

# Learn street culture, educators are urged

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — If a teacher wants to help his or her students become book-smart, the teacher must become street-smart.

That was the message Catholic educators heard last week at the University of Rochester during a presentation by Herbert L. Foster, director of the Institute for the Study of Classroom Management and School Discipline at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

"The behavior and language of the black American street crowd has spread to almost all aspects of American life," Foster asserted. He noted that through such outlets as movies, rap music and televised sports "lower-class" African-American slang, dress and behavior have found their way into classrooms throughout the nation.

Foster emphasized that administrators and teachers must learn about such cultural trends if they are to understand the behavior of some of their students — both white and black — and how it influences the rest of the student body.

Foster's July 11 talk was part of a series of workshops presented at the Institute on Catholic Education, which ran from July 9-12 at the UR's Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

More than 200 Catholic educators from seven states, Canada and Great Britain attended the institute, which was co-sponsored by more than 20 individuals and organizations, including the diocesan offices of Catholic Schools, Black Ministries and Religious Education.

Foster's 1986 book, entitled "Ribbin', jivin', and playin' the dozens — The persistent dilemma in our schools," embodied many of his classroom insights. The title is taken from three black American street terms that define behavior common to all ethnic groups, he said, but which in today's U.S. culture are usually called by an African-American name.

For example, a student "playin' the dozens" may attempt to upset a teacher or classmate by trading barbs until either participant's mother becomes the target of insult. "Playin' the dozens" can lead to violence, Foster warned, cautioning teachers to avoid being trapped in such games by their students.

Just as black street life and mores are influencing students today, poor, street-wise kids in general teach their classmates a way of looking at life that may run counter to the middle-class values their parents gave them, he said.

"You have to learn the language and behavior of the ... poor children with what ever group you're with," he said. "Very often, the poor children set standards for the middle-class students." Sometimes,

those standards include peer pressure to perform poorly in school or to dress and behave badly, he said.

Foster used the terms "middle-class" and "lower-class" to encompass more than the economic status of students' families. He outlined behavioral patterns he claimed were often found among the poor and middle-class to better define his use of the two terms.

He remarked, for example, that "lower-class" families generally use "harsh physical discipline," "have fatalistic attitudes about life," orient themselves to "live in the present" and define the roles of women and men "rigidly."

On the other hand, he said, "middle-class" families are inclined to "use mild, consistent discipline," be "rational" in their outlook on life, orient themselves "to the future," and define men and women as "equals." Yet, Foster emphasized that lower-class parents could very well adopt the patterns of the upwardly mobile, taking their children to such places as museums and theaters, and instilling middle-class values in them.

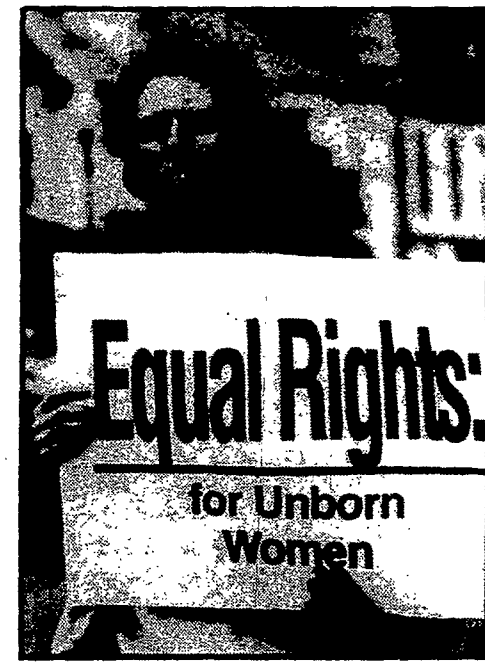
To illustrate his thought, Foster pointed out that during the civil rights movement of

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## SUSAN B. ANTHONY CALLED ABORTION "CHILD KILLER"

Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

FEMINISTS FOR LIFE — Women converged on Seneca Falls last Saturday, July 14, for a pro-life march as part of the 12th Annual National Women's Convention Days. The three-day celebration commemorated the expansion of voting rights to women. Above, Rachel MacNair, president of Kansas City, Mo.-based Feminists for Life of America, delivered an address entitled "Our Feminist Foremothers' Role in the First Great American Abortion Debate." At right, Noella Schum of Rochester marched in the Convention Days Parade.



## New pro-life network to bring parishes together

ROCHESTER — Approximately 30 representatives from parishes throughout Monroe and Livingston counties are scheduled to meet at Sacred Heart Cathedral Tuesday, July 24, to discuss creating a Catholic pro-life parish network.

Father John A. Firpo, diocesan director of the Division of Social Ministry, will deliver the meeting's keynote speech at 7 p.m.

The idea to create such a network came from the Catholic Family Center's 10-member Task Force on Abortion, which began meeting in July, 1989. The task force was created last year following an open discussion on pro-life issues sponsored by the justice and peace committee of CFC's board of directors.

The agency will distribute pro-life resource materials to parish representatives who will be asked to work with their churches' social ministry committees, said Kathleen Machi, chairperson of the task force and a member of the center's board of directors.

Machi said the agency is encouraging parishes to join together in a network instead of forming individual pro-life committees because the unified approach embodies the Catholic church's consistent life ethic as applied through its social ministry.

"You can't really make much sense of abortion if you take it out (from other life

issues)," she said, adding that a pro-life Catholic would be interested "in seeing that women and babies are cared for; seeing that children have the opportunities and resources to live productive lives; seeing (that) the single mothers (are supported)."

Each parish in the network will determine how to structure its own approach to pro-life issues, Machi said, noting that she hopes the network will help parishioners of all political persuasions work together.


"We're not trying to push any single

agenda," she said, adding later, "I think (the task force) felt fundamentally that the best way for Catholics to come together in the area of pro-life is from a spiritual or prayer basis."

Such an approach can allow more vocal Catholics to mingle with less aggressive Catholics in the pro-life camp. In order to stop abortion, some pro-life Catholics may be looking for alternatives to protests and "rescue missions," Machi said.

— Rob Cullivan

  
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