Dear Friends,

“The Imagination in Action” was the theme of Andover Bread Loaf’s 2009 summer Lawrence Student Writers Workshop (page 7) and also the focus of the Bread Loaf Teacher Network’s 2009 fall conference in Lawrence, MA. In both cases, students were asked to use their imaginations to dream of a better world and then to begin making those dreams a reality. Just as in many other Bread Loaf conferences, workshops and classrooms, students in these programs learn basic academic skills while they work to make their schools and communities healthier and happier places to be.

BLTN Lawrence Conference: The Imagination in Action

On November 21, 2009, forty five teachers and students attended the BLTN Lawrence fall conference, The Imagination in Action. Bread Loaf professor, Michael Armstrong – who traveled from his home in England for 3 weeks (as he has for the past five years) to work with teachers and students in the Lawrence public schools – gave an inspiring keynote address. His talk addressed the richness and sophistication of children’s imaginations as shown through the work of two young students from Sheila Barry’s 3rd grade class at the Oliver School in Lawrence. He concluded his talk by discussing what it means for curricula if schools took student writing and art seriously, if imagination were at the center of the curriculum.

Jamele Adams, our featured artist, was spectacular. Jamele, also known as “Harlym 1 2 5”, was a big hit with everyone, building community and sparking creativity with his performance. Both in his roles as Spoken Word artist and as a dean at Brandeis University, Jamele is a valuable partner in our network.

(continued on page 2)

(Poster created by Buxton Shippy of Lawrence CommunityWorks.)
IMAGINATION, from page 1

We had several visitors from out of town join us, including: Professor Ricardo Dobles from Worcester, MA; Jose Dobles from NYC, Brendan McGrath from New Bedford, MA, Ummi Modeste from Brooklyn, Patrick Guerrero from Mexico City and Audra Alexander from Lexington, MA, all of whom are BLTN members.

We owe a big debt of gratitude to Movement City/Lawrence CommunityWorks for generously inviting us into their space. No doubt that the magic of the conference was enhanced by the beautiful venue that “Our House” provided.”

FRIENDS, from page 1

Liberating young people’s imaginations and inviting them to become agents of change requires a shift in the teacher-student relationship from the hierarchical model that is prevalent in most schools to one that is more democratic, one in which the student is an active participant in his or her own education. The hierarchical model is inefficient and ineffective; it creates passive, disenfranchised students who often are alienated from their own education and frustrated, angry teachers who have to spend more time on discipline than teaching. Teachers in the Bread Loaf Teacher Network have witnessed the results when their students become partners in their own educational process and when they see a genuine purpose to their work in the classroom: inevitably, academic indicators rise (including test scores), sometimes dramatically.

Andover Bread Loaf Mission Statement

Andover Bread Loaf’s mission is to promote literacy and educational revitalization in the most economically disadvantaged school systems and communities around the world.

Andover Bread Loaf needs help to continue its mission. For every dollar donated to ABL, five to ten times that amount is generated in sweat equity and in-kind services by teachers, students, community organization staff, partners, and volunteers. Please contribute what you can.

Make checks payable to:
Andover Bread Loaf/Trustees of Phillips Academy
Phillips Academy
180 Main Street
Andover, MA 01810

Adunni Hall-Modeste from Brooklyn and Jackie Schiemberg from Lawrence work together in one of the Imagination in Action workshops.

Brandeis University dean, Jamele Adams, a.k.a. Harlym 1 2 5, inspires a young writer at the Imagination in Action conference.
**If I Ruled the World, Lawrence, MA**

On May 8, 2010, the Bread Loaf Teacher Network in Lawrence, MA collaborated with Lawrence CommunityWorks’ youth organization, Movement City, to offer a regional writing conference for students called “If I Ruled the World”. The conference was held at Movement City’s building, “Our House”. Its title was borrowed from a popular song by hip-hop star, Nas. About 100 people attended, 80 of whom were students. “Imagine that”, as Nas says in another one of his songs, 100 people devoting their Saturday afternoon to writing poetry.

The conference was a big hit with everyone. The focus of the day was on students as dreamers and activists. What would young people do if they had the power to change the world? How can they use their words and ideas, their poetry and performance, to begin to make a difference?

Anthony Morales, a poet and public school teacher from NYC, was the keynote artist. His opening performance/workshop was electric, as he shared his own work and invited the audience to write their own poetry. At the end of his session, participants shared what they wrote, inspired by Anthony’s art and by his teaching.

After Anthony, teachers from BLTN offered several workshops for participants to choose from, including: “Mobilizing Lawrence”, “¡Discute!” (Argue)”, “Dreams, Failures, and Standing Tall”, “Tell Them Who You Are”. The ultimate goal of each workshop was to have participants produce something they would share at the community open mic that culminated the day.

After the workshops and before the open mic, participants and organizers enjoyed a meal catered by a local Dominican restaurant.

Several important community organizations were represented at the conference: Movement City and the Boys and Girls Club both showed up with big student contingents.

A majority of the students came from the Lawrence Public Schools, but there were also students from Central Catholic High School, St. John’s Preparatory School and Phillips Academy. In addition, Wings and Hooves, an equine therapy organization in Kingston, New Hampshire, was represented by a group of students and their Executive Director, Colleen Boylan, all of whom are helping our network develop capacity to work with autistic children.

