

# **Cultural Proficiency**

**Fourth Edition**

*To the memory of Gracia Alkema, who opened the door for us.*

—The authors

*To John A. Elliott, Raymond D. Terrell, Kikanza Nuri-Robins, and Delores B. Lindsey—in appreciation of the doors you opened for me.*

—Randy

*To K. Rashid Nuri, my first light.*

—Kikanza

*To the memory of Dr. Augustus Jones, a scholar, colleague, friend, and champion of equity and inclusion.*

—Raymond

*To the memory of two mentors who taught me new ways to think and reflect: Laraine Roberts and John Dyer.*

—Delores

# **Cultural Proficiency**

## **A Manual for School Leaders**

**Fourth Edition**

**Randall B. Lindsey**

**Kikanza Nuri-Robins**

**Raymond D. Terrell**

**Delores B. Lindsey**

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# Preface to the Fourth Edition

This edition of *Cultural Proficiency* has provided us with the opportunity to write together again and to share our learning about Cultural Proficiency. With this edition, we have the benefit of Delores Lindsey joining our team and her experience as a teacher, site administrator, administrator of a leadership academy, and professor of educational leadership. We are most appreciative that Corwin continues to be supportive of our writing and advancing the notion of culturally proficient practices. As has become our custom, this edition incorporates our learning from two sources: (1) our work with schools, educational agencies, and organizations engaged in educating their members and the communities they serve and (2) colleagues, like you, who have used previous editions to deepen their own understanding of Cultural Proficiency in the service of their schools, school districts, and organizations.

Since the publication of the first edition in 1999, we have been pleased with three consistent responses to previous editions of *Cultural Proficiency*. First, we have had numerous experiences with educators and community partners approaching us after having read vignettes and indicating that we must have modeled the case story on their school or community. In most instances, we had never visited their school or community. We began to see the pervasiveness and timeliness of the issues addressed in our writing. Second, we receive supportive comments about the design and presentation of the learning strategies. Readers appreciate that the learning strategies support the content of the book and guide the facilitator through the processes of presentation and facilitation. Third, we receive positive feedback that we have fused practical, onsite applications with the prevalent theoretical and research literature that addresses systemic privilege, entitlement, oppression, education, and leadership in an integrated approach.

While we've worked hard to retain the integrity of prior editions, we've made the following improvements to this edition:

- The content and vignettes are updated and expanded.
- New learning strategies are added in the Resources section at the back of the book.
- A Book Study Guide has been added to the Resources section to facilitate deeper and expanded use of this book by school and district learning communities.
- A new resource, Cultural Proficiency Books' Essential Questions, has been added that describes how to use other Cultural Proficiency books.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Prior to the third edition, through ongoing discussions with our coauthors and colleagues, Franklin Campbell Jones brought to our attention that our actions imply an underlying conceptual framework to Cultural Proficiency that needs to be explicated. Developing the conceptual framework shaped our thinking about the book and led to the other revisions designed to make the work more relevant, accessible, and effective. The conceptual framework demonstrates the interrelationship of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency. Chapter 4 presents and describes the conceptual framework, and Chapters 5 through 8 provide detailed descriptions of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency. In our work with schools and school districts, we refer often to the framework as a mental model for deepening the work of moving from inequity to equitable values, behaviors, policies, and practices.

## UPDATED CONTENT AND CASE STORY

The world continues to change since previous editions. We have endeavored to keep the content and case story relevant and forward-looking. We pride ourselves on our continuous involvement with preK–12 schools, educational agencies, and organizations engaged in educating their members and the communities they serve. In this edition, we continue to base the behavior of the characters in the stories on our experiences and use the stories to present issues relevant to today's schools, school districts, and agencies. The content that surrounds these stories reflects what we are learning about personal values and behaviors and organizational policies and practices that support being successful in our schools and agencies. We take care to support the content of the text with relevant academic and research citations.

## NEW LEARNING STRATEGIES

We have added new activities, which we now call learning strategies; dropped some activities; and streamlined a few of the activities. All learning strategies

are in the Resources section and are presented in the same sequence as the chapters they support.

## **CULTURAL PROFICIENCY BOOKS' ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

When we started the journey of writing the first edition of this book, we did not anticipate there being new titles to follow. As of this writing, Corwin has published 19 books on Cultural Proficiency. We are motivated in this work due to our colleagues, culturally proficient educators, and those who aspire to exhibit culturally proficient practices.

Each of the Cultural Proficiency titles offers a distinct application of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency. The Cultural Proficiency Books' Essential Questions resource is organized to inform you which book(s) may be appropriate for your use.

