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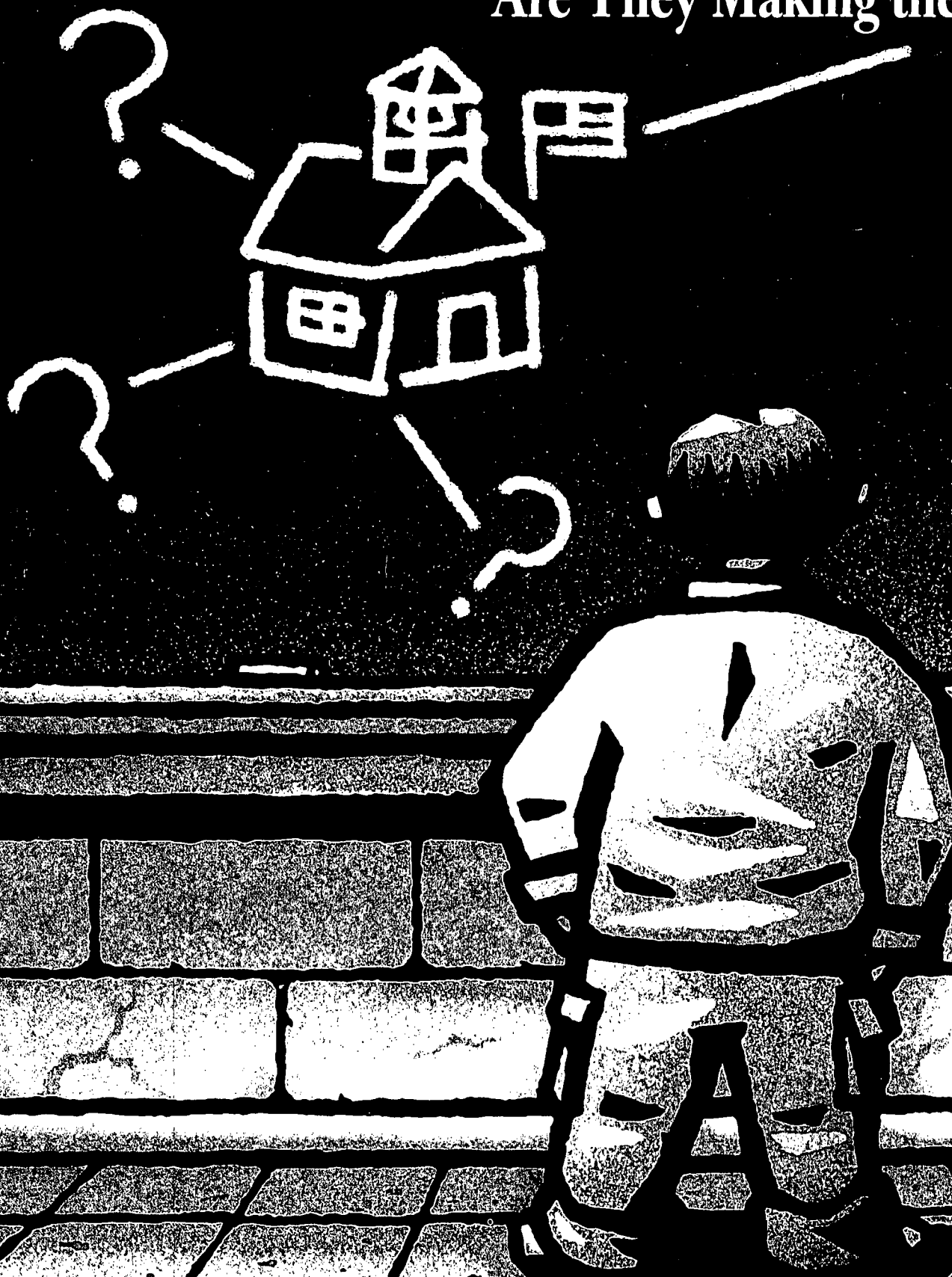


An Issue Book for National Issues Forums

NATIONAL
ISSUES
FORUMS

Public Schools

Are They Making the Grade?



Prepared by
Public Agenda

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Brochures, "National Issues Forums The National Issues Forums
Institute." 84 pgs.

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and Board
Members***

Board members for NIFI are drawn primarily from the educational and civic organizations holding NIF forums.

