



a MATTER of SPIRIT

A publication of the INTERCOMMUNITY PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NO. 100 / FALL 2013

Education: Energizer of the Soul

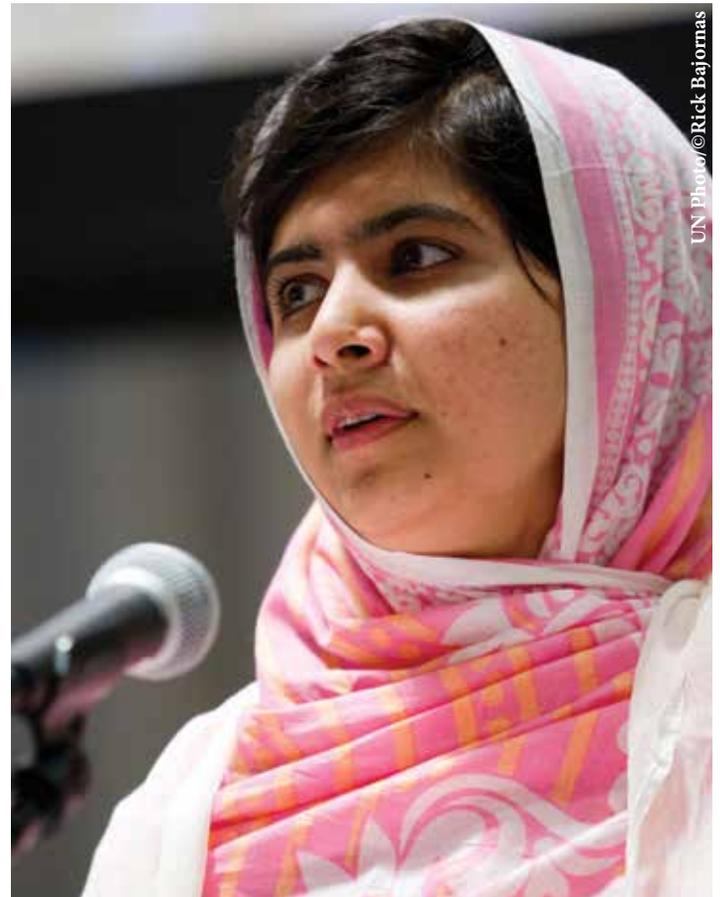
by Gretchen Gundrum, Ph.D.

When the political cartoon appeared on Facebook, I copied it for later reflection—a drawing of Pakistani education activist Malala Yousafzai holding a large book titled Knowledge. The caption noted that a girl with a book is more terrifying to extremists than guns and bombs. Recently the NY Times filmed Malala, sixteen that day, standing at the United Nations, giving her eloquent, impassioned speech to world leaders urging “free, compulsory education” for every child.¹ This of course occurred after her recovery from being shot in the face by Taliban militants for criticizing their destruction of schools in the Swat Valley where she lived.

Would any of us have the courage to face such danger defending the right to an education? Malala’s activism reminds us of how precious the opportunity is, and how many in our world are still deprived of it today. During a presentation to 100 youth leaders she boldly encouraged them: “Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.” She is willing to die for that belief.

*“One child, one teacher, one book and
one pen can change the world.”*

Those in control of the status quo—heads of government, military leaders, church authorities, members of other hierarchies—too often strive to keep things within the comfort zone of sameness. To them, education is powerful and scary because it evokes change. It increases equality of opportunity and freedom for persons who have been disenfranchised due to lack of status, class or wealth. Author Gretta Vosper in her provocative text *With or Without God* writes, “The more people have at risk when a system starts to change, the harder they will usually fight to bring it back to the homeostasis they



Malala Yousafzai speaks at the United Nations in July, 2013

enjoyed and which was the least painful and most palatable for them....Generally, power is not offered up without some kind of fight.”²

The Latin root of education means to bring up (as to rear) or to lead someone out of ignorance. Early on, our children learn societal expectations about becoming productive citizens, contributing to the world, supporting themselves and their families. In adult education, learning can be a process where knowledge, wisdom and truth already dormant within the individual is brought to the fore—education for action, reaction, contemplation, social justice and social change. Education of the heart, compassion, is as important as education of the mind, information. Life experiences educate us, moving us to deeper understanding of relationships, moral choices and responsibility for the common good. Critical

thinking, right judgment, the ability to debate, discuss and discern are all part of the educational process. At its best, learning is lifelong. When we fail to absorb life's lessons however, we make a mess of lives and relationships. Yet the gift failure offers is paradoxically, what it can teach us.

Nations evolve and hopefully, learn. We are presently engaged in a remarkable debate in our country and around the globe about the moral use of chemical weapons. Our nation is war-weary, as are the countries that have been struggling for their right to self-determination. But a crime against humanity has been committed. What is the moral response?

Because we are networked economically and electronically, information, ideas and options for action are transmitted instantaneously across the planet. We are being educated constantly about the lives and struggles of other peoples everywhere. Sometimes this knowledge is more than we can bear—certainly more than we can assimilate. Change is happening at mind-dazzling speed. It is sometimes too much to digest the information now at our fingertips. But these facts are only a piece of the worldwide education that's occurring. For deep change and awareness to happen, hearts as well as minds need to be opened. We are faced daily with the

possibility of the destruction of life as we have known it on the planet. What will move us to the compassion it will take to stop the violence, to stop the destruction of ecosystems, to embrace one another without fear?

The soul of education, its purpose, thrust and drive is to change us, to enoble and enrich us, to lead us out of ignorance into truth. In the Great Transformation, historian of religion

"We have never since achieved a higher understanding of the nobility to which the human spirit can aspire."

Karen Armstrong wrote of the Axial Age (900 to 200 BCE), a time not unlike our own where wars and the suffering they wrought had exhausted the human spirit.³ Out of that time, in four places geographically distant from one another, the idea of compassion spontaneously appeared in the great religious traditions of monotheism (through the teachings of the Jewish prophets), Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Armstrong argues that compassion evolved when these societies became despondent over the effects of constant war—the destruction of so many young lives, the desecration of homes, cities and people. The Golden Rule—do unto others as you would have them do unto you—was born at that time. We

have never since achieved a higher understanding of the nobility to which the human spirit can aspire. Empathy. The capacity to stand in the shoes of another. A refusal to kill because every human being on the planet has the same needs, the same desires, the same hopes and dreams as I do. When will we finally learn this lesson? When with popes and pacifists and other wise people will we be able to say and mean "War—never again!" Only education of mind and heart can bring us to this point.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently reminded us that "It is not enough to teach children how to read, write and count. Education has to cultivate mutual respect for others and the world in which we live, and help people forge more just, inclusive and peaceful societies." Education can lead to shared power, mutual understanding and ultimately, peace. A sixteen-year-old Pakistani girl now living in Birmingham, England is doing her part to light the way. Somehow, in our own way, we are called to do likewise.

