

# The Power of Words

an anthology of writing from  
Connecticut Writing Project-Fairfield  
2015 Young Adult Literacy Labs,  
Ubuntu Academy &  
Invitational Summer Institute for Teachers

**ABRIDGED VERSION -  
UBUNTU ACADEMY**



**Connecticut Writing Project**  
FAIRFIELD

This edition of the Young Adult Literacy Labs' anthology is the result of the dedication and diligence of many people. Now in his fifth year, CWP-Fairfield Director Dr. Bryan Ripley Crandall continues to be a source of inspiration, edification, and jubilation all year long culminating into these summer workshops. As energetic as he is, we would be nowhere without our instructors: Shaun Mitchell, Ali Laturnau, Dr. Ryan Colwell, Tom Grund, Shannon Burr, Gina Forberg, Attallah Sheppard, Brynn Mandel, William King, Jessica Baldizon, Amanda Morgan, Jennifer von Wahlde, Cecily Anderson and Julie Roneson. Likewise, our talented assistants, Abu Bility, Lossine Bility, Steven Vissichelli and artist extraordinaire Julia Schorr, contributed in ways large and small.

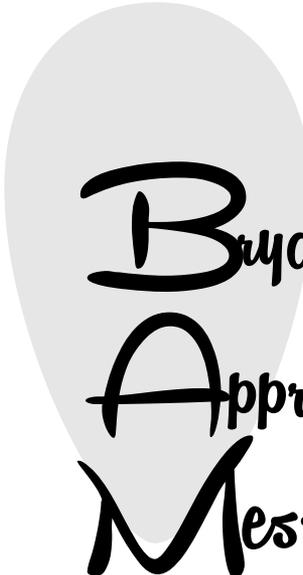
We owe a debt of gratitude to those listed above as well as our in-person and digitally connected speakers, but most of all, this book is a product of the creativity of our young writers. We never cease to be amazed by their capacity to harness the power of words (and pictures!) for good and other endeavors. A special round of finger snaps to Jason Odell Williams, Laurie Stolarz, Sarah Littman Darer, John Curtis, Jack Powers, Carol Ann Davis, Elizabeth Boquet, Charlotte Pecquex, Sonya Huber, Cara Rubinsky and Hugh Bailey for visiting our summer labs and sharing their expertise.

The 2015 Young Adult Literacy Labs were made possible by generous donations and resources from many people, included but not limited to our great teacher network, our affiliation with the National Writing Project, State Senator Bob Duff, Fairfield University, Fairfield University Athletics, Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions, JUHAN, the Office of Service Learning, Bridgeport Public Schools, and LEAP – Leaders Educated and Prepared.

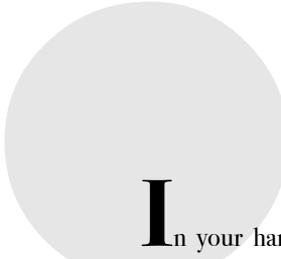
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Bryan's  
Appreciative  
Message



**I**n your hands is the 3<sup>rd</sup> publication of *POW! The Power of Words* and the culminating work of CWP-Fairfield's 2015 summer programs. Each July and August, literacy opportunities abound and these pages represent Connecticut youth and local educators *writing their lives* in Young Adult Literacy Labs and an Invitational Summer Institute for teaching hosted at Fairfield University.

For the last several years CWP-Fairfield has listened to students about what (if at all) they write in school. Similarly, teachers and administrators are lamenting that test-only writing instruction is the new norm of Connecticut schools. That is why, in 2014, CWP-Fairfield did a formative experiment and asked three questions:

- What if we redesigned writing institutes into Young Adult Literacy Labs based on Writing Activity Genre Research?

- What if we mandated four criteria for each lab: (1) youth will write, (2) youth will read, (3) youth will talk with each other and (4) youth will have fun?
- What if we invited teachers into youth labs to learn with the young writers?

Our emphasis has been on **fun**. We wanted to break down a few of the traditional walls and to restore playfulness in in the learning process. We've found success. The youth are reporting favorably about our summer programs and teachers feel inspired by their interactions with young writers. We are getting smarter together.

