

INSIDE **Idioms Galore!** How many idioms can you find? Learn the meanings of this issue's idioms. **PAGE 9**
Happy 45th Birthday. Take a glimpse at the Literacy Council's history in the county. **PAGE 5**
On the Move. Student Achievements. **PAGE 2**

it's never too late to learn

Volume 27, Issue 1 | Winter/Spring 2008
45th Anniversary Series

Literacy Link

A publication of the Literacy Council of Prince George's County, MD

All Ears at African-American Read-In

Loreta Jordan, Tutor Coordinator – Literacy Council

Did you participate in the 2008 African-American Read-In? On February 4th, many classes did, as well as those students, tutors, teachers, and community members who joined the staff in the board room at the Literacy Council to partake in the joy of reading. (Pictured at top: Sylvestre Kouacou and Patrick Trainor discuss a selection at the African-American Read-In.)

This was the second year the Literacy Council participated in this national event. The National Council of Teachers of English has promoted this activity to kick-off Black History Month for the past 18 years.

The Read-In gathers people to read aloud or listen to works by African-American writers. Its national organizers are tabulating the number of participants and are close to their goal of one million readers.

This year, there was not only a wider variety of writers represented, but a larger number of participants.

140 students, staff, tutors and friends of the Literacy Council got together and enjoyed the writing of such acclaimed authors as Langston Hughes and Phyllis Wheatley, as well as those from the Harlem Renaissance and contemporary literature periods. In addition, participants read from *More Than an Athlete*, a book of poems by Washington Wizards' Etan Thomas, who spoke at the Literacy Council's 2007 awards banquet.

You may be familiar with the names Paul Laurence Dunbar, Martin Luther King, Jr., James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, and June Jordan. But there are so many more: Anthony Walton, Alice Walker, Janice Bishop, Nikki Giovanni, John Wideman, and Assata Shakur.

The Hyattsville Library has a special display of books on African-American writers for borrowing. Why not go soon, choose a new author, and relish in the writings? Or listen to a few readings from this year's celebration at www.literacycouncil.org/readout.

Director's Corner

Whether we are creating a learning plan for a class, developing a long term plan for growth, or simply planning an evening of fun, all of us are actively involved with setting and pursuing goals.

This issue of the *Literacy Link* demonstrates the ability of our members to set and meet goals. We can all appreciate LaTrisa Dickens' (pg. 3) resolve to earn her high school diploma, despite the fact that being a mother of eight "can make your dreams and goals seem so far-fetched." The Literacy Council's 45th Anniversary (pg. 5) and a successful African-American Read-In (pg. 1) are further testimony to the progress that can be made when you are firm in purpose.

We hope that you find inspiration in these stories to help keep your own goals clear and that you continue to share your progress with us so we can share it with others. As long as we are a community of resolved goal-setters, our progress is inevitable.

Gail Duke



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Hats Off to You!

Literacy Council Student Achievements

Every day, Literacy Council students are attaining competencies, achieving personal goals, and truly becoming independent, life-long learners. Here's a glimpse at what some students are doing:

Twenty-eight adult learners celebrated earning their high school diplomas by successfully completing the External Diploma Program or passing the GED exam at the fall 2007 graduation.

Georgine Hunter is preparing for tests to become a technician in the emergency room at a local hospital.

Fanta Fofano has been accepted into a nursing program for fall 2008.

Young-Hye Park received her Master of Musical Arts, Chamber Music, from Catholic University.

Timnit Haile passed his driver's tests.

Alejandra Aviles applied for and received her library card.

Patricia Richards testified three times before Maryland General Assembly committees in Annapolis in support of adult literacy.

Lorena Romero and **Claudia Vargas** became U.S. citizens.

Naomi Gray passed the exam to enter the Nursing Aid Program at Bethel Healthcare Institute with flying colors. She earned a perfect score (including the math section, a subject in which she's working hard to improve)!

Nicolas Fuentes earned a promotion from foreman to an office position.

