Looking at any schedule of college courses, one is likely to find several classes which come under the rubric of ethnic studies. The courses are popular with teachers and students alike because they represent a change of pace from traditional study. Hopefully, such courses suggest a move toward an appreciation and recognition of the cultural diversity in America and mean that, as a nation, we are ready to follow the suggestion of Louis Ballard, American Indian composer and author, who stated that 'cultural differences should be honored, not merely 'accepted,' which is nothing more than a synonym for 'tolerated.'" In the decade of the Bicentennial, it is fitting that we re-examine our history; however, the "celebration" of the past and the interest in ethnicity have combined during the seventies to result in one very large and, to many people, embarrassing truth: America's historical past does not mean the same to everyone nor has it been interpreted accurately in many cases.

In high school and college classes, teachers are using anthologies including black poetry, Omaha folklore, and stories of La Raza. Some high school teachers are being assigned to teach courses in minority history, folklore, and literature for which they have little preparation. Teachers can ignore neither the historical nor the mythical past when teaching House Made of Dawn or Bless Me Ultima. They cannot forget even the recent past in teaching such works as Manchild in the Promised Land or The

Autobiography of Malcolm X. Thus, there are very practical reasons to include ethnic studies courses in teacher preparation programs.

There are, in addition, many philosophical reasons for multicultural education at all levels. In Toward a Theory of Instruction, Jerome Bruner outlines the changes in our time which require that we reconsider our definitions and methods of education. If these changes are considered in light of ethnic studies programs, one finds that innovation in curriculum is mandatory. First, there is an increasing understanding of man as a species. In considering what we have in common with our ancestors and with each other, we may find that we need to read and study about peoples and subjects which we have previously neglected. Bruner also says we understand the process of education somewhat more clearly than before, and we must redefine how we shall educate this generation of students. Too often teachers continue with the same books, the same discussion questions, and find that what they are teaching, as well as how they are teaching the material, is totally irrelevant to the student's experiences and abilities to comprehend and is equally irrelevant to the needs of society. In another article, Bruner reiterates his theories: the educator "... who formulates pedagogical theory without regard to the political, economic, and social setting of the educational process courts triviality and merits being ignored in the community and in the classroom."3

Jack Forbes, who has worked with education of both Mexican-Americans and American Indians, offers a reason for the instruction of non-Indians in Indian cultural materials: "... majority group pupils are being cheated in our schools when they master only one


language, when they learn about only one side of American history, when they are exposed to only one musical tradition, when they read only one kind of literature, when they learn only one approach to the visual arts, and when they are exposed to a curriculum which has no deep roots in the soil of their region and in America.\textsuperscript{14}

James A. Banks is adamant in his view: "... the main goal of ethnic studies should be to help students develop the ability to make effective decisions so that they can, through intelligent social action, influence public policy."\textsuperscript{15} Banks sees the courses primarily functioning as political tools which have long-range effects on our society. Clyde Kluckhohn, anthropologist, sees such studies in a more self-fulfilling way: "Studying (other cultures) enables us to see ourselves better. Ordinarily we are unaware of the specialized lens through which we look at life."\textsuperscript{16} Both of these views suggest that education must be relevant, must have purpose beyond knowledge gained, must lead to change, either in the individual or in the society.

There is yet another reason to include ethnic studies in curricula, although the focus is somewhat different. In his study of the education of American Indian children, Berry Brewton discusses two ways to alleviate the educational problems of Indian young people. Indian children need to develop a better image of themselves, but, more significantly, he suggests that non-Indians need more understanding and appreciation of the Indian so that their image of the group might also be improved.\textsuperscript{7} He cites evidence that


\textsuperscript{5}James A. Banks, \textit{Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies} (Boston, 1975), p. viii.

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 21.

suggests that the Indian's image of himself depends greatly on the image held by white society. If that is true, the place to begin to improve the Indian images is with non-Indians. Research also indicates, according to Brewton, that 'prejudice yields to education.' Thus, schools can make a contribution to changing the stereotypical views many non-Indians have about Indian people. 8

Jack Forbes echoes Brewton's conclusions: 'Anglo-American young people grow up in a 'never-never' land of mythology as regards non-whites and it is crucial for our society's future that damaging myths be exposed and eliminated. We must bear in mind that the 'white problem in America,' the tendency of Anglo-Americans for three centuries to exploit and denigrate non-whites, is probably still the major hurdle blocking the advancement of brown and black Americans.' 9

Because the educational systems have a responsibility to contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the many diverse groups in our society, the courses which we teach in all our schools, not just in higher education, must reflect the contributions of those groups. One group that has been repeatedly overlooked, except in popular culture, has been the American Indian. The literary achievements of the American Indian have been especially ignored in the traditional English department. What remains from the oral tradition has been labeled children's stories, and contemporary writers find themselves labeled "protest writers" or studied as sociological examples rather than men and women with creative talents producing a major literature. The reasons then to study about the American Indian are to reinforce the concepts of pluralism, to teach the literature, the history, the values of this group which are a part of American society, and to provide students with the knowledge and materials which will enable them to make decisions in a pluralistic society.

