



# BRIDGES

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

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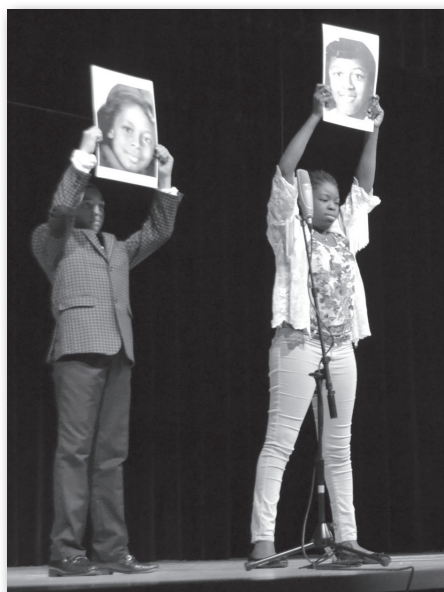
## *We Shall Not Be Moved: A Story Worth Retelling*

By Astrea Campbell-Cobb

**I BELIEVE IN STORIES.** I believe that telling and retelling stories is a critical agent of change. I also believe in the power of children. I believe that telling stories to children and children retelling stories is a fundamental pillar of education.

On December 18<sup>th</sup> the Paul Cuffee Middle School students performed *We Shall Not Be Moved*, an original piece written and directed by Robb Dimmick and Charlayne Osborne with music by Cathy Clasper-Torch. This performance, sponsored in part by the Wiggins Society and the Barker Foundation, recounts the Civil Rights Movement through scenes, songs, and poetry.

The ensemble piece, focusing on the children of the civil rights movement, opens with projected images from the era as the students march through the audience to the stage where they declare “We are the children! Never underestimate our power to change the world!” This uplifting, yet sobering image inescapably ties the violent discrimination of the civil rights era to the violent discrimination of today. The play combines direct quotes from



*PCS Middle School students Jose Santana and Chinelo Odih “shall not be moved” as they depict children of the Civil Rights Movement.*

notable figures of the civil rights movement with reenactments of major events. Kids take the stage and step into the shoes of Rosa Parks sitting on the bus, Miss Bessie Mae Wheaton registering to vote, Ruby Bridges skipping to school, the Birmingham Girls giggling before Sunday church, and many other events that became pivotal moments of justice.

Songs intersperse the scenes, providing moments of reflection, protest and hope, not to mention some remarkable voices.

*We Shall Not Be Moved* creates the opportunity “for middle school children to deal with the issues of the civil rights era, for them to deal with the issues of children who lost their lives so our children today can be who they are.” To really understand the current moment, we must take ownership of history - all of it. History then becomes our story, our song, our poem. We tell and retell, sing and re-sing, dance and re-dance until, in the words of Nina Simone:

“...we can all be proud to say  
To be young, gifted,  
and black  
is where it’s at.”



*Adely Pineda uses headphones and a recording device to learn broadcasting skills.*

## Listen Up! Paul Cuffee Students “Shine” on Woonsocket Radio Station

**Y**W **SHE SHINES** is a magazine, radio program, and ‘Shining With’ series that celebrates the aspirations and accomplishments of women. An after school program of the YWCA, Radio Rosie’s teaches girls the technical skills related to radio production and broadcasting while expanding their research and communication skills.

A number of Paul Cuffee Lower School 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade girls are participating in the after school program, working to create podcasts which will be aired in the spring. Left to their own creativity, the students will use books from the Wiggins Collection as a foundation for their podcasts, perhaps reporting on the narrative, creating a biography of a lead character, or even turning the narrative into a radio script and assuming the “voice” of one of the characters.



*Gianna Soares, one of Radio Rosie’s girls, plans to write a podcast using the Wiggins Collection book, The Old African Man.*

Fifth grader Gianna Soares joined the group because she thought it would be “cool” to hear her own voice on the radio. She plans to use the Wiggins’ The Old African Man for her podcast and assume the voice of the lead character, the old man.

Tune in on Saturday mornings at 10am on WOON 1240 AM. 

## Remembering “POSY”

I am honored and inspired every day by Posy Wiggins’ legacy, or Milly as I called her. Milly/Posy was my grandmother. She was my mother’s mother and my superhero. I saw her living a life that was diligently friendly, hungry for justice, and with an ever-questioning and playful prod at the world around her. In conversations with friends, family, and her religious community I witnessed her seeking equality, integrity, justice, and fun.

