

# THE LITERACY REVIEW

**VOLUME 1, SPRING 2003**

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*THE LITERACY REVIEW IS AN ANNUAL JOURNAL OF WRITING BY ADULT STUDENTS IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR OTHER LANGUAGE, BASIC EDUCATION, AND G.E.D. PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK CITY.  
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## **A GALLATIN WRITING PROGRAM PUBLICATION**

THE GALLATIN SCHOOL OF INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY

*NEW YORK UNIVERSITY*

*715 BROADWAY*

*NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK 10003*

*[www.gallatin.nyu.edu](http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu)*

## **FUNDED BY**

SCALE, THE STUDENT COALITION FOR ACTION IN LITERACY EDUCATION

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### THANKS TO GALLATIN WRITING PROGRAM

LISA GOLDFARB, LORIE HARTMAN, STACY PIES, AND ESPECIALLY KAREN HORNICK, FOR HER EDITORIAL ADVICE

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### SPECIAL THANKS TO

SCALE (THE STUDENT COALITION FOR ACTION IN LITERACY EDUCATION) AT THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL, FOR FUNDING THIS FIRST **LITERACY REVIEW**

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## THE “GOOD MORNING” BOSS

### IMOINE KENTON

I went to work today and my boss said, “Good Morning.” I was in shock for when he is so nice, he has something up his sleeve. For example, one morning Ann and I went to work and he bought us breakfast. When we were halfway through it, he called us into his office and said, “Girls, there’s a volcano threatening in the mountains, so I want you both to go and get the story. Off you go.”

It was very far away and there was no transportation there. He gave us a blind donkey to take us there. So you know how hard that was. When one of us was riding, the other one had to lead the donkey. Anyway, by now we know how he operates, but he is still a good boss otherwise.

One morning recently when I went to work, my boss said, “Good morning.” So I listened. He said to me, “Do you remember the bonus I promised you? The one that came with a vacation?” I hesitantly said, “Yes...” “Where would you like to go?” I said, “Ocho Rios.” He said, “OK you got it.” So I picked up the phone to call my phone agent. And he said, “You got it.”

I was so glad to get a vacation, I told him to book it for two weeks. One week after the vacation started, my boss rang. “Kenton,” he said, “the vacation is over.” I said, “But the

vacation is two weeks.” He said, “You didn’t sign a contract. It’s your word against mine.” So back I went to work.

My new assignment was to investigate an accident at Animal Kingdom, a home in the wilderness for animals. I went to the district where I was to start my assignment and during the first few days a few unpleasant animals came up to me. Miss Goat was the first. When I told her good morning, she said she didn’t see what was so good about it. I explained that I was investigating a report that several baby animals had been kidnapped. She walked away.

I then came across Mr. Kangaroo. I tried to talk to him but he also snubbed me. So did Mr. Giraffe and so did Mr. Hippopotamus. Finally, Miss Monkey came along. She asked me if she could she appear on T.V. She whispered that she had heard a rumor that Mr. Lion was the one stealing the babies. I asked the animal police if they had heard this rumor. They had but hadn’t taken it seriously. Since the outside world was now interested and there was a chance the story might be on television, they called all the mothers who had lost their babies and looked into their stories. It appeared that the baddie was Mr. Lion.

I came back to my boss and smiled. “So what, did you get the story?” “Boss,” I replied, “do you remember my week’s vacation that I didn’t finish?” “What about it?” “Well, if you like my story, can I have that week’s vacation?”

He did like the story and now here I am sitting in the sun and drinking a pina colada while I tell you about my boss and why I don’t like it when he tells me, “Good Morning.”

## MEMORIES

### RAJKUMARIE NAUTH

It was the year 1964. There was a woman who lived in Guyana. She had a light complexion and long black hair. She was also very hard working and always tried her best to please everyone and make them happy. Her day started at four in the morning and finished at nine or nine-thirty at night. She started her day by making breakfast. For breakfast she cooked plantains or roti, potatoes and pancakes. Sometimes for lunch she made rice with hot spicy eggplant or beans. She packed her husband's lunch bag for work and then she started to get things together for the children to go to school. When she finished she had something to eat and left for work.

She worked in the cane field. She would cut the grass and then fertilize the cane into the field. She also planted and cut rice in the fields. After a long and hard day of work she began her journey home. I saw her coming around the corner of a crowded street. She was wearing a brown printed flower dress, the black headscarf, no shoes. She carried a bag with her lunch bowl in her hand and a bundle of grass on her head. As she came down the street she came across a fish market and she went in to buy fish for dinner.

When she came back through the white front gate, she would drop the bag on the table, then she went to the backyard and fed the grass to the cows, goats and sheep. When

she finished she bathed with a bucket of water, then she came into the kitchen and started to prepare the fish for dinner. She cooked rice and spicy fish curry with mango and spinach on the side. After dinner she relaxed a little by sitting with her husband and children, talking about how their day went. Sometimes they listened to news or songs from the radio. After she finished relaxing, she went back to the kitchen to finish cleaning up. She washed the dishes, swept and mopped the floor. By this time she was anxious to get off her feet. It was a long hard day for her. Finally her day came to an end and she would go to bed.

THE

RUBEN OCASIO

As a child I wanted to be a drug dealer. As surprising as it may sound, I noticed that all the people in my neighborhood with the flashy cars and the nice clothes were drug dealers. Having the time and money to do just about anything I wanted was appealing to me. As a child that was my definition of success. I also noticed that the people in my neighborhood with legal jobs were financially impaired and that included my parents.

One of my closest friends had a brother who was a drug dealer. I stayed over at their house very often. I began to inquire as to how I could get some of the fast money my friend's brother was earning. My friend's brother then asked me if I would like to work for him. I agreed. I worked for him a few months before I began to experience the negative aspects of the job.

The negative aspects of drug dealing are severe. People were dying and I was always afraid that I would be next. Another aspect was the consequences of being caught. One can face a lot of jail time for a drug sale conviction. I also learned that I was spreading *poison* throughout my community.

So between the lives that were destroyed by the drugs I sold and the critical risks involved, I have decided not to pursue the career of drug dealing any further.

AN UNFORGETTABLE  
WEDDING BANQUET

LISA LEE

I attended an unforgettable wedding banquet in Hong Kong 25 years ago.

One day, my father handed me the mail and said happily, "Your cousin's daughter is getting married to the son of a millionaire who is a famous real estate merchant in Hong Kong. Here is the invitation." Ah yes, my cousin was a very kind and elegant gentleman and was also one of the partners of my father's Import & Export Consignment Co., Ltd.

He was rich but never despised the poor. However, in my mind I still had some hesitation. My mother seemed to be reading my mind and said, "Put 100 Hong Kong dollars in a red envelope as your present. He won't mind if it is cheap or valuable." Whoa, it was one-sixth of my monthly salary. Anyway, I nodded.

I attended this 90-table luxurious wedding banquet with my daughter. My parents had to help my cousin take care of the older generation of guests, so they left home earlier than we did. I did not understand why my mother put a small chocolate bar in my handbag before she left. I wore a little makeup and put on my best dress, a light sky-blue evening dress, and a pearl necklace to match. I thought that was nice enough.

The banquet was held in a big restaurant in Kowloon, on the opposite side of Hong

Kong Island. We needed to go by ferry and bus. When we arrived at the restaurant, it was 6:45 PM. I took a look at my invitation. It showed that the reception was at 6 PM. Dinner was at 7 PM. I was glad that we were not too late. A waiter wearing a black suit came up and led us to the first floor. It was a large hall and was decorated splendidly. I thought that I was very lucky to have a chance to attend a marvelous wedding banquet. A pretty lady sat in front of a small table. She was the receiver. When I handed her my red envelope, she looked me over from head to foot, her eyes like a pair of searchlights. Then she threw my present into a box, cast her eyes down, squeezed a smile at me, and said coolly, "Table No. 88." As we were walking to the table, she stood up quickly with a big smile, to welcome a couple wearing fine clothes. Suddenly I thought her face was the ugliest I'd ever seen, and recognized the true saying, "Fine feathers make fine birds."

