Dear Friends,

The current economic meltdown has dramatically intensified the crisis in public education, with no end in sight. School districts are slashing budgets that were already egregiously inadequate. Both teachers and students are suffering, as class sizes rise and teaching staff and resources dwindle. Of course, the cuts will be felt deepest in our poorest schools. These realities make the Bread Loaf Teacher Network’s (BLTN) supportive professional development community for teachers even more important.

When districts slash school spending, professional development budgets are among the first cut, despite the research which reveals that good professional development for teachers is critical to their students’ success. BLTN’s generative and economical professional development model is one answer to this problem. BLTN’s work costs a fraction of what most districts spend on their professional development programs. Moreover, since it is created by groups of teachers who have developed the capacity to train other teachers, the content of the BLTN program is directly applicable to the classroom.

In 2008 – 2009 the generative power of BLTN was showcased by two conferences, one in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the other in Nairobi, Kenya. The stories of these conferences are told within this newsletter.

BLTN conferences have a 25 year history in the network. BLTN members plan, organize, run, and teach at these conferences. Whether it’s one day or one week, the conferences require many hours of planning and enormous amounts of in-kind contributions and sweat equity, particularly

BLTN member and 14 year veteran Lawrence teacher, Sheila Barry, who teaches third grade at the Henry K. Oliver School in Lawrence, MA, was named Wal Mart’s Teacher of the Year for 2008-09. The honor comes with a $1000 award that Sheila has decided to use to reopen the Oliver School’s library, which had been closed for several years. Sheila earned her Bread Loaf MA in 2008 and attended the ABL in 2003. Below is something her friend and colleague, Mary Guerrero, wrote about her.

This past school year Sheila Barry was recognized with the Walmart teacher of the year award. In my opinion there is no person who deserves this award more than she.

Every year Sheila’s classes are transformed into writing communities where each writer encourages the other to express new ideas. Sheila motivates her students to read continuously. By reading they search for new ideas that will inspire their own writing. All along the way, students have Sheila’s full support. Support, however, is not a strong enough word. She does more than that because she believes in each student. She gives each student that undivided attention and respect that allows the student to listen to his or her own voice.

It is difficult to describe in words how Sheila accomplishes this success. In order to understand the power of Sheila’s teaching, we should visit her class. We could watch how she encourages all students to write, watch as she finds meaning in their words. We could observe how she hears their voices and listens to their thoughts. We could see how Sheila is moved to

continued on p.2

continued on p.14
from BLTN members. We estimate that the real expenses for these conferences are somewhere between 20 – 40 times what is spent in dollars. And this cost does not include the in-kind efforts of Bread Loaf School of English professors such as Dixie Goswami and Michael Armstrong. Dixie and Michael, in particular, through their research and the courses they teach, are invaluable consultants for BLTN conferences and other initiatives.

BLTN professional development conferences have several important features. Perhaps the most distinctive is that each must include students as well as teachers, and include them not only as participants, but where appropriate, as workshop facilitators, respondents, and authentic collaborators. Another key feature is that BLTN conferences do not segregate according to grade level. BLTN assumes that teachers take a holistic view of their students’ education and that they should be aware of the teaching and learning that happens in every grade.

The philosophy of BLTN conferences is tailor made for teachers. Participants always leave the conferences with at least one method that they can use in their own classroom. Moreover, participants do a significant amount of writing, experiencing what their students will experience when they write, including having the opportunity to share what they’ve written. The strongest proof of the conferences’ success is always in the participants’ assessments, where words such as “inspiring” and “transformative” appear repeatedly on their evaluation sheets.

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**Leading Ladies Summer Workshop for Teens**

The Leading Ladies Summer Workshop for Teens is a one week intensive program designed to nurture the health and well-being of high school girls. The overall goal of the program is to use the writing process as a tool to teach young girls how to conduct themselves as outstanding leading ladies. The girls will participate in a series of classes on pertinent and relevant subjects.

The workshop will be offered the week of June 15-19, 2009, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. at O. Perry Walker High School. The program is open to students of O. Perry Walker High School.

Topics covered will include:

- Personal Hygiene; Dressing for Success: Hair care and Make-up; Conflict Resolution; Mental Health Strategies for Handling Life’s Problems; Public Speaking;
- Writing Workshops which include reading and journaling; Abstinence/Sexuality;
- Eating Healthy, Exercise and Living Alcohol and Drug Free; Leadership Development; Character Education; Nurturing the Mind, Body and Spirit

New Orleans’ teacher, Jennifer Heard, ABL 2007, launched a summer writing workshop at her school in June 2009. Her plan is to offer this workshop every summer for her students.

