



'My name is Matt'
Living with autism
DAYBREAK, 1G



Parade of Homes Preview
HOME, 1I



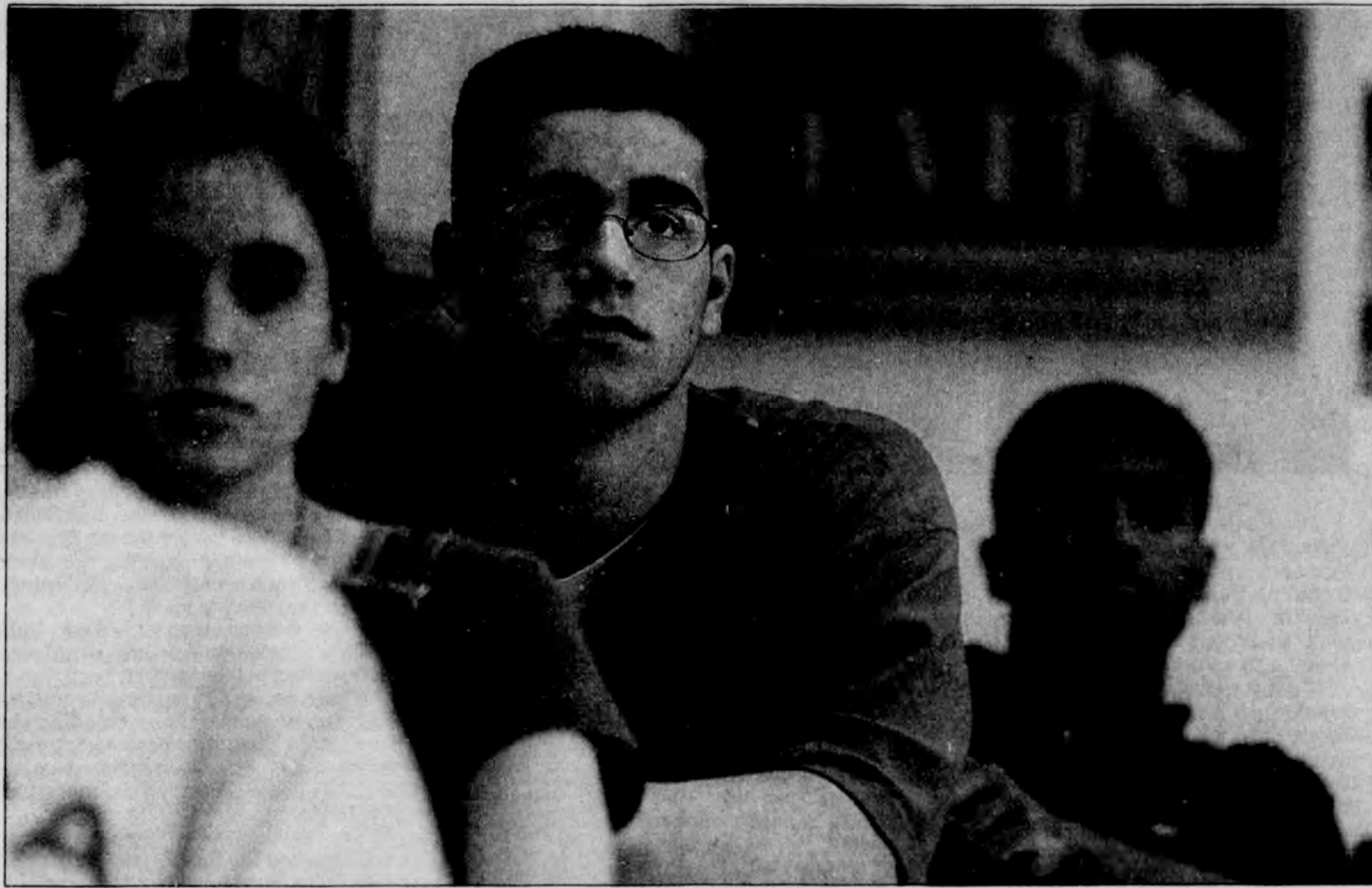
Reggie Torian: On the verge of greatness
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"Racial and cultural diversity is a source of strength in Madison's schools," says Sebastian Podesta, shown in class at West High School. He is a junior who is keeping a diary for the Schools of Hope project.

The pain and promise of diversity in schools

■ The Madison schools, like no other institution in Dane County, must deal intimately — and on a massive scale — with myriad racial and cultural issues.

By Andy Hall
Wisconsin State Journal

Race is about to climb out of its box. The children will see to that. Profound racial shifts in Madison's public schools are placing race and culture at the center of daily life in the schools — and throughout the community. And despite some promising small programs, neither the schools nor the community has developed systems to bring these diverse voices together, the Wisconsin State Journal has found during its Schools of Hope reporting project. Although calls to openly deal with race have been pushed aside for 30 years, there's no dodging them now that three of 10 Madison students are racial minorities. It's an issue that's no longer black and white, as Hispanics, Southeast Asians, other Asians and American Indians grow in number. The gentle voice of a child prods the School Board: "We need new social studies books because they're very outdated," fifth-grader Carina Marquez said at a May meeting. "They ... speak about Latinos hardly at all." On this night, most of the people watching the School Board are Hispanic — evi-

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Coming this week

TODAY: The demands of diversity in Madison schools
MONDAY: Separate, but better? Classes, activities retain degree of segregation.
TUESDAY: Role models: Are teaching ranks diverse enough?
WEDNESDAY: White anxieties: Safety and fairness.
THURSDAY: Hispanic ties to schools grow.
FRIDAY: African Americans confront ongoing issues.
NEXT SUNDAY: Dealing with diversity: Ideas and issues.

