Boyz N The Hood is a movie that portrays the lives of three young men growing up in an urban community stricken by violence, drugs, and poverty. The main characters in the film are Tre, Ricky, and Doughboy. Tre is the character who envisions a better life beyond “the hood.” Ricky is the star football player who is bound for college and is also raising a son. Doughboy is Ricky’s brother and a drug dealer who started out on the wrong track at a young age. All three face adversity throughout the film on more than one occasion. The most critical point in the movie happens toward the very end with a trip to the store when Ricky gets murdered. This event leads to the retaliation of Doughboy murdering the group that shot Ricky.

The morning after the shooting, Tre is sitting on his porch and is joined by Doughboy. You can tell that after everything, Doughboy seems different. He realizes that what happened to his brother was wrong, but what he did was even worse. He had just added to the violence going on in his community. He says to Tre, “I ain’t been up this early in a long time. I turned on the TV this morning. Had this s*** on about livin’ in a violent world. Showed all these foreign places, where foreigners live and all. I started thinking’ man. Either they don’t know, don’t show, or don’t care about what’s goin’ on in the hood. They had all this foreign s***, but they ain’t have shit on my brother man. I ain’t got no brother. Got no mother neither. She loved that fool more than she love me…I don’t even know how I feel about it neither man. S*** goes on and on you know. Next thing you know somebody might try and smoke me. Don’t matter though. We all gotta go sometime”. This quote signifies almost everything that we are learning or have discussed in our Introduction to Urban Education class.

When Doughboy says “I ain’t been up this early in a long time,” I think this is very symbolic because he finally opened his eyes to all the violence that is going on in his community and how he is a part of it. Doughboy feels that people don’t want to know about, or they just forget about, the violence going on in his neighborhood. After Ricky’s murder, he really has nobody. His mother can’t stand him and never could. This shows how when children have no guidance in life they often turn to other things to get noticed. Doughboy started stealing at a young age, got sent away, and then started selling drugs. This relates to children in urban communities because a child that has no guidance from their parents or other caring adults will often turn to the streets for whatever they’ve been missing.

They are often led into gang life and get caught up in bad situations.

There is no end to the shootings and killings that go on in urban communities. “S*** goes on and on you know. Next thing you know somebody might try and smoke me.” In urban communities, there are many rival gangs who fight against each other. If somebody is killed by a rival gang member, then somebody from the other gang is going to get killed, too. The cycle is never ending and that’s why there’s so much violence in some urban communities. When kids see this violence on the streets, they feel as if that’s what they’re going to get pulled into.

The last scene in Boyz N The Hood relates to everything we’ve learned in the Introduction To Urban Education class, because it portrays how urban youth can get caught up in bad situations when they have no guidance and how they feel nobody cares about them or what goes on in their communities. These kids need guidance in their lives and somebody who understands them and is willing to listen to what they have to say. I want to be that somebody, a teacher who guides my students in the right direction and helps them make the right decisions in life. I want to be the teacher who helps them learn they don’t need to get caught up in the street life because, in the end, the streets are what takes them over.
One highly debated issue in the United States today is affirmative action. What we now know as affirmative action began with President Kennedy in 1961 when he established the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. The goal was to end discrimination in employment based on race, creed, color, and national origin by the government and its contractors. It was President Johnson who officially introduced affirmative action in 1965. The policy was the same as what former President Kennedy proposed, but it also included gender.

The objectives of affirmative action policies were to ensure equal opportunities for women and racial minorities in jobs, schools, scholarships, career opportunities and financial aid. A groundbreaking case that disputed affirmative action was Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke in 1978. Bakke was a white applicant who was denied admission to the University’s Medical School and claimed he was a victim of reverse discrimination. The Supreme Court struck down the use of numeric quotas but still upheld the authenticity of affirmative action.

In recent years, government policy towards affirmative action policies has changed. In 1995, President Clinton stated in a White House memorandum that programs will be eliminated if they create quotas, have a preference for unqualified individuals, create reverse discrimination or continue after equal opportunity has been achieved. However in 2000, the state governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, banned using race as a factor in college admission. His initiative entitled "One Florida" stated that Florida’s schools could increase diversity in schools, businesses, and the state’s contracting without affirmative action policies. Florida is not the only state to get rid of affirmative action, but it shows us how much things are changing and what was once implemented to help people is slowly being eliminated or becoming less important.