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**New Orleans Student Writers Workshop ~ July 27-31, 2009**

The New Orleans Bread Loaf Experience is a one week intensive writing and arts workshop for students in grades 6th-8th. The primary goal is to help students discover how enjoyable creating arts and writing can be. Over the course of the program, all students will become more competent and confident writers and artists and will improve their public speaking skills.

NOBLE will offer students the unique experience of being part of a community of writers. It will begin Monday, July 27th and continue through Friday, July 31st. It runs from 9 – 2, lunch included. The workshop will be held at the United Teachers of New Orleans headquarters at 4718 Paris Avenue. Writers, teachers, artists, and college professors will offer the students workshops in different genres. By the end of the program the students will produce a literary magazine, artwork, and a public reading and exhibition of their work.

Based on the Bread Loaf Teacher Network’s acclaimed 21-year-old Lawrence Student Writers Workshop, NOBLE will become a program that will spawn other similar workshops during summers, vacations and the school year. During the school year, we plan to offer writing conferences for other students, using students from NOBLE and Students at the Center (SAC) as leaders.

NOBLE students will be selected through an application process. Selection will be based on the recommendations and the students’ desire to write; the students will represent a cross-section of the kind of students that attend NOLA schools, including students from all academic levels.

Please mail to: NOBLE c/o UTNO 4718 Paris Ave New Orleans, LA 70122

*If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Shavon Magee, 504.339.9792 or shavon_magee@nops.k12.la.us or Julie Wedding, 217.652.5813, or mswedding@hotmail.com.*
“I have learned so much, interacted so much, I am bursting with energy!”

So wrote a local teacher who participated in the 2009 Andover Bread Loaf Conference held at Nairobi, Kenya this past April. “It was fantastic to have such a wide and international group of teachers together in one place” said another. “I feel re-energized about my profession. Thank you.” reported a third. What was good about the workshop? “Getting to share experiences as teachers and discovering that we face the same challenges the world over.”

Titled Writing with a Difference, to Make a Difference, the ABL International Conference brought together 35 teachers from a dozen schools across Nairobi, India and the US for workshops on writing, using technology in the classroom, teacher research, and HIV/AIDS education. Twelve ABL staff members, including Associate Director Richard Gorham PA ’86, traveled to Kenya to visit schools and conduct workshops for teachers and students.

“It was a life-changing experience” said ABL staffer Roberto German of Lawrence, who traveled to Africa for the first time to attend the conference and conduct writing workshops for teachers and students. Roberto echoed the experience of all the ABL staff who went to Kenya to present workshops, but learned as much as they taught.

Since 1987, Andover Bread Loaf, based at Phillips Academy, has partnered with Middlebury College’s Graduate School of English (the source of the quirky ‘Bread Loaf’ name) to improve education in traditionally underserved communities throughout the US and abroad. Based around a two-week teacher institute held at Phillips Academy in the summer, ABL’s long-term goals are to build sustainable, interlinked professional networks in cities around the world that transform education and empower teachers and students to use writing to change their world.

An important part of ABL’s success has been the ability to sustain partnerships with teachers and schools across the globe over time. “The key is the commitment of these wonderful teachers to work together to build communities across great distances,” said ABL director and longtime Phillips Academy English teacher Lou Bernieri. “We’ve seen what committed teachers can do when we help build a network that supports and connects them.”

Currently, Andover Bread Loaf is actively helping to build sustained teacher networks in New Orleans, New York City, Mumbai, India, Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Nairobi. Future plans include work with schools in South Africa. The goal, as always: to build community, improve education, and transform lives.

— Richard Gorham Associate Director, ABL.
Change. We call our conferences “Write/Right To Change Conferences” to remind everyone of our roots.

The conference convened in the Community Room on 60 Island Street, thanks to the generosity of Chet and Gary Seidel, who, once again, gave use of the room. Some individual workshops were held at the adjacent Essex Art Center, another space that we often for conferences through the kindness of Leslie Costello and the EAC directors and staff. We also owe a big thanks to the Phillips Academy Audio Visual staff for setting us up with an excellent sound system and other useful technology. Finally, we are grateful to the Addison Gallery of American Art and Julie Bernson, Director of Education, for supplying the bus to pick up students. Julie also led one of the workshops.

Most participants were k-12 teachers from Lawrence and the greater Merrimack Valley. However, also in the mix were 25 students, community organization staff, college professors, graduate school students (from Harvard Graduate School of Education and Northern Essex Community College), a couple of parents, and a few Phillips Academy students. While the great majority was from Lawrence, teachers also came from Oakland, CA; Clemson, SC; NYC; Boston, Cambridge, Methuen, Haverhill, and Andover, MA.