CWP-Fairfield believes in **POW! The Power of Words** and that young people have much to teach us. Last year, for instance, youth participants wanted a program to write politically and to learn digital tools. We heard what they had to say and added a TedTalk lab and Project Citizen to this year's program. From listening to our youngest writers (those with the biggest imaginations), too, we gained knowledge that they wanted to be published. For this reason, we've included them in this year's collection. The writing is passionate, playful, intriguing and, at times, doesn't shy away from difficult subjects.

**BAM!** Bryan's Appreciative Message goes to the 152 young people who contributed creativity, opinions, and research during the summer. It goes to Abu Bility, Lossine Bility, Steve Vissichelli, Shaun Mitchell, Ali Laturneau, Dr. Ryan Colwell, Tom Grund, Shannon Burr, Gina Forberg, Attallah Sheppard, Brynn Mandel, William King, Jessica Baldizon, Julia Schorr, Amanda Morgan, Jennifer von Wahlde, Cecily Anderson-Cowburn, Julie Roneson, Ellen Israel and Caryn Sullivan who, as masked-educators, crusaded with extreme superpowers to launch:

- Little Lab for Big Imaginations: a Young(er) Writers' Workshop.
- It Was a Dark and Stormy Night: Writing Your Novel
- Speak Yourself: A Poetry and Playwriting Lab
- The Art of Storytelling: A Graphic Novel Lab,
- Stop the Presses! A Journalism Lab,
- Project Citizen: Write a Wrong!
- Ideas Worth Writing: A TED Lab.
- Who Do You Think You Are? College Essay & Narratives, and
- Ubuntu Academy: The Lab for Immigrant and Refugee Youth

Under their leadership, writers **wrote their lives** to express, critique, entertain, shock, educate, wonder, explore, and propose.

My appreciative message also goes to CWP-Fairfield partners helping to make the summer possible: a strong teacher network, our affiliation with the National Writing Project, State Senator Bob Duff, Fairfield University, Fairfield University Athletics, Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions, JUHAN, the

Office of Service Learning, Bridgeport Public Schools, and LEAP – Leaders Educated and Prepared. CWP-Fairfield can be *what we are* because of **who we are together**. There are few locations in southern Connecticut where young people and teachers representing multiple zip-codes are provided a space to co-mingle minds and make magic together! We are proud of our democratic pastiche and feel,

U gotta write  
for what's right  
& fight with all u'r might  
to insight incite,  
and to ignite  
a spotlight  
to put yourself  
in the limelight,  
outright & forthright...  
A'ight?

Collaboration. Thinking. Reflection. Inquiry. This is **writing**, y'all! This is who we are.

KaPOW! (and Ubuntu),

*Dr. Bryan Ripley Crandall*

Director, Connecticut Writing Project-Fairfield

P O W E R O F W O R D S



# Chapter Nine



## Ubuntu Academy

Definition - Ubuntu (Caracciolo & Mungai, 2009) - a Bantu word that translates “I can be me because of who we are together.”



## What Ubuntu Means to Me

*By Beatriz Guevara*

During my etymology research I learned that my name means brings joy, and happiness in English and Spanish respectively. These descriptors are important for Ubuntu because they allow for groups working together to do so joyously and happily.

In my own life, with family and friends. I will promote Ubuntu by maintaining a positive outlook and striving to help in any way that I can. Ubuntu means work together and helping one another.

*By Elvis Lopez*

The name Elvis is a Scandinavian baby name. In Scandinavian the meaning of the name Elvis is: origin uncertain, but may be from famous bearer: late 'king of the rock and roll' Elvis Presley. An 'elvis man' is a wise man and it is a Scandinavian word.

I have also learned in this week that Ubuntu is not just a word, it also means community, working hard, and have team spirit. I've also learn to have communication with new people try to be a group and represent the meaning of Ubuntu.

What Ubuntu means to me is to create my own communication, to share ideas with others , also Ubuntu means to me to be helpful , help others people that needs our help in what they are doing.

There's different ways I can see Ubuntu in my life: like in my family we could help with each other's to have a better happy life, with my friends because we are a group a team where we can be help others, in my school because we make a community with my others classmate to can work together and have a better grade, and sports team because I can be me because of who we are together.