▲ *Gretchen Gundrum, Ph.D. is adjunct faculty at Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry and a psychologist and spiritual director in private practice in Seattle.*

Footnotes for all articles in this issue of AMOS can be found online at www.ipjc.org

AMOS Editor Annapatrice Clarke with her students at St. Jude Primary School in Uganda





Creative Commons © Bill Lyons



Creative Commons © Aisha Faquir

Educational Opportunity: A Call to Justice

by Anthony Gnanarajah, Ph.D.

Education for their children is the first priority of parents throughout the world. It is one of the major pathways for upward social mobility. However, when the educational system helps to preserve the status quo and perpetuate social inequalities arising from differences in gender, race, ethnicity and social class, it becomes a social justice issue.

In an ideal world, education would be considered a common good. Education would be universal, free, inclusive and equitable. All children would have access to quality education. People would accept modest sacrifices for this common good. However, the fact remains that many are reluctant to embrace the common good over individual rights.

Educational inequality continues to be one of the most important social and political issues globally and locally. Leaders of the world at various international forums have acknowledged that education is a fundamental human right and not a privilege of the few. In

September 2000, member countries of the United Nations gathered at the Millennium Summit. The leaders realized that the world's quest for dignity, peace, justice, sustainability and an end to poverty had reached a moment of urgency. The outcome was a concrete plan with eight Millennium Development Goals and 21 targets to be reached by 2015. The first three goals are: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty; Achieve Universal Primary Education; and Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.¹

“When the educational system helps to preserve the status quo and perpetuate social inequalities... it becomes a social justice issue.”

Among the eight goals, education was identified as the vital thread that ties all the goals together. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated, “In our knowledge based world, education is the single best investment countries can make towards building prosperous, healthy and equitable societies. It unleashes the full potential in people, improving individual livelihoods and those of future generations. If all students in low income countries acquired basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty, equivalent to a 12% reduction in world poverty.”²

In many countries the slogan, “Education is the great equalizer,” continues to be more myth than reality. This is mainly due to the fact that inequality is deeply rooted in history and is linked to socio-economic, racial, political and geographic differences.

The US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan acknowledged the gravity of existing disparities in educational opportunities: “I believe that education is the civil rights issue of our generation. And if you care about promoting opportunity and reducing inequality, the

classroom is the place to start. Great teaching is about so much more than education, it is a daily fight for social justice.”³

The inextricable link between poverty and education is a worldwide phenomenon. However, the nature, pattern and magnitude of education-

al disparity vary among countries. In spite of considerable progress in school attendance in certain countries, attendance in the world's poorest countries is not universal. The disparity between the sexes is more pronounced as girls figure disproportionately among the students who do not attend primary school.

In a recent report, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) identified the “vast-gulf” in educational opportunity separating rich and poor countries:

- “One-in-three children in developing countries (193 million) reaches primary school age having had their brain developments and education prospects impaired by malnutrition—a figure that rises to 40% in parts of South Asia.”⁴
- In developing countries, 57 million children of primary school age are not in school.⁵
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, only one-in-three children attend school.
- In developed countries like the US, over one-third of students complete university education compared to five percent who even attend in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁶

The UNESCO report observed, “The failure of governments across the world to tackle deep and persistent inequalities in education is consigning millions of children to live in poverty and diminished opportunity.” It also stated, “The interest and urgency shown by governments to tackle financial crises situations are not shown in addressing educational issues.”⁷

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published the latest results on reading, math and science achievements. In the past, the US had a high ranking in these disciplines, but recently has fallen.

Among the reasons for the decline: the report found educational attainment and income inequality to be inversely related. If the inequality is higher, educational attainment falls.⁸

The OECD study also found a positive correlation between per student expenditure and test scores. In the US, schools are perceived to serve local communities. They are funded through federal, state and local taxes, and nearly 50% of the funds are generated through local property taxes. School districts in affluent communities receive more funds than those in poor communities. These differences exist among states

“The inextricable link between poverty and education is a worldwide phenomenon.”

and among school districts within a state. For instance, New York spends more than three times what Utah does on each student.⁹ In the Los Angeles area, schools in the highest income district are spending more than twice as much per pupil as the lowest income district.¹⁰ Per pupil funding determines the type of school building, quality of staff, technology and curricular activities. The education of the children in lower income districts suffers. However, this is not the case in all countries. Some countries, such as the Netherlands, provide equal funding per

student, regardless of local community wealth.¹¹

Analysts have pointed out how student achievement affects society at large in areas such as development and health. Therefore, US politicians and educators have advocated for a variety of sweeping school reforms ranging from common curriculum standards, alternative assessment methods, school choice, vouchers, increased funding and merit pay for teachers.

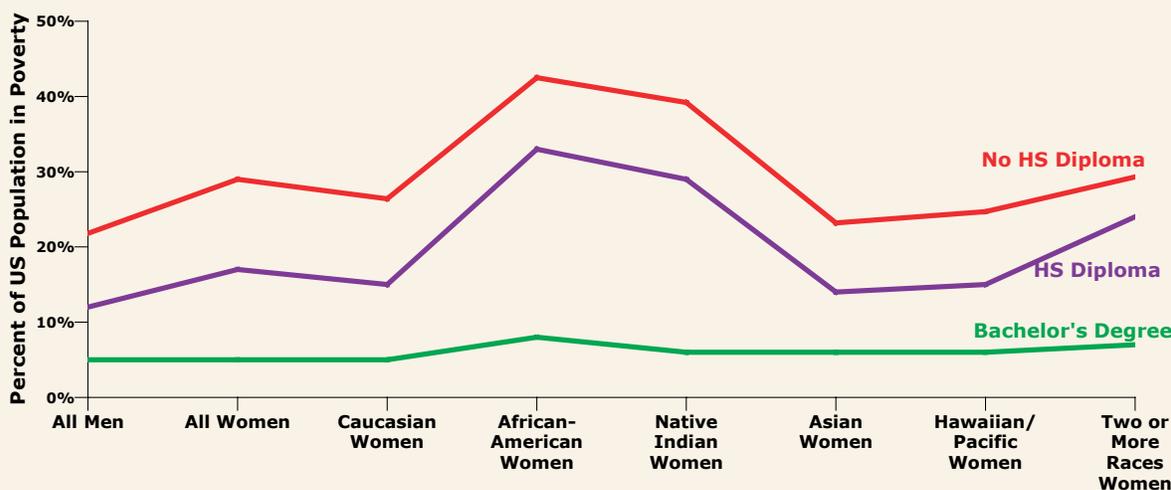
There are signs of a hopeful future for education. Globally, more children than ever before are enrolled in primary schools, and there have been significant reductions in educational gender disparities.

