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FIELD NOTES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter to the Editor Marie Narvaez & Bob Bickerton	2
Some Thoughts on Lamott A Review of <i>Travelling Mercies</i> Tina Toran	3
A Journey of Change, Critique, and Contradiction A Review of <i>Listening Up</i> Michele Sedor	5
The Restraints of Capitalism A Review of <i>Workin' on the Chain Gang</i> Marie Cora	6
Into Africa A Review of <i>The Poisonwood Bible</i> Sally Gabb	8
Communities of Truth A Review of <i>To Know as We Are Known</i> Alex Risley Schroeder	10
ABE Licensure Update Carey Reid & M. J. Faye	10
Loyalty, Liberia, and Literacy A Review of <i>Beyond the Mango Tree</i> Diana Satin	11
True on the Tongue A Review of <i>The Work of Hands</i> Lenore Balliro	12
Inside Reaching Out A Review of Materials by Workplace Education Students Connie Nelson	13
Clearing the Decks A Review of <i>Blessing the Boats</i> Jeri Bayer	14



Massachusetts Department of Education

Summer Reading



Before we became teachers, we were readers, and our love of literacy may be one reason we were propelled into the field of adult basic education. This issue of Field Notes speaks to you, above all else, as a reader. It offers reviews of books by your colleagues—books somehow related to the work we do—that move, elevate, inspire, or entertain the reviewer. Inside you will find reflections on fiction, memoir, poetry, pedagogy, parenting, and more.

Exploring a shared book with another reader intensifies the reading experience. Questioning a character's motivation, analyzing an author's bias, and critiquing a writer's style enrich our understanding of any text. And discovering a new book at the recommendation of a friend or colleague offers new reading territory.

We hope some of the titles reviewed here resonate with you and motivate you to hit your local library or independent bookseller. Read at the beach, read on the porch, read on the fire escape. And if the spirit moves you, send us a review of something you've discovered for a future issue of Field Notes.

Letter to the Editor

The article by Marcia Hohn and Alisa Povenmire in the last issue of *Field Notes* tracing the history and accomplishments of the ABE Health initiative in Massachusetts was excellent. It was great to be reminded of all the people and developments that have thrust our state into the national spotlight when it comes to the intersection of ABE and health.

We want to add a few key developments to the picture. Early in 1994, it became clear that a major portion of the recently increased state tobacco tax would be dedicated to the cessation of tobacco use—and that education would play a key role in accomplishing this goal. We were fortunate that the Department of Education was very receptive to our recommendation that a portion of this funding be dedicated to a new ABE Health initiative. The allocation of \$500,000 to ABE was distributed mainly to programs via a competitive request for proposals. A portion was also awarded to SABES to establish a technical support and training component, thereby launching the “HILLS”—Health In Literacy LiaisonS. The tobacco tax funding continued at \$400,000 to \$500,000 per year through 1997, with the integration of health content and participatory development practices into the local ABE program emerging as the main theme. In 1998, faced with the elimination of tobacco tax funding, ACLS used part of an increase to our state ABE



grant to continue the ABE Health Initiative and this theme of “institutionalization.”

During these six years we learned just how important and powerful this integration of ABE and health could be. As we developed the open and competitive RFP in FY 2000 for a new round of five year “Community Adult Learning Center” grant awards starting in FY 2001, we decided that keeping ABE Health as a small separate initiative was not getting

these important practices out to enough of the programs we support. This is why we took away the artificial “cap” in ABE Health funding and made it available to every program that could demonstrate it can integrate these practices into a successful program.

Today, 14 ABE programs are working at the cutting edge, integrating participatory health practices and content throughout their services. Previously funded programs continue to institutionalize health content with other sources of funds. This continues to be one of the most exciting initiatives our state is involved in. I hope that *Field Notes* and many other venues will continue to keep us abreast of and get more of us involved in these developments. Thank you for another wonderful issue!

**Marie Narvaez and
Bob Bickerton**

Marie Narvaez is a program specialist at Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) at the Massachusetts Department of Education. Bob Bickerton is the director of ACLS.

Upcoming Issues of *Field Notes*

We welcome submissions on the topics listed below. Also, if you have anything to highlight: a new book or resource, an upcoming event, or other newsworthy bits, please call Lenore Balliro, editor, or email her at <lballiro@worlded.org>.

Fall 2001 Teaching Math

This issue will be practical and hands-on, presenting math activities within the latest theoretical frameworks.

Call or email by: June 10
Submit by: June 15

Winter 2002 Managing ABE Programs

This issue will focus on program administration. If you are a program coordinator or teacher and want to share ideas, or if you are a teacher who wants to talk about what makes a good supervisor, now's the time.

Call or email by: Sept. 3
Submit by: Sept. 17

Spring 2002 Youth in ABE Programs

This issue will focus on learners from 18-21. We welcome articles about teen moms, youth ABE programs, and other basic education projects focusing on young adults.

Call or email by: Dec. 1
Submit by: Dec. 15

Some Thoughts on Lamott

A Review of *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* by Anne Lamott
Random House, 1999

Review by Tina Toran

Part of what I do in our non-traditional Family Literacy class is to prepare students to take their G.E.D. exam. After a few weeks/months/years (students move at their own pace) of study skills, reading comprehension, and math drills, most students feel a bit more confident about the whole process, but even the fearless are apprehensive when it comes to the essay portion of the test. One way I address this tension is by putting concrete examples, from other reading material, on the board; that way, we can examine and address the writing issues together.

I have used many books for this exercise, but my forever favorite is Anne Lamott's *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*. These essays are honest and detailed, incorporating astoundingly simple moments of everyday euphoria, mirrored against the struggles of being human in a world with few answers but many questions. Her language of love, selfishness, and addiction use and abuse speaks directly to my students in ways that I never could.