Today on WISC (Ch. 3)

The roles of race and culture in Madison's public schools will be discussed at 10 a.m. today on "For the Record" on WISC, the Wisconsin State Journal's partner in the Schools of Hope project. Other WISC coverage includes: ■ 5:30 p.m. today, interviews with student Lai Thao and Joseph Nigh, her English as a Second Language counselor. 10 p.m. today, report on "The Changing Face of Madison's Schools." ■ 6 and 10 p.m. Monday, reports on how the diverse student population mixes during and after school.

■ Lai Thao's rise from illiterate war refugee to honor student shows how one family remained true to its culture while thriving in Madison's public schools.

By Andy Hall
Wisconsin State Journal

P a Yae Thao understood rice and guns and survival. A Hmong peasant farmer drafted at age 16 into the CIA's secret war in Laos, he learned by watching. Those who lived should be mimicked. Those who died should be buried. In Madison, the place he first touched snow, Pa Thao surmised that neither rice nor guns would help his family survive. But what would? Pa found the answer by watching prosperous people. Needing to cash a check, he visited the gleaming Firststar Bank building on the Capitol Square. He looked at the busy tellers, the well-dressed attorneys and executives striding through the lobby, and he noticed something odd: Their bodies were weak — in many cases, too weak to have tended a rice paddy in his homeland. But their minds, exercised through education, were strong. In America, he figured, education meant survival. Pa, his wife, Nhia Her Thao, and children had little money, little schooling, little ability to read, speak or write English. But Pa and Nhia vowed to make their family strong. "To survive here, you don't need a pow-

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Land swap would give state forest to timber cutter

State would get Willow Flowage

By Ron Seely
Environment reporter

In a little-known deal being negotiated by state officials, a paper company would get thousands of acres of public land in northern Wisconsin — some of which may contain old-growth forests — in exchange for its land around the Willow Flowage in the north central part of the state. The proposed deal with Tenneco Packaging Corp. and Four States Timber Venture, Inc. has been in the works for more than a year. Plan details alarm environmentalists and other critics who fear the state's citizens would be getting a raw deal. The trade would give the timber cutter between 15,000 and 20,000 acres of Public Trust Lands for about 9,922 acres, much of which has already been clear-cut by Tenneco, around the flowage. "It's a net loss in terms of ecological quality," said UW-Madison ecologist Don Waller. "Where's the bargain?" Few argue with the merits of bringing the 6,623-acre Willow Flowage and surrounding land northeast of Tomahawk under state protection. Though hardly

wild by true wilderness standards, it is a remote and beautiful part of the state that is increasingly prone to development. Much of the shoreline around the 127 miles of flowage is undeveloped; about 8,700 acres, or 90 percent of the shoreline, has already been restricted from development. The flowage is a rich fishery and the glaciated hills surrounding it are home to abundant wildlife; some nearby residents have even reported sightings of the extremely rare mountain lion. The issue, according to Waller and others, isn't the value of saving the Willow; it's the fairness of the deal that is being considered. The deal, according to Stan Druckenmiller, an executive assistant with the Department of Natural Resources, would work like this: The DNR would use between \$9 million and \$10 million from the Stewardship Fund to buy the Public Trust Fund land, which is in several separate parcels within 70 miles of Tomahawk. The DNR would then trade the Public Trust

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Campaign reform elusive, states find

Wisconsin among many looking for answers

By David E. Rosenbaum
New York Times

The biggest mystery in Wisconsin about campaign financing has nothing to do with sneaking foreign money into American politics or why certain people and not others stayed overnight in the Lincoln Bedroom. What people here are baffled about is who spent \$135,000 anonymously to send 450,000 post cards to voters just before an election in April to influence a race for state Supreme Court. Similarly, campaign finance issues in other states are considerably less cosmic than in Washington. In California, the main question is whether the courts will allow low limits approved by voters last year on donations to legislative candidates or whether the caps will be overturned, as in Missouri. In Illinois, the latest news is about how legislative leaders spent tens of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions to buy tickets to sports events, cars and other items that have nothing to do with elections. In Texas, the legislature refused to change the requirements to publish reports of campaign contributions, leaving in place an

arrangement that is so unwieldy as to make the data essentially inaccessible. In New England, some states are considering financing all races for state offices with public money. The Vermont State Senate passed a public financing bill this week. The Connecticut House rejected such a measure by two votes two weeks ago. In Maine, which last year adopted the most extensive public financing system in the country, worries have arisen that the amount of public money will be too small to allow the system to function properly. Although the questions involving the states are on a smaller scale than in Washington, the underlying problems are the same. The first is that the cost of running a competitive race has exploded in recent years. In Illinois, at least four state senate candidates spent more than \$1 million on their campaigns last year. In Washington State, it cost Mike Lowry \$6.7 million to be elected governor in 1992 and Gary Locke \$10.1 million last year. In New Jersey, the average cost for an assembly seat rose, to

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Madison Forecast:
Today: Mostly sunny and pleasant. High 78. Tonight: Mostly clear and mild conditions. Low 51.