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Since 1988 many Andover Bread Loaf alumni have enrolled in the MA in English program at the Bread Loaf School of English, the great majority on fellowships. In the summer of 2010, eight will be attending one of the four Bread Loaf campuses:

- Jackson Garcia, Lawrence, MA
- Ashley Jones, New Orleans, LA
- Katie Lupo, Mashpee, MA
- Pati Nuñez, Lawrence, MA
- Holly Spinelli, New York, NY
- Jineyda Tapia, Lawrence, MA
- David Wandera, Nairobi, Kenya
- Julie Wedding, New Orleans, LA
CONFERENCES

First Ever ABL-New York City Conference Held at City-as-School!

On a warm, rainy Saturday afternoon in October 2009, City-as-School (CAS) High School’s Manhattan campus hosted the first-ever Andover Breadloaf-New York City student writing conference, attended by about 40 middle and high school students from all over New York City.

ABL ’09 graduates Jason Brezina, Jose Dobles, Anthony Morales, Carlos Rosello and Holly Spinelli conducted workshops while Director Ummi Modeste acted as runner and troubleshooter. A lovely breakfast and lunch spread were provided by CAS and the administrative support from CAS staff was phenomenal.

Some comments from the students were:

“I loved the music workshop with Mr. Carlos!”

“The poetry workshop was crowded and I thought I wouldn’t get a chance to share, but I did!”

“Mr. Morales made me realize that I can write poetry, too!”

“It was funny to see Mr. Brezina on a Saturday. He’s different as a writing teacher. I only had him for Social Studies before.”

The ABL-NYC contingent is thrilled that the first conference held in New York City was so well-received by the students. Now we are looking forward to planning a larger conference for the 2010-2011 school year!

— Rhea Ummi Modeste, ABL Director

In addition to working on their individual pieces, students at the first ABL NYC Writing Conference created several collaborative poems such as the one above.
Saving the Lion in the Snowing Streets: The Challenge of a teacher in an African Multi Lingual classroom

Nairobi’s David Wandera (ABLWW 1999, M.A. Bread Loaf 2008) is currently working on his Master’s of Letters degree at the Bread Loaf School of English. David and his colleague, Patricia Echessa-Kariuki (ABLWW 1998, M.A. Bread Loaf 2008), are active BLTN members throughout the year. In the spring of 2008, the dynamic duo organized and ran the third ABL International Conference in Nairobi. David and his colleague, Patricia Echessa-Kariuki organized and ran the 2008 ABL International Conference. David has been active in the Bread Loaf Teacher Network as a researcher as well as program organizer. In 2009 David wrote a paper that was accepted for publication by the Australian Council for Educational Research for the 2010 Global Language Convention to be held in Melbourne, Australia. Below is the poster he created that gives a thumbnail explanation of the paper.

Mr. David B. Wandera
The Aga Khan Academy, Post Office Box, 44424 (00100), Tel: 254-733798312
e-mail: willshiva@hotmail.com
NAIROBI, KENYA.

This paper is based on a collaborative writing project between the grade 9s and the grade 5s where they engage in a series of activities in a bid to answer the question; how does one achieve good writing?

KEY WORDS IN THE PAPER: Undercurrents of language, Language interference and Linguistic confluence

Aim

This article suggests methodology and attitudes which local educators in multi lingual urban Africa can employ to enhance teaching of English. It examines manifestations of other languages and resultant opportunities for effective teaching. It also discusses inherent language acquisition complexities regarding undercurrents of other languages which are felt during performance in the target language. It explores cultural dichotomies (Western vs. African) through understanding the incongruity in the story of the lion in the snowing New York street. Educators reading this article will pick up on the benefits of linguistically diverse classes in shaping pedagogy leading to effective teaching.

Methods

It all started with a grade 5 student suggesting ideas for a story; she suggested that the group writes a story about someone walking on some street in New York city when it was snowing. It is not uncommon to ask students in Kenya to tell you a simile that they know and to hear them saying almost glibly “as white as snow” despite the fact that they may not have seen snow in real life.

The modern day African (whom I will call ‘Hybrid African’ owing to his/her varied and variant exposure) is thus caught between the Eurocentric and the local and it came as no surprise to me that the grade 5 student wanted to locate a lion in this snowing street just “to spice things up.” This anachronistic inclusion demonstrates the complexity of experiences and language which characterizes the Multi lingual African space.

The student has been influenced by several visually powerful print and other media that portray divergent settings and contexts.

When considering the idea of the lion in the snowing New York streets, one quickly realizes that in allegorical terms the teacher’s role in class is to participate in the negotiation between the conflicting images and to harness meaning out of the divergent languages being spoken in class.

Pedagogically speaking, the teacher should employ teaching practices which enable students to explore language confluences that supplement the grade nine students reading word from grade five which was displayed in the foyer of The Aga Khan Junior Academy.

A grade five student showing Mr. Wandera some more that the grade five and she had come up with during their discussion.

In a multi lingual classroom, when one performs in one language other languages can easily come into play. Languages in a multi lingual classroom operate like a sea where the existent languages are like sea currents. If I can speak in English, Swahili and Maasai and I am speaking in English, the Swahili and the Maasai linguistic currents while extant, operate under the language performance surface and their effects are felt when they cease to be underlying and they come to the surface. The word ‘onomatopoeia’ was the funniest word since it brought to surface the Kiswahili aggregative word ‘anomatope’ (which translates into ‘he/she has mud’).