*By Tiffany Cevallos*

To me, personally, Ubuntu means we all can succeed together with help from each other. "I can be me because of who we are together," which basically is saying I can't do this without your help and that I can do it if you can help me do it.

Anything is possible with you here helping me. It's a positive word also that makes up Ubuntu.

In my research I figured out what my name represents; it explains that if a girl is named Tiffany they are usually very loyal, intelligent, sweet and compassionate. They are the type of person who will always find beauty in everything. They are open-minded, easily satisfied and helpful. This can relate to Ubuntu because based on the research it says positive things about the name Tiffany. There are no negative sayings about it. To be a Tiffany is to be helpful and Ubuntu means that I can succeed on my goals with the help of others.

The ways use Ubuntu in my life is through my family and friends of course. They stick around with me, no matter what will happen. They will always help me if I'm struggling on something. When family is respectful to each other and kind, it represents Ubuntu. Most importantly, I can succeed on anything with my family and friends because they won't let me down. They always find a way to help me.

*By Arcadius Takinda*

Arcadius was traditionally derived from the Greek name of the son of Zeus, Arcas, who was the king of Arcadia in Greek mythology. The way Arcadius relates to the Ubuntu philosophy is that those with the name are devoted to bringing people together and to encourage others to be more brilliant. Arcadius is a messenger and sets out to make others happy. It, like Ubuntu, means being a part of the community.

To me, Ubuntu means, "make everyone into one family." It is my job, as Arcadius, to work in a community of unity to unite those I'm surrounded by. My role is to make others feel great and positive. I use Ubuntu to bring my friends and the people next to me together for work as one family for happiness. I do this by inviting them to go to the park to play soccer with me and to have fun.

*By Sabrina Torrealba*

How can you connect the meaning of your name to the Ubuntu philosophy?

In my research, I learned that the traits related to my name are success, creative, enjoyable and helpful. Here in Ubuntu Academy we are working hard to be successful with the English language. We are creative and we enjoy every moment we spend together and working with other students. All the games we have done with Abu and Lossine have been helpful for us to know that teamwork helps us win the game.

Ubuntu, for me personally, means that if you want to accomplish something or make something happen, working together is the most effective way. Ubuntu means a community that helps each other in favor of being successful and to become a better person. Community helps us to accomplish our goals and to make the world a better place for living. Ubuntu means,

“If you got me, I got you.” It means family and that we are always there for each other. Every time we are together we have nothing but fun and unity is the key to success in life.

I support Ubuntu in my life by helping my family and friends get together. I support them if we are going through a similar situation. In school, I help out in activities as a volunteer and also by working with other students who are struggling with a class that I’m very good at.

Sabrina means means legendary princess. That’s me!

*By Johanna Hernandez*

After conducting etymology research, I learned three ways I may promote Ubuntu: being helpful, reliable, and patient. Knowing that my name represents these characteristics is interesting in thinking about how I approach others, especially my family and friends. Ubuntu, to me, means no one gets left behind; it’s all or none.

I can use Ubuntu in my life through family nights and with my friends through helping them with homework. By spending quality time together and striving to help others, I believe I may make them better.

*By Johana Sigua*

Johana is a feminine name, a variant form of [Joanna](#) that originated in Latin in the Middle Ages, including an -h- by analogy with the Latin masculine name [Johannes](#). The original Greek form Iōanna lacks a medial /h/ because in Greek [/h/](#) could only occur initially. Ubuntu means to me personally,

J: helpful. Intelligent.

O: patient, responsible, good.

H: successful. A natural money make business acumen.

A: leader, confident, adventurous. Determined.

N: certain, writer, spokesperson, communicator, imaginative.

It means working together as a community. By doing this we will become sensitive to each other’s feelings.

My name Johana means one who works hard as leader, communicator and writer. My understanding of Ubuntu motivates me to enhance my writing skills English and to live up to my name. Once I achieve this I can help other Spanish speakers who wish to learn English.

*By Jackeline Sigua*

My name means creativity, entertainment, inspiration and balance. Jackeline is French, feminine for [Jacques](#). The Ubuntu philosophy encourages people to be creative, balanced and inspired. Keeping these characteristics in mind, I am forever reminded of the diverse opportunities available to make change in the United States and around the world. My name will always remind me of my responsibility to uphold the Ubuntu Philosophy.

