

TEACHER INQUIRY PROJECT

BY: PATRICIA LOPEZ-CHAVEZ



“Teachers, I believe, are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth.”

–HELEN CALDICOTT

INTERVIEWS



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What grade and/or subject(s) are you currently teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. Who or what made you decide / inspired you that you wanted to teach?
4. In your opinion, what are the best aspects of teaching?
5. In your opinion, what are the most challenging aspects of teaching?
6. What has been the 'highlight' of your career?
7. What keeps you motivated to continue teaching?
8. Do you consider yourself a flexible teacher? How do you approach diversity?
9. Out of the 4 C's: creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking — which is your favorite or most emphasized in your teaching style and why?

MRS. V

- 1. Teaches 8th grade language arts, 4th grade math, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade religion, and 8th grade music and arts.
- 2. Has been teaching for 19 years at a private elementary school. And previous to that has subbed for two years.
- 3. Why she started to teach: Teaching because she loves education. When she decided to go back to work she wanted a profession that allowed her time to spend with her family. She wanted vacation time and loved education, so teaching fit her perfectly.
- 4. Best aspect: The company and spirit of her students. She loves the overall community.
- 5. Challenge: Keeping material and activities 'fresh' year after year. Another is having completely different 25 students every year to attend to on intellectual, physical, and emotional levels.
- 6. Highlight of her career: Seeing her young students grow into fabulous adults (like me, she said), and feeling so proud of each and every one.
- 7. Motivation to keep teaching: Curriculum both academic and religious, and the students.
- 9. 'Favorite C': Communication. She said how you cannot critically think or collaborate without communication. Communication has to be done kindly and effectively.

MRS. Y

- 1. Taught 5th and 8th grade. Is currently taking a break to be the teacher to her children. When her children are grown, she wants to teach Kindergarten or Pre-school. She finds it a very important age to properly develop gross and fine motor skills.
- 2. Has taught for 6 years in grade school setting, in both public and private school.
- 3. Why she decided to teach: She had a teacher called 'Mr. Strange' who she saw as so much fun, especially since he taught history — she loved how he brought it to life. And another teacher, for AP biology in high-school, who even though he wasn't the greatest teacher, he really cared about his students and would have memorable life conversations. He cared a lot about developing his students as human beings without forcing his thought into them. She believes a teacher really has an impact on creating good human beings.
- 4. Best aspect: Getting to know the kids. And seeing where they are going to go in life. Found private school better than public, because public follows the government but private follows the principal and the principal can open more doors.
- 5. Challenge: Paperwork. Administrative paperwork that went with everything and having to file things by certain times.
- 6. Highlight of her career: Seeing her first 8th grade and first 5th grade class graduate. And during her first pregnancy, her class wanted to be her 'god-class' and she felt such a loving connection with them.
- 7. Motivation to keep teaching: She feels it as a natural born instinct. She wants people to be the best person they can be. It keeps her motivated when she sees her students becoming the best they can be and knowing she had a helping hand in that.
- 9. 'Favorite C': Collaboration. Enjoyed doing group activities or simply talking together. She did not see herself as a 'stay quiet' teacher.

MS. P

- 1. Teaches 9th, 10th, and 11th grade religion class, yearbook, and leadership class.
- 2. Has been teaching for 10 years at a private high-school.
- 3. Why she decided to teach: She did not know what she wanted to do with her life when she was in college, but life put things and people in her path that led her to teaching. She graduated with a political science major and ended up as a teacher.
- 4. Best aspect: The personal relationships with the students and the idea that they will last for a long time, longer than the four years she has with them.
- 5. Challenge: Student don't appreciate the education they are receiving and the question is always "why". She says the teacher knows further than the moment, but the student can't see the purpose for all they do. Also, seeing a student that does not want to reach their potential although you know how far they could go.
- 6. Highlight of her career: Relationships with students that come back 1, 5, and 10 years later. She has gone to graduations, weddings, and has met her previous students' children.
- 8. Flexibility in teaching: Considers herself a very flexible teacher because she expects her students to be flexible. She is also an administrator (vice-principal) and has to have early outs for rallies and such so she cannot always be in the classroom. She believes flexibility is a two way street.
- 9. 'Favorite C': Communication. She said that it is an assumed skill, but most always be worked on and can find places of improvement. Whatever you do in life, you will have to communicate. Clear communication helps one get rid of any limits in the world.