Maria and **Roberto Nolasco** celebrated their 28th wedding anniversary in class! Maria had to remind Roberto. He says he never remembers. That's 27 times of forgetting! Asked about the secret of such a long marriage, Roberto affirmed, "Through the problems we've had, love brought us through them, and together we continue."

Go ahead. Toot your own horn!

Teachers, tutors, students -- please share your accomplishments with us to publish in the next issue of the Literacy Link.

A Word to the Wise

2007 Graduates Reflect on the External Diploma Program

Never give up on your goals and dreams. If you believe it, you can achieve it. — *Cynthia Bell*

Attending the EDP Program has not only helped me earn my high school diploma, but it has helped me utilize my life skills to compare pricing when buying electronics and appliances, and research my city representatives and congressmen so that I would know their issues and concerns, and choose the right person when I vote. This program has encouraged me to move forward with my education and to know that **it is never too late to further my education and seek my dreams.** — *Kelvin Parker*

I swear by the Literacy Council and the work you are doing. I have passed my assessment and enrolled into Montgomery College. ... My counselor told me that I did really well for someone who had been out of school for over 40 years. I couldn't have done it without the Literacy Council and the great program they have for adults and young people. **This program enabled me to graduate from high school and enroll in college within a nine-month period.** I will always be grateful for all that this program has enabled me to do. — *Paula TyndleBuford*

The EDP program gave me a sense of accomplishment in my life and the opportunity to achieve greater things — I'm currently enrolled in college and also trying to build a business at the same time. You can see I have my work cut out for me. I encourage all students to **continue to strive for excellence. Let nothing stand in the way of progress as you are the only one who writes your destiny in life.** — *Mike Pettaway*

I'm a mother of eight wonderful children. Having that number of children can make your dreams and goals seem so far-fetched. I was unable to finish school and that made it hard for me to find a job that I liked or a job that could help me take care of my family the way I wanted to. It also lowered my self-esteem because I never felt complete and able to move forward.

All of that changed the day I registered with the Literacy Council's EDP program. It stimulated my mind, strengthened me emotionally, and encouraged my children. Now that I have graduated, I feel so complete. The whole world of opportunity is in my hands, waiting for me to make a move. ... This has been a spectacular experience. **I would recommend this program to any adult seeking a high school diploma.**

— *LaTrisa Dickens*



Kelvin P.



Paula T.



Mike P.



LaTrisa D.

Save the date.
June 12th @ 6pm
Literacy Council
Graduation
6532 Adelphi Road
Hyattsville, MD

It Takes a Village Teaching ESOL through the Years

An Interview with Shawnnee Holmberg



Shawnnee Holmberg has been teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to adults for more than 35 years. She earned her bachelors degree from UC-Santa Barbara and received a masters 2nd Level in Japanese Flower Arranging. She lived and taught in Japan for 11 years before moving to Maryland. She has been an ESOL instructor for the Literacy Council since September 2005.

When Felicia Jackson came to the Literacy Council to improve her reading, she was placed on a waiting list for a tutor. Instead of waiting, she began attending a study club. Inspired to do more, she offered her services as a volunteer in the office. Now matched with a new tutor, she has given 35 hours of volunteer service so far. Thank you, Felicia!

Without the generosity and support of tutors, donors, community partners, and volunteers like Felicia, the Literacy Council would be unable to carry out its program. We thank you all!

We would especially like to highlight organizations and groups that made financial contributions in winter 2007/2008:

Prince George's County Council
Philip Graham Fund
Bank of America Foundation
Verizon Foundation
NCB Capital Impact
AETNA Foundation
SMECO

St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church
G.I.V.E. Committee - Gannett Corp.
Upper Marlboro Public Library Staff

What drew you to adult education?

I resisted the idea of being a teacher because that's what my mother thought I should do. She said teachers could always find work. I was looking for meaningful work, not an easy job. Nevertheless, while living in Japan, I found myself teaching and loving it.

Which lessons have you enjoyed teaching your students the most?

I get the most satisfaction from any lesson that puts the light of achievement in learners' eyes or that shows an adult that they CAN still learn. It energizes me and my students as we rediscover learning as the on-going process it is. ...

