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Disposition for Change: A Teacher's Quest for Student and Self-Liberation

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Introduction

The tensions that dominate the lives of Mexican-American adolescents complicate their academic achievement. Many Anglo-American teachers see Mexican-American students as lacking parental and administrative support and capability or intelligence, stereotypes that poison progress and inhibit their learning.

Our research considers the influence of visionary, dedicated teachers in the lives of underprivileged students. The biographical film narratives included in our study detail the experiences of Caucasian and Latino teachers and their Mexican-American students. They point to the power of individual teachers to open doors for positive change and progress in the lives of their students.

Results

Teachers who engage in the process of student liberation, choosing to learn and change on a daily basis and encourage their students to do the same, will be able to overcome racial stereotypes and help adolescents reach their potential.

Teachers can successfully engage in this process by choosing to:
- Keep an open mind
- Embrace student culture
- Love and respect their students
- Inspire hope

Teachers in Film

Stand and Deliver teacher, Jaime Escalante, and his students celebrate the success of James A. Garfield High School’s first AP calculus class.

Coach White celebrates his cross country team’s victory in McFarland, USA.

Conclusions

Teachers who look beyond racial stereotypes with the disposition to change liberate both their students and themselves. They experience fulfillment as they help adolescents reach their goals. In the future, we will consider how this type of teacher engagement can increase classroom effectiveness in schools across the country.