The conference ran from 9:00 am - 2:00 pm., breakfast and lunch included. The stunning keynote speech (see below) was given by Dr. Ricardo Dobles, an education professor at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. and a member of the Andover Bread Loaf staff. Dr. Dobles was followed by a performance by poets Roberto German and Yvette Modestin, the former also an ABL staff member. After writing and sharing with Roberto and Yvette, participants chose from among 6 different workshops given by BLTN members. The day culminated in an open mic plenary session where students and teachers shared the work they created during the conference. ☮️

At ABL/BLTN professional development conferences, students work closely with teachers, and often, as in the photo above, with parents and family members. Maria de la Cruz (bottom left) has offered bilingual workshops at the conferences.
What I got from today is that writing is an important thing in people's lives. What inspired me today was how Roberto was talking about how he grew up in Lawrence and he was rapping and talking about beauty. I think I can bring back with me from the conference another way of telling about what “beauty” means. Something I learned about myself today is that I really like writing and I usually say I don’t like it.

The amount of students who were willing to share their writing and thoughts was truly inspiring. This really highlighted the power of writing, the validation of sharing and expression, and the impact of a child’s voice. I attended the photography workshop and loved it! I’ll definitely be using this in my classroom and writing program. I learned that everyone is a writer and communities can come together and experience healing through writing.

Bread Loaf is freedom to write! Freedom of speech is creative writing. Dreaming and being me is my soul. Everything continues to be as good as the first Bread Loaf conference I attended years ago.

I’m going to take back with me from the conference a new way of encouraging “freedom of mind.” I learned that I am not alone and can rely on the Lawrence community to bring about change... I was inspired by the solidarity of the group who put on the workshops.

Noelia’s workshop was chock-filled with motivational strategies to get students to write. What better way than integrating the arts! I learned how to use poetry as a stepping stone to launch narrative writing. I learned that all human issues, whether emotional or intellectual, are global!

Today, I learned that I myself need to express my feelings in writing. I think this conference was perfect!!!!!

Someone today who inspired me was Roberto and the way he rapped his thoughts. I learned that my friend, Maria, who was also here, likes to look at a picture and imagine she is in it.

It was inspiring to be with other people—kids, teachers, artists, parents, adults who all shared a common interest/concern/love/perspective on life and learning. I appreciated having time to think and write in the midst of the conference. I love having kids be part of the professional development process and experience.

I learned that Beauty is not what is ugly or not, or what is good or bad. I learned that beauty is being in contact with your emotions.
It is unquestionably a privilege to address this audience. I am, as ever, in awe of the work that goes on in many of the classrooms in the city of Lawrence. The teachers, students, parents, and community members who attend this celebration serve as evidence of the power that is derived from believing in the ability of students and in the power of the community.

Needless to say, when we compare the scores of Holden children and Lawrence children there is no comparison. If I were to compare Lawrence with nearby Andover my guess is we would see the same differences. These test discrepancies, what people in my field call the achievement gap, is not news to most folks here. The achievement gap is large and the achievement gap has been large for as long as such measurements have been taken.

One of the courses that I teach has to do with the various explanations for the achievement gap. Principal among them is the issue of economics. Looking again at the difference between Lawrence and Holden, the median household income in Lawrence is 31,604 dollars while the median household income in Holden is 74,600 dollars. The difference, which is substantial, many argue translates into resources that are available to my children that are not available to children in Lawrence, to you who are gathered in this room. So, the argument goes, stuff like computers, textbooks, libraries, art, music, and other enrichment opportunities are in greater supply in Holden schools than they are in Lawrence schools. As a result the achievement gap is nothing more than a resource and opportunity gap.

This is a powerful argument and one that I certainly think has a great deal of merit, however, there is a danger in assuming that one place has more “resources” than another. It is just a baby step to go from saying that one place has more ‘economic’ resources to saying that there are also more human and cultural resources. So the idea creeps in that the teachers are better in one place over the other. The idea creeps in that one place has better families and more capable students. These explanations for the achievement gap, that it is a reflection of poor teacher quality and student deficit, are not only prevalent in the research literature but also drive much of the education reform in this country. The idea that low quality teachers and intellectually bankrupt families can explain the achievement gap is evident in education reform efforts; be they local (SFA?) or state level (Unz?) or even in national attempts to leave no child behind (a name that could only have come from someone with a deep sense of irony). Bad teachers and worse families. Are we depressed yet?