Capturing the Reader's Attention

One of the things I tell my class is that it doesn't matter if they are writing a cover letter requesting an interview, a note to a far away friend, or an essay to pass their G.E.D. exam; their first job is to capture the attention of their

reader. On the board I write these words: *ordinary night*, *lunar eclipse*, and *cystic fibrosis*. My questions are "What type of feeling do you get from each word? Are they positive, neutral, or negative words?" Then I ask, "Can you use

that are invested in both the lesson and what happens to Olivia.

No essay discussion is complete without covering the topic of description. When the students write that they were mad, I have to ask, but how mad were you? (and

"I thought such awful thoughts that I cannot even say them out loud because they would make Jesus want to drink gin straight out of the cat dish."

all three in a single sentence?" After a discussion that usually includes comments regarding my sanity and the impossibility of using this combination, I copy the first sentence from Lamott's essay "Barn Raising." She writes: "On an otherwise ordinary night at the end of September, some friends came over to watch the lunar eclipse, friends whose two-year-old daughter Olivia had been diagnosed nine months earlier with cystic fibrosis." (p. 147)

"Has she commanded your attention?" I ask. We talk about the emotional roller coaster ride provided by this one sentence, from the ordinary word "night" to the anticipatory phrase "lunar eclipse," to the plunge with Olivia and her "cystic fibrosis." As they nod, I see

"very" doesn't count). How can you describe that anger so I can feel it as painfully and powerfully as you do? What kind of thoughts did this type of anger evoke? Anne Lamott writes: "I thought such awful thoughts that I cannot even say them out loud because they would make Jesus want to drink gin straight out of the cat dish." (p.131)

I actually had one student clap after this line. Now those are some angry thoughts!

Using Description

"How would you describe the most beautiful person you know?" I ask the class. Their interest piqued, they are now yelling suggestions to me. Their offerings are

Continued on page 4

Some Thoughts...

Continued from page 3

impressive: “as beautiful as a sunset, as lovely as the ocean” (remember, we live on the Cape), “as beautiful as my baby’s skin.” Their efforts are enchanting, and I see them reaching beyond their normal writing parameters. I ask them if they would like to hear/read another selection from *Traveling Mercies*, and they answer unanimously in the affirmative. I give them this recounting from the chapter “The Aunties,” where Anne is describing her son, Sam. “He wouldn’t understand: he looks like a cross between God and Cindy Crawford.” (p. 206)

Once this description settles in, there seems to be a resounding *ahhhhhhhhhhh*, leaking from the students into the classroom. Picturing the offspring of Cindy Crawford—representing the societal image of female flawless-

ness, and God, the unseen image of (Christian) male perfection—well now, that’s a beautiful baby! Suddenly, when I say that “very mad” and “interesting” are empty words that tell me absolutely nothing about the person or the situation, they have a clearer understanding of what I am looking for.

Grammar Groans

The eye rolling that follows a grammar introduction is quite comical. My students want to learn the basic rules so they can pass their test, but they make me very aware that any frills in this department will not be tolerated.

How do you talk about dependent and independent clauses, compound and complex sentences, as well as coordinating conjunctions in a way that captures what is tangible to the grammar-haters? I used this extraordinary passage:

I can’t imagine anything but music that could have brought about this alchemy. Maybe it’s

because music is about as physical as it gets: your essential rhythm is your heartbeat; your essential sound, the breath. We’re walking temples of noise, and when you add tender hearts to this mix, it somehow lets us meet in places we couldn’t get to any other way. (p. 65)

With this type of in-class assignment, I hope to present a model of the writing process that is both informative and exciting, and if I can entice my students into reading outside of the classroom, I feel like I have done a good day’s work. So far, I’ve had a request for, and given away, three copies of *Traveling Mercies*. Yes, I think it’s working!

Tina Toran is a part-time family literacy teacher and a full-time coordinator for the Falmouth Parent-Child Home Program. She welcomes any, and all, comments on writing, family literacy, and her obsession with the writings of Anne Lamott. She can be reached at <ttoran@cs.com>.

From the Editor

In the last issue of *Field Notes* (volume 10, number 4) I wrote a foreword to introduce the topic of the issue: teaching health in the multicultural context of adult basic education. As an illustration of the topic, I wrote about my experience teaching health to Cambodian women and what that taught me. I also gave an overview of the articles appearing in that issue of *Field Notes*. As a graphic, I included the Chinese characters for “Good Health,” to illustrate, not Cambodian language, but the theme of multicultural health.

A reader noted that it was inappropriate to use Chinese characters in an article about Cambodians. She explained that by doing so, it could reinforce the damaging

stereotype that all Asians are the same. I was glad she brought her reactions to my attention. I am aware that Asian languages differ from one another and recognize that the distinctive writing system of Khmer (Cambodian) is nothing like Chinese. It wasn’t my intention to conflate Chinese with Khmer or have Chinese stand in for all Asian languages. I apologize to anyone I may have offended by using Chinese characters in an article featuring an anecdote about Cambodians. In the next issue of *Field Notes*, watch for an article on the damages of stereotyping and an illustration of different Asian writing systems

Lenore Balliro, Editor

Join the Field Notes Advisory Board!

Field Notes is looking for ten Advisory Board members for 2001-2002. Here’s a chance to offer feedback on the direction of the statewide adult ed newsletter.

