

Director's Report

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“One of the immutable laws of being human is that the people who show up are the right people.”

– Anne Lamott, *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith*



Barbara Bass

I thought about this quote as Linda De La Ysla and I walked through the doors of Penn Station in Baltimore last April and saw Linda Wharton waiting for us with her niece, Kumba. It was 7:10 in the morning. They were both smiling. I remember other Lobby Day mornings-meeting Jen Goulston or Elias O’Neal or John Barber or Stephanie Leddy or Terry Mobley at the train station with students in tow, and Sarah Jones or Virginia Labar, who often meet us in DC with some of their students as well.

I thought of the quote again when we met Kathy Jenkins at the Capitol Building in DC. She had driven up herself from La Plata to help talk to our congressional representatives about supporting the reauthorization of funds for the NWP. And I thought of it again as I looked out at the T-Cs from forty states who had all gathered there for the same purpose. Ellin Nolin, congressional advisor to the NWP, refers to us as *the*



Barbara Bass and Kathy Jenkins in Washington, D.C.

troops, T-Cs who have been traveling to DC for the last eight years to educate our representatives. Our funding has grown from \$1 million in 1991 to \$30 million today. And the funding has grown because we bring our own stories to our representatives every year. Words on a page are translated into real people with real stories. And these stories are particularly crucial this year. The Bush administration has cut the Education budget by \$5 million, with a 1% cut in new programs targeted at high schools, including the NWP.

Our day on Capitol Hill is fascinating—a true learning experience. Those of us who gathered there on that beautiful cherry blossom day in early April this year heard from Senator Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, who applauded us for our *kuyana*—our acceptance of responsibility for the tribe—and from Congressman Rush Holt of NJ, who told us, “Everyone talks about writing, but you’re the only ones doing anything about it!” Congressman George Miller of California, a long-time warrior for the National Writing Project, spoke to us as well. He reminded us that we have a strong claim to funding because of our results. Representative Roger Wicker of Mississippi quoted Faulkner to us: “I only write when I’m inspired. Fortunately I am inspired at nine o’clock every morning.”

Those of us who traveled to DC were also inspired at 9 AM - we were reminded of the power of the pen and of the right people showing up to get the job done. We were encouraged by our representatives and reminded that the NWP is a long-term investment that will continue to provide returns. The NWP now reaches 70% of all teachers. We want to reach everyone.

After lunch, Linda D., Kathy, Linda W., Kumba, and I split up and visited all of our senators and representatives, leaving our materials and telling our stories. We went home with promises from Representatives Van

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Hollen, Ruppersberger, Cardin, and Wynn, and a commitment from Senator Sarbanes to co-sponsor the National Writing Project's reauthorization of funding. (I later ran into Senator Mikulski in the beauty parlor and harassed her until she agreed to sign on, too.) Next April, plan to join us and bring a young person along with you to learn first hand about our democracy in action. Whether you can join us or not, be sure to contact your representatives and encourage them to support funding for the National Writing Project. Go to our website and click on the NWP Legislative Updates link to find out how to contact your congressional representatives.

www.towson.edu/mwp

MWP-ily yours,
Barbara



Linda Wharton and Kumba Senaar