

## WinkWorld December 2004

Hello Friends,

This month I asked a diverse group of colleagues/friends to share their thoughts about the holiday season. As I read their contributions, I am reminded that we are a beautiful land of immigrants. Thank you for sharing Nadine, Wu, Ula, and Delphine.

I hope you will take time to enjoy the new Site Index, <http://www.joanwink.com/map/siteindex.php>, which Denise, the Wise Web Wizard, has been constructing for our convenience. In addition, I will soon be adding 2-3 new things to Student Treasures. Those of you with an interest in bilingual education will find these very handy, I suspect.

Prairie Pedagogy

I recently returned from the prairies and share my thoughts of the ranch. Dawn will be on the ranch this week, and we can look forward to her sharing in the January WinkWorld. In addition to Prairie Pedagogy, she has promised to update us on her adventures with literacy, Potter Pedagogy; The Path to Pokémon, and Captain Underpants to the Rescue, (Wink, *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World*, 2005 3/e, pp. 5-10).

[http://www.joanwink.com/cp3/cp3\\_jontowyatt.php](http://www.joanwink.com/cp3/cp3_jontowyatt.php)

Enjoy the season. I am reminded of Thich Nhat Hanh who shares that to make peace, we must be at peace.

Be at peace,  
Joan

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### Winter Celebrations

From **Nadine Pinkerton**, a bilingual school librarian, and also Jonathan's mom in *Critical Pedagogy*.

Over the past fifteen years or so, I, along with most of us in education, have witnessed and participated in the shift and struggle over what is emphasized in public schools during the month of December. Many of us initially failed to see why our "dominant culture" traditions were being challenged and why they might be offensive to those who did not share them. How could our status quo "peace on earth" produce such discord?

As an elementary school librarian, part of my job is to assist teachers in gathering appropriate materials for presentation in the classroom, as well as in my own classroom, the library media center. Our school district created policy that emphasized balance and cultural inclusion, so we collectively began seeking beyond the traditional "Christmas around the World" theme to not only find out but begin to understand what is celebrated other than Christmas. Not surprisingly, a beautiful universal theme of light seems to prevail among the varied religious and non-religious celebrations that occur during this naturally dark and cold time of the year.

There is one significant book that has defined my feelings about inclusion and kinship among diverse groups during this season. It is *The Tree of the Dancing Goats*, by Patricia Polacco, which relates the story of a Jewish family that provides a Christmas celebration for their neighbors who have been stricken with scarlet fever. Heedless of the risk of exposure to a highly contagious disease, these caring neighbors find tremendous joy in making personal sacrifices to bring the trappings of a celebration which is not their own to their dear friends. Homemade candles created for the menorah at Hanukkah instead adorn and light up evergreen trees brought into the homes of those who are too ill to provide their own.

I am grateful to have had my own status quo shaken a bit. Appreciating other ways of celebrating in no way detracts, but rather enriches and indeed enlightens my personal beliefs and ways of celebrating them.

From **Dr. Wu Yiqiang** of The College of New Jersey. Wu and I did our Ph.D. work together at Texas A&M and have been friends since that time.

Chinese New Year, also known as Spring Festival, gave me the best memory of my childhood. It does not occur on a fixed date, but it does take place around the end of January or the beginning of February depending on the Chinese Lunar calendar. It is usually a few days after school winter break. It is the longest holiday and vacation for all Chinese. It's also the happiest time for children. Like most Chinese children, I would spend several sleepless nights before the festival anticipating the many attractive things around Chinese New Year. It's characterized by familygatherings like Christmas when we visit friends, have festivals, bigmeals, etc. Spring Festival-*ChunJie* pronounced in Chinese, it means to celebrate the coming of spring.

At New Year's Eve, all the family members must be at the dinner table. The feast consists of at least 12 dishes and it must have a whole tail of fish. *Yu* (fish) is also a homonym for "to spare", or literarily "enough food for next year." Children are always warned not to ever eat its head and tail because the head and tail symbolize that you have a good beginning and ending for the coming year.

For people in the north of China, they must have dumpling, *Jiaozi*, for the New Year's Eve dinner. In the South, New Year's cake is more popular. It's made of seat rice with varieties of other ingredients. My family used to make our own and that would be our breakfast for weeks. Chinese people like things to be the color red for the holidays, although it has nothing to do with the notion of communism. During the holidays, people like to put a red *Duilian*, a pair of poems on each side of their front gate, and a few characters on top of it. And many would have an upside down character "Happiness" in the middle of the door, inviting happiness and fortune to the family. Red lanterns are hanging everywhere. To children, fireworks are the best among gifts they are expecting and they enjoy playing with them in the evenings, painting the sky red and bright. Another thing makes children love the festival is *Hong bao*, a little red envelope with pocket money from their parents, relatives, and close friends of their parents.