For an application, call Lenore Balliro at (617) 482-9485 or email her at <lballiro@worlded.org>

A Journey of Change, Critique, and Contradiction

A Review of *Listening Up: Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers and Students*

by Rachel Martin

Boynton-Cook/Heinemann, 2001

Review by Michele Sedor

From the introduction to the epilogue of *Listening Up*, Rachel Martin charges and inspires us as adult educators to write more about our practice and who we are in relation to it. This work requires more than sharing our successes; it means documenting “what we are seeing in our work, how what we see is forcing us to change our ideas, how our ideas are compelling us to change what we “see” and how it really feels day after day.” (p.3) *Listening Up* is a manifestation of that charge. In clear, graceful language, Martin shares her journey—one full of change, critique, contradictions, thoughtful reflection, and action. She opens her mind, taking us along, asking us to imagine that we are part of her dialogue on radical pedagogy and progressive literacy education.

In the beginning of *Listening Up*, Martin discusses the five different educational settings that serve as the backdrop for the prac-

tice woven throughout the book as well as the Freirean pedagogy that influenced her early teaching. She then talks about why she began to critique radical pedagogy and the poststructural and psychoanalytic theories that influenced this critique. Martin uses personal and classroom examples to illustrate theory and practice. She doesn't shy away from looking critically at her own roles, actions, and thoughts; indeed, this is what makes the book so engaging.

Teaching Writing

The last three chapters look at techniques for teaching writing and reading and for creating curricula. In harmony with the rest of the writing, these chapters offer more than lists of suggestions for practitioners. Originally intended as a book of classroom methods, Martin discovered as she wrote that she “needed it (the book) to show that progressive classroom methods work only if grounded in attempts

to move beyond often unperceived beliefs, held by both teachers and students, that impede their implementation.” (p. 8–9). While it is possible simply to skim and pull out useful techniques, more careful reading continues to reveal the questioning and analysis that led Martin on a path toward a new pedagogy.

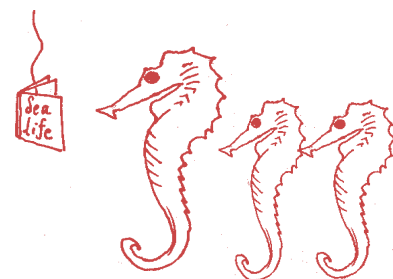
This book provides a rich backdrop for us to examine ourselves as educators as well as the pedagogy that guides our work. Martin touches on complex issues: contradictions between Freire's words and actions; questions about who is defining the field of adult literacy; issues of race and power; explorations of “co-learning” and what it truly means. *Listening Up* is a thought-provoking work, largely due to the questions Martin raises about some of the most fundamental and widely accepted practices and theories in progressive literacy education.

Michele Sedor is an Associate Coordinator at SABES West. She has worked as an ABE, GED, and ESOL teacher and trainer. She can be reached at <msedor@hcc.mass.edu>.

NEW from ERIC

<http://ericacve.org/docgen.asp?tbl=tia&ID=143>

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 2001
Trends and Issues Alert, no. 21
Adult Education and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Communities



The Restraints of Capitalism

Review of *Workin' on the Chain Gang: Shaking Off the Dead Hand of History*
by Walter Mosley
The Library of Contemporary Thought, Ballantine Publishing Group, 2000

Review by Marie Cora

Walter Mosley, the award-winning African-American writer and director of the Africana Studies Institute at New York University, is probably best-known for his mystery novels starring private detective Easy Rawlins. One of his later characters, a favorite of mine, is Socrates, an ex-con who after 40 years in prison re-enters society, and provides the reader with a compelling way to experience the social injustices of our society. Socrates is particularly interesting as the unlikely figure to embody the morals and values inherent in a just community—I thought of Socrates as a “moral lighthouse” of sorts while reading Mosley’s most recent mystery, *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned*.

However, while I highly recommend anything written by Mosley, the book I review here is an essay that Mosely was asked to write for the millennium. He initially thought he would approach the essay in terms of race and its position in our society at the millennium, but he shifted this focus to something broader. Mosely purports that “the restraints of capitalism” are the true chains of our society. He asserts that “capitalism applies value systems to everything,” but that these value systems are not morally or socially just:

“capitalism has no humanity,” he states. Mosely bases his argument on the capitalist notion that every person is a unit of labor, and in the small amount of free time that people do have, they spend that

don’t take a deep look at who we really are. Mosley asks that we question our assumptions regularly.

4. Margin of profit—we must define this great enemy. “For profit we will overlook murder and rape and genocide. For profit we will accept apartheid, slavery, and even total anarchy in isolated instances. For profit we will enslave our own people...” Mosley says that we are the margins of profit because the profit to this country comes

Mosely purports that “the restraints of capitalism” are the true chains of our society.

from our labor. Thus, he says, “we are marginalized by the profit of capitalism.”

5. Platform for presidency—Mosley’s platform includes immediate concerns and future concerns. Immediate concerns include things like educating children, providing welfare for the aged, improving health care, finding better solutions for issues of drug trafficking and abuse, removing capital punishment, reworking affirmative action so that it includes all people, and instituting a foreign policy on an international right to good life. Mosley’s future concerns center on extending the life-span of humans.

Much of this essay was difficult to read. It hits you over the head, and it gets at the core of our

time in the chains of “spectacles and illusions”—the shallow consumerism of TV, sports, magazines, movies, even things like a “mud-slinging election or a grisly string of murders” add to the “subsequent pacification” and restraint of the masses.

Mosley states that in order to break these chains, we must resolve the issues he describes. He outlines five approaches to achieve this:

1. History—we are not learning from our own history and we need to. He particularly suggests that we should examine the Black experience within history to inform our future choices.

2. Truth—people spend more time avoiding the truth than telling or living it. He suggests that we look to truth as a measure of our commitment to growth.

