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VOICES OF DIVERSITY: MULTI-CULTURALISM IN AMERICA

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Voices of Diversity

Multi-culturalism in America

by

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The authors humbly dedicate this book to a man who represents, in a very special way, the diversity which is 21st Century America:

BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA,

44TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

President Obama is consistently described as the first African-American President, and indeed he is. However, his great appeal across racial lines stems from President Obama's personification of the diversity which is so much a part of America.

The son of a white American woman from Kansas and a Black man from the African nation of Kenya, President Obama is multi-racial, like several participants in this study. He is Black, but was raised primarily by his Caucasian mother and grandparents. During his formative years, he encountered several religions: his stepfather was Muslim; while living in Indonesia, he attended both Roman Catholic and Muslim run schools; as an adult he is a member of a Protestant denomination. He was born and spent his adolescent years in Hawaii, where multi-culturalism and multi-racialism flourish.

As a consequence, President Obama, in a real sense, embodies all Americans. He is Christian, but his experience leads him to understand persons from other religions. He has numerous ties across racial lines. Like the respondents in this study, he has experienced the dilemma of defining a personal identity when faced with multi-racial and multi-cultural divisions. Who is better than him to lead America into the increasingly diverse 21st Century?

It is our fondest hope that the suggestions offered in this book will help the people of America deal more effectively with 21st Century diversity, under the leadership of their new President, who so vividly embodies this diversity.

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Brenda I. Marshall, M.A.

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Dr. Arifa Javed's description of the workshops she has conducted with immigrant families and their children provides a valuable insight into the school problems of immigrant children, as well as techniques for dealing with them. While workshops for teachers, parents, and students are common, Dr. Javed's synchronized workshops provide a unique opportunity for teachers, parents, and students to work together in a coordinated effort to improve the educational setting for immigrant students.

The high school diversity program described by Sonya Berkley is one of many attempts to bring cultural and racial diversity into the classroom. However, her analysis provides a rare opportunity to examine the effectiveness of such programs from the perspective of participating teachers and students.

Rarely do we think about the manner in which societies other than our own cope with diversity. Brenda Marshall's analysis of the varying approaches to racial and cultural diversity which appear in different nations provides a unique international perspective.

The specific areas of expertise of these three authors add a valuable dimension to the work which I could not have provided.

Most important, I express my deepest appreciation to the thirty people who served as respondents in the study of multi-racial and multi-cultural families. At their request, their identities remain anonymous. However, without their cooperation, this book could never have been written. I am forever in their debt.

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