We are most appreciative to those who have contributed to the improvement of this edition of *Cultural Proficiency*. Educators in preK–12 schools, colleges or universities, educational organizations, and agencies engaged in educating their staffs, communities, and clients throughout Canada and the United States have been generous in describing how they use the content and learning strategies from this book to enrich their own learning and in professional learning with colleagues. We are very grateful to Corwin for its ongoing interest in and support for our work. In particular, we continue to be fortunate in having Dan Alpert as our editor, advocate and guide, and the support of Lucas Schleicher, our associate editor, who guides us through all stages of production. The production team at Corwin is most impressive in their commitment to high standards throughout all phases of turning the manuscript into a book. Finally, we appreciate you for your interest in our schools, in issues related to diversity and equity, and for your commitment to our profession.

*Randall B. Lindsey, Escondido, California*  
*Kikanza Nuri-Robins, Los Angeles, California*  
*Raymond D. Terrell, Woodlawn, Ohio*  
*Delores B. Lindsey, Escondido, California*



# Foreword to the Third Edition

“So, what do you want your students to be able to do when they graduate from your schools?” When I heard this question, I was with a small group of educators and university students at a conference in San Francisco in the mid-1980s. Almost a challenge, the question was posed by Seymour Sarason, a professor emeritus from Yale University.

As a new school site administrator, I was impressed by the thoughtful responses of my colleagues in the room. Many of the responses were similar: mission and vision statements from their school districts. After we spoke, we all looked expectantly to Professor Sarason. He responded with a look of boredom and a sigh. Although you could see in his eyes that he clearly understood our answers, he also knew the statements rang hollow. Did our mission and vision statements really translate to educating the whole child? Did they encompass preparing our students for a future quite different from our childhood?

I recall Professor Sarason’s response as if it were yesterday: “Would it not be easier to simply state that we want our students to leave our schools wanting to know more about themselves, others, and the world?” More effectively than all of our words in those mission and vision phrases, he clearly articulated all our hopes and dreams for our students in one sentence. Imagine every student having a deep desire to be self-reflective, to care and know and learn about their neighbors—neighbors not just next door but also in far-away places around the world. With Professor Sarason’s words as a catalyst, I began in earnest my journey toward Cultural Proficiency.

*Wanting to learn more about ourselves, others, and the world!* A simple statement that was very difficult to put into action. Since the 1980s, my journey toward becoming culturally proficient through self-reflection has guided both my personal and my professional growth. Begin with the inside first and learn more about ourselves.

The third edition of *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* starts with that premise: a commitment to examining your own values, assumptions,

and behaviors to ensure that we serve the needs of all our students. The text provides the reader with effective tools to develop introspective skills and become fully aware of one's strengths as well as barriers to becoming culturally proficient. It is not a quick recipe book or a text for those looking for an easy road to becoming culturally proficient. It does fully engage you in the guiding principles, the language, and the behaviors necessary to celebrate and value diversity.

The text provides illustrative examples of district leaders looking inward to make the changes required to be responsive to their community; it outlines a process for individuals to identify their strengths and areas for improvement along a continuum of Cultural Proficiency and provides the same framework for the community and the organization. The reader will come to face the historical barriers each of us must overcome to become aware of our behaviors and beliefs that stop us from truly engaging our community and our organization to be culturally proficient.

There is no more visible symbol of change and new leadership in America than the election of the first African American president of the United States. We can take this as testimony to the strength of diversity in its broadest definition. Another president, John Quincy Adams, said it best: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader." The challenge to be such leaders is upon us. True leadership in the 21st century is built upon the foundation of Cultural Proficiency. We cannot settle for less—our children and our country depend on it.

—Darline P. Robles  
*Superintendent*  
*Los Angeles County Office of Education*



# Foreword to the Second Edition

In the fall of 1968, I left a Roman Catholic seminary and walked into Dominguez High School in Compton, California. As a rookie school-teacher, I knew nothing about the forces of cultural diversity shaping the school and the history of inequitable school policies and practices in that district that had caused all manner of chaos, including racial tension, riots, bomb threats, and assaults. What I did know is that students, teachers, administrators, and parents couldn't get along and that their disagreements were impeding both teaching and learning.

Thirty-four years later, as I retire this fall as the longest-serving urban superintendent in the country, it's a real pleasure to discover a book for school leaders that offers a systematic approach to addressing problems and challenges that have impeded teaching and learning in so many classrooms, schools, and districts for such a long period of time. I would add that the problems and challenges today are not as obvious as those I encountered as an emergency permit teacher in that tumultuous year of that tumultuous decade. They are, in fact, much more subtle and below the surface, but their ability to impede is in some ways much stronger and more problematic.

This is a book that is grounded first and foremost in respect for people and institutions as they struggle with the important issues of diversity, equity, and fairness. It provides leaders with a profound understanding of the importance of Cultural Proficiency as a guide to long-term improvement in schools and classrooms, where differences should never be ignored in our haste as school administrators to maintain positive public relations at all costs. It challenges school leaders with a moral imperative and a bias for action that puts the importance of leading the change process as the defining factor in their daily work lives.