Currently in the US, there is tremendous support for and interest in quality pre-school education. Recent research studies show that early educational intervention can have short- and long-term effects on cognition, social-emotional development, school progress, antisocial behavior and even crime. The economic benefit of high quality pre-school programs far outweighs the cost.¹²

In an ideal world, education is a common good. Our responsibility as global citizens is to strive for universal, free, inclusive and equitable education for all.

▲ **Anthony Gnanarajah, Ph.D.** is a retired Associate Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Seattle. He holds a doctorate from the Center for Comparative and International Studies in Education at LaTrobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

US Population in Poverty in 2011 by Education Attainment and Race



A Future Full of Hope



Kindergarten students at Juan Diego Academy

From One, Two, Three to Uno, Dos, Tres

The Benedictine Sisters of Lacey opened the doors of Holy Rosary School in Tacoma in 1891 to educate the children of working class immigrant families. More than a century later low enrollment made the future of the school questionable. The newly hired principal Dr. Timothy Uhl and the faculty began to search for a creative and viable alternative to closing the school. They found it in the families of the greater Tacoma area who are seeking a good education and a better life for their children, many of whom are immigrants.

In September 2012, Holy Rosary School began evolving into Juan Diego Academy as it welcomed its first kindergarten class with equal numbers of Spanish and English speaking children. The students are taught in Spanish and English and immersed in both cultures, thus preparing them to live in an intercultural world. By 2020 the entire Juan Diego Academy will be bilingual. Now parents and teachers see a hopeful future for their school which “really embodies the spirit of what Holy Rosary School has been for years and years,” said Dr. Uhl.

From Homeless to Howard

Nineteen-year-old James Ward, his mother and two younger siblings were homeless for four years. They moved from shelter to shelter, from one relative’s home to another, and sometimes lived in their car. In spite of attending three different high schools and not having a stable home, he maintained his grades and made sure his siblings did the same.

Despite his good grades and acceptance into Howard University, his chance of attending college looked grim. His financial aid package only covered 70% of his expenses due to governmental budgetary cuts in student loans. Jessica Sutherland, who travelled the rare homeless-to-college path herself, met James through her volunteer work at Union Rescue Mission in Los Angeles and mentored him through his college preparation and application process. She also helped him publicize his plight through her social media savvy. Celebrity re-tweets, corporate donations and crowdfunding enabled him to close his first year’s tuition gap of \$14,000 in about a week.

James commented on key lessons of his journey: “One of the biggest things I have learned from my experiences is that no matter who you are or how scared you are, as long as you ask for help, there is always someone out there who is willing to help you. More kids should understand that, because if they did, you never know what could happen.”



James Ward and Jessica Sutherland before he left for Howard

James started his freshman year this fall and plans to major in Physics. The year 2017 looks to be a good one for the family when he, his sister and his mother are expecting to graduate from college, high school and nursing school, respectively. He reflected that he is excited, but “it was never about me. It was always about my younger brother and sister learning that education is what they need, because as long as you have knowledge, no one can ever take it from you.”¹

Educate Girls: Transform the Community

by Judithe Registre

At the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "Let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights, once and for all." This conference marked the tipping point of the global women's movement. For too long, women's issues had not been considered important to social and economic development and national policy. But these words mobilized increased support, politically and morally, for women's rights. In the last fifty years we have seen notable achievements for women. In 2011, women accounted for 19.5% of the membership of national legislative bodies worldwide. While this figure may not seem impressive, it is. In 1999, women accounted for only 13% of national legislative bodies globally. In many countries, it is still not conceivable that women can do anything besides bear children.¹

Why are these numbers important? An increase in women legislators leads to health care prioritization, an increase in social policy spending, and a decrease in poverty, thereby improving development trajectories in developing countries. In rural communities worldwide, when women are members of the village leadership, resources are allocated to water, schools and sanitation. These are social goods that benefit children, families and the community at large.²

Talking about the status of women sets the stage for talking about the importance of investing in girls. For a long time it was assumed that when we talked about women's issues, the discussion automatically included girls. In some ways it does, because girls

become women. However, the fundamental challenge in achieving rights for women, and ending the intergenerational cycle of poverty that plagues families and communities around the world, stems from the failure to invest in girls. The solution starts with ensuring that access to primary and secondary education for girls is a priority issue. Globally, 66 million girls who should be in school are not.³ Getting these girls in school promises a brighter future for them, filled with opportunity and possibility. An educated force of girls translates into an educated force of women, which changes the troubled socioeconomic course of many underdeveloped countries.

The situation for millions of girls around the world is bleak: they are more likely to suffer from malnutrition; be forced into early marriage; be

"Globally, 66 million girls who should be in school are not."

subjected to violence; be sold into the sex trade; or become infected with HIV. Girls face discrimination in their own homes, often having limited access to a doctor or even a primary education.⁴ In rural and poor areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, poverty and culture are still used as justification to deny girls the opportunity to go to school. The barriers girls face in the developing world when it comes to education go far beyond simple economics—cultural bias, tradition and safety concerns often stand in the way of going to school.⁵

But going to school is not the only problem; staying in school is an issue

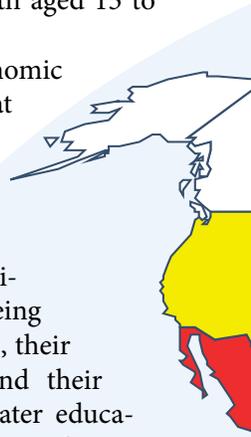
too. Girls are more likely than boys to drop out because at adolescence their worth to their families and communities is a domestic one, or because of the threat of violence on the way to or at school. A life without education leaves these girls even more vulnerable and with no real choices. In short, in the poorest regions of the world, girls are among the most disadvantaged people on the planet.⁶

- Of the one billion people living in extreme poverty, 70% are women and girls.
- Two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate adults are women.
- There are nearly 60 million child brides worldwide. Some are as young as 12.
- Nearly two-thirds of new HIV infections among youth aged 15 to 24 are in girls.
- The estimated economic loss in countries that do not strive to educate girls to the same level as boys stands at \$92 billion.