8Ibid., p. 98.
9Forbes, Education of the Culturally Different, p. 51.
It is essential that the materials we teach are accurate, however. Mentor Williams, in his introduction to Schoolcraft's *Indian Legends*, criticizes the way we have approached American Indian studies in the past: "He is more than an exhibit in a museum, more than a vendor of trinkets, more than an extra in a Hollywood western. The American Indian has left an indelible mark upon the culture of America, upon its customs, its habits, its language, and even upon its mode of thought. . . . there are more ways to study the Indian than to botanize on the grave of his dead past: History and literature have too long done no more than that." Irving Hallowell argues the same thing, saying that the Indian has influenced "our speech, our economic life, our clothing, our sports and recreation, certain indigenous religious cults, many of our curative practices, folk and concert music, the novel, poetry, drama, even some of our basic psychological attitudes. . . . " Despite the influence that the American Indian has had on twentieth century America, we must recognize, as does historian Bernard Devoto, that "American historians have made shockingly little effort to understand the life, the societies, the cultures, the things, and the feeling of the Indians, and disastrously little effort to understand how all these affected white men and their societies." The misrepresentation and distortion of American history have resulted in another obstacle for teachers of minority studies. Many students carry in their heads a number of stereotypes and outright prejudices about those people who are in any way "different" from them. It does not matter that they have never seen a "real-live Indian"—most non-Indian students "know"

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they grunt a lot and say "how" and "ugh," just as they "know" that black people have rhythm, Chinese are good at doing other people's laundry, and Mexicans talk like Frito Bandito.

Recently, while traveling in the West and Southwest, the author was visually reminded of some of the real problems faced by teachers in American Indian studies. The Buffalo Bill Historical Center, a modern structure on the edge of Cody, Wyoming, houses the Buffalo Bill Museum, the Whitney Gallery of Western Art, and the Plains Indian Museum.Displayed there are the originals of lithographs from old Harper's Weekly magazines and the art works of Remington and Russell and Catlin, as well as their letters and pictures. The memorabilia of Buffalo Bill, "the idol of American youth," prove that he was one of the first media freaks. Pictures of Cody with famous Indians, books translated into French and Spanish, comic books, dime novels, posters—all make a hero out of the former hunter and scout who had a flair for the unusual and a desire for the spectacular. In the Plains Indian Museum, case after case of intricately beaded clothing, hand-formed cooking pots, and archaeological findings line the walls.

At the Historical Center, abstract concepts about the dual and ambiguous images of the American Indian come to life. The idealized warriors painted by Catlin hang in one wing; the gaudy and fantastic Indian imagined by Cody is present in another. And on the lower level, the real and actual bits and pieces of Indian history are stored—dolls which little Indian girls once played with, toy horses made by some father for his son. There are cooking utensils, clothing, old Navajo blankets, and yes, feathered headdresses, too. But the picture that emerges from viewing the exhibits on the lower level is a more complete image—an image of a people, diverse and unique, who grew and changed with the influence of the Europeans, changing from porcupine quills to beads to decorate their clothing, from antler utensils to metal ones, from bows and arrows to guns. Studied carefully, the exhibit shows that neither Catlin's nor Cody's Indians are complete, but both were the inventions of individuals with their own purposes in mind. Catlin was an idealist whose
motives were to preserve the "nobility" of Indian ways and be "historian for the Plains Indians." Cody's motives, however, appear to be self-aggrandizing and capitalistic.

The Huntington Library in Pasadena, California, also provides evidence of the confusion of white society when dealing with Indian life and history. One of the labels in an exhibit case reads: "Despite efforts by the United States government to make just treaties, the Indians were gradually pushed west." Such a statement reflects the ambivalent and ambiguous manner in which the American Indian has been regarded, as well as the veiled guilt about the treatment of the country's first inhabitants. If "just" treaties were made, who was doing the pushing? Who determined whether or not the treaties were just?