Details/back page

Flak flying over clean air proposal

EPA leader won't back down

By John H. Cushman Jr.
New York Times

WASHINGTON — Major industry groups are protesting, senior members of Congress are complaining and the White House economic advisers are balking. But

Carol Browner, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, continues to defend doggedly the agency's proposal to toughen air-quality standards. In one forum after another, from grueling daylong congressional hearings to public debates with her opponents, Browner has insisted that nothing she has heard in six months has changed her fundamental view that the current standards do not adequately pro-

tect the public from the effects of breathing soot and smog. Toughening the standards, as the EPA proposed in November, would put hundreds of counties out of compliance with the Clean Air Act and force states to impose costly controls on emissions of ozone and fine chemical particles, mostly caused by burning fuels. A final rule has to be issued in July, and as the EPA prepares its ultimate recommendation, an in-

tense debate over the best course to take is roiling the Clinton administration. While Browner has staunchly defended the proposed rule, the White House has maintained almost total silence about it. No top officials there have spoken out in defense of her proposal. And in closed meetings, other aides have sought to water it down, people in-

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Thaos

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erful body. You need a powerful mind," Nhia Thao said in a recent interview at the family's well-kept, crackerbox home six blocks from East High School.

Proof that the Thaos succeeded arrives in six days, when Lai, the oldest of their seven children, becomes the first member of her family ever to graduate from high school. Her father attended three years of school; her mother, none.

Lai's rise from illiterate war refugee to honor student offers a glimpse into how a family can remain true to its culture while thriving in Madison's public schools.

All seven Thao children excel despite a lack of Southeast Asian role models on the district's staff, or curriculum that conveys much about Hmong culture.

Their success formula: Hard work, including two to four hours of homework every night.

Lai will graduate from East with a 3.76 grade point average on a four-point scale — high enough to earn six scholarships from foundations and corporations totaling \$10,500. She plans to enroll at UW-Madison and, later, become a physician.

Among the 211 Southeast Asians attending Madison high schools, 42 (20 percent) maintain cumulative grade-point averages of 3.0 or better on a four-point scale, records show. In contrast, 67 (32 percent) of these students from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam are enrolled in the English as a Second Language program — not yet ready to move into the mainstream.

With her achievements, Lai inspires not just her siblings, but her people. And it all starts with parents like Pa and Nhia Thao.

For Pa, survival has meant: ■ Holding a gun on Communist prisoners who were forced to watch as their comrades were pushed out the doors of airplanes.

■ Enduring a grenade blast that ripped into his nose and leg and scarred him for life.

■ Leaving his parents behind, his mother covering her eyes in grief, as he brought his family to the United States from a Thai refugee camp in 1988.

■ Carrying that trauma in his mind, where it awakens him, screaming, with nightmares that the war has followed him from Southeast Asia to the Upper Midwest.

Still, though his family is safe, Pa continues looking, continues leading them to new ways. Pa and Nhia Thao have abandoned the ages-old custom of expecting girls to marry in their mid-teens, for example, and now order their children to delay matrimony until after graduating from college.

By Hmong tradition, the oldest girl usually bears most of the burden of domestic chores. But Pa and Nhia perform many chores and divide the remaining labor evenly among all the children.



This change frees Lai to do her two to four hours of homework a night.

"I really have to focus on my homework, to catch up with everyone else," said Lai, who speaks in a friendly, comforting voice, even if she's arguing a point.

Along the way, the Madison School District, too, showed the Thaos that it could bend — offering special language assistance and encouragement. Family members are flattered that one of the children's white teachers at O'Keeffe Middle School is learning to speak Hmong.

Leaving Laos

Pa and Nhia Thao fled Laos in 1975, after Pa served five years in the CIA-funded Hmong army, helping choke off Communist supply lines during the Vietnam War. He attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. Remaining in Laos after the U.S. withdrew from the war would have been suicide. The couple settled in a refugee camp in Thailand and began a family.

But diseases made life miserable. The parents were up all night, tending to their children's fevers. Lai developed polio. Until she reached age 4, her mother had to carry or drag her.

When Lai was about 7, her legs remained weak. She fell while walking to a rice paddy. Dragging her right, polio-ravaged leg, she made it to the hospital. What she saw changed her life.

A woman carrying a sick baby pushed her way to the front of a long line. A physician arrived at about the same time and tried to calm the crowd.

"They were all crying and begging for his help," Lai said. "He couldn't help everyone and he started crying, too. It keeps going through my mind, the faces of the people, the face of me standing there with my polio."

"I want to help people."

When she arrived in Madison nine years ago, Lai was simply a shy, scared girl enrolled in Lowell Elementary as a fourth-grader. Her English vocabulary: "yes," "no." She was unsure how to say the ABCs.

