Project Read Update

Project Read: the Adult Literacy Program of the San Francisco Public Library

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To Take Charge of My Life: Tired of Giving in!

by Leona Whytus

Leona and Carol

I must talk to myself by saying, I can, I will, I must. I am 63 years old and am tired of fighting, keeping my head down and feeling sorry for myself when it comes to reading. I know that I am not the only person in this situation.

I know things don't come to you unless you work at it with a willing and attentive heart. This is my second time here at Project Read and I hope this time I can keep myself together and make a better effort to succeed.

I know things don't happen fast. It is a slow process but I have faith, just like I can work out to keep my body in shape I can work hard to get my mind strong and have the confidence that I will be a better reader one day.

Maybe some of the things I always wanted to do can happen, speak out in public without fear, be able to take care of my finances all by myself. All I have to do is press on because there are still a lot of things I would like to do with my life. I am going through many transitions right now but I know if I pursue, I will get better, and reading will be a dream.

I know with these new goals I can throw out all the ones in my past and one day hold my head up high. And you have to know how to read with understanding to do it.

I am proud to say I have read a few books with the help of the tapes, and I am very happy about it. I will do it all by myself one day with very much pride and anticipation.

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The views expressed are those of the authors - not necessarily that of Project Read or the San Francisco Public Library.

My New Tools For Learning by Joe Banderas

Joe and Mikhail

In my two years with Project Read, I have had three tutors. So you can say I have tried various ways of learning. An as a learner it is hard to recognize or even know which is the best way to learn. This was very true in my case, until my tutor suggested some techniques that I found helpful and hopefully you will too.

My tutor and I started probably like most, picking a book I was interested in reading. Now for me, I was interested in what was going on in the civil rights days in the Bay Area. Naturally I want to read about Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party. However, all the books were checked out or missing. So my tutor suggested something else that was in the same section, a book by Eldridge Cleaver. We decided to read the introduction and the preface and then decide if we wanted to continue with the book. I told him that when I read and come to a word I don't know, I write it down and look it up later. He agreed that was a good idea and we decided to meet next week with my review of the book.

When we met again the following week I had some words with a few definitions. My tutor then suggested that instead of writing the definitions on separate pieces of paper in a notebook, that instead I should write them down in a composition book. That way all my words would be in one place. Creating my own dictionary of vocabulary words that I could look over whenever I wanted to. What a great idea!

Then I told him that there were words that I could not find in the dictionary. The book also mentioned a couple of people I had never heard of. People like Thomas Paine, Nat Turner, and Sun Tzu. There were also terms that he also referred to such as Marxism and Jim Crow. He told me that all those things we could find out about in one place. A place bigger and easier to use than any library. The Internet!

We went on-line and checked out a couple of search engines. Anything you want at your fingertips. Just type it in and Voila. However, you cannot just believe anything you read, so he told me of another place that was on the Internet, *wikapeda.org*. This place is like an encyclopedia on the Internet. It was an awesome place for information. For the vocabulary words that I did not find, we went to a website called *dictionary.com*. There you can get definitions from the Internet. That was pretty cool too.

By the end of the day I was full of information and had other ideas on which books to read next. All the information I got that day made me want to read Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* even more. Now I am not just reading this book, but learning what inspired it.

Writer to Writer

Dear Mr. Argueta,

Dayana

I was aware of the situation that El Salvador faced during the recent civil war, however, it was not until I opened your book "One Day of Life" that I really understood what had happened. Your book also made me remember the stories that my ex-husband shared with me about how he had to deal with the government and how much his family suffered in El Salvador. However, the book made it seem more realistic because I was able to relate to what the main characters dealt with. I can understand in some way because I am from Guatemala and also my country had to deal with 30 years of war. By turning each page, I was able to imagine how much the people suffered and were killed by those inhuman people. It was really sad to learn how many people were murdered in the hands of others who thought that they were superior. The character of Lupe was incredible because she had the willpower to continue her life despite the killing and death of her family members.

On the other hand, your book had good passages that made me feel happy. Since I grew up in Guatemala, I can relate to the wonderful stories in your book. They made me reminisce about the old folklore that I used to hear as a child. For example, my grandmother used to tell me about La Llorona. Your book made me appreciate what I have: freedom, security, rights, and health.