3. Man in the mirror—we

Continued on page 7

Restraints...

Continued from page 6

society's ills: that they are in fact rooted in our humanity, in our values, and in our morals. We choose consumerism and profit over social justice. Much of the essay left me feeling helpless and cynical. Indeed, Mosley points out that it's easy to complain about how much is wrong, and he points out that it is difficult to begin to make change when so many of our challenges are embedded in years of the systemic politics of capitalism. But Mosley does address the "what can we do about this" question by providing the reader with some "pedestrian suggestions for change"—small, individual acts that each of us can in fact do in order to begin the revolution needed to make our world a better place:

1. Make lists of what you think you deserve for a lifetime of labor, tinker with the list, change it, share it with anyone who will listen, make decisions based on your list, vote by your list.

2. Question critically. Mosely not only asks us to question people and the media around us but to ask ourselves hard questions as well.

3. See your neighbor: Know his or her name, find out what their interests are, ask after their health.



4. Personal enlightenment: "The goals of revolution are realized by personal enlightenment." We must each define what life we want to live ourselves, not borrow someone else's ideals.

Mosley's challenge to us is to "build a world where progress is for everyone and ownership is for us all ...that our citizens should have equal access to the advantages that we discover." I believe that if we all strive to live in the world more like Mosley suggests, then we would be on our way to breaking the chains and shaking off the dead hand of our history.

Marie Cora is a Staff Development Specialist for SABES and editor of Adventures in Assessment, an annual journal by and for adult education practitioners. She can be reached at (617)482-9485 or <MCora@worlded.org>.

Content Based Language Teaching Through Technology

The March 2001 issue of ERIC/CLL Language Link can be found at

www.cal.org/ericcll/langlink/current.html

The feature article describes a project aimed at providing language teachers with practical tools to help them incorporate content-based instruction into the classroom.

Who Are We?

Field Notes is a quarterly newsletter that provides a place to share innovative practices, new resources, and information within the field of adult basic education. It is published by SABES, the System for Adult Basic Education Support, and funded by Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS), Massachusetts Department of Education.

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Subscriptions are free to Massachusetts ABE practitioners. All others may subscribe for an annual fee of \$8.00. To subscribe, contact Heather Brack, 44 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210. Make checks payable to World Education.

Submissions are welcome. If you have an idea for an article or wish to submit a letter to the editor, call Lenore Balliro at (617) 482-9485.

We do reserve the right to decline publication.

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Into Africa

A Review of *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver
HarperCollins Publishers, 1998

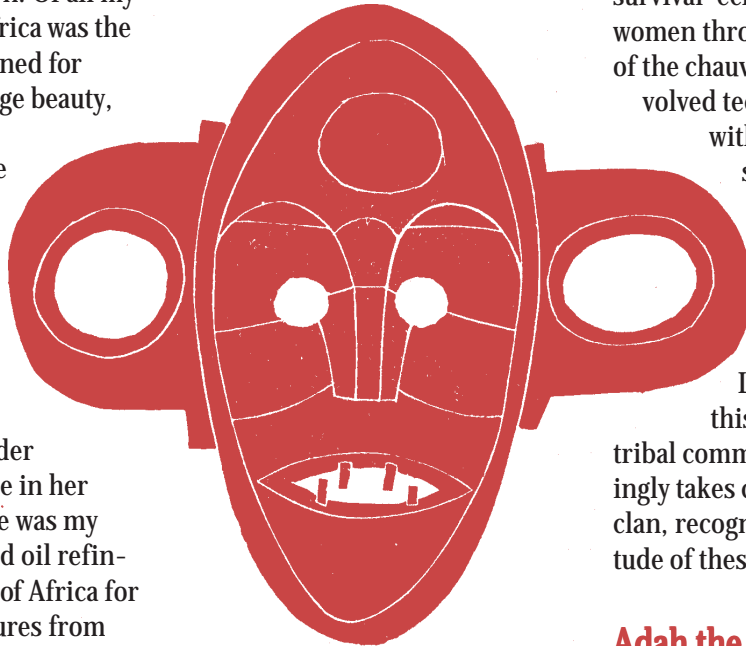
Review by Sally Gabb

When I was very small, I created my own Africa in my mind. I dreamed of traveling the world, discovering the unknown. Of all my fantasy destinations, Africa was the most compelling. I yearned for what I felt was her strange beauty, an otherness unlike my pedestrian white middle class American childhood.

I had three muses for my explorations. First there was my mother, who had traveled little, but was (and is) an avid reader and had toured the globe in her imagination. Then there was my Uncle Paul, who directed oil refineries on the West Coast of Africa for 20 years, brought treasures from his travels, and offended me even in my innocence with his prejudice and disdain of Africans. And finally there was our treasured library of *National Geographic* magazines from whose pages Africa emerged, a world of lush jungles and rich cultures. In this Technicolor Africa, men, women, and children wore dramatic, colorful, and mysterious costumes and decorations, and beckoned a world filled with the alluring unknown.

This winter, Barbara Kingsolver transported me to her own Africa created in the compelling novel, *The Poisonwood Bible*. Kingsolver's continent resembles the Africa residing in my adult mind, one introduced by research and reflection, and the truths related by African friends. Through

this engaging fictional journey, I experienced a world of violence and violation, a people of endurance and energy.



Kingsolver's Congo

In her novel, Kingsolver depicts the Congo of the 1960s, as perceived and experienced by four small girls, the children of fanatical and obsessed Baptist missionary Nathan Price. Unlike my childhood fantasies, the author's Africa grew from her own firsthand experience, and that of her public health professional parents. Through Kingsolver's pungent prose the reader immigrates to an Africa that is both vibrant and vicious, an Africa struggling to survive ubiquitous invasions, of army ants, jungle vines, colonizers and politics.