"She is beginning to speak some English and is progressing in her reading," her ESL teacher wrote in her fourth-grade report card. "She will use her language when she can't use English."

That card hints at why Lai would succeed: "Lai has worked very hard this year," her classroom teacher wrote.

A report also noted, "Parents will encourage her to use her English to get her questions answered."

In fifth grade, her ESL teacher remarked that "Lai is a very hard worker and has improved greatly since last year. . . . She is one of my favorite students and I wish her success."

The pattern was set: Every report card through high school lauds Lai for working hard, contributing to class discussions and learning new skills quickly.

A FAST start

While Lai attended Lowell, the family also enrolled in Families and Schools Together (FAST), an eight-week program that strives to give parents the tools to work effectively with their children and the schools. Parents are taught, for example, that in America it's important to attend meetings with teachers and to talk with their children about school.

Family members today credit FAST with helping them get off to a strong start in America. They proudly show visitors a photograph from the program's graduation ceremony; they appear with principal Jerry Johnson.

Seven years later, Johnson recalls that evening, the way Pa and Lai Thao climbed onto Lowell's little stage and thanked the FAST staff.

Ever since then, Lai's parents have regularly attended their children's parent-teacher conferences.



Lai Thao at home with her parents and siblings. Front row, from left: Magalee, Nhia Her, father Pa Yae, Chao Xiyang. Back row: Kerchee, Frang Soua and Chou Dou Houa.

State Journal photo/STEVE APPS



Left: The Thao children attended classes in their refugee camp in Thailand, but learned no English to prepare them for life in America. Right: Pa Yae



Contributed photos

Thao, center, bids farewell to relatives before leaving a Thai refugee camp for the United States in 1988.

They tell every teacher to do what's best to educate their children. By Hmong tradition, parents wouldn't presume to tell the experts how to do their job.

With Lai serving as interpreter, they also keep up with every letter the children bring home from school.

All the Thao children speak Hmong and English, but Lai is the only family member who can also read and write both languages. Her parents have learned little English; the construction of sentences and the speech patterns are so different that they're finding it difficult to adapt.

Lai's parents also ask teachers to understand that the children have certain cultural obligations that may restrict their ability to join after-school activities or social events.

Hmong culture thrives on the weekends. Nhia teaches the girls traditional needlestitch. Through an arrangement with area farmers, Pa teaches the boys how to butcher cows and pigs.

By Hmong tradition, families belong to one of 18 clans. Hmong are forbidden from marrying within their clan, even if they aren't related by blood. However, in crossing clan lines, relatives as close as first cousins — such as Pa and Nhia Thao — are permitted to marry.

Owing to tradition, Lai and her siblings aren't permitted to date in the American style. However, Lai is permitted to accept 15-minute phone calls; her cousins have circulated her number to young men across Wisconsin and Minnesota. "They call me," Lai said. "You talk to them just for fun."

In addition, suitors are allowed to visit a girl's home and talk with



Pa Yae Thao attends a 1995 Colorado reunion of Hmong veterans of the CIA's secret war. Last month the former guerrilla fighter joined U.S. officials in honoring Hmong veterans at Arlington National Cemetery.

her in the presence of her parents. "Usually only college guys would do that," Lai said. "They're not as afraid of the parents."

The Thao clan in the Madison area sometimes draws more than 100 adults and 30 children to weekend religious ceremonies. Shamans, traditional healers, perform rituals when a clan member is ill or worried, and attempt to coax the person's spirit back to the body to restore strength.

Racial tensions

For four hours every Saturday, Lai lives with one foot in the past, one in the future, as she meets with the Hmong American Youth Organization. She helped establish

the group, which originally included only Hmong girls but recently began accepting boys, to focus on bridging the generation gap with parents as well as the gap between U.S. and Hmong cultures.

At one such meeting in April, Lai led a discussion of troubling racial incidents — racial slurs and fights — that had erupted the previous week between Hmong and African-American students at East High School.

Hmong students at East have been labeled with racial epithets for at least a decade. They used to follow their cultural training and smile and walk away. Now, however, some Hmong youth, drawing upon the advice of American friends and teachers, have decided to stand their ground.

It was the latest sign that race and culture are ever changing, ever shaping Madison's public schools — just as the schools continue to have a profound influence over the racial and cultural beliefs of residents.

The students in Lai's group drew up a list of suggestions for defusing the tensions — such as creating a conflict-resolution panel and asking more teachers to monitor the halls and stairs. Early the next week, Lai led them into a meeting with East principal Milton McPike.

Lai complained, "There are some teachers who see fights or hear something that goes on in the classroom and they don't do anything about it."

She and her friends said they're angry about being called "chinks," an epithet that further underscores the speakers' ignorance of the fact that Hmong are from Laos, not China.

"You're right," McPike said,

pondering how cultural awareness themes could be woven into classes. "One of the things that has bothered me is we haven't used our kids to talk about cultures."

He assured the students: "This is your school. . . . My job is to make you feel comfortable here. . . . I was very hurt by the things that went down."