Another important lesson my students learn is that making a mistake is not bad. Rather, they are opportunities to learn, thus to improve our lives. I am currently taking Spanish 2 again. When I bring my own homework and quizzes, red-marked with corrections, students say, "Oh, teacher. You need more practice!"

What has been the most unexpected effect of your work?

I never expected that I, as one person, could have so much effect on people's lives. I see students or students call me, years after they have been in my class, to tell me what they are doing with their lives and to thank me for crazy little things they learned in my class. They ask where I am teaching now and can they be in my class again.

What are some of the best lessons you've learned from students?

I have learned that all food is edible though sometimes not to our particular taste; that the customs, cultures, and traditions of any country are interesting; and that it doesn't hurt a person to adapt and adopt. I have learned that mastering a new language opens many interesting doors. As students became friends, I learned that while we may seem different on the surface, what we have in common is more meaningful. ...

Read the complete interview at www.literacycouncil.org/shawnnee

Celebrating 45 Years of Working with Prince George's Adults

Since our humble beginnings in 1963 as an all-volunteer organization, the Literacy Council has become the primary non-profit in Prince George's County for the advocacy and implementation of adult literacy programs. Here's a glimpse at how we got there!

1963. After attending a startling presentation on illiteracy in America by Laubach Literacy, a group of women from the District Heights Presbyterian Church were inspired to organize the Literacy Council of Prince George's County to help decrease levels of illiteracy in the county.

1979. The Literacy Council was incorporated as a non-profit charitable organization in the state of Maryland, with Mal Lindstrom as the first executive director, Charlie Grammar the first president of the Board, and Joan Bassett (pictured) the head trainer for workshops.



1980. The Literacy Council held its first ESOL workshop for tutors.

1986. The Literacy Council created the first program in the Washington area that presented tutor-trainings to federal employees. Five federal agencies participated in the program.

1987. The Council qualified for a three-year contract for federally funded employees through the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program.



1991. For the first time, a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) helped the Council provide outreach services to prisoners, low-income housing residents, the immigrant community, and the homeless.

1998. The Literacy Council hosted its first Student Achievement Awards.

1999. The Literacy Council received its first grant from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

2000. The Literacy Learning Computer Lab opened its doors to students.



2002. The Literacy Council's central office relocated to the Hyattsville Library.

2004. The Literacy Council began offering basic literacy, ESOL, and GED classes. It also graduated its first GED class.

2006. The Literacy Council was honored by MSDE for achieving the highest statewide performance in literacy skills, enrollment and retention, and receipt of high school diploma.

2007. The Literacy Council launched the External Diploma Program.

Behind the Numbers:

When did the VISTA contract expire?

What year will the 10th Annual Student Achievement Awards be held?

How long after its founding did the Literacy Council receive a CDBG grant?

re.solved [ri-zolvd] adj. firm in purpose or intent; determined.

Student Writing (Advanced Intermediate ESOL - Deerfield Run, Intermediate ESOL - University Park)

“I will walk every afternoon with my dog.

I will be more patient.

I will be nicer with my daughter, and play and go to the movie theater more often.

I will speak more English with my boss.” — *Rosiris Lobo*

“I will help my family more, especially my mother.

I will go to the doctor more often.

I will find a good friend.

I won’t fight anymore.”

— *Wilfredo Bernal*

“I will go back to a regular school to finish high school, but first I want to learn more English.

I will keep myself healthy so I can still work and try to stop eating so much junk food because it is not good for me.”

— *Denis Hernandez*

“I will know about the different verbs, like present, past and future. I will know when I should use them.

I will get up before 10:30 on the weekdays.

This year I will learn more English than last year.

This year I will look for some work.” — *Patricia Donati*

“I will speak English and get a better job.” — *Rafael Lopez*

“I want my family to be healthy.

I want good health.

I want to buy a house.

I want to learn English.

I want to get married in a church.

I want to retire in my country.