ARTICLES

WHAT MAKES A GREAT TEACHER?

- Characteristics of great teachers:
 - Set high expectations for all students
 - Have clear, written-out objectives
 - Are prepared and organized
 - Engage students and get them to look at issues in a variety of ways
 - Form strong relationships with their students and show that they care about them as people
 - Are masters of their subject matter
 - Communicate frequently with parents

TEACHING IS A PROFESSION, NOT A JOB

- "Teaching is hard. Extremely hard. A teacher must not only be a master of the material but also an effective communicator, quick problem solver, constant innovator, social organizer, occasional therapist, and much more besides. It takes energy, ingenuity, insight, knowledge, and most of all, patience to lead a classroom full of kids. You must decide if you want 80 percent of your students to understand 100 percent of the material, or 100 percent to understand 80 percent. Sometimes you end up with zero percent understanding zero percent and you must go back to the blackboard and start over. Teaching has been described as one part preparation and five parts improvisation, and the preparation alone will take hours." — Brendan Gillett
- Before being placed in my fieldwork, I would have read this and agreed on such an ignorant level. Reading this now, while immersed in a classroom, I agree with this statement to my fullest capacity and can picture these moments in my fieldwork.

TEACHING IS A PROFESSION, NOT A JOB

- “Teaching is a profession, not a job. Sure, teachers are underpaid and overlooked. The hours are long and the obvious benefits are few. You have to steal supplies from home to bring to work, only to have them stolen again. You have to give everything and expect nothing.” — Brendan Gillett
- The “you have to give everything and expect nothing” phrase is what, for me, really defines what a teacher’s sole purpose in teaching is: A teacher must give all they can to provide a solid foundation for their students to be the best possible human beings both academically and socially, while expecting nothing in return... but being satisfied with their success in life.

WHY TEACHING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROFESSION

- “Teachers are our nation builders — the strength of every profession in our country grows out of the knowledge and skills that teachers help to instill in our children.” — Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education at U.S Department of Education
- Amen! Duncan has professionally and adequately said what I am always saying — you can’t be a doctor without having a teacher first.
- In this article, Duncan is stressing the importance of our great American nation to support our teachers in all they do. He is also acknowledging teacher leadership, like in Marshall, Michigan, that are picking up extra weight to support their students and are setting the progressive and innovative path for the rest of the nation’s teachers.

21 REASONS TO QUIT YOUR JOB AND BECOME A TEACHER

- 1. To encourage children to DREAM BIG
- 2. To positively IMPACT THE FUTURE of our world
- 3. To live with a deep SENSE OF PURPOSE
- 4. To GET A LETTER of inspiration from good people
- 5. To discover your TRUE CALLING
- 6. To be the ONE CARING ADULT in a child's life
- 7. To experience personal GROWTH
- 8. To GIVE AND RECEIVE unconditional love
- 9. To be a STUDENT for life
- 10. To PAY IT FORWARD
- 11. To LOVE YOUR JOB so much that Friday's make you sad and happy
- 12. To INSPIRE generations of CHANGE
- 13. To ignite the SPARK of LEARNING
- 14. To GIVE BACK
- 15. To be a TRAILBLAZER
- 16. To experience the JOY of working with kids every day
- 17. To HELP THE UNDERDOG
- 18. To explore your CREATIVITY
- 19. To prove that ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE
- 20. To MOTIVATE other TEACHERS by your example
- 21. To be THE OBJECT OF THE CUTEST COMPARISON you've ever heard

FINDINGS AND SURPRISES



FINDINGS AND SURPRISES

- I found that teaching is a chosen profession in which one fully knows, and is okay with, a low income
- I found that teachers are literally students, life-long learners, and sometimes even have to play the role of parent
- I was surprised that all my interviews had a centralized theme that focused on their love and commitment for their students
- I was surprised to find out how long my teachers had been teaching. And that time has not affected their passion for teaching.