McPike asked the Hmong students to alert him of any incidents. "Trust me," he said. "It won't lead into a fight. I think I have that much power. . . . I beg of you."

After 10 minutes, the students were on their way to class, and McPike was on his way to watch cultural presentations at the school's Fine Arts Week celebration that featured Hmong and African-American dance performances.

"I thought it was pretty good," Lai said of the meeting with the principal. "He communicates."

The racial tensions dissipated by the end of the week. Two students — one Hmong, one African-American — were asked not to return to school the rest of the year. Indeed, a student panel was created to address racial issues.

And Lai soared through her senior year in Madison's public schools.

She left Madison at 5:30 one April morning with a teacher and group of students to join more than 500 people for the Third National Hmong Conference in Eau Claire. The students, packed shoulder to shoulder in stuffy rooms, politely raised questions about their own culture and its worth in modern U.S. society.

By early afternoon, Lai was so excited that her voice trembled.

"Now I know there are Hmong principals, Hmong doctors, Hmong lawyers," Lai said. "I didn't know that before."

"It makes me feel proud inside."

Racially motivated fight has ripple effect

Diana Dahlk, a white; Timeka Rumph, an African American; and Lai Thao, a Hmong, all are seniors at East High School.

In these excerpts from their Schools of Hope diaries, they react to one racially motivated incident of taunting and scuffles that occurred at the school in April. As a result of the incident, school officials asked one African-American and one Hmong student not to return to school for the remainder of the year. Tensions eased within a week.

Diana Dahlk: I really don't see much of the fights that have been happening around school lately. I did however see a pretty major one by the Forum. It happened during silent reading and I think it was between an Asian and African-American. (I didn't go up to watch like the rest of the students that were around did.) I was in the Forum for a club meeting when it started. At first there was a lot of shouting and then students started crowding around and cheering them on. Of course the teachers and security guards separated them. As I was walking to go to my next class I could still

hear them shouting swear words at each other.

Timeka Rumph: It's Friday and thank God. This week has been forever long. It seems as if all the excitement from last week has blown over. Perhaps I should have more faith in people, because I honestly thought something more might happen, but it didn't and I'm happy. Sometimes I look at this school, this mini-community, and count the days until I'm done. School just isn't my thing anymore and last Thursday's events just made that more clear. Why must people fight with each other? Whether verbal or physical, there just is no point. I don't know what went down, or why, but I do know they didn't have to bring it into the school.

My class went to see KOJO yesterday and it was pretty good. They had a good message — stop the violence.

Last week I don't know what happened but everything changed. Thursday there were three fights and when I walked out of the school on Friday, there were eight

police officers there to "prevent" something from happening. I think I was at a loss because I couldn't believe that in 48 hours East could make such a change.

By Monday, the whole incident had blown over, but I just didn't understand. The fight I saw was verbal. This girl walks up to another girl and says "I heard you called me a bitch and a nigger."

They went on to scream at each other and then the girl says, "How would you feel if I called you a chink?"

Now, this isn't my business and it would've been nice to not even have seen and heard what I did. Does it always have to be about race? I am so sick of all this. . . . and I mean it. High school has turned into a big joke. I'm glad I'm getting out because I don't think I could handle another year. Well, what's done is done. Although I thought something more might happen, I'm very pleased that the situation has been handled.

Lai Thao: Today at school after the United Asian Students meeting there was a big fight. I wasn't

there to see it because I had to go to the National Honor Society.

After the meeting, a boy and his friends were walking back to class but two black girls who were sitting on the railing started calling them names. At first they ignored the two girls, but one of the girls stood up and pulled the boy on the shirt and pushed him against the wall.

The Asian guys got angry and they hit the girl back. A boy jumped in to help his friend and the other black girl jumped in to help her friend.

Mr. (Joseph) Nigh, the United Asian Student adviser, went to stop the fight but the black girl hit him and he fell down. There was a big crowd.

During lunch today, the Asian guys were talking about the fight and some friends of the black girl started calling them names again.

(One boy) got angry and he went up on a table and started talking back to them. The staff finally came and stopped the fight again.

I think we need to do something about this. I and many other Asian students are not safe any-



State Journal photo/L. ROGER TURNER

East High Principal Milton McPike, right, meets with a group of Southeast Asian students concerned about racial incidents at the school. Tension between Southeast Asians and African Americans has occasionally erupted into fights.

