Skipping Stones
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A World of Women
Sing Our Song: Black History Month
An Architectural Journey of Europe
In This Issue of Skipping Stones:

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Welcome to 2004! We feature two important themes in this first issue of our 16th year. In the United States, February is celebrated as African American History Month, and March as Women’s History Month.

Why do we need a Black History Month or a Women’s History Month? I posed this question to three veteran educators on our Skipping Stones board.

Mary Drew, an ESL teacher who belongs to a very multicultural family, explains, “I, myself feel rather conflicted about celebrating Black History Month or Women’s History Month. It seems like a kind of segregation. We all live in the world together and we all make vital contributions to each other’s experiences.

“These special months came about because there was, at the time, no focus on the contributions of diverse groups to U.S. history or to world history. Whole populations were being ignored. We continue to get very little information or even misinformation on groups other than the dominant one in our news, current events and history lessons. However, my hope is that continuing efforts in multicultural education and diversity training are creating a change, slowly but surely.

“I would greatly prefer to see a concerted effort by all educators to use the energy they might put into these special months to instead design inclusive curriculum to be used throughout the year, and across subject areas.”

Paulette Ansari and Bahati Ansari, both African-American educators agree. They feel that while these months offer opportunities to teach the missing pieces, they want to see African-American and women’s history incorporated in the classrooms throughout the year (see page 33).

Both in my personal life and work with Skipping Stones, I feel blessed with the continued presence of women of wisdom and courage. Their skills and labors of love give birth to issue after issue of our magazine. As our editors, directors, volunteers, contributors, translators, artists and interns, they nurture the spirit of Skipping Stones.

In these pages, we present voices of many young women from Zimbabwe to Argentina. These perspectives provide a glimpse of the hardships and sorrows that women continue to endure, even today.

It is no secret that women and people of color receive much less recognition or compensation for the services they provide. The media promotes stereotypes that can have a negative influence on their self-images and the way they are treated by others.

During the last seven years, my wife and I have found the unconditional love of Amma, our spiritual teacher. Amma has shown us, with her own exemplary life, that we can learn to treat everyone with respect and dignity. She says we all have both feminine and masculine aspects within us. Men and boys might try to nurture their feminine nature, while girls and women might develop their masculine aspects. This way, everyone can feel whole and thus happy.

Girls and boys, women and men, people of color and others—each one of us has the same inner beauty, goodness, and high potential. External social pressures and conditions help shape or try to crush our spirits. Why can’t everyone feel safe and secure walking alone on the street? When anyone in a society or family feels unhappy or unfulfilled, we all suffer the consequences.

Let’s be mindful of our words and actions. We can learn to be more respectful and appreciative of each other, including women and people of color. Let us all work together to create the conditions for each person’s growth and fulfillment!
The Most Perfect Thing in the World

Can you guess the most perfect thing in the world? Here are your hints: Willow, Aspen, and Birch are all types of it. Did you guess trees? Then you’re right. Just think, in a way, trees own the world. Without them, no oxygen. No oxygen, no people. Or air-breathing animals, at that. So, they give us air, food, shelter, and pets. Quite a deal, huh? All we have to do is water and preserve them. Can you imagine living without nuts, apples, oranges, olives, pears and peaches? Or live without bird nests, leaves to rake and Christmas trees? I can’t! So, let’s give three cheers for the best things in the world—TREES!

—Megan Olsen, 9, Lakeville, MN.

I’m Nathalie. I live here in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. I am a Hmong girl. My family eats rice and other stuff. We don’t eat like Americans. In the olden days, we wore what we now call “Hmong costumes.” Back then we called them “clothes.” Every New Year, we play a game called “ball tossing.” We throw underhand and catch upper hand. And that’s a little about me.

—Nathalie Y. Ly, 9, Sheridan Elem, Sheboygan, WI.

“...Thank you for your effort in transforming our big world into a cozier one, by linking our youth together. They have the same goals and dreams wherever they come from.

Your gift subscription to our Library has been well received by the students. Amazingly, many have been used for speeches. The shipment of books was great and reached a lot of our 7–9th graders.

We are the Friends Boys School and have grades 7–12th. We are as diversified as your magazine is. If there is any way you can supply us with more books, we would not object to this kindness.

Our students would also like to communicate with their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere. Anyone interested in initiating a penpalship with our students, please e-mail me at: LM529@palfriends.org or write: Lisa Ma’rouf, Librarian, Friends Boys School P. O. Box 166, Ramallah-Bireh, West Bank, VIA ISRAEL

• 27 sixth graders in Loudonville, NY are looking for pen pals. We would like to trade information, stories and personal facts with a group of interested writers! Please send letter of interest to Colleen Carroll, teacher (e-mail: ccarroll@ncolonie.org) at Loudonville Elementary School 349 Osborne Road Loudonville, NY 12211 USA

• Requesting Pen Pals: Our school’s theme this year is Community. We also have a Diversity Council that promotes taking pride in our differences and learning from each other. Our third graders would like to exchange letters with children in other lands, including the Middle East! Write or e-mail: Cmartin@mail.friendsbalt.org Cindi Martin, 3rd grade teacher Friends School of Baltimore 5114 North Charles St. Baltimore, MD 21210 USA

• 14 ESL sixth-graders at a Muslim school in Montreal, Canada want pen pals from Arabic countries or culture. Write Rana El-Mousawi, ESL teacher Ecole Dar Al-Iman 4505 Henri Bourassa O Montreal, QUEBEC H4L 1A5 CANADA
Why We Have Black History Month

Like the black birds that soar in the sky
And the white pearls on the ocean’s floor
The treasures at the bottom of the waters
Are more cherished than the beasts flying high

White and black are not defined as colors
Just opposites of one another
White is heaven and soft clouds that drop rain
And black is gothic and seen as dark as pain

So we wonder why there is segregation
And why no one is happy with integration
Maybe because light is in the morning
And dark is at night
And to bring the two together
Just wouldn’t be right
And that’s why I think the war of prejudice
Deserves a good fight.

In the month of February
We all begin to wonder
Why the thought of Blacks
Roars louder than thunder
It’s because Black History Month
Is a time of celebration
And a time for learning and education
Though some might say:
“Why give Blacks a month to sing their song?”
I say: To see how the so-called weak
Became so strong.
—Claire Fluker, 14, West Palm Beach, Florida.

What’s On Your Mind?

Advice for Kids

If you are going through friendship problems, here are a few ways to solve them...

1. First, talk to them.
2. If that doesn’t work, start playing with another friend and maybe s/he will join you.
3. If that doesn’t work, try steps one and two a few more times, and you might find your way to friendship!

If you have a friend who is playing with someone else more than with you, just try to keep playing with them.

You can also choose to play with an old friend and soon you’ll all be playing together!

A real friend to me is someone who is still your friend no matter what happens. Once you know s/he is your real friend, you are doing well. The way you know for sure who is a real friend is by waiting!

Play with the new friend. See what s/he is like. Ask yourself if s/he is faking, and if s/he is what you think a real friend should be. If you let your friendship go on, you will find the answers.

How do I know this? I had these problems and questions. Waiting helped me find the answers.

What is a real friend to you?
—Katerina Maria Allen-Kefalinos, 9, Miami, FL.

“We are strong Black women. We are, and we have feelings, dreams and a need to belong to a healthy and safe community.”
—Bahati Ansari, founder, National Racism Free Zone, Eugene, OR.

“We are strong inwardly where it counts, as a group we have risen above each adversity, and we continue to rise. Our faith makes us strong and we will not be held back for long.”
—Paulette Ansari, librarian, Springfield, OR.
The Day Music Triumphant

In a humble black church choir in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, six-year-old Marian Anderson began an extraordinary singing career that would span the next 50 years.

Her dream was to sing on the concert stage. The journey, however, was not easy. For Marian and many black Americans, it was difficult to follow a dream because the early years of the 20th century were a time of racial strain and prejudice. When Marian tried to enroll in music school as a teenager, she stood in line with other hopeful students and waited her turn. After all of the white students were enrolled, the young woman in charge looked past Marian and said, “We don’t take colored.”

The cold, hateful words remained in Marian’s head and heart, but she continued to sing with determination and courage. Criss-crossing the country, she sang in small churches, schools and halls, to segregated and, eventually, to mixed audiences. On these travels she was regularly refused lodging or service in a restaurant because she was not white. It would have been easy to quit, but Marian refused to give up her dream.

In 1923, she won first place in the Philadelphia League competition which led to a concert with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Then, she won a scholarship to study in Europe. As Marian’s rich, contralto voice grew to perfection, her fame became widespread—she was called “The Voice of the American Soul.”

Then, in 1939, she was placed at the forefront of a storm of racial tension raging in our nation’s capital. While an American flag flew high above Constitution Hall, there was something very wrong on the inside of the concert hall. The Daughters of the American Revolution, who owned the celebrated auditorium, refused to allow Miss Anderson to sing in their hall because she was black. This announcement was clearly an embarrassment to the nation, and it caused a storm of protest. The most spirited disapproval came from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who resigned her membership in the organization.

President and Mrs. Roosevelt invited Miss Anderson to give a public recital on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on the following Easter Sunday. At first Marian, was hesitant. She was not a fighter for rights, but rather a gentle woman, content with her music. “Yet,” she said, “as I thought further, I could see that my significance as an individual was small in this affair. I had become, whether I liked it or not, a symbol of my people.”

When Ms. Anderson agreed to sing at the Lincoln Memorial, she stepped forth as a leader in one of the first civil rights issues. Her dignified and graceful manner of participation became an inspirational and moral symbol.

She said, “My mission is to leave behind the kind of impressions that will make it easier for those who follow.” She encouraged people of all colors and creeds to follow their dreams.

On April 9, 1939, Easter Sunday, Marian sang on steps of the Lincoln Memorial before an audience of 75,000. The crowd stretched from the Lincoln Memorial all the way to the reflecting pool of the Washington Monument. Miss Anderson said, “I had a feeling that a great wave of good would pour out from these people, almost engulfing me.”

Her mighty voice soared to the heavens and acted as a unifying instrument of healing. The “Voice of the American Soul” found true meaning that day. When she sang the final words to “America”—“...and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea”, it was as if the vision of Mr. Lincoln and the presence of Miss Anderson joined together to remind us of what America was all about.

—Sandra Bernhagen, author, Dana Point, California.