The influence of this inability to explain or define the historical reality of Indian-white relationships has affected society in several ways. The need to affirm governmental attitudes toward the Indian resulted in literature which treated the Indian either as the ignoble savage or the romantic nomad of the forest. Early American literature portrayed Indians as evil animals in the captivity narratives and at the same time glorified Indian "princesses," such as Pocahontas, and dying warriors in early poetry. As the invaders pushed the frontier farther and farther west, American writers continued to reveal the dual views of the Indian. More and more contact with the Indian tribes of America resulted in new relationships, some of which modified previous views and resulted in even more confusion about who or what the "Indian" was. Painters such as Catlin saw themselves as historians recording the costumes and ceremonies of the "vanishing" tribes. Missionaries continued their attempts to Christianize the "savage" and "heathen" people of the woods. Others, with an interest in what was to become anthropology or ethnology, recorded some of the languages of the various tribes. During the latter part of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century, more and more writers became interested in the Indian as subject matter. The results ranged from the sympathetic treatment of Helen Hunt
Jackson to the savage portrayals in the Beadle dime novels. Between the two extremes, the images reflected each writer's personal vision as well as a combination of the political and/or social views of the time.

A stronger force than literature began operating on the public mind during the twentieth century--the visual media was also portraying the Indian, and many people were viewing movies based primarily on the dime novels of the previous decades. The images portrayed on the screen were at first accurate newsreels, but soon producers and writers discovered that vicious Indians drew more crowds. The visual misrepresentation was perpetuated for several decades--from the silver screen to the 24-inch color television in every home. What continued to be communicated was a non-Indian view of the people and the culture, and it is this inaccurate view of the American Indian that has created the twentieth-century stereotypes.

The majority of the students in this author's classes on American Indian literature are white and from Iowa. The first assignment is to define or describe "Indian." Responses from students in eighth grade through college and an analysis of several classes' papers indicate that views of other groups are formed early, and, unless these views are challenged, they change very little. Images of feathers, horses, tipis, war paint, and scalping--the Hollywood Indian--predominate. Even when these more obvious stereotypical views are missing, the image is one of the past, usually either romanticized or evoking pity for a vanishing race.

Given that most of these students have never seen nor lived near Indians (keep in mind that they would not recognize an Indian unless he had long braids and a loincloth), how did they form their images of what Indians are? And, given these descriptions, how can they understand the beauty of a Navajo chant or the humor of green frog dollars or the pathos of "women and children lying frozen in Wounded Knee Creek"? Before they can deal with the literature, then, they must deal with these images in their minds. By asking students to define or even to draw an Indian, the instructor will gain an awareness of the students' stereotypes.
Education and Images

and both teacher and students will become more sensitive to the inaccurate images that appear so frequently in mass media and too often in literature as well.

These experiences are not unique, nor are these students from Iowa unusual in their misconceptions. The U.S. Senate Special Subcommittee on Indian Education report of 1969, Indian Education: A National Tragedy--A National Challenge, reports similar situations all over the country:

To thousands of Americans, the American Indian is, and always will be, dirty, lazy, and drunk. That's the way they picture him; that's the way they treat him.

... In every community visited by the subcommittee there was evidence among the white population of stereotypical opinions of Indians.

... The basis for these stereotypes goes back into history--a history created by the white man to justify his exploitation of the Indian, a history the Indian is continually reminded of at school, on television, in books and at the movies.

It is a history which calls an Indian victory a massacre and a U.S. victory an heroic feat. It is a history which makes heroes and pioneers of gold-miners who seized Indian land, killed whole bands and families and ruthlessly took what they wanted. It is a history which equates Indians and wild animals, and uses the term "savages" as a synonym for Indians.

It is this kind of history--the kind taught formally in the classroom and informally on street corners--which creates feelings of inferiority among Indian students, gives them a warped understanding of their cultural heritage and propagates stereotypes.

The manner in which Indians are treated in textbooks--one of the most powerful means by which our society transmits ideas from generation to generation--typifies the misunderstanding the American public as a whole has regarding the
Indian, and indicates how misconceptions can become a part of a person's mind-set.

Textbook studies by a number of States indicate that misconceptions, myths, inaccuracies and stereotypes about Indians are common to the curriculum of most schools.

... With attitudes toward Indians being shaped, often unconsciously, by educational materials filled with inaccurate stereotypes—as well as by teachers whose own education has contained those same stereotypes and historical misconceptions—it is easy to see how the "lazy, dirty, drunken" Indian becomes the symbol for all Indians. When the public looks at an Indian they cannot react rationally because they have never known the facts. They do not feel responsible for the "savages" have brought their conditions upon themselves. They truly believe the Indian is inferior to them.\(^{13}\)

All of these past images still live today. The stereotyped Noble Savage who appeared in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and was featured in *Harper's Weekly* lithographs reappears on the late show. The scenes reproduced in Catlin paintings later appeared in *A Man Called Horse*. The drunken Indian of 1846 signing a worthless treaty was recreated in *Flap* during the 1960's. The bonneted chief of Remington was still around in 1976 getting his picture taken, this time to commemorate the Bicentennial. Our popular culture continues to expose and exploit the negative and unreal images of the Indian that were formed by our first writers, photographers, and painters and nurtured in textbooks.