Posy completed her bachelors and masters degrees at Goddard College, a low-residency, self-directed degree program in Vermont. In February, I followed in her footsteps graduating from Goddard myself. In my two years on campus in the woods of Vermont and studying as a member of my Philadelphia community, I found myself understanding a broader context of Posy’s dedication to scholarship, justice, and fun. Posy was a scholar whose studies lay as much in books and historical records as they did in the context of her community.

Posy understood that honestly examining our past sheds light on our present and informs our steps towards the future. In the same way, as we move about our present, our past becomes clearer. In our conversations with friends and neighbors, and observations of daily life, we see both progress towards justice and echoes of the past reflected in our present. There is still work to be done. It requires both diligence and joy.

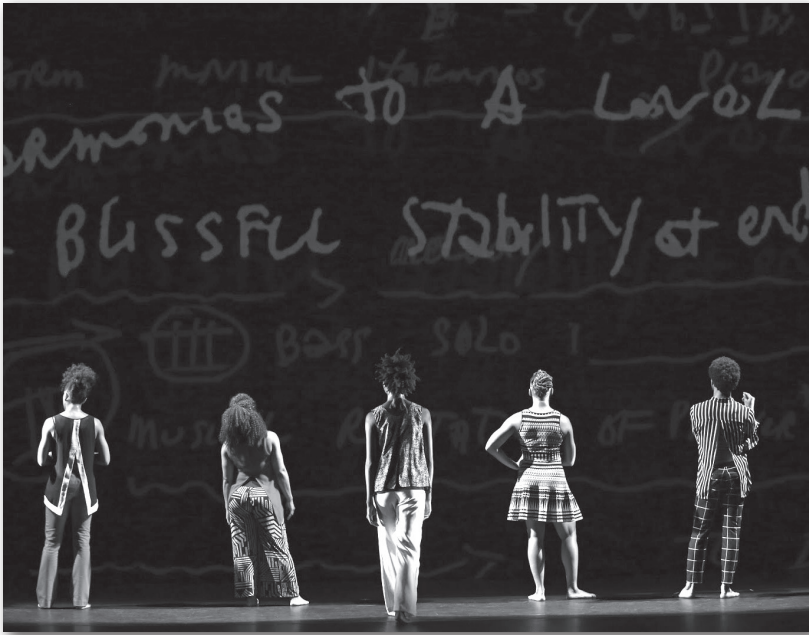
*\* Rania follows in her grandmother’s footsteps working in the African American community. She grows free vegetables on the grounds and on the roof for the low income elders in a HUD housing complex, Guildhouse West, in Philadelphia. She has started a rooftop garden program she hopes will flourish in cities to help food justice issues and global warming issues: [Cloud9rooftopfarm.org](http://Cloud9rooftopfarm.org).*



*Rosalind C. Wiggins*



*Rania Campbell-Cobb (Posy’s granddaughter) and Patricia Cobb (Posy’s daughter) with Posy’s graduate thesis, in which she developed an in-depth curriculum examining North African history.*



Hosted by Wiggins Society member and Brown University professor, Lynae Brayboy, PCS 11<sup>th</sup> grader “Star” Timbo attended a special performance of Urban Bush Women’s dance, *Dark Swan*. (Photo by Julieta Cervantes)

## Paul Cuffee Student Sees Her Own Reflection in Urban Bush Women’s Dance: “Dark Swan”

By Astarrian Timbo, PCS 11<sup>th</sup> Grader

“**I FOUND GOD IN MYSELF AND I LOVED HER FIERCELY.**” This line from Urban Bush Women’s dance, *Dark Swan* resonated with me and the audience. When I was younger, insecurities were very hard to overcome. Being a young, tall, dark-skinned female in a society where the black female is The Mammy, The Sapphire, or The Jezebel, I was teased by people in my age group. Through my adolescent years, I found out how to love myself. I finally discovered that I’m never coming out of my skin and that I am worth it. It is because of this that the performer and her passionate words stuck with me.

