



BRIDGES

“Education is all a matter of building bridges.” Ralph Ellison

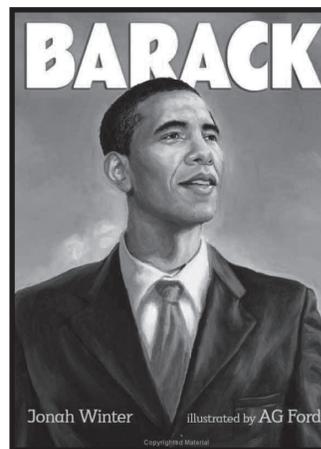
A Wiggins Society Newsletter | Winter Edition 09-10 | Vol. 2

THE WIGGINS SOCIETY

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 Abebech Ayele
 Bernice Belt
 Jenny & Doug Boone
 Ruth W. & David L. Bourns
 Elaine A. Brown
 Anne & David C. Burnham
 Letitia M. and John S. Carter
 Elizabeth Cazden
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 Elijah Cobb
 Laurel K. & J. Stanley Cobb
 Pat and Peter Cobb
 David Campbell & Patsea Cobb
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 Rob Pike
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 Elizabeth H. Schumann
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 Liane Livi & Eli Upfal
 Dulibel and José Ureña
 Arline L. Walker
 Christine Watts
 Louis and Alona Wilson
 Susie Wilson
 W. Irving Wolf, Jr.
 Carmella Woods

A Letter from the Librarian

There are a lot of “firsts” as a librarian and a teacher, but I felt particularly happy and reflective about this most recent one. I have been working in libraries for about seven years now. One of the great joys of working with children is how they are always saying these smart, funny, and insightful things. However, I recently had an experience I’ve never had before. It was one of those educator moments that really make you stop and think.



Barack by Jonah Winter

I was getting the library all gussied up for the start of the new year, making library cards for brand new Cuffee students, planning lessons, and putting new books on display. For the first few days, I took students on tours of the library, reacquainting them with where everything is, and showing off the new titles that they absolutely MUST read. This was and is extremely fun for me, because even after all of the days students spend lounging in the sun and drinking lemonade, their faces light up with excitement as their eyes roam over the shelves. You can see that their minds are ready to DIG IN.

Among all of the books with a “back to school” theme that I put out on display, I included one of the new additions to the Wiggins Collection, *Barack* by Jonah Winter. It is a picture book biography geared towards primary grades which tells the life story of our president, beginning with his childhood in Hawaii. In painted illustrations, the young Barack Obama is depicted going to

elementary school, shooting hoops, giving speeches, and, finally, standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial as president. He is described as “a man who spoke of ‘hope’ and ‘change’, whose strong words lifted up the downhearted people and made them believe that the world was not beyond repair.” I propped the book up to show its beautiful cover, on which the president’s face is painted with a half-smile, surrounded by blue sky, and greeted my classes as they began to march through the library door.

Here is what happened: as I gave a class a tour, a student pointed at this

book of the president and said, “Ooooooh, I gotta get THAT!” I had other students asking, “Where can I get another Barack Obama biography?” and “Ooo, ooo, can I get it next time, please?” Never in my time working in libraries have I seen students so excited over books about a president. I have never seen this response to any political biography. I have students reading *Our White House: Looking Out, Looking In* by David McCullough, which is a thick collection of essays about the history of the White House, because that is where *he* lives.

As I reveled in students’ enthusiasm and pride in their president, I realized that this was most likely the first time I have ever put a living president’s biography up on display. I am just as proud and hopeful as the students are. I have never been so excited about a president. So make that two “firsts” for me so far this year. Not bad. ☺

Mega

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Tues., March 16

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT:

Before Rosa Parks... there was Claudette Colvin!