Ubuntu means unity, community, collaboration, and assistance. The individual cannot be successful without the support of others. A group that works together prospers and becomes a family.

I can use the Ubuntu philosophy with those I love. When someone needs help, I will not hesitate to provide the necessary services. Ubuntu teaches me that there is strength in numbers. Working with my peers at Bassick High School will assist me with learning English. Like a family who sticks together, Ubuntu reminds me to work on maintaining positive relationships with the members of my community.

*By Madsen*

The name Madsen means “son of Mads,” popularity and rank. “Mads” is of Danish origin and derived from Matthew in the bible. My name means, “Gift of the lord” Personally, my name is my reason for being. It is who I am and it represents where I come from and where I’m going.

My name comes from Matthew, who is an “Apostle” who helped the people find the right path or that of truth. So the way Madsen is related to Ubuntu is that, it helps to remind me that to be of the people, I must do good things for others. It is my job to be a gift to the community and to be there for them when they are in need.

*By Leocard Vargas*

The Africans philosophy of Ubuntu says that, “I can be me because of who we are together.” I learned at Ubuntu Academy that my name represents a willingness to help, to use an imagination and to live a balanced life. This was from my etymology research.

These descriptions also represent Ubuntu. In my life, being helpful and offering assistance to anyone in need promotes my willingness to give back because, together, we are stronger. In focusing on leading a balanced life, I can make sure that I make good decisions to benefit others and myself in the future. Ubuntu is together we are stronger, when balanced, aligned as a community, and surrounded by family. That is Ubuntu for me.

I use Ubuntu with family, friends, in the community, in school, and with my baseball and football team.

*By Juma Bonneface*

My name is Juma Bonneface, which means “good fate.” Bonneface also means to be peaceful and to experience happiness. Ubuntu means unity and solidarity. I demonstrate these ideas with my friends and at school. While I am online I also help other people learn about the reading and writing we are doing at Ubuntu Academy. My name means peace therefore I look for peaceful ideas and actions to present back to my community.

To me Ubuntu means to help each other, to not care about gender, nationality, who you are, or where you come from. Rather, we must think of who we are to together.

In my own life with friends and family (and the social internet) I promote Ubuntu by maintaining a positive outlook and striving to help people to have a better life.

*By Miglay Samed*

The name Miglay means, “Someone that is imaginative, enterprising, aesthetic, independent, courageous, a leader, determined, intellectual, charitable, orderly, human, compassionate, purposeful, intuitive, balanced, and conventional. I can be me because of who we are together is the connection between my name and Ubuntu Academy. I am determined, humane and charitable. I am ready to do whatever and sacrifice much to help my family and my friends. I can’t stand back, but must give back. I want to know that at the same time I am progressing, they also are progressing!

Ubuntu is about building and achieving together. For me Ubuntu means a big community that wants to gather all the different nationalities together to do the intellectual work for the good of our World. Together, we can all survive. In my life, I help my friends and my family. I work with people to help them to realize their most cherished dreams. I encourage them, love them, and especially respect them.

I promise not to forget what I learned in Ubuntu Academy - together our strength is immeasurable!

*By Clemence Uwimana*

The name Clemence is derived from the word, Clemens, which is of the meaning “merciful” and “gentle.” My name comes from English, German, and French. Ubuntu means to be devoted and to bring people together. I can be me because of who I am or who we are together. I can do something with people to make them great and to increase the strength of the community.

I can help someone be happy by inviting them to play with me when they have nobody to play with. Also I can help through offering my friendship, wisdom, and to tell someone who don’t know what Ubuntu means what it means. Also, I can help refugee families like mine to seek shelter or safety due to war or political unrest in other countries.

In my life I use Ubuntu to show respect to my family, friends, or anyone in school. I learned new words that can improve my English, because I am in United States of America. I am a person with high good manners. I am polite and respectful to others.

I need to learned English well and be myself. In school I must show care and be conscientious in my work and duties. I must be bright, smart and intelligent.