Those who are looking for quick fixes, magical cures, and short-term spikes in student achievement will be disappointed by this second edition. The case studies are rich, the practical applications are relevant, and the exercises are designed to force thinking in new ways that profoundly challenge the status

quo. Such activities provide a real guide to long-term thinking about new policies, programs, and practices that offer genuine hope in creating a bright future for all those students who have been left behind in school systems everywhere.

This is the beauty of the moral imperative and urgency that these authors capture better than most in the literature on this subject. It goes without saying that our failure to act and to understand the importance of these concepts will lead to continued handwringing about an achievement gap that couldn't be closed in 1968 and won't be closed in this new century.

—Carl A. Cohn  
*University of Southern California*

# Foreword to the First Edition

For years, education work that went under the label *multicultural* was well intentioned and appropriate in orientation but superficial. *Culture* was undefined. Rarely was there any grounding in the study of culture. Even as anthropologists were brought into the picture, our understanding of diversity was not enhanced much given the extremely wide range of cultures that are a part of the American mosaic.

Not only was cultural understanding superficial, but our understanding of pedagogy (especially valid pedagogy) was not much better. Even now, it is hard to have a coherent dialogue about valid pedagogy. It is hard to separate the trivial from the substantial. It is hard to see how valid pedagogy makes a difference in everyday work. Yet powerful general approaches to teaching and learning exist and are well documented, and many demonstrations can be seen (e.g., Eakin & Backler, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sizemore, 1983; Suzuki, 1987).

Valid pedagogy shows that, given a high quality of teaching and nurture, all children succeed in spite of IQ, poverty, crime- and drug-ridden neighborhoods, and other issues. Simply put, ordinary teachers who are well prepared, motivated, and dedicated produce high-achieving students. This production is not rocket science. With reasonably hard work and an appropriate focus, success is certain for all children (e.g., Sparks, 1997).

Culture can be understood, and powerful pedagogy is within the grasp of well-prepared teachers. So why does success elude us, especially for so many poor minority students? Simply put, a third factor complicates and obscures our view of both culture and pedagogy. It is politics. Teaching and learning in schools are the sites for power struggles. These sites are the places where hegemonic agendas are played out (e.g., Freire, 1970; Kohn, 1998; Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1985). The intersection of these three things is the context within which teaching and learning take place. No understanding of school success and failure is possible in ignorance of how these things interact.

A sophisticated understanding of each of these three components separately and in interaction with each other is necessary to raise the level of professional dialogue, analysis, and professional practice.

This book is one in a small number that presents clear voices on these matters. These authors plumb the deep structure of the diversity issue in education. They provide precise definitions of such things as culture and oppression. Moreover, they offer a wide array of anecdotal examples that have the ring of authenticity to them. The anecdotes alone are a rich source of stimulating materials guaranteed to launch meaningful dialogue. The anecdotes bring to life what would otherwise be dry and perhaps irrelevant talk about abstract things, things that are also likely to be decontextualized. Yet the authors weave these anecdotes skillfully into the text, giving it a robustness seldom found in educational literature.

As if this were not enough, the authors provide many activities suitable for staff development. Even veteran staff development leaders will find activities here to enrich their repertoires of best practice.

Culture is real and is a major element in all human interactions. Those who are blind to cultural diversity are blind to reality. Teaching power is also real. Those who are blind to that must improve their own competency. Above all, power and hegemony, the desire by some to dominate vulnerable groups, are alive and well. The ugly history of American apartheid (segregation) is but one example of how hegemony plays out in education and becomes embedded in structures of schooling, root and branch, from ideology to methodology to curriculum to assessment.

The theory and practice described and presented here challenge all to offer at least as much quality as the authors have shown.

This book is a major contribution to the education literature on diversity and pluralism in education. Cultural Proficiency, as discussed here, contributes to the language of empowerment.

—Asa G. Hilliard, III  
*Georgia State University*

# Acknowledgments

Randy, Kikanza, Raymond, and Delores appreciate the many people who have influenced and shaped our lives. Our work provides the opportunity to work with many fine educators across Canada and the United States and we take this opportunity to thank them for continuing their good work influencing and shaping the lives of our children and youth.

One of the many benefits of publishing with Corwin is the opportunity to work with Dan Alpert, our acquisitions editor, whose commitment to equitable and inclusive education inspires us. Appreciation also goes to Lucas Schleicher, Associate Editor, for keeping us on track and ensuring that we made few missteps. A special note of appreciation to Amy Schroller and Laureen Gleason, Project Editor and Production Editor, respectively, for their supportive and artful guidance through final stages of production.