Educated girls dramatically improve the well-being

of their families, their communities and their countries. Greater educational opportunities decrease vulnerability to violence, give girls the opportunity to escape early marriage and early motherhood and help them gain skills that give them enhanced economic and social opportunities. Finishing secondary school leads to smaller, healthier families, lower HIV infection rates and higher wages. Educated women are more likely to educate their own children, ending the cycle of poverty in just one generation. Completing school can make a world of difference: For every year beyond fourth grade that a girl goes to school, her future family size drops 20%, child deaths drop 10% and wages rise 20%.⁷

- For example, a girl in Ethiopia has a 63% chance of being married as



a child. But with a primary school education, her situation improves dramatically: she has a 38% chance of early marriage. The situation gets even better when she has a secondary education: she has a 10% chance of early marriage.⁸

In my travels around the world, I've met many mothers who recognize the importance of educating their girls. These mothers, denied the opportunity of education when they were young, are determined to have their daughters write a different story. Binh, a mother from a savings and loan group program in Vietnam, works

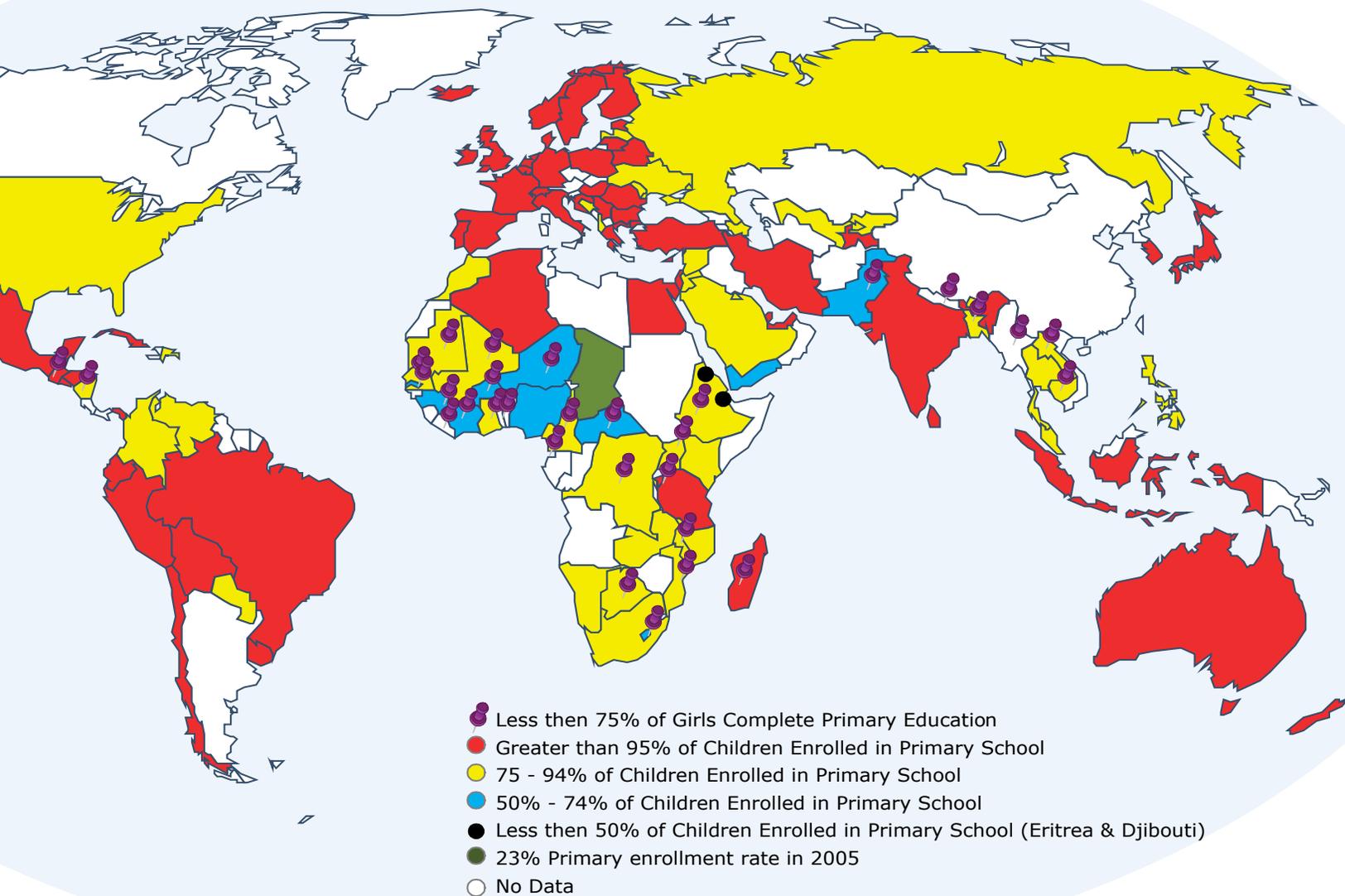
hard to ensure her that her 15-year-old daughter, Cho, gets an education. She said, "Going to school will help Cho to have a better life. When I was young, I couldn't go to school. But I'll work hard so she can."

We are also seeing such stories in the reverse. In Sierra Leone, 13-year-old Danica told me, "My mom and grandma can't save money because they can't read or write. But now I can teach them how." Investing in a girl's education transforms not only her future, but the futures of those around her too. Educating girls really is that powerful.

