

***Socio-Economic Class in Independent Schools:  
An Educational Approach***

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**You're Here! Let's Talk!**

# *People Like US*

## The Film's Resources

<http://www.pbs.org/peoplelikeus/resources/index.html>

# Why is this topic so challenging?

- The myth of the middle class and the classless society
- The mainstream definition of success
- The inherent elitist history of independent schools
- The class struggle between educator and the students they educate
- The relationship of race and class

# The Facts According to the U.S. Census ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

- U.S. median household income  
(in 2007 inflation-adjusted dollars) **\$50,740**
- California median family income  
(in 2007 inflation-adjusted dollars) **\$59,928**

# The Facts (continued)

- The Bay Area median family income  
(Not current, only 1999 statistics available)
- Alameda County median family income  
(in 2007 inflation-adjusted dollars) **\$68,263**

# The Overall Distribution of Income in the U.S.

- <http://www.answers.com/topic/household-income-in-the-united-states>



# Overall Distribution of Wealth in the World

TABLE 2-1. *World Consumption Classes, 1992*

Category of Consumption	Consumers (1.1 billion)	Middle (3.3 billion)	Poor (1.1 billion)
Diet	meat, packaged food, soft drinks	grain, clean water	insufficient grain, unsafe water
Transport	private cars	bicycles buses	walking
Materials	throwaways	durables	local biomass

SOURCE: Worldwatch Institute.

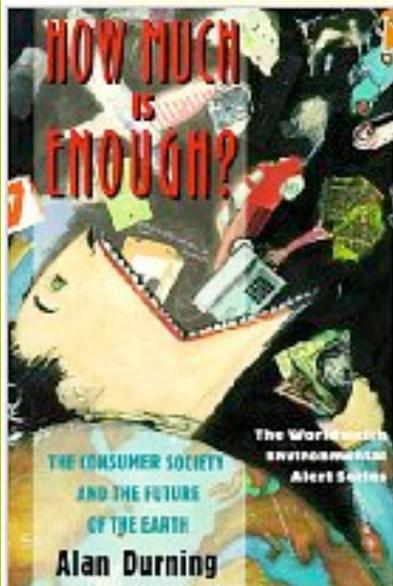
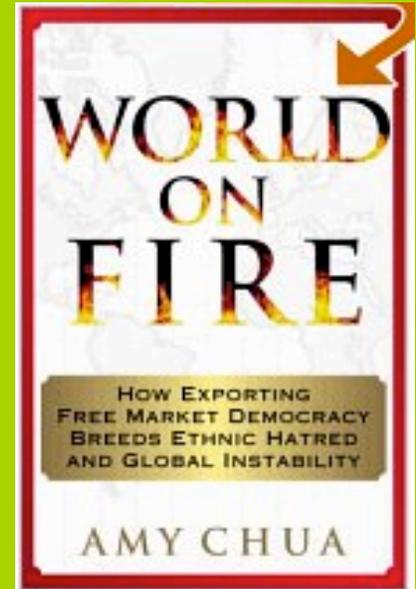
- Poor: earn \$0-\$700 pp/yr
- Middle 3.3 B earn \$700-\$7,500 pp/yr
- Consumers 1.1B earn > \$7,500 pp/yr

# Educational Opportunities

- **Interconnected World:** Philosophy, Texts and Courses
- **Global Awareness:** In and outside the classroom

# Interconnected World: Texts and Courses

The World on Fire by Amy Chua



How Much is Enough by Alan Durning

# Ethical Issues: Ethics of Privilege; Ethics of Sustainability

## *Ethics of Privilege*

(Week 28, 2

Weeks)  

What privileges do we take for granted? What role does guilt play in a serious discussion about privilege and ethics? Is life inevitably unfair? What does "unfair" mean?

Read and discuss Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" View documentary "Making the Grade" about college applications

Class leadership in discussion group work Reading and analysis Reflective writing

reading quizzes reflective essay journal writing reflective paper

Selected newspaper and journal articles, to be distributed in class.

## *Sustainability and Ethics*

(Week 30, 2

Weeks)  

Connecting personal ethics to planetary resource issues

Short reflection essay; active student-led discussion

Alan Durning, *How Much Is Enough* (Multiple-Award winning DVD, 2007)

## *Apr: Personal Ethics*

(Week 32, 2

Weeks)  

What traditions inform your own moral reasoning? To whom do you turn to for advice when you're facing an ethical dilemma? Which habits of mind would you like to develop to become clearer about your own morals? Which habits of behavior would you like to develop to become more consistent about walking your talk?

Reading and discussion of Steven Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* Reading and discussion of case studies

same as above

same as above

Covey, Stephen, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* Selected newspaper and journal articles, to be distributed in class.