Sincerely yours,
Dayana Salazar

Dayana wrote this piece for the 5th Annual Writer to Writer Challenge – a contest sponsored by the California State Library and the California Center for the Book. This contest asks adult learners from across the state to write a letter to the author, living or dead, of a book that they read and was meaningful to them.

Someone Might Find Out

by Neil Mills

When I was young, my friends and I would go to restaurants to eat. I could read pretty well. But when they gave me the menu to read, I got what the actors called stage fright. My friends would order and I would say, "That sounds good and I will try that also."

When I was in high school, I had a teacher named Ms. Goldsboor. We were reading, *The Pit and the Pendulum,* and we went around the room and took turns reading. When my turn came Ms. Goldsboor said to the class, "Now its Neil's turn to read and we will all have a good laugh." This made me very hurt and nervous. I could not make out the words on the page.

I got a summer job in Washington DC. My Uncle Bob wrote a letter to Buck, the man who I rented a room from in the basement. He called me upstairs and asked me to read the badly handwritten letter. Of course, I could not read it. Although I tried in front of his whole family, he laughed and made fun of my reading. The family was embarrassed for me and for their own father for making fun of me. When I get excited, my mind does not fire right.

When I caught a ferryboat from Piraeus, Greece to Brindisi, Italy, I discovered my Visa card was missing. I had been assigned to a room and I knew I was excited so I stood outside my room for at least five minutes trying to memorize the four-digit number. I went top side to try to find out how I could call the T-shirt shop in Athens where I left my card. When I went back to find my room, I could not find the number I thought it was.

I once read a sign on Van Ness Avenue and went back the next day and the *same* sign said a completely different thing because my mind did not acknowledge the right words.

Today I sometimes leave the endings off the words. I sometimes make up a different word that is not on the page and pronounce it differently. This is something I am trying to improve. Reading out loud to a group of people is something that I used to do, but today I refuse because it takes too much out of me. Except in a group setting in Project Read, where the learners understand and the tutors will not make fun of me if I make a mistake. God bless Project Read.

A Louisiana Man by Larry Condall

I was born in Thibodaux, Louisiana. Louisiana was a nice place to grow up in. I remember, after a sundown, we set around in the evening at the dinner table eating gumbo. After a good bowl of gumbo, we would sit around looking at moss on big oak trees and watch sugarcanes being harvested on a fall day. The sugarcanes grow in summer, but they get harvested in a fall.

As countrymen, we were always kidding and playing around with each other in our tiny one bedroom house. Life was harsh sometimes, but we always pulled through together.

My parents had always worked hard putting all of us, seven kids, through school. I am the youngest of seven children. We all went to a catholic church on Sundays. Since I was raised in a catholic community, I went to a catholic school. I always had to wear khakis, black shoes, and a bowtie. It was the experience I will never forget. We had close relationships with nuns, and they were good teachers. When I was in my eighth year of the catholic school, my mom died. I got into a public school system, but I did not want to learn anymore after my mom died. Both my parents are deceased now, but they raised a good kid who grew up to be a good hardworking man. My parents always taught me to work hard for what I wanted and not to take anything from anybody. They said that if you don't have enough money, you should ask people for it and not take anything from anyone. When life knocks you down, you have to get up and keep on going. That was what my parents instilled in me. As a child, I always had chores to do. My brothers always kept me doing something. In Louisiana we did several things to keep ourselves occupied: we made gardens, did homework, and attended school activities.

The other thing my parents did, that I appreciate a lot today, was tough discipline. I had gotten some beatings as a child and I don't advise today's parents to beat their kids. A good conversation with a kid is much more useful. When you are young, sometimes you don't listen, and you can make some wrong choices in life. Tough discipline helped me learn from them and has paid off for me and helped me make better choices in life as a grown man. I am a drug free person. I have never done drugs in my life. I like fishing and I love the outdoors. I love sports, like outdoor baseball and football.

Alla and Larry

I would like to say something to today's youth. Some of the children today are not organized. They need someone to follow. They also need to be educated more. If a drug pusher approaches you and says, "I have something for you," all you need to do is just keep walking and say, "No. I don't need it today." As long as you don't need it in your life, you can just keep on walking.