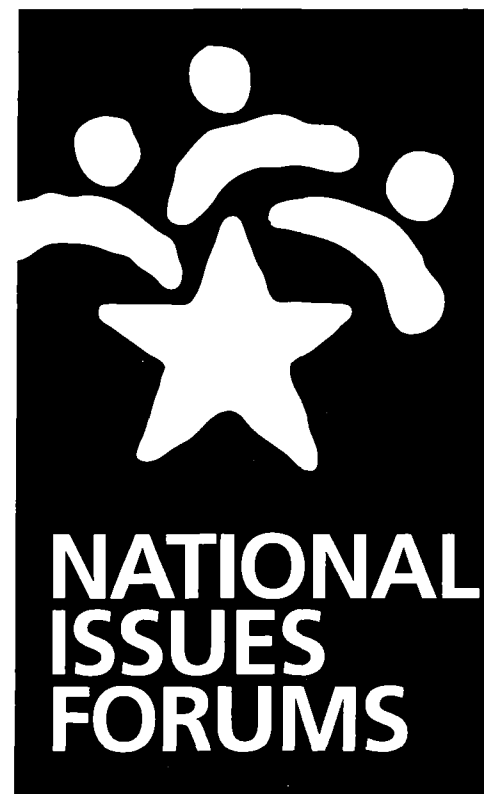
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A Different Kind of Talk, Another Way to Act

The National Issues Forums Institute

P.O. Box 75306
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www.nifi.org



***The National
Issues Forums
Institute***

www.nifi.org

The National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) is a 501(c)(3) organization chartered in 1987 for the purpose of promoting the National Issues Forums (NIF). The primary tasks of the institute are:

- to ensure the ongoing preparation of issue books and other materials that will stimulate serious public deliberation on major issues that Americans face nationally and locally;
- to encourage collaboration in the NIF Network and to provide a legal home for consortia that grow out of this collaboration;
- to collect and share information about what is going on throughout the NIF Network; and
- to solicit and administer grants for the network.

The National Issues Forums and the NIF Network

In 1981, a group of civic and educational organizations began a new effort to promote public deliberation in America. They turned to two nonpartisan research organizations, the Kettering Foundation and Public Agenda, to begin preparing issue books expressly designed to prompt serious deliberation on a wide range of public issues. The forums convened by the civic and educational groups are often called National Issues Forums. These groups and others that use similar public choice books comprise the NIF Network.

The NIF Network is not a project of any foundation or single organization. All forum activity is locally organized, moderated, and financed. The network is a voluntary alliance of thousands of civic and educational organizations connecting a wide variety of leagues, clubs, religious organizations, libraries, study circles, and schools. While the size of the network is impressive, the diversity of the audience is equally significant. Participants vary considerably in age, race, gender, economic status, and location. Students in literacy programs participate in forums and so do university students. NIF forum participants include teenagers and retirees, prison inmates and community leaders. The diversity of participants allows the network to provide a unique and valuable service;

it links different regions and groups in a civic “superhighway” for America.

The NIF Network operates on the premise that in a democracy people have to take responsibility for what happens in their community and in the country — and they have to act on that responsibility. In order for citizens to act wisely, they have to make sound choices on how to act. To do that they have to deliberate as carefully as possible. Deliberation is a necessary part of politics at every level. It is the DNA of democracy, the means by which a responsible public forms and informs itself.

Outcomes from each year’s round of forums are presented in NIF reports on the issues and through the annual “A Public Voice” program on public television.

The institute is supported by the sale of NIF books and materials, as well as by grants and contracts. The Kettering Foundation provides in-kind support of legal and administrative services.

A wide variety of organizations and institutions provide public space for citizens to develop skills in convening and moderating National Issues Forums. In many states, institutions of higher education, humanities councils, and/or other civic organizations have established Public Policy Institutes (PPIs) that provide NIF training. The list of states with locally organized and operated PPIs continues to grow: Alabama, Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia, and West Virginia. In addition, national organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) sponsor specialized PPIs for their memberships. For a complete listing of PPI locations and local contact information, please visit www.nifi.org or call 1-800-433-7834.

NIFI

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NIF Report on the Issues 2000

Public Schools: Are They Making the Grade?

by John Doble Research Associates, Inc.



A Different Kind of Talk, Another Way to Act

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