# Educational Opportunities (continued)

- **MS Advisory Discussions:** Self-awareness, reflection and activism
- **Service Learning:** dispelling stereotypes, local, national, international
- **Parent Education & Administrator/Faculty/Staff Professional Development:** fostering dialogue, raising awareness, stimulating action

# Scenarios/Role Plays

Discuss one of the scenarios  
in small groups.

# Scenarios

1. A teacher asks for photos of kids' houses for a unit on neighborhoods. During the class presentation, kids start talking about whose house is bigger and better.
2. Students are using the word "ghetto" to describe things such as the broken headphones, someone's clothes or the way another student acts.

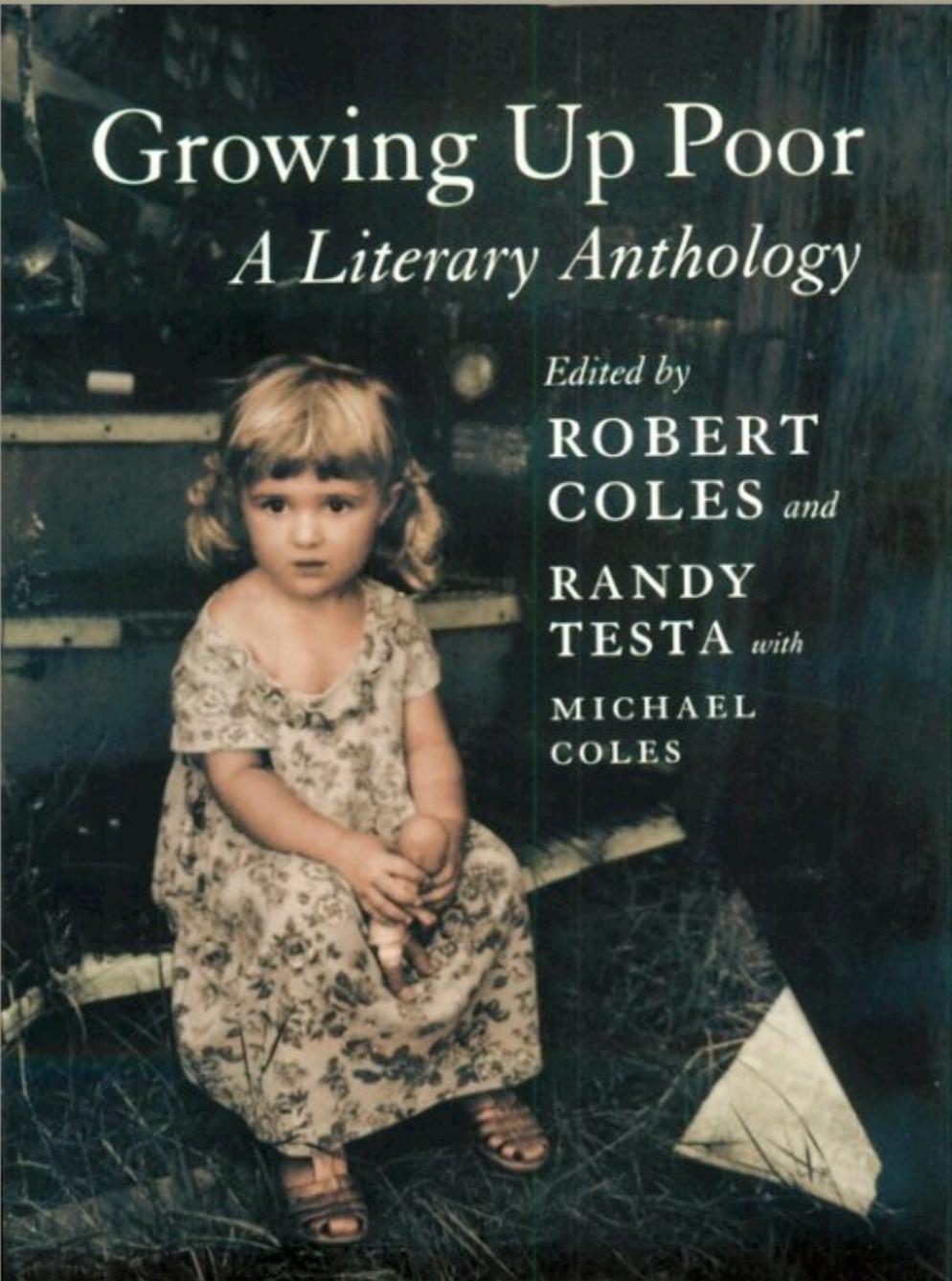
# Review

- Create opportunities for dialogue for all constituencies
- Use internet data and research
- Incorporate socio-economic class into program, professional development and parent education
- Connect discussions of class to questions of sustainability and global education
- Support the emotional challenges this topic evokes
  - Humor and reflection are key!