Prior to the twentieth century, one finds the beginnings of what have become the American Indian stereotypes. One image does not suffice. The Indian has a multiple image and at the same time a

\(^{13}\)Report #501 of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate. Made by its Special Subcommittee on Indian Education. 91st Congress, 1st Session.
partial image. The Indian--no tribe, no identity, almost always male--is either noble (still savage, but noble nevertheless) or bloodthirsty and vicious. There are variations of the stereotype--the drunken Indian, the heathen, the lazy native--but still it is an image of a creature less than human without a religion and lacking in morality and virtue. Usually he is viewed apart from wife or children or any family relationships, an isolated figure, one with a pinto pony, gliding across the plains of America. He is viewed always as an Indian first, an individual last. He combines all the noble virtues expressed in a Catlin painting and the savagery of a Beadle novel.

American Indian literature reflects a different view of the Indian. Literature being written today by American Indians varies a great deal, but often it reflects a sensitive understanding of the past and the oral tradition, perhaps a sadness and longing for what might have been, and a hope for a future in which Indian people can rightfully claim their heritage, if not their land. Writers such as N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Wendy Rose, Leslie Silko, Ray Young Bear, and others represent the vitality and imagination of the Indian writers of this century. They do not ignore their heritage nor do they deny its influence; however, their past is not a creation of Hollywood directors, dime novel authors, or wild west show entrepreneurs.

How does the student reconcile these two views--one perpetuated by mass media and outdated texts, and the other portraying a picture closer to the reality of Indian experience? The student needs to clearly understand the past that has contributed to the development of various stereotypes. A visual representation of where the pictures have come from can easily and quickly convince the students that there is a source for their stereotypes; mass media and popular culture have given them their image of the American Indian. This author has collected examples which trace popular and literary images of the American Indian from the earliest portraits and sketches to recent film images, and such examples illustrate the effort on the part of advertisers, writers, and moviemakers to produce an Indian which is a twentieth-century anachronism.
What have Indian people been saying about images of their culture which have been and continue to be projected in the twentieth century? In 1927 the Grand Council Fire of American Indians addressed the mayor of Chicago: "We ask this, Chief, to keep sacred the memory of our people." Over twenty years later the American Council of Education did a study of textbooks being used in the schools. Their observations about the Indian image in the books was short and to the point: "Only two major attitudes governed the treatment of American Indians. The first was that of cruel, bloodthirsty Indians whose rights were unquestionably superseded by the interests of white pioneers. The second was that of the noble redskin, a high minded son of nature. Almost without exception, no convincing picture of Indians as a group or of the cultural characteristics of Indian life, past or present, was presented." Another twenty years of publishing and teaching was to go by before a group of Indian people in San Francisco decided that they had had enough of the "white-washing" of books, especially textbooks used in the public schools. In 1966 the Indian Historical Society stated in a report on the status of education: "What is needed, and quickly, is a massive program to provide new materials of instruction, new curricula, a whole set of new values which take into consideration the original owners and the First Americans of this land, as an integral part of our history." Although most of these studies and comments had as their main concern the textbooks used in social science and history classes, the impact of the statements and the reality behind them must be borne by other literature as well. The indictment is against the entire


educational system which, as Roy Harvey Pearce points out, is "to make people alike." Only recently have we begun to reject the "melting pot" concept in favor or cultural pluralism. Ruth Roessel, in a publication from Navajo Community College, pleads with the reader: "Our nation must respect these desires and yearnings on the part of Indians and others, and it must readjust its thinking so that we Americans can respect differences and recognize that each culture makes an important contribution--adds a significant design to the overall fabric that makes up this great land. Today, as never before, schools are challenged into presenting the kinds of information and kinds of materials which will support and reinforce the principles of cultural pluralism."

In the conclusion of that 1969 report on Indian education, Ted Kennedy expressed a vision of America as "a nation of citizens determining their own destiny; of cultural difference flourishing in an atmosphere of mutual respect; of diverse people shaping their lives and the lives of their children." If this is not the vision we offer in the classroom and in the media, it is the vision which we should be seeking.

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19 U.S. Senate Report #501, p. 1x.