VIDEO



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=SFnMTHhKdkw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw)

Every kid needs a champion by Rita Pierson

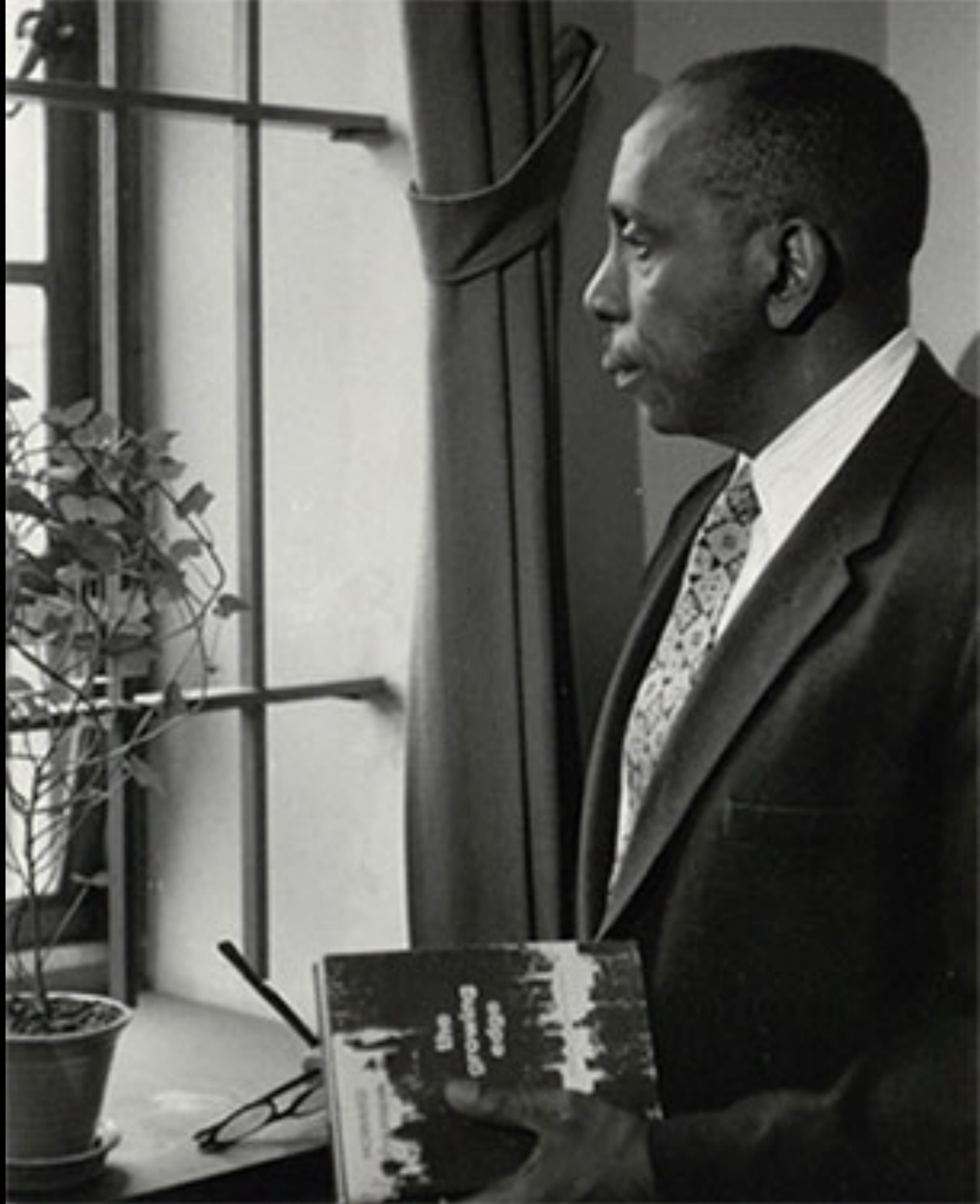
“Value and Importance of Human Connection” - R.P

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“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

—HOWARD THURMAN





2009

THE END