# Questions & Answers

# Resources



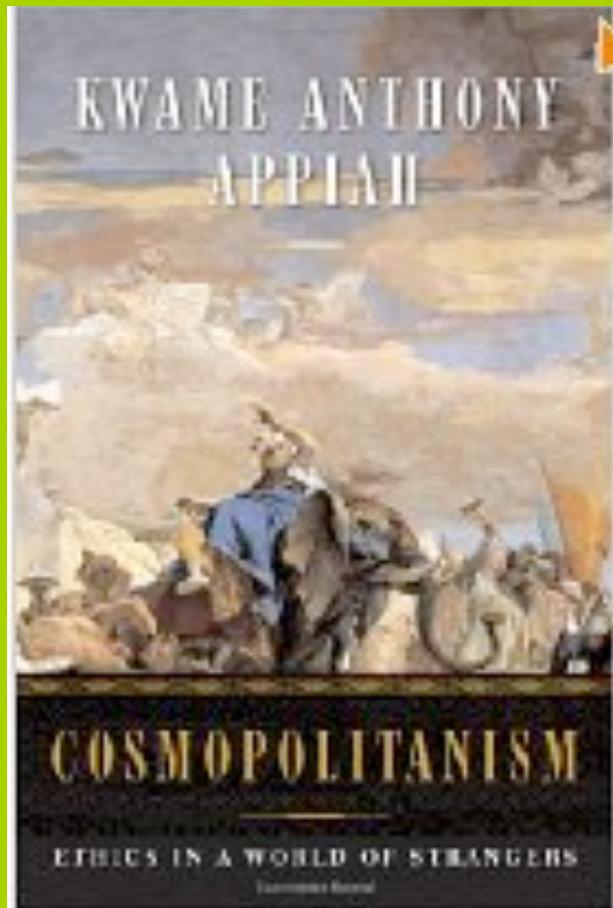
**Growing Up Poor**  
*A Literary Anthology*

*Edited by*

**ROBERT  
COLES** *and*

**RANDY  
TESTA** *with*

**MICHAEL  
COLES**



Cosmopolitanism  
by Kwame Anthony Appiah

# Advisory Discussions:

## Self-awareness, reflection and activism

- Queries & Questions
- Role Playing
- Games
- Research
- Advocacy

# Role Playing & Games

- Act out a scene when a student tells another student that her/his clothes are so cheap. They look like they are from Target.
- Card Game & Discussion
  - Distribute cards to participants and tell them not to look at them. Cards should be placed on the forehead for others to see.
  - Tell participants to group themselves with people like themselves and treat others who have different cards accordingly.
  - Ask participants to line up in sequence according to the card they believe they have.
  - Allow them too look at their cards and begin discussing how they felt during the activity, how they acted and how they believe this relates to real life.

# Research

Ask students to find 5 distinct definitions of success.

- The information must be gathered from a range of people.
- Students will craft their own definition of success.
- Compile the definitions electronically.
- Students identify themes and trends in the information and discuss their own definition relative to the research and their peers.
- Questions: Did your definition change or strengthen during this project? Did anything surprise you? How does your definition of success fit in with your family members? What do you feel is the school's definition of success?

# Service Learning

- How to avoid perpetuating stereotypes.
- Local: soup kitchen with training on cost of living and how easy it is for anyone to become homeless
- National: American Friends Service Committee, homestays
- International: construction work in Puerto Rico or Ecuador

# Advocacy Review

- Give students opportunities to share how class is used within the school context.
- Allow them to practice ways to intercept unkind behavior.
- Provide them with scripts in anticipation of difficult moments.

# Parents/Administrator/Faculty/Staff Education Review

- Scenarios & Case studies
- Role playing
- Surveys
- Community Dialogue

# Scenarios

- A. During a service project at a soup kitchen, a child comments that “all poor people are Black.” Black classmates don’t know how to respond.
  
- B. You encourage your child to invite over their new friend, but your child responds, “I would never have Felix over, we live in an apartment.”

# Scenarios

I was riding on Bart with my students coming home from a play and some students started talking about going to Tahoe and their Tahoe houses. The makeup of the group was such that the majority of the kids frequently spent weekends in Tahoe, so it was a common discussion topic. At the same time, I was acutely aware of the fact that a few of the students certainly did not have a Tahoe house and weren't able to go skiing often. Neither was I. We were completely excluded from the conversation. Did the other non-skiers feel bad? I don't know. I actually was shocked to note how easily the kids who had Tahoe houses talked about them completely matter-of-factly, and I'm not sure how aware they were of the silence of the other kids and of me.