

King shedding light in era of terrorism

By Dave Brendsel

During her four decades of teaching at the University of Denver, Edith King has worked to infuse a global perspective of peace into her teaching of education. It's no wonder that sociologists and educators called on her—in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks—to light the way for young teachers struggling to make sense of the global realities of terrorism and Islamophobia.

That light is reflected in King's newest book, *Teaching in an Era of Terrorism* (Thompson Publishers, 2006). Released this spring, the book outlines the stresses encountered by children in a climate of terrorism and uncertainty and describes creative classroom strategies for combating those stresses.

"In this atmosphere of daily worldwide stress," King says, "it is all the more essential that the schools and teachers put forward the lessons of tolerance, social justice, conflict resolution and peace education."

During her 40 years as an education sociologist at DU's College of Education, King has served as the major adviser on 40 doctoral dissertations for students from around the world. She has studied with some of the world's foremost sociologists—including Elise Boulding, David Reesman and Margaret Mead. Her career has been dedicated to peace education, diversity and the concept of "worldmindedness" she borrowed from first lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

As a graduate student at Wayne University (now Wayne State University), King participated in inter-group and international relations workshops for teachers in suburban Detroit. When

Education professor Edith King's latest book, *Teaching in an Era of Terrorism*, describes creative classroom strategies that combat stresses in a climate of uncertainty.

Roosevelt heard about the workshops and King's use of the United Nations as a theme for beginning reading instruction and social studies in a school's kindergarten class, she decided to visit.

Roosevelt spent about 30 minutes with King and her 5-year-olds, taking in the classroom's international décor and listening to children singing in various languages. As she left, Roosevelt said to the idealistic young educator, "My, Edith King, you certainly are a worldminded teacher."

Roosevelt died soon after, but King has kept her legacy alive as an advocate for peace and human rights. She adopted "worldmindedly" as her motto and even has a logo drawn by one of her students that reflects the concept.

"Worldmindedness" encompasses far more, she says, than recognizing cultural diversity or bettering intergroup relations. It is a humanistic philosophy, King says, grounded in the arts and humanities and the major contributions the social sciences bring to furthering knowledge about the human condition.

With more than 175 million people—3 percent of the world's population—living outside their country of origin, King says adults must recognize and children must be taught the impact of migration and globalization. In *Teaching in an Era of Terrorism*, King advocates teaching young children about the impact of social

inequality and discrimination, the definitions and origins of terrorism and the use of bias-free language. She discusses bullying and homophobia as a form of terrorism, combating growing Islamophobia, and dealing with the unintended educational consequences of an era of terrorism.

Education Dean Ginger Maloney says King opens her heart and her home to students from around the world and instills a global perspective in each of them. King is an active scholar, Maloney says, lending a necessary sociological context to the art and science of teaching.

"The remarkable thing about Edith is the passion she still has for her work and how she instills that in her students," Maloney says.