The mind is a terrible thing to waste
Young men of all ages of all races:
Don't waste your mind,
And put the guns down,
And put the drugs down too,
And go on to lead a good productive life.
Guns and drugs are not going to lead us anywhere,
But education will.
Educate people more.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Project Read for giving me this opportunity to present some of my life history in this newsletter, and to tell a little story, and for supplying me with this fantastic tutor Ms. Alla. I thank Project Read for helping me read better, for my tutor miss Alla, who is being patient and who is planning to stick with me. Since I have been coming to Project Read, Project Read helped me a lot by giving me the nice tutor, so that I can continue to read better, spell better, and do my job better. I appreciate that a great deal. If, like me, you have not been all the way through school, and you want to educate yourself more, Project Read is the place to be.

[Larry wishes to thank his hardworking and supportive tutor, Alla Baran, for editing this piece.]

Finding a Place to Live

by John Caroompas

Do you know how hard it is to find the right place to live in San Francisco? Let me tell you what you need to do. You need to have an email address and you need to go on-line to www.craigslist.org. Craigslist is an internet website that helps you find rooms, apartments and in-laws for rent at the price you want to pay and in the area you want to live. It gives you the phone numbers to contact for the places to rent.

When you use Craigslist to look for a place to live there is a lot of work involved, it is almost like looking and interviewing for a job. You search for the places you want to live, then call the contacts to set up an appointment to see the place, and always ask the address and the cross street.

When you look at the room for rent you will also have to meet the roommates. They will try to make sure you are the right match. You will need to ask a lot of questions for yourself, questions like, "Can I use the kitchen to cook?", "Can I have a guest overnight?", "Do you have cable?", "What chores does each roommate do?" and "How long is the lease for?"

There are a lot of issues when you move into a new place. I have just moved into a new place, right now I am living in a house with three other guys who are really nice and cool, and I only have to walk three blocks to my work.

The sad part is my lease is for six months only and I have to move again at the end of January. I did have my own in-law in the Sunset district, which I had lived in for five years. I had to move because my landlady's daughter was coming to live in the city and was moving into the in-law and going back to school.

I'm still looking for a more permanent place to live now. I hope to find a place on Craigslist.

Learner Accomplishments

John Caroompas earned his California Driver's permit.

Shedrick Ferguson's accomplishments -- Shedrick wrote, "I can spell many words of my choosing. My writing has improved. I am less nervous when I write for long periods of time." Tutor Katie Olson wrote, "I feel that I've accomplished a lot myself. I've learned a lot about perseverance, patience and positivity from Shedrick. It's also a lot of fun working with him. He's always so kind and funny, and he always works hard. I really enjoy the time I spend with him."

Virginia Martinez is proud of her work over the last 8 months in her new position as a family advocate for the OMI Family Resource Center. She has done incredible work helping families deal with the impact of domestic violence. Virginia tells us that her increased reading, writing, communication, and computer skills have helped her succeed in her job. She writes reports, makes case notes, and performs many reading and writing tasks on a regular basis. Virginia credits her tutor with showing her how to break information down into smaller bullet points and then organize it. She is particularly proud of her ability to read and understand the many brochures and flyers she receives and then pass relevant information to the families she works with.

My Summer Plans

by Shedrick Ferguson

I would like to go to Sacramento and go horseback riding. I feel that the land is flat and there are no mountains in the surrounding area. You can have a good ride. I think the horses are better and they are not ready for the glue factory. They are trained better. You can handle the horse better. It is easy to guide the horse with the reins.

The drive up there is a good ride and it gets better when you stop to eat. It's special when there is no traffic on the road.

When you get to Sacramento you can also go sightseeing in old Sacramento. The buildings are built like the old western buildings.

New Project Read Resources by Brian Castagne

Project Read Blog (*www.projectreadsf.blogspot.com*)

We have put the finishing touches on our very own blog (short for web log). A blog is a simple website where you can easily post new information.

The main purpose of the Project Read blog is to share instructional techniques, links to key resources, answers to commonly asked tutoring questions, downloadable forms and curricula, cool stuff we've learned at conferences, and news about recent and upcoming events. It is geared mainly for Project Read tutors but we hope it will prove interesting and useful for our learners, and other members of the adult literacy, family literacy, and library communities.

We'll add entries on a fairly regular basis so please visit it often. Those of you who are tech-savvy can copy and paste our Atom site feed link into your My Yahoo, Google, or other RSS feed reader and be effortlessly updated.