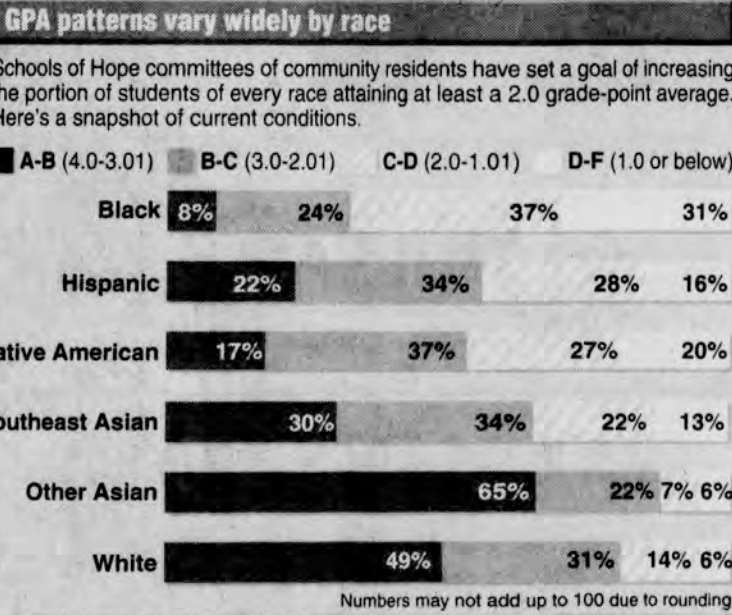
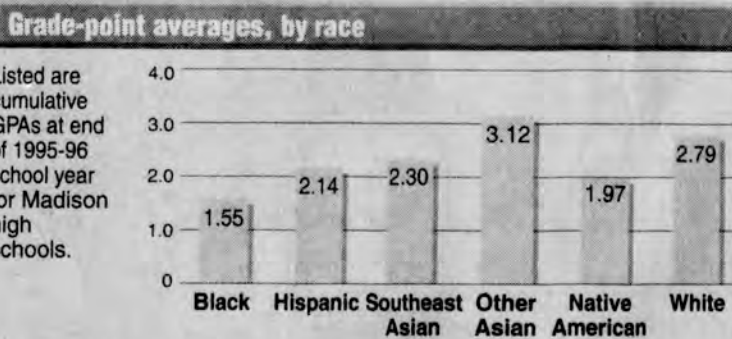
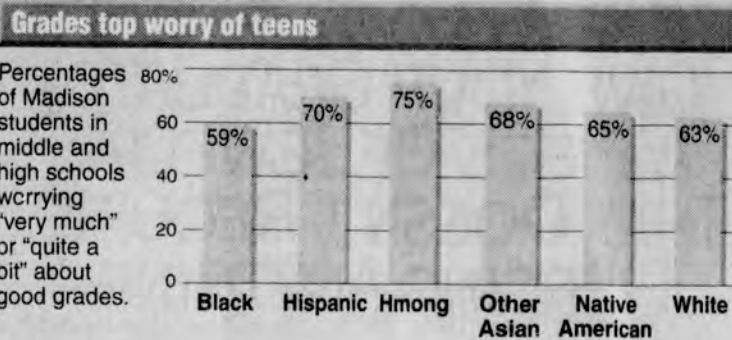
more. Today, after lunch, some of the Asian girls went to class and some black girls were calling them names. It would be nice if we could ignore them like our Hmong parents would like but it's not easy. Our teachers at school and many good friends in the United States taught us to stand up for ourselves.

When someone is calling you names, I think you should do

something about it. I think this is a job the administration has to take care of. Many of the Asian students, including myself, are not feeling safe. This is one of the reasons gangs start. If the administrator wants East to be a safe place they should do something soon. NOW!

■ More excerpts in Forum/1B

Students share desire to succeed, but grades vary by race



Many students enrolled in special programs

It's important to note that significant numbers of students were omitted from the GPA analysis because they are enrolled in special educational or language services.

Listed are percentages of students in Exceptional Education Needs (EEN) or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs:

	EEN	ESL
Native American	9%	0%
Black	17%	1%
Hispanic	11%	15%
Southeast Asian	5%	32%
Other Asian	1%	13%
White	7%	0%
Percent of all students	9%	2%

NOTE: Southeast Asians include students whose families speak Hmong, Khmer, Vietnamese or Lao at home

SOURCES: 1995 Dane County Youth Survey, Wisconsin State Journal analysis of data provided by Madison School District for Schools of Hope project.

WSJ graphic/LAURA SPARKS

Findings

Continued from Page 1A

dence of the increasing involvement in schools of Centro Hispano and a newer activist group, Latinos United for Change and Advancement. They have come to endorse a school district task force's report calling for improvements in the way Hispanic children and culture are handled in the schools.

They cheer the School Board's unanimous election of Juan Jose Lopez as its first Hispanic president.

A few weeks later, Superintendent Cheryl Wilhoite convenes a meeting with a group of Southeast Asian parents. Although their languages and cultures are unique, they seek the same things all parents want:

■ High standards for their children

■ Tips on how to ensure that their children receive all the help they need

■ Classes and a school environment that make them feel comfortable and acknowledge the achievements of people from their culture

No other institution in Dane County must deal so intimately — and on such a massive scale — with such a wide range of races and cultures. Students speak more than 50 native languages. Every school day, 7,000 racial minority students — a rainbow of African-American, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian heritages — join nearly 18,000 whites to learn about not just the "Three Rs," but each other.

"Racial and cultural diversity

is a source of strength in Madison's schools," writes Sebastian Podesta, a West High School junior who is keeping a diary for the Schools of Hope project.

He warns: "It can cause certain tensions, though, especially when you do not find a way to bring all the diverse people together."

The pain and promise of diversity resonate in the Schools of Hope examination of the roles of race and culture in Madison's public schools.