There were 40 tables in the hall, but only about 50 people were sitting there. My daughter and I found No. 88 Table and sat down nervously. After 7:30 more people came and the hall become noisy and crowded. A middle-aged couple came to our table. They looked noble and very proud of themselves. According to etiquette, I greeted them. The man spoke in English: "My lame (some people mixed up the pronunciation of "l" and "n") is Philip Chan. He is my wife." Before I could answer, he said scornfully, "Oh! What a pity, you don't low (know) English." Then they ignored us.

At 8:15 PM, a family of four joined us. The father was an easy guy. He just sat down, then talked volubly. "I am Chang. Call me Leo Chang. Hey, you people lack the experience of attending this kind of banquet. Am I right? Ha ha!" His wife was quiet, only held up her right hand wearing a shining diamond ring.

A fat woman, holding a skinny little old man, asked, "Which table is No. 88?" Mr. Chang responded at once, "Ah! Lam Ba (elder uncle), sit here!" The old man sat down, opened his

toothless mouth, breathed heavily. Mr. Chang continued, "Lam Ba, see, this is Xo, the best French wine. Do you know there are three special courses on the dinner menu? The first one is the whole roasted baby pig. The second is the shark's skirt-shaped fin with crab spawn soup. The third is the big abalone; everyone has a whole one. The food of this banquet must be very delicious. Ah! Magnate's banquet is really special, the best!" I saw the old man close his eyes as if going to sleep; he barely swallowed his spittle.

My daughter whispered to me, "Ma, I'm hungry." I looked at my watch. It was 9 PM. It was her bedtime. That was why she complained. Suddenly I remembered the chocolate bar my mother had put in my handbag. It saved my daughter from starvation. Thank you, my smart mother! Even Mr. Chang became impatient. He sprang up and went to ask the chief waiter. After five minutes, he returned and spoke loudly, "You know why? A high ranking government officer will come in 15 minutes, because his airplane from London was delayed. The master table is set on the third floor with 19 other tables, and there are 30 tables on the second floor. This floor is the lowest part; we can only hear the ceremony from the radio. But don't worry, the menu is the same." He was so excited, as if he were the host of this banquet.

"Ladies and gentlemen. . ." A voice came from the radio. Immediately, all the guests sat down in their seats and the noisy hall turned silent. "Mr. and Mrs. Y, the bridegroom's parents, the most successful and wealthy. . ." It seemed to be an endless introduction.

At last, the wedding banquet began. The first course was the whole roasted baby pig. In lieu of the pig's eyes, two small light bulbs were set in the eye holes. Whoa! Most of the guests praised it. But I had a strange feeling that made me uncomfortable. The noble couple lost their elegant manner. They were the first to pick up the meat to eat. The old man held out three fingers, then the fat woman (maybe his wife) picked up three pieces and

put them in his dish. Mr. Chang scolded his son and daughter-in-law who were talking so amusingly. "Stop the nonsense, eat!" When I finished one piece of meat, there was nothing on the platter.

When the shark's skirt-shaped fin soup was put on the table, all eyes watched the waiter put the soup in the bowls with the soup ladle. Some soup remained in the big pot. I wondered how this soup tasted, because usually this kind of soup was cooked with needle-shaped sharp fin. I drank slowly. Then I saw two hands grasping the handle of the soup ladle. One was the fat woman's and the other was Chang's. I was very surprised that the old man's bowl was empty already. A solemn voice said, "You must respect elders." This was the only sentence the old man spoke at the banquet. Mr. Chang gave up reluctantly and had a long face now. Thank God, no fighting! I said to myself.

The third special course, the abalone, was a very pretty dish. Ten whole abalones were put on the green vegetables, and around the abalones were mushrooms. It was a pity that this pretty dish was quickly destroyed by chopsticks. I wondered how the toothless old man could chew the abalone. Oh, he had a private knife. The fat woman was cutting the abalone into small pieces for him. He swallowed fast.

Maybe the banquet was taking too long. The waiters impatiently put all the last dishes, fried rice, noodles, sweet soup. . . on the table.

When the banquet (on our first floor) was finished, it was 11 PM. I did not see the bride and the groom, or the wedding ceremony--only eating. However, it was an unforgettable banquet. It let me know about some characteristics of people, let me see the other side of Hong Kong society.

## WANTING TO TOUCH YOU

ANGELA HENAO

In the ritual of living

Your presence

Was my daily bread.

Your hands, kneaded

My happiness every day.

And now,

Loving with silence,

There are

Only words

Wanting to touch you.

## HOW I MET WALTER

### LUCY TORRES

When I was a little girl, I thought about living in a different country. I didn't know exactly where this country would be. I always felt like somebody was waiting for me or calling out to me from somewhere. I went to college, my daughter was born, I worked in a couple of companies, but I never forgot my dream of living in a foreign country.

I was a single mother living with my daughter in my country, Colombia, when my childhood friend came to my mother's house to visit. He had been living in New York City for many years and was in Colombia for a vacation. I was happy to meet him again. I had not seen him since we were seven or eight years old. It was a surprise to see him as an adult. I asked him how I could move to the U.S. He told me to go to the U.S. embassy in Bogata. From that moment, I had a deep feeling in my heart because I was sure that I would come to the U.S. one day. When I arrived in New York City in 1999, I was happy because my dream had come true.

As soon as I arrived on Staten Island I started to work in a deli. It was here that I met my husband, Walter. I think he was waiting for me. When I met him it was like I had met him years before. I did not speak any English. He didn't speak Spanish. We started to

communicate by using a dictionary. He used to go to the deli every morning. One day he invited me to go out to lunch at the mall. He asked if I would like to bring my daughter. We all had a good time. I think there is a reason for everything in this world. I came to New York City to meet my husband.

## THE STORY OF A CHINESE IDIOM

DAVID CHEN

What a beautiful sunny day! On a sandy beach a clam opens its shell and sunbathes. A snipe walks around searching for food. The snipe finds the clam, whose meat is reddish and fresh, and wants to eat it. In pain, the clam suddenly closes its shell and tightly clamps the snipe's beak. The clam says, "Idiot, how dare you touch me! I'll never let you go. One or two days from you'll starve to death." But the snipe gives the clam a warning and says, "I'll never release you, either. After one or two days without rain you'll dry up." At that moment a fisherman is passing by. He sees the snipe and the clam fighting each other. He picks both up and puts them into his fish container. He laughs and says, "Today I am very happy. I've easily gotten both of them."

We know what the story tells us: Beware of a third person taking advantage of a quarrel.

THE

Recently I wrote a story, "The Story of a Chinese Idiom." There was a story behind the story. Last year I already had the idea to write the story. But I was not able to write it in

English. Why? Because I did not know the English name of the bird in the story.

I have an acquaintance who is an Italian-American, in middle-age. He graduated from a college in New York and used to be an English teacher. Right now he is a street book-vendor. Sometimes we meet and talk to each other on the street. One day I asked him to tell me the name of the bird which my story was about. I described the bird I wanted to know. I said, "It was a small bird and always searched for food on a sandy beach. I think it had a long beak, because it needed to dig clams in the deep sand." He thought a while and started to tell me. He said, "It's a sea gull." I said, "No, I know a sea gull." He said, "An ostrich." "No, it can't be that." "It's a flamingo?" I said, "I don't know what a flamingo looks like. I have never seen it." He finally said, "I don't know much about birds. Don't worry! Let me ask my friend who knows birds more than me. I will tell you later."

The next day he came to me and told me that his friend responded, "There are over a thousand kinds of birds. Who knows which one looks for food in the sand? I have no idea!" I said, "Indeed, this is a difficult question. Anyway, thank you both so much."

