

Project STEP: Poetry Slam 2008



On April 29th, 2008, the auditorium of PS/MS 218, in the Bronx, was transformed into a poetry club, complete with signature finger-snapping, for WHEDCo's Project STEP (Students Toward Educational Promise) All Stars' Poetry Slam. Project STEP is an academic enhancement component of WHEDCo's After-School Program at PS/MS 218, which aims to facilitate the development of students' critical thinking skills around issues of social justice and community service. Before an audience composed mainly of their peers, teachers and WHEDCo Staff, 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in Project STEP artistically performed their poems, skits and raps, on the culture of bullying. Exhibiting maturity and eloquence, the students ran the entire event, serving as emcees, and performers. Poems adequately captured the essence of the topic of "Bullying," and most interestingly, even the perspective of the stereotypical middle-school bully was represented.

Poems like Aziz Fall's "When I Get Bullied," explicitly shed light on the heartfelt emotions of "the bullied" with lines like: "anger, hatred, traveling



through my brain, . . . I felt like I was shot dead, . . . this is how I feel when I get bullied." Others like Oreilla Navarrete's "Rebel Again-Bullying Rules" admonished all to "rebel against bullying rules now." Some of the 8th graders also cleverly captured



instances of bullying in everyday life through poems which catalogued racial injustice, unfair courts and police brutality. The slam served as proof that bullying has left an indelible mark on the consciousness of these students. However, they remain committed to rising above that culture and educating others through the shared experience of spoken word.

When I Get Bullied

Thoughts, feelings going inside my head
Anger, hatred, traveling through my brain
Anger like a fierce shark, looking for food
I felt like I was shot dead
Like a drain
Of blood through my body
A dirty sack of mood
This is how I feel when I get bullied
-Aziz Fall

Rebel Again- Bullying Rules

Insult, insult
punch and kick
A fight will start now
if you don't stop right away

Rule 1: Insult each other
Laugh at each other
you think it's funny to
make fun of another.

Rule 2: Kicked or punched,
you have to return the favor
but this time even harder
It only a game you say
covered with bruises and marks.

Rule 3: Tell someone to see you
At the yard after school.

Both of you will to fight.
The crowd screams and roars "fight, fight."
Still you think its ok
to hurt someone that way!

No way! This cannot go on.
Listen to yourself,
Look at yourself!
You became a beast
You became a bully to many

It's till time to learn your lesson
Before it's too late
Because you'll be the one
Who will be hurt in the end

Act now, change now... Be on e of the many rebellions,
Rebel against bullying rules now!
-Orielia Navarrete