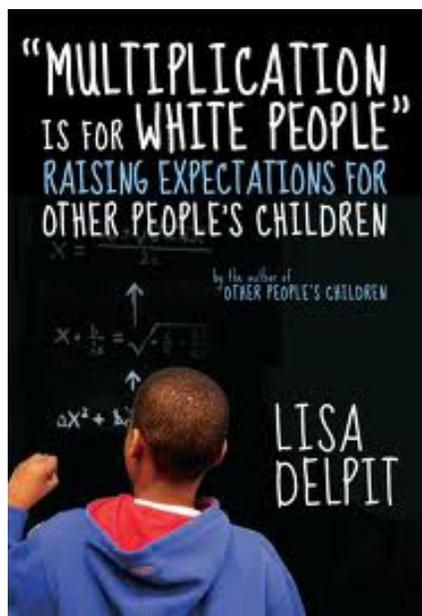


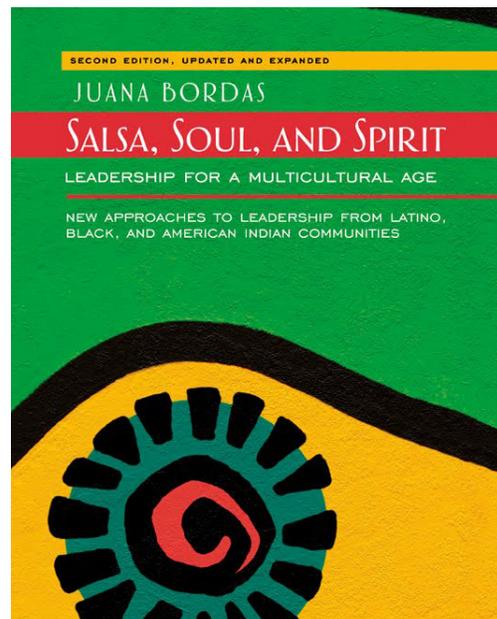
TWO BOOK REVIEWS: The Rainbow People, Spokes on the Great Wheel of Life

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Multiplication Is For White People: Raising Expectations for Other People's Children

By Lisa Delpit, 2012,
New York: The New Press



Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age

By Juana Bordas, 2007,
Second Edition, 2012,
San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler
Publishers, Inc.

In keeping with NSRF's commitment to equity and diversity, we are reviewing two books in this issue.

Lisa Delpit, no stranger to educators concerned about the education of students of color, is presently a Professor of Education at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Juana Bordas was born in Nicaragua and is the President of Mestiza Leadership International and Founding President and CEO of the National Hispanic Leadership Institute in Denver, Colorado. Both have received numerous awards for their contributions to the fields of education and leadership. Delpit received the Harvard School of Education award for Outstanding Contribution to Education, and Bordas, the Leadership Legacy award from Spellman College.

These books are both based on research from professional resources. Their bibliographies and the works cited in their footnotes are a treasure in themselves. The volumes are profoundly personal as their following dedications attest:

[Delpit's] *"This book is dedicated to my mother, Edmae Butler, a ninety- six-year-old educator who is still teaching me patience, unconditional love, and the value of finding something to laugh at every day. To my daughter, Maya Delpit, who – as she constantly reminds me – taught me everything I know about teaching 'other people's children'; To my Southern University students who continue their commitment to education in the face of challenges that would leave lesser people hiding under the covers; And to the brilliant and talented students of Southern University Laboratory School, their teachers, principal, and families."*

[Bordas's] *"Para mi Madre, mis Hermanas, mis Hijas, y mis Comrades. (For my mother, my sisters, my daughters, and my friends.) You have been the cradle and the substance of my life."*



Lisa Delpit

a "majority of minorities" — African American, Latin American, Asian American, and Native American. Yet, European American (or "white") teachers are overwhelmingly those who are teaching these students — thus, "other people's children."

Juana Bordas' title, *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit*, refers to what she calls "new approaches to leadership from Latino (salsa), Black (soul), and American Indian (spirit) communities." Her subtitle, *Leadership for a Multicultural Age*, addresses a wide audience of leaders including, but not limited to, educational administrators. She explains this more fully in her Preface:

"Today's leadership models, although they may differ from person to person and method to method, generally have a common bias toward Western- or European-influenced ways of thinking and approaches. Contemporary leadership theories center on the dominant or mainstream culture and exclude the enormous contributions, potential learning, and valuable insights that come from leaders in diverse communities. However, the task of integrating leadership from these communities into the American mainstream does not fall to Anglo leaders or



Juana Boraas

authors. To be authentic and effective, this information must emerge from leaders and scholars in communities of color.” [a main reason why she, as a Latina, has written this book]

Thus, throughout her book, Bordas incorporates the African symbol of the “Sankofa,” the mythical bird from West Africa at the beginning of each chapter. This bird, whose head is turned around looking backwards, symbolizes the respect West Africans have for the insight, knowledge, and wisdom acquired from the past. The bird symbol is said to remind us, “Our roots ground and nourish us, hold us firm when the winds of change howl, and offer perspective about what is lasting and significant.” Yet, Sankofa’s feet are facing forward, thus reminding us, “The past is a pathway to understanding the present and creating a strong future.” In other words, Sankofa tells us to learn from the past — to avoid the dead ends, the mistakes, and the pitfalls of previous personal and ancestral experience.



