

RELIGION

Taught carefully, Religion needn't be taboo in classrooms

BY MARK FLOYD

American students may lag behind much of the world when it comes to learning about math, science and geography, but they are virtual Einsteins in those fields compared to their knowledge about religion.

The teaching of religion in the United States hasn't completely disappeared, educators say, but it may be the most under-taught—or poorly taught—subject in the curriculum of most American Schools.

Many teachers either ignore the controversial topic for fear of political backlash, or resort to *tokenism*—for example, covering Judaism by including a single Hanukkah song during the annual holiday pageant.

"There is a noticeable gap in the inclusion of religious topics as part of a standard curriculum," said Barbara McEwan, an associate profes-

sor of education at Oregon State University. "Most teachers go into the classroom woefully unprepared to deal with many legal issues, including the teaching of religion.

"We are alarmingly ignorant of the laws affecting education," she added. "As a result, we make it up as we go. And, as a result, we get into a lot of litigation."

McEwan, a nationally recognized author in the areas of educational law and classroom discipline, said teachers can respect religious diversity while avoiding bias and tokenism. The Supreme Court has never mandated the exclusion of religion from American classrooms, she added, merely and advocacy role.

"I don't see how you can teach history and culture without teaching about religion," McEwan said. "Religion played a role in the Pilgrims

coming to this country in the first place and, in part, motivated the westward settlement.

"Failure to include religion as an integral part of how societies define themselves would leave students with a shallow and very limited understanding of human history and cultures," she said.

McEwan has developed a series of guidelines for teachers to integrate religion and diversity into the curriculum. Published in a recent issue of the *Middle School Journal*, the guidelines focus on maintaining an atmosphere free from cultural and religious bias.

Most important, she says, is for teachers to integrate religion and culture into the year-long curriculum, and not to use Christmas—or other holidays—as the basis for a celebration in a public school classroom.

"We need to avoid giving students the impression that everything there is to know about Native Americans should be taught in November, or that everything there is to know about African Americans should be taught during Black History Month," McEwan said.

McEwan said that comparative religion courses are important, but shouldn't be implemented until at least middle school, and probably high school. Students at a younger age may be unable to make up their own minds about complex concepts.

Many educators prefer not to delve into the teaching of religion for fear of igniting controversy among students or parents. McEwan, author of a book called *Practicing Judicious Discipline: An Educator's Guide to a Democratic Classroom*, said the Supreme Court is clear on what can

and can't be done regarding religion in public schools.

"Some teachers like to share their own religious perspectives with students because that can be an effective way to teach," McEwan said. "The Supreme Court has a different opinion. It advocates a policy of 'whole-some neutrality' which says that the state cannot promote or prohibit religion."

"In other words, you can give a moment of quiet to students and some of them may choose to pray," she stated. "That's okay. But you can't establish a prayer time. It's all about providing students with choices."

Providing alternatives is why many public school districts around the country are forgoing Halloween parties and decorations in favor of "harvest parties"—in deference to students and parents who dislike the

holiday's pagan origins.

"Some parents feel that's nitpicking, but when a student—especially a very young one—has to walk into a classroom filled with dangling ghosts, cobwebs and witches, it can make them uncomfortable," McEwan said. "And there are some families—Jehovah's Witnesses, for example—who don't believe in the celebration of any holidays."

And that is why the traditional Christmas pageant has all but disappeared from many American Schools, in favor of "holiday" pageants, or "winter fests." That may not be enough, McEwan said.

"If you call it a Winter Festival and then turn around and sing 39 songs about Santa Claus and Christmas, then one song about snowflakes and one about Hanukkah, you still have a problem."

Rome's Jewish "ghetto" stunned

BY PHILIP PULLELLA

Bitterness and anger swept through Rome's Jewish quarter after stunned residents heard that former SS captain Erich Priebke would not be punished for Italy's worst wartime atrocity.

Residents of the quarter on the banks of the Tiber still known as the "Ghetto" poured into the streets from homes and businesses on Thursday night when they learned that a military court had thrown out war crimes charges against Priebke, 83.

