

# Learning Multiculturalism through the Study of Geography

By Morton Tener

One of the most crucial educational concerns today is addressing the needs for multicultural understanding. According to the National Council for the Social Studies, promoting the strength and value of cultural diversity in our classrooms should be a primary goal of our schools. The Council suggests that a social studies program should provide intensive study of groups to which students themselves belong and those to which they do not belong.

A very effective way to satisfy the above goal is through the study of geography. A knowledge of geography will aid students to be aware of factors that determine their destiny. In addition to a study of land mass it is also an investigation of human existence. The study of geography provides the opportunity to understand other cultures with respect to how they dress, the types of houses in which they live, the products they produce, the type of food they eat, their health, physical characteristics, languages spoken, ethnic distribution, etc.

Currently the knowledge of geography on the part of high school students is very limited. Geography as a course in the junior high and senior high school curriculum is a dinosaur. Because of this circumstance a definite educational vacuum exists. A geography course should be offered to all high school students either as a year course, a semester course, or integrated within a number of other social science courses.

It has been traditional that geography be taught as a textbook course. Most current educators agree that geographical related material should be presented in a stimulating manner using current issues and events. Students should think and work as geographers, which will help them understand the conflict with unlimited wants, limited material, and human resources. The study of geography also can include many other academic areas such as psychology, meteorology, oceanography, eco-

## Activities That Can Promote Multicultural Understanding

1. Have students discuss their family's geographical origins.
2. Read literature of writers from different areas of the world.
3. Map Study—Understand geography and climates and how it affects living through maps.
4. Use technology and visuals in study of different countries.
5. Have local resource people from a variety of geographical locations speak to the students.
6. Share ethnic foods and how it relates to soil and climate.
7. Discuss the globalization of our economy.
8. Have students share experiences of their visitations to different parts of the world.
9. Celebrate multicultural holidays.
10. Design art or graphics focusing on a foreign country.
11. Discuss languages spoken in different countries.

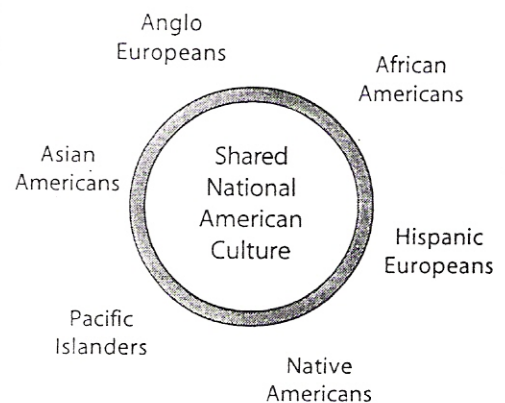
nomics, graphic arts, etc.

Multicultural education via study of geography is also a way to reduce prejudice, foster tolerance, and build a commitment to the American idealism of pluralism and democracy. It is a way to prepare young people to be competent future citizens and to contribute to a better world.

A particularly valuable experience for the study of various cultures can be a field trip in the local or nearby communities. Students can visit places of worship, festivals, restaurants, and other places and events that are duplicates of those in another country. The students will get the feeling that they "are there."

For example, by visiting a Japanese neighborhood or community students will realize that social values play a larger role than does religion. People are concerned with order, harmony, and individual development. In businesses the Japanese are motivated and make decisions on a group basis. The Japanese use long periods of silence for thinking and pondering. Though we might not be in Japan, a visit like this

## An Important Concept to Promote



helps us understand a particular culture to a greater degree.

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December 21, 1998

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Dear Morton,

Your article "Learning Multiculturalism through the Study of Geography" has been prepared for publication in *Multicultural Education* magazine.

I enclose a set of page proofs which represent the manner in which we expect the article to appear in the magazine. Please give these pages a careful review and mark directly on the proofs any corrections or changes that you wish us to make, and then return the relevant pages to me no later than January 8, 1999.

Your article will be published in the Spring 1999 issue of the magazine, which will be mailed to our subscribers around March 1, 1999.

As soon as we receive the issue from the printer, we will mail you a complimentary copy.

Thanks again for contributing to *Multicultural Education* magazine.

With best wishes,

ALAN H. JONES  
Executive Editor, *Multicultural Education*,  
and  
Publisher, Caddo Gap Press

*You will receive a letter  
verifying this statement.*

**There is no need to make any changes. Your presentation of my article is very accurate and graphically meaningful.**

M Tener

*DEAR ALAN -  
THANKS FOR THE WONDERFUL JOB YOU DID ON MY ARTICLE.  
MY DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON AND OTHER DEPARTMENT MEMBERS  
WERE IMPRESSED. HAVE MORT.  
A SUCCESSFUL 1999.*