*By Esther Kamengele*

After researching the origin of my name, I thought about how it relates to Ubuntu philosophy. The name, Esther, means “star,” a person who is loving, energetic and imaginative. When I think of these different adjectives I imagine myself bringing peace and love to the community at Bassick High School. A way to do this would be to demonstrate my love of learning during class and at after school clubs and activities.

Ubuntu is energy, and I have adopted the definition, “I am who I am because of who we are together.” Ubuntu philosophy stresses community over the individual.

One way I can represent my name is to encourage my peers and classmates to work together, care and respect each other’s ideas. During small group discussion, instead of focusing on my responses, I am going to pay attention to the question and ideas presented by my classmates. This demonstrates that I am interested in achieving a greater goal: Education, Education, Education, like Abu and Lossine taught us. Furthermore, I will assist my sisters, brothers and mother to prepare meals for the family on weekdays and weekends.

*By Dorcas Mpoyi*

The name Dorcas is from the New Testament and means one who is ‘abounded in good deeds and gifts of mercy.’ Dorcas was a charitable woman. The way it is related Ubuntu is that, with my name, I should find the beauty in community, being charitable, and being merciful.

My family and friends in the community represent what Ubuntu means to me. They are there to help me when I need help, to give me support and to show me love.

I use Ubuntu by helping people that need help in my community and by talking to new people and leaning about them. Ubuntu encourages teamwork and community so I want to learn more about my community and be more involved in the United States.

*By Ariel-kalonji*

The name Ariel means leader. It is related to Ubuntu philosophy because it shows leadership in the community and how I can take responsibility for my actions, which is the Ubuntu philosophy. For me Ubuntu means to help each other, to lean to grow to show respect, to be a part of community, and to help my family, friends and classmates. Ubuntu also means “to be with each other as one.”

Ubuntu helps me by bringing me closer to new people that I met this summer and that I meet in school. It allows me to share my stories with them and to hear them when they are sharing their stories with me, too. We can all be a better community if we know one another and work together to understand what life is all about.

*By Johanna Suqui*

Johanna means to help, to be responsible and to be a leader. I have dedicated time to helping new arrivals at Bassick High School develop English reading and writing skills. Knowing what my name means helps me to provide perspective for my personal goals of becoming a medical doctor and/or English teacher. Ubuntu means to maintain a community where there is a love and support.

With Ubuntu philosophy I will go confidently into the direction of my professional goals and become a medical doctor and teacher. With these experiences of working with teachers and other students at Fairfield University, I can help many families who are experiencing lifestyles similar to my own. I can also make the world a better place by instilling ideas that will help a majority of people in Bridgeport and neighboring communities.

We are stronger together.



**TWACK**



*One last thing before you go...*

“Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive, who is Youer than You.”

-Dr. Seuss

Congratulations! You've reached the finish line of *POW! The Power of Words* and made it to Crandall's THWACK-page! Sh'Zam! The summer redesign required ingenuity and results from Crandall's twenty-plus years of classroom-teaching experience and writing research.

**THWACK!** - This is **How We Advance Creative Knowledge** in literacy research. We share resources with one another.

CWP-Fairfield values the importance of teachers and students, as subjects, within writing communities. Redesigning Young Adult Literacy Labs in 2014 first began as a formative experiment (Fisher & Frey, 2009; Reinking & Bradley, 2008) built from writing activity genre research (Russell, 2010) and an intent to create a summer literacy model to effectively engage youth and teachers together (Chandler-Olcott, Nieroda, & Crandall, 2014). Following the National Writing Project's reputation for transforming teachers (Whitney, 2008) we embrace effective practices in writing instruction (Applebee & Langer, 2013; Graham & MacArthur, 2013).

More recently, we've focused on the ways that community matters within writing activity systems and, as a consequence, have embraced a philosophy of Ubuntu (Caracciolo & Mungai, 2009) - a Bantu word that translates "I can be me because of who we are together." A good writer (or teacher of writing) is equipped with tools, clever rules, and a respect for individuality and personal motivations to reach written outcomes. They must belong.

**THWACK!** – One way to improve writing instruction in our schools is to put every writer at the epicenter of his or her world (Crandall, 2012). We need to allow them to *write their lives!*

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