

Double Your Pleasure

Partnerships and collaborative work relationships are concepts that can only enhance the multicultural work environment. Our experience of joint leadership of the Multicultural Program has represented an institutional commitment to shared leadership as well as a visible, strong model for "working it out."

As in any partnership, at best we are good together. There is a balance. Where Aylette is cautious, I say let's do it. I am afraid or anxious, she is confident. We continue to learn from one another. We are both "teachers" - teaching about ourselves and "learners" - learning about each other. We have had to adjust our thinking and to try to understand the other's position, taking into account our differences in race, ethnicity, life experiences, approaches and work styles. We have had to "try on" the other's ideas and experiences and to push ourselves and each other to take things on from a perspective that challenges our racial values, personal beliefs and who we each are.

So it is not easy. When things are going well we are able to help one another, to offer new perspectives and to listen to each other's way of thinking. We have become friends in a familiar, comfortable, sometimes uncomfortable way. Over the years we have come to know each other's weak spots, strengths and fears. As in any partnership there are hard times when it is painful, when you wonder, why doesn't she agree or why can't she see things the way I do. When you know you are the one who is "right."

In retrospect I wouldn't do it any other way. Because of our shared leadership and struggles through the hard stuff, we have been able to shape the direction of this major initiative in ways we never imagined.

Joanne Jones-Rizzi

Where are We Going?

Joanne and I have co-directed the Multicultural Program for five years now, and each year our work has had successes, problems and new learnings. Learning about cultural diversity and racism is an unending and on-going process, as is institutional change.

Seen in this light, shortcomings don't feel like failures, they feel like necessary steps along the way. We look forward to seeing *The Kids Bridge*, replicated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), travel around the United States in the next few years, and we are planning a series of children's books drawn on the exhibit's themes. We will continue to support staff development at The Children's Museum, to build relationships with new communities in our area, to strengthen and improve collaborations with familiar communities, and to work with the museum profession on these issues which engage us so profoundly.

Aylette Jenness