As the night progressed, I basked in the powerful messages of other distinguished performers. The Urban Bush Women was an uplifting and phenomenal performance that showed the anger that most African-American females feel and the change that happens when they find love within themselves. This love was so evident by the slight smiles of the performers as they confidently danced about the stage. The poems and songs performed were equally as beautiful. Being able to observe the appreciation and respect of black females by black females was empowering. As African American women are often unfairly stereotyped by society, this performance showed that it’s okay to step out of that box that society has stuffed us in. It is okay to be a “phenomenal woman.” 🦋

# LABELS

By Milly Asherov, Madel Cabreja, and Yanexa Almonte (PCS Middle School students)

### FAKE, LOSER, ANNOYING, WANNABE

I hate labels  
I am not talking about the ones you use  
to organize your binders  
I am talking about the ones people call each other

### TOO SHORT, TOO UGLY, TOO DUMB, TOO TALL

I hate labels, I hate them all  
The trouble with labels  
is that they don’t tell the whole story,  
They just put you in a category

We have been labeled before,  
We allow people to label us, but what for?  
Why don’t we tell them to quit it?  
One label can affect someone’s whole day  
That can go to a week  
That can go to a month  
That can go to a year  
A year of life that they have wasted  
Because your label, your word, has cut into their brain,  
into their skin, into their heart  
Deeper than any knife  
That person might forget the label  
But they will not forget the feeling  
Is that what you were hoping for?  
Were you wishing to start a war?

### OBSESSIVE, POSSESSIVE, NERDY, FAT

You might think what’s wrong with calling people that?  
Labels make people feel like they are trapped in a jar  
Because labels really aren’t who we are

Maybe you’re just jealous  
Maybe you think he deserves being called names  
Maybe you don’t like the way she walks  
Maybe you don’t like the way she talks  
MAYBE YOU CAN’T ACCEPT THE FACT THAT  
WE. ARE. ALL. DIFFERENT.

I hate labels  
When will people start to consider that labeling  
other people makes themselves sound really bitter?  
Heart is shattered, I hear the chatters  
I just walked into a dark room, no light  
Where is the light?  
Is that really what people think of me?  
I hear the murmur of negativity

### L-A-B-E-L-S

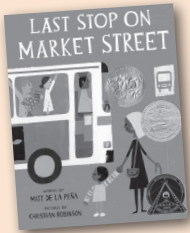
that’s all it really is  
It can make you feel sick  
It can make you feel mad  
It can make you feel sad  
It can make you feel angry  
HATE. LABELS.

### BEAUTIFUL, SMART, TALENTED, INTERESTING

No one is perfect  
What will we become if all we are known for is one word,  
one category, one label?

# LIBRARIAN'S PICKS

The Wiggins Collection at the Lower School library includes our new Coretta Scott King award winners.



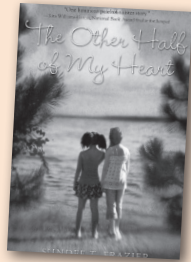
**Last Stop on Market Street**  
by Matt De La Pena (Lower School)

On a city bus, a young boy peppers his grandmother with questions about all the things he sees that they do not have...a car, iPods. Her deep questioning responses create opportunity for reflection and gratitude for all of us. Highlighting such as "urban life,

volunteerism, and thankfulness, with people of color as the main characters," (from School Library Journal) it fits right into our Paul Cuffee culture.

**The Other Half of My Heart**  
by Sundee T. Frazier (Middle School)

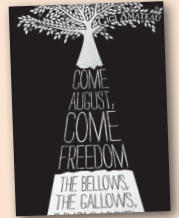
Keira and Minni have always known that their family is a little different; even though they're twins, Keira looks more like their black father, while Minni takes after their white mother. Regardless of these differences, the girls are best friends, and understand each other in a way no one else can. This understanding is challenged for the first time in their 11 years when their maternal grandmother, Grandmother Johnson, enters the girls in North Carolina's Miss Black Pearl of America Program. For the first time, Minni finds her identity questioned - many people



wonder if she even qualifies for for the program, regardless of her heritage. For the first time in their lives, Minni is the one being judged on her appearance, and it creates a tension in the girls and presents a challenge that, until then, Keira had been facing alone. Posing a striking picture about what it means to be black or white -- or both -- in America, *The Other Half of My Heart* is an honest and moving story that is thought-provoking as well as enjoyable.

**Come August, Come Freedom: The Bellows, the Gallows, and the Black General Gabriel**  
by Gigi Amateau (High School)

This novel is a fictionalized account of the life of Gabriel Prosser, a slave in the late 1700s who raised up a fierce rebellion in Richmond, Virginia. After Gabriel's family and life is torn apart, he uses his training as a blacksmith to forge an arsenal of weapons and inspires a group of followers to join him in fighting back against the people who enslaved them. Scattered throughout the novel are authentic documents, including recipes, diary entries, and newspaper clippings, which give the fictional retelling the tie to reality it needs. Although the plot was eventually discovered, this widely untold story of a young man's courage and determination will inspire readers to consider challenges in their own life, and what they may be willing to sacrifice to combat them.



## THE WIGGINS SOCIETY

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