While visiting Burkina Faso, Sierra

Leone, Nepal and Indonesia this year, I was reminded by both mothers and fathers of that simple truth. In a conversation with a father in Burkina Faso, I asked why it was important for him to send his daughter to school now. He told me, "Before we believed the culture wanted it that way, then we saw the people with education that were coming back to the village to give back to their families were the women. The boys that were educated and are now men are not coming back to support the village and their aging parents; the women are. The culture is missing something." He continued, "After all, are we not the ones who make and live

TOTAL PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATES



Source: Global Education Digest 2011, all enrollment and completion rates are for 2009 except Chad's



©Floor Catshoek

the culture? Without our participation that culture does not exist.”

Personally, I have seen the transformative impact of education in my work with Plan International USA through our Because I am a Girl program. This initiative seeks equal educational access for girls globally. We collaborate with forward-thinking nonprofits, policymakers, community leaders and corporations to build a global call for the universal completion of nine years of primary and lower secondary education as a minimum—for girls and boys—with intentional emphasis on equity, equality and participation.

“We saw the people with education that were coming back to the village to give back to their families were the women.”

Collective efforts are our best hope for change. As part of the global community, we can all do our part to help girls by making school accessible and safe. Here are a few ways you can help:

- Invest directly in girls. Less than 2% of every international development dollar goes directly to adolescent girls. Find organizations that work on the girl issue, and find out how you can get involved. Charity Navigator is a great place to start.⁹
- Pass it on. Building large-scale change starts small. The more people who share the message that investing in girls will change the world, the more support we build. The more support we build, the more change we can effect.

The road for girls’ education is being cleared, and there is no turning back.

▲ *Judithe Registre is a seasoned international development expert, focusing on human rights, gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment. She is the Director of Because I am a Girl.*
www.becauseiamagirl.us



©Kees Sprengers

A child without education is like a bird without wings.

—Tibetan Proverb

Closing Opportunity Gaps: Eliminate the Practice of Unequal Schooling

by Charisse Cowan Pitre, Ph.D.

As a professor in a social justice teacher education program, I have the privilege of partnering with teachers as they engage in the critical work of understanding and developing strategies to dismantle the systems and structures in schools that consistently deny marginalized students access to quality education. As they spend time in a number of schools in both urban and suburban settings, the teacher candidates I work with quickly come to understand that the “achievement gap” is really an “opportunity gap”—lack of access to a quality education resulting in a persistent gap in student achievement.

The National Center for Educational Statistics defines the achievement gap simply—“when one group of students outperforms another group, and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant.”¹ The disparity in achievement is usually between white and non-white students, and the difference can be seen in standardized test scores, grade point averages and graduation rates. The included graphs show that Black, Hispanic and Native American students lag behind their White and Asian peers in math outcomes. Similar trends in reading were noted.

Why Opportunity Gaps Exist: The Issue of Unequal Access

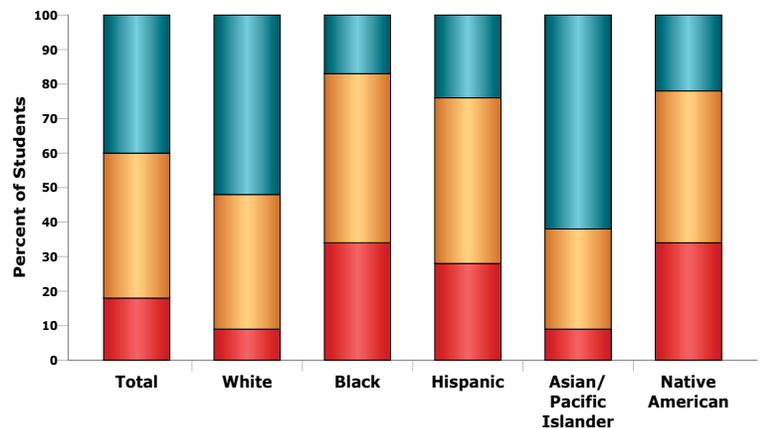
The achievement gap issue is complex, and research suggests both in-school and out-of-school factors correlate with student achievement. Out-of-school factors include hunger and nutrition, parent availability and student mobility. More recent studies focus on in-school factors such as teacher quality, rigor of the curriculum and a school culture of high expectations. Leading educational scholars have rejected explanations that attribute low performance to factors such as poverty, number of parents in the home and parent participation.

Scholars reject the “culture of poverty” theory primarily because it is a deficit-thinking model that suggests something is wrong with the children. This theory is viewed as “blaming the victim” without acknowledging the unequal educational and social structures that deny many racial/ethnic minority and low-income students access to a quality education. Stanford University professor and leading education scholar Linda Darling-Hammond identifies several key factors contributing to unequal schooling and the opportunity

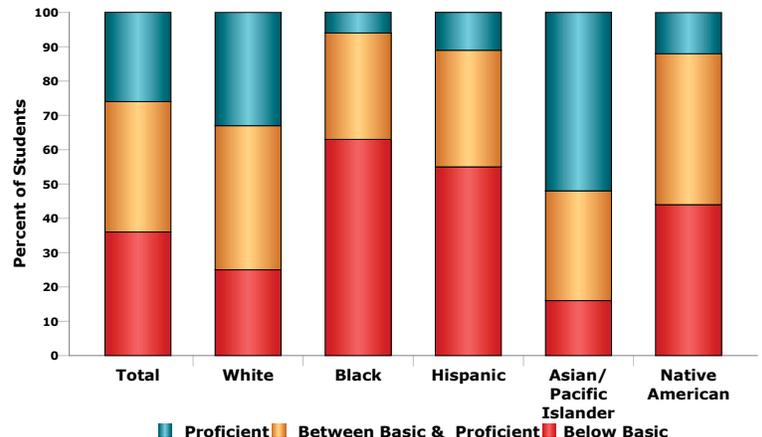
gap: resegregation of schools, unequal access to qualified teachers and lack of access to high-quality curriculum.