Accompanying the Price daughters to the Congo, I flew the cargo jumper to the Congo village

of Kilanga on the Kwilu River. I felt the weight of the boxes of birthday cake mix hidden below the girls' Sunday school dresses. I viewed the survival-eclectic fashion of village women through the adolescent eyes of the chauvinistic and self-involved teenage Rachel. I agreed with the politically and socially precocious Leah, as she reflected on the strength and wisdom of Kilanga neighbor, Mama Tataba. I applauded Leah's appreciation for this matriarch of the proud tribal community as she begrudgingly takes care of the entire Price clan, recognizing the blind ineptitude of these pale invaders.

Adah the Oracle

But it is Kingsolver's Adah, the twin who does not speak but hears all, who serves as the novel's voice for the tragic and violent repercussions of Nathan Price's "mission" and its relentless spiritual and cultural imperialism. Adah learns and interprets for the reader the many meanings of the tribal dialect Kilango. Her unique gift for language reveals the meaning of her father's message as he tries to "save" the village by preaching in their own tongue. It is Adah the oracle who exposes the ultimate irony of Kingsolver's metaphorical title, the "Poisonwood" Bible.

Adah and Leah are the politically progressive voices in this saga of invasion and cultural blindness.

Continued on page 9

Into Africa...

Continued from page 8

Kingsolver's use of these two innocent children as the vehicle for her politics is sometimes effective, sometimes overbearingly transparent. Adah summarizes the politics and the 500-year history of Europeans and Americans in Africa in a brief salient paragraph.

Bingo bango bongo. That is the story of the Congo they are telling now in America: a tale of cannibals. I know about this kind of story—the lonely look down upon the hungry; the hungry look down upon the starving. The guilty blame the damaged. Those of questionable righteousness speak of cannibals, the unquestionably vile, the sinners and the damned. It makes everyone feel much better.

The Doctor Poet

Adah also introduces the reader to the “doctor poet” in the village, Nganga Kuvudundu.

“... (I) believe he means to protect us really. Protect us from

angry gods, and our own stupidity by sending us away. . . The Nganga Kuvudundu dressed in white with no bone in his hair is standing at the edge of our yard.... He repeats the end of his own name over and over—the word dundu. Dundu is a kind of antelope. Or it is a small plant of the genus veronia. Or a hill. Or a price you have to pay. So much depends on the tone of voice. One of these things is what our family has coming to us. Our Baptist ears from Georgia will never understand the difference.”

Kingsolver's invasion of Africa with the Price family is a painful pilgrimage. The author has done her homework—hers is the Africa of my Uncle's use and abuse, not the Africa of my mother's romance. It is also the Africa of vibrant color, but not of the *Geographic's* glossy unreality. By its conclusion, the novel spans 25 years in the lives and deaths of a family, the lives and deaths of a tribal village, the lives and deaths of a nation.

Kingsolver attempts to intro-

duce new voices in a western novel about Africa. In the end, it is still the story seen through eyes of white bantu, Euro-American souls. Heart of Darkness, Out of Africa, I Dream of Africa—over and over we create an imagined Africa in our minds. Barbara Kingsolver enriched my own expanded dream of Africa through *The Poisonwood Bible*.

I found Kingsolver's Western guilt in Orleana Price, the long-suffering wife and mother, the voice of Africa as everywoman. Intoning the litany of regret: poor Congo, barefoot bride of men who took her jewels, and promised the Kingdom.

But it is through the voices of Leah and Adah, the Price daughters, I found Kingsolver's interpretation of the African view of existence: the struggle of life is not won or lost, but experienced, endured, survived. Human beings will dominate human beings. Men will kill men. People will live, die, and be born. Through all the human sophistry, the drought, the rains will come, the ants will devour, the jungle vines will grow, the frangipani will blossom again. Leah the unmissionary raises Kingsolver's hymn of penitence for attempting a new look through western eyes: Forgive me, Africa, according to the multitude of thy mercies.

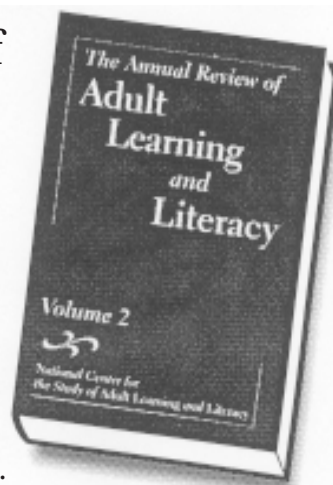
Kingsolver has added new dimensions to the Africa of my mind. Should Africa forgive or embrace this author's bold efforts? When I finally get there, I'll ask.

Sally Gabb is a reader who also works at SABES SE in Fall River. As a result of her life-long reading adventures, she has traveled this planet and many others. She can be reached at <sgabb@bristol.mass.edu>.

The Annual Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, Volume II

John Comings, Barbara Garner, Cristine Smith, editors

A project of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy and World Education.



For chapter summaries and ordering information, visit the NCSALL Web site at <<http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu>>.

ABE Teacher's License: An Update

www.doe.mass.edu/acls/certification.html

By Carey Reid and Mary Jayne Fay

On April 24, 2001, the Massachusetts Board of Education approved the *Regulations for the Licensure of Adult Basic Education Teachers*, a voluntary license. Massachusetts is now the first state in the nation to have an ABE-dedicated teacher's license that is not predicated on a K-12 license and that requires the same depth of knowledge, rigor of standards, and minimum educational requirements equivalent to the state's other teacher licenses.

