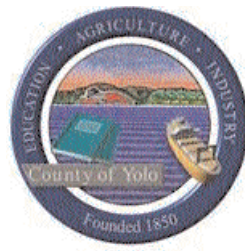




Yolo Reads



Volunteer adult literacy tutoring – a program of the Yolo County Library fall 2010

In this issue:

Welcome to the Writer to Writer issue of the Yolo Reads newsletter. Writer to Writer is a program sponsored by the California State Library in which adult learners read a book and write a letter to the author.

This year, four Yolo Reads learners participated. Their letters, and any responses from authors, are featured in this issue.

Congratulations!

- Ayovie, Miguel, Patrick and Satish entered the Writer to Writer contest.
- Aurora and Patrick found jobs.
- Roguiato became a U.S. citizen on Oct. 20.

Thank you!

-- The literacy celebration, on Sept. 15, was a great success. Thank you to those who helped and congratulations to the tutors and learners who were honored.



Photo by Steve /Yolo Reads volunteer
Tutor and learner pair Carl and Najia pose for a photo during the Yolo Reads celebration.

Celebrating literacy

By Rachel
Yolo Reads volunteer

The Yolo Reads Literacy Celebration was a great success this year. During the event, on Sept. 15 at the Winters Community Library, the program's learners and tutors were recognized for their accomplishments.

Yolo Reads provides free tutoring to help English-speaking adults improve their reading and writing skills. The tutors are all volunteers.

At the celebration, Yolo Reads participants were joined by Patrick Blacklock, county administrator; Sandra Rodriguez, representing Yolo County Supervisor Jim Provenza's office; Patty Wong, county librarian; and Elizabeth Gray, assistant

county librarian.

Heather Bratt, Yolo Reads coordinator, kicked off the evening by introducing Raquel, a Yolo Reads learner. Raquel (who was featured in the last newsletter's Q&A) spoke about her experience as a participant in the Adult Learner Leadership Institute, a training series for adult learners presented by the California Library Literary Services.

Then, Yolo Reads tutor Meradeth introduced Ayovie who read her 2010 Writer to Writer letter. In the Writer to Writer program, learners read a book and then compose a letter to the author.

Raquel and Ayovie both gave inspiring talks about their experiences with See **CELEBRATING**, page 2

Phone: (530) 666-8019
(866) 609-7303 toll-free

Online: www.yolocountylibrary.org
click on "Yolo Reads - Adult Literacy"

Heather Bratt, librarian, literacy services
heather.bratt@yolocounty.org

Yolo Reads, a program of the Yolo County Library, provides free tutoring to adults who want to improve their reading, writing, spelling and grammar skills.

Contributions to this newsletter are from participants in the Yolo Reads adult literacy program and do not reflect the opinions or position of the County of Yolo or the Yolo County Library.

Celebration/Writer to Writer

Celebrating: Learners share experiences

Continued from Page 1

literacy. In addition to the planned presentations, many tutors and learners shared their Yolo Reads experiences with the group. Thanks, encouragement, inspiring stories and a few jokes were shared while the audience enjoyed food generously provided by Silvina's Basket, Nugget Market and volunteers Stephanie and Jacqueline.

Also, participants had the chance to win a number of beautiful flower arrangements provided by Raley's. All of the learners went home with gifts generously donated by

Wong and Jacqueline. Yolo Reads tutor Steve took photographs throughout the celebration and was on hand to take photos of learner/tutor pairs.

The Literacy Celebration was a great way for Yolo Reads participants, their families and library/county staff to spend an evening together. The spontaneous sharing by tutors, learners and family members was a particular highlight of the event as it allowed those in the literacy community to get know one another better. The anecdotes shared were encouraging, funny and inspirational to all. See you all at the Literacy Celebration next year!



Photo by Steve/Yolo Reads volunteer
Yolo Reads learner and tutor pair Roguiato and Jacqueline at the Literacy Celebration on Sept. 15 at the Winters Community Library.

Satish writes to Obama about 'Dreams From My Father'

July 30, 2010.

Dear President Obama,

Sir, my name is Satish Chand. I just finished your book *Dreams from My Father*. Last year I enrolled in the Yolo County Library Writer to Writer Contest. I was one of the finalists. My letter was to author David Mandel whose book was based on your biography, *Obama's from Promised to Power*.

As I told Mr. Mandel our early lives were very similar, I was born in Fiji Islands. I migrated to Hawaii before my late teens. Then I moved to Sacramento, California. Today I am an auto mechanic technician still going to Sacramento City College to learn more about automobiles.

This year I decide to enter the contest again, picking your book, *Dreams from My Father*. It really inspired me about our common family roots. When I saw the front cover of your book, I was very surprised to know that you had brothers and sisters in Kenya, Africa. I could picture you wanting to visit them.

