Once evolving our CFG Coaches trainings to be Equity Based and for the sake of our most underserved students explicitly prioritizing race (at least for the weeklong institute), we have learned much about the dynamics and reactions that can be expected as our curriculum and community develop across the intensive week and as participants face and assess their individual journeys and roles within our educational system.

Common is the “This is not all about race” statement. Another argument is “Race doesn’t matter if we love and respect each other,” suggesting that our goodwill and behaviors will counter the impacts of the larger sociological impacts issue of racism within our classes. Our recent Equity Based CFG training with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction proved to be no exception to the rule. Following a rich and deep discussion as to whether or not race matters in good education, one of our participants could not stop thinking about the discussion, even after he had gone home for the evening. He returned the next day and offered the following reflection during Connections. – Greg Peters, California

Race Matters
John Patrick Moran

It mattered within the inner halls of these same steps when segregation played itself out and I have to ask myself: if race doesn’t matter, why have we let history repeat itself? And most importantly, what is my role in changing it?

Race matters. It matters every time my partner and I go out into the world: One black man with one white one, and I have to ask if race doesn’t matter:

why do I sometimes see the face of indifference?

Race matters. It matters then and today, I believe it matters still. To believe otherwise am I not denying my own history? Are we not denying our collective struggle? Our connected story? I am not color blind for to believe that I am denotes sameness. Denies not only who I am as a white man with a story and a heritage of his own, wrought with the same struggles and triumphs as yours, but a man unique in this difference. I am not color blind for to believe that I am denies who you are. Your story. Your heritage. And the legacy you wish to leave.

And if I could leave you with one final thought: in my life and especially in my work as well as my relationships with the rest of you, will this difference be something to loathe and hate? Or instead, will it be something that needs to be embraced and celebrated. Today I choose the latter.

Greg Peters can be contacted at gpeter@scress.org

The Five Freedoms Project: Entry Points
The Five Freedoms Project believes that America’s young people need educators who can do more than raise test scores; they need leaders who spark student learning by creating schools in which everyone has voice, value and visibility. We also believe our democracy needs individuals with more than a vague awareness of the First Amendment’s five freedoms (religion, speech, press, assembly and petition); it needs a new generation of citizens who utilize those rights in order to follow their consciences, speak out for justice and organize for change.

For more information visit freedoms.org or northharmony.org/connections.html

Kim Carter can be contacted at kimedceee@gmail.com

Fall 2008
Connections: the Journal of the National School Reform Faculty

Steven Straul can be contacted at stevenstrull@optonline.net

How will I become a better learner and teacher? How will I foster equity? Will I need to interrupt inequality? What will be different and what the same? What child will I reach? Who will reach me?

The Five Freedoms Project... (continued from page 4)

The new school year is an opportunity to renew our friendships — critical as well as collegial. Those of us in NSRF enter the new school year looking for our groups, our peeps, our Critical Friends Groups. There is anticipation for the first meeting — what test will we read? Which protocol will we use? Whose student will we learn more about? How will I become a better learner and teacher? How will I foster equity? Will I need to interrupt inequity? What will be different and what the same? What child will I reach? Who will reach me? I always love the beginning of school — even though it’s the end of summer and autumn is upon us, for school people, September feels like a new beginning. As I enter this school year I wonder if and hope that my practice will be different — more equitable, more aware. I continue to consider the role privilege plays in my life and in the lives of the people I work with. I wonder how NSRF will continue to critically examine the role of privilege and equity in our work and how we will work to achieve our mission through the joint constructs of critical friendship and facilitative leadership.

My mother always taught me that on the first day of school, for good luck, you were supposed to both leave the house and enter the schoolhouse with your right foot first. The consequences for disrespecting this superstition would be dire yet unamed. I still do it every year, and by the time this edition of Connections hits your mailbox, I will have done it again. Good luck to all of you and to all of our children as we embark on another critical school year.

Fall 2008
Connections: the Journal of the National School Reform Faculty