After several months I almost forgot that thought. Last year, in October 2002, one night I watched Channel 11 on TV. On the screen the news broke: "In Washington, D.C., a sniper shot a woman who died." I did not know what a "sniper" was. I wrote down the word's spelling and consulted an English-Chinese dictionary. I looked down the page letter by letter. Before I got to "sniper," I saw the word "s-n-i-p-e." The dictionary said it is a kind of bird which always looks for food on a sandy beach. At last I got it! I felt so happy. Then I found the word sniper, someone who "hides and shoots." Finding the bird's English name was only an incidental discovery. But now I could finish writing my story about the Chinese idiom.

## A SAD STORY

**KAREN STOUTE**

His name was Stephen Bispham. He was sixteen years old. He had curly hair, dark skin, brown eyes and stood a striking 5 feet, 9 inches. He had the personality of an angel. His thoughtful ways showed his big heart. He loved everyone. People were drawn to him. Stephen always had time to listen. He was popular in the village where he grew up. They loved him at church and they loved him at school.

On December 14th, 1998 we received a phone call that he was in an accident and was taken to the hospital. My mother and a few of Stephen's friends went to look for him. When they got there, one of Stephen friend's overheard the nurses talking about a young man that came in forty-five minutes ago and died. He went over to find out the name of the young man and they told him Stephen Bispham. He then called me and told me the news. He said, "Stephen is dead." My first thought was, "That could not be true," my brother was too young to die. His friend told me for the second time, "Stephen is dead." By the tone of his voice I now knew he was not joking. I started to cry out uncontrollably. I wanted to go to the hospital right away, but unfortunately I couldn't go because I had two other brothers at home.

The news spread through the village. In the twinkle of an eye the whole village was at my house. That was my opportunity to leave and go to the hospital. I was there in ten

minutes. I went straight to the emergency room and told the clerk who I came to see. I was told to have a seat. When I looked across the room I saw my mom sitting in an empty room. I went over to her. I asked her what she was doing in an empty room. She looked at me blankly. Then the doctor came in. Holding my mother the doctor told us the disturbing news. He said to my mother, "Your son is dead. We tried our best to save him, but the bullet exploded in his brain. I'm so sorry." I looked at the doctor and said, "Are you telling me that I no longer have a brother." He said, "YES."

The doctor took us to see him. My mother and I lost it. I cried and touched him to see if he was really dead. My mother thought she lost everything she was living for.

Our ride back home was very long. I had never felt pain like that in my life.

My heart was hurting and there was a lump in my chest. My days and nights have never been the same. We were just becoming best friends. We spent every time we had talking about everything.

I didn't get the time to tell him how much I loved him. Although we spent lots of time together we never told each other I LOVEYOU. Stephen was killed by his best friend on the 14th of December 1998.

## **AN UNEXPECTED STORM**

**KHADIJAH ALI**

On Wednesday the 19th of May, 1998, it was a bright sunny day. Everyone was enjoying the day, in various ways. Some of the neighbors took their children to the park, while others sat in front of their building and enjoyed a friendly chat with other neighbors.

I was sitting in front of a store with a small wagon, selling religious items. Suddenly the sun became very dim. The sky became overcast and all around got very dark. It appeared like heavy showers of rain were about to fall, which I assumed looked like it was going to be a rain storm. With this thought in mind, I immediately got the plastic and covered the wagon, to protect the merchandise from the rain.

Very soon after I covered the wagon, heavy showers of rain began to fall. I knew it was time for me to leave. A very dear friend helped me push my wagon across the street and into the lobby of the building in which I live. Then I took the wagon into my apartment.

I was standing in the kitchen, when I heard very strange sounds coming from the living room windows. It sounded like pebbles were being thrown on the pane. I went into the living room and looked from the window, but could not see the objects that were falling on the outside because it was very dark. I immediately left my apartment and went outside into the lobby to have a better look and what I saw was truly amazing.

It was an unexpected storm that caught everyone off guard. Large showers of rain, and huge hailstones were coming from the sky. They were coming with such great force. They broke down the branches and leaves from the trees, and in less than one hour the streets were covered with branches, leaves and hailstones.

For some it was very scary and for others I guessed it was a really amazing sight. One moment a bright sunny day and the next moment a stormy day. It lasted about one hour. Then the sun came back out and all around became bright and sunny again, looking like nothing had ever happened. Only for the branches and leaves that were left lying in the street would anyone have known that one hour ago a small storm had just passed by.

## INSPIRED BY MAYA ANGELOU

LAVENUS ROSS

Yes, my skin is black and my chest is stacked

My waist is curved and my hips is all that~

but that's no need to hold me back.

Yes, I am woman, hear me roar.

Your blond hair shimmers in the sun like golden string come undone~

Your skin is like milk, silky and smooth

but that's all right~can't you see we are both as beautiful as beautiful can be?

God made you and God made me, so can't we be friends?

Let it be

Let it be

Let it be

## YOU ARE YOUR OWN HAPPINESS

NADJA MOTTA

I have yet to find my sincere happiness. I sit and contemplate the things that would make my world a great and joyful one. There is so much hate and betrayal in this world that, just when you believe that your life is complete, things happen to make everything you have striven for come crumbling down. I honestly believe that what would make me happy would be to become a professional and a well respected person. I would love to live a comfortable life and not to have to worry about struggles and bad moments. I want money and, above all, health.

I want to become *somebody* in society. But I have realized through very terrible experiences that you, deep inside, are your own happiness; you should never let anyone take that from you. The people that you least expect it from, and the people closest to you, that you love, will not hesitate to stab you in your back, and try to ruin your life. That is why, in short and simple terms, I believe that true happiness lies within yourself. Anything an individual does to prosper and better himself or herself is happiness. When you fight against all odds to make your life peaceful and content, you will discover what truly makes you smile. When you feel yourself shining one day, and all the people who tried to hurt you, staring in disbelief, with envy in their eyes, you will feel great satisfaction.

## AN INTERLUDE IN MY LIFE

**KING MAN NG**

This week, when we were in writing class, my classmate wrote an essay about his farming life in Mexico before he came here. That let my mind flash back to an interlude in my life in China more than 40 years ago: I had joined a group to help farmers plow fields with manpower instead of cattle. It was in the time about 1959-1961 that was the most difficult time in China since the liberation. There was a famine of goods and materials. All people and cattle did not have enough food to eat. The staple food and oil supply had to be rationed out. Many cattle in the country starved to death, and many cattle had no strength to work anymore. Most of them were killed by the owners in order to allay their hunger. The fields had fallen into disuse by having no cattle to plow. The government mobilized the city factory workers, especially the office workers, who went to the countryside to help the farmers plow the unused fields. At that time I worked as a technician in a machine factory and was unmarried. I was a 25-year-old young woman full of enthusiasm. I went ahead to registration and worked in the countryside for one month with my colleagues. We helped the farmers collecting manure in latrines and helped them to plow the fields, too. We were divided into several groups for plowing. There were 8 to 10 people per group. Everyone in the group held a rope tied together to a simple plow, which had been pulled by cattle before.

We pulled the ropes with tension, and staggered ahead on the field with all our strength. The farmer was controlling the plow and was tagging along behind. We plowed furrows one by one until sunset. The furrows were very long, so we had a break after we finished one furrow. We were dead tired. Some guys were lying on the field directly during the break. Some made fun of the other groups, "Look, you are so strong, you even bent the rope!" They were laughing at someone who had not done his best to stretch the rope. In fact, everybody knew what a difficult time we had suffered! The government of Mao Zedong told the people there were two reasons for the difficult situation: the first was that China had continually suffered natural disasters for three years. The second was that Russia and China became unfriendly. Russia withdrew all their experts from China in a short time and they had been working in China previously. It caused great damage to the development of China. But the people knew that the most important reason was the government had been practicing a bad policy. But the people only complained in their heart and did not dare to speak out. However, all of that has passed. It was just an interlude in my life. But I hope the Chinese government will learn a lesson from the past and never let it reappear in our coming generations.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

**GIOVANNI FRUSCIANTE**

The logical or “common sense” interpretation of “human rights” should be rights regarded as belonging fundamentally to all persons. These rights are freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution. “Human rights” is a term frequently used but seldom defined. What rights should belong to every human being? In democratic societies, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity; therefore, freedom and liberty should be the first human rights.