Paul Cuffee School
459 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908
Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Reservations: 401-453-2626 x118
(Limited Seating. RSVP by March 9)
www.paulcuffeeschool.org

* Come prepared for a facilitated discussion of the award-winning book *Claudette Colvin: Twice toward Justice*, by Phillip Hoose. Visit your library or local bookstore for a copy of this book.

Fri., March 19

Step Afrika

Zeiterion Theater
684 Purchase Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
Time: 8:00 p.m.
Box Office: 508-994-2900
www.zeiterion.org

April 14

Jazz Is a Rainbow

Paul Cuffee Middle School
30 Barton Street
Providence, RI 02909
Time: 7:00pm
Reservations: 401-453-2626 x118
www.paulcuffeeschool.org

April 14-18

The Brown University Africana Film Festival

For more information:
Department of Africana Studies
Brown University, Box 1904
155 Angell Street
Providence, RI 02912
Telephone: (401) 863-3137

April 20

Reading by Poet Yusef Komunyakaa

Performing & Fine Art Commission's
Spring Festival of the Arts

Sapinsley Hall in the Nazarian Center
Rhode Island College
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Free Admission

Grants from Rosalie Fain and RISCA bring "Jazz Is A Rainbow" to Cuffee

There's nothing like being on stage surrounded by lights, music and fellow actors to deepen understanding and cement memory. Paul Cuffee middle school students auditioned in January, and a cast of twenty are now engaged in twice-weekly rehearsals for *Jazz Is a Rainbow*, a musical revue of African-American music, culture, and events of the early twentieth century. To further integrate their academic knowledge of the Harlem Renaissance era, students will study jazz artists Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Fats Waller; learn singing techniques; develop acting skills; and carry out stage direction from experienced professionals. The production will be directed by performance artist Robb Dimmick and vocalist Kim Trusty, along with Lynne Jackson and Michael Palter, who co-authored the piece. *Jazz Is a Rainbow* has generated great enthusiasm among appreciative audiences in New England, and received live coverage on WBRU last spring. 🎶

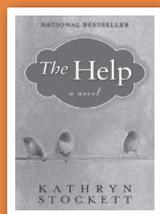
Your Gifts Add Up!

We're \$13,000 away from meeting our \$50,000 fundraising milestone for the Wiggins Endowment. The interest from the Endowment makes it possible to add new books and resources to the Wiggins Collection each year. This year, the Rhode Island Foundation forwarded us the first endowment gift for the Collection, which allowed Librarian Megan Madden to add more than \$2,000 of new titles to the Wiggins shelves in the lower and middle school buildings. These books support the K-8 Humanities curriculum and allow students to learn about African-American history, read African-American literature, and become familiar with the achievements of African Americans in a wide range of fields. To help us reach our goal, please send your check payable to Paul Cuffee School to the R.C. Wiggins Fund, 459 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908. 🎶

Wiggins Endowment



BOOK REVIEWS:



The Help, by Kathryn Stockett, is a riveting account of daily life and pervasive attitudes in Jackson, Mississippi in 1962, written from the perspective of a naive journalist who desperately launches her professional career by interviewing the servants that work for her young married women friends. Highly recommended.

Visiting History by Julia Karahalís, Director of Institutional Advancement



In creative skits, seventh-grade students played the roles of famous African-American artists and intellectuals from the 1920s-30s. From left to right: Deon Gomes as Louis Armstrong, Alejandra Pernia as Bessie Smith, Angie Diaz as Nella Larsen, Guillermo Funes as Duke Ellington, Alexa Melo as Zora Neale Hurston, and Marvick Felix as W.E.B. DuBois.

In the era of this nation's first black multi-racial president, it is more appropriate than ever for students to have a deep understanding of the African-American history as it relates to contemporary American history, culture, and politics. At Paul Cuffee School, the Harlem Renaissance unit immerses 60 seventh graders in the artistic, intellectual, and political aspects of this period, and links these studies to our contemporary, multi-ethnic culture. Independent reading includes historical fiction and nonfiction from the school's growing Wiggins Collection. Each student completes a portfolio on a historic figure, comprising researched biography and an essay analyzing that person's work. This year students are hoping to take their studies one step further, by raising the funds for a field trip to Harlem.