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The grade nine students reading word from grade five which was displayed in the foyer of The Aga Khan Junior Academy.

A grade five student showing Mr. Wandera some more that the grade five and she had come up with during their discussion.

Student A: What does that mean?
Student B: It means walking aimlessly... the dictionary says “to wander about, seeking pleasure or diversion” and “to travel about in search of pleasure or amusement or “to go around aimlessly”

David Wandera with his students at a writing workshop.

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This girl chirpily recalled the word ‘tembea tembea’ which is a Kiswahili agglutinative word only that the pronunciation is “anomatope” not “anomatope” for the full sound.

An example of language harmony

(Student write ‘gallivanting’)

Student A: What does that mean?
Student B: It means walking aimlessly... the dictionary says “to wander about, seeking pleasure or diversion” and “to travel about in search of pleasure or amusement or “to go around aimlessly”

Student A: I don’t get it.
Student B: Yeah, I... it is too much too hush
Student A: OK, let’s just do it.

In a multi-lingual classroom such allowances should be encouraged bearing in mind the varied linguistic experiences present which could at times prejudice enhance learning (their manifestation in the performance of the target language can be exploited in furthering lessons objectives). One can further calibrate the types of languages in the classroom based on age such that “onomatopoeia” spoken by the students differs from the teacher’s adult articulation noting that this variety is not restricted to multi-lingual classrooms. Thus a multi-lingual class encompasses linguistic confluence which is more complex than merely thinking of many languages in the same space. It is imperative that teaching in such a space requires a deliberate sensitivity to the linguistic interactions which will occur in the conduct of the lesson and an adaptation in managing these interactions and directing the same towards the fulfillment of the lesson without necessarily diminishing the ‘assistant language’ or compromising the ‘target language’.

CONCLUSION

In a multi-lingual classroom such allowances should be encouraged bearing in mind the varied linguistic experiences present which could at times prejudice enhance learning (their manifestation in the performance of the target language can be exploited in furthering lessons objectives). One can further calibrate the types of languages in the classroom based on age such that “onomatopoeia” spoken by the students differs from the teacher’s adult articulation noting that this variety is not restricted to multi-lingual classrooms. Thus a multi-lingual class encompasses linguistic confluence which is more complex than merely thinking of many languages in the same space. It is imperative that teaching in such a space requires a deliberate sensitivity to the linguistic interactions which will occur in the conduct of the lesson and an adaptation in managing these interactions and directing the same towards the fulfillment of the lesson without necessarily diminishing the ‘assistant language’ or compromising the ‘target language’.

Acknowledgements

M. Mwanzia for taking the pictures.
Andover Bread Loaf Workshops

Andover Bread Loaf’s generative power is among its defining characteristics. Teachers who attend ABL’s summer professional development program, the Andover Bread Loaf Writing Workshop (ABLWWW, see below), not only return home and change their own curricula, but also become activists, reaching out to other students and teachers in their schools and school systems. Many of these teachers point to their work with students in ABL’s summer Lawrence Student Writers Workshop (LSWW, see page 7) as the inspiration for their efforts.

This newsletter features a number of workshops that emerged from ABL’s summer workshops for teachers and students. A notable trend is the proliferation of student workshops that have been created based on the LSWW. In New York City, New Orleans, Boston, Mumbai, and Nairobi as well as Lawrence, ABLWWW alumni are running student workshops every year, some for one day, some for one or two weeks. In fact, in New Orleans, two summer student workshops were founded in the summer of 2009.

ABL student workshops have three central agendas. First and foremost, they benefit the individual student’s academic and personal life. Second, they serve as a lab where ABL staff in collaboration with students can develop curricula that can be used during the school year. Third, they provide a model for workshops and conference for teachers who want to start programs of their own.

The student workshops also reflect ABL’s deepest conviction about the necessity of bringing students into the educational process as authentic collaborators, co-teachers, and co-researchers. In each workshop, older high school and college Writing Leaders work closely to mentor and inspire their younger peers. Many of these Writing Leaders get their first experience as a teacher at an ABL workshop, an experience that often motivates them to pursue teaching as a profession.

(See additional photos on page 19.)

ABLWWW (Andover Bread Loaf Writing Workshop for teachers)

Seventeen teachers from Lawrence, New York City, New Orleans, and Capetown, South Africa attended the ABLWWW in July 2009. Similar to other years, the program included workshops by teachers, professors, writers, artists, actors, and poets. The ABLWWW is a model for professional development workshops that teachers create when they return to their schools and run workshops for their colleagues. Through daily reflection and discussion about the workshop, participants discover ways they can build a similar program in their cities.