To ensure freedom and liberty, countries which practice democratic political systems (that is, people who elect their own leaders to their governments) have an independent judiciary~the legal system~where the rule of law prevails. The rule of law delivers justice, equity and fairness to enable humans to enjoy freedom and liberty. Every human has a right to life, liberty and security of person; so, in practice our country has the legal system, the police departments and the corrections system, which are independent of each other. The media, the watchdog of the nation, gives us reports on these departments every day. The “Amado Diallo” and “Abner Louima” sensations are still fresh in our minds.

Countries which have human rights are also signatories to the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This declaration, which has about thirty articles, elucidates all

the human rights that free people are entitled to enjoy.

In conclusion, “human rights” are the rights all human beings are entitled to: they are our birth right; they are not only implemented in individual countries, but also internationally between countries, and are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the United Nations. These rights are, indeed, a blessing to all mankind.

## **THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IS STILL IN MY HEART**

**MIN JIE**

I will never forget the World Trade Center. The buildings of the World Trade Center disappeared by the acts of terrorists, but none can damage the World Trade Center in our hearts.

About 1984, I had a job at the World Trade Center on the 107th floor for more than one year. Every day I surveyed the whole great city's view, day and night, spring, summer, fall and winter. It didn't matter if it was sunny, raining or snowing, I always enjoyed the beautiful view. In different weather and different seasons, it showed a different view, which was breathtaking to me. I felt like I was standing on the sky, the clouds grew under my feet. I looked outside the tower again and again, it was never enough. I was mesmerized by our city's wonderful view.

When I quit the job, I missed the Twin Towers very much. My second job was very near the World Trade Center. I had to go through the huge building every day. I regretted that I couldn't survey the paradise of New York on the 107th floor, but I was happy that I still belonged to the World Trade Center. After more than four years, I got a new job. I didn't have to pass the World Trade Center, but I still saw it from my home's windows every day.

During the summer at noon and in the evening, I liked to walk to the World Trade

Center to see the free shows. The good music and dancing made everyone so happy. I could forget my own problems and enjoy the performances together with others.

The World Trade Center was like my home. I worked, enjoyed, relaxed, spent my leisure time, and even took the subway or train to many places in the World Trade Center. I felt very comfortable and it was convenient over there.

The Twin Towers were as my garden and door. Sometimes when I lost my way, I raised my head and looked for the Twin Towers. I knew where my home was, because my home was around the World Trade Center. When I returned to New York from another city and saw the World Trade Center, I was very excited because New York City was in front of me. My home was next to the World Trade Center; I almost saw my home.

The World Trade Center was like an independent city in the Big Apple. There were a lot of stores, offices and banks in the buildings. One hundred thousand people worked or walked through it every day.

On September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked them. Dense smoke and stinking air came instead of the tallest and most modern buildings. The famous place became a few thousand peoples' huge tomb; the fascinating World Trade Center became a Ground Zero. This was a terrible nightmare.

New York lost her well-known landmark. Without the Twin Towers, New York doesn't look like New York. I felt deeply lost.

It hurts my feelings so much. I want to see my World Trade Center every day. I wear the T-shirt with the World Trade Center's picture. I hung up the World Trade Center's postcards everywhere in my home. The big picture of the Twin Towers was on my door. I still walk through the World Trade Center and see them every day.

Our blood and tears were burned to dry by rage's fire. "United We Stand" to fire back,

to protect our country, our people. We are going to win! We are going to rebuild our World Trade Center. But I am very worried that the new building would not be as tall as the old one. Would New York's landmark ever come back? We need our landmark, it is as important as a lighthouse in the sea. It is not only in my heart. The Twin Towers must come back, in fact, because all Americans and New Yorkers are very proud of the World Trade Center.

## **SEPTEMBER 11TH HAS CHANGED ME**

**ZAKA YOUSSEF**

September 11th has changed me because it made me a much nicer person toward other people and strangers. I am also nicer to the firemen and police. I have more respect now. I stop to say hello and thank them. I always thought we were safe and that nothing like this would ever happen to us. I feel scared now and this was such a nightmare and it shocked me. Now I notice myself looking up and watching the planes when they fly low. Every time I take the bus into the city now, I see Ground Zero and it helps me to never forget what happened that day. I am thankful to be alive now more than ever before. I realize how valuable life really is.

I am also more patriotic then ever before and so proud to be an American. I am still scared, but I know a lot of other Americans feel the same. I know that because we are all Americans and all feel the same way, I'm not alone. We are all facing the same challenges every day to live and go on with our lives even when we are scared.

## **GROWING UP WITH THE CULTURE OF PUERTO RICAN FOOD**

**MARILYN ROMAN**

I am a Hispanic woman and I do not know how to cook Puerto Rican food, maybe because I never got married or never had the time to learn. I remember when I was younger, my father and mother would cook for holidays. They would start three days earlier to spice up the turkey and two days earlier for the thigh of the pig. My father would put a broomstick across the cabinets and let the turkey hang from the sticks. He would put spices on the turkey and always kept the turkey moist.

My mom would make stuffing for the gobble-gobble. They would also make rice with gandules. Other dishes include pasteles (green bananas with meat inside). Thanksgiving and Christmas are big feasts for the Puerto Rican culture. For the dessert, we had arroz con dulce and bread pudding.

My father and mother would also learn how to cook seafood: crabs with beer, octopus with onions, olives, avocado, green pepper, vinegar, and peppercorn. My father always took the family to City Island to eat seafood. I remember when I was a little girl, my father would take me to the fish market. One of the other family outings was to go to the beach and have a cookout. I think it was a holiday weekend that the family went. So one of my uncles was on a small boardwalk near the lake. He saw a turtle. So three of my brothers went for the turtle

and caught him. The first thing that my father said was, "Let's have a big soup party."

My mother learned other cultures' foods. She learned the Italian sauces and spaghetti and meatballs from a friend who was an Italian lady. I would like to keep the tradition in the family going because when your father and mother go to heaven, the taste of other people's food is not the same. Now that my reading is better, I read the recipes on my own. Well, I will write another story about when I started to cook.

**WHAT IT WAS LIKE  
WHEN I COULDN'T READ**  
**MIGUEL MONDESIR**

When I couldn't read I could not pronounce big words. I was mad when I read and did not understand the story. When I had to read in front of the class, I felt very nervous and my palms got very sweaty. I felt embarrassed and thought that people would laugh at me. When I got my spelling words wrong I did not feel good about myself.

To make things easy for me I read on the train and used the dictionary and I read on the Internet. I did word puzzles. I also read the newspaper. My mother helped me by giving me spelling tests. She also made me read to her. I read about basketball players, baseball games and the stock market, when it goes up and when it goes down. I also read about movie stars. My mother ordered the *Source* magazine for me. She also ordered *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Men's Health*. I also bought a lot of comic books.

My mother used to read for me but as I got older she made me read for myself. She made me use the dictionary when I did not know a word. She made me write it down on a book and made me learn to spell it. She told me to picture the word on the wall and repeat it so I could memorize it.

My mother told me about Literacy Partners. She heard about it on WLIB radio station. I have learned a lot of words and reading skills from them. I use my skills in my everyday life by reading the newspaper and the mail at home. I read books. I read very well in front of the class although I still feel nervous.