This achievement caps off a long history of past task forces and committees, and most recently was brought to fruition through the efforts of a statewide Advisory Committee, several support groups, hundreds of practitioners, and the Department of Education under the

leadership of Bob Bickerton, Ruth Derfler, and Mary Jayne Fay. The ABE Teacher's License will be available beginning October 1, 2001, when DOE will begin accepting applications. The approved regulations and other relevant documents are posted at <www.doe.mass.edu/acls/certification.html>. The approved regulations cover the requirements for organizations that might wish to offer teacher preparation programs. They also cover a process where teachers can demonstrate their proficiency of the teacher standards by collecting evidence and submitting it to DOE and, if needed, to a review panel. There are also four routes to licensure, through which candidates' prior experience may be acknowledged as well as the posses-

sion of any Massachusetts preK-12 teacher's license. All candidates, regardless of experience and credentials, will be required to demonstrate their teaching.

DOE must now implement the new license. Toward that end, Mary Jayne Fay has convened an Implementation Work Group to advise the Department on guidelines, such as the levels of proficiency for each teacher's standard and ways to indicate that proficiency. Please watch for opportunities to review and comment on proposed guidelines.

Support for Practitioners

Meanwhile, SABES is developing a licensure-support

Continued on page 12

Communities of Truth

A Review of *To Know As We Are Known, Education as a Spiritual Journey* by Parker J. Palmer Harper, 1983

Review by Alex Risley Schroeder

As summer reading goes, *To Know As We Are Known* falls into the category of porch reading. You'll want to be sitting in a cushioned wicker rocking chair, feet propped on the porch railing, ice tea at your elbow and a good vista to look out onto when you pause to reflect on what Parker Palmer is saying. You'll pause frequently to consider and digest.

At its heart, this book is a rich and complex argument for not only recognizing the relationships be-

tween teacher and learner, knower and what is known, but for seeing these relationships as the sum and substance of teaching. Central is Palmer's belief that "to teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced."

Drawing on revelations in atomic physics, his understanding of faith (he is Christian; you don't need to be), and what he believes is the state of education, he thoughtfully and thoroughly develops his point.

This book provides an extended opportunity to reconsider and reexamine the ways in which our own world views and beliefs influence our practice and our understanding of what it is to know something. The first half of the book is an in-depth examination of teaching from the perspective of education as a spiritual journey. The second half links the theory and thinking to practical teaching activities. Although these are not

Continued on page 11

Loyalty, Liberia, and Literacy

A Review of *Beyond the Mango Tree* by Miriam Bronwen Zemser
Greenwillow Books, 1998

Review by Diana Satin

A couple of summers ago, I searched for three books to use in a reading circle project I was developing for my intermediate ESL class. In a local bookstore I happened to find a gem called *Beyond the Mango Tree*, and immediately fell in love with it. Author Miriam Bronwen Zemser writes beautifully, using symbolism and developing the characters and psychological and sociological themes using an engaging, poetic style.

Tied to the Mango Tree

The book begins dramatically when we meet the main character Sarina, an American girl whose father is working in Liberia, tied to a mango tree outside her family's house. Sarina's mother, who has serious medical and psychological illnesses, is so dependent on her daughter that she periodically ties Sarina to the mango tree in order to keep her from ever leaving the yard.

A poor Liberian boy named

Boima enters her life, freeing her from the tree. Sarina wants to befriend Boima, but her mother opposes the friendship, due, in part, to her prejudice against Liberians and her own unhappiness at feeling ill, displaced, and lonely in a foreign country.

Meanwhile, Sarina longs to meet other children her own age. TeTe, one of the Liberian houseworkers, tries to keep Sarina from sneaking off, fearing Sarina's strict mother will fire her if she does. Sarina occasionally manages to get away from the house with Boima, and the two share the world "beyond the mango tree"—beyond her isolated, protected, Americanized world. After jars of food begin disappearing from the pantry, Sarina finds out where they have gone to, and she struggles with issues of loyalty and values with Boima and TeTe.

Reading Circle Projects

The book has worked well in the two reading circle projects we

have had in class. Students have said they were motivated to read it, pushing themselves to understand vocabulary beyond that which they normally use. The relationships between Sarina and other characters address many themes that adult students can relate to. These include moving from one's homeland to live in another country, institutionalized racism, being responsible beyond one's years, and the ethics of doing something illegal for a good reason, among others. I saw that the book encouraged much discussion and writing.

Diana Satin teaches ESL and computers/ESL, and is Staff Development Coordinator at the Jamaica Plain Community Centers' Adult Learning Program. She can be reached at (617)635-5201 or <stevendiana@hotmail.com>.

The Reading Circle project was based on the work of Anna Safi at Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island.

Communities of Truth

Continued from page 10

extensive, they serve to illustrate the ways in which education is about the cultivation of the wisdom each of us possess and can share to benefit others.

Although now 20 years old, this book is considered a must-read in the current high-profile national discussion about the role

of spirituality in the life of higher education students and institutions. It is equally compelling to consider it with respect to the ABE field. As we endeavor to ascertain the ways in which our learners learn and come to know, it is vital that we clearly understand the diversity of thinking that exists about what it is to come to know and therefore what it is to teach and to achieve. Parker Palmer's

perspective is perhaps inadequately represented in the current discussions about learner outcomes and accountability.

Alex Risley-Schroeder is the coordinator of the changes Project at Western SABES. She can be reached at <arisleyschroeder@hcc.mass.edu>.

True on the Tongue

A Review of *The Work of Hands* by Catherine Anderson
Perugia Books, 2000

Review by Lenore Balliro

I had wanted to enter
our country's strange & beautiful
heart
with my rapid oars.