There is an alternative explanation for the achievement gap that I argue in my teaching and in the little writing that I have done. And, yes, it is no less depressing. I believe that the achievement gap is the logical result of a system that is designed to maintain the social divisions of a stratified society. A friend of mine from graduate school, who, like me, is originally from New York used to talk about the graduation rate of African Americans and Latinos in New York City. The rate has been abysmally low pretty much for as long as such records have been kept. Upon reeling off the numbers, he would ask: how long will it take before we stop asking what is wrong here and start asking whether the problem is that there is no problem?

It is a fair question and one with deep historical roots. Right here in the city of Lawrence there was a debate that was echoed in the rest of the nation about the purpose of public education. On one side of the argument you had folks like Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University who argued that the purpose of education was to prepare students for their “evident and probable destinies in life.” He felt that teachers should determine the probable destiny of a student as early as possible and then prepare that student for his or her future. So the son or daughter of a factory worker should be educated as if that were their destiny: a life of hard labor in the mills. The son or daughter of a doctor, well
the son of a doctor, should be educated for professional life and life as a civic leader. On the other side of the debate stood educational leaders like Jeremiah Burke, Superintendent of Lawrence from 1894-1904, who argued against the idea of predetermination, saying, in 1900:

It is urged, and wisely, too, that the studies pursued by the child should equip him especially for his life’s work. I believe in such adaptation of means to ends, everywhere, at every stage, in every system of instruction. But where is the prophet to forecast the life’s work of a child? I question the ability—yes, I challenge the right,—of anyone to predetermine the character of the life’s work or the sphere of serviceableness of such a child. Such a prescription would be unnatural, unjust and un-American. Although Burke and like-minded leaders presented passionate arguments, unfortunately, the Charles Eliot side of the debate ruled the day. Beginning in the early 20th century, public education became explicitly about preparing children for their evident or probable destinies in the economic order. Middle-class Holden kids should be prepared for their middle class futures and working-class Lawrence kids should be prepared for theirs.

Though the rhetoric may be different today, I would argue that not much has changed over the last century or so. Take, for example, the recent debate over school uniforms at Lawrence High School. In defending the school uniform policy, Mayor Sullivan stated “Education is all about showing up every day to school and learning what happens when you don’t go along with the policy.” Truer words have never been spoken. Unfortunately, schooling, especially schooling in urban America has become more about Discipline, Control, and Order than Learning, Critical Thinking, and Exploration.

Of course, someone could say, excuse me Professor Dobles, wasn’t your father a factory worker and then a janitor and didn’t your mother also work in a factory? That is very true. If we follow the logic of the argument above, I too should be a janitor rather than a Harvard University trained academic. I wish—in fact nothing would make me happier—if I could say that my example presents compelling evidence to refute my position. Unfortunately, in the US the number of Puerto Ricans with a doctorate constitute one tenth of one percent of the Puerto Rican population. By contrast, recent figures from the city in which I grew up, New York, show that less than 10% of Latinos are graduating from high school and only 11% of Latinos nationwide are college graduates. The truth of the matter is that a little Ricardo born into poverty is much more likely to remain in poverty than he is to graduate from college and live a middle class life. He is exponentially more likely to drop out of high school than he is to attend graduate school. In fact, he is much more likely to go to prison than he is to attend graduate school. And no matter how many compelling studies I read with sophisticated analyses of why this is so, I am left with the belief that it is so because schools are not designed in any way to disrupt the social order. In fact, as I have stated earlier, they are designed to maintain it. Go along with the policy or face the consequences. So, I don’t know about you, but I find that a little depressing.

Yet, this helps to explain why I am so happy to be here with you today. Why I consider it an honor and a privilege whenever I attend these Lawrence Teacher Network conferences. For it is during these conferences that I am given the opportunity to serve as a witness to a powerful project of hope and resistance.

Paulo Freire wrote “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry we pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.”

Here is the living breathing embodiment of that idea. Here I see time and time again teachers who resoundingly reject the notion that they, or their students, or their student’s families are deficient. Here I see educators who draw strength from themselves, their students, and their student’s families. Here I see time and time again a community that rejects the historically and institutionally oppressive function of “schools” and re-imagines the possibility; the possibility that education can serve a greater good; the possibility that education may yet help to liberate us all. Here I see and hear, in the action and in the doing of the day’s activities, time and time again the refrain of resistance, Si Se Puede. Yes, we can. Not alone. Not in isolation. But Together. In Solidarity. In Community. We will put word to paper. We will lift our voices. And together…we will learn…which is to say…we will be free.

As the poet Antonio Machado says “Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.”