A few sample quotes from the evaluations are exemplary of what the teachers felt about the summer:

*It was an awesome, empowering experience.*
— Stephen Bestbier, Capetown, South Africa

*This has been one of the greatest experiences of my personal and professional life.*
— Holly Ponticello, NYC

*I will never be the same, as a teacher or a human being.*
— Patricia Nuñez, Lawrence, MA

*This experience has profoundly changed me. I feel like this has been so amazing because it was a catalyst for a lot of personal growth that will make my life better but will also make me a better teacher.*
— Amy Laurenza, New Orleans, LA
The 2009 LSWW was titled “The Imagination in Action.” Over 80 students, grades 6-9 from the Lawrence public schools enrolled in the intensive 3 week writing and arts program. They were led by 16 older high school, college, and graduate school Writing Leaders. In addition to creating art and sculptures, theater and dance productions, and a literary magazine, the students also completed service learning projects that had as their mantra Gandhi’s dictum: “Be the change you want to see in the world.” Divided into 8 groups, each group facilitated by two older writing leaders, the students

chose, wrote, painted, planned, directed, and completed multi-media productions aimed at making their world a better place. Included in the final products were posters, banners, calendars, videos, and pamphlets that focused on topics such as global warming, racism, recycling, animal abuse, domestic violence, and freedom of speech.

Maud Xauka from Capetown South Africa spent several days observing the LSWW with the idea of creating a similar workshop in her school: “The following day we spent the whole time with the student workshop. The workshop was facilitated by two ABLWW graduates, Mary Guerrero, a teacher from Lawrence and Lee Krishnan, a teacher from Mumbai, India; they were joined by the Writing Leaders, older high school and college students, many of whom had been students in the program. The confidence the students showed was amazing; I wish I had a video to show our students. They all owned the workshop and produced poems of a very high standard that I even had doubts that I would be able to produce such brilliant work…I was already thinking about South Africa and how we could do the same…”

In the LSWW young people use their writing and art to make their community and their world a better place.
The O.P.W. Leading Ladies program has emerged as a strong and steady support for female students at O. Perry Walker High School and Community Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. After its birth during the summer of the 2008-2009 school year, Leading Ladies has grown from 15 steady members to about 30 members strong. As requested by the summer participants, the program was extended into the school year to meet twice a month. Also during the year, Mrs. T. Charles, the O.P.W. Graduation Coach, joined Mrs. J. Heard, Leading Ladies founder, to work with the program.

Leading Ladies hosts meetings twice a month during the school year where speakers come in and talk about goal setting, health and nutrition, academic success, youth entrepreneurship, overcoming obstacles, fashion, and proper self-presentation, just to name a few topics. Additionally, students discuss and write about topics such as dating abuse, suicide, personal goal setting, and phenomenal women. At the request of some of the participants, some meetings are designed just for the young ladies to come in and talk about whatever topics that are on their mind. The hour long meetings, which include snacks and refreshments, are designed to nurture the social skills and the mental, physical, and spiritual health of high school girls. Along with the previous mentioned activities, the O. Perry Walker Leading Ladies also completed the following activities:

**DECEMBER 2009**—Members partnered with the O.P.W. Honor Society to host a senior citizens’ Christmas Luncheon as part of our school’s community outreach efforts.

**JANUARY 2010**—Members served as assistants at the O.P.W. Honor Society induction ceremony.

**JANUARY 2010**—Members attended the New Orleans Chapter of Top Ladies of Distinction’s Health Workshop where young ladies received spiritual inspiration, health information, and mental health support.

**FEBRUARY 2010**—Members attended a young women’s conference at Greater St. Stephen Full Gospel Baptist Church.

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**Leading Ladies Poem**

The soul of a girl lies deep within her heart.
And the teenage years are where her troubles start.
Stress begins to build as she feels there’s no one that she can talk to.
But there’s a group she can always run to.
It’s called Leading Ladies where your voice can be heard.
And you become a better young lady with every spoken word.
It teaches etiquette, business, and everyday skills.
And everything you learn seems to be the real deal.
It epitomizes what a real young lady should be.
And there’s a change in every member that’s easy to see.
So I’m proud to be a Leading Lady

— Donnisha Patterson, high school

*O. Perry Walker Leading Ladies workshop, founded in June 2009, already has become a model for other workshops in the Bread Loaf Teacher Network.*
The New Orleans Bread Loaf Experience (NOBLE) 2009 was a great success. Thirty students, in grades 5-9, from across New Orleans gathered for one week to participate in this writing and arts workshop. Every morning the students began by writing on a theme of the day. Next, NOBLE staff members offered various workshops for them. Noelia Bare, from the Lawrence, Massachusetts Bread Loaf Teacher Network, gave the students their first writing prompt: “I Am From.”

During the week, the students were treated to numerous presentations. Rich Gorham, an Andover Bread Loaf staff member, guided them through the process of creating a “New Orleans Alphabet”, using photographs they took and their writing. The New Orleans Craft Mafia taught the students the importance of recycling and how to sew as the students turned t-shirts into reusable grocery bags. A local theater group, Art Spot, helped the students express themselves through various theater activities. After lunch each day, students gathered in their writing groups to edit pieces or talk about any concerns. The program ended with a public reading that showcased the students work to parents, teachers, and friends, revealing how much the children had grown over the course of the workshop.

Parents were excited about the students’ writing and the workshop in general. They urged us to run NOBLE every summer. Over the course of the week, the staff saw students who barely wrote or spoke one word at the beginning of the workshop, freely express themselves on the page and on the stage by the end.