In her new book of poetry, *The Work of Hands*, Catherine Anderson succeeds in entering “our country’s strange and beautiful heart,” and in the process enlarges our hearts as well. This is a collection both personal and transpersonal, deeply empathetic but never sentimental.

Memory, landscape, and history shape the work. As a former ESOL teacher, Anderson has been deeply affected by the life stories of immigrants and refugees: their losses and endurance, their memories, and their prevailing hope.

In the collection’s introduc-

tory poem, *The Life of Wood*, the poet brings us deep into the center of Cambodia to the largest religious temple in the world, Angkor Wat. The poem, which offers the image of a carved statue of a boy kneeling before Buddha, moves beyond exquisite description into a metaphor for the years of war and genocide Cambodians have had to endure:

Near the temple where the boy
has sat for three hundred years
*sugar palms show the mark of bullets
in their green wood.*

In subsequent poems, we are brought closer to home: A Cambodian refugee narrates resettlement experiences in the ironically titled “Wonderland,” a Haitian man is forced to relive torture in his homeland in “How to Prepare the

Haitian Applicant for Asylum.” In “The Name of a Tree,” an immigrant woman speaks:

it’s better to forget what you used to
know:
the taste of fish cooked in banana
leaves. . .
the rose color of sea waves at dusk...

But one of the strengths of this collection is its refusal to allow us to forget, especially about the experiences of people marginalized in our culture. In that sense, Anderson is a poet of witness, part of an admirable tradition that speaks the unspoken.

Originally a Midwesterner, the poet lingers on landscape in many of the poems. In “Before

Continued on page 14

ABE Teacher’s License

Continued from page 10

system to assist license-seeking teachers through the process. This summer, SABES hopes to bring together a group composed of SABES staff and ABE practitioners to design a field test of its support system to begin in late fall.

History

Last fall, the Massachusetts Department of Education, with the assistance of the SABES Regional support Centers distributed a *Needs Survey for Adult Basic Education Teacher Certification* across the state. An analysis of the

returns reveals that of the 737 respondents, there are over 500 ABE practitioners who have expressed interest in pursuing an ABE license. Most of these individuals would qualify for Route 4 (five years of ABE teaching experience).

In the coming fiscal year, ACLS and SABES will collaborate to pilot five more courses designed to be compatible with the new license. Three of the courses—Foundations of Reading and Writing, Reading and Writing (4–8 GLE), and Diversity and Equity for ABE—are already being developed. For the final two—Reading and Writing (9–12 GLE) and Adult Human Development—ACLS will be posting RFRs

to seek developers. Watch the SABES Web sites for course announcements and the DOE COMPASS system for developer solicitations, and, of course, future *Licensure Updates*. Also feel free to contact Mary Jayne Fay at <MJFay@doe.mass.edu> or Carey Reid at <creid@worlded.org> if you have any questions.

For an updated summary of the licensure requirements, go to the DOE Web site:

<www.doe.mass.edu/acls/certification.html>.

Final state regulations will be posted sometime this summer. Also, older documents (interim reports, Advisory Committee meetings) will be archived soon.

Inside Reaching Out

Working Writers (Vol. I–IV). SEIU Local 285 Worker Education Program, 1996–2000

We Are More Than You See (Vol. I–III). Labor-Management Worker Education Program, University of Massachusetts, 1996–1998

The Heat: Steelworkers Lives and Legends, Cedar Hill Publishers, 2001

By Connie Nelson

These collections of writings by learners in worker education programs offer an insider's view that can affirm the experience of other learners. They provide fresh takes on familiar situations such as starting a new job or coming to a new country, finding that a coworker has become a friend, or trying to balance work and family. They can also be used as textbooks for educators with little or no direct experience in the jobs their learners hold.

"Outside, Looking In," a poem by steelworker J. A. Orellana, sums up what these books may mean to their readers:

A baby-face walking
alongside the barbed wire
fences wraps his eyes around
the prickling red,
Dull, silvery carcass, belching
fiery breaths
From the churning mill, and
wonders what it's like
inside.

As workplace educators, we come as guests to a rich and intricate culture in each workplace. These accounts of workplace life help us learn what it's like inside the maintenance cage, the hospital kitchen or the galvanizing line.

The writers provide those precious details that show what their work is and what it means to them: four shampoos to get the red dust out, the pride of being able to comfort the frightened family of an accident victim as you clean.

"Outside, Looking In" continues:

*Hard-faced, mill rats with steel
orbs trickle out then flood out
the clock-house gate.
Exodus at torrent speed in a rush
to escape from what? To where?
And he wonders what it's like
inside.*

We learn a lot about what these workers are escaping from. We also learn where they go when



they punch out and what it's like inside the heart. The volumes vary in material; some are more about the job and some are more about life off the job. We learn about the families, the hobbies, the hopes, dreams, satisfactions and disappointments that the jobs support.

Many adult educators are concerned that our field is being forced to "train the workforce" and neglect the whole person. I worry about that, too. But for those who equate workplace education with that trend, here is powerful evidence that locating programs at the workplace or the union hall does not necessarily mean reducing the learners to their worker role. These writings tell the wonderful and tough,

funny and sad stories of full lives: meeting co-worker, friend, and spouses, raising children, remembering childhood, losing loved ones, and spontaneous getaways when it all gets to be too much. Orellana concludes the poem: *And he wonders what it's like inside
Shoveling coal and churning out
structural T's.
A good meal ticket at the price of
10 years off your life.
And he wonders what it's like
inside.*

The writers in these collections help us feel the heat, see more of who they are, and understand what it means to be a working writer.