I want to go on a vacation with my husband on a boat.

I will see my grandchildren grow up.

I will go on a vacation to Disney World with my grandchildren.”

— *Luciana Castro*

“I will get a better job.

I want my family to be healthy.

I will get a house with more space so my children can play.

I will speak perfect English.

I will help my son in school.”

— *Wendy Castro*

“This year I want to work full time.

This year I need to study more English.

This year I want my daughter to be healthy.

This year I want my family to be healthy.” — *Saida Ruedas*

“I will learn much more English.

I want to work this year.

I want to cook the best food.

I want to be patient.”

— *Fatou Diallo*

“This year I want more friends.

This year I will buy a house.

This year I will buy a new car.

I will be able to speak to women in English.” — *Bladi Espino*

“I will take a long vacation.

I will get a good job.

I will have good friends.

I will become a nurse.

I will be a good neighbor, take dance lessons, write letters to my family in my country, and learn to swim.” — *Lydia Lopez*

“I will speak English at my job.

I will study to be a professional chef.

I will get a new house.”

— *Patricia Perez*

“I will be able to talk to my boss.

I will be able to drive in the USA and read the signs.

I will say my name and address in English.

This year I will save money.

This year I will take a long vacation.

This year I will buy a new car.

This year in May I’m going to have a big birthday party.”

— *Wilson Lemus*

“I will become an American citizen.” — *Maria Flores*

“I will get a good job, like a machine operator.” — *Julio Reyes*

“I will get a good-paying computer job. This spring semester I will have to get my GED, which will enable me to get the required training.” — *Henry Urbaz*

re.solved [ri-zolvd] adj. firm in purpose or intent; determined.

Student Writing (Advanced ESOL - University of Maryland & University Park, Pre-GED Hyattsville)

“I will be better in reading, speaking, and writing English, especially at communicating with others. In 2008, I want to be proficient in typing, finished with my GED, and have a better job. I will be getting a better education to help my children. I could help myself, my parents, and my family. I will be able to do what I want to do. I will be a very happy person because I could help other people as they need. I could make more money.”
— *Solanges Louis*

“I will get better on my writing and be able to write an essay. One of my dreams is to get my GED. I want to continue with my education. I would like to become a teacher because I really like working with children.”
— *Nancy Rexrode*

“I will write English better because I need it. I need it every day. Every time I go to any office, they give me forms to fill out in English. For example, if I look for a job or buy a car, I have to fill out forms. That’s why I come to school to learn. When I go to the offices, I won’t need to ask anyone to fill it out. I try to keep studying because I need it, right?”
— *Fidel Flores*

“I will get better at communicating with my children’s teachers and pass the [university’s prequalifying English test] to begin my M.S. so I can get a better job. To achieve my goal, I will read as much as I can and sometimes I will write things. Then I will ask my children about my writing. I will know that I am achieving my goals when I have fewer problems writing and when I feel more comfortable answering phone calls.” — *Maria Aleman*

“I will write my own textbook in the long term. My focus during the spring semester is to improve my English writing skills and continue improving my grammar skills.” — *Yuli Wang*

“I will understand when others speak to me. This spring my goal is to improve my English listening, speaking, and writing skills.”
— *Grace Du*

“I will go to college and become a registered nurse. In order to achieve my goal I have to get my diploma. To do this I have to increase my vocabulary everyday and work hard to complete the Pre GED class.” — *Belkis Villafana*

“I will start nursing school next year. My goal this spring is to study hard for my GED.”
— *Pauline Kkpuye*

“I will study hard to pass the GED exam. This will help me to get into a university and earn my degree in political science, focusing on conflict resolution.”
— *Amelework Bitew*

“I will go to college and become a nurse. My short term goal is to study hard in school this semester.” — *Aloye Azauka*

“I will pass my Pre-GED class. I am working on getting into the GED program. My long term goal is to go to college.”
— *Nedgine Pierre*


“I will become a child care provider. To do that I will study hard to pass my GED exam and move on to further studies in child care development.” — *Shelly Williams*

“I will complete my Pre GED education and continue with GED classes. That way I can get my GED and then achieve my long-term goal which is to go to college.” — *Jose Ttrminio*

“I will go to college. To do that during this spring semester, I will need to get my diploma. I will have to work hard, especially in writing essays.” — *Marie Vigee*


Overheard

Candid Conversations


 At a Saturday tutoring session, Lashawnia and Sister Ann studied compound words like “anybody,” “overboard,” “gadabout,” “citizenship,” etc.