Part of the promise is that whites, who have enjoyed some of the highest levels of academic achievement of students in any U.S. public school system, continue to excel. Through friendships with students of diverse backgrounds, they're now developing a taste of the world, not just a memory for facts.

And there's no evidence of widespread "white flight" from Madison's public schools.

More hope can be found in the stories of students from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds — including refugees from violence in faraway Laos or nearby Chicago — who are managing to attain good grades despite such barriers as limited English abilities and poverty.

But every day, students' progress is imperiled by racism, ignorance and fear. Racial epithets are still hurled at a black student council candidate like Alice Ntambi, as they were decades ago. Students from minority backgrounds, like Ty Clark, still complain that white teachers expect too little of them, as they did decades ago.

Students and adults from different backgrounds still are reluctant to cross racial lines to form relationships, as they were decades ago.

Interviews with more than 100 students, parents and school officials and other information suggest that:

■ Students of color are comforted by schools' increasing diversity and are as likely as white students to report they're receiving high-quality educations. Madison minorities tend to feel better about school than do minorities in four adjoining school districts.

■ Students share a desire to excel. By a wide margin, getting good grades is the top worry of students from every racial group in Madison schools, with 63 percent worrying "very much" or "quite a bit," according to 1995 Dane County Youth Survey data analyzed for the Schools of Hope project. Ranking second on the list of 19 worries is getting a good job after graduating; 22 percent cited it. Farther down the list were such worries as being too fat, getting AIDS and having enough money.

■ There are large variations in the grades and test scores of blacks, Hispanics, Southeast Asians and American Indians, yet, on average, they lag significantly behind other Asians and whites.

■ A major reason that minorities compose a growing share of the student population is that the number of white children living in the Madison School District has plummeted in the past three decades. The enrollment shifts are tied to the aging of white Baby Boomers, housing patterns, economics and a vague anxiety about the schools, data and interviews show.

■ Compared to blacks, white students and their families haven't grown accustomed to forming relationships with people

of other backgrounds and appear reluctant or unable to do so, new research at Madison high schools indicates.

■ Minority students are three times more likely than whites to report that teachers treat them unfairly because of their race.

■ Many students and parents complain that, despite the good efforts of individual teachers, too many classes fail to include meaningful material on Hispanic, Asian, African-American and American-Indian cultures. Thus, students fail to learn about other cultures' perspectives and accomplishments. And minority students may feel classes aren't relevant.

■ Although the district is meeting its own goals for hiring minorities, more than nine in 10 teachers in the district are still white, according to a review of district staff records.

■ "Black fatigue" afflicts many black activists who more than two decades ago became the first to push for improvements in the district's handling of minority students. A new generation of activists, including Hispanics and Southeast Asians, is emerging. Old and young activists don't always agree on the problems — or the solutions.

■ Some leaders suggest it's time to develop a communitywide approach for openly discussing the roles of race and culture across Dane County. The United Way and others involved in Schools of Hope are exploring a range of ideas that could lead to the creation of a program that would draw citizens together to get to know one another's strengths — and to confront prejudices.

■ What can be done?/BA

Race and culture in the Madison School District

Key events and trends

1930s

1930s: City population is 57,899; about half are foreign-born. Relations are tense between the city's established residents — Europeans and "Yankees" — and recently arrived immigrants. Italians fled poverty in Sicily; Russian Jews, anti-Semitism. Few speak English.

1933: About 350 blacks live in Madison in pockets on the East, West and South sides. Velma Fern Bell, future Velma Hamilton, writes in thesis that Wisconsin grade schools are "relatively free from racial friction" but "consciousness of differences" leads to friendships along racial lines in high school. Variations in grades can be "explained by factors other than race."

Principal L.A. Wachler expresses concerns about Central Junior-Senior High School, a Downtown school which later would be closed: "Our enrollment comprises pupils from a variety of homes, social conditions and of racial stocks, a fact which creates for Central special problems in administration and instruction."

1940s

1940s: Post World War II Baby Boom launches population explosion that will drive school enrollment increases in 1950s and '60s. City has 67,447 residents in 1940, 96,056 in 1950.

1940: Superintendent Philip Falk, five decades before Superintendent Cheryl Wilhoite makes "Success for All" the district's slogan, declares, "What happens to every child is the concern of the school."

1941: Spanish first taught in the Madison schools.

1950s

1954: U.S. Supreme Court, *Brown v. (Topeka, Kan.)* Board of Education, outlaws separate but equal schools for blacks and whites.

1959: State classifies Madison schools as "integrated" yet minorities compose a tiny portion — probably less than 3 percent — of school enrollment. Figures are kept by sex and special education categories, but not race. Enrollment totals 19,959.

1960s

1960s: Housing trends affect school system. Young white families settle on fringes, creating need for schools there. Greenbush, an ethnic neighborhood of immigrant Italians, Irish, Jews and African-Americans near Downtown, is leveled for an urban renewal project. Low-income apartments and medical buildings slowly replace the homes.

1960s: Madison begins to hire black teachers.

1966: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People reports "few, if any, of the residents expressed any anxiety concerning the integration of Madison's schools." However, "a low level of performance was noted among Negro students." Madison schools begin services to 22 students with Limited English Proficiency.

