The low valuation of parents who are poor is communicated to them by the difficulty they experience in being attended to and heard by teachers and administrators. Among a group of low-income Puerto Rican families in New York City, one mother told an interviewer “La opinión de nosotros no vale” (“Our opinions are not valued”; Harry, 1992, p. 181). These parents reported receiving only formal, written communications from schools, incomprehensible and confusing papers from a powerful and impersonal “they.” The investigator in this study concluded that “The only consistent role offered to [these] parents was that of [compliant] consent-giver” (p. 239). ¹

They definitely do not [value my beliefs]. They can’t understand why I complain. They never tell you what their expectation is or what they are going to do for your child. ²

Too many teachers, unfortunately, seem to see their role as rescuer. My child does not need to be rescued; he does not consider being Indian a misfortune. He has a culture, probably older than yours; he has meaningful values and a rich and varied experiential background...

...You will be well advised to remember that our children are skillful interpreters of the silent language. They will know your feelings and attitudes with unerring precision, no matter how carefully you arrange your smile or modulate your voice. They will learn in your classroom, because children learn involuntarily. What they learn will depend on you.

Will my child learn to read, or will you teach him that he has a reading problem? Will you help him develop problem solving skills, or will you teach him that school is where you try to guess what the teacher wants? ³

My daughters are growing up and they have been teased a lot, because of the way they look, the way they dress, the way they speak. I know they are struggling. Like they are getting frustrated, like they are getting rebellious with me. I feel helpless. What should I do? Honestly I don’t know. At least with the oldest one I am struggling.

When I have a problem I call my mother or my sisters in Mexico. They are professionals and they have children older than mine. They already lived what I am living now. Here, I do not know anyone. One can’t trust people easily. There is a lot of discrimination. If you don’t speak English, they treat you badly. ⁴

The teachers just call the parents and tell them they need to sign forms concerning their children’s education. The parents do not really understand the forms and just sign them. They don’t realize they’re actually agreeing to place their kids in special ed. ⁵

I look at what I’ve seen in my lifetime and what I’ve seen specifically since challenging this school system, and it’s the most frightening thing I’ve ever seen. I’m not talking about discriminating against housing, that’s frightening within itself. But when you are talking about miseducating and ‘dumbing down’ generation after generation, after generation, after a while you can keep diluting something until it is just as weak, to where you almost have to start all over again. ⁶

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