**THE MUSIC OF MY GLOVES**  
**YVONNE BARKLEY**

When I get to be a composer,  
I'm gonna write me some music about  
the sound my boxing gloves make when they hit the bag.

It sounds like the boy who dances in the movie "The Tap Dance Kid,"  
the sound of his shoes on the wood floor.  
Top-top-bang on the wood floor  
sounds like the music my gloves make when they hit the speed bag.

The sounds of my feet jumping rope like Double Dutch,  
Tip-tap-tip-tap is music to my ears. I love that sound because it encourages me  
to do more and more.

I like the sound of the music I make from my feet-  
Pitter-patter-pitter-patter.

## THE BIRTH OF MY FIRST CHILD

**HAUGHTON DENNIS**

This is the story about my first child. I was just nineteen years old when I got my first child and knew that I was going to be a father. As a young man, it was a very good feeling that I was going to be a father. It was something that would change me. Now I would have someone I was responsible for.

My baby was a pretty little girl. The first time I looked at her I thought, "Wow!" I felt like I was in heaven. My baby looked at me and I said, "Yes, this is a good feeling." She was born on March 17, 1989, at 5:30 a.m. She weighed seven and a half pounds. We named her Mahalia Dennis. We gave her the pet name Kay.

Then the work started. First, I was going to stop being a bad boy. Then I was going to get a job and start doing the things that a father is supposed to do, because I wanted the best for my daughter. I wanted her to get what I didn't receive and to be a good little girl.

The first morning we took her to school, I was glad to see her. She did well in school. Now she is going to high school and continues to do well and get good grades. She is planning to go on to college. Now I can see that my hard work was not in vain. At times I did feel like giving up, but I am glad that I didn't.

I am so thankful to God for giving me the strength to guide and take care of her. Any boy can make a baby, but it takes a good man to be a father.

## THE ALPHABET OF WAR

**DAPHNE PRATT**

Words to an end

What are the most despised words?

Attack Bloody Cruel Deadly Evil Frightful Grave Hazardous Infliction Judgment Killings  
Lifeless Merciless Nasty Offensive Provoking Questionable Relentlessly Suffering Terror  
Unjust Vicious Wicked X-rays Yearning Zero.

## CHINA: PAST AND PRESENT

### LI YUE CAI

I was born in a big city in southern China. In 1976, since Mao Zedong died, China slowly “opened its doors” to the world. China has changed a lot. Here are some examples:

Before, most people used to wear simple, dark colored and boring clothing. Now, they wear fashion clothing.

Before, there used to be a limit of food people could get. If you wanted extra food, it would be difficult. Even more, there are now many supermarkets. You can buy anything and any amount of food you want.

Before, China had no highways, because everyone rode bicycles or walked. Now, there are many highways leading everywhere. Plus, many people that are in China now own cars.

Before, China had no millionaires. Now, there are plenty of millionaires.

Before, students didn’t study hard. Now, they must study hard.

Before, China didn’t have freedom of speech. Now, China has freedom of speech, however, not including political.

Before, China didn’t have a lot of tall buildings. Now, China has many tall buildings, including skyscrapers.

Before, many people got stable jobs, people nicknamed this job, “metal bowl.” Now,

many people get laid off of jobs, it is very difficult to find a job.

Before, the federal government provided comprehensive health care to everyone. Now, if you’re sick, and you are poor, no one will accept you, including the government hospitals.

Every day China makes more changes, but only two things never changed. Number one, there is a sea of people. Number two, people like to eat as usual. Every restaurant is full of people.

## MY VISIT TO VENEZUELA

JENNIFER LOCARIO

The first time I visited Venezuela was on February 26, 1988. Venezuela is a country in South America. The capital is Caracas, and the official language is Spanish. The currency is called Bolivar, after the founder of the country. The exchange rate to the U.S. dollar was 417 Bolivar, to one U.S. dollar. When I changed my two hundred U.S. dollars, I thought to myself, "I am rich." I was feeling very happy.

I went to Venezuela with three friends. We traveled through Curacao, which is a beautiful little Dutch island in the Caribbean Sea. We stayed there overnight and the next day traveled to Venezuela. When we arrived in Venezuela, the inside of the airport was beautiful, but when we came outside it wasn't what I expected. I expected it to be more beautiful, more like Curacao, with a nicer view.

When we left the airport, the place looked like we were in the countryside. There were many little houses on the hillsides and lots of trees and valleys. We traveled through a tunnel, which was about a mile long. At the end of the tunnel, we came to Caracas, the capital city. That's where our hotel was located. Now we saw high-rise buildings. Some were beautiful and some looked as if they were vandalized. People hung their clothes through their windows. Some parts of Venezuela looked like ghettos.

When we arrived at the hotel, it was about 11 o'clock at night. We were tired and hungry, so we went to the front desk to check in. The receptionist didn't speak English, and we didn't speak Spanish. So I asked the taxi driver to explain to him that we had reservations for one room with two beds. After my message was translated, the clerk gave us our room. We rented only one room because it was our first time in Venezuela and we didn't want to be separated. We didn't know what to expect and it was much cheaper.

On the next day we met a lady who spoke English. She worked at the hotel. She was very nice to us, so we told her that we were there to buy leather shoes that we could sell. We explained that we didn't speak Spanish and we didn't know where the shoe factory was located. She got us a guide for a reasonable price to take us around. On the fourth day we decided to go on our own without the guide.

We took the train going uptown. We were to get off at the fifth stop but we were so taken up looking at the scenery, that we missed our stop. We got off at the next stop but we didn't know how to get back on the other side. Since we didn't speak Spanish, we tried to find an English speaking person to help us get to the other side. We found a man who spoke a little English, and he showed us how to take the train back.

We were so scared that we took the train back to the hotel. We didn't leave the hotel because we didn't want to get lost again. Also, we didn't have any more money to pay for a guide. We didn't leave the hotel until the next day when we went back home. Since that day, I have been to Venezuela nine times. I know how to take the train to the shopping area without a guide. I love Venezuela.

**THIS IS A STORY OF MY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**  
**IVELISSE REYES**

Well, when I started kindergarden I never wanted to go. I hated school, I can't remember why, but every time my mother sent me to school I would get out and stay in front of my building. I remember my mother screaming from the window, telling me to go back to school and I would always hide behind the cars so she wouldn't be able to see me.

The school was right across the street from the building where I used to live. Then we moved and my mother put me in another school and I didn't run out of that one. The school was P.S. 261. I guess I liked that school better.

When I was young I remember I always wanted to be It (if you know what I mean). If we were playing teacher I had to be the teacher, if we were playing office I had to be the receptionist. So of course I had to be the first one on line in school.

My teacher was really nice, she would let me be the first on line because I would listen and not behave bad like the other kids. Maybe that's why she was one of my favorite teachers. My other favorite teacher was in the sixth grade. I remember that I would be the monitor for everything, giving out class work, cleaning the blackboard, even giving out the milk in the lunchroom. She always said I was her best student.

Now it was time to move on to junior high school. I was so happy that I was going

to graduate and go to the prom. My mother bought me a beautiful dress. I looked like a princess. My mother spent so much money since she had to buy me two dresses, one for the prom and the other for the graduation.

So it was time for the citywide test. After so much study and all the money my mother spent on the dresses, I failed the test. I was not going to graduate. I was not going to be able to go to our prom. I was so devastated. I cried all night and told my mother what had happened. Since she saw me crying so much she cried with me and told me everything was going to be all right. That next year I had to try harder. I guess I got a little pissed off because I know I tried hard.

Then I went to school the next day and my teacher pulled me to the side of the classroom and told me, I know you have tried very hard this year, and that she had spoken to the principal about me and that they agreed to give me another chance to take that test over. I was so happy that the school had given me another chance. I only had two days to study. I wouldn't tell my mom until I was sure that I had passed the test to make her happy.