Art: Sheree LeDoux, art intern, Univ. of Oregon.
A Good Lesson Learned the Tough Way

I've dealt with many racist things in my life so far, but this is the one incident that sticks out in my mind the most.

I was playing a basketball game—my team was winning, as I recall. I was under the basket, fighting my hardest for the ball, and I guess my efforts upset someone, so they called me a nigger. This shocked me so much that I instantly began to cry. As I came off the floor, I immediately walked to my mom. When I told her what had happened, she seemed shocked at first, but then she told me, “Don’t let them see you cry!” I thank my mom for telling me that, because crying lets people know that their ignorance has beaten you down and that should never be the case. I tried my hardest to hold back the tears that wanted to burst out. I was so angered that I shut down. I was in denial. Being naive, I thought people weren’t racist. The girl who called me that name must have some African-American friends and I’m sure they wouldn’t have liked what she said. She let her mouth go before thinking about what she said.

After the game, the girl who I thought had called me that horrible name came up to us with her parents. Her mother said, “My daughter would never say something like that.” Whether that was true or not, I don’t know. All I could say was, “I don’t know who said it. I’m sorry. I thought it was you. It shouldn’t have been said to begin with.”

I was depressed for the rest of the night. I still couldn’t believe it happened to me. Then my coach got a letter from the other team’s coach. It said they were sorry, and that the girl who said it had to admit it in front of all of the parents. They offered to forfeit all of the games against our team. Of course, my parents said that wasn’t necessary, but the thing that still makes me upset to this day is that the girl who said it never apologized to my face. That’s why I can never forgive her. I don’t know who she is.

I had never been called that before and it still stays in my mind. You should never dignify ignorance. Never let people know that they have hurt you, so they don’t think they’ve won. A racial slur of any kind is unacceptable. It should not be tolerated or applauded, whether from the home, music, or movies. These are words of the past and should be left there. Whenever you see someone being picked on, stand up and let your voice be heard. Let it be known that it is not cool and not acceptable. You don’t have to be mean and stoop to their level. Let them know calmly.

We are the next generation, and it’s up to us to make changes in things that are wrong in the world. Never honor ignorance and don’t stoop to ignorance. This is an important lesson for us all.

I won’t let ignorance ever tear me down. I’m proud of myself and I know that other people don’t think of me that way. They care for me, so I don’t have to worry about anything or anyone putting me down.

—Kelleyah Simmons, grade 8, Gibsonia, PA.

Give Me High Five!
Name five African Americans that are:
• Inventors and Scientists
• Social Leaders
• Women Leaders
• Olympic Athletes
• Authors and Poets
• Artists and Musicians
• Your Friends
• Public Officials
**HEALTH ROCKS!** *Trot, Trot, Pant, Pant*

**Trot, Trot, Pant, Pant**

We’re talking about exercise here! Most people know what exercise is: activities that get your legs a’ runnin’, heart a’ poundin’ or body a’ stretchin’. When we’re very young, being active is just a natural part of life—small children naturally crawl under chairs, dig in the dirt, and more. Sometimes as a kid grows older, though, exercise doesn’t come so naturally anymore. Many other activities may seem far more important, such as studying, talking with friends, or playing video games. With all of this going on, exercise could gradually vanish from your life altogether, without you even realizing it! The question is, does this matter? Why should we care? What does exercise do for us? Read on to find out.

**All Muscles, Great and Small**

Being active makes muscles stronger. If your muscles are strong, you can be active for longer without getting tired. Muscle also protects your joints, so you’re less likely to get injured. The strongest muscle in the body is the heart—by exercising your heart, your blood can carry more oxygen, as well as travel more efficiently through your blood vessels.

**Stretch it out**

As you grow older, you become less flexible. By stretching regularly, you can keep (or even gain more) flexibility. Some activities which are particularly good for stretching are ballet, martial arts, and yoga. However, even just bending and stretching while watching t.v. or talking on the phone can help a lot.

**Not Purely Physical**

You may have noticed that the benefits so far have only been for your body. However, it’s amazing what being active can do for your brain. Sometimes, life can be so hectic—dealing with tough homework, arguments with friends, family dynamics, and on and on. Exercise is a great way to release that stress and pressure. It forces you to breathe more deeply and can take your mind off what’s bothering you. Exercise also releases endorphins, a chemical that gives a person a feeling of well-being.

**The Future is Now**

In addition to the positive impact stretching now will have on your flexibility later in life, an active lifestyle can also give you more of a future, by allowing you to live longer and more healthfully.

**Onward and Upward!**

So, it’s amazing how one little activity, like hiking or swimming, can pack in so many benefits: strength, flexibility, peace of mind, and future health. Whether on a team or on your own, staying active is a gift that keeps on giving. Don’t let it slip away!

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**25 Ways to Be Active**

-Bike, climb a tree, dance, fly a kite, have a pillow fight, laugh, touch your toes, slide, skateboard, walk to school, swim, knead bread, ice skate, make a snow man, rock-climb, walk the dog, help carry groceries, kick a ball, hula, spin, hop on one foot, wiggle your toes, reach for the stars, stand on your head, two-step into town, DIVE IN!

**Share it!**

Send us your personal stories, articles, and thoughts on keeping healthy. How do you keep a healthy body, attitude, or spirit?

—*Nicole Degli Esposti, assistant editor*
I feel that it is so unfair that in order to be considered beautiful, women have to be anxious about our weight while men don’t. You might say that nobody asks women to do it; they can choose not to lose weight. I agree with that. However, even though nobody asks women to be concerned with their weight, society’s values pressure women to adapt to them in order to fit in.

A primary element that motivates women to lose weight is the media. Whether on TV or in magazines, there are a lot of commercials that consider only a certain type of woman beautiful. These women are mostly thin. These ads are very powerful; they gradually change people’s beliefs. Ads instill those beliefs into most of the people in society, so most people have the same thinking.

Let me talk about my own experiences. When I came to Oregon, I lived in a dorm for two years. When we girls in the dorm (who were not only from America but also Russia, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and so on) hung out, the topic of conversation would often be weight. We would say, “I am so fat! Look at all the fat in here! I need to lose weight!” or “I have been eating so much lately; I need to stop eating.” Sometimes, we would skip lunch or dinner because we thought we were too fat to eat. And, if any girl would lose weight, others would tell that girl that she looked good, which gave her the idea that girls look better with a slim figure. Among the girls I know, some even take diet pills; some of the pills are legal, while the origin of others is unknown.

When I was in Taiwan, I was even more aware of my body shape than I am in the United States. Because of the body type they’re born with, girls in Taiwan are much slimmer than the girls in the U.S. Although the girls in Taiwan already have a slim body type, they still want to be skinnier because they think only thinness is beautiful. One reason they think this way is the female figures shown on mass media. There is one popular female host of a show in Taiwan whose height is five feet and weight is only about 90 pounds. She still wants to lose weight, though, which she frequently states on the show.

Furthermore, because of the collective culture of the Taiwanese, everyone expects each other to conform to the values shared by most of the people. Collective culture doesn’t really appreciate differences. I remember one day when I was walking on the street, I heard two girls make fun of a fat girl who stood in front of us. “Geez, she is so fat,” they laughed. Likewise, most of the guys in Taiwan like slim girls more. In order to be considered beautiful by guys, some girls want to keep themselves slim.

Now, I still talk about “losing weight” with my girlfriends. It’s hard to resist the dominant values of society. However, now I know, deep down, that it is a wrong concept. If any of us women find anything we feel is unfair, we should definitely point it out and spread correct values. We shouldn’t bear the wrong values and try to take them on. We women should know what is right for us and stick to our own beliefs. This way, we will be less affected by society’s values and can really enjoy ourselves much more.

—Li-Chuan Chiang, from Taiwan, is a Fine Arts student at the University of Oregon.
IDENTITY CRISIS

What I am writing may sound strange to you but this is the truth. How would you feel if you had no name? How would you feel if people just called, “Hey, come here,” or “Hey, do this, or do that?” Don’t you think it would offend you? But this is how women lived for a long time in my country of India. Even today, it is common to hear husbands not addressing their wives by their given names (husbands are also not called by their proper names by their wives).

I am not talking about the present generation. I am talking about the older ones, like my parents and grandparents, barely 30 or 40 years ago.

It was a very strange practice, especially for women. Parents would give a girl-child a name. She’d live with that name until she got married. She would be married off at the age of 13 or 14. My grandmother got married when she was just nine and from that day on she lost her name. You know how? My grandfather never addressed her by her name. That was the custom. He just called her “Engikke?” (Where are you?). Or, sometimes he would call her by “Ikkiya?” (Are you there?).

These phrases come from Kannad, one of the many languages of Southern India. In Northern India, husbands refer to their wives as mothers, not individuals. They would address her as, “Raju Ki Ma,” or “Ramu ki Ma,” which meant “Raju’s mother” or “Ramu’s mother.” I don’t know how women could manage a lifetime with this kind of effacement of their names.

In many households, if the bridegroom’s family thought it fit to change the name of the bride, they would do so without even asking her permission. Doesn’t this name-game seem demeaning? Her parents gave her a name she grew up with, and surely it was very precious to her. But just because her husband wished to change the name of the bride, he did it without batting an eyelid.

I am a teacher by profession. I once asked a group of children what was the favourite word that they liked to hear? It was heartening to hear most of them say, “My own name!”

Let me tell you about another offensive thing. A girl is called Miss So-and-So until she is married and then suddenly becomes a Mrs. So-and-So after she gets married. This did not exist before British rule.

When we study Indian epics, we find that the male gods’ names are prefixed by their wives’ names and not vice-versa. For example, Lord Rama is referred to as Seeta Rama. Lord Krishna is referred to as Radha-Krishna. In both the cases, it is the wife’s name that is prefixed to their names and not the other way. Even Lord Shiva is known as Parvati-Parameshwara. Parvati (his wife) remains just Parvati. It is the husband that prefixes his wife’s name. Strange indeed! I do not know why and how we started copying the westerners in appending the husband’s name or his family name to our first names.

Men never change their names or legal identity just because they get married. Only the woman has fallen prey to this axe. This is similar to how she is called a “housewife” when she does not work outside her home. Is she a woman who has married a man, or the structure in which she lives? What exactly does the term mean? How does a woman’s psyche react to this title? Does it suggest security? To me it has always sounded offensive. It disturbs me, because it seems to suggest that a woman is a wife only if she stays in the house of her husband—an unpaid, unsung, pseudo-servant who cooks, serves and looks after the members of the house.