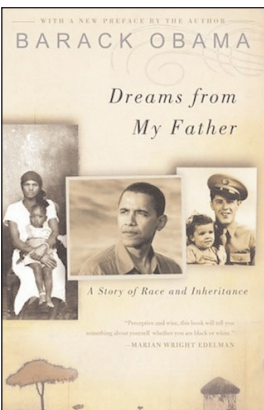
I have not been back to Fiji Islands since I left thirty years ago. Your families' roots

really interest me. I left my members of family behind also. On the book's front cover are three early family photographs.

The photographs don't seem to be mentioned in the book itself. The person in the right photo wearing an army uniform and carrying a child I guess is your mother and grandfather [?]. In my imagination the left photo could have been your grandmother carrying your father when he was a child [?].

I started researching your family background roots. So I decided to look for your family tree. I found the book, *Life the American Journey Barack Obama, with your family tree*. Is the woman on your book cover Sarah Ogwel, your grandmother? I would like to know.

I am so happy to see your dream to



become first black President of the United States of America come true. Thanks to your mother and your grandparents who provided your support.

I have meet many black students from Africa while living in Hawaii and on the mainland that studied to become doctors and lawyers like your father and yourself.

You mention you attended schools in Hawaii and Indonesia, as you grew up with local boys, making some lifetime friendships. It reminds me that I went through the same parallels in life when going to school. I was graduated from the Indian College.

Back in my high school days boys and girls studied in separate classrooms, and wore different colors uniforms. After school, on my way to home I stopped at the Comic Book Store to buy the latest comics. Just like you did ten years before.

Your book really reminds me of the 1970's and 1980's when we both went to school on "The Islands" with our families and best friends / buddies.

Thank you sincerely,

Satish

Patrick writes to Nelson Mandela

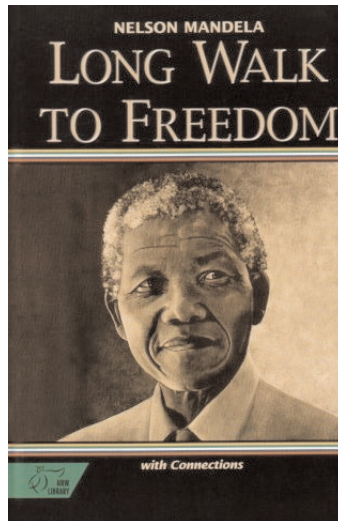
President Nelson Mandela,
Pretoria
South Africa

July 20, 2010

Dear President Nelson Mandela,

I am Patrick. I am from Cameroon in central Africa. It was fascinating for me to read your book *Long Walk to Freedom*. First of all, I would like to tell you thank you. This book really touches my heart; it helped me in personal growth and also made a big impact in my life. I would like to share my story with you.

When I lost my father, I was just 21 years old. I became the head of my family of seven children and a mother. I was a student and it was just eight months later that I went to Belgium to study engineering. It was hard to have lost my father and be away from my family in difficult times, but I am the oldest and I must show an example to my sisters and brothers. This was the moment of doubt for me. Being in Europe alone without family or financial support for my studies, I asked myself many questions. For an example, is it better to go back in



Cameroon to find my family? or remain in Belgium to continue my studies? Sometimes I say I will come home, but how to return to my family? For my departure was considered a real hope for my family because neither my mother nor my father have gone to school and in my country as in many African countries, the unemployment of young graduates achieved the rate of 70% in some area. Sometimes I wanted to stay in Belgium, but how to fund engineering studies for 5 years alone and help my mother to look after my brother and sisters?

One day while I was walking in a library in Brussels I found

“When I lost my father, I was just 21 years old. I became the head of my family of seven children and a mother. I was a student and it was just eight months later that I went to Belgium to study engineering. It was hard to have lost my father and be away from my family ...”

-- Patrick

your autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. You are a real fighter. In reading your book, I've found that you also got separated from your family and sentenced to prison. In your 27 years of imprisonment, you endured physical and emotional abuse, isolation and degradation. Somehow, your trials purified your spirit and clarified your vision, giving you the strength to be a free man, and to remain free of anger and hatred until you were at last released. I am inspired by your vision, courage, tenacity, dignity to build my life. The fact that you never abandoned hope gives me the desire to never give up. I think your book will revive the hope inside everyone who reads it. It is one of the few books that stimulates the sense of struggling and fighting. When I was reading your story I felt like I was traveling with

you during your consistent walk of struggle. You challenged your own imperfections not allowing them to stand in the way of your determined struggle. This book teaches me that there is nothing impossible, and consistent hard work and hope are the key elements of success at any time.

Your book is highly meaningful, in every page and every line there is a lesson to be learned. You wrote in your book, After climbing a great hill, one only finds that are many more hills to climb. I think I've been able to succeed in Belgium, finishing my studies. I think I can also succeed in the U.S. because it's a new hill. Your book motivated me enormously to remain a fighter during my entire life.

Sincerely,

Patrick

Ayovie writes to author of Mother Teresa book

Dear Carol Greene,

I chose this book because I heard about Mother Teresa and her good works and kindness when I was in Togo. Because of her generosity, when someone does good things in my country we call them mother Teresa.

