

## Editor's Notebook

A highlight of this issue of *Social Education* is its special section on the poignant topic of teaching about refugees. Our contributors take us beyond the headlines and TV news clips about the global refugee problem, and present valuable classroom strategies, resources, and personal accounts that offer guidance about how to address the subject in our schools.

Introducing the special section, Matthew Reynolds, a regional representative of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, emphasizes the scale of the problem: about 26 million people are classified by the United Nations as refugees because they fled their countries and cannot return without being in danger. He points out, however, that “it should not be beyond the ability of the world’s 7.5 billion people to manage the problem.”(310)

Understanding the problem is an important step toward managing it. Frederik Smets explains why teachers should teach about refugees and how to do it, and introduces UNHCR educational resources that are especially designed to provide time-pressed teachers with the useful information that students need to examine the problem. He also provides advice on how schools can establish a welcoming and inclusive environment for refugee children.

Two authors offer inside views of the challenges and opportunities facing refugees in the United States. Bertine Bahige spent more than five years in a refugee camp in Mozambique after escaping from the civil war in Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo). Today, he is an elementary school principal in Gillette, Wyoming. In his article, he draws on his life experiences to advise educators on the best ways of providing refugee children and other students from low-income or non-English-speaking families with the education that will give them a good start in their adult lives.

Adrian Garcia, a first-generation American whose family escaped difficult circumstances in Mexico, offers recommendations based on his experience of growing up in Houston and pursuing a career of public service that has resulted in his becoming a County Commissioner in Texas. He emphasizes that refugees are “dedicated economic contributors who help improve the quality of our neighborhoods” (327) and suggests steps that educators can take to promote the successful integration of refugee children in their schools.

The swirl of opposing viewpoints on the topics of immigration and the resettlement of refugees has generated a great deal of misinformation. A feature by New American Economy provides our readers with important facts that are often little known about refugees who come to the United States: that they have a high entrepreneurship rate; contribute meaningfully to the economy; establish safe and secure communities; and lay down roots in American life by becoming citizens at a quicker rate than other immigrants.

Many young refugees come to the United States from countries with no tradition of political freedom, civil activism, or government responsiveness. Suzanne Shanahan and William Tobin describe a program of the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University, which has involved newcomer youth in civic action that benefitted

their own communities so that they could “learn U.S. citizenship by doing it.” (339)

Outside the special section on refugees, our contributors offer insightful articles on civic engagement, historical milestones, and the use of geography to examine social studies trends.

Civic educational efforts often focus on encouraging students to vote. Jill Bass and Brian Brady of Mikva Challenge suggest that this is a less effective approach than engaging students deeply in a wide range of civic actions, of which voting becomes a spontaneous and natural part. They urge a focus on *growing* voters through a holistic civic education rather than simply *mobilizing* voters at election time.

Many states now require high school civics tests that emphasize rote memorization (such as the test taken by immigrants who apply for U.S. citizenship). In our Teaching the C3 Framework column, Jennifer Fraker, Carly Muetterties, Gerry Swan, and Kathy Swan ask whether these tests can be fitted into a more analytical framework. They recommend an inquiry in which students study the test itself to address the question, “What do active citizens need to know?”

Michael Apfeldorf illustrates the value of geographic data for examining major demographic changes. His Sources and Strategies column focuses on the series of Statistical Atlases produced by the U.S. government between 1870 and 1920, which are part of the extensive online map collection of the Library of Congress. Apfeldorf offers suggestions for using these atlases to study migration within and immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth century.

The focus of this issue’s Teaching with Documents column is the story of Dr. Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, a Chinese American who was active in the women’s suffrage movement. Dr. Lee could not benefit from the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote, because Chinese American women remained disenfranchised until the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1892 was finally overturned in 1943. Sara Lyons Davis presents documents illustrating the challenges faced by Dr. Lee, and suggests accompanying class activities.

Next year will mark the anniversary of two crucial amendments to the U.S. Constitution—the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment that prohibited the denial of voting rights on the basis of race or color, and the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment providing for women’s suffrage. In our Looking at the Law column, Lisa Tetrault reviews these amendments and their effects, but warns that the pursuit of the right to vote “remains an unfinished project” (368) because of a recent wave of state voter suppression.

The final feature in this issue describes the recently established NCSS Septima Clark Book Award and reviews the first award-winning books.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at [socialed@ncss.org](mailto:socialed@ncss.org) 