

# Hands For A Bridge

Spring 2016 Newsletter

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This year has been extraordinary for Hands For A Bridge students. In a program that is constantly evolving, the class is unique each year. As the students of the 2015-16 HFB class, we are excited to share our experiences from the year with you through this newsletter.

At the beginning of our year, we set goals of how we want to be when we are together. We decided on the words *vulnerable, brave, present, proactive, and passionate* to drive our goals and actions throughout the year. We have worked toward these ideals when having sensitive, even uncomfortable, but incredibly rewarding conversations with each other about race, gender, class, and privilege. We have worked toward these ideals when welcoming guest speakers into our classroom and guest students into our homes and hearts. We have worked toward these ideals when we traveled to South Africa and Northern Ireland for two life-changing weeks. Working toward these goals allowed us to learn and be open with each other, to get the most out of our year.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our experiences.



# *Assuming the Attitude of the Poet*

Hands For A Bridge is unlike any other language arts class. We focus on the importance of expressing our voices and incorporating poetic styles in all of our writing. We use poetry to express many of our thoughts and emotions.

I had always enjoyed writing poems because it was somewhere I could write down what I was feeling, short and concise. I never gave much thought about sharing my poetry until I joined Hands for a Bridge. I soon grew fond of sharing my poetry, because this class was a safe place for me to be vulnerable, a place where everyone was proactive and gave me the courage to speak my mind.

This February I was given a tremendous opportunity to perform at the Martin Luther King assembly. I was asked to read 'Average Black Girl' a poem by Ernestine Johnson. A piece that gives readers a glimpse of how it feels to be stereotyped, and put down because of the color of their skin. Maybe something that the majority of the school could not relate to, but it was something that Black Student Union at Roosevelt believed they all needed to hear. I stood in front of the whole school and read aloud, trying to mimic the power and heart of the author that I felt when I first watched her perform. I wondered while reading, are they even listening? Do

they understand that this is how I feel? Do they care that I put myself out there? When I finished they gave me a standing ovation. I was greeted in the hallways for the rest of the day by people I had never talked to, telling me how great I did. I had reached them, I got out what needed to be said and I will forever be proud of that moment. I can only thank the Hands for a Bridge community for giving me the courage to do so.

- Bailey Holifield



*HFB students and South African visitors sharing their poetry at Jack Straw recording studio*

# South Africa Visitation

In October, we hosted students from our sister schools, Isilimela and Bellville, in Cape Town. These students forged close bonds with us, shared their stories with us, and allowed us to be vulnerable with each other. With the South African students, we recorded our poetry at Jack Straw studios, went on a retreat to Camp Sealth, and showed them around Seattle.

When the students from South Africa came to visit us for a week in October, everybody in Hands for a Bridge was still getting to know each other. Although we'd met up in the summer a few times, the class was still new, and it was the beginning of the school year. As well as getting to know students from another country, we were able to become even more familiar with one another. It was a



fantastic experience exchanging cultures, learning new songs and dances, watching people try new foods, and making lasting friendships. It was my first time hosting somebody, and it really made the whole visit more meaningful. I still keep in touch with the girl I hosted, Chrisandra, and when HFB went on our trips to Northern Ireland and South Africa the following February, I was able to reconnect with many of the people that had come in October. Although the South Africans were only here in Seattle for a week there was never

a dull moment. With all of the classes being shadowed, eating, touring, potlucks, and even a few love confessions, it made the time for goodbyes come much sooner than anybody wanted. It was sad for everybody, but the warm memories were well worth it. I'll never regret the choice to host my darling friend, Chrisandra, or the chance to get to know all of our South African visitors.

- Celine Tang

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*Whisper*

I could feel the  
tears  
building up behind my eyes.  
Every part of me wanted  
to just let them out,  
but I knew that if I did that I  
wouldn't be able to  
stop  
them.  
I knew that once I let  
one out, the other  
thousand  
would follow.

But when I heard what the  
other people were saying,  
and seeing their  
faces  
as they held back their  
tears  
too, it made me want to  
explode.

About half way through sharing,  
someone  
who I'd never seen upset,  
someone  
who was always laughing  
and energetic,  
let them out.  
She let the  
tears  
roll down her face and onto her notebook  
as she read about how much she'd miss  
the week that was about to end.