Then I went to school that Monday to take the test, and there were two other kids from school that were given a second chance also. After the test I went home and prayed all night to god that I pass that test. When my teacher told me that I passed the test I ran home and told my mother all about it. She was so happy. She gave me the tightest hug. My graduation was nice and my prom was off the hook. My mother volunteered to help out in the prom so I couldn't dance with the boys. I won a lot of awards in my graduation, and my mom was so proud of me.

So now I moved on to junior high school. That's when everything started messing up. I got new friends, I started to hang around and cut class. I would get suspended every other week for fighting in school all the time. After three months I got kicked out of that school,

which was J.H.S. 143, so they put me in J.H.S. 45. I started cutting school there too and fighting with everyone, thinking I was Tyson. I got kicked out of there also and they put me in J.H.S. 80 and on probation. If I missed a day I was going to boot camp. That was the worst school but I went every day and they passed me and I went to Evander Childs High School.

That was the baddest school in the Bronx. The kids would smoke pot in front of the teachers in the classrooms. Everyone would hang out outside, not even go to class. Everyone had to be searched before going inside the school. Then one day there was a shoot out and a girl got killed. That's when I said I was never going back and I decided to drop out of school. I was only fifteen years old.

My mother bought a house in Puerto Rico and I stayed here, living with my sister. I started working to help my sister with the bills. At that time I had an abusive relationship. My father was sick of it so he sent me with my mother to Puerto Rico. I was sixteen at the time. Then I met this guy that lived right across the street from my mother's house. He is my husband now. We have been together nine years and have two kids. He is the one who gives me that extra push I need to do this and so do my daughters.

So I decided to go back to school now, to become what I want to be, and that's a chef or an executive secretary, because that's what I like to do most. I do need my G.E.D. first. I can't lie. I am afraid because I haven't been in school in ten years, but I'm going to try my best. Now that I am in school I like it more, maybe because I'm older now or because I want to do better. With the help of my teachers and myself of course I will do this. I will pass the test.

## MY TEENAGE YEARS

### CARMEN ADORNO

I quit school when I was only thirteen years old because I didn't like school. The reason I wasn't learning was I couldn't slide the letters together. So it was like my body was there but my mind wasn't there. The teachers just passed me through grades without knowing anything. My mother was always telling me to go back to school because she never went to school and she knew how hard it was to get by in life without knowing how to read and write.

When I couldn't read I couldn't help my kids with homework. I had to get my sister to help my kids and it was so hard for me. Sometimes I had to take my kids to her house and that was the hardest part of it.

To make things work for me I had to go to my daughter to read my mail and to fill out my applications. Sometimes people asked me to read a letter for them and I would make an excuse because I knew I couldn't read. I'd have other people read for me, like my sisters or my daughter. I was so embarrassed so I would be sure that one of my family members would read to me.

I first heard about Literacy Partners on the radio. For me Literacy Partners has been the greatest thing that happened in my life because I know I'm getting the help I need.

The way Literacy Partners is helping me is that now I know how to read the signs on the highway and menus and street names much better. I especially want to thank Calvin for pushing me harder. He is a great man.

I want to tell all the people that are having reading problems, "Never give up."

## OUR GRANDMOTHER'S TRUNK

**SERGIO ROJAS**

Our grandmother had an old trunk which she jealously guarded. It had a magical aura in the infant eyes of my little sister and me. It looked like a treasure rescued from a pirate galleon. She had inside it a wardrobe and opened it with a key that only she had access to, so we didn't get to know its contents. In spite of many frustrated attempts, the little we could find out was its interior was lined with red velvet, and from that box came the candies which were offered to us at situations that she considered appropriate.

A little woman, with small and tired steps, she came out from her almost always semi-dark room, bringing with her the most delicious candies that we could imagine, a motive for celebration on our part.

Our grandmother was very religious, but she became even more devout after our grandfather died. She prayed the rosary every day, kneeling down on a kneeler in front of a small altar with the Virgin of Copacabana's image. Her long worship touched and saddened me. Sometimes I tried to accompany her, but the pain in my skinny knees betrayed those attempts. Her room smelled of incense and holy week palms, emanating the peace that one feels when entering into the church and at the same time a mysterious feeling.

During school vacation, while we were playing, we never stopped observing her. We saw her in her room among the embroideries she made, the faith she practiced and the trunk that she kept. Later at dusk, she left the house wearing a black coat she used to go to the church. In reality, the only thing out of our control (but not outside of our fantasies) was the

contents of that enigmatic box.

So, the time passed, my grandmother continued her disciplined routine; my little sister more dedicated in trying to imitate every living creature which crossed her path; and I, committed to reading comic magazines.

One day our grandmother woke up sick and in less than a month she died. It didn't take long before we found the key to the trunk on the table; our parents simply had left it here. Without wasting the opportunity, I opened the trunk in the presence of my young and curious accomplice.

What we found within the ordered compartments of the trunk was: a bible preciously bound in leather, some jewelry that belonged to our grandparents and a box with gold coins, in addition to many others of silver, coined during the Spanish colonial times, surely at La Casa de la Moneda of Potosi, and a porcelain dish with candies. Without doubt, our discovery was worthy of our surprise. But it wasn't the same. Our grandmother had taken with her the most valuable thing: a loved part of the magic universe of our infancy.

## **THROUGH THE EYES OF LANGSTON HUGHES**

**MAVIS LEWIS**

I read a poem written by Langston Hughes. He was writing about himself, a black American man who was living in America when racial discrimination was at its worst. From what I heard about racial discrimination in this country, Langston Hughes had to be a very strong black man. I would think life would have been better for him because he was born in this country, but I was wrong. Racial discrimination was not about being an American. It was about the color of your skin. There was a line in Langston's poem that I love very much, where he said, "They'll see how beautiful I am and be ashamed." I was not lucky enough to have known Langston, but I would have loved to meet him. I think that he was a very intelligent black man.

## **MY DEBUT AT GRACIE MANSION**

**LUVENIA ELLISON**

The date was April 25, 2000. I wrote a story to read about the desire that I've had in my heart for such a long time, to find a program that could help me and my children who didn't know how to read and write. I was a mother of eight children, four of my children learn from their teachers, and the other four had the same problem I had.

At my debut, my daughter Louise Ellison, she was my guest to be with me, and Calvin Miles, my director, he was my escort to take us there to Gracie Mansion. When we first drove up to the gate of Gracie Mansion, we started taking pictures by the beautiful flowers in the front yard all up the walkway.

And after that we went into the house where some of the guests were waiting. While waiting for the rest of the guests we walked around the house to look at different things.

And then we wandered off to the back way, that led us to the backyard. As the door open to the back yard there was this big white porch that had these long steps, looking over into this big yard with all these beautiful flowers, all over the yard.

Then Calvin started taking pictures of me and my daughter on the porch, as we walked down the steps into the yard where all these beautiful flowers were, and there in the yard was a seat for two, and Calvin kept on taking pictures of me and my daughter. And after

that we were called back into the house, it was time to have our late breakfast. As we walk back into the dining room that was full with guests, there were twelve tables that seated ten people at each table. There were photographers, they kept on snapping pictures, all over the dining room.

And after breakfast, that time came for me to meet my host of the morning, Donna Hanover, the Mayor's wife. At that moment when I was called by the speaker John Deveaux, to read my story, as I walked toward John and the rest of the hosts, at that moment I was very nervous, but very excited.

After it was over, oh what a wonderful feeling that I felt inside.

## **SLOGANS**

### **CRYSTAL TERRY**

While I was sitting in my car at a traffic light, I noticed a slogan on the side of a bus. It said, "Be all you can be." I thought to myself, wow, what a great motivational tool for me to use to reach my goals. Currently, I am taking all the necessary steps to achieve my goals, and hopefully be all that I can be very soon.