[Traveler, there are no roads. The road is created as we walk it [together]]

I am, as always, honored by the invitation to travel with you on this journey. ☺
The 2008 ABLWW enrolled teachers from New Orleans, LA; Lawrence, MA; and Oakland, CA. Their program was similar to other years, including workshops by teachers, professors, writers, artists, actors, and poets. The power of the ABLWW to help teachers transform themselves was more evident than ever this year. One reason for this is that the participants came to the program prepared by colleagues back in their respective cities. Our alumni, who work to spread what they’ve learned in the program to their colleagues, are our best advertisement. As they recruit more of their colleagues into the ABL network, they lay the groundwork for what we do in the summer.

“I cannot put into words what this experience has meant to me both professionally and personally. I don’t want to simply say I enjoyed it—that was a pleasant surprise, a bonus. I want to say that I learned a lot about teaching, about writing, about myself. My mind is buzzing with new ideas and fresh perspectives. I have no doubt that I leave here a better educator as well as a better writer.”
— Ambrosia Grant, New Orleans

“In the end the fact that the ABLWW strives to help educators tap into the creative human impulse, which in a sense “humanizes” us deeply, appeals to me and I feel very fortunate to have been a part of this experience… I will go back to Oakland a more caring educator, with a clearer vision of what I want in my classroom and for society. I will go back nurturing a desire to build community… I came to ABL somewhat disillusioned, viewing myself as a cog in a machine that trains children simply to become marketable commodities… However, here I have catalyzed a passion for social justice and change and feel as if I have some tools to build not automatons, but critical, conscientious members of society who will perhaps grow up to become agents of organic dialogue and societal change one day.”
— Gabriel Lugo, Oakland

“I have learned a tremendous amount over the past two weeks while participating in Andover BreadLoaf. The program immersed our group in the writing process and in stimulating dialogue on a continual basis. The type of environment established was one of collegiality and a willingness to speak openly and honestly. This type of environment can be achieved in all classrooms. The methodologies emphasized by Bread Loaf are what I believe to be conducive to great learning… I am eager to learn more, to stay involved and bring what I have learned back to my school to share with others.”
— Jill Ramey, Lawrence

Members of Soul Kaliber, a poetry and arts organization from Lawrence, MA, have been on the ABL staff for a decade. On the left, they perform at the ABLWW. Left to Right: Roberto German, Troy Lazaro, and Jackson Garcia. Jackson is one of 5 ABL alumni currently enrolled in the Bread Loaf School of English. Roberto is an ABL road warrior, traveling to New Orleans and Nairobi to do workshops during the 2008-09 school year. Troy was recently appointed as Director of Admissions at Notre Dame High School in Lawrence.
In 2008 the LSWW enrolled a record 80 students and 20 Writing Leaders. The popularity of the LSWW grows every year; thus, we have worked to increase our size so we can serve more students. Thanks to the strength and talents of the 20 Writing Leaders and the guidance of our directors, we had our best summer ever in 2008.

As in the past, the workshop resembled an artist colony more than just a writing workshop. In addition to writing every day and creating a literary magazine, the students did theater, music, dance, photography, sculpture, collage, painting, drawing, and several other kinds of visual arts. In each art form workshops were given by teachers, students, writers, poets, artists, actors, and university professors, all of whom are part of ABL and the national Bread Loaf Teacher Network.

Led by the 20 Writing Leaders, predominantly high school seniors and college students from Lawrence, the LSWW students culminated their summer with a talent show on Thursday, July 17th and an Exhibition on July 18th, the latter held at the Community Room on Island Street in Lawrence and drawing over 200 people.

The LSWW continues be a flagship program for ABL. As teachers and students from other sites have understood, a student workshop is a key to catalyzing change in a school or school system. In addition to the remarkable benefits it offers individual students, such a workshop allows teachers, administrators, and other adults to witness the talents of young people. Moreover, student workshops help teachers develop curriculum and projects that can be brought into the schools in the fall.

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FROM TEACHERS

September Song

Give me September…
No. Rather, back up and give me August.
August when there is still time
To climb into roller coasters that speed and
spiral, twist and turn,
To slide and slip in tubes
And splash in cool, wet glee at the bottom
of tall water towers;
When there is still time
to really stop and examine the full
bloom of radiant petals,
to guffaw in the sheer happiness of days,
to fill the needy heart,
to live the magic moment,
to seek and secure pure pleasure

Let me wallow in August –
Until…until August disappears and
September is here
September that almost never looks back
Only sometimes and only at the beginning
during the first few days
When it looks forward as much as it looks
backward.

Let me manage September
Get my own back first.
Get my heritage right.
Assess my spring and summer.
Give closure to tasks left unfinished.
Come to terms with relationships let drop;
Weed my gardens, decide what to keep,
what to pluck out,
What to transplant, what to throw
away…
I know I’ll want to keep more than should
be kept;
But give me September’s wonders
Let my September show the fullness of
time
I want to keep the guffaws,
I want to gather the radiant petals.
I want to keep the pleasure pure.