And that's when I lost it.  
I couldn't hold the buildup of  
water  
Any  
longer.  
My emotions were racing around  
the room and I just  
couldn't catch them.

So I let them out.  
I let the tears fall down my  
cheeks  
and onto my notebook while my friends  
continued sharing what they'd miss most.

I heard a whisper come my way asking  
if I was crying.  
I badly wanted to shake my head no, but  
she could see the  
drops  
dripping out  
of the corner of my eye.  
She put her hand on my back  
and leaned in close.  
Though this was supposed to help,  
it just made it worse.  
My eyes let out more of my  
thoughts  
and I looked up, trying to get them to  
stop.

Even though I don't usually cry, especially  
in front of 40 people,  
I'd do anything  
to be back under that gazebo,  
on the 2nd Saturday of October.  
With the people that I love  
and the raindrops falling off the trees  
into the palms of the foreigners  
that even though I had only met a week ago,  
were my family.

But that family  
had to leave  
and  
there will be many more raindrops  
falling off of the trees until I see them again,  
so I might just have to let my eyes express my  
thoughts a little longer -  
or until I learn to speak them.

- *Sholeh Sharif*

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# Visiting other Seattle Public Schools

When we were visited by South African students, we all got the opportunity to go to other high schools throughout the Seattle area for a day. This gave the South Africans the chance to compare different schools and it allowed the Roosevelt students to better understand the experiences of other students in Seattle. Groups visited Franklin, Seattle World School, Ingraham, and Rainier Beach.

Seattle World School: My group was fortunate enough to be sent to the Seattle world school. This particular school is tailored to immigrant children, who did not grow up speaking English. Throughout the day we sat in on different classes and interacted with the students. Though many of them were our age, they were on a very different scholastic level. The differing backgrounds and language barriers they faced made school extra challenging. I sat and read with a boy from Hong Kong who had arrived two weeks ago. The students there were so eager to improve their English and learn more about the country they were now in. In almost every class the teacher would have each student say their name and where they were from. It was rare to have more than two people from the same country in one classroom. I felt so honored to be able to witness a place like that and be able to spend time with the students there. It was definitely a highlight of my senior year.

- Olivia Mora

Franklin: My group, an amazing mix of South African and Roosevelt HFB students, traveled down south to Franklin High School. It was an amazing experience for us. We were welcomed into the principal's office and given free Franklin merchandise, and then proceeded to visit classes in the school. I noticed many differences between our two schools, but the one that struck me the most was the art. Every wall of Franklin was covered in colorful murals. Compared to Roosevelt's bland walls, the walls of Franklin were beautiful and creative. Visiting another school with the South Africans was an amazing and eye opening experience for us all.

- Joe Moore



HFB students and teachers stop for a sightseeing opportunity on their way to visit Seattle World School.

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Rainier Beach:

The stereotype.

That I've heard in the halls at Roosevelt,  
That I've felt emanating in the North End.

The feeling.

That I should check over my shoulder an extra time as I get off the bus.  
That I should pity these kids who don't share the opportunities I have.  
That I'm filled with an uncomfortable guilt as these thoughts enter my mind.

The realization.

That Rainier Beach's IB program is just as strong and rigorous as Roosevelt's AP classes.  
That the aura is welcoming and relaxed, something I was not used to feeling.  
That we share many concerns about school and about life.

The remembering.

That the friends I have through sports who go to Rainier Beach love it.  
That finally, I understand why.

- *Olivia Kugiya*

Ingraham: Ingraham gave a new perspective to our life here at Roosevelt and our friends' lives across Seattle. Instead of just hearing rumors or what a friend might have told you, we finally got to experience another school for ourselves. We talked with kids in classrooms and hung out and shared experiences with them. This allowed for a whole new perspective to be gained for our lives at Roosevelt. Not only that but it opened our eyes to the uniqueness, the good and the bad at RHS. Although after returning all I could see was white. The lack of diversity was astounding and somehow, I had never noticed it before. As I walked the halls of Ingraham I noticed a feeling of community that RHS just didn't have. With our clique culture and hard lines between groups, the diversity, the communication and the connections broke down. Now coming back I believe that HFB, my friends and I have all given our best effort to affect change here at Roosevelt and make this the best community that we can.

