

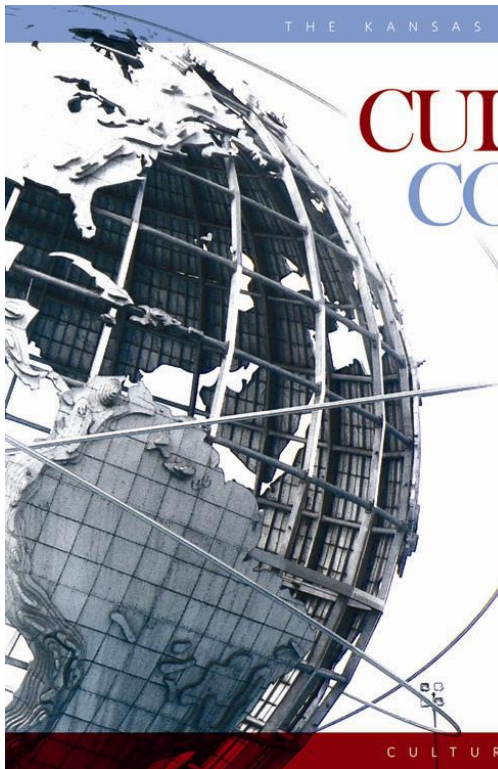
*The Whole World is....*

# One World

a publication of Cultural Crossroads, Inc.

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THE KANSAS CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

## CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS

SERIES CONCLUDES

During the first half of 2008, Cultural Crossroads and the Plaza Library co-sponsored a five-part series of engaged dialogues on a variety of multicultural topics. From small, intimate gatherings to capacity groups, the public responded to the opportunities to learn and share on subjects of vital importance to our community.

CULTURAL CROSSROADS

A wide range of topics were covered in the five-part series, featuring speakers and facilitators with unique experience in the areas under discussion.

- **February: Unwitting Transgressions in a Multicultural World** - David Alexander of Kansas City Academy (*see report in this issue*)
- **March: Diversity in the Workplace** - Donna Dolinar Stalker of Cultural Crossroads
- **April: Milestones & Passages** - Mary Gibson McCoy of Cultural Crossroads
- **May: Diversity in the Media** - Lewis Diuguid of *The Kansas City Star*, Sylvia Maria Gross, of *KCUR-FM* and Eric Wesson of *The Call* (*see report in this issue*)
- **June: Diversity in Religion** moderated by The Rev. Vern Barnet, DMn, of CRES, with members of the Kansas City Interfaith Council: Syed Eqball Hasan (Muslim), Singh Sahib Karta Purkh S. Khalsa (Sikh Dharma), Rev. Gary Langston (Native American spirituality), Barbara McAtee (Baha'i), Pam Peck (Christian Scientist), Rev. Kathy Reigelman (Unitarian Universalist), and Lama Chuck Stanford (Buddhist)

This and subsequent issues of *One World* will summarize the flow of ideas and concerns which surfaced in the Cultural Conversations series. We hope to sponsor future Cultural Conversations events on other topics of cultural and multicultural concern. Let us know if you have a topic (and/or a speaker or speakers) to suggest for any future Cultural Conversations.



### ***REPORT ON FEBRUARY 2008 CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS:***



**Speaker: David Alexander** was born in Topeka, Kansas, and has been an educator for 36 years in the fields of social studies, language arts, and guidance and counseling. He has been affiliated with the Artist in Residency Programs of the Kansas Arts Commission, Missouri Young Audiences, and the Nebraska Arts Council. In addition, Mr. Alexander was selected to be one of 56 Artists-in-Residence in "Artists in Communities for the Millennium" sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Arts Council in Maryland. He has taught in schools in Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Today, he teaches full time at the Kansas City Academy in Kansas City, MO. He currently is working as a full time teacher of social studies at Kansas City Academy at 79th & Main in Kansas City, Missouri.