— Hazel Lockett, East Orange, NJ

Newspaper Walls

A wooden shack to some
A home to others
This was her home as a child
A twisted wooden shack
It’s still there today
But not as she described it
Gone are the newspaper and magazine
pages
That lined the walls
Back then periodicals served well as wallpa-
er for Black people
An “unlearned” family
The letters grouped together didn’t evoke
and emotion, reflection, or thought
The straight lines and curves were nothing
more than decorations
A family too busy working to read
Working in the field
Except for her
The grouped letters were real to her
They were words
Words pasted on the wall
She tried to work in the fields
Tried her hardest to pick the sweet potatoes
But her hardest wasn’t good enough
They laughed and said, “Girl, stick to
school.”
They knew she wasn’t made for the field
In fact they knew she wasn’t made
For life in the wooden shack with newspa-
er walls.

— Shavon Magee, New Orleans, LA

I Am From

I am from the land of never-belong
Outside myself I am
blooming, like the scent
of Magnolia
I come from a line
of women strong as oaks,
who knew it all
and passed it on.
I come from newspaper clutter and
French Roast coffee
on the corner of Carrollton Avenue.
I am from slumming with smart people,
from designer labels from thrift boutiques,
from peppermints and oatmeal raisin
cookies in my purse.

I come from heat that envelopes you, cra-
dles you.
I’m from the trickle of summer nights,
sweat beading,
from bittersweet memories
of my sincere heartsong dreaming.

-- Ambrosia Grant, New Orleans

I Am From

I am from Heineken bottles and cigarette
butts,
but I’m still sober and smell as fresh as the
dandelions lying at my feet
I am from dead skunks and children, not
mine, who stay up after the lights
go out because ain’t nobody worried about
their behind.
I am from ballet, to jazz, to hip-hop, body
rocks, windmills and pop and locking,
I am dance.
I am from the yellow taxi – too late
because there is some mysterious
Traffic jam somewhere in my mind,
I think I am early, but I am Dominican, so
I guess not.
I am from mondongo, sancocho, and pla-
tanos
And when I assimilated, or so they
thought.
I became a part of McDonalds and Taco
Bell and Wendys.
I am from “Tutu loca mu mucha tu no
parece hijamia”
To “Dejame en paz porque estoy viendo la
novella.”
She is still watching the novella while I am
here waiting…
Until something happens.
I am from the Bible class to confusion to
afternoon rain showers
And dried up tears on the pillow next to
the armoire
Which holds a framed picture of my Nino.
I am from the sister, the Mirabel sisters,
courageous,
I would have stood delante del Trujillo.
I am woman.
They come no stronger than me.

— Noelia Bare, Lawrence, MA
**Friendship**

According to me, friendship is the greatest wealth that brings many pleasures to gladden the heart. A friend is one who treasures my every hope and dream. Friendship … is a glorious melody whose beauty increases with the passage of time. A really close friendship doesn’t just happen. It takes time to build the kind of trust and respect that makes a friendship a lasting one. Life is nothing without friendship, because it’s only in the relationship that one has the freedom to be oneself. Friendship is smooth, free flowing, like a river of dreams that brings surprises, all new, growing deeper day after day. Friendship can show how beautiful life can be. Happy is the heart that knows true friendship.

— Shaikh Naufil

**That’s Me!**

Speaking
Dancing
Loving
Playing
Studying
That’s me!

Eating
Screaming
Drawing
Riding
Fighting
That’s me!

Aiming
Flying
Teasing
Running
Scolding

That’s me Huzain Khan!

**Do More!**

To get the Best of Life:

Do more than Exist … live!
Do more than touch… feel!
Do more than look… observe!
Do more than hear … listen!
Do more than listen … understand!
Do more than think … ponder!
Do more than talk … Act!

— Jamil Sorathia

**A Person is said to be a good man…..**

“A person is said to be a good man when his heart always welcomes giving others’ help.”
“A person is said to be a good man when his words do not hurt anyone.”
“A person is said to be a good man when he has respect for others.”
“A person is said to be a good man when he is always honest.”
“A person is said to be a good man when he always shows the right way.”
“A person is said to be a good man when he lights the candles to dispel others’ darkness.”

— Shaikh Noor Forooque

**In The Practical Examination:**

Examiner: You have to write the name of the bird by observing its legs.

Students: I don’t know.

Examiner: You failed, what’s your name?

Student: Observe my legs and tell me.

Millions said that the apple fell.

But Newton was the only one to ask why.