- *Alex James*

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*Roosevelt and Cape Town students  
visiting Ingraham High School*

# A Conversation with Polly Olsen

Hands For A Bridge is known to focus on studying social injustice on an international scale, but a large part of what we do is also understanding issues of social justice in our own country and community. This year, we were lucky enough to be visited by Polly Olsen, an advocate for Native American rights. What she taught us added on to what we had read in the book *Lakota Woman*.

In the winter, we had the privilege of being visited by Polly Olsen. While Polly has been a neighbor of mine since I was a baby, I was shocked by how much I didn't already know about her, and how much she had to teach us. Polly talked to us about her experience as a Native-American woman growing up on a Washington state reservation. She touched on themes we uncovered while reading *Lakota Woman*, as well as telling us stories from her own life.

She described the many identities she wore as a Native-American woman. On the reservation, she was white, while in the rest of the world she was an Indian. Then through processes of social change she became a Native-American. Then an American-Indian. Then an Indigenous Person. To this day, she told us, her identity is an amalgamation of labels she's still defining for herself.

Many of us were shocked by the statistics she rattled off of how many registered tribes versus reservations there are in Washington state, but what struck me most deeply was the way she defined microaggressions. Offenses that are not intentional, and likely not even consciously perceived, but still hurt. "What do you do with that?" she asked. "What do you do when you're hurt but the thing that's hurting you isn't something anyone else can perceive?"

Upon entering our building, Polly was told by the office to "follow the drum circle" in order to find Mr. Nolet's room. While yes, Mr. Nolet is known for engaging classes in making music, advising a Native-American woman to "follow the drum circle" reinforces a damaging and reducing stereotype.

Polly awed us all with her grace and poise as she overcame these challenges. What astounded me most was her ability to recognize that "overcoming" is not a one-stop achievement but a process of growth and change. She was not at all reluctant to acknowledge that she was still deeply engaged in her process, despite the fact that she was well into adulthood. Her wisdom was a gift, and we were lucky to hear her speak.

- Emma Williams

# Hosting A Play by the Lummi Tribe

This year, we got the unique opportunity to host a play put on by our neighboring Lummi Tribe called *Sonny Sixkiller Buys the Washington Redskins*, a fictional story of a Native American football player buying the Washington Redskins to change their name. We are grateful to have been able to experience this funny, thoughtful, and educational event and share it with our community.

In the Fall, we hosted a play about Sonny Sixkiller, a Cherokee football player for the University of Washington, buying the “Washington Redskins” football team - something no one would ever suspect or think could be done. It was a comedy but definitely highlighted the issues Native Americans have to face. The name and mascot is a controversial term, seen by many as a racial slur. Those like Dave Snyder (the team owner) see the name as honoring the people, however many all over the country strongly see otherwise. The term Redskins is referring to the scalps of the people killed in the many wars while fighting for their stolen land and is used in referring to the long, ugly history between colonizers and Native Americans - not to mention it's defined in the dictionary as an offensive term.

A performing group from the Lummi Tribe, here in Washington, came to Roosevelt to express the issues behind the name “Redskins”. The play brought Roosevelt many new perspectives on racial conflicts as well as a new connection with the Lummi Nation- the third largest federally-recognized tribe in Washington. The Lummi performing group was full of different aged volunteers who felt passionate and impacted and hurt by the “Redskins” name. Darrol Hillaire, the former Lummi chairman, was the playwright and Dennis Catrell, the director. The play starred Arlie Neskahie as Sonny Sixkiller; Robert Muzzy as team owner Dan Snyder, Valerie Phair as the grandmother and Eugene Harry as Ray Thunderchild.

HFB focuses on connecting communities across cultures. Since Seattle is the home of the Coast-Salish people, there are many reservations nearby. However, people in Seattle and especially at Roosevelt don't really know much about them, nor make an effort to learn about a culture so rich and close to us. Members of the HFB board came together to help bring the Lummi performing group to our school to teach our community about the issues faced in their culture. The play was available for the entire community as well as a fundraiser for HFB and the Lummi Youth Academy. Before they performed, we all had a meal together at Roosevelt. This interaction gave the HFB class a chance to connect and learn with the Lummi Nation!