# About the Authors



**Randall B. Lindsey** is professor emeritus at California State University, Los Angeles. He has served as a teacher, as an administrator, as executive director of a nonprofit corporation, as interim dean at California Lutheran University, as Distinguished Educator in Residence at Pepperdine University, and as chair of the Education department at the University of Redlands. Prior to that, he served for seventeen years at California State University, Los Angeles, in the Division of Administration and Counseling. All of Randy's experiences have been in working with diverse populations; his area of study is the behavior of White people in multicultural settings. His

PhD is in educational leadership from Georgia State University, his master of arts in teaching is in history education from the University of Illinois, and his BS is in social science education from Western Illinois University. He has served as a junior high school and high school teacher and as an administrator in charge of school desegregation efforts. At California State University, Los Angeles, he served as chair of the Division of Administration and Counseling and as director of the Regional Assistance Centers for Educational Equity, a regional race desegregation assistance center. With coauthors, he has written several books and articles on Cultural Proficiency. His most recent publication is *The Cultural Proficiency Manifesto: Finding Clarity Amidst the Noise*.

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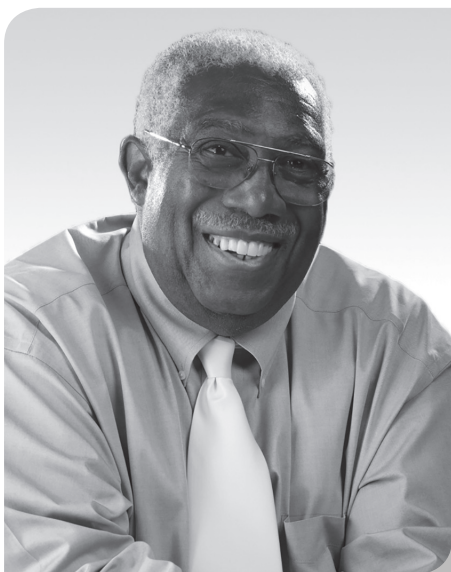
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**Kikanza Nuri-Robins**, MDiv, EdD, is a sojourner for truth. She has been an advocate for justice, equity, and inclusion—first, in the civil rights movement; then, as an elementary school teacher; then, as a lecturer in urban studies and education; and for most of her career, as a consultant. In that role, she has worked as a school desegregation cop, a teacher of public administration, and an organization development specialist serving mission-driven organizations and people across the United States who are in transition—or ought to be. The unifying thread of her work has been her advocacy and support for marginalized and targeted people. She

started her career thinking she would change the world. Now she knows that she is most effective making a difference, wherever in the world she finds herself, one conversation at a time.

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**Raymond D. Terrell** is a professor emeritus. He has served as a high school and junior high school English teacher, an elementary school principal, and an assistant superintendent in public schools in Ohio. He spent one year as a faculty member at Texas A&M University in the Department of Educational Administration. He spent nineteen years at California State University, fourteen years in the Department of Educational Administration, and for five years as the dean of the School of Education. He then served for three years as an elementary principal at Jefferson Elementary School in Hamilton, Ohio. Ray then joined the faculty at Miami University

in Oxford, Ohio, where he served as a professor in the Educational Leadership department, associate dean for the College of Education Health and Society, and as chair of the Teacher Education department. Ray has fifty years of professional experience with diversity and equity issues. He has served school districts in



California, Arizona, Nevada, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. Ray writes about issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Ray lives in Springfield Township, Ohio, with his wife, Eloise. They have two adult children, Dina and William.



**Delores B. Lindsey**, PhD, retired as associate professor at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) but has not retired from the profession. Prior to teaching at CSUSM, she was visiting faculty at Pepperdine University in the master of arts in education leadership program and educational leadership doctoral program. Dr. Lindsey served as a middle school and high school teacher, assistant principal, principal, and county office of education administrator. She received her PhD from Claremont Graduate University. Her primary area of research is creating, leading, and sustaining culturally proficient teaching and learning environments.

She is coauthor of numerous articles and books. Recent publications include *A Culturally Proficient Response to the Common Core: Ensuring Equity Through Professional Learning* by Lindsey, Kearney, Estrada, Terrell, and Lindsey (2015) and *Culturally Proficient Inclusive Schools: All Means All!* by Lindsey, Thousand, Jew, and Piowlski (2018).

Using the lens of Cultural Proficiency, Dr. Lindsey helps educational leaders examine their policies and practices as well as their individual beliefs and values about cross-cultural communication. Her message to her audiences focuses on socially just educational practices and diversity as assets to be nurtured. Dr. Lindsey facilitates educators to develop their own inquiry and action research. Her favorite reflective questions are these: Who are we? and Are we who we say we are? Often, her favorite coauthor and coteacher, Dr. Randall Lindsey, also her husband, joins her to coteach.

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