In December of 2003, there were important rulings made by the Supreme Court in relation to affirmation action and college admissions. The University of Michigan had a point system that determined who would be admitted to their school. Points were given to those applicants who represented racial minorities. Two white students were denied admission to the law school and another to the undergraduate school. They claimed the point system used by the college was discriminatory against whites. The Supreme Court ruled the point system was unconstitutional, but gave allowance to programs that would promote diversity in schools. This case is a historical event to take place in this generation.

While researching this topic, I came across a few myths that drew my attention. One myth stated that affirmative action was necessary years ago but not now. This is untrue because blacks have twice the unemployment rate as white citizens. Another myth is that affirmative action programs would have a negative effect on the self-esteem of minorities and women. This has the opposite effect because it enhances self-esteem by providing jobs and career opportunities. A third myth is that white workers will lose out if affirmative action is continued. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000, there are 1.3 million unemployed blacks and 112 million employed whites. Even if every black worker replaced every white worker it would only affect 1% of whites.

Personally, I agree with affirmative action because it has benefited my race and those in my gender group. I think that each state should continue to implement affirmative action programs because they have positive aims. This country has come a long way from owning human beings as personal property to giving everyone equal opportunity in different fields. I think that affirmative action is a sensitive issue for people to talk about. I am slowly realizing that the world is changing and there are always landmark events occurring that can change my future.
C.U.R.E. Profile: Christina McCollough

Christina McCollough is a senior, Childhood Education major. This is her fourth year as a C.U.R.E. student. Christina’s family lives in South Hempstead, Long Island, but she lived her early years in New York City. Christina says she is dedicated to teaching in an urban school because of her primary school years in an urban school. She says after her family moved to Long Island she “missed the diversity” of her former school and “always wanted to go back.”

Christina chose Cortland because of its reputation for excellence and because of the C.U.R.E. program. She says she appreciates all the time she has spent in schools.

“There’s nothing better than that,” she says about having first-hand experience in classrooms.

Christina will be starting her student teaching next semester. She says she is nervous, but feels prepared. In addition to her field experiences through SUNY Cortland and C.U.R.E., Christina has worked in schools for the last two summers. In 2003 she worked in a 3rd Grade classroom in Brooklyn as part of Summer In The City, and last summer she worked with three, four and five-year olds at Francis de Paola, a school for children with special needs in Brooklyn.

When she is finished with her undergraduate degree, Christina hopes to teach 3rd grade in Brooklyn and get her Master’s in Literacy. Down the road, she hopes to open her own daycare and continue to get degrees in Business and Early Childhood.

The President’s Reception for C.U.R.E.

In what has become a yearly event, President Bitterbaum and Ellen Burton hosted the President’s Reception for C.U.R.E. on October 28, 2004. In attendance were C.U.R.E. scholars, members of the C.U.R.E. Committee, C.U.R.E. supporters from all around campus and funders of the C.U.R.E. program. President Bitterbaum welcomed everyone to his home and congratulated the C.U.R.E. students on their successes. Michelle Kelly introduced the C.U.R.E. Program and spoke about the support it receives from the campus community. C.U.R.E. students Keith Greene, Autumn Bifano, Tameka Stephenson, Elyse Laughlin, Rose Graham, Jon Woody, Nina Primiano, Dan Cordaro, and Michael Witkovich shared their experiences in the C.U.R.E. program with everyone in attendance. Students from each year spoke to help give a perspective of the C.U.R.E. program throughout the four-year experience. All of the students spoke about similar themes; how important urban education was to them and how much of a difference a teacher can make. A representative from one of C.U.R.E.’s primary funders also spoke to express her support of the program.

At left, President Erik Bitterbaum with C.U.R.E. students Doreen Wade, Rose Graham, Keith Greene and Lauren Ortiz.
The C.U.R.E. bulletin board in October received far more attention than any other bulletin board in the history of C.U.R.E. Graduate Assistant Amy Prosser designed a bulletin board that compared George Bush’s and John Kerry’s views on education. “Professors were sending their classes down to look at it,” Amy said, “and people in my classes were talking about it.” Dr. Stephanie Spina used it for a class discussion, and many people stopped in to congratulate us on a thought-provoking bulletin board and discuss the issues. Thank you Amy.