- Frannie Nelson and Jessica Pollard

# *Guerilla Poetry: An Artistic Attack*

In Hands For A Bridge, we constantly seek to engage our community at Roosevelt. One way we did this was through “guerilla poetry”. In groups of four, we created a spoken poem with movements about a subject we felt needed to be discussed more at Roosevelt. We then entered classes without warning to read our poems.

Working together and creating a piece of art was both frustrating and exciting. As a group there were many things that we couldn't agree on to put in our poem. Though the process was hard, when we finished creating our poetry and incorporated movements that would fit with our poem, it was very fun to present it in front of everyone. As we prepared ourselves to walk into the classrooms, it was always nerve racking. Every time we would ask ourselves if we were actually going to do it. But when we were in there the words just flowed out naturally, it was so easy for me to present the piece that we put a lot of work into. I just hope the audience understood what we were trying to convey through our poem.

- Tatsu Narifusa

An excerpt from one of the guerilla poems:

*You look at me  
What do you see  
A reflection of an image  
Your assumptions of me  
Based on what?*

*The mask we wear is protection  
A medicine that shouldn't be needed  
It numbs your mind  
And controls your heart.*

*The confinement isn't obvious,  
The oppression is quiet  
like a serene forest  
filled with shadows unseen  
traps set for those who stray from the carved path  
because everything you do seems to be judged.  
And we are so very afraid of being judged*

*So everyday I put on my mask of an emotionless  
face, I wear it day after day.*

*My identity is stolen and replaced  
with a blur of color  
carelessly painted without any thought  
a strangling vine wraps around me  
pulling me down to what is supposed to be acceptance.*

*What is a progressive society  
Where you can't be too out of the ordinary  
without it being correlated to the color of your skin?*

*But Imagine,  
Imagine a world where we acknowledge the existence of racism  
but do not accept it.  
Imagine a world where our voices are not silenced  
by stereotypes.  
Imagine a world where people listen to differences and embrace  
them.  
Imagine a world where our identities  
are not muddled by expectations*

*Listen, you might just learn from our song.*

# History Projects

In Hands For A Bridge, we want to ensure that on our trips, we are aware and conscientious travelers. South Africa and Northern Ireland are both places with complicated histories and deep conflicts. To try to understand these issues, we read books and created presentations. All students learned about and presented on both places, not just the one they traveled to. The projects we completed gave us more understanding when we travelled and experienced the places firsthand.

It's no secret that a big factor in Hands for a Bridge are the trips we go on during the middle of the year. On top of the fundraising we do to make going on the trip possible, we also do extensive research projects on the conflicts that are ongoing in both countries. For our project on South Africa we put together books that dove deep into different sub-topics on the conflicts. We then got together in groups and taught each other what we had learned. On our Northern Ireland project we made gigantic posters on the struggles, and went around in groups and listened to our peers present their topics. I really enjoyed doing both of these projects because I think that they really allowed us to learn about the conflicts in the countries in a way that engaged the whole class as a community.

- *Jalia Setel*



# Northern Ireland Trip

In February, our class split into two groups to travel across the world. One group went to Northern Ireland, a place that experienced violence between paramilitary groups of Loyalist Protestants and Republican Catholics until an uneasy peace was created with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. On our trip to Northern Ireland, we spent a week and a half in Derry/Londonderry and attended Oakgrove Integrated School, which is unique in the way it combines students of Protestant and Catholic backgrounds. We spent the rest of our trip in Belfast. Some of our experiences included meeting a man who had learned the meaning of forgiveness after being blinded as a child by a rubber bullet from a British soldier, hearing the story of a woman whose husband was killed by the IRA paramilitary group, taking walking tours to see political murals, seeing a play on a story of suicide, and going on a weekend retreat on the coast with Oakgrove's HFB students.

This trip was by far the best experience I have ever had in my life. We met so many extraordinary people and went to so many breathtaking and interesting places. It might sound cliché to say we became a family while there, but when you go and experience everything there together, you really do become a family and not just a community. I was very skeptical and nervous heading into the trip since I am an introvert, but once we arrived I was able to learn how to open up and become comfortable with people I had just met. I would not trade this experience for anything in the world.



I think the most important thing I learned on the trip was that everyone moves on from violence and tragedy in different ways; that everyone forgives or forgets in different ways and it just depends on who you are and what you have been through to decipher how exactly you will react to the events that have affected you.