Practice makes man perfect.

But no body wants to be perfect,

So why practice?

Too many cards

Too many kisses

After some days

Mr and Mrs.

— Abdullah Ansari

**Lawrence, MA**

**My Beautiful Shoes**

My beautiful shoes have gray and silver triangles with pink stars.

My beautiful shoes and I go to the store to buy a blue dress with green flowers.

My beautiful shoes and I go to school because my shoes want to write poems.

My beautiful shoes and I love to read romantic fairy tales.

My beautiful shoes and I love to play hopscotch and jump rope on the dark green grass.

My beautiful shoes and I love to play school with my friend Karla and her tiny dog, Butterscotch.

My beautiful shoes and I eat sweet potatoes with marshmallow on top.

My beautiful shoes and I get ready for bed and snooze away.

— Illyana R

**I’m Not Afraid**

I’m not afraid of anything.

Knowing I can breathe and have what I need, I’ll be OK.

“I am young and I am free, but I get tired and I get weak.”

Those words are sung by Avril Lavigne and as these words ring in my ears, I understand that this person – young and weak – that’s me. I’m the ‘go-to’ girl.

Every time my name is called, I go forth – no questions asked.

I’m the broad shoulders everyone leans on when upset and tired.

I kill the spiders on the wall, check for monsters under the bed.

I’m the strong, brave, and courageous one who is happy but easily saddened.

What about me?

What happens when I become weak like everyone else?

Who is strong enough to help me hold my head high

And say, “It will be okay?”

I’m my own person

And if nobody is there to turn to – It’s okay. I’m not afraid.

— Alexis Rene Caratini
**The Beauty of A Child**

Cody. That’s what his name is. He’s seven years old. Last year this beautiful child walked into my life. He was so shy but he was so happy to talk to me. The first time we got assigned to be pals, we were making paper flowers. While we were doing that, he told me, “I’m having fun. I really like spending time with you.” After he said that, I cried. It was like right there I knew I would be happy to stay there. Ever since that perfect memory, we are still making more memories. When I talked to his mother and she told me he had Down syndrome, I was so sad. She told me he has been so happy lately. “All he ever does is talk about you!” Ever since his mother told me that, I’ve had a strong bond with him. Volunteering in a special needs class has helped me to grow and to know that there is a reason why I’m here—cause I’m making a difference in someone’s life.

Fact: Did you know that 1,000 kids a year are affected by Down’s Syndrome when they are born?

So, it’s wonderful to give your time to a special needs class. I promise a child will love you for your support, love, and care. So, help now.

— Zhayna Alvarez

**My Garden of Friends**

My garden of friends is always in bloom. When one is not my friend a flower dies. Then one comes up all brand new. It will astonish you in an instant. My garden of friends is always in bloom.

— Reyna D

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**Boston, MA**

**Tears**

I wish I was one of your tears
I would start in your eyes
Live on your cheeks
And die on your lips
But if you were one of my tears I would never cry for fear of losing
You

— Lee

**Pineapple Samba**

Sweet rhythm!
One two three
Dance Samba!

Peeking out from underneath the leaves,
They look down on potatoes and yams.
They smile at the sun that gives them strength.
At the sound of the twanging guitar
And the low, rhythmic beating of the drums
And the trumpets’ blare, pineapples dance.
Dance Samba!
Bounce to the Fruity beat!

They dance under the trees which bore them.
They celebrate their sweet origin
And they thank their mother earth for life.
Their spiky tops sway as they all dance.
Pineapples spin and twirl gracefully
And they continue into the night.

Pineapples!
Dance Samba!
Fruitfully!

They samba from morning to evening.
They dance without rest or even a care
That they will someday be eaten.
Perhaps even served with fructose syrup
Or maybe meant to meet the other fruit
In a nice, nutritious fruit salad.

Sweet, juicy
Pineapples
Dance Samba!
Pineapples!
They always
Dance Samba!

— Nancy Lopez

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**Brooklyn, NY**

**I am**

I am Michael, Mike, Hood, Humble, and The Most.
I am notorious, intelligent, dominant, and well respected.
I am uno, the chosen one.
I am the universal street scholar destin for greatness.
A part of me will always be Crown Heights, my home.
I am Hood Humble.

— Michel Simms

**Imagining Me**

I stare up at the ceiling late at night
And see my imagination soar to great heights.

One second, I am a secret agent,
Sneaking down the sides of buildings,
And looking for the slightest clue
On how the criminal stole the top secret files of the President.

Another second, I am an artist,
Sitting on a sandy beach,
Painting a sailboat gliding across the water
Which is sailing toward the dock, just out of reach.