Connie Nelson has worked in laundries, libraries, and factories. She directs the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable, a network of union-involved education and training programs. She can be reached at <nelsonco@gse.harvard.edu>. nelsonco@gse.harvard.edu

Working Writers is available for \$5.00 per volume from Carlos Gonzalez, SEIU Local 285, Worker Education Program, (617) (541)6847, ext. 128.

We Are More Than You See is available from Lesley Fraser, Labor-Management Workplace Education Program, UMass Amherst, (413)545-2013.

The Heat is available from the Institute for Career Development, (800) 291-8003.

Clearing the Decks

A Review of *Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems, 1988–2000* by Lucille Clifton
BOA Editions, 2000

Review by Jeri Bayer



Poetry can be a direct route to the heart of things. Many of the best poets distill experiences by clearing away the detritus of unnecessary detail that obscures our understanding of them. Lucille Clifton is such a master of distillation. She pares away the clutter and offers her readers poems that are both accessible and wise. Because of its simple language and stirring themes, Clifton’s work is affirming and inspiring for adult literacy and language learners.

For many years, through numerous books, Clifton has explored what it is to be a woman, an African-American, a mother, a daughter, a victim, a survivor. Her most recent volume, *Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems, 1988–2000*, which won the National Book award

last year, in large part confronts loss. The poems examine the pain and the transformation of life’s “boats,” or experiences, carrying us “out/beyond the face of fear.” Some of the pain she evokes is personal: the death of loved ones and her own struggle with breast cancer. Other poems, however, speak to the pain within our society. For example, in “jasper texas 1998” she responds to the slaying of James Byrd, the black man dragged to his death from a truck driven by a group of white men. The haunting last stanza reads:

The townsfolk sing we shall overcome
while hope bleeds slowly from
my mouth
into the dirt that covers us all.
i am done with this dust. i am done.

While the tone of many of the poems in *Blessing the Boats* is grim, the overall impact of the books is not. Ultimately what Clifton leaves us with—through her signature style and free-verse lines, extensive use of dramatic monologue and autobiographical anecdote, and preference for lower-case letters—is an uplifting sense that grief and evil can be transcended and that a source of rejuvenation is the essence of experience, distilled.

Jeri Bayer is the curriculum Frameworks Coordinator at Northeast SABES. She can be reached at <jeribayer@aol.com>.

True on the Tongue

Continued from page 12

Touching Ground,” she lyrically yet un sentimentally reflects:

*Traveling west cased in white
clouds going
home to what I was made from
dog brown earth & flattened
pissed off hills...*

The themes of family and childhood feature prominently in the book as well, often with the perspective-taking of someone older looking back at early experiences. A mother’s anger, a girl’s

first experience with work, a brother’s hospitalization provide the focus for a deeper understanding of the past. Some of the journeys home are literal: plane flights take her home and back again, while others appear as memories pulling the writer, and us, back to early recollections of girlhood.

Anderson tells us, in “Strange and Beautiful Heart”:
*A story is told over and over again
because it feels true on the tongue.*

The poems in this collection, written with clarity and grace, should be read over and over again because they, too, feel “true on the tongue.”

Lenore Balliro is the editor of Field Notes

*The Work of Hands is available through Perugia Press, PO Box 108, Shutesbury, MA.
<perugia@mindspring.com>*

Mark Your Calendar



June 20

SABES Western Mass & Landmark College
It's Not Just Academic: The Social Dimensions of Learning Differences
Location: Holyoke Community College
Contact: Adrienne Morris
<amorris@hcc.mass.edu>

June 18-29

Institute for People's Education and Action,
Summer Institute *The Cobscook Gathering*
Location: Cobscook, ME
Contact: Francine Rodman, (207)726-4749
www.thecccl.org/Gathering/cobscook.html

June 25-27

National Educational Computing Conference
(NECC), Annual Conference *NECC 2001*
Location: Chicago, IL
Contact: NECC, (541)349-7571
www.neccsite.org

June 29-July 1

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other
Languages (TESOL), Atlantic Academy
Location: Boston, MA
Contact: Srisucha McCabe, (703) 836 0774
www.tesol.org/edprg

July 10-12

Northeast SABES & Massachusetts DOE
Creating Successful Youth/Adult Collaborations
Location: Northern Essex Community
College, Lawrence Campus
Contact: Alisa Vlahakis Povenmire
(978) 738-7304 <avlahakis@aol.com>

July 17-19

SABES Western Mass
*Promoting Learner Success: A Conference
on Learning Disabilities*
Location: Holyoke Community College
Contact: Adrienne Morris
<amorris@hcc.mass.edu>

July 18-20

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL),
Family Literacy Summer Institute
Location: Louisville, KY
Contact: NCFL, (502)584-1133, ext.140
www.famlit.org

August 9-12

International Council on Adult Education
(ICAE), Sixth World Assembly and General
Assembly
*The Creativity of Women and Men: A
Strategic Choice for Tomorrow*
Location: Ocho Rios, Jamaica
Contact: ICAE, (416)588-1211
www.web.net/icae/WA.htm

August 10

University of Wisconsin-Madison
17th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching
and Learning
Location: Madison, WI
Contact: Kimary Peterson, (608)265-4159
www.uwex.edu/disted/conference

October 12-13

MATSOL 2001: Telling Our Stories
Location: Sturbridge Host Hotel and
Conference Center
www.matsol.org

October 17-20

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA),
Annual Conference
2001: A Literacy Odyssey
Location: Albuquerque, NM
Contact: Peggy May, (843)671-2008
www.literacyvolunteers.org/conference

Want to publicize your ABE conference in *Field Notes*? Send complete information, based on format above, to: Lenore Balliro, World Education, 44 Farnsworth St., Boston, 02210 or email to: <lballir@worlded.org>.

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