- Edra Colbeck

Northern Ireland is exactly how you would picture it. The cliffs are as gorgeous and jaw-dropping as the pictures, the fields and countrysides are as green as the shamrocks so commonly thought of, and the people are as confusing and delightful as any story has ever told. Let me begin by telling you this trip was physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausting. The bonds I formed with the kids at Oakgrove were immediate and intense and exciting. We instantly loved each other. This trip was eye-opening in ways I had never known. We got to meet



and hear from people who had been in prison for bombings, men and women who had lost their loved ones to the IRA, bomb survivors, and activists. The information pouring over us was both overwhelming and confusing. We had learned about the Troubles before, but we didn't learn just how real it was-and still is. I didn't know how to feel. Am I allowed to cry over this story of a death of a child, when their father was sitting right next to me?

There came a time during this trip when we had the opportunity to see a play centered on a young man who committed suicide. This not only shook me to my core, but devastated the group as a whole. To say we opened up to each other about our feelings would be an understatement. I have always been the type of person to keep my feelings hidden, and I wanted to change that.

Over time, I look back on each situation in Northern Ireland differently. I find myself thinking differently about people and things and places. I know more than I ever did before, and somehow I don't know enough. I learned how to self-reflect in a way I had never done, and I'll always remember the moments that made me realize things I had never known about myself. I was so worried before I left that all my friends who

went to South Africa would forget about me, but coming home I could only think about how excited I was to share with them the details of my adventure. I am so thankful to the amazing teachers who learned, adventured, and even cried with us. The other kids who went with me on this trip are some of the most incredible people I have ever met, and all I can say is this trip has been something I will always treasure and hold close to my heart. - Juno Spafford



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Hands For A Bridge is very different from your average language arts class. It involves uncomfortable topics, discussions and projects all throughout the year. However everything that we did prior to the trip helped prepare us for what we were about to encounter in Northern Ireland. The trip to Northern Ireland was one to be remembered for a lifetime. It helped me meet new people, make close friends and become



more outgoing. As visitors in the country, we took center stage wherever we went, and me being a person that doesn't like to be noticed was forced outside of my comfort zone. After realizing that me being in the center stage wasn't going to change, I was pushed so far outside my comfort zone that I began to grow. To grow as a leader and mature as a person. I learned a lot about other children, my peers and myself through the dialog that we engaged in.

We went to a school where we were given the chance to lead classroom games and discussions, and in those classes we tried to build a more secure and comfortable community. It was amazing to see how easily people opened up to us because we were similar in age, just slightly

older. This gave us the opportunity to listen and be able to relate, but also be able to provide advice on how to deal with certain issues. There has never been anything that has taught me so much about myself and the impact that an individual can have on a whole community, more than this amazing trip to Northern Ireland with wonderful people.

- *Shadrak Musafiri*



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The difference between Derry/Londonderry and Belfast was tangible. In Derry/Londonderry, I remember feeling mesmerized by the old architecture and idyllic town that seemed as if it was out of a fairy tale. History seemed to leak from every stone and sidewalk we traversed, both the good and the terrible. The town's history may have been dark, but from the people I met, it seemed as if the scars from The Troubles were truly beginning to become a thing of the past. Many students were apathetic to the conflict. While there were still traces of a bias toward one side, especially in adults who could remember the violence, it seemed as if people were really moving on.

Upon arrival in Belfast, I remember feeling a sort of melancholy take over me. What I saw surrounding me was a city. Department stores and fast food littered the streets and hordes of people went along their way. It felt as if it was just any old city, like the kind I had seen so often back home in the United States, but a more mediocre city. By the second day in Belfast, during our mural tour, I began to see the Northern Ireland I had expected to see. As we walked through



both Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods, I felt a chill descend upon me. There were bars on school windows, barbed wire, anti-climbing paint, and fences and walls that seemed to surround everywhere, even a lone KFC. There were bullet holes through windows of elementary schools and caged in cameras, serving as a permanent reminder of the horrors that had occurred not too long ago in the very spots I stood. Our guide through the Catholic area, a former IRA bomber that served a 16-year sentence for attempted murder, gave me an immediate bad impression. After spending so much time in Derry/Londonderry with people who at least seemed to try to have open minds, he was very biased and I got the impression that he didn't regret his actions. In contrast, the Protestant guide who had committed murder as a member of the UVF and served 16 years, seemed slightly more open minded. He at least provided justification for his beliefs, referencing pride for his country during World War II, as well as stating that none of the deaths that occurred during The Troubles were justified.