Schools have become resegregated as Civil Rights Era gains have steadily declined. Civil Rights Era school desegregation policies increased minority access to well-funded schools with high quality teachers and curriculum. By 2000 however, resegregated schools were the norm in the United States with 71% of African American students and 77% of Latino students attending “majority ethnic minority” schools.² Darling-Hammond paints a clear picture of how segregated schools contribute to the problem:

US 4th Grade Mathematics Achievement Levels by Race



US 12th Grade Mathematics Achievement Levels by Race



Source: Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011



Teacher and student at Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8 School in Pennsylvania

Deepening segregation tied to dwindling resources has occurred as African American and Latino students are increasingly concentrated in central city public schools, many of which have become majority “minority” over the past decade while their funding has fallen further behind that of their suburbs.... in cities across the nation, a group of schools [has] emerged that might be characterized as ‘apartheid schools’—serving exclusively students of color in low-income communities....these schools have featured crumbling, overcrowded buildings, poor libraries, few materials, old dilapidated texts so scarce that students must share them in class and cannot take them home for homework, and a revolving door teaching force with little professional expertise.³

Inequities related to access to well-prepared, high quality teachers and quality curriculum is also well documented. Nationally, unqualified teachers are disproportionately assigned to teach low-income ethnic minority children. With respect to various measures of quality such as certification, subject matter background/expertise, pedagogical training, selectivity of college attended, test scores and experience, less-qualified teachers are disproportionately found in schools with greater numbers of ethnic minority, low-income students. In 2001, students in the most segregated ethnic minority schools in California were more than five times as likely to have an uncertified teacher.⁴ This issue is important because research has consistently identified teacher quality as the most important school-based factor in student

achievement. Compounding the problem, studies have consistently found African American, Latino and Native American students have less access to academic and college preparatory courses, but they attend schools that provide more remedial and vocational courses.

Promising Practices: Evidence-Based Strategies for Closing the Gaps and Action Steps

It is with good reason that education scholars reject the “culture of poverty” theory as an explanation for poor academic performance. Using poverty as an explanation for low performance has been disproved with evidence from a number of high performing schools with student populations that are predominately low-income and majority racial/ethnic minority. Urban education scholar Lisa Delpit studied low-income, predominately African American schools that were high performing to the degree that the students outperformed students in more affluent communities on standardized academic assessments. She compared the “high performing” low-income African American schools to “low performing” schools that served the same population of students. Delpit’s findings were consistent with the wider school reform and achievement gap literature which suggests three key characteristics of high performing low-income, racial/ethnic minority schools:

1. High expectations—all students, regardless of perceived ability or circumstances, are held to high standards for learning;
2. Rigor—challenging academic content; students are well aware when they are the recipients of sub-par content and instructional practice, and they are likely to resist or disengage;

"...students are well aware when they are the recipients of sub-par content and instructional practice..."

3. Relationships—positive, collaborative relationships are the norm in the school; positive relationships exist between teachers and their students and families; there are structures in place to develop and maintain positive peer relationships; and teachers are working together to support all students to high levels of achievement.

In a report on closing opportunity gaps, the U.S. Department of Education Equity and Excellence Commission focuses on policy changes that will eliminate disparities in access to high quality teachers and curriculum. This commission's charge was to make rec-

ommendations to address "disparities in meaningful educational opportunities that give rise to the achievement gap."⁵ Its recommendations include: attracting top talent to the teaching profession; supporting and retaining effective teachers; and having access to high-quality curriculum and learning opportunities. The Commission does not dismiss the issue of poverty and its potential impact on a student's path to academic achievement. However, the report recommendations focus on mitigating poverty's effects with equitable access to high quality instruction, early childhood education and other support services to promote student success.

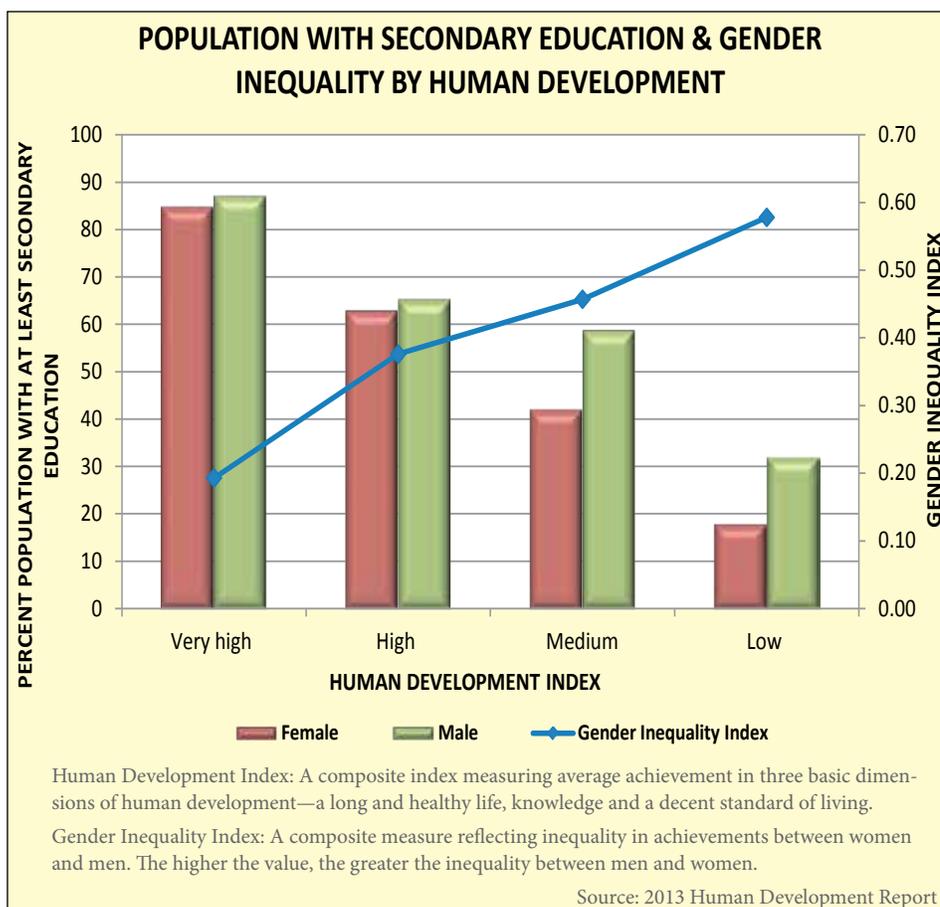
Finally, meaningful action steps

must take into account that schools are situated within the context of local communities. Therefore, ensuring educational equity and eliminating opportunity gaps will require collective action at the local level. Below are some ways to engage.

- Get involved with education reform groups working to advance efforts toward equitable education.
- Stay informed on the issues, and share your views with school board members and state policymakers—send emails, make calls and write letters. Remember, school boards influence education policy at the local level. Research and vote for your local school board candidates.
- Attend school board meetings and education forums in your area.