Both of these authors draw on interviews with those with whom they are directly involved. Delpit’s talks are more informal, often on the spot, with elementary school students in their classrooms, individual high school students, and several teachers and student teachers with whom she works. Bordas more formally uses quotes in each chapter from interviews with a group of eleven current leaders, three African Americans, four American Indians, and four Latino/as. Both authors provide us with themes and “factors,” lists of major principles around which they organize their books. Delpit describes two major themes:

“The first is the symbiotic interplay between my personal life as a mother and my professional work as a scholar and hopeful activist. Within the chapters of this volume are stories that range from my daughter Maya’s first years in elementary school through her admission to college.... The second theme that runs through the book, from the chapters on educating young children to those focused on college students, is the relevance of a list of ten factors I have formulated over a number of years that I believe can foster excellence in urban classrooms.” [I would suggest all classrooms!]

Here is Delpit's list of 10 “factors” we must do to create this excellence:

- 1) *Recognize the importance of a teacher and good teaching especially for the ‘school dependent’ children of low-income communities.*
- 2) *Recognize the brilliance of poor, urban children and teach them more content, not less.*
- 3) *Whatever methodology or instructional program is used, demand critical thinking while at the same time assuring that all children gain access to ‘basic skills’ – the conventions and strategies that are essential to success in American society.*
- 4) *Provide children with the emotional ego strength to challenge racist societal views of their own competence and worthiness and that of their fami-*

lies and communities.

- 5) *Recognize and build on children's strengths.*
- 6) *Use familiar metaphors and experiences from the children's world to connect what students already know to school-taught knowledge.*
- 7) *Create a sense of family and caring in the classroom.*
- 8) *Monitor and assess students' needs and then address them with a wealth of diverse strategies.*
- 9) *Honor and respect the children's home cultures.*
- 10) *Foster a sense of children's connections to community, to something greater than themselves.*

She then weaves these “factors” throughout each of her eleven chapters. For example, in Chapter 2, “Infinite Capacity,” she expands on Factors #2 and #9 above, describing “3 Steps to Sanity” –

- a) *believe in the children,*
- b) *“fight foolishness” (or what educator Herb Kohl says, “fight stupidity,” e.g. attempting to build teacher-proof schools with scripted low-level instruction and worksheets), and*
- c) *learn who our children are and discover the legacies they bring.*

In Chapter 3 “Stuff You Never Would Say: Successful Literacy Instruction in Elementary Classrooms,” Delpit refutes many unsuccessful literacy practices, including looking up words in the dictionary, writing down definitions, then writing them in sentences. Then she expands on Factors #3 and #6 describing “what does work” –

- 1) *Integration: connecting new vocabulary to prior knowledge;*
- 2) *Repetition: encountering/using the word/concept many times; and*
- 3) *Meaningful use: multiple opportunities to use new words in reading, writing, and discussions.*

Likewise, Bordas describes “8 Principles of Multicultural Leadership” as the first step in integrating the leadership practices of communities of color into an inclusive and multicultural form, drawing on core values that are keystones in these cultures.

Part one, A New Social covenant with these Principles:

- *Sankofa – learn from the past*
- *I to We – from individualism to collective identity*
- *Mi Casa Es Su Casa – developing a spirit of generosity*

Part two, Leadership Styles in Communities of Color:

- *A Leader Among Equals – community conferred leadership*
- *Leaders as Guardians of Public Values – a tradition of activism*
- *Leaders as Community Stewards – working for the common good*

Part Three, Creating the Circle of Leadership:

- *All My Relatives – La Familia, the village, the tribe*
- *Gracias – gratitude, hope, and forgiveness”*

At the end of each chapter that addresses these eight principles, Bordas provides a short section called “Next Steps,” reflections for applying each principle. For example, at the end of Chapter 2 about Principle #2, “I to We – from individualism to collective identity,” she describes an activity for understanding the group (e.g. a school faculty or subject area department) and their collective heritage (see the sidebar “Understanding Our Collective Heritage” on page 19.).

Interestingly both Lisa Delpit and Juana Bordas end their respective books with stories from Native American cultures, from which I chose to title this pair of book reviews: “The Rainbow People, Spokes on the Great Wheel of Life.” Delpit ends her book