While he seemed to feel remorse for his actions, there was a definite tension that still seemed to linger in Belfast, where gates closed to outsiders because people still didn't feel safe. Belfast was a strange paradox. In one half of it, the city seemed as if I had stepped onto a war zone while in the other half, while exploring the city I overheard a man making a joke of the horrors, saying he would "just pull a Bobby Sands" after he had eaten too much fast food.

Northern Ireland, it seems, can't be categorized as peaceful or tense.

- Anika Utke

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We leave and they stay  
We say our farewells then go  
Roads merged now separate  
A journey's end, comes new beginnings  
And as many cry I shed no tears  
My heart weighted but not broken  
I leave with wishes of what could have been  
But no regrets of what was  
Each and every one of you are good people  
People who in whatever way,  
Big or small  
Will help the world  
And I leave them feeling fulfilled  
We made a connection with them  
But also,  
We made a connection with our group  
And within ourselves  
I feel I have come to realize a simple truth I've known  
But have too often forgotten  
We only live once and every moment is precious  
I feel that isn't embraced enough  
So I say goodbye  
We all hug and I tell you  
"Never stop being awesome"  
Then we leave  
When I get back I've got things to do  
Things I need to say  
So I say goodbye and it is okay  
You helped me to be better  
And I hope I did the same  
Thank you  
- *Jacob Olsen*



# South Africa Trip

On the other end of the world, another half of our class traveled to Cape Town, South Africa to see firsthand the country that experienced the oppressive apartheid system until 1992. We spent time in two schools, Isilimela Comprehensive School, a mostly black school in the township of Langa, and Bellville High School, a majority white school in a neighborhood that formerly housed only whites under Apartheid. We stayed in Langa with “mamas”, women of the township who cared for us and shared their stories with us. We then stayed with homestay families of HFB students in Bellville, giving us the unique opportunity to learn about and understand both areas and cultures. We had many incredible experiences, including a visit to a museum about slavery, a walking tour of Langa, a hiking trip to the top of Table Mountain, and a weekend retreat with Hands For A Bridge students from both schools.

When I was chosen as a member of the South Africa trip, I didn't know what to expect going in. I had so many questions. What would school be like? How does their food taste? Am I going to make friends? However, soon enough all my questions were answered. As we disembarked from our 24-hour plus travel day, my feet still swollen two sizes up, we were greeted by the incredible HFB students from Isilimela Comprehensive School and Bellville High School. From there all my worries of being judged and not fitting in washed away.

The South Africa trip was such an incredible and enriching experience. Throughout the visit I learned about South African culture, the people around me, and myself. By the end of our trip, after only two weeks of being there, I felt like I had really found a place that I could call home. A place that I was so sad to leave. I was able to meet and share my experience with so many other amazing people that I would have never met otherwise if it weren't for HFB. It was incredible to watch how all three groups of students from different schools and cultures were able to put aside, but not disregard, all our differences and work together to form a cohesive group. On top of that, everyone was so welcoming and full of fun, I never had a dull moment.

- Cheya Potter



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Birds calling out in the early morning,  
the smell of gardenia shampoo.  
Long talks with Mama B over fried eggs and rooibis tea.  
Laughter in the vans and the sound of the penny whistle.  
Hugs outside of Isilimela.  
Hands quickly embracing and parting between classes.  
Soccer at sunset in the park.

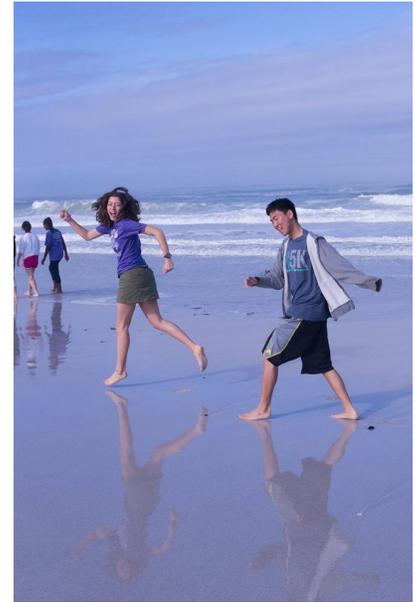
A mixture of voices singing-- both beautiful and terribly out of tune.  
Discussions that reach beyond the uncomfortable,  
that dig deep and connect and let us SEE each other.  
Jumping in the cold waves until our teeth chatter.  
Cia braiding my hair in the sun.