New Year's celebration goes on for 15 days and it is the time to visit relatives and friends. You can pay a visit to anyone you know without notice, phone calls, etc. Every family has tea, wine, and all kinds of candies and snacks for visitors. Can you image how happy children would be if they have a whole week of trick of treating? Chinese people don't have

regular meals during the holidays so they eat around the clock! Spring festival is also a time for entertainment, all kinds of parties, and fun activities are organized for the young and elderly. You would never be bored.

From **Ula Awwad-Raiyan**, a young woman studying for her CA teachers' credential.

The holiday season is coming upon us. Colorful lights, joyful carols.... a time of reflection and renewal. Many people do not realize that for one-fifth of the world's population, another "holiday season" has just ended: the Islamic month of Ramadan followed by the Islamic holiday *Eid Elfitr*. The holy season begins with the sighting of the crescent moon on the evening following the new moon and lasts for 29 or 30 days depending on the lunar cycle. This year it fell between October 15 and November 12, 2004.

In recent years, Ramadan has been observed during the "holiday season" of the other two great monotheistic faiths. But the timing is where the similarity ends. Whereas Christmas and Hanukkah have become widespread, commercialized holidays for many, Ramadan retains its intense spiritual meaning.

The word "Ramadan" comes from the Arabic root word for "parched thirst" and "sun-baked ground." It is expressive of the hunger and thirst felt by those who spend the month in fasting. As opposed to other holidays, when people often indulge, Ramadan is by nature a time of sacrifice.

- Through fasting, Muslim experiences hunger and thirst, and sympathize with those in the world who have little to eat every day.
- Through increased devotion, Muslims feel closer to their Creator, and recognize that everything good we have in this life is a blessing from Him.
- Through increased charity, Muslims develop feelings of generosity and good will toward others. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once said, "A man's wealth is never diminished by charity."
- Through self-control, a Muslim practices good manners, good speech, and good habits.
- Through family and community gatherings, Muslims strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood, in their own communities and throughout the world.

Ramadan is a period of fasting, reflection, devotion, generosity and sacrifice observed by Muslims around the world. Even though from dawn to sunset, Muslims abstain from, food, drink and all sensual pleasures, that doesn't mean food is entirely out of the picture. Two main meals are taken each day during Ramadan. The *souhoor* begins each day before dawn and the *afar* breaks the fast after sunset with the main meal.

The month of Ramadan ends with the festival of *Eid-ul-Fitr*. It's a time for us to celebrate the end of fasting. This holiday is so important that many Muslims in the U.S. take a day off from work or school to celebrate with their families. Everyone rises early for the prayer ceremony at the *masjid* (the place Muslims pray at) wearing his or her new clothes. Afterward, families visit each other, exchange wishes and bring gifts. But we should also remember that *Eid* is not about such gifts, it is really a time to remember God and to feel joy comes to us once we meet obligations toward him. If muslims practice in the fasting, celebration becomes even more meaningful.

From **Delphine Red Shirt**, a Lakota writer, who currently is raising her family and teaching at Yale. Delphine will be at Wayne State College in Nebraska in the spring semester. The following selected paragraphs are taken from *South Dakota Magazine*, Nov/Dec 2004, pp. 85 - 87. In this article, Delphine is reflecting on what her mother told her about the holiday season, when her mom was a young girl, and how it has evolved until today.

Over time, the Lakota way of life, like many Plains cultures, insisted upon generosity as a means for survival of pa people. The weak, poor and the old, especially the infirm, orphans and widows, were sought out to receive gifts. A girl became a true buffalo Woman, part of the Lakota Pte Oyhate, or Buffalo People, through a ceremony called Hunka Olowan Pi, or the Making Relatives Song. The young woman would adopt the poorest member of the tribe as her relative. The indigent person then considered the wealthier family his or her own, and the family cared for that individual throughout his or her life as they would someone related by blood.

Gift giving was simply a way of life. Today, Plains people still have "giveaways." Families save and give things away to honor someone else or an event in their life. The word *wi kpe ya pe*, means to throw away, the idea that things of this world are meant to be pushed away from the individual self and toward the collective, thrown into the pile where they can be redistributed.

The display of generosity at such events will humble any observer, especially those in today's culture who after the holidays open their bills to pay for what they have given to family and friends. For many indigenous people Christmas can happen any time, and the wonderful thing about a give away is that you will walk away with something good, tangible or otherwise.