NOBLE was a success because we received overwhelming support from many different sources. Special thanks to the United Teachers of New Orleans for all of their logistical help and for providing the venue for the workshop. Gayle Green and other Andover Bread Loaf alumni from New Orleans contributed snacks and lunches, while Toni Jack, another ABL alumnus, served the students their food. Students At the Center (UTNO and SAC) contributed all of their logistical help and for providing the venue for the workshop.

— Shavon Magee, Founder, NOBLE, Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School, New Orleans

LADIES, from page 8

O.P.W. LEADING LADIES FUTURE PLANS—The O. Perry Walker Leading Ladies are working with our Students at the Center (SAC) to produce a video about the program. This video will be used at two upcoming workshops to talk about Leading Ladies and how to nurture students beyond the classroom with social support and community collaboration. One workshop is the College Board’s Dream Deferred Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, April 29-30, 2010. The other is the Andover Bread Loaf Writing Workshop to be held in Andover, Massachusetts and Vermont in July 2010.

In our school itself, Leading Ladies is planning to promote a culture of caring and giving thanks at O. Perry Walker by pushing a student-led campaign to honor teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week, May 2-7, 2010. Finally, we are working on our schedule for the next O.P.W. L.L. workshop to run from June 7–16, 2010. 

— Jennifer Heard, Founder, OPWLL, OPW High School

— Shavon Magee, Founder, NOBLE, Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School, New Orleans
Classroom Projects

I am From... Poetry and Art Project

Eleanor McMain High School art teacher, Natalie Maloney (ABLWW 2009), created an art and writing project with her high school students that was exhibited at the New Orleans Museum of Contemporary Art.

Where I’m From:
On Becoming Conscious

The idea of marrying writing and visual art was born in the summer of 2009 when many teachers and students at Eleanor McMain High School in New Orleans were involved with the Students at the Center (SAC) writing workshops. The experience was so powerful, so cathartic, that both Beverly Cook and I decided to integrate writing into all of our visual arts classes. The “I Am From” project consisted of an initial poetry assignment followed by lessons on portraiture and composition. Finally, the students were challenged to incorporate text into their work in a meaningful way. These pieces stand as individual statements of strength and resilience. They speak for themselves. We hope you enjoy seeing what they have to say.

— Natalie Hutzler Maloney

I am From... Poetry and Art Project

I am from mermaid sheets, wood doors and paneled walls with dark spots. Every five minutes a nightmare, thinking roaches were those black dots.

I am from inflated pools, invisible club houses and a Purple and pink bike with one pedal Still confidently pushing that pedal to the metal.

I am from good frozen cups, popsicles, Always owing Mr. Isaac a nickel Crack heads, messy girls, hood fights Coming inside at the click of the light Red light, green light Mid City Bowling Alley And running errands for Ms. Sally.

I am from gangsta grandma Ollie and spoiling Maw Maw Lottie From “Have fun while you’re still a child” “Stop being so wild” and “What are we going to eat, wind pudding and walk away pie?”

I am from gumbo, macaroni, lasagna, chicken, greens Dressing, pasta, 7-Up cake, and beans I am from writing in my journal Tearing it up and throwing it away Because after I express what I have to say My outspoken feelings are gone away.

— Charnise Walker, Age 16

Maud Xauka, Capetown, South Africa; Natalie Maloney, New Orleans, LA; Hazel Lockett, East Orange, NJ.
I Am From

I am from the smell of fish sauce lingering about
To malicious needles underneath cheap fabric
From little stuffed animals roaming my room and
Game consoles that brighten my days.

I am from the echoes of “Did you study the ACT?”
From the anxiety of my family’s expectations but
I couldn’t care less even if I wanted to
So I walked the path for their warm smiles.

I am from a poor family who works restlessly
A brother who studies sleeplessly
From my money hungry ogre aunt
Just like my mom’s mother who only sees the color green.

I am from the backyard of veggies and little devils
They bark for attention even from a fly.
From squash and unwanted weeds of every kind
To one lonely persimmon tree.

I am from the sweet scent of spring rolls and rice
That disappears as soon as my brother gets home
From my favorite food, mom made dumplings
Believe it or not, I can eat a whole pot full.

I am from the four grainy textured white walls
Come, look in my closet to see my bygone years
Little cards and candy wrappers embrace each other
In that little corner deep in my den.

I am from identical mail boxes in front of well trimmed weeds
To my next door neighbors’ goldfish pond
I stretch my hands to the sky
And listen to the rustling of distant leaves.

— Nhi Hoang, Age 14
Ms. Wedding: like a cake. She’s the lady who kind of looks like Pocahontas, well, to me at least. Yeah, her, the one who comes to class every day with her curly locks dangling like golden tinsel. I guess it makes her hot because every day I notice her pulling that stick thingee from behind her ear and twisting her hair up into a tidy bun. “Good morning, beautiful babies!” she says with that distinct Illinois and New Orleans accent as eyes roll and whispers clamor about. “That lady crazy,” they say. “I sure am!” she happily squeals in reply every time and everyday, little by little, I notice that “sure” turning into “Sho.”