At the end of the session Lashawnia asked her tutor what she was planning for the weekend. Sister Ann told her that she was on her way to Philadelphia “right now.”

Lashawnia replied, “You gadabout!”

 During a snowy evening, conversations and back-and-forth questions continued smoothly among the smaller than usual beginning ESOL class.

Finally, the teacher interrupted, “You are speaking English, on and on, for over an hour! This is a thrill to see such progress!”

 After successfully completing the External Diploma Program, John Josey came to the Literacy Council to pick up his high school diploma. All the staff members there congratulated him, to which he responded, “This is just the *first* step.”

 “I’ve heard the case for adult literacy programs before, but never so well presented,” said Sen. Exum’s aide to GED student Patricia Richards during a congressional office visit.

Lean On Me

Kenol Celian & Francisca Hernandez, Pre-GED students

The fatherless child ...

Who can he lean on to show him the way – the right things to do in life? Lessons from boyhood are absent.

There are deep scars from many mistakes.

Now reaching the age of 15 but with the mentality of a 25-year-old!

Never really went to school – always relied on the street for guidance.

It’s like the father he’d never had. It never lied to him, always keeping it straight.

When he made mistakes it lashed out – like any father would.

His wounds are internal – not even the greatest scientist could discover them.

Lessons from manhood – they never leave. That’s the code of the street.

It’s always been that way – as far back as he can remember.

The fatherless child sees the street as dad.

Born rough and rugged he seeks for the best to guide him.

He wonders – is my real father wiser than the street?

There is a “good spirit” on the street.

When he pauses every now and then, he listens to the street.

Many who fail to listen properly fall.

They perish one by one, leaving dreams of a good future behind just to pursue yet another unreachable goal.

Like the invisible golden coin no one ever claims that fades from one’s hand as one tries to reach for it.

Bitter sweet! It’s just like the woman that hangs around it. He’s no better!

For he had walked from the same path, being called by the same dad.

The street doesn’t judge – it’s color blind.

It’s like the ultimate ego – once one puts in, it provides one with everything one needs – with no time to pause.

It’s like a little paradise. Everything around is at one’s service.

So who would turn that down?

Everyone is celebrating and he has nothing. The street is a magnet for him (and others) who have sought fulfillment over the years of distress.

He’s older now and a veteran of the street. Over the years the “good spirit” has shown him and he has learned how to be still. And, the street offers no careers – only part time. Should one get fired there is no guarantee of a new career.

So school is his thing now. He’s learning to read and write. He has a goal – with a diploma he can be all he can possibly be.

Nah, the street has never gotten a hold of him. Cause his real father was always there.

Around Town

Local Events & Services for Learners, Teachers, Tutors

National Poetry Month

April 1 - 30, 2008

April is National Poetry Month and the Literacy Council encourages you to make poetry a part of your life! We are in the process of organizing a Poetry Reading and Open Mic session that will give students – most importantly – but also teachers, tutors, and staff an opportunity to share their original poems or favorite poetry selections. Teachers will be encouraged to organize a field-trip for their classes to come participate and share their work. Stay tuned for more information.



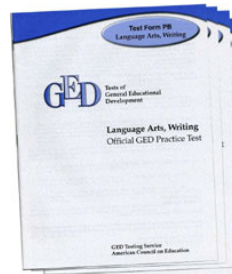
Official GED Practice Test

Tuesday, April 12, 2008

9.00am - 2.00pm

Literacy Council

6532 Adelphi Road (Hyattsville)



Are you ready to take the Official GED Exam? Get a glimpse of the kinds of questions you will see on the formal test, get exposed to timed testing, and receive feedback from instructors on where to focus your efforts so that you will pass the GED! Call the Literacy Council for more details. 301.699.9770.

