differ in many ways, we are probably more alike than we are different. We need to focus on commonalities more than we do on differences in our practice of education.

Those are the first steps in tackling this real threat to American ideals. To me, the essence of the American ideals can be found in four words: equality, fairness, freedom, and justice. As educators working toward a more unified society, we need to recommit ourselves to those ideals. Equality does not extend only to people with an IQ of 100 and above. The Constitution states that everyone is created equal and should be treated equally. People should be judged by their deeds and contributions to their communities and not by how a test they have not even taken predicts they might do — were they to take it.

What does IQ represent? According to information given in a sidebar to *Newsweek*'s October 24, 1996, cover story on the *Bell Curve*, Marilyn Vos Savant, the columnist who answers arcane questions put to her by readers, has an astonishing IQ of 228. In contrast, J.D. Salinger's IQ is a modest 104; the late President John F. Kennedy's was 119. What do such differences or comparisons mean? Would anyone think it appropriate to compare Ms. Vos Savant's accomplishments as they do her IQ with JFK's? Or with J.D. Salinger's?

One of my real-life heroines is an African-American grandmother in Oakland, California. This 75-year-old activist granny, who is known as "Mother Wright," collects produce that grocery stores are discarding, meat from butcher shops that can't be sold, and turns these seemingly unpromising ingredients into hot meals that she serves to homeless people in a downtown park once a week. To the people whose lives she touches she is a savior, a ray of joy and hope in an otherwise miserable existence. They describe her as Oakland's Mother Teresa. What's her IQ? One wonders what Mother Teresa's IQ is. Does it matter?

Let us return to the question of American ideals and our need to renew our commitment to them. Consider the question of freedom. For me as an immigrant and as an educator, the most important freedom is the opportunity to be whatever one can be. As a Chinese woman of my generation, this has a special meaning. When I was growing up, few Chinese girls had much hope of going to college and having a career. In fact, back in the 1940s and 1950s, few girls in general aspired to higher education. I did not get to go on to college after graduating from high school. There were all kinds of social limits from both my native and my adopted culture on what women could or couldn't do. It took 12 years after high school for

me to get to college. What it took to remove those limitations on my social and intellectual aspiration was the realization that I could go back to school if I wanted to, and if I could figure out a way to do it. It was a choice I could make. That is something that is now under serious attack, in all the deterministic arguments about IQ.

This brings me to the final point in this discussion of what we as educators might do to achieve unity in our society, despite all of the forces working to divide us. What can we do to achieve a multicultural society in which our diversity unites rather than divides us? I will argue that the starting point is to confront the beliefs and values that divide us and to consider what we have that could unite us. Around the time that the *Bell Curve* was in the news, Sheldon Hackney, the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), called for serious discussions to be conducted across the country by thoughtful people everywhere on "What does it mean to be an American?" It was a proposal that generated a certain amount of derision in the press and little public enthusiasm as far as I could tell. I found it to be an intriguing proposal — intriguing enough to remember it and the NEH chairman's name. It would not be a bad place to begin tackling the problems discussed in this essay.

NOTES

1. For example, see *Time Magazine* (October 24, 1994), *Newsweek* (October 24, 1994), *The New Republic* (October 31, 1994), in which the entire issue is devoted to an examination of the question of race and intelligence, as well as reviews of three works on race and intelligence in the *New York Times* Book Review section entitled "For Whom the Bell Curves" and "What Is Intelligence, and Who Has It?"

2. Chapter I is now ESEA Title I.

3. At least not since a California federal court ruling in *Larry P.* v. *Riles* (343 F.Supp. 1306; N.D. Cal. 1972; affirmed 502, F.2d , 9th Cir., 1974), which banned the use of IQ tests for the purpose of placing children in classes for the educable mentally retarded.

4. This documentary was produced by the Center for Investigative Reporting and broadcast on PBS on October 18, 1994.

5. For an excellent discussion of this documentary and of race relations at Berkeley High School, see Pedro Noguera's 1995 article, "Ties That Bind, Forces That Divide: Berkeley High School and the Challenge of Integration," in *University of San Francisco Law Review* 29,3 (Spring: 719–740).

6. 347 U.S. 483, 1954.

7. The teacher of that class said he needed to prepare different instructional plans for the various levels of students in his class each day. That being the case, the class could hardly be characterized as "untracked," even if it is heterogeneously constituted (see "School Colors").

8. The student population in 1994, the year the documentary was made, was reported as 35% African American, 39% white, 10% Asian/Pacific, 9% Chicano/Latino, and 7% "mixed."

9. ABCs are American-born-Chinese, as contrasted with "FOBs, fresh-off-the-boat" in the parlance of young Asian Americans.

10. There are obviously many other aspects of Asian cultures and educational practice that are different, and they are by no means perfect. Critics of international comparisons of academic

performance in which Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese students outperform American students in math and science argue that these comparisons are based on flawed data and that no one would want the kind of educational systems that get those results (see, especially, Berliner, 1993, and Bracey, 1991).

11. Susan Ervin-Tripp, personal communication, 1977.

12. Mary Eunice Romero (1994) found in a study of "giftedness" among Keresan Pueblo Indians (both Acoma and Cochiti are Keresan) that the concept, to the extent that it was recognized, was in sharp contrast to the one held by other Americans. In the Keresan cultures, giftedness is not limited to a few individuals, but is seen as a potential that is available to all. Those who are ultimately recognized for special gifts are persons who use those gifts for the good of the community.

13. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has developed curriculum materials for elementary school students called "The Wonderful World of Difference" and a comprehensive community program against prejudice called "A World of Difference." The address for the ADL of B'nai B'rith is 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

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