Taking action to work for a more equitable and just education system is critical. Achievement gaps weaken America on multiple levels—internationally, economically, and morally. "In America, we believe that fate is not fixed by the circumstances of birth [but rather] educational opportunity [is] the birthright of each and every child."⁶ I have great hope in our country's commitment to this ideal and in our ability to reach educational equity because of this promise.

▲ *Charisse Cowan Pitre, Ph.D. is a professor in the Master in Teaching Program at Seattle University. Her research is in the area of sociocultural and schooling factors related to the educational achievement of students from diverse social and economic backgrounds.*



Digital Learning, Digital Equity

by David Keyes

A Somali mom in Seattle asks how she can help her kids use the Internet to do their homework; she's frustrated because she doesn't have computer skills and can't afford Internet. At the Yesler Community Center kids flood into the computer lab after school to do homework, and to play and create new games using MIT's open source Scratch program. At a neighborhood school, a teacher wonders how thirty students can do science research on three working computers.

Despite the trend toward a device in every pocket, a global digital divide persists. It's an increasingly important part of the education, economic and social justice puzzle. In the US, many people have computers and Internet, but a deeper divide reveals deeper divides.

Creating technology equity or digital inclusion requires attention to **Access, Literacy, and Content**.

- Access: available and affordable Internet, computers or other devices, software applications, and tech support
- Literacy: the skills to use these tools effectively and safely and to analyze information

- Content: the capacity to produce, distribute and receive information that is easily found, readable and relevant for diverse communities

Digital inequity in education and its impact on poverty alleviation or economic opportunity is a broad topic. A few current issues include:

Digital fluency: Students need to be prepared for next generation jobs and able to apply technology to solve problems and develop solutions. Projects such as the National Girls' Collaborative and Black Girls Code are helping by equipping and encouraging girls to enter tech careers.

Bandwidth inequity: What Internet speed is available and at what cost in rural versus urban areas? Internet providers build first in areas where customers are buying more services or there is a greater density of customers. That leaves few or no choices for rural areas, poorer communities and

low income consumers. For the village in Africa or rural Idaho, it's tougher to bring on-line educational services into the community.

Laptops, tablets and mobile: Higher income and higher educated families are more likely to have multiple devices, faster Internet and larger data plans. They're connected to learning anytime, anywhere. Low income families may share a single phone with Internet.

Digital Equity: A Human Right? The United Nations World Summit on the Information Society has designated digital equity as a human right since 2003 and continues to identify it as a critical issue in education, poverty elimination and information technology.

"Despite the trend towards a device in every pocket, a global digital divide persists."

Students learn computer skills at the Oromo Cultural Center in Seattle



©City of Seattle Community Technology Program

In many communities, computer labs in libraries, community centers, schools or low-income housing complexes are helping close the digital divide for our most needy residents. There are an estimated 500,000 centers in the world, though many are underfunded. These Public Computing Centers, or Telecentres, support pathways to education for learners of all ages and languages. Staff and volunteers in community organizations are creating new digital opportunities daily.

Dahkota learned to blog in a YMCA class. Now she writes about abuse and issues she cares about on PugetSoundOff.org, a website started in 2007 as a

youth civic engagement and digital literacy training project by the Seattle Metrocenter YMCA, City of Seattle, and University of Washington.

Take Action in Your Community

- **Organize a Digital Inclusion Council:** Help write and implement a digital inclusion plan for your state, town, neighborhood or school. You don't need to be an expert, only a convener who cares. Bring together public, private and non-profit partners to work on solutions. The Building Digital Communities Framework is a great tool.¹
- **Advocate and educate for digital inclusion policies:** Identify who's responsible in schools and local government for closing the digital divide. Encourage reinvestment of technology and telecommunications revenue into tech education programs for families.
- **Help/Visit a local computer center:** You don't need to be a techie to help.²
- **Adopt a grade:** Pick a school, start with one class or grade and make sure every kid has a working computer and Internet connection at home, as well access to a computer lab for homework help. Pair up with parents to build their skills.

▲ **David Keyes** has directed the City of Seattle's Innovative Community Technology Program since 1996. His experience also includes serving on the Seattle Public Schools Technology Advisory Board, National Digital Inclusion Framework Advisory Committee, and the WA State Access to Justice Technology Advisory Board. He may be reached at david.keyes@seattle.gov www.seattle.gov/tech



From Vietnam to Brooklyn

by Hong-Nhi Do

It has been 12 years, but I still vividly remember sitting in Ms. Miller's seventh grade math class after school, confiding to her the reality I faced when the dismissal bell rang every day. I felt unsafe walking home from school, didn't have a quiet place to do my homework, and had to help my parents with matters beyond my understanding. I told her that I felt my life was an uphill battle with school and home life. Ms. Miller held my hand and told me that those who can beat those hardships, stay focused in school and stay positive when everything around them is crumbling will reap the benefits of freedom, built on the foundation of education.

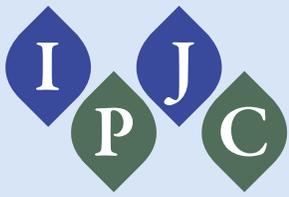
It is the weekend before the beginning of a new school year, and I am sitting in my apartment in Brooklyn, NY, pondering what my students will bring the first day of this new school year. This will be my fourth year in the classroom, and I still feel the same butterflies I did in kindergarten.

"...those who can beat those hardships...will reap the benefits of freedom, built on the foundation of education."

My family moved from Vietnam to Seattle, WA in 1992 when I was four years old. Throughout my life, my father has slowly peeled away stories of the war and the eight years he spent in the reeducation camps after 1975. Under the Refugee Assistance Act my father was granted asylum in America, and without any hesitation my parents left their family and hopped on a plane to a land they felt would give their children the opportunities that they were never given—an education and the freedom for my brother and me to live our lives as we wish.

In Seattle, I attended a demonstration elementary school. The school was unique because the principal promised that all students entering the school in kindergarten would graduate from 5th grade on grade level in reading, writing and math. Guided by that sole vision, teachers, parents and community members came together to provide in-classroom support, one-on-one tutoring and after-school support for me. I graduated from Hawthorne Elementary reading, writing and doing math above grade level and was awarded the Seymour Kaplan Humanitarian Award.