I have many different goals that vary from getting my G.E.D., to attending college, to obtaining a position with the Board of Education as a Para. At the moment, I am enrolled in the G.E.D. program at the College of Staten Island. My main focus is to complete the course and take the test to receive my G.E.D. I know these goals don't seem so monumental to some, but to me, they are a vital part of who and what I want to be. There is no room for any negative thought. I have to stay focused and "Just do it."

Every day I read the slogan "Just do it." I placed this slogan on my refrigerator because there are days when I feel like giving up. This slogan says to me, forget the difficulties and obstacles, you can do it. I know that to reach a goal, one must take certain steps. For instance, my main objective is to obtain a position with the Board of Education as a Para. Therefore, I know my first step is to acquire my G.E.D., hence be able to attend college. Once enrolled in college, I can then apply for a position as a Para with the Board of Education. I want to be

all I can be, so I stay focused and read positive slogans often. Reading these positive slogans gives me motivation, and boosts my confidence to succeed.

The final outcome of all my hard work and positive thinking will be employment within the Board of Education. Although I know my journey won't be easy, determination and motivational slogans will keep me focused. I will obtain my G.E.D. because not only do I have perseverance, I have direction pointing me to "A stairway to the stars."

## **THE HOLIDAY SEASON MAKES ME REMEMBER**

**DAISY SMITH**

The holiday season makes me remember how at Christmas time we prepared a lot of food for family, friends and children. They make a merry-go-round with one big post and string around it with a seat. We sit on the seat and one person holds the string and wheels it around and everybody goes in the air. That's how we make our own entertainment.

We save towards Christmas. We prepare by cleaning up. We paint the house and fence, we make stones with patterns at the front of the house and paint them. My mother takes us to Christmas market. She buys new clothing for us. She makes potato pudding and corn cakes. She takes banana leaves and warms them over the fire. She cooks the cornmeal with spice. We put it in separate leaves, tie them with cord and boil them. My father used to keep one goat and one pig for Christmas. He would kill them and sell their parts around to people in the district for their Christmas dinner.

I am so sorry they are no longer here because Christmas time was a jolly good time in the old days.

## REMEMBERING MY VILLAGE

**LOURDES TAPIA**

My name is Lourdes. My country is Mexico. I was born in one very small village. The houses are small. The people are agreeable. All the people know each other because the houses are in front of each other. The nights are very silent. I see small mountains and lots of trees. There is little civilization, no banks, no stores. When we need clothes, we have to go to another place.

The weather is cool. When it's raining, all the children go outside the house to play. The village is different than other places. Most of the time, the trees are green. More than half of the people are Catholics. The other people are Pentecostal. The Catholics have their traditions, like the Day of the Dead. Families choose one place in the house to put offerings of some candy, flowers, water and food. They create an environment to welcome the spirits of the dead.

## I HAVE LIVED UNDER THE RULE OF MANY COUNTRIES

**WAH YOU LEE**

Part 1

I was born in 1930 in a city in the middle of South China. At that time, that city was a colony of France. The city was formed by two districts; one was old and the other was young. There were 12 kilometers between them, traveled by bus.

Under the rule of the French, there was one public primary school and one public hospital in each district, but a lot of casinos, brothels, opium houses and night clubs were set here and there. My family belonged to the middle class. We didn't need to worry about life, but still I saw that someone had died of sickness and hunger on the street.

In 1942, before the Japanese invaders came to my hometown, the teacher taught us a lesson called "The Last Lesson." It was written by a French writer about a French village occupied by Germany. Our situation was just the same, so all our students felt painfully sad emotion. This was the first time I worried about my country's fate. I hated to be a slave losing his motherland.

When our family knew the Japanese invader would come, we fled to the countryside and stayed there for ten days. When we returned home, the invaders' violation had stopped, but we could see some Japanese soldiers taking a bath on the street, rudely and openly. The

people didn't dare pass by and had to turn the other way. The Japanese once came to our school to make a movie for political propaganda, but many of us turned our backs to the camera. When one of my friends learned Japanese at evening school, I treated him as our country's betrayer. I ignored him for a long time.

But a Japanese soldier made me know the difference between the peaceful people and the bloody reactionary government. He was 23 years old; he came to our school to play with us individually. He told some stories to us and said that he had been a college student in Japan. He didn't like this war. He didn't like to come to China as an invader.

He came to school three or four times. The last time he told us that he would be sent somewhere, and if he stayed alive he would return to see us. But he couldn't come again and I don't know where he is now. I was very impressed with him, because he let me know something about war.

Still, the invaders must be defeated! In 1945, the Japanese imperialists surrendered. All the Chinese people were delighted by the victory. I remember that my class made a big tank to join the victory parade. The tank could fire. One of my classmates was hurt by fireworks on his face, which scarred him, but he never blamed anyone for it. At that time, my younger brother, who was just ten years old, liked to play with the soldiers and listen to their battle stories. He regarded them as national heroes.

## **Part 2**

From 1945 to 1949, the Guomintang's government ruled my hometown. Political corruption and economic ruin caused inflation, a sudden rise in prices, and a big gap between rich and poor. All of these made the society chaotic, and the people were very resentful. I was dissatisfied too, but I knew nothing about the Communist Party, so when in 1949

my hometown was "liberated," I just waited and watched. Then I became interested in the youth activities of propaganda and entertainment, and gradually I agreed with the policy of the Communist Party, and admired their members. This was especially true when my two brothers and I could study in college for free. We gave our thanks to the Communist Party from our hearts.

After graduating from college, I was sent to be a teacher under the rule of the Communist Party. There were a lot of political movements proceeding; the so-called political movements were truly struggles. One day, one group of people attacked, insulted, and persecuted the others; the next day, the others would attack the rest. The struggles never stopped.

Most of the struggles aimed at the intellectuals, because the Communist Party thought the intellectuals were not loyal to them. Because of my family's middle-class background, I was distrusted by the Communist Party. I did a lot of work, but I didn't get fair treatment. I felt wronged. I could do nothing but work harder and harder, to console myself. In China at that time the people were living a poor life, living supplies were short, but there was not a big difference in the lives of most people, and crime was low, the society was peaceful. And there was a flashing slogan, "Serving the people," supporting us. So if there had not been so many political movements, I would have been satisfied with my life, because I didn't care too much about my material enjoyment. However, for my children's future, I finally chose to go abroad. I didn't want my children to be distrusted persons.

Now China has had a big change, to attach importance to intellectuals and their abilities. It is great progress.

## **Part 3**

In 1980, I went to Hong Kong. I stayed there for more than two years. In Hong Kong,

everything was plentiful, but it didn't have a big effect on me because I had gotten used to living a simple life. I worked in a transportation company as part of a staff. I had to go here and there. It wasted my physical strength, but I could bear it and felt happy. Because there was no political pressure, we could say or do anything and didn't worry about getting into political trouble. It meant that there was more political freedom. In China, there was no law. The officers of government could decide everything individually. In Hong Kong, everything had to be managed according to the law. It showed me that the law is very important for the country. But, in my mind, Hong Kong was not a paradise. There were a lot of sexual affairs and too many crimes committed. When I saw the old prostitutes who were more than 50 years old standing on the street in winter, I felt very upset. I thought that they should be enjoying the life of a grandma with their grandchildren.

I came to America in 1983. I worked in garment factories as a sorter for more than ten years. I joined the union to become a member of the working class. Maybe God joked at me. In China, the worker was respected, but at that time I was a member of the intellectual class, who were looked down upon; in America, the intellectuals have the worthy jobs, but I was a common worker who got a low salary. One of my English teachers suggested that I should go to college here. I didn't, because I had a family to support. I regret it sometimes. But if I went to college, could I get success? I'm not sure.