There are many words I would use to describe her: caring, calm, charismatic (see the alliteration—you taught me that). But my favorite would be “loony.” Yeah, that’s definitely the word. She says, “I’m a New Orleans girl with a British chick trapped inside.” I say she’s a modern day hippie nutcase but also a blessing. Never have I had a teacher who has made me work so hard. I’m used to, “Oh, Ariel, you’re smart, you’ll be fine,” like my former chemistry teacher always says as she passes me up to deal with distractions… But, anyway, I love Ms. Wedding because she makes me dig deep. Although it sounds cliché, there is no other way to put it. Writing even the simplest pieces for her turns into a quest into my imagination and memories, seeking out those feelings I felt and translating them into raw language, later to be refined (This sentence alone took me five minutes).

In class we just finished studying Emily Dickinson, you know, the desperate lady who fell in love with a married man and went nuts. I’ve become a lot like her. Although I’m not too boy crazy, I’ve started to literally obsess about each of my words to the point where even one red mark on my paper tortures my soul. Nonetheless, I can do revision after revision and I’ll still be seeing red. She’ll probably make me even revise this, that evil woman. “You’ll never be done,” she often teases. And, really, I believe her, but it’s okay because I am honored that she sees such depth in me. Some of my classmates call her mean because of her high expectations, but they just don’t understand. She is special. To have a teacher like her, who believes in everyone’s greatness as an individual, is a privilege most people will never know; and with this being my senior year, I came close to never having the chance to have these memories of a person I will never forget. I’m just glad that I was stupid enough junior year to fail my English class, so that this fall they stuck me with Ms. Wedding.

— Ariel Estwick

THE WRITERS’ CIRCLE

The Boston Writers’ Workshop, which has been featured in previous ABL Newsletters, celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2008 by publishing an anthology of student work from the past two decades. This workshop was the original Andover Bread Loaf student program that was held on the Phillips Academy campus in 1988 and 1989 until the cost of transporting students from Boston became prohibitive and it moved to the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Nancy O’ Malley, the veteran Boston public school teacher who founded the workshop and continues to direct it, writes, “...I believed that there was some kind of destiny involved in the fact that so many inspiring young people found their way to the workshop...Over the years I was struck by the fact that every student who came to sit in our circle that first day belonged there...Every single one of the hundreds who their way to us gave something of great value by lending his or her voice to the chorus that is the Workshop.”

Following is a poem written for the Workshop’s first anthology in 1988.

To You With All My Heart
(based on a Vietnamese song)

Oh my little darling, if you are a bird, I wish to put you in a golden cage.
Oh my little darling, if you are a plant, I wish to grow you in a most enchanting garden.
Oh my little darling, if you are a picture, I wish to hang you on the wall of an orderly room.
Oh my little darling, if you are a piece of cloud, I wish you don’t fly by the direction of the cold wind.
Oh my little darling, if you are a flower, I wish to sleep beside you on the gigantic field.
Oh my little darling, we are the only two people on the whole world, no one else is on this universe.
Oh my darling, all my life I love you from my honest heart.

--- Tai Huynh
Top left: Andover Bread Loaf’s Alumni Advisory Board at the LSWW’s Final Exhibition.  l to r.: Ricardo Dobles, Jose Dobles, Rich Gorham, Scobie Ward, Lou Bernieri (ex officio), Abby Shuman (chair), Travis Metz, and Wanda Mann. Not in the photo: Michael Cahill and Tucker Levy.

The Final Exhibition of the Lawrence Student Writers Workshop each July draws a crowd of over 200 people. The event is exciting and empowering for students and their families. Above is the 2009 Final Exhibition, which took place at the Community Room, 60 Island Street, Lawrence, thanks to the generosity of Chip and Gary Seidel, owners of the building and patrons of the arts and education in Lawrence.
I WILL USE MY MOUTH

Saving the earth...
What will I use?
Why, I will use my mouth!
What will you choose?

I will use my mouth
To save the beautiful earth.
I will tell people to recycle newspapers and t-shirts.

I will use my voice
and scream out loud
To every city, neighborhood, and crowd.

I hope this will save
the earth. Yes, I really do.
So I’m telling everyone,
Speaking loud and true.

Soon everyone
will have heard my voice.
Come on, you can recycle!
Make the right choice!

— Jewel Jalisa McGary, middle school

THE PARENTS

They used to be friends
Those two little boys

They used to share and
play with each others toys

One’s parents told him
White is right

The other boy’s parents
told him Black is beautiful

Now all they do is fight
They used to have fun
Those two little boys

When race was what they
did with their toy cars

and not the color of their skin.

— Lithia Schexnayder, middle school

INTERSECTION

At the intersection of life and death
a little kid gets hit by an unnamed bullet, and is rushed to the hospital
Lying on the surgery table in the E.R.
He wonders if he is going to make it
The scene smelled of fresh blood
and gun shots
“That old me’s dead and gone, dead and gone”
Wait, there were witnesses:
Life, Death, and Pain.
I looked at the back of my hand and saw
a future picture of the boy as a teacher
Is this the answer to his life or death question
or a glimpse of what could have been?

— Malcolm Green, middle school

ODE TO THEATER

Ode to theater
The stage
The actors
A comedy
A tragedy
Give me joy
Give me regret
An actor is a WONDEROUS liar
To be in the moment
To act in a moment
To feel the moment
Yet have it no lasting effect on them
The entrance
The exit
The scene in between
They all leave an effect
On my mind
The confidence
The excitement
It makes my blood stir
And how I admire the heart
The heart!
They put into it
And those blood, sweat, and tears...
They show.