The next thing I know, I am a rock star,
Walking down the red carpet,
Loving the photographs as I step out of my car,
Smiling toward the cameras as graceful as a swan,
They imagine me playing my guitar.

Now, as I drift off to sleep,
I return to my old life,
Back to my tiny room.
Suddenly, I hear my phone beep, so I clumsily get out of bed and turn it off,
And go back to my dream about me.

— Deidre Hurley
free verse

just thinking about it i like writing
writing is what i do
writing is who i am
what i do best is being me
i am what ever i say i am
i wil be a u.s. marine
i will be successful
you can love me or hate me
but you cant stop me
let me go
i want to explore
let me go
let me be me

— Justin Barrowes

The Girl I Am

It is hard to believe,
That the girl I am,
Is not the girl I really am.
I live in a world of dreams…
Each one different from the last,
Or so it seems…
Every day is a struggle, another fight to win.

Every day becomes a battle, ‘cause you’re just trying to be real.
But at that moment, nika stress zote zimedie…
Nika stress zote zimedie and life becomes one smooth ride every time I close my eyes and enter that other world.

I dream so that others can dream,
So that through my dreams their broken dreams can become real,
And a broken child will have a chance to heal and become whatever they want to be.

Because in that moment, that one singular moment,
When I decide to take a chance,
Take a step, (Move ahead)
Speak out, (be heard)
Stand up, (arise)

I become, not a child, but a soldier
Living my dream. (yeah)
Living my dream.

A family of ants gathers food
For their home.
The leaves are neatly placed
on the ground.
Brown, dead, like a painting.
My imagination is running wild.
I’m trying to shape the clouds
into an animal.
The feeling of being free
is so good.
Not a care in the world.
Just me and the open air.

— Sharise Butler

I Am

I am Jayden
I love to
Danse I like
Play and Danse
I love me
I have a little
Bruther and I love
Him.

— Jayden

The Struggle of New Orleans, August 29, 2005

August 29th, the worst day to me
Katrina came that day – a catastrophe
Lonely, all alone, no place like home
On a highway thinking about my home
Worrying, stressing, asking God for his blessing
Mothers crying, babies dying, trying to make a way
Police shooting, people looting, trying to make it okay
Think about if you weren’t here today
Thank God, be amazed, cause you could be dead
They still have people sleeping on air beds
I thank God none of my people died,
Now I understand why all the people cried
But I still hate the fact that so many people died.

— Johnna Burds

Nairobi, Kenya

I’m Wishing Upon a Star

Blood red moons,
Diamonds glistening in the eyes
of a slave child,
Metaphoric words silence the world,
Great minds influence the young,
H.I.V robbing children’s dreams,
A world no one understands,
My own
Vapid canvas,
Sharp paintbrush
Artiste in the making,
Eyes tearing with hope,
End to war,
Children singing,
This time try to listen.

— Nelly Zahara Munge

New Orleans, LA

The Open Air

I feel the calm New Orleans breeze
Brushing against my face.
I hear the buses and cars racing
through traffic.
I see the trees swinging back and forth
In an awkward motion.

— Grace Olenja
tears by the words the students write. I once interviewed her students and I asked them if they would continue to be writers. Most students said yes but one student was doubtful. He explained that he could only continue to write if he were allowed to come back to third grade to read his writing to Mrs. Barry. He explained that he knows that his writing is good when he sees her reaction.

Back a few months ago I received an email from Dixie Goswami with the following quote written by Steve Seidel:

"That "withitness" may be both an essential element in successful teaching and extremely difficult to predict echoes an idea that some colleagues and I have been exploring, which we refer to as the "presence" of the teacher. At its core, presence could be defined as the ability to listen to everything of relevance that is happening in the room—and to respond flexibly and helpfully. This intense awareness and responsiveness, when combined with deep respect for others, radically alters the traditional student-teacher relationship, from one of control to one of collaboration. Whatever you call these qualities, it is hard to predict who will have them, but observing how people listen—and respond—may be a key to the puzzle."

I think that in Sheila Barry we have the perfect example of this presence.

Andover Bread Loaf (ABL) is a non-profit organization based on the Phillips Academy campus in Andover, MA. A joint venture between Phillips Academy, a private college preparatory high school, and the Bread Loaf School of English, Middlebury’s graduate school of English, ABL’s mission is to collaborate with activist teachers, students, and community organization staff from underserved communities to transform teaching in schools and school systems. ABL is an important hub of the international Bread Loaf Teacher Network. Contributions to ABL should be made out to: Trustees of Phillips Academy/Andover Bread Loaf, Phillips Academy, 180 Main Street, Andover, MA 01810

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