I didn't know much about her works. But reading your book taught me more about her and her great works. Mother Teresa is a

great person. She is a great model to all of us. Learning about all the good things she has done for people has helped and led me to be like her more. It has helped me to love her much more and to be kinder to people.

Because of what you have learned about her from your book, I can now talk to people about her and her great works. One thing that caught my eyes in this reading is

the way Mother Teresa always put other people first in her life. How she cares for needy children is impressive. I wish I could do like her in life. Her kindness and generosity have made her a global figure. I wish we could all do, care for and care our neighbors like her. I love Mother Teresa for her great works and kindness.

Many thanks,

Ayovie

Writer to Writer

Yolo County library branches

- Arthur F. Turner Community Library

1212 Merkle Avenue
West Sacramento, CA 95691
(916) 375-6465

- Clarksburg Branch Library

52915 Netherlands Avenue
P.O. Box 229
Clarksburg, CA 95612
(916) 744-1755

- Mary L. Stephens Branch Library

2801 2nd Street
Davis, CA 95616
(530) 757-5593

- Esparto Regional Branch Library

17065 Yolo Avenue
Esparto, CA 95627
(530) 787-3426

- Knights Landing Branch Library

42351 Third Street, P.O. Box 517
Knights Landing, CA 95645
(530) 735-6593

- Winters Community Library

708 Railroad Avenue
Winters, CA 95694
(530) 795-4955

- Yolo Branch Library

37750 Sacramento Street
P.O. Box 447
Yolo, CA 95607
(530) 662-2363

- Yolo County Library System Office

226 Buckeye Street
Woodland, CA 95695
(530) 666-8019
(866) 609-7303 (toll free)
www.yolocountylibrary.org

Miguel writes about 'Devil's Highway'

Dear Mr. Urrea,

Reading your book "The Devil's Highway" brought back many memories that I had forgotten about my own challenges coming to the United States. A lot of what you describe in your book about the welton 26 crossing the Arizona desert I experienced myself. However my journey wasn't quite as difficult. Fourteen in the Welton group died. Luckily the conditions during my trip allowed everyone in my group to make it safely across the border.

I grew up in a small town in El Salvador in a family of ten members and we had very little money. This made it very difficult for my parents to provide everything that we needed. I felt helpless watching my parents work so hard and barely scraping by. As a kid I just wanted to grow up to be able to help my family. At the age of seventeen I decided to immigrate to the United States. Like the welton group I left my house with nothing but a back pack filled with clothes and my dreams for a better life - for me and my family.

Like the Welton 26, I had to cross the Arizona desert. But for me it wasn't that hard, perhaps because I did it in a different time of the year, so the temperature never got as high.

I would like to thank you Mr. Urrera for taking the time and putting so much effort into this book. I also want to thank you for doing so much research and explaining so well what every immigrant has to go through in order to pursue our

dreams. You touch many people with this book as you did myself. Since I started reading the book I felt that I was in it.

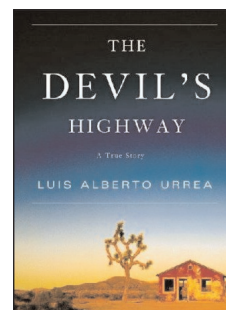
I think I have achieved a lot since I've been in the United States, but there is a lot more that I want to do. Right now I'm working toward my GED and eventually I want to go to college and get a better job. These are some of my main goals that I set myself. I also keep my family in mind and I help them whenever I can.

Reading your book made me realize how lucky I am to be in this country. It also inspires me to work harder to accomplish my dreams. This country offers many opportunities that I never would have had in El Salvador. Crossing the desert was the biggest challenge that I had ever faced, but I didn't stop there. I know I will encounter many more obstacles in my life, but I'm determined to overcome them.

Thank you again Mr. Urrea for this great book. And to the families of those immigrants who died trying to cross the border. I hope that they were able to find peace and to overcome the pain of losing their loved ones.

Sincerely,

Miguel



The author's response to Miguel's letter

Dear Miguel,

Thank you for writing me that beautiful and moving letter. It is difficult to write a book like Devil's Highway because as the writer, you are speaking for so many people. Not only the immigrants, but the Border Patrol and even the coyotes.

It deeply gratifies me that someone like you, a true expert in that experience, finds my work

accurate. I congratulate you on your achievements in the face of the kind of adversity that those who criticize you couldn't survive. I hope it inspires you to know that the nephew of one of the dead Yuma 14 followed his uncle North. He crossed into the United States and, like you, pursued his education. He is now completing a PhD in economics with a focus on international finance. He is

studying at Oxford University in England. And he tells me he will return to the United States to focus his expertise on the immigrant experience. He said he only wanted to show the world what an "undocumented immigrant could accomplish when given a chance."

I look forward to your future triumphs and wish you the best of luck.

Your friend,
Luis Alberto Urrea