— Sean David Fahey, middle school
GRANDPA

It was my grandpa coughing again. Every time, every night that I visited and stayed in his house, “Just go back to sleep, I’m fine,” that what he always say to me.

Walking in the dark is his habit. He walks like a ghost, but he is good ghost. At least I didn’t faint when he came by me suddenly while I was going to bathroom.

I never forget his bend back which was damaged during he was a soldier. I don’t meant to disrespect but it looks funny when he is moving.

I also remember his beard which is long and white. I still remember that I usually play with his beard when I was little, Pulling his beard until he begged for releasing was my favorite game.

When I was little, I spent whole time in my grandpa’s house. I liked to play the game that my grandpa would pretend like a horse. Then I would ride on that horse until he got tired and collapsed. That time was great for us, all of us had a good time together.

— Hiep Tran, high school

Boston

HOTEL DIEU

in the parking lot of the hospital
i sat by your wheelchair
watched your smoke dart by
the spokes of the wheels
relaxing your forehead muscles
i am responsible for your body
navigating this ramp
i hate the staples in your side
your bandages, your painkillers
i hate the feeble light seeping through
the cheap stained glass
in the chapel in the hallway --
the light on the surgical floor
beams green

i’m sorry – i never knew
if it would be better
to tell you that I hate to see you weak
i unclenched my secret fists when
you ripped out your I.V.
heard the rustle of the hazmat bin

out here
fresh snow smothers the pavement
on the wheelchair ramp
covers footprints and tire treads
as if it didn’t happen

you need to see this
because i don’t know what to say
when you say thank you

— Claire Moran, high school

A SRI LANKAN DICTIONARY

Rice and curry
Stories to bury
Temples to pray
Fields full of hay
Accents are strong
Blazing sun all day long
Roads full of poor men
Every barn has a good old hen
Homeless dogs bark through the night
Alley cats aren’t scared to bit
The land of peace, the land of war
The land I hate, the land I adore

— Natasha Karunaratne, middle school

REMEMBER

There are moments in life
when you feel lost,
empty, abandoned
when the stars of the night
have lost their shimmer
and the aura that surrounds you
now glows dimmer
even the sun does not shine
as it once did
when words were left unspoken
when the ties that bind
a love once lived
could be broken
and we find the world we once knew
is no more
so time itself seems to stop
and we begin to ignore
all the beauty that still remains
the beauty of life
in blood coursing through our veins
in the song of the swallows
in the silent strength of violets
in the coming tomorrows
in every smile
lingering in memory
so when you feel as if this burden
you no longer can bear alone
listen to the whispers of your heart
and remember there are those who still care.

— Sean Hackel, high school
COLORS ARE A FEELING

Red makes me feel angry.
Violet makes me sad.
Green makes me happy.
Black makes me feel like a night sky.
Orange makes me feel bright.
Yellow makes me feel like a starry night.
Red and Orange makes me feel fruity.
Pink makes me feel girly.
Gray makes me feel rich.
And Black and Red makes me feel scared!

—I Ashley Rodriguez, 3rd grade

I STILL LOVE H. E. R.

I met this girl when I was three years old
And what I loved most was that she had so much to show
She said she's worked the blue collars and the corner street stores
She had so much culture; Hispanic pride was in her soul
Speaks two languages, Spanish and Spanglish slang
As I grew, her thoughts had seeped into my swag
I’d listen to her talk for hours with her hood chick stance
People never bothered
Her accent was heavy, they couldn’t understand
I had slept beneath her skies listening to her cries
About the abuse she’s dealt with from politicians who’ve connived
About the kids who hated her because she could not make them shine
So I held her hand and told her she’s a star within my eyes

The first hit I make she will be within my mind
The immigrant girl from the hood with them big ol thighs
Ms. Fly, does anyone know about real grind?
You all try raising kids with a language barrier
And yeah she has tripped many times but I’ll carry her
She may not be Chi[cago]niqua
Is not New[York]rinda
Can’t club like Mia[mi]
But I believe in her, I will marry her
My soul, my love, my city, Lawrence, Massachusetts.

— Frandiego Veloz, high school

MY ESCAPE

My house that we usually rent for the summer is in Salisbury Beach.
My favorite time there is nighttime because of the moon. Lying on the top of the roof outside the bedroom, even at nighttime, I can feel the summer heat. Still, refreshed by the soft, cool breezes coming off the ocean water, I taste the salt and the moist night air. I’m sitting on the rooftop of my beach house, holding both my knees, my chin resting in the small nook between them, a cozy, warm position. I see the calm and tired waves that the ocean carries. My eyes are closed as I listen to the water crashing on the chilled shore. I open my eyes wide to the breathtaking view of the moon and its orange glow, almost as radiant as that of the sun, but with the sky painted black and speckled with bright stars. The water reflects the yellows, oranges, and whites — creating twinkling crystals in the water, and I am at peace, my Bella Luna.

— Sydni Caratini, middle school

Lawrence
My pencil broke.
It was war.
The sharpener Sharpened
Grrrrrrrrr!
Grrrrrrrrr!
But the pencil
is a cheetah
quick and strong.
The sharpener sharpened
Grrrrrrrrr!
Grrrrrrrrr!
The pencil tried as hard
but the sharpener won
with a point!
The only thing the pencil said was
“I will be back!”