Computer Lab Links (*www.projectreadsf.org* - click "Learning Lab Links" at bottom)

If you have used our computer lab to access the Internet, then you are familiar with our links page. It is an easy-to-use page that has links to key Internet sites that can be used to support tutoring sessions and independent learning. It was created by Warren Kennell and myself a few years ago and has been a trusty (not rusty) tool of the computer lab. Mike Levy, Ada Ma, Adam Markosian, and the SFPL web team have collaborated with us to create a fabulous new version.

It now sports very snazzy boxes with bold clear type that changes to easy-to-remember pictures when you rest the mouse pointer on them.

This resource now reaches beyond the lab and is fully accessible on the Internet. The easy way to get to it is to go to ***www.projectreadsf.org*** and click on "**Learner Lab Links"** in the box at the bottom of the page. It is also the first link on the sidebar of our blog. Once you are there, you may want to add it to the bookmarks / favorites in your browser.

We hope these tools prove to be helpful and fun. If you like them - don't hesitate to heap praise on us. If they fall short of what you need – then let us know and we'll come up with something even better.

Some New Instructional Books Available Free for Tutor-Learner Teams

The next time you visit the Project Read office, take a look at a few titles we've added to our free collection of instructional books.

· ***Flipping Phonics,*** **New Readers Press, 1997**
This is an excellent instructional tool for beginning or intermediate level learners who are working on basic phonics skills. By flipping through the letters and adding different beginning and ending consonants to the middle vowel sounds, learners will soon be able to read words more quickly as they begin to understand the sounds of the letters.

· ***Action Grammar: Fast No-Hassle Answers on Everyday Usage and Punctuation*****, by Joanne Feirman, Fireside Books, 1995**
This little book answers any questions a tutor-learner team may have about grammar and punctuation. Clear examples are given for each rule, and the appendix includes a section covering the most commonly made mistakes.

· ***Punctuate It Right! A Complete Quick-reference Guide to Modern Punctuation,*** **by Harry Shaw, Harper-Collins, 1993**
This is a book for tutors who need to remind themselves of the rules of modern punctuation. It is a very comprehensive guide to punctuation; however, the explanations are probably too difficult for adult learners to use successfully by themselves.

· ***Writing with Style: Making Your Writing Stand Out,*** **by Sue Young, Scholastic Books, 1997**
An excellent instructional tool for tutor-learner teams working on higher level writing skills, this book offers information on how to organize ideas before you write, create grammatically correct sentences, arrange sentences for maximum effect, create effective paragraphs, and proofread for mistakes.

· ***Get Wise! Mastering Reading Comprehension Skills*****, by Nathan Barber, Thompson-Peterson's, 2000**
This book is full of exercises and techniques that can help any reader improve basic comprehension skills. Although written humorously for middle and high school students, the techniques are still effective and the entertaining style could make it fun for a tutor-learner team to use.

· ***Barron's Pocket Guide to Study Tips*****, by George Ehrenhaft & William Armstrong, Barron's Educational Series, 2004**
This book is an excellent resource for advanced level Project Read learners who are now, or soon will be, taking classes at the college level or preparing for the G.E.D. exam. It is full of techniques and strategies to improve time management, note taking, reading comprehension, working with individual learning styles, writing with clarity, and many more important topics.

Thank you

☺John Gildersleeve and Erin McAleece for leading the Wednesday Night Readers meetings. ☺Friends of the San Francisco Public Library for their generous support. ☺Tutor contacts Vivian Altmann, Renee Feldman, Susan Fink, JoAnn Lopez, Gail Shen, Terri Ryan, and Richard Sikes for providing invaluable support to the staff and fellow tutors. ☺ Annie Begay for speaking at the March 2006 Tutor Training and Lilton Powell, Jr. for addressing the May 2006 Training.

Welcome New Tutors

Nan Budinger
Ray Clark
Emilie Cole
Jerome Duffy
LaShonda Griffin
Chuck Griffith
Amanda Hamilton
Mark Trotter
Jeff Newell
Stephanie Patterson
Mark Rowe
Julia Bainbridge
Elizabeth Elftman
Bina Galal
Suze Gardner
Michelle Green
Melanie Hulata
Ellie Knecht
Jill Kneeter
Helen Manahen
June Nakajima

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