**"UNWITTING TRANSGRESSIONS IN A MULTICULTURAL WORLD"**  
**David Alexander: "The quickest way to get your self in trouble in America is to lie. In Britain it is committing an indiscretion, in Asia it is dishonoring your family. When the tourist or expatriate comes face to face with conflicting values, it is a sure way to find yourself unwittingly in trouble. This discussion seeks to build some bridges of understanding between the far corners of the world."**

Opening the Cultural Conversations series, David Alexander presented an informative, yet humorous, account of life as an educator in various countries around the globe. As one sensitive to local custom, he related that each move to a different country required he and his family to constantly learn new responses to situations, that "whatever was polite before is impolite now" in the new posting. Mr. Alexander also pointed out the importance of custom in different cultures. Whereas law is of paramount importance in the United States and the US is described as a nation ruled by law, rather than ruled by men, the law ranks as only second or third in importance in many other countries, where custom and family or clan ties are controlling of social issues.

As an example, in the United States, anything less than absolute truth is considered a lie (or, at the least, a "white" lie). An American's propensity for "the truth" would be considered impolite in other countries (particularly in Asia and Africa), where "saving face" is highly important. In those cultures, negative thoughts are spun as positive to avoid saying "no" and being impolite.

Mr. Alexander gave the example of a parent who was trying to gain admission to a prestigious school in Indonesia. The response to the parent was “I will do everything in my power to get your son into this school.” Although the official was not actively arguing the son’s case, this is not considered a misstatement of fact or lying because saving face is the most important goal, not being technically factual.

Another example was the custom of greeting friends and acquaintances. In the United States, greetings are required when encountering someone, but the greetings are brief and constantly re-enforced throughout the day (as in an office environment). In Ethiopia, for example, each greeting is protracted and more formal.

Many of those in attendance at this first segment of the series had traveled extensively or lived and worked in other countries and cultures and shared their personal experiences. The primary lesson learned from all those experiences was to carefully observe the customs of each culture, to withhold any value judgment of those cultures, and to respectfully conform to the customs of the host culture.



## ***REPORT ON MAY CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS:***

### **"DIVERSITY IN THE MEDIA"**

**Synopsis: Media reflects our society, but, to do so, media must be a mirror of that society. How much is our popular media a reflection? What has been the experience of those within the media industry and how have their personal experiences both shaped and been shaped by the media industry?**

### ***The Speakers of “Diversity in the Media” --***

**Lewis W. Diuguid**, vice president for community resources, editorialist and columnist for The Kansas City Star, is the author of the newly-issued book, *Discovering th Read America: Toward a More Perfect Union*, and the 2004 award-winning book, *A Teacher's Cry: Expose the Truth About Education Today*. He is a founding member, treasurer, newsletter editor and Media Awards Committee chairman of the Kansas City Association of Black Journalists, the Missourian Publishing Association Board of Directors, the William Allen White Foundation Board of Trustees (University of Kansas), and several other organizations, a certified diversity facilitator with the Newspaper Association of America and has received more than 50 awards, including the 2000 Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism.





**Sylvia Maria Gross** is both producer and host of KCUR's weekly newsmagazine *KC Currents*, a show that covers news and culture in Kansas City's diverse communities. She studied English at Yale University, and then spent a year in Brazil on a Fulbright researching arts education. Back in New York, she taught middle school math and English for six years. Sylvia completed a master's in journalism at Columbia University. Before coming to KCUR in October 2004, she reported in New York City about education and culture for radio and print.

Eric L. Wesson is reporter and columnist for *The Call*, Kansas City's African-American newspaper, publishing since 1919. He has received national attention for his in-depth reporting and incisive interviews. A member of the Kansas City Association of Black Journalists, he received its award for commentary in 2006. He appears as both reporter and speaker at numerous events of political and social importance. As well as a journalist, he also has experience in radio and is a consultant and conference organizer, including this year's "Among Sisters" with Bill Cosby.