— Alisa Colon, 3rd grade

God made the earth,
Man made boundaries.
God made water,
Man divided the seas.
God made fire,
Man made revolvers and guns.
God made the air,
Man made pollution.
God made time,
Man made the clock.
God left everything open,
Man made the lock.
Despite all his lovely things
God doesn’t pride in his “Creation.”
Despite his shameful acts,
Man prides in his “Destruction.”
It’s time to think,
Are we moving ahead?
Or are we digging graves
For the living, not dead.

— Mernon Mustafa, middle school

Gunshots were fired
Now people are wired
Ready to argue
That it was you
Who committed the crime
But didn’t want to pay the time.
So they run and hide
Until they decide
To come out and play
On some beautiful day
Not realizing that they’re jeopardizing
Their chances to live free
But I guess they wanted to be
The one who dies in jail
In their own little cell
All lonely and sad
Feeling bad
For killing someone’s dad.

— Adunni Hall-Modeste, middle school

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I AM FROM

I am from a place
With rhythm
I am from a place
With style
I am from a place
Where costumes and oceans are
beautiful as a smile
I am from a place
Where I call home
I am from a place
Where the best food is near
like Roti, Mango, and Callao
Which sounds rare
I am from
Trinidad and Tobago
These names are mentioned
Over the Caribbean table

— Seleane Browne, middle school

I AM FROM...

I am from leaning chain link fences
& lead paint,
Black-hand superstitions & candle
saints,
“Cono muchacha” and “hay Dios
Mio”,
“En este país si hace frío.”
I am from broken bottles and pincho
sticks,
Loud Latino Festivals with carnival
tricks,
Merengue, Bachata, & Reggaeton,
“Una tripleta con salichichon.”
I wanted to leave, but I came back,
I finally got my life on track,
Wherever I may choose to roam,
In the end, the warmest place is
home.

— Patricia Nuñez, teacher

LIMBO

Rosary beads set me free
Maria, baby, look out for me.

— Carlos Juan Rosello, teacher

WHAT IF?

What if I were rich?
Would my mocha cafe skin turn to
cream and skim?
Would I no longer be the baby of
two sets of twins?
What if I were rich?
Would my mother shower me with
kisses instead of pitiful tears?
Would my father return to say,
“Hello”?
What if I were rich?
Could I still chill with the girlz on
the block and eat my rice and
beans?
What if I were rich?
Would I still be me?
Would I still have the self-confidence
that shines through this thick
skin?
What if I were rich...

— Melanie B, high school

I’M FROM

I’m from the new century, where my
destiny awaits me.
I’m from the Giants dominating all
teams standing in their path of
victory, when I only celebrate
their victories
I’m from where pants sag, where
whatever happens, happens like
death.
I’m from living my own fantasy,
where dreams really do come
true.
I’m from the cruel gangs roaming
the streets, hating each other,
cops taking innocent lives whose
souls soars to heaven.
I’m from a place that has racism
hurting me on the inside just
because of my color.
I’m from harmony and peace,
hoping to restore the balance
there never was in New York.
I’m from where a liar and a thief
must walk together.
I’m from where my education is
most important, to help me get
into a perfect college.

This is where I’m from.

— Jordan Laland,
elementary school
Professor Dixie Goswami, Director of the Bread Loaf Teacher Network addresses ABLWW 2009 in the Blue Parlor at the Bread Loaf School of English. Bread Loaf professors are vital and active partners year-round in the Bread Loaf Teacher Network.

Brooklyn is in the House! The ABL crew from Brooklyn chills on the porch of the Bread Loaf Inn, Bread Loaf, VT. L. to r. Ricardo Dobles, Professor in Education at the College of the Holy Cross and ABL Director; Jose Dobles, Education Program Coordinator, Sing For Hope; Jason Brezina, teacher, Ronald Edmunds Learning Center; Carlos Rosello, teacher, El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice.
The heroism of teachers and students in the public school systems of the United States has never been more evident than in the work of Students At the Center (SAC), New Orleans. SAC is a high-school based writing program—and much more—co-directed by public school teacher Jim Randels and poet and producer Kalamu ya Salaam. Founded in 1996, SAC has produced 16 books and numerous videos, radio broadcasts, newspapers, and poetry collections.

ABL is proud to be a partner in SAC’s work in New Orleans. In her introduction to SAC’s latest book, PEDAGOGY, POLICY, AND THE PRIVATIZED CITY: Stories of Dispossession and Defiance from New Orleans, by Kristan Buras with Jim Randels, Kalamu ya Salaam, and Students At the Center is published by Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027.

For more information on SAC contact Jim Randels at jimrandelssac@earthlink.net or visit: http://sacnola.com/menwelove/ or http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/nola_voices/.

For the latest publications from Students At the Center (SAC) in New Orleans visit: www.sacnola.com.

New Orleans, Emory University Assistant Professor Kristen Buras writes: “…SAC engages youth in historically informed writing initiatives aimed at transforming their schools and communities…The program, in short, has built upon the experiences of the students, as its name implies, and formulated a pedagogy rooted in the voices, cultures, and histories of traditionally marginalized youth, their families, schools, and neighborhoods.”