America is the richest, strongest and most prosperous country in the world. People can live a better life here than in other countries, but I think that in America the Medicare system is not flawless, and the teaching of teenagers has big problems. I can't understand why the government does not pay more attention to public schools. Erotic affairs are spreading and violence happens here and there. These issues have caused a lot of social problems. The government should make effective laws to control and stop them. I am a man who has lived

under the rule of France, Japan, China, England, and America. I think it would be very interesting to make programs to investigate, study, and analyze these countries in polity, economy, and culture in the past, present and future. But it is a pity that I don't have such an ability.

## **WHY AM I HERE AT C.S.I.?**

### **PHYLLIS EISENBERG**

One year ago, almost to the day, my entire life changed. My beloved husband of over twenty years passed away.

His name was Jack Eisenberg, and he was the bravest man I have ever known. Jack and I were very happily married with three children. Their names are Joseph, Sara and Michael.

In addition to being soul mates, lovers and best friends, we were also business partners. Our business was music. Jack was a drummer and I am a singer. Together we formed a "Wedding Band," which we named "Starfire." Our band has performed at numerous weddings, bar mitzvahs and other social events since 1983. In fact, we were the band that performed at Marietta's wedding, who happens to be another student in this program at the College of Staten Island.

Needless to say, since Jack's passing, I have tried to keep the band going. Fortunately, our son, Joseph, is a fine drummer, and stepped into his dad's position with ease. Despite our efforts, however, the business is drastically changing. People are not hiring live musicians for their affairs the way they used to. They seem to gravitate toward Dee Jays. How sad! There is nothing like the energy of a live band.

Consequently, I have had to switch gears and apply for employment in the corporate

world. I realized early on that without my high school diploma, I will not have an easy time getting a job. This is what brings me to this program. My hope is that I will obtain my G.E.D. and go on to college. I would like to work in the health care field, as I am a person who enjoys being in the service of others.

I will continue my music for as long as possible. However, my goal is to get a full-time job with benefits. As for my husband Jack, I will try to follow his glorious example of dignity and bravery. It is that which sustains me and allows me to continue on, one day at a time!

## MY FATHER

LILY TANG

My father was a high school teacher. He was always busy. He gave his time to his school and his students. My mother was a housewife. We had eight people in our family. My father's school was two hours away. When he went to school, he was always on the road before six-thirty am. He always came back after dinner. We didn't see my father very much when we were young. My mother used to yell at him, and was very upset. She wanted him to give us more attention and teach us, too.

My father was very handsome and very smart. He was the only person who had the highest education and became a teacher. Everyone respected him and said "hello" to him everywhere. I was proud of him and liked to follow him wherever he went. I had to run after him because he walked so fast. He never yelled at us and was always kind. He liked to keep silent, too. When my mother used to be angry, and fought with him, he still tried to keep silent or just walk away.

I'll never forget a lesson he gave us. My brother, sister and I were playing a game. We hadn't finished our homework. We were fighting with each other and everything exploded. We were crying, yelling and fighting. This time he was angry and punished us. We had to sit on our knees on the floor for two hours. After that, we were afraid of my father's reaction and

behaved better. We respected him more, too.

When I was a teenager, my father was still busy all the time. He was a very good teacher. His students respected him very much. Two parents wanted to send their son to my father's class. His class was full. They fought with the vice president of the school. The noise made all the teachers stop teaching. All the students came out in the hallway to see the fight. Finally, the parents gave up and wanted to transfer their son to another school. My father felt so sorry that after school that day he visited the student's parents and the president of the school. He accepted the student into his class and persuaded the school to reaccept him, too. Later, this student became the number one student in his class. After many, many years, the student still visited my father and was very appreciative that my father had given him the chance to be in his class.

Over the years, I saw stresses on my father's face. I understood when I became an adult that he was the only person making money for eight people in our family including money for the five of us in school. We were using his money for everything. He was responsible and he saw it as his duty to support us. He wanted to do the best for everyone who needed him.

Due to too much pressure, my father was getting old too fast. When he was in his 50s, he had white hair. He started to joke with us, saying that he would like to live on a farm with cattle and he didn't care how hard he would have to work. Then, I finally understood after many years why we couldn't see our father all the time, why his face was serious, why he was silent so often and why he told us he wanted to live on a farm. He had huge responsibilities.

When we all finished school, everyone got a good job and had a good life. Then, we saw the smile return to his face. I know my father loves us and he did his best.

## THE LONG LONG HAIR

LARRY ESPIRITU

My mother is a sweet woman, strong and very spiritual. She told me many stories from her childhood. There is one that I remember and I want to share with you.

This story happened many years ago in a little town in the Andes Mountains of Peru we call "Sierra." Indigenous people used to live there without annoying electrical alarm clocks or any other sophisticated devices or other modern appliances. My mother was ten years old and as a child she was very mischievous. She used to have long long hair and as a vain young woman she took care of it a lot. She used to spend too much time brushing her hair or decorating it with pretty flowers that she picked on her morning walks or when she had to herd the sheep. She always wanted her long long hair to look its best (you know how girls are). So one day she decided to use her grandmother's shampoo made from natural herbs, but Mercedes, my mother, didn't want to ask for it, just take it. So when Grandmom was out, Mercedes snuck through Grandmom's house, got the valuable shampoo and began to wash her long long hair. She used a big clay pot with a narrow opening and wide bottom where Grandmom used to store "Chicha de Jora," another natural product which is a liquor.

Well, all was OK until the moment when her head did not come out from inside of the

big pot. She tried and tried to push it out but it was impossible. (At that point in the story I was laughing and laughing. Could you imagine a person with a big pot stuck on her head trying desperately to pull it off?) She fell on the ground, crawling in circles, and started to hit it many times with fast movements of her head, trying to knock it off. At last, her right hand found a stone. Finally, she could break the big pot and take out her head from its momentary prison. She ran away all wet... keeping her secret to herself ...until now.

## **FAMILY TIME**

**DAPHNE YOUNG**

My family is very small. My husband, my son and I are very close. My husband's name is Paul and my son's name is Tony. One night I tried to have a family dinner. After I set the table Paul said, "Why are we eating at the table?" I said, "We are a family." My son said, "Come on mom, we don't have to eat at the table to be a family." "Yes, Tony, we have to eat at the table together on a Sunday like a real family." Finally, we ate dinner at the table but it never happened again.

When dinner is being served at my house, everyone takes a tray and goes in front of the TV. Sometimes Tony and Paul eat in the living room. I told my guys that they are going to wreck my living room. My son said, "Mom, that is why it is called a living room. It is not a showroom." It is not easy to live with those two men, but it is good to have them around, even if I can't get them to eat at the table.

Yesterday I tried to get them to eat at the table again for the last time. I give up. I gave them their food and Tony went to his room, Paul went to the living room and I went to my bedroom. Sometimes we all actually end up in one room but not for dinner.

## **THE STATUE OF LIBERTY**

**ELENA TANG**

I knew the Statue of Liberty before I came to America. It often appeared in my mind and I wished to be close to it, when I was in my terrible time under Mao's dictatorship. Now I can see it almost every day when I'm riding the subway across the Manhattan Bridge. It excites me. Looking at it, my thoughts go into the past and the future. Finally, I feel happy because I got freedom.

The Statue of Liberty is a woman who is a representative of confidence, bravery, and freedom. I love her very much. The statue was given by France, then America gave France the same one but smaller, which I saw in Paris.

In the tragedy of June 4, 1989, in Beijing, there was a Statue of Liberty, which showed another woman. Her name was Zhi Ping Chang, who was against Mao's ideas. She struggled for truth and freedom and never surrendered. Before she was killed by Mao's followers, they cut out her tongue in 1976. There is another statue of her in San Francisco now.

How valuable liberty is! Everybody should treasure freedom.

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**A GALLATIN WRITING PROGRAM PUBLICATION**  
THE GALLATIN SCHOOL OF INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY  
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY