

# **We Each Have Our Own Story of Resistance**

**By Sharon Cronin**

I see culturally relevant anti-bias work with children and families as coming from a long tradition of people resisting oppression in the Americas, beginning with the first acts of European economic, racial, and cultural oppression. As coordinator of the Seattle CRAB group, I found a major source of strength in my knowledge of the history of people's resistance and the skills I have learned from elder and community organizers that made me the person that I am. I can't continue to do this work without continuing to learn from, acknowledge, and honor those ancestors who brought us forward to this point.

One of my early recollections of beginning to understand and resist racism was when I went to play with a European American girl at her house. We had played together the whole day. Her Auntie had not taken a good look at me when I came in, so it wasn't until the afternoon when my mother came to pick me up that Auntie realized I was not entirely of European heritage. Her whole presence changed. She became very, cold and stern. She did not speak a word to my mother. She just glared at us. Then she took an old rag and began methodically wiping everything that I had just played with or touched.

I remember sensing that something about me had really changed in her mind. I knew it was unhealthy and illogical, since I was still the same little girl. I also noticed that my mother was not fazed or surprised. Mom just looked at the woman and gathered me up with my things and we left. We talked about the experience in the car on the way home. I don't remember

if my mother used the word racism to define my experience, but she did give me words to name what had happened.

Since then I have had many other experiences with racism. But the way my mother guided me through that early incident helped me to be prepared, to understand what was going on, and to figure out my options for responding. More important, my mother's guidance taught me that I must not allow that incident to define my self-concept. Nor should I internalize the negative or racist messages of others or society. In other words, I learned not to buy into the philosophy "which holds one race superior and another inferior" as described in Bob Marley's song.

Later in my life, other family members - aunts and uncles, my grandfather - offered continued guidance and support. I realize now that this support helped us to defend ourselves against the psychological and physical attacks of racism, as well as to construct strong, positive, viable self-concepts and identities within our own culture.

*\*Reprinted by the Early Childhood Equity Alliance with permission from the author and publisher\*  
© Sharon Cronin. From Future Vision Present Work, 1998. Used with permission from Redleaf Press.*