Adult Learning Mini-Conference

Saturday, April 26, 2008

9.30am - 4.30pm

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library

901 G Street, NW (Washington D.C.)

Mark your calendars! This mini-conference will provide workshops and networking opportunities that focus on adult literacy, ABE, GED, and adult ESOL. Registration is requested, but the conference is free. For details, contact Elaine Randall at the D.C. Public Library's Adult Literacy Resource Center at 202-727-1616.

A-MAY-ZING Animal Fest

Saturday, May 10, 2008

Noon - 4.00pm

Bladensburg Waterfront Park

4601 Annapolis Road (Bladensburg)



Enjoy this fun event featuring birds of prey, reptiles, farm animals, puppet show, arts & crafts, special animal exhibits, and much more! All ages welcome. FREE.

Keep Your Eyes Peeled

Inside This Issue

Idioms are phrases and sentences that do not mean exactly what they say. Even if you know the meaning of every word in the idiom, you still may not understand it!

Did you find all of the idioms in this newsletter? Check the listing below to find out!

“all ears”

(pg. 1)

to be very eager to listen to what someone is going to say.

“hats off to you”

(pg. 2)

something that you say when you want to express admiration for someone.

“toot your own horn”

(pg. 2)

to tell other people how good and successful you are.

“a word to the wise”

(pg. 3)

something that you say when you are going to give someone advice.

“lean on”

(pg. 8)

to depend on someone or something.

“keep eyes peeled”

(pg. 9)

to look carefully for someone or something.

What's *Right* with Prince George's County?

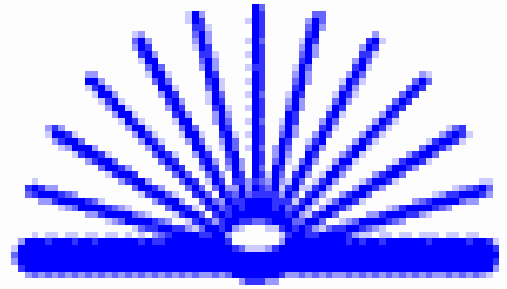
Micki Freeny, Director – Prince George's County Memorial Library System

When you think of a public library, what comes to mind? Where you go to borrow a book? A homework center for children? A place to take a young child to hear stories? A computer center? The modern public library is all of these and much more.

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS), with 18 branches throughout the County, should be your first stop for information, research, or just plain fun. We offer books, magazines, DVDs, compact disks and audiobooks to borrow. PGCMLS has electronic books and audiobooks, and movies that you can download to your

computer or listening devices.

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System provides online and electronic services to help with your everyday needs such as homework and language instruction. Use our free computers to check your email or search the Internet. Our regular programs range from story times for babies, toddlers and preschoolers to computer instruction for seniors with something for everyone else in between. Special programs help teens prepare for a first job, allow you to meet an author or hear a great lecture. Conversation clubs help English



language learners perfect their speaking skills; teens learn advanced technology skills; readers of all ages gather to discuss their favorite books.

Visit the Library's web site today to learn about all that awaits you online or at your neighborhood library. It's free with your library card!

www.pgcmls.info

Resources You Can Use

Eden H. Segal, Instructional Specialist – Literacy Council

Word-by-Word Dictionaries

Using a dictionary is a necessary tool for learning language, particularly for speakers of other languages who are learning English. The Word-by-Word series of picture dictionaries for new speakers of English and an English-Spanish, Spanish-English dictionary are available for intermediate and advanced learners. The Literacy Council also has several dictionaries available for instructors and tutors to borrow for individual lessons with learners.

Reading and Writing Today

Supported practice is an essential learning method for our learners in adult basic education. Studies show that it can take as many as seven contacts with a new idea to learn it. Our resource library offers instructors, tutors, and learners free, gently-used books and workbooks, like "Reading and Writing Today," that can represent new ways for a learner to interact with and master increasingly familiar material.