It was from the same pavements, shops and homes in the Ghetto that in 1944 German soldiers rounded up some of the 75 Jews who died in the Ardeatine Caves massacre along with 260 other men and boys.

"We the living are in pain. You have to realize that," one angry man told deputy prime minister Walter Veltroni, who donned a Yarmulke (skull cap) and took part at a prayer service in the synagogue.

An 87-year-old man named Moses, his hands trembling and his head shaking, said as he entered the synagogue for the service: "With this verdict they have killed these people twice."

Veltroni was one in a constant flow of politicians who went to the Ghetto to express solidarity with Italy's outraged Jewish community, the oldest in the diaspora.

As the Jews poured out of the synagogue after the service, some could not contain their anger or their emotion as they tried to dissect the

court's verdict.

"Tonight we are praying for all of the victims, Jewish and non," said Angelo Spizzichini, who lost several members of his family when German soldiers killed the 335 men and boys in retaliation for a partisan bomb attack.

Prosecutors had accused Priebke of playing a leading role in the organization of the massacre and sought a life sentence.

"This is a terrible verdict," said Tullia Zevi, president of Italy's Jewish communities. "A great opportunity was lost which could have been a definitive condemnation of a regime that turned Europe upside down 50 years ago."

Mayor Francesco Rutelli condemned the military court's ruling

and ordered that the capital's main monuments remain in the dark on Thursday night in a sign of mourning.

"Turning the lights off monuments does not resolve anything. This is a nice gesture but what happened today was a farce, a shameful farce," Spizzichini said.

"We are making the whole world laugh at us. This is shameful, disgusting."

Graziano Disegni, a merchant with a shop in the Ghetto said: "Italy did not have the courage to punish a delinquent like this. They found this formula to wash their hands of it like Pontius Pilate (the Roman governor of Palestine who refused to save Christ from crucifixion)."

MISSING

**Lennon Drew Smith - 35 yrs. old
6'0" - 130 lbs.
Med Complexion (Black)
D.O.B. 1-26-61
Eyes: Brown
Hair: Black/Wavy/Short Cut**

Missing



Last seen in Eugene and Portland driving a white Chrysler New Yorker-Newer model 4 dr. 1984

His other car is here in Portland, It has been seen around town a 1985 Olds. 4 dr. Linc.# BVB-195. Tan in Color all over. A.P.B-Contact Portland Police or 497-8427 ask for Diann.

Birth Announcement

Marshe' Deneya Upton

Born: August 10, 1996

Weight: 6lb 12oz Length: 20 inches

Mother: Kathleen Lynette Mitchell

Father: Marsel Darvis Upton Sr.

Brother: Marsel Darvis Upton Jr.

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Obituaries

Suzette Sanders

November 14, 1965 - August 3, 1996



Brother (Portland); Geneva Blake, Grandmother (Portland); Eddie Augustus, Fiance (Portland); Sharnette Hunter, Niece (Portland).

Ronnie Duane Burns

July 21, 1967 - August 3, 1996

The Funeral for Ronnie Burns was held at 1:00p.m. on Friday, August 9, 1996 at the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church, Portland, Oregon.

Ronnie Burns and Suzette Sanders were cousins, and both died in an auto accident in SeaTac, Washington on August 3, 1996

Ronnie lived in Portland, Oregon all of his life.

Ronnie leaves to mourn: Jesse R. Burns, Sr., Father (Seattle, WA); Donna Fraser Mother, (Portland); Jesse Burns, Jr., Brother (Portland); Richard Burns Brother, (Portland); Christopher Fraser, Brother (Auburn, WA); Gwen Haskins, Sister (Portland); Geneva Blake, Grandmother (Portland); Marie Smith, Grandmother (Portland); Joe Bush, Great-Grandfather (Portland).

Interment was at the Rose City Cemetery



Back to gospel origins

BY FRANKLIN PAUL

Talented, energetic and driven, vocalist Ann Nesby is just the woman to break down the barriers that exist between the Contemporary Gospel and R&B genres.

Of course, it really doesn't make any sense in the first place that such a division exists.

After all, Contemporary Gospel is doing brisk business these days, boosted by gifted artist like Kirk Franklin, Fred Hammond and Yolanda Adams. They have updated "church" music by injecting livelier grooves and a hip vernacular, giving the Christian message a uptempo sound for the 1990's.

And while secular artists like Mary J. Blige, Whitney Houston and K-Ci Haley rarely mention God in their tunes, you can be sure he's the first one they thank when accepting that Grammy or Soul Train Music Award. Truth be told, many of today's soul singers took their first bows at their local church.

Yet, there stands a rock solid barrier between the two genres, despite their demographically-similar audience. Don't expect to hear a gospel tune in regular rotation on urban radio. And if you're a secular artist, please don't waste your time recording a gospel album. Chances are it won't sell.

Nesby says that a change is due, and she's uniquely qualified to make such a request. She's witnessed the spirits on both sides of the fence, a lead singer for "The Sounds of Blackness," the popular Minneapolis-based inspirational group, and as the writer of tunes recorded by the likes of Gladys Knight and Patti LaBelle.

According to her, there is a commonality of ideals in the two styles that goes beyond beat structure and vocal delivery—that is, people working to deal with one another. So this year when she crafted her debut solo album "I'm Here For You," (Perspective) she focused on that common thread.

"I knew that I wanted to make an album about relationships," she recently recalled. "The broken-ness and even the joy of family. Relationships as it relates with God, husband and wife and our friendship relationships."

The result is a 71-minute emotional examination of the complex feelings that we face each day, uplifted by Nesby's masterfully rich and powerful voice. The impressive 14-song CD was written in large part by Nesby and Sounds' keyboardist Big Jimmy Wright, under the watchful eye (and mixing boards) of super-producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis.

While the album is thick with Nesby's spirituality, it also delves into the kind of real world issues that don't focus on guidance from on high. That's what makes it unusual.

That's also where her problems begin.

"I knew that I would be criticized for doing R&B and Gospel on the same album," she explained, her voice as confident as it was invigorated. "But I felt that it would take that to talk about relationships, the good side and the down side. It's all the truth."

"I wanted to talk about (life) not always being a bed of roses...and I didn't see a way where a traditional gospel song could explain that."

One such issue she wanted to address was the anguish and everyday reality of divorce. So she penned a song which stated, "I'm still wearing your name/But things are not the same/I found me a better man/Someone who loves me and understands.../The papers are on the way/You can be looking for them any day."

Certainly not the traditional fare that would have come from her most powerful influences, The Reverend James Cleveland and Shirley Caesar.

But it is reminiscent of another of her idols. Aretha Franklin, who, like Nesby, came of age singing in her church choir, was known to stir audience with rousing tunes ranging from "You Make Me Feel Like A Natural Woman," to "Wholly Holy," without skipping a beat.

Audiences around the globe are growing to recognize and appreciate Ann Nesby's special blend of music.

Last month, she traveled to Brazil, where she did a pictorial spread for *Vogue* magazine and performed at a local church. Last week, she sang at the Atlanta Olympics. And in June, the mayors of Bloomington and Minneapolis, Minn., declared June 8, "Ann Nesby Day."

Still, Nesby sees that wall between the musical worlds remains standing. She's succeeded so far in satisfying both audiences ("Lord, How I Need You," a self-written traditional song, is already a gospel favorite, and "I'll Do Nothing For You," her current single, is one of the greatest airplay and sales gainers on Billboard Magazines Hot R&B singles chart).

But she's driven to inspire more artists to strive to diversify their tastes, thereby giving these precious musical forms a platform to live and breathe. And come together.

"I think that if we continually pound away," Nesby said, "we will make our own way."

Birth Announcements

Nicole Marie Gamble

Birth date 7-8-96

7lb 8.5oz

20.5 inches

Mother: Diane Marie Gamble

Father: Steven Dee Gamble



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