

**Public Comment**  
**Emily Dexter, 9 Fenno Street**  
**City Council Meeting**  
**June 10, 2013**

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I'd like to thank all of you for considering a resolution honoring Professor Larry Blum, who wrote *High School, Race, and America's Future: What Students Can Teach Us About Morality, Diversity, and Community*. Thank you to Councilor Kelley in particular for sponsoring this motion. To me, the particulars of this motion are unimportant: what's important is communicating our gratitude, as a city, to Professor Blum for writing a book about our young people and about our high school. If you read this book, I think you will agree with Professor Blum that our young people have a lot to teach us, but that there is also a lot that we need to learn and help them understand about structural racism, sexism and misogyny, homophobia, anti-religious prejudice, and other forms of hate and discrimination. This book celebrates ~~of~~ our many forms of diversity, but it is not a sentimental examination of race issues in our city or our schools.

Some of the people who endorsed Professor Blum's book are also based in Cambridge: Martha Minow, dean of Harvard Law School; Tommie Shelby, professor of philosophy and African American studies at Harvard University, and Ronald Ferguson, director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard. The book opens with an Introduction titled "Why I Taught a High School Course on Race and Racism," and proceeds through 12 chapters that parallel the units in the course. Some of the chapter titles and subtitles include:

- The Historical Construction of Race
- Reflections on Immigration and Racism: Complicating the Discussion of Racism
- Challenging the Notion of Black Inferiority
- Reflections on Expectations and Potential: Different Students, Different Needs
- Hair, Skin, and Pride
- Racial Identity and Moral Self-Concept
- Students Reflect on Diversity

The Conclusion is titled: "The Personal, Moral, Social, and Civic Values of Integrated Education and Diversity."

This is a unique book that focuses on one of the greatest strengths of this city and of our public school system: our diversity. We shouldn't be cynical about our diversity, nor should we take it for granted: It is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education this year and Cambridge is one of the few places where students with different amounts of melanin in their skin go to school together. We know that desegregation is not enough, but we should not minimize that accomplishment and we are correct in seeing diversity as the social foundation for our city.

I think, therefore, we are extremely fortunate to have citizens such as Professor Blum not only writing about race and racism, but actually getting into our schools to do this kind of action research and equity scholarship. I should add that Professor Blum came to the CRLS school council last year to talk with us about his work, he has met with students doing independent

study projects related to race and diversity in Cambridge, and I know he is very committed to being a resource to our schools as we struggle with these difficult issues.

We are also lucky in Cambridge because we have *many* citizens engaged in equity scholarship related to education and youth development. I hope the City Council will find a way to bring all of the equity scholars who live here in Cambridge together for a discussion about education in Cambridge. I know that at the City Council hearings on the CPS budget, you all discussed issues of cultural proficiency, issues related to the school-to-prison pipeline, and issues about curriculum innovation. There are many people living or working here in Cambridge who have the capacity to help us develop approaches to teaching, assessment, and curriculum that are grounded in anti-racism and a relentless focus on equity. The list is too long to name all of these individuals, but I would certainly include:

- Of course, **Bob Moses** and the staff of the **Algebra Project and the Young People's Project**. Bob Moses, obviously, developed the Algebra Project here in Cambridge schools.
- **Emmy Howe**, former CPS Liaison to Gay and Lesbian Families and current co-director of the **SEED Project at the Wellesley Center for Research on Women**. **SEED stands for Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity Through Inclusive Curriculum**. They piloted some of their work in Cambridge in the 1990s and several of their staff are former CPS educators.
- **Ann Roseberry and Beth Warren**, co-directors of the **Cheche Konnen Center at TERC**, which does action research and works with teachers to design learning environments and curricula for diverse students, particularly for math and science education. "Cheche Konnen" means "quest for knowledge" in Haitian Creole, and they started their work years ago working with Haitian students in Cambridge.
- And, of course some of **the current educators** in the Cambridge Public Schools who are doing groundbreaking action research everyday with their colleagues on equity and education in our schools and classrooms.

We have a wealth of resources here in Cambridge amongst our own citizens. This particular motion focuses on the work and contribution of Cambridge resident and Cambridge citizen Lawrence Blum, but I suspect he would be the first to say that he has the company of many other educator-scholars in Cambridge who are committed to both diversity and equity.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer Public Comment.