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THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION (ISSN 0021 8480) is published bimonthly, October through May, and a summer issue for June, July, August, and September by the Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 6840 Eastern Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20012. (202) 722-6407 or 6412. Subscription price, U.S.\$12.95. Single copy, U.S.\$2.75. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing office. Please send all changes of address to Southwestern ColorGraphics, P.O. Box 677, Keene, TX 76059, including both old and new address. Address all editorial and advertising correspondence to the Editor. Copyright © 1989 Southwestern ColorGraphics. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION, P.O. Box 677, Keene, TX 76059.**

Of Many— One People

The focus on a “finished work,” of carrying the gospel to all the world within a given generation, was an early and pivotal vision of this church. This vision shaped the early church’s growing consciousness toward a recognition that its task embraced the variety of cultures, European at first and later a multiplicity of ethnic and transcontinental peoples.

Thus early in its history the Seventh-day Adventist Church established seminaries and secondary schools for Nordics, Germanics, Hispanics, and related European groups. Later, as it extended its mission outreach, schools and education for national and ethnic peoples became an integral part of its evangelistic thrust.

The patterns of recent church growth in the North American Division are creating renewed consciousness in the church, resident in the division, of the need to revitalize and educate itself to embrace these positive evidences of the continuing attractiveness of the message to a world family. Although some, unexposed to varieties of cultural expressions, have become fearful and uncertain regarding the developments ahead, those who have lived abroad or among other cultures readily recognize the potential for strength and growth this represents.

Such persons have come to appreciate such qualities as warmth of interpersonal relations, openness to others, a more dynamic and enthusiastic form of worship, a greater readiness to cooperate and follow leadership in realizing new goals and expanding the church’s soul-winning efforts, as discernible qualities to nurture in the process of bonding the extended spiritual family. Such persons see that with the integration of these traditional qualities of the home base, such as the acquired habits of sustained hard work, the cultivation of patterns of orderly processes to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness, and the provision of major financial resources to share for the extension and expansion of this enriched heritage, we can indeed rebuild the old waste places and move ahead in a concerted drive to complete our universal task.

Sensing the importance of this, in 1985 the North American Division Curriculum Committee adopted guidelines (see page 12) on multicultural awareness. The editors are addressing an entire issue to this topic in the hope that in each school, in each conference, there will develop greater sensitivity and openness to meeting the challenges that such a rich diversity provides.

Decided and deliberate efforts must be put into practice throughout our body politic to encourage the growth toward greater understanding and acceptance of the various ethnic and cultural entities among us. To fulfill God’s will, we need to use the many strengths and abilities to benefit the expanding church family placed under our leadership.

—V.S.G.