Emma talking late at night.

The exchange of goodbye letters and goodbye tears.

These are just a few of the things I will miss, just a few of the things I have learned from,  
and a few of the things I will continue.

- Ana Jurca





Black smoke poured from the oil drum. Nearby shanties were stained black by the many layers of soot, and as we passed we turned down our heads so as to avoid inhaling the acrid fumes; our faces flushed from the heat.

African beer is very special in Langa. Students at Isilimela had tried to explain the drink's cultural significance several times, tried to explain the way it is prepared for special events, a staple at any celebration. We'd always politely nod, not understanding.

Here now we walked, feet pounding long compressed sand and trash-caked paths. The fire beneath the drum spit smoke and the liquid within frothed ferociously.

What world is this? Children leaned against doorframes of sagging homes, corrugated metal and warped scrap wood. The smoke I could barely stomach flowed easily through the shanties; no one seemed to mind.

I did not understand the cultural significance of African beer. In this space though, a space of poverty which had for me never truly existed beyond the pages of Time Magazine, I understood far less.

What world is this? In what strange dimension may I sit and read in a big house and fantasize of poverty like romantic fiction and simultaneously a plastic tarp roof leaks onto a child's head?

The African beer frothed on. We walked on. I don't know why this world is so wide and why I am here and you are there and will I ever understand what African beer means to you?

- Sophie Aanerud

Over the course of the trip to South Africa, my cheek muscles hurt from smiling so much. You could say that it had to do with the weather--yes, I love the sun--but I think what was most significant was the wonderful people that surrounded me, taking me into their homes, and just accepting me for who I was. I met people whose beliefs I didn't agree with, people who treated gender roles in a way that would've been unacceptable to me in an American setting. I met people who were from different backgrounds than me and were part of different cultures. And still, despite all of our differences, we were able to come together in one big Hands for a Bridge family. So, for me, that's what I'll remember most about South Africa. The family I found there, and the bonds I formed despite the oceans that separate us.

- Sophie Grosskopf



South of the equator  
Outside the comfort zone  
Understanding facilitated across the world  
Time ticks slowly, then spins quickly  
Home opened, a new home made

A once in a lifetime opportunity  
Friendship to last our lifetimes  
Reuniting with old friends,  
Inspiring new friends, inspired in return  
Creating conversations that continue even when the two weeks have come to a close  
An experience other members and I will always keep close to our heart and cherish forever

- Taylor Bissey



# Real Change Papers

Real Change is a newspaper that reports on underrepresented issues and is sold by homeless and low-income vendors. At various points during the year, we have been instructed to buy a paper and have a conversation with the vendor. In the spring, a Real Change vendor named Margaret came into our class to talk to us about her experience with homelessness and her views on the homeless crisis in Seattle. Listening to Margaret and going into the community to meet vendors was an eye-opening experience for all of us.

Look them in the eye, tell them hello. Make it so there is no them, only an us. Have a conversation. That's why we did this assignment. To remember that homelessness is an issue, to remember to view the people who live on the streets without shelter as our equals. Justice is not just an issue abroad- it's an issue all around us, and small solutions are at the tips of our fingers. Maybe we won't solve everything, but buying a paper from Margaret at PCC or Greg at Whole Foods? It means the world to many within the homeless community. The conversations may barely skim the surface, they may tell you more than you bargained to know, but anything means something. All you need is open ears, you need to remember that they too have voices. Listen to their political opinions, hear the advice they have because they are wise beyond their years which is far beyond what any of us can imagine. Listen with love and hear with open minds. Smile, say hello, and use those \$2 to make a real change.