1969: Enrollment peaks at 34,317, which includes 33,331 whites, 604 Negroes, 134 Orientals, 29 American Indians, 38 Spanish Americans and 181 other non-whites.

1970s

1975: First refugees from Vietnam War enroll in Madison schools. Vietnamese are followed in later years by Hmong, Lao and Cambodian refugees.

1976: District's human relations director, Roland Buchanan, says "institutional racism" within schools harms minority students. Eugene Parks, head of local NAACP chapter, complains schools "are set up for white, upper-income children."

1976 enrollment: 29,504

Race	Percentage
White	94%
Black	3%
Asian	1%
Hispanic	1%
American Indian	Less than 1%

1980s

1983: School Board approves a student-assignment plan aimed at heading off the OCR complaint by reducing minority concentrations by pairing Franklin with Randall and Lincoln with Midvale. OCR approves.

1984: District pledges to develop multicultural curriculum and training of staff, and to boost hiring of minority teachers.

1987: Madison Urban League documents black-white achievement gap. "Our children are not measuring up," says league executive director Betty Franklin-Hammonds. Superintendent James Travis: "We need to examine the reason for these numbers."

17 percent of all students are from poor families. About 700 students, 3 percent of the population, have Limited English Proficiency.

1989-90: District committees issue reports calling for reforms to improve the academic performance of minority students.

Racism perceived

Rarely are perceived incidents of racism obvious. Are these acts of racism?

Remedial expectations?

Ty Clark, a black student at La Follette High School, tells his white counselor that he's unable to find next year's math class in the school schedule. She asks if he's looking for General Math, a remedial class. Actually, he's looking for Algebra I.

"They have low expectations for African Americans," says Clark, son of Fred Clark, head of the district's Affirmative Action Advisory Committee.

Racial grouping

Jason Cameranesi, who is part Egyptian and has brown skin, is reassured when he sees the diverse students upon enrolling at Marquette Middle School.

But he writes in his Schools of Hope diary: "As time went on I began to see just how segregated the school was. African-American students hung around other African-American students. Caucasian students and a few of the other ethnic groups did the same thing. There were also many different cliques within these ethnic groups, making it harder to get to know everyone or to be accepted by the different groups especially if you don't or can't talk to someone because of a difference in skin color or in some cases because of rival gangs or cliques."

He's now pursuing a high school equivalency degree through Operation Fresh Start, an alternative education program.

'Let them be'

Diana Dahlk, a white student at East High School, writes in her Schools of Hope diary: "At school,

I've noticed how students tend to 'hang around' with students of their own race. But I don't consider that being racist. If they feel more comfortable being around their own race, let them be."

Indians 'conquered'

Kane Evans, an American-Indian student at Velma Hamilton Middle School, bristles because his teachers tell the students that Christopher Columbus, and later cowboys, "conquered" Indians. He says events aren't examined from Indians' perspectives.

Raised hand ignored?

Maurice Foster, a black student at West High School, raises his hand in class. In his opinion, the white teacher passes over him.

"That's the reason why I started skipping school with my friends, just hanging out smoking cigarettes," Foster writes in his Schools of Hope diary.

He is now enrolled in Operation Fresh Start.

Culture by the month

"Peechez" Echols, a black fifth-grader, moves to Madison from Chicago and enrolls in Lincoln Elementary in March. "When are we going to learn about black people?" she asks her white teacher. The reply: "We already did that in February" — Black History Month.

"I was extremely shocked," Echols, who now attends West High School, writes in her Schools of Hope diary, seven years after the incident. "I was used to learning about all people all year round and here this white lady was telling us we couldn't learn about my people. This statement will hurt me for the rest of my life."

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1990s

1990: Madison population 191,362.

1993: With little controversy, five Madison middle schools are renamed to honor prominent women and minorities — Black Hawk, Georgia O'Keeffe, Annie Greencrow Whitehorse, Akira Toki and Velma Hamilton.

1996: Wisconsin State Journal Schools of Hope investigation finds that achievement gap between blacks and white widened during 1990s. Hispanic, Southeast Asian and American Indian students also lag behind whites and other Asians. Superintendent Cheryl Wilhoite says "institutional racism" is part of the problem.

1996: Ho-Chunk Tribe uses profits from its gambling operations to help district finance a study and tutoring center for American Indians.

1996 enrollment: 25,158

Race	Percentage
White	70%
Black	17%
Hispanic	4%
Southeast Asian	4%
Other Asian	4%
American Indian	1%

Hamilton

Wilhoite

Lopez

Mural at O'Keeffe Middle School depicts connections between races and cultures, including Chief Black Hawk, who once camped nearby.

1996: 24 percent of all students are from poor families.

1997: Lonnie Smith, one of first black teachers hired, retires and says, "Madison is still a good district."

About 1,275 students, 5 percent of the population, have limited English proficiency. Juan Jose Lopez first Hispanic elected president of School Board. District task force calls for improvements in handling of Latino/Hispanic students and culture.

Research by Wisconsin State Journal, Madison School District, city of Madison and UW-Madison student Kaleem Caire.

WSJ graphic/LAURA SPARKS