To work on their persuasive writing skills, a group of Ms. Wohl's students participated in a campaign to invite community support for their trip. In their requests they describe the multiple benefits of visiting Harlem. Students directed one of their impressive letters to the Wiggins Society Committee, asking us to help them reach their goal by spreading the word to our membership.

Dear Wiggins Society Members:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Paul Cuffee School. Our 7th grade class is planning to go to Harlem for a field trip related to

our Harlem Renaissance Unit. We are planning this trip to strengthen our vision of what was a great era. The only obstacle we face on this journey is funds. We would like to ask for your help, for which we would be grateful.

We at Paul Cuffee School have been using the Wiggins Collection to study the Harlem Renaissance in our Humanities class. We understand that it was a time period during the early 1900s. One benefit of visiting this area in New York is that we can see how much progress Harlem has experienced through the decades. Harlem had an explosion of black culture even though Jim Crow segregation was still in effect. We would be able to experience Harlem almost through the eyes of the people of the early 1900s and definitely through its residents today. We would be able to see places like Langston Hughes' house. Hughes was an important figure in the movement. We would also see the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture, named for Arturo Schomburg, an Afro-Puerto Rican historian. These are just some of the places from the era that we would be able to experience. [Other compelling paragraphs were included before closing with the following information.]

Our idea for the trip is to take Archway buses to Harlem. We would be able to walk the path of the "Talented Tenth" (term coined by W.E. B. Du Bois). We would get to taste and explore the culture. A special professional tour will be included, as well as a traditional meal.

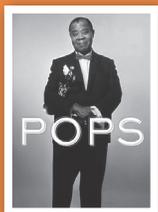
We need to raise \$2,000 to complete our fundraising goal of \$4,000. We are inviting you to sponsor one or two students (\$50-\$100), the cost of the tour guide (\$500), or the charter bus transportation (\$1500) to make it possible for every seventh-grade student to go.

Thank you for reading this letter. You had to take time out of your day to read this and we thank you for listening to our requests. We would love to go on this trip, and cannot do it without you.

Gratefully, your Paul Cuffee School Scholars
Aldrin Munoz, Kassielle Ramos, Jesus Tolentino and Sebastian Yidana

This trip will promote intercultural understanding and expose our students to present-day Harlem, teaching them that moments in history evolve into our current reality. For most students, this will be their first-ever trip to New York City.

Please help us make a gift from the Wiggins Society to the seventh graders' trip to Harlem by sending a tax-deductible contribution of any size! Please reference the Harlem field trip in the memo section of your check. Mail your gift to the Paul Cuffee School, 459 Promenade Street, Providence, RI. If you prefer to make a donation using a credit card, please visit our website at www.paulcuffee-school.org or call Dulibel Ureña at 401-453-2626 x130. Thank you!



Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong, by Terry Teachout, is an energetic and exhaustively researched portrait of one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century. Teachout is the first biographer to have had access to hundreds of private tape recordings Armstrong made himself, after-hours recordings in which he tells his story. In clear-minded, vibrant prose *Pops* presents the life, times, and music of the charismatic and reflective genius who became an international celebrity and an American icon.

Setting the Record Straight: Before Rosa Parks... there was Claudette Colvin!



Join us on Tuesday evening, March 16, 2010 from 7-9 p.m. at Paul Cuffee School for a facilitated discussion of this year's award-winning book of nonfiction by Phillip Hoose: *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice* - an incredibly informative account of the Montgomery bus boycotts from the perspective of the teenager who actually was arrested for refusing to give up her seat nine months before Rosa Parks. Read this short account and join in the conversation as we learn something new about American history and the Civil Rights movement.

Distinguished guest facilitators from the community include:

Cheryl Albright RPM Voices of Rhode Island

Jametta Alston Lawyer, Social Activist, and State of RI Child Advocate

Maria DeCarvalho Former Dean of St. John's Episcopal Church and Founder of Another Way

Teny Gross Executive Director of the Institute for the Study & Practice of Nonviolence

Joanne Pope Melish Author, Historian, and University of Kentucky Associate Professor of American and African-American History

Carolyn Pemberton Consultant in Diversity, Management Training, EEO Compliance and Employee Relations

Peter Wells Publisher and Editor of *The Providence American*

A.T. Wall Director of the RI Department of Corrections

THE WIGGINS SOCIETY IS GROWING!

Members of the Wiggins Society comprise a group of individuals who share Posy Wiggins's passion for lifelong learning and social justice. We are eclectic readers whose book lists often include titles by and about African Americans. Please consider joining us!

Annual membership benefits include **this newsletter** (to be published once a year), **invitation to our annual event**, and **the opportunity to connect with others** who share your interests in furthering the education of young people with inclusive library books and resources. Individual membership in the Society is \$25. All membership fees are transferred directly to the Wiggins Endowment. Members are encouraged to renew each year by Posy's birthday. Non-members are invited to join all year long. Enjoy the benefits of membership while supporting the Wiggins Collection! Join today!



The Wiggins Society
Paul Cuffee School
459 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908
Phone: 401-453-2626
www.paulcuffeeschool.org

Wish List for the Wiggins Collection

Did you know that you can honor a family member, friend, teacher, or colleague with a gift to the Paul Cuffee School Library? Please send your donation with a note in the memo section of your check indicating your desire to support the Wiggins Collection. Our librarian, Megan Madden, will order a book from her lengthy wish list and place a bookplate inside with whatever name you request. A beautiful note card will be sent to you to acknowledge your tax-deductible gift, and another one will be sent to the person you honor mentioning your gift to our library on their behalf. You may even select a specific title from the partial list below or go to our website at www.paulcuffeeschool.org to see a more extensive wish list that includes titles requested by our students and faculty. Your gifts will help us to grow the Wiggins Collection for Paul Cuffee kids! Thank you!

A Dime a Dozen by Nikki Grimes

Amistad: The Story of a Slave Ship
by Patricia C. McKissack

Beauty, Her Basket by Sandra Belton

Cassie's Word Quilt by Faith Ringgold

Clothes I Love to Wear by Cheryl Willis Hudson

Color Me Dark: The Diary of Nellie Lee Love, The Great Migration North by Patricia C. McKissack

David's Drawings by Cathryn Falwell

Doo-Wop Pop by Roni Schotter

Hot City by Barbara Jooose

I Lost my Tooth in Africa by Penda Diakite

Jericho Walls by Kristi Collier

Jubilee Journey by Carolyn Meyer

Loved Best by Patricia C. McKissack

My Best Friend by Mary Ann Rodman

My Big Lie by Bill Cosby

One True Friend by Joyce Hansen

Read and Rise by Sandra L. Pinkney

Shop Talk by Juwanda G. Ford

Sophisticated Ladies: The Great Women of Jazz
by Leslie Gourse

Speak to Me: (and I Will Listen between the Lines)
by Karen English

Stompin' at the Savoy by Bebe Moore Campbell

Sweet, Sweet Memory by Jacqueline Woodson

The Bat Boy & His Violin by Gavin Curtis

The Gift-Giver by Joyce Hansen

The Girls in the Circle by Nikki Giovanni

The Honest-to-Goodness Truth
by Patricia C. McKissack

The Meanest Thing to Say by Bill Cosby

There Is a Flower at the Tip of My Nose Smelling Me
by Alice Walker

Where's Jamela? by Niki Daly

Women of the Harlem Renaissance
by Lisa Beringer McKissack

* For a complete list please see www.paulcuffeeschool.org