The ideas expressed by me are not intended to accuse men or society. It is done with the honest, genuine intention of awakening the general consciousness of people and making them aware that “homemaker” would be a more dignified term than “housewife”.

—Srijaya Char, teacher, Bangalore, India.
March is Women’s History Month, a time to reflect on the status of women around the
globe. To move ahead, we must know our past and what it took to achieve the freedom that we
now may take for granted. The history of women in every part of the world tells a different
story. International Women’s Day (March 8) is a time to celebrate womanhood everywhere.
Women in the U.S. have struggled for civil rights through education, protest and persuasion.
Women didn’t even have the right to vote until the 1920s, but now there are at least a few
women in Congress. Women have come a long way in the past century, but there are still barri-
ers that we face. Many of the issues women face today cross cultural and national boundaries.
The following pages contain opinions and experiences of young women from various cultures
and countries. As a part of this feature, I interviewed three students: Tsitsi Melody Magaya from
Zimbabwe, Siska Tjhin from Indonesia and Amal from Sudan to get their perspectives.

_—Emma Zuhlin, Journalism student, University of Oregon._

Tsitsi Melody Magaya,
22, from Zimbabwe

Emma: Tell me about
your background growing up in Zimbabwe.

Tsitsi: I was born in
Bulawayo in Zimbabwe.
We pretty much traveled
a lot when I was grow-
ing up. I think the most
we spent in one place
was three years, so I’ve lived in a number of
places in Zimbabwe. That helped me mix with a
lot of other people in different ethnic groups or
tribes. It helped me learn to speak two languages
other than my own: English and Ndebele. My
own language is Shona. I also speak dialects of
Shona other than my own. It’s helped me to be a
more well-rounded person in terms of knowing
my own country and the people within it.

I went to boarding school in Chimanimani so
I would have more time to concentrate on school
compared to being at home. When you’re at home
and you’re a girl, you have other duties around
the house, like doing the cooking, washing the
dishes, laundry, and just generally keeping the
house clean. If you go to boarding school then
you don’t have to deal with that.

Emma: What is the role of women in society?

Tsitsi: As in any other culture, the role of the
woman is to take care of the family, be at home,
and do all the cooking and the washing. I think
that still is the role, but it is evolving now,
depending on where you are. If you’re in an
urban area, it has definitely changed. The women
are going to work more; they are not staying
home all the time. If they don’t have a formal job,
they are self-employed. They find ways to make
money so they don’t have to just wait for their
husband to bring a check home at the end of the
month. Some are dressmakers, and some take
goods from Zimbabwe and resell them in South
Africa or Botswana. Then they come back and
exchange the foreign currency, which is worth
more in Zimbabwe.

Some men definitely do not like women work-
ing. They don’t want their wives to do anything
but stay at home and take care of the kids.
However, in the urban areas, because the econo-
my is bad, the men realize that they cannot pro-
vide by themselves, so they don’t complain as
much. But in the rural areas, it is not common for
a woman to go to work. The urban areas are very
Westernized while the rural areas are more tra-di-
nional. In the rural areas, the women work in the
fields, go make lunch for the men and bring it to
them, and then go back to work in the fields.
When the day is over, they go home and make
dinner for the family.

Emma: What major events or strides for
women have taken place in Zimbabwe lately?

Tsitsi: Until 1980, there wasn’t much that
Women in Moldova

Moldavian society is built on the basis of equality. Women are granted equal rights with men under the constitution. Women have excellent professional education and make up half the labor force. Women are the standard-bearers of the country’s moral and social values. However, women still are the only ones to take care of the family and children.

Sometimes, women in Moldova say that they have too much equality. Women are disappointed with having to fulfill society’s expectations that they should work as well as assume primary responsibility for the home and family. During the time of emancipation, under the Soviets, women started to play some “male” roles by working outside the house. But, men are not eager to share the responsibilities connected with the household. This has resulted in women’s double load of work and home responsibilities, which is the cost of independence.

—Olga Grecova is a student from Moldova.

How Many Women Can You Name?

- Inventors/Scientists: __________________________
- Social Leaders: __________________________
- Public Officials: __________________________
- Olympic Athletes: __________________________
- Authors/Poets: __________________________
- Artists: __________________________
- Spiritual/Religious leaders: __________________________
- Musicians: __________________________
- Business Executives: __________________________
- Role-Models: __________________________
Siska Tjhin, 22, from Indonesia

Emma: Tell me a bit about yourself.

Siska: I lived in Jakarta, the capital, on the Island of Java. I went to study in Singapore when I was young and studied there for seven years and graduated from high school. My parents wanted me to study in America after I graduated, and that’s how I came to the U.S. I was 17 when I came here.

Emma: What was different from your lifestyle here?

Siska: Usually when I got home from school, I’d play with my grandfather or my house maids. House maids mostly don’t have much education, they just finish elementary school. They don’t have enough money, so they come to the city to work. It’s common for village women.

In the villages, I think women don’t receive a lot of education. The women help in the fields. The families there have a lot of kids; they might have five or six siblings. The women in the cities do more office work, or at least have higher-paying jobs. They also work in restaurants as waitresses. Now, the women’s role in society is increasing. Our current president is a woman, Megawati Putri Sukarno. She’s the daughter of our first President. In the past, women’s role was seen more as in the family, not in society. There were women pioneers, but just a few.

Emma: What is the general atmosphere like for women?

Siska: More women now want to get into government. I think in the future there will be more and more women who have higher positions in companies, and more women will get an education. For sure, women in the villages are going to have a better life. They’re going to develop even more, it’s just a matter of how fast it will be.

Emma: Is it common for women to be single or divorced?

Siska: Divorce is not common in Indonesia. Indonesia is a Muslim country and it’s okay for a man to have many wives. It’s still arranged marriage. Even for my culture, Chinese Indonesian, it’s arranged marriage, but it’s getting better. In the family, the man plays a bigger role, because we still think that the man is the one who makes money for the family and earns a living. In America, men are more respectful to women. Men and women do grocery shopping. In Indonesia—it’s the wife who does the shopping. In America, some men even help with cleaning the house or washing the dishes after dinner. Not so in Indonesia!

Wait

You must learn to sit and stay
And wait like a loaf
Of sourdough bread
Sitting in a bakery window.

Wait, add more hopes
To that ever-growing list...
Someday I’ll... I wish I could...

It will remain
Just a pile of words
Because you are too afraid
To put your dreams at risk.

You will never know
What might have been
If you just sit and wait.

—Melissa Hayden, high school student, Poulsbo, Washington.

A Way of Life

Freedom, not a definition.
Freedom, a way of life.
Our constitution is
Bound together by the laws
we must obey
in order to keep
our place in society
Freedom goes deeper,
Deeper than the laws.
To start afresh,
To build new foundations.
Freedom,
where women expose
their golden locks
to sunlight,
Where a child becomes
What she always hoped
Freedom is
To dream,
To believe,
To be.

—Caitlin Conflenti, 13, Wexford, PA.
Amal, 22, from Sudan

I was born in Lebanon; my parents were there for higher education. Then, we moved back to Sudan, and I lived there until I was 17, when I finished my high school.

North and South

Sudan is an African country, but has two parts. The Northern part has considerable Arabic influence. The Southern part is African; they live the tribal life there and speak a tribal language. In the North, the language is Arabic. We have all the Islamic traditions, like prayers, and mosques are all over the country.

Families in Sudan tend to be huge, especially if you are from a family who has not migrated for a long time. But now it’s changing because people are moving to Khartoum, the capital city, where I grew up. They go to school there and they meet people from other areas. So, it’s more common now to marry someone who is outside your tribe.

In Northern Sudan, women are considered very valuable because they carry the honor of the family. Whatever happens to the female affects the reputation of the entire family. Women can go on to higher education, but for most women in Sudan, even if they’re very educated, when they get married, they have to take care of the family. You live with your family until you get married.

In Southern Sudan is different in many respects because the religion there is not Islam. It’s mostly tribal culture and traditions, so it depends on each tribe how they treat women and what’s accepted and what’s not. For over 50 years, that area is a war zone. So there is no good education, no good health care, and no good facilities for anything. Life is harder in the South.

War and Women’s Education

The war is between the North and the South. The North is Muslim and the government is in the North, and they’re trying to control the entire country by Islamic law. The new generations don’t want to go fight in the war, so the men leave the country before they finish high school. That way they don’t have to do army service. The women tend to stay in Sudan, so now you have a very high number of women and a very low number of men, especially eligible men for marriage. You see more women going to universities and schools for higher education, but not men. Still, even though more women have a higher education, men are always the bosses of companies.

Women’s role has evolved in terms of getting an education. Until recently, for most women, especially if you lived in villages, you grew up, you didn’t go to school, and you had to do the house work. When you were 18 you got married and you had to take care of your husband and your kids, and that was your life, and then you grew older and your people took care of you and that was it. Now, women are going to school and getting an education. I think that’s really good.

Marriage, Divorce and Polygamy

The family will support the idea that you have to stay with your husband, even if he treats you badly, because divorce is not accepted at all especially in small towns or villages. It’s always seen as the woman’s fault, like there’s something wrong with her and that’s why she got divorced. Because it is an Islamic country, polygamy is practiced in Sudan. It used to happen more in the past, but now women are getting educated and they’re more self-confident and they know what they’re doing, so they’re more of a companion than before in so many ways. Polygamy had declined, but now it’s increasing again because of the war and the men migrating outside of Sudan. The last I heard, there were 1 million women who had hit the age of 40, and still were unmarried in my country. For so many families that’s not a preferred situation. If a woman is not educated and she’s not married, that means her parents have to take care of her until she dies or until they die, and then her brothers have to take care of her. This is not because women are incapable. They can take care of themselves financially, but in terms of living, they have to stay with somebody. It’s more of a cultural thing, because the woman is considered valuable to the family, so she’s always being watched.
Social Expectations

One of my friends who used to go to school with me had a very strict father. She did something unacceptable, and her father said, "You're not leaving the house," so she couldn't go to school anymore. The majority of parents are this way, but there is variation. The woman carries the honor of the family in many countries in this area.

Traditionally, the people that talk about Islam and explain all this stuff are men. That's the problem for so many cultures that are influenced by Islam. The Book is interpreted by men, and there are all these restrictions on women because the men are in control. They give themselves the benefits: they want to be in charge, and what better way to do it than with religion, because people follow that.

When I came to the U.S., I saw there was more freedom. Sometimes I don't think lots of freedom is a good thing. Back home, even though the women are treated differently, they are sort of respected. They have a higher value in the community in many ways. We're treated like we're fragile, even though we're not. I think it's nice for a female to be treated that way.

In Sudan, if a woman has a strong personality, she is the one who is in charge of the family. But in front of people, she has to show that the man is in charge of the family. The man is the head of the family, but the woman is the neck; she tells him whatever she wants to. But you're a victim if you want to be, definitely. So if you stand up and you know what your rights are, and if you act within your culture, you should be fine.

What I Would Change

If I could, I think I'd make it more acceptable to have men and women in the same space. I went to an all-women's school all the way through high school. There's a huge gender gap because of the way we grow up: you have to be separate. At home, the family shares one living room, because you're related. But when guests come in that you don't know, you have an area for men and another for women. Men and women are different, I get that, but they're not that different.

(Based on an extended interview with Amal.)

Pennies From Heaven

I have always wondered why people underestimate the value of a penny. Every time I see a penny on the ground on the way to my sixth period class at school, paying for a head of lettuce at the grocery store, or even when crossing one of the crazy streets of Manhattan, I tend to pick it up. Lately, I've been noticing that when people see me get excited over a penny, they look at me like I just landed from another planet. Little do these people know just how hard some people have to work to earn a little money.

My family and I moved to New York from a small country in Europe, Croatia, in 1987. I didn't have many toys as a child, so I was happy if I had a pile of pennies to play with. It was hard for my father to get a steady job back then because he didn't know much English. He used to do all sorts of little painting jobs in the beginning, just so he could earn enough money to support his family. I remember one day when I was about three, my father didn't have enough change for the train ride. He came up to me and asked me if I could give him some of my pennies. I used to take the pennies and hide them between the cushions of the sofa, under the carpet, and in all sorts of odd places around our little apartment. So when my father asked me if I could give him my pennies, I was more than happy to have my father play "Find the Pennies" with me. Back then, I didn't realize how important one cent could be, but now I know that every penny counts.

There is some truth in the saying that "the roads in America are paved with gold." I have noticed that there are some people in America who don't care if they throw away a penny. All these pennies that have been dropped shine on the road like gold, waiting for people like me to walk along, pick them up, and save them for a rainy day. Although it is difficult for some people to earn a decent living, once they realize how valuable a penny can be, they will see that by saving every penny they earn, they will be able to support themselves and their loved ones.

—Dina Kalmeta, 17, Congers, New York.
Being a Woman in Argentina Is a Challenge: I’m Up for It!

There is no doubt that in the last decades the role of women in society has changed enormously almost all over the world. The degree and speed of change in each country is obviously related to the characteristics of the community and its culture. It is not the same to be a woman living in Norway as it is to be a woman living in Saudi Arabia. And also, we shouldn’t forget that it’s very different to be a woman in a shantytown than it is to be a woman in a circle of intellectuals.

As an Argentine woman, I can speak of what I’m experiencing in my country. Like most Latin American countries, if not all, Argentina has a history of sexism. Argentina’s society is definitely patriarchal, with the man being the head of the family and the one providing for all the material needs, while the woman stays home and takes care of the children and the house. For hundreds of years that seemed to be all that women were “allowed” to do; our options were very limited. This has gradually changed and is still changing. Our role in society has become more of a leading one.

Looking back, there have certainly been several figures who have contributed to the advancement the situation of women in our country. Probably the most well-known one is Eva Duarte de Perón. Sure, she was loved by some as much as she was hated by others who questioned her ways, but there’s no denying that her influence and commitment were key factors in advancing women’s status in our society, beginning with her bringing women the right to vote in 1947.

Today’s Argentine woman is independent; she’s interested in making a career for herself before settling down and starting a family. We have come to the point where there aren’t that many jobs considered exclusively male or female. But of course, if an employer had to choose between a man and a woman with the same qualifications, they most likely would hire the man: With a male employee, they wouldn’t have to worry about maternity leave or days off to take care of a sick child.

Argentina is struggling to work its way out of a severe economic and social crisis that has been affecting us for years. During this time, unemployment has increased drastically, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without jobs. So, it’s very common to find men looking after their kids and doing the household chores, while their wives are out there working, in many cases, two jobs.

We have managed to put ourselves in the position of making our own choices, of exploring the paths that we want to explore without being judged. For that, we should feel proud.

Yes, we have to work nine hours a day, take care of the kids, the house, the husband, and finally, if there’s any time left, ourselves. But the funny thing is that even when it is hard work, at the end of the day, I wouldn’t change it for the world—being a woman is a challenge, and I’m up for it!

—Belen Navarro, 23, translator, Rosario, Argentina.

Sunday

Blue sky above, I am with Granny
Drops of flowers are in the house,
The grass is growing, I am running, drawing
Or taking a picture for you. A happy day!

The wind blows, the leaves are moving,
Blowing in my face, too
In the warmth of thanks,
I am thinking of you. A nice day!

February is a winter month,
I love it for its beauty,
In the serenity of Spring,
Lilly-bells appear, making my life happy,
I am happy with Granny, too.

—Uliana Matei, 11, Onesti, Romania.
A Road Less Travelled

I peered anxiously over the edge of my seat. Signs of a coming sandstorm hovered in the sky, and the driver fidgeted in his seat, mumbling a stream of incoherent words. The ride was bumpy and the heat was intolerable as usual, with a temperature of about a hundred degrees. I glanced over to see my mother, who wiped the beads of sweat from her forehead with her flower-patterned handkerchief.

“How much further do we have to go, Mom?” I asked with impatience, as I swatted several sand flies droning near my ears. My mother didn’t answer me, but squinted through the dusty air as the jeep jumped over yet another sand dune. I was frustrated by her refusal to answer me so I distracted myself by drawing wavy lines and squiggles on the sand-covered windows.

I was eleven then, and my family and I lived in North Africa. My mother was sent overseas with the Medical Corps to deliver health care to the local people. I was homeschooled; this gave me much free time to roam about my new environment and accompany my mother on patient home visits. This provided me with the rare chance to gain insight into the local culture, people and customs. A the time, though, tagging along with my mother to see her patients just meant another boring two-hour trip in the sweltering heat and getting bitten by hundreds of flies.

Finally, the oasis came into sight, which signaled our arrival at the village. We stopped at a small tent, where friendly goats and sheep outside greeted us. A man came out of the tent clad in a tattered robe. His face was filled with lines of worry that softened when he saw my mother.

“Sabar,” he said as he received her gratefully. He led us into the dimly lit tent where hundreds of flies gathered and the ground was dusty and dirty. I held my mother’s hand tighter, in discomfort and disbelief at the impoverished conditions of these people. She shot me a look of annoyance and let go of my hand.

We were led to the bed of a stricken woman whose face was pallid and emaciated. Five squalid children gathered around her, anxiously, with tears in their eyes. One of the girls was my age, and I felt a pang of pity as I saw her soiled hands and matted hair. My mother took out her stethoscope to examine the woman, who muffled her cries of pain. She had been sick with a fever for three days and had severe cramps. I stood in the corner and waited with her children. My mother gave her a shot and we waited for an hour until her fever subsided. Then, after coming out of her semiconscious phase, she somehow managed to get out of bed, and insisted on brewing us sweet tea out of her gratitude towards my mother. While we sipped from dirty cups, her thankful husband searched the tent and handed us a hard-boiled egg, which my mother gave to me.

The children waved to us as we got back into the jeep. The ride back home was bumpy as usual, but I didn’t mind—I was savoring the delicious taste of the egg. Meanwhile, the driver engaged in a quiet conversation with my mother, and though they murmured, I could make out a few words. He explained how the family was impoverished, that they sold off their camels and were left with only a few goats and sheep. My mother sighed sympathetically, and the driver told her that she was the first doctor to accept what the family had been able to pay: the egg that I just ate. A strange feeling tingled inside me and gathered at my throat.

That day changed me forever. From then on, I vowed to be someone who could paint smiles and bring comfort into patients’ lives, regardless of the remuneration they were able to pay. To this day, I follow my childhood mantra: I seek neither fame nor wealth, but the greater satisfaction of gratitude and service.

—Leona Liu, 15, New City, NY.
Building and Re-building in Europe

Let's begin our tour with the Whitby Abbey, the place where, in the year 664, the timing of the Easter festival was decided upon. The Danes destroyed the Abbey in 867; these ruins belong to a second re-building which took place between 1220 and 1320, in the Early English style. This style includes ribbed vaults, narrow pointed arches and lancet windows. (Photo 1)

In 1920, *HMS Victory* (2) was brought into dry-dock in Hampshire-Portsmouth, England, after 150 years of active service. Used in the battle of Trafalgar, it is still manned by serving naval personnel.

*Bramall Hall* (3) in Cheshire, England, is situated on 70 acres of beautiful parkland. It is a superb example of a 14th Century Cheshire Black-and-White timber-framed manor house.

The Royal Pavilion (4) has pinnacles, turrets and bulbous domes in a free interpretation of “Hindu” architecture. The Prince Regent, later King George IV, collaborated with architect John Nash between 1815 and 1824 to recreate a pleasure palace by the sea at Brighton.

The Jasna Gora Monastery (5) in Poland is one of the major pilgrimage centres of the Christian world. Every year Jasna Gora is visited by three to four million pilgrims and tourists. The
Old Town of Warsaw is a meticulous reconstruction of the original that was totally destroyed during World War II. Restored using old plans, pictures and photographs, the result is magnificent.

The Church of Our Lady of Tyn (6) in Prague, Czech Republic, is the most eye-catching building in the Old Town Square with its twin towers rising to 80m. The church, which started in 1360, is the city’s most important Gothic place of worship other than the Cathedral.

The Orloj (7), which means Astronomical Clock, can be found on the wall of the Old Town Hall in Prague. It was put up in the early 1400s. When it chimes, on the hour, a procession of wooden apostle statues emerge from a door on one side to enact a medieval morality scene before disappearing behind a door on the opposite side.

The Rila Monastery (8) in Bulgaria, is perched high up on the side of a mountain in the middle of thick pine forests, has a fascinating collection of frescoes, woodcarvings and Bibles written on parchment. It was founded in the 900s by hermit Ivan Rilsky. It preserved many Bulgarian cultural artifacts during the 500-year Turkish occupation from 1396. However, fire destroyed much of the early architecture. The present buildings date from the 19th Century.

In Dresden, Germany, a huge statue of King John on horseback sits in the centre of the Semper Opera House Square (9) with ornate lamp standards on either side.

—Julian Worker, New Westminster, B.C., Canada.
A Thoughtful Heart

My family has many treasures, but the most valuable one is my Grandma Conchita. I love her very much. She is special to my whole family. She is plump and her hair is short. Her hair has three colors: black like night, gray as an elephant, and white like a rabbit. She lives in Anthony, New Mexico. For the last three years since my grandpa died, she has lived alone on a ranch that grows pecans. She has two dogs to keep her company, Ruby and Maya, plus a cat and fish.

My grandma speaks Spanish; she doesn’t really understand English. Each time I call her to say hi, she says, “Hola, mi princesa.” That means, “Hello, my princess.” My grandma is very thoughtful. She buys us limes when they are on sale; if we’re not home, she leaves them in our mailbox. She is like a third mother to me. First is the Virgin Mary, second is my mom, and third is her. When I spend the night at my grandma’s, we sometimes make gorditas or tortillas. For Christmas, my grandma Conchita gives us pecans because she has too many.

I love my grandma very much and would never ask for another one.

—Kristina Dominguez, 12, El Paso, Texas.

The Greatest Gift

I can remember my first experience with little league baseball as if it were yesterday. I was only a little kid, but I wanted to play so badly.

“Come on, Steve, hit the ball!” my coach yelled.

“I can’t,” I said, swinging at the pitch.

“Well, then, go sit on the bench until you learn how to hit a baseball.”

I went home that night thinking of how I could improve my batting skills. The next day, I went back to the plate and still couldn’t hit the ball. Even my mom’s cheers from the bleachers had no effect.

When we got home, she asked me why I couldn’t hit the ball. “I just can’t connect the bat with the ball,” I said, “It’s only my second day of baseball practice, and I just can’t hit the ball. I can play in the field, but I can’t bat.

“Well, maybe you just need practice,” she said. “Not everything comes naturally. Sometimes you have to work to get stuff you want. Everyone has to work to be good at something. Tomorrow, we’ll go to the field and practice.”

The next day, we went to the park. The field was deserted. It seemed as if everything had vanished except the field itself. All I could focus on was the baseball bat, which rested in my hands.

“Oh, okay,” she said, “Just try to connect that bat with the ball. I will throw it softly until you get the hang of it. Then, we’ll speed things up.”

“Oh, okay,” I said, as I stepped up to the plate.

She threw the ball and I took a swing. I missed. We tried again and again, for hours, until I finally got the hang of it. At the end of the day, I felt I could hit anything that came my way.

“Good job, Steve,” she said with a smile. I had just hit the ball into the outfield, where my sister retrieved the ball. “We’ll stop for today. It’s starting to rain, and you’re on a hot streak.”

The next day was our first game. My first time up to bat, I hit the ball and ran my heart out until I reached first base. My mom was so proud of me, and I was ecstatic! I had done it! Even though my team didn’t win the game, I was a happy little child. You see, my mom had given me the greatest gift anyone could give. She believed in me.

—Steve Edsall, grade 8, Gibsonia, PA.
**Garlic and Onion**

In Indonesia, "garlic" is white onion and "onion" is red onion. By color association, garlic is seen as "good" and onion, as the "bad" one.

Once upon a time, a family lived in a rural village near a jungle. The father of the family had passed away, and now there was only the mother, a daughter named Onion and a stepdaughter named Garlic. The stepmother and Onion always treated Garlic rudely and made her do all the chores around the house. Garlic often cried because of the mistreatment by her family.

One day, Garlic went to the river to wash the clothes. While she was washing, one of Onion’s outfits got washed away by the stream. Immediately she ran down the riverside to get the outfit. When she finally reached it, she realized she was lost far in the jungle. Garlic tried to make her way home. While she was walking, she heard somebody call her name. It was an old man. He had noticed her and knew her story. He invited Garlic into his old hut and asked her to choose one coconut from a shelf as her present. Garlic saw that there were several large coconuts, but she picked a medium-sized one that she could carry. She thanked the old man and carried the gift home. When she arrived home, it was very late. Her stepmother and Onion were mad at her because she was so late. Garlic explained what happened and showed them the coconut. They laughed at the present but asked her to open it anyway. Much to their surprise, they found gold, silver, diamonds and other jewels inside the coconut.

Immediately, the stepmother and Onion summoned Garlic to take them to the old man’s hut. When they arrived there, Onion asked if she could also have a present. She chose the largest and heaviest coconut. The stepmother and Onion were so excited, but when they opened it, there wasn’t any jewelry. The coconut was filled with rocks. It was the old man’s way of teaching them a lesson, and they promised never to treat Garlic unfairly again.

—Retold by Detty Saluling, Indonesia.

**Escaping Elephants**

Once, in the zoo, there stood five elephants. It was a lazy day and the elephants were enjoying a mud bath. Then, something very strange happened. Yammi, the oldest elephant said, “I’m tired of mud baths, people feeding us peanuts, and being trapped in a small cage! I’m going to escape tonight! If anyone wants to join me, meet me by the water hole.”

And he stormed off.

After much discussion, the other elephants reluctantly went to the watering hole. When they arrived there, Yammi’s wife Sentri said, “If we’re going to escape, we’ll have to do it quietly and distract the "keeper" while we turn the security off.”

The others nodded in agreement. Caltish, the youngest elephant, brought up the problem of food. So, all day the elephants wove palm branches into a giant net, with bamboo poles attached for pulling. They piled mounds of straw in the net and stored it in the bushes.

That night, when the keeper was making his rounds, a long, loud blast from Yammi sounded. The keeper rushed over to see what was upsetting him. While he was on the other side of the cage, Sentri turned off the security. Then she waved her trunk to signal that she was done. Yammi stopped blowing his trunk and the keeper left. When the keeper went to check on the monkeys on the other side of the zoo, the elephants picked up their food and started climbing out of their cage. When the last of the elephants were safely out of the cage, they made their way (as quietly as elephants can) out of the city.

An original story by Katie Enge, 12, Fred Moore MS, Anoka, MN.
Art: Li-Chuan Chiang.
The Plight of Girls with Disabilities in Nigeria

Nigeria is known as the most populous black nation in the world, with a population of about 120 million people, of which slightly less than half are women. However, women are seen and treated as second-class citizens, with little or no opportunity for self-discovery and development. So, you can only imagine the hardship that Nigerian girls with disabilities suffer: they suffer twice, once for being female and again for their disability.

First, about the hardship of being a girl: In Nigeria, girls have a lower status and enjoy fewer of the rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood than boys. This is because many believe that sons will provide more economic support for the parents. Sons are also the ones to carry the family name. On the other hand, girls leave home at marriage and subsequently become their husband’s ‘property.’

Since girls are usually not sent to school in some parts of Nigeria, the education of a disabled girl is simply seen as an even greater waste of time and resources. So naturally, girls with disabilities bear a major share of the burden of poverty; lacking an education, they can’t get jobs.

Most times, a girl with a disability is seen as a social embarrassment to her family because she is not seen as marriageable. She is often considered unable to be a ‘good wife’ or a ‘good mother’ and therefore may be forced to remain in her paternal home for the rest of her life.

This, in turn, is a source of shame for the family, which leads the family to discriminate against her and hide her away from public view. She has no place in society. In addition, she usually has a poor-self image because of the emphasis society places on women’s physical beauty.

Meanwhile, the access needs of girls with disabilities is being ignored. For instance, reproductive health information is not produced in a format accessible to blind girls (e.g. Braille). Also, health care workers are not trained to understand the special needs of girls with disabilities. Most often, the attitudes of health care workers about disability discourages them from seeking medical attention; this has led to a high incidence of ill health and death among Nigerian girls with disabilities.

Even worse, the reproductive rights of girls with disabilities is increasingly being violated. Teenage, disabled girls are made to undergo sterilization. The mentally challenged are the hardest hit. Men with learning difficulties or mental challenges are usually not forced into sterilization.

Since, there are no strong laws that can be enforced in Nigerian courts to protect the human and reproductive rights of women with disabilities, organizations are springing up to fight for their rights. Fortunately, we are now beginning to record some successes in this direction.

—Ekaete Judith Umoh, Nigeria.

About the Author

“I had polio at the age of three and I have been coping very well after I recovered. I got the idea of starting an organization when I was a student at the University of Ibadan. While there, I was placed in a hostel reserved for female students with disabilities. My experience living there made me better appreciate the plight of women with disabilities. I also became more aware of people’s reactions towards them. So, I led a group that fought for the rights of people with disabilities in my school.

After graduation in 1995, I got really involved with a women’s group in Nigeria. There, I found that women with disability were constantly being excluded from their programs. This led me to help create the Family-centered Initiative for Challenged Persons in 2000, for Nigerian women with disabilities. I serve as its director.”
**Hurt**

Being hurt means being in pain
Being mad at what happened
Being mad at the world
When you express your feelings
Let go of your worries,
Concentrating on that one event
Will make all of your worries come back
Making you feel miserable again
Making you feel like a hurricane just hit
Like everything was a dream.

—Jacki Margeaux Dornfeld, 10, Armonk, NY.

**The Voice**

The voice is me.
The voice is every move I make.
The voice gives me advice.
It moves, it talks.
All of it is the voice.

—Paris Lee, 9, Charlottesville, VA.

**If My Life...**

If my life were a T.V. show,
it would be a soap opera.
If my life were a book,
it would be a novel.
If my life were a poem,
it wouldn’t rhyme.
If my life were a song,
it would be out of pitch.
But if my life were perfect,
it wouldn’t be exciting.

—Taylor Ketterer, 13,
Rockland, MA.

**The Bald Eagle Shadow**

The thing that the bald eagle and I have in common is
That we are independent.
I enjoy the fresh air like the bald eagle.
Flying fast through the air
On a falling roller-coaster down a steep slope is like
The bald eagle diving down to catch a fish in a lake.
Like the bald eagle gliding through
The wild windy air, watching the world below like a stranger,
I look down out of my open window.
The eagle diving down to the water, fast as light,
Me diving into a swimming pool.
As the bald eagle flies high above the world
to smell the fresh, crisp air,
I sit on a hillside, looking down into the city.

As the bald eagle grows up and dies,
it will never know about its shadow,
Only the shadow knows about the eagle.

—Jesse Clark (written at age 16),
Comanche Indian, Eugene, OR.
Let's meet **Women Following their Hearts**

Suzette Tomaska, Child Life Coordinator, St. Luke’s Roosevelt Hospital Center, New York.

Suzette remembers her heart leaping the first time she saw children, IV’s in tow, walking down the hallway of a hospital toward the playroom, so they could be there right when it opened. She was a volunteer then, testing the waters of a career called “child life specialist,” and at that moment, she knew it was for her.

Today, Suzette is the head of a child life department where she devotes each day to making a child’s time at the hospital less stressful and more comfortable. A large part of her job involves “medical play.” For example, a child who has just had surgery can reenact their experience with dolls and real medical equipment. Suzette helps them express feelings about their experience and become familiarized with equipment and procedures that are often foreign and frightening to them. She also prepares children for medical procedures by using pictures and books to show them what will happen, and she teaches them relaxation techniques they can use whenever they feel overwhelmed.

Part of Suzette’s job is to act as an advocate and reliable listener for children. Doctors and nurses always ask many questions of child patients, but children rarely have an opportunity to ask questions or voice their concerns. Child life specialists pay attention to emotional difficulties that are often neglected while trying to solve physical problems.

Child life specialists also work with parents, sisters and brothers. “Anything a parent is feeling will be transposed to the child,” Suzette said. She helps the family stay calm, supportive and understanding. Sometimes Suzette’s job is simply to be with the child so the parents can have a chance to cope with their own feelings and needs.

With siblings, Suzette’s role is to answer questions about their sister or brother and clear up any misconceptions. She says sometimes a child’s imagination can take over and create traumatizing ideas of what his/her sibling is undergoing. The specialist might mimic the sibling’s situation with a teaching doll, so the child is better prepared to see the brother or sister.

Suzette says the most challenging part of her job is balancing the professional and emotional sides of the position. Child life specialists can get very close to the patients, but they have to know when to let go, especially if the child has a terminal condition.

Being a child life specialist takes a lot of patience and persistence, Suzette says, because a lot of children don’t show a positive response immediately. She keeps her view of accomplishments very small. She says the best moments are when a child says, “I feel better now that you’re here,” or when the children smile and laugh.

If you think you might want to become a child life specialist, Suzette recommends starting out as a volunteer. Simply go to your local hospital and ask to volunteer in the pediatric care unit or with the child life program if they have one. Volunteers play games, talk about music or just hang out with patients. They also have a chance to observe a real child life specialist at work.

To learn more about the work of a Child Life Specialist, visit: www.childlife.org.

A teacher asked students to punctuate this:
"Woman without her man is nothing."

The boys punctuated it like this:
Woman, without her man, is nothing!

However, the girls did it very differently:
Woman! Without her, man is nothing!
Laura Close, field organizer, Students Transforming and Resisting Corporations, STARC.

When Laura joined STARC as a sophomore in college, she knew she had tapped into something special. She discovered the ability within herself to help build leadership in young activists.

“It’s really powerful to see this many people who care about change and to know that when we unite we actually have more power.”

Laura helps build networks of high school and college student organizers. She recruits new members to STARC and helps develop youth leaders. Every day, she calls and e-mails young organizers around the nation to help them set their visions and achieve their goals. She also works on fundraisers and on bringing people to events, such as the national STARC conference.

Each month, Laura travels, meeting new people and attending conferences. She says it is challenging to be “really open at all times to the perspectives of people I meet, and really listen to people.”

The best parts about being a field organizer, she says, are meeting inspiring people and making real change. Some of Laura’s achievements include: founding STARC’s two-month-long program for young organizers; working with Global Exchange to enable Starbucks to sell ‘fair-trade’ coffee in their shops; helping organize 200 campus peace rallies after Sept. 11th; educating people about Citigroup’s denying low-income families loans; and pressuring universities to invest in low-income families.

Laura wants youth who care about social justice to know they are not alone. “We help form communities. I want people to know there are hundreds of thousands of people who care as much as you do.”

For more information, visit: www.starcalliance.org.

Jen Anonia, Guidance Coordinator, FOOD For Lane County, Oregon.

At FOOD For Lane County, the mission is to get as much food to the county’s hungry residents as possible. Jen’s job is to supervise coordinators and volunteers, develop programs and get dirty at the community gardens.

She manages the Churchill Community Garden, where she works with community members in their garden plots and students from nursery school-age through college.

In the summer and fall, Jen also works on the Youth Farm, where teenagers from low-income families work part-time growing organic food and receive job training. Besides supervising the youth while they work, she helps them set goals to work over the growing season. “The program gives youth an opportunity to be their best selves,” she said.

Jen’s job involves “a lot of creative stuff.” She chooses games, presentations and other enrichment activities for the youth farmers. She also helps lead the mentoring program and create a curriculum for the students.

Jen especially enjoys working with people, adapting to different learning styles and helping them connect with the outdoors.

“I help people make connections between food and what’s going on in the world.”

She also simply likes to roll up her sleeves and get to work. “I love being outside and digging in the compost,” Jen said.

Jen’s goal is to combine farming and gardening with education. She helps people work together and grow high-quality, organic food for people who otherwise wouldn’t have it.

Circle countries below that have NOT had a woman head of their government in the past 25 years?
Indonesia, India, Philippines, Sri Lanka, United States of America, Germany, Canada, England, France, Mexico, Japan

—Illustrations by Kristen Dicharry, Eugene.
Into the Heart of Dustiness

I didn’t know anything about my dad’s culture, save the woolen rugs on the floor and the little yellow boxes full of spices in the pantry proclaiming the name “Shah.” I didn’t know how to read Urdu, which seemed composed of a bunch of squiggly lines and dots, as if someone were trying to get a dry pen to write. And I didn’t know just how much of my paternal family was across the Atlantic, over in Pakistan.

Then one day, my dad decided it was time to go visit them. I’m sorry to say I wasn’t too excited. At fourteen, the thought of spending my Christmas break in a country that seemed a universe away was not appealing. Let’s face it: when most people are planning a vacation, they don’t usually say, “I know! Let’s go to Pakistan!”

I had to think ahead. I had to consider every aspect of Pakistan’s culture, every factor of its climate. I had to bring white bread, Pringles and other such staples of life.

What I should have brought was aspirin. The plane ride took forever. I still remember getting out of the airport and meeting up with my grandparents, aunts, uncle, and all of my cousins, most of whom I had never met in person before.

Surprisingly, Pakistan was a lot like I had imagined. It was dry, caked in dust. Any small patch of grass was an oasis, or probably fake.

It was then, driving to my grandparent’s house, that everything hit me at once—mosques instead of churches, donkeys on the highway, no McDonald’s at the exits, and an empty lot where boys were playing cricket, not baseball.

One of the first things we did in Pakistan was to get some traditional clothing—knee-length dresses with baggy pants underneath. Shopping is an international pastime, apparently, and I found myself picking out a green set that I liked. We bought this item at an outdoor market. The place was hot and crowded. You couldn’t swing your traditional dress-scarf two feet without hitting someone. It looked like a flea market, in a hot, dusty, claustrophobic’s-worst-nightmare sort of way.

So you can imagine my surprise at stepping into a mall and finding highly polished tile floors, air conditioning, and even fake trees. I had expected “the mall” to be just a slang term for another outdoor shopping center. Jeans, t-shirts, CD players, toasters and stereo systems were all illuminated by the bright florescent store signs.

Then, just when I was challenging Pakistan to throw its hardest at me, it was time to go. I had washed my clothing in a washtub. I had ridden a camel (“No, Daddy! I don’t want it to go faster!”). I had bartered for jewelry, dipped my feet in the Indian Ocean, watched as my college tuition was spent on yet another oriental rug, ate French fries until they haunted me in my sleep, and managed to talk to my grandfather one last time.

I still can’t speak or read Urdu. The rugs have continued their invasion of my house (infiltrating my room, as it were). And still I avoid those “Shah” boxes. But I have gained something: roots.

—Sarah Akhtar, high school junior, Rockwall, TX.
Pongal

Vibrating drums, piercing whistles, fireworks, and joyful hooting drew me to the shabby neighborhood. In the golden light of the dusk, I spotted them. Their backs were covered in splendid silk, glittering horns adorned with festoons and bells, hoofs painted red or yellow, and flower garlands around their necks. Swaying to the music of the drums and pipes, I wondered if I was in a fantasy-land. Would anyone be crazy enough to drape silk sarees on their cows? As the darkness fell, the climax of the night occurred: The cows walked on live coal! The crowd cheered; our milkman and family beamed with pride. They had just celebrated “Mattu Pongal” in a traditional manner.

Pongal, the harvest festival for the Tamils in South India, is celebrated in January, following the solar calendar. The festival marks the commencement of the Sun’s northern course when it enters the sign of Capricorn. It is a three-day fun-filled festival, with family, social and religious activities.

The first day, the Bhogi Pongal, is celebrated in honor of the Rain God (Indra) for abundance of harvest. On this day, all the family members join together and light a bonfire in front of the house. Into this fire, all useless household things are thrown. New things are brought home, signifying a fresh, prosperous start for the year ahead. Homes are cleaned and painted. Traditional kolams adorn the door. Kolams are designs made of rice flour with borders painted using red mud. For this occasion, there is a small cow-dung ball, in the center of the design with a yellow pumpkin flower. Sometimes, young men play a small buffalo-hide drum in front of the fire.

Surya Pongal, celebrated on the second day, is dedicated to the Sun God (Surya) for filling the granaries. The major rainy season is in October and November; the harvest is gathered just before Pongal festival. A wooden plank is placed on the ground and kolam of the Sun God and His powerful rays are drawn on it. Prayers are rendered to the Sun God to seek his benediction. Sakkarai pongal (sweet rice) is cooked in a new clay pot painted with traditional designs. It is customary to allow pongal to boil and overflow from the pot with people shouting, “Pongalo, pongal!” The word “pongal” in Tamil means to boil and overflow. The mouth of the pot is tied with ginger and turmeric saplings. These plants symbolize the spiciness of life and auspiciousness. Green leaves indicate prosperity. Following the ritual worship, pongal is offered with sugarcane sticks as a thanksgiving offering to the Sun God. Sugarcane symbolizes the sweetness and happiness in life. Elders present money to the children. People wear new clothes and eat traditional meals.

On the third day, every home with cattle celebrates Mattu Pongal. On this day, farmers honor the hard work of the bull in ploughing the field and the cow in providing milk. Some men race cattle, while the younger and bolder men attempt to wrest a purse with money that is tied to the horns of the bull. This sport is called jalli kattu. Groups of young men try to out-run ferocious bulls in an event called Manji Virattu. Usually, at dawn, women offer cooked rice to birds and animals as a gesture of solidarity, and pray that brothers and sisters remember each other on this day, wherever they may be. This is called Kanu. People also host community dinners, where every person, regardless of caste, creed or land ownership, participates.

Although India has many traditions of thanksgiving and harvest festivals, Pongal is perhaps the oldest of them all. We find the Pongal festival in the Tamil texts of the Sangam era (100 BC-250 AD). Thanking the gods for the abundance of food and goodness of life and remembering the role of nature are the core values of Pongal. It is a festival where our immediate needs—land, food, and nature—connect with a celestial phenomenon, bringing greater understanding and fulfillment in life.

My Dreams

My first dream is to create and be the head of my own computer software company. Creating my own company requires colossal labor and assertiveness. This process will be very slow and hard, but I’ll survive the big obstacles in my way and never give up!

My second dream is this: I want this world to avoid wars, violence, human pain and oppression. This dream sounds almost like a utopia but I still keep believing in it.

I also want my friend’s mother to survive a serious operation successfully, because I don’t want my friend to be separated from his beloved mother, being so young.

I think that the future of the world can be turned in two directions: The first one is that the world can be ruined and humankind eliminated by creating new super weapons of mass destruction and working on new military equipment. Or, our “mother” nature, who has been abused for centuries, could reply to us with cataclysms, disasters or global warming, leading to the destruction of humankind as well.

The second direction is this: No wars, no violence, and no incurable diseases—scientists working out the technology of struggling against AIDS and cancer; kindness and love are ruling the world. People would be friendly and kind towards each other, highly educated and culturally developed. Harmony would be the main value in the world.

To achieve this, it is necessary for people to reevaluate their attitude towards certain simple things in the most positive way. Be kinder and better: Only then can we prosper and flourish with harmony and love reigning on this planet. I see the future of our planet from this perspective. I have hope and I strongly believe in it!

Let peace prevail on Earth!

—Anvar Nasimov, 16, Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

My Future

What’s my future? As usual it is the most interesting question that every person asks him or herself. Everyone dreams of the best for themselves. On the other hand, not everyone is concerned about the future of the whole world.

I believe that war is one of the biggest problems of humankind. It is like an awful habit to fight with one another, which brings destruction, harm and suffering.

I think that technologies should continue developing in the field of rational use of natural resources. People should begin to use solar energy in order to save gas, oil, etc.

Although we have so many problems to solve, we should see positive things, too. I believe that a good mood, strong optimism and hope will help us to make the best decisions and to find the best way of realizing them.

In my future I want to get a university education, become a professional and a respectable person needed by other people. One of my dreams is to create an international friendship club without any limitations of age, nationality, religion, occupation, etc. Members will come from all over the world. We will be in touch with one another by e-mail or by post, and hold meetings in one country and then another. We will discuss various topics, members can teach each other their native languages, and they will speak about their cultures. Later maybe this club will establish a little fund to assist friends in need. I think it is a real opportunity to help people in many ways: discussing problems, mutual understanding and cooperation. I believe it will be one step in the right direction.

While we can’t make a big difference alone, we could unite to make our future prosperous and happy. We should learn to live in harmony with nature and with one another.

May peace prevail on Earth.

—Vitaly Ionesov, 17, Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
I hear lots of people, even my parents, sounding all gloom and doom: tragedy that we went to war, economy is shaky, people’s rights denied, spirits in the dumps! Seems to me we should be hopeful and helpful, especially when people are going through hard times, don’t you think? —Peter

Dear Peter: I also regret our country’s decisions, but I don’t throw up my arms in hopelessness and withdraw, moaning! Our current situation reminds me of a story.

There was once a farmer. His land was hilly; the soil was not the best. He had a cow that wasn’t giving much milk; he had chickens who were laying few eggs. The place looked run-down: barn and fences needed repair. The farmer and his wife were so dejected in spirit that they just could not manage to get the farm back on its feet.

One stormy evening, a poorly-dressed man knocked on their door, asking if he could get shelter for the night. They shared what food had been prepared, while they talked a great deal about the sad shape of the farm.

When the stranger left the following morning, he thanked the farmers for the good rest he had. As he was by the door, ready to leave, he pulled a little bag of gold pieces out of his pocket, and said that maybe this would help them. He added that he’d come by next year with hopes of finding a revived farm.

After this, the farmer and his wife often talked about whether they should buy a more promising cow. Other times they considered whether they should buy chickens who laid more eggs. However, every conversation ended with the farmer trusting the farm would improve as he found himself fixing the barn and the fences, caring for the animals, planting food for themselves, for their animals and more to sell.

The farmer beamed when the stranger really did come by again a year later. Everything looked so much better. The stranger asked, “What did you use the gold for?”

“Why,” the farmer said, “we had hidden the gold under the kitchen tile and, while we often thought of it, we never did think of anything we needed the gold for.”

Then the farmer looked the stranger in the eye and added thoughtfully, “I do thank you, though, ever so much. You gave us what we really needed to keep going—you gave us the lift of our spirits.”

Saying that, the farmer dug up the tile and cheerfully returned the gold to the stranger.

So, Peter, maybe what you and I can do is give encouragement to the “down in the dumps” folks we encounter. We can give them whatever lift they need to return to their former positive attitudes. We possess the gold that is needed to turn the world around: it is the courage and hope they experience shining from our eyes.

In Peace,

Illustrations by Kristen Dicharry

Send your questions or comments to:
Dear Hanna c/o Skipping Stones
P. O. Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403
Time

The lush, golden fields of wheat dance in the wind as the sun watches over them, showering them with warmth. Children lie down in the wheat field and look up at the sky, which looks like a bottomless pool of light blue. The clouds circle around this scene, like playful cats, prancing about the sky. The sky soon turns dark, the sun sets, and the cloud cats go to sleep. The moon rises above everything, and the children soon go to their homes to get their rest. They dream their beautiful dreams, which are forgotten as they grow older.

The empty field stands still beneath the sky as the sun watches over it. Several old men and women sit inside their houses and don’t bother to look up at the sky. The clouds circle around this scene. The sky slowly turns dark, the sun sets, and the clouds stay, frozen.

—Matthew Kim, 11, Korean and British ancestry, New Brunswick, NJ.

Golden Snow

Frost, snow in the cold
As the yellow sun comes out
The snow turns gold.
—Julia Stamatakis, grade 4, MeKees Rocks, PA.

Reflections of the Earth

Iridescent streams of light from our great sun melt into the Luminous shadow of the full moon Large plains of browns and yellow sway to the silent symphony of the wind Under the sea, a herd of crystalline gossamers reflect a rainbows prism the Majestic mountain harbors a billowing waterfall Invisible crystals of immaculate ice cover the land in a duvet of white Never-ending sea of sand that basks in the suns sweltering rays A cloudy lake seeps into the horizon at twilight Timid fog hangs as a sheer silvery sheet over a grandiose rainforest. Phantom Images of a fairy realm that almost never was Ominous nights that shatter into the brilliant rising of a new day Never ceasing to amaze the spirits and minds of all those who inhabit the earth. A Stunning spectrum of earth’s creation, to last for all time.

—Rashida Polk, African-American, senior, Jupiter, Florida.

Noise

I am surrounded by noise.
I hear people talking All day and all night.
But what do they really say?
Their conversations aren’t personal. They barely know you—
All they know are the little things: Your favorite song, your family.
But they don’t know your personality. If they met you in a place Where nobody had bodies or voices, Would they recognize you?
Would you recognize them?
I am surrounded by noise.
I hear people talking All day and all night.

—Kelsey Jones, 13, Gibsonia, PA.

“Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves.”
—President Abraham Lincoln.
Noteworthy North East West South • Taking Action

• **Fruit and Veggies for a Longer Life Span**

Rio de Janeiro, BRAZIL, 10 Nov. 2003: Consuming at least 400 grams of fruit and vegetables each day will ward off heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes and obesity. This statement appeared recently in a published report from the United Nation’s World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Food and Nutrition Division. WHO Director Pekka Ruska reiterates: “There is strong and growing evidence that sufficient consumption of fruits and vegetables helps prevent many diseases and promotes good health, but large parts of the world’s population consume too little of these.” The article says that both the WHO and the FAO emphasize that inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetables is estimated to cause some 2.7 million deaths worldwide each year.

(Source: www.HinduismToday.com/hpi/)

• **London, UK, 9 October 2003:** Children who speak at least two languages do better at school than those who speak only one, according to new research published by the Institute of Education, University of London, England. (Source: The Independent)

• **Equal Work Doesn’t Mean Equal Pay:** According to recent census data, American women now earn 76.3 cents for every $1 earned by men, up from 73.7 cents in 2000. The pay picture is much bleaker for women of color, who earn only 66 cents or less for every dollar earned by men as a group.

(Source: www.buffalonews.com)

• **North Americans on the Move!** Almost half of the U.S. population has moved during the past five years, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report. In the five Western states of Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, Alaska and Oregon, more than half the population had new addresses in the last five years!

• **A City of Cyclists:** According to the 2000 U.S. census, Eugene-Springfield, Oregon, has a higher rate of bike commuting compared to any other large metropolitan area in the nation, with 5.5% of residents commuting by bike. Still, the number of bike commuters has decreased since 1980, when 8% people biked to work in the area!

(Source: Eugene Weekly)

• **International Day of Disabled Persons:** In 1993, the U.N. declared Dec. 3 the International Day of Disabled Persons, with the aim of achieving full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society for disabled people. This year, Mobility International-USA celebrated the Day of Disabled Persons by presenting a new educational video: **Loud, Proud and Prosperous**, by Dana Vion and **A Sky’s the Limit Productions**. This MIUSA video features women with disabilities in Zambia and Zimbabwe who are participating in cutting-edge microcredit programs. Through interviews with disabled businesswomen at their places of enterprise, the video promotes more accurate images of women with disabilities in developing countries. They are shown as micro-entrepreneurs supporting themselves and their families; as agents of economic development. Established in 1981, MIUSA is a non-profit organization with a mission to empower people with disabilities around the world. It also serves as the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange. For more info., contact: MIUSA, P. O. Box 10767, Eugene, OR 97440; www.miusa.org.

Photo: **Elsa Martinez Castillo,** from Mexico, attended a two-week long MIUSA annual gathering in Eugene.

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Winter Celebrations

**Pongal:** Jan. 15 • **Dr. King Day:** Jan. 19 • **Black History Month:** February • **Women’s History Month:** Mar. • **No Name-Calling Week:** Mar. 1-5 • **Purim:** Mar. 6 • **Int’l. Women’s Day:** Mar. 8
African American History Month

How can we leave African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, others of color and women out and say we are teaching history? How can we teach history from only one perspective: "white males"?

Only now, in the last ten to twenty years have history books included other voices. There is still not enough on the elementary and middle school levels. When I first began teaching about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in this school district, on the middle school level, many of the students had never heard of him and the rest didn't realize that he was African American. I still have a difficult time getting students to understand what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did for all Americans and the impact he had in many other nations around the world.

It's important for all students to get a true picture of American history. How can we successfully teach respect and appreciation for every race if we don't teach the truth about each of them? Black history should never be limited to just one month. Let's incorporate African American history throughout the year. Every part of American history has African Americans in it. Even during the generations of slavery, we were making hundreds, maybe thousands of positive contributions.

You might do a unit on African American inventors and scientists. Encourage students to do their own research. The internet offers many resources. Check out Teaching Tolerance and other African American history websites on the net. Also, there is nothing like a warm body to share her/his experiences. Allow time for other resources to come in and present.

This is a prime opportunity to teach 'their-story.' Please be sensitive about your student's personal and cultural experiences. And get ready for criticism.

Contributed by Paulette Ansari, Springfield Schools and Bahati Ansari of Eugene Schools, Oregon. Both are Skipping Stones board members.

Parenting & Teaching Resources

- Daughters: For Parents and Girls An encouraging, bi-monthly magazine about issues facing girls and their parents. Includes news, editorials, reviews and parenting advice. Also includes first-hand accounts by both girls and parents. More information at www.daughters.com.
- How the Gifted Brain Learns by David A. Sousa (Corwin). Provides practical classroom activities and strategies for addressing the needs of the gifted students. ISBN: 0-7619-3829-X.
- Teen Life in the Middle East, edited by Ali Akbar Mahdi (Greenwood). Provides insight into familial, social, and cultural lives of Middle Eastern teens in eleven countries. A resource guide for each country is provided. ISBN: 0-313-31893-X.
- Building an Inclusive Development Community: A Manual on Including People with Disabilities in International Development Programs (www.miusa.com) is a 658-page toolkit for those concerned with the inclusion of people with disabilities in the international development process. Contains expert opinions, techniques, resource lists and examples of best practices.
- Let's Get Real by Debra Chasnoff, Helen Cohen and Kate Stilley (womedia.org). An outstanding 36 min. educational video about the serious bullying problem in middle school. Features real students. For middle grades. Great for No Name-Calling Week (March 1-5).


The Man Who Walked the Earth, written and illust. by Ian Wallace (Groundwood). On the prairie, in the 1930s, Papa has left to find work; it looks like it'll be a lonely Christmas for Elise and Andre. Well, that is, until Mr. Balzini shows up. A magical story about the rewards of kindness to strangers. Ages 6 – 9. ISBN: 0-88899-545-8.


Gugu’s House, written and illustrated by Catherine Stock (Clarion). Set in the grasslands of Zimbabwe, a little girl helps her grandmother decorate her house with beautiful animals. When the rains wash away their hard work, she learns that an ending is also a beginning. Fantastic watercolor illustrations. Ages 4 – 9. ISBN: 0-618-00389-4.


Gandhi: India's Great Soul by Maura D. Shaw, illust. Stephen Marches (Skylight Paths). This biography profiles one of the most influential leaders of the 20th century. Includes quotations from Gandhi, as well as photographs, activities and a glossary. Ages 7-10. ISBN: 1-893361-91-8.


Members of the Longia Saora tribe, in Orissa, Eastern India, stretch their ear lobes by placing increasingly larger balsa wood earplugs into their pierced ears. After several months, the earlobe is so elastic that it nearly reaches the shoulders.

Why do people adorn, tattoo, scarify or pierce their bodies? This question had never occurred to me until I traveled throughout tribal Africa and Asia. Of all the ways that a culture distinguishes itself—through architecture, religion, ceremonies—ritual decoration is the most fascinating of all. At first glance, each tribe or ethnic group is captivating for its own unique appearance. But, for all their differences, many of their reasons for adorning, tattooing, or piercing their bodies are the same: to convey beauty, wealth, status, bravery or even to appease the spirits.

The Beauty of Accessorizing

The remote parts of Orissa, Eastern India provide a perfect environment for the preservation of several tribal groups. The women of Bonda tribe (who live not too far from the Longia Saora tribe) are known for their colorful costumes. They artfully cover themselves with hundreds of strands of yellow, orange and white beads, which cascade elegantly like a brilliant bib. The crowning accessories include a beaded skullcap over a shaved head, silver necklace and earrings, and a brass nose ring.

The men of the elusive Dani tribe of Irian Jaya are immediately distinguished by their dress, or lack thereof. They wear only a privacy gourd for modesty. The Dani are well-attuned to the resources of their land, which provides them with superb accessories, such as white lime, flowers, fur, shells, feathers and curved bone nosepieces.

Courtship and Marriage

Hamer women (back cover) of Ethiopia beautify their bodies with elaborate decorations and scars. They apply a concoction of red ochre and animal grease to their hair and style it according to their marital status. If a woman is married, she wears two iron torque necklaces, called essentes, or three if she is her husband’s first wife. An engaged woman wears a leather band around her neck, signifying that her fiancé has completed the bullah, or “jumping of the bulls”, a rite that testifies to his manhood and his right to marry. A young girl of marriageable age wears a metal visor called a balle to indicate her status. This symbol of eligibility simplifies things at the weekly market, which is a common meeting place for young men and women. A Hamer man notches his ear on the occasion of his first marriage, and the edges of his ears are pierced once for each wife he has.

In the Wodaabes of West Africa, the most dramatic beauty custom is the gerewol courting ritual (back cover). Young men adorn themselves with extravagant costumes and makeup, carefully applied to highlight their cherished elements of beauty: sinewy bodies, thin noses and lips, and white eyeballs and teeth. Once festooned in full gerewol regalia, the men hold hands, form a circle or line and start to chant and sway. The young girls choose the most handsome men, and many of these pairings result in marriage.
Wealth and Status

Wealth is measured differently from one tribe to another, but one thing is consistent: if they've got it, they flaunt it.

Cowry shells are a measure of wealth in the Dani tribe, although these highlanders may not have seen the sea! The tribe's chiefs and most affluent members wear a breastplate made up of the shells to display wealth. The value of a shell is determined by its size, shape, color, ribbing and luster. The most valuable are the smaller shells with the convex back removed. Top-grade shells are given names and accompanied by a detailed history of every transaction in which they were involved. The shells take years to travel from the coastal region to the highlands, passing through many hands en route.

PaDaung women of Thailand are known for the practice of stretching their necks. The number and value of the rings confers status on the wearer's family. Girls are first fitted with the rings at the age of five or six, on a day prescribed by the horoscopic findings of the village shaman. A new ring is added to the stack each year until marriage. There are several theories about the origin of this practice. Some say that it rendered the women incapable of farming or heavy labor, thereby protecting them against kidnapping by invading tribes and slave traders. Others believe it prevented tiger bites. Yet another explanation is that it is purely an expression of feminine beauty.

Intimidation and Bravery

Dani men are notorious for battles over pigs, women and land-rights. The warriors set forth for battle naked, but covered with a mixture of ashes and pig grease. This is meant to intimidate their adversaries by appearing so fierce that they paralyze the enemy with fear.

The Bume of Ethiopia are warriors who fight over grazing land, and their body scarification is closely related to their warfare. They are earned after a hunt or kill, and given in a complex ritual. These prestigious marks are a record of personal achievement.

Across the Omo River from the Bume, Hamer men wear their hair in a multi-colored, painted clay bun. It is a symbol of bravery and courage.

Appeasing the Spirits

Akha women of Thailand wear an elaborate silver headdress that might weigh as much as ten pounds, yet they wear it all the time: to festivals, to labor in the fields, even to bed. The point of these ornate adornments? Quite simply, as strict animists who practice spirit worship, they believe it would offend the spirits if they did not wear their finery.

The most distinguishing feature of Orissa’s Dongariya Kondh women is the geometric tattoos on their hands. As animists, they believe that when they die and turn into spirits, these markings will help them recognize each other in the spirit world.

Living in the Remnants of Time

Beyond the significant and bold symbolism of body-art, jewelry, clothing and hairstyles, there is another, more timeless reason for why tribes create a visual uniformity that so obviously sets them apart: They hold onto a fierce determination to maintain their cultural identity. This visual uniformity helps keep them together and also keeps everyone else out. The more rituals a tribe binds into its culture, the less likely that members of the group will assimilate into the surrounding society.

Some of these tribal groups have recently experienced their first contact with the outside world, while others have survived years of exploitation, repression or modernization. It is my hope that they will not be “civilized” into extinction.

By remaining true to tribal identity, they maintain a perpetual memorial to their ancestors. These rituals honor the past, nurture the future, and preserve extraordinary people living in the remnants of time.

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Tribal Beauty Photos by Debbie Jefkin-Elnekave. (top) A Young Woman of the PaDaung Tribe, Northern Thailand • “Sombari,” Bonda Tribe, Orissa, India • Hamer Woman in Omo Valley, Ethiopia (bottom) Gerewol (Beauty Contest): Wodaabe Men, Niger, West Africa • Wodaabe Man

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