Official GED Practice Test

One of the most important resources for students who are preparing to earn their high school diploma through the GED exam is the Official Practice Test. Test-takers get a glimpse of the kinds of questions they will see on the formal test, are exposed to timed testing, and get feedback from instructors on where to focus their efforts to earn a high school diploma. The Literacy Council offers the practice test on the second Saturday of each month.

The Final Word

Eric Christopher Webb, Literacy Council -- President

Adapted from excerpt © 1999 from his National Black Authors Tour bestseller, "Love Letters, Death Threats & Suicide Notes: new & selected poems & essays (1991-1998)"

It was like a tomb. The air was dry and dusty, but I kept going. I fumbled for my flashlight, but the batteries were dead.

The darkness consumed everything around me. I ran my hands clumsily through the huge barrel-like cylinder containing the treasures. The power and mysteries they might unlock were intoxicating. I was addicted.

The treasures—books about Black people: Black people living Black lives and doing Black things. Most importantly, there were books seeing Black people's beauty through Black eyes.

That expedition several years ago led me into a closed storage space under the staircase in my mother's home – the resting place for all of her old books and oversized Ebony magazines.

At one time, my mother, like other "sistas back in the day," was "down with Black power." When I was a toddler, she was a member of the Nation of Islam and changed her last name to "3X." A few years later, my mother left the group never to talk of her former association.

The Nation of Islam, also known as the Black Muslims, emphasizes

knowledge of self and a shedding of an oppressed mentality, which begins with a rejection of "slave names." The last names of many African Americans are believed to be the last names of American slave masters, who forced African slaves to accept them to denote ownership.

The "X," which Black Muslims, at first, accept as their new last name, symbolizes the unknown – a part of myself I had never known or was ever told existed. Sure, I saw and read the late Alex Haley's "Roots," but that story was of a Black family's history from slavery to freedom. An African's history doesn't begin in slavery. It's world history. It's as old as Creation. You see, most of those books that I found led me to others' books that talked in depth of great African leaders and the wonders of their civilizations.

Today, I am not a Black Muslim, but I am still "down with Black Power," which I perceive to be power to a people who have been denied power.

Knowledge of self is power.

In the past, it was against the law for African slaves to read or write to thwart plans for escapes and revolts. Today, descendants of those African slaves allow books on Black History to sit collecting dust on library and bookstore shelves. Perhaps the early American slave masters' law was more far-reaching than ever realized. The now-abolished law continues

to thwart escapes and revolts -- escapes and revolts from oppressive and destructive environments, mentalities and lifestyles. Those mentalities, particularly, perpetuate no knowledge of a past and no hope for a future.

Marcus Garvey, who advocated economic self-help and a migration "Back To Africa" for Blacks in the 1920s, said that a people without history was like a tree without roots.

The ancient Egyptians (originally the people of Kemet or Kamit, which means "land of the Black-skinned people") knew this. Their carvings and hieroglyphics heralded the phrase, "Know Thyself." This ancient phrase was not only to be heeded during one month out of the year, as some African Americans, Hispanics, and other ethnic groups practice during their respective history months, but year round.

With the recent dialogue surrounding race being spurred by the presidential candidacy of Democrat Barack Obama, we should all seize the opportunity to not only know or read more about ourselves and our struggles, but about others and their experiences. Let us avoid making stereotypical assumptions and talking about people, but rather, approach each other with an open mind. Only through these efforts can there be understanding as well as a true belief and acceptance of equality.

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The theme for this year's graduation will revolve around a steadfast commitment to and belief in learning. All classes are invited and encouraged to submit presentations (poems, narratives, monologues, etc.) for this important and inspiring event. Up to three presentations will be selected to be performed at the Literacy Council graduation on June 12th.

Selections will be made based on:

- * relevance to the theme;
- * proper grammar and word usage; and
- * and creativity.

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Class Submissions Due:**

May 9, 2008

For more details, call the Literacy Council at 301.699.9770.

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