When I graduated from Whitman College in 2010, I was offered jobs in two fields: education and business. Having grown up in poverty and needing to watch where I was going my whole life, the decision seemed obvious. I ended up choosing teaching. Every day I think about the mission that was instilled at Hawthorne and my conversation that day after school with Ms. Miller.



INTERCOMMUNITY

▶ Justice Circles: Bothell to Bolivia



Justice Circles, our grassroots organizing among women who are low-income, are currently taking place in rural towns, villages and urban cities in three countries:

- Bolivia: Municipalities of Minero and Saavedra
- Nicaragua: Municipio de El Rama y Rio Escondido
- United States: Bothell, Burien, Connell, Everett & South Park

▶ Syria Peace Prayer & Procession



Gathering at Temple De Hirsch Sinai September 7, 2013

▶ Please Consider...



- Please consider writing the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center on your **United Way** pledge card
- Does your company have a corporate matching program? Remember IPJC!

▶ Young Adults

Justice Cafés

October:
Gender: Rules, Roles and Expectations

November
Water: Is there Enough?

Start or join a Justice Café today!



The new Salt Lake City Justice Café discussing Positive Peacemaking

Contact Anna at aclarke@ipjc.org to start your own Justice Café! Check us out on Facebook!

Interfaith Young Adult Conference January 12, 2014

Mark your calendar!

The committee and plans are underway. We invite young adults to contact IPJC to volunteer or to be added to our conference updates list: ipjc@ipjc.org

▶ Human Trafficking School Presentations & Webinars

- Live webinars for 7-8th grades (U.S. and Canada)
- Local onsite classroom presentations for 7-12th grades

Human Trafficking Webinar



PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NEWS • ANNOUNCEMENTS • EVENTS

▶ IPJC Contemplative Dialogue Circles



Coming mid-November

A new six-session process on contemplation, dialogue and transformation. The process provides an opportunity for those with differing perspectives and world views to build community.

▶ *Grace on the Margins: The Musical*

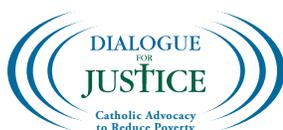


- New professionally re-edited DVD from IPJC—\$15
- For performance rights, script and score, contact IPJC

Searching for meaning as a woman in the church and confronted with the challenges of a people and planet in peril, Grace's cries for help are answered by Hildegard of Bingen, Joan of Arc, Catherine of Siena, Sojourner Truth and Our Lady of Guadalupe, who lead her on a journey of the heart to experience *Grace on the Margins!*

Gather others to share the DVD and encourage schools and theatre groups to perform the musical.

▶ Dialogue for Justice



Is an Archdiocesan-wide initiative to strengthen Catholic advocacy on behalf of the poor and vulnerable in our communities. The goal of the Dialogue for Justice is to partner with parishes and Catholic organizations to advocate effectively to reduce poverty in our communities.

The Dialogue for Justice is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Seattle and coordinated by Catholic Community Services, the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center and the Washington State Catholic Conference.

Regional Advocacy Convening

St. James Cathedral, Seattle
Sat., Oct. 19, 10:00 AM–Noon

Sacred Heart Parish, Bellingham
Wed., Oct. 23, 7:00–9:00 PM

**Catholic
Advocacy Day
February 21, 2014**

▶ Advent Reflection Day with Edwina Gateley



In God's Womb: Your Soul Journey with God

Saturday, December 14, 2013

9:00am—3:30pm

Location TBA

Cost \$25

A contemplative day sinking into God through poetry, music, visuals and reflection. A true spiritual vacation which will give us the inspiration and courage to continue deepening into God and being the prophetic witnesses we are called to be in our church and our world.

Mark your calendars now! Registration in November.

▶ Donations

Donations in honor of:

Adrian Dominican 2013 Jubilarians, Heidi Gemperle & Polly Young, Linda Haydock, SNJM, Sisters of Providence 2013 Jubilarians, Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace 2013 Jubilarians

Donation in memory of: Cecilia Marie Gri, CSJP

▶ U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

A newly formed national group is working to strengthen the advocacy, education and organizing on the issue of human trafficking. The Washington, D.C. meeting included appointments with Representatives and Senators.



Sr. Linda Haydock and other sisters with Senator Barbara Boxer, CA



1216 NE 65th St
Seattle, WA 98115-6724

return service requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 4711

This Issue: Education

206.223.1138 • ipjc@ipjc.org • www.ipjc.org

SPONSORING COMMUNITIES

Adrian Dominican Sisters
Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace
Oregon Province Jesuits
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S. Ontario Province
Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Tacoma Dominicans

AFFILIATE COMMUNITIES

Benedictine Sisters of Cottonwood, Idaho
Benedictine Sisters of Lacey
Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel
Religious of the Sacred Heart
Sinsinawa Dominicans
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon
Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union

EDITORIAL BOARD

Judy Byron, OP
Timnit Ghermay
Gretchen Gundrum
Linda Haydock, SNJM
Vince Herberholt
Tom Hulscher
Nick Mele
John Morefield
Editor: Annapatrice Clarke
Layout: Justin Almeida

Reflection

Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire.—W.B. Yeats

At a family meal, community gathering, or in a conversation with another person, reflect and share on the following:

- Which teacher gave me a spark for learning?
- What educational experience lit a fire in me?
- How did I learn the lessons of compassion and justice?
- Where am I manifesting the blessings of my education?

Reader: Gracious God, bless each teacher, student, staff member, parent and guardian around the world, from classrooms under roofs to those under trees. As we read this issue of *A Matter of Spirit* strengthen our call to be part of creating equitable, accessible and quality education for all.

We give thanks for all the educators who have provided a spark so that we might be lights in our world.

Go and set the world on fire!—St. Ignatius of Loyola

This is the one hundredth issue of *A Matter of Spirit* (AMOS)! As we celebrate this milestone we unveil a new format in full color. For 23 years we have provided our justice journal free to anyone interested in receiving our quarterly publication. We are committed to making *A Matter of Spirit* available and accessible in print, online and through podcast. Therefore, our religious communities are underwriting much of the cost.

We are grateful to all of you who contribute in small and significant ways to support our Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center ministry, including this publication. It is our hope that those who are able to make a contribution will use the envelopes found in each issue of AMOS to make this publication and our ministry sustainable.