- Sydney Haas



There's nothing that can compare to listening to someone's story firsthand - that's exactly what we did with Real Change. I found it magical to support someone not only via buying a paper that they sell, but by having a conversation, listening to their wisdom, their advice. It all felt like a breath of fresh air. It seems like in today's media we only hear from the "top" of our society. But in reality, the words of those we idolize can become toxic and form a somewhat mesmerizing haze of information that we can't really sort out ourselves. That's what's so amazing about Real Change; you get the news, the good and the bad, from an actual person. These people aren't our idols, they're the invisible, the people that we pass by on the street without a second thought, and oddly enough - they're the people we need to hear from the most. The Real Change vendors that you pass by on the street when you're walking home, or maybe going to Whole Foods for lunch, all have a story to tell, and it's one that needs to be heard. So try it - buy a paper and have a conversation; make the invisible, visible.

- Finn Allen

# Race and Gender Units

Throughout the year in class, we discuss important issues of social justice. Two of these topics that we have spent a lot of time on are race and gender. We engaged in our race unit early in the year and our gender unit later in the spring. In both of these studies, we learned a lot through engaging in conversation with one another.

Race: Throughout the year many topics are discussed, pondered, and argued in class. One such topic is racism and institutional oppression. Although many people might deny it, racism is still alive and well in the 21st century. It still heavily affects the way Americans interact with each other, even in liberal Seattle. We see it in schools, communities, on the streets, and in everyday life.

In Hands for a Bridge we had a unit exploring racism and wrote a paper on the first time each of us understood what it meant in our lives. In class we were asked to share our stories. But it is definitely not an easily discussed topic and I still remember the silence in the room when it was time to discuss our writing. Eventually the discussion started and slowly we saw that racism and its meaning was never exactly explained to us in a literal sense, but picked up in social situations or comments. We then explored how it still affects Seattle today and the segregation of the schools and neighborhoods, how most of the Hands for a Bridge class is white (as is the rest of Roosevelt), and how stereotypes still shape our view on the people that make up the American population.

In the end we learned that there are many sides to racism and institutional oppression. We all share a part in it, directly or indirectly, privileged or not. Racism is not something easily fixed and forgotten. But talking about it is the first step toward change. *- Cassy Aleman*

Gender: During our gender unit, we read books that involved commentary on gender, we wrote papers on our relationship with the concept of gender, we shared our papers and talked with each other, and we welcomed guest speakers from our own community: moms of HFB students.

It was interesting to compare our understanding of gender as students to the moms' understanding. Many of us students expressed strong frustrations with sexism in our society, and this is very understandable. The moms though, seemed to have accepted the world as it is and channeled their frustrations into specific outlets, such as furthering gender equality in their career fields, offering support to younger women in their communities, and doing their best to raise their children to be members of society that work against sexism. It was inspiring to see how these women have worked in specific ways to combat sexism in their daily lives.

*- Olivia Kugiya*



# Activist Projects

One of the most important things we do towards the end of the year are our activist projects. These projects target problems we see in our community, whether that's our city, our neighborhood, or our school. We are working on the projects now in small groups, and they reach a wide variety of issues. One group is sharing the stories of homeless people in Seattle, one is teaching middle schoolers about activism and combatting microaggressions, and another is organizing a lock-in for Roosevelt students to talk about issues that matter to them, just to name a few.

In HFB this year, we have experienced many different opportunities, yet there is one thing we have yet to fully commit ourselves to, and that is trying to create change and participation in our own communities. Our activism projects are a way for us to reach out and make a difference in the things we care the most about. The goal is to create a project that we will spend at least 24 hours completing, and then present the changes we've made and the new ideas we've cultivated to the class at the end of the year. We have two months to do so.

My group is going to different elementary and middle schools around Seattle and educating children on poverty, gender issues, and body image in modern day youth. With the younger students we plan on playing simulation games that show the gap between rich and poor, as well as introducing art projects that allow students to see themselves in a whole new light. We are also going to bring supplies in which the students can produce gift baggies with essential items for the less fortunate, and encourage them to take them home and go with their parents to give to someone in need. As a group we are very excited to share our passions and the ideas we've learned with the local community, and encourage everyone to do the same...*you can make a difference.*

- Monica Gustaveson

Throughout this year we have learned so much about Northern Ireland and South Africa. Through the experiences we have had abroad, we are given the opportunity to take our findings and passions and implement them into activism projects here in Seattle. Some are throughout the greater Seattle area, while others are focused towards the Roosevelt community.

The past two years have been very challenging for a lot of students at Roosevelt and there has been an increase in stress, suicide attempts, and the loss of two students