### ***The Discussion of "Diversity in the Media" --***

Pointed questions and comments were raised both by members of the public and by media representatives. Lewis Diuguid (*Kansas City Star*), Sylvia Maria Gross (*KCUR-FM*) and Eric Wesson (*The Call*) fielded questions, raised issues, and revealed personal experiences from their varied perspectives on our varied communities. Those questions included:

- Is multiculturalism in danger?
- Does multicultural, itself, *present* a danger?
- Is multiculturalism just a "PC" term, used without depth or understanding?
- Does "multicultural education" just mean "Black History Month"?
- Why is Black History Month considered just MLK and his "Dream" speech?

Lewis Diuguid raised the opinion that children are not being taught multicultural *values*...just how to survive in a multicultural society...and stated that the media is, in fact, a deficient mirror of our actual society. Eric Wesson offered the idea that African-American people need to go to media like *The Call* to tell their news and their stories, from their perspective, without reporting that can subliminally cast reservations on the crime victim. From the viewpoint of public radio, Sylvia Maria Gross pointed out that media itself is changing and that younger generations get their news online or through radio and that the media industry needs to go to the younger generation, with their different methods and different views on diversity than past generations.

Is there bias within the media industry? If so, is that bias only on the part of the editorial board or the publisher and not reflected in minority reporters? Lewis Diuguid stated that minority reporters are often accused of bias and are under a microscope for that reason; while it is true that those reporters may have a personal bias, it is also incumbent upon them, as minority persons, to tell the story of diversity from the perspective of the minority community; to do otherwise, would promote stereotypes. Sylvia Maria Gross made the observation that stories cannot simply be determined on percentages of population and editorial profiling – that, for instance, many Latinos also want immigration reform, and to assume that all Latinos think the same on the immigration issue is itself a form of profiling and stereotyping. Eric Wesson also pointed out that black ownership, for example, doesn't mean responsible reporting...it involves more than mere ownership to provide that responsibility.

The media representatives were very open with sharing their personal experiences and encounters with prejudice – and, sometimes, outright hostility – from readers and listeners. The examples they related exposed attitudes that amazed many in the audience and revealed an undercurrent that is not always visible on the surface of society.

Panel representatives and members of the public also engaged in a lively discussion that centered on the current political campaign and how the various candidates both are treated in the media and the affect of those candidacies on the American society of the next half-century.



## NEW MAGAZINE HIGHLIGHTS MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The Autumn 2007 issue of *One World* highlighted multicultural organizations in Kansas City. [http://www.culturalcrossroads-kc.org/NEW\\_NEWSLETTERS/Autumn\\_2007.pdf](http://www.culturalcrossroads-kc.org/NEW_NEWSLETTERS/Autumn_2007.pdf). Cultural Crossroads now welcomes *RiseUp*, a new publication. *RiseUp* will appear as a weekly newspaper supplement in several newspapers nationally, including *The Kansas City Star*, and online at [www.usariseup.com](http://www.usariseup.com).

.....scroll down for coming\_events.....



## SUMMER AND FALL 2008 EVENTS

Cultural Crossroads produces a number of interactive, educational activities for children, youth and families. We work in partnership with libraries, schools, churches, community centers, and youth and community organizations.

Cultural Crossroads also provides enhanced learning-through-fun activities at community festivals. Volunteer opportunities are available – call or email if you are interested in working with the children at these events.

September 15 (Mon)	<i>Hello, World!</i>	Lone Jack Library
September 27 (Sat)	<i>Independence Heritage Festival</i>	McCoy Park, Independence
October 4 (Sat)	<i>Multicultural Festival</i>	Longview Comm. College
November 5 (Wed)	<i>Reading &amp; Rhythm</i>	North Oak Library
December 6 (Sat)	<i>Hello, World!</i>	Excelsior Springs Library

Everyone of every age is welcome at all programs

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**Cultural Crossroads offers opportunities for involvement as volunteers, board or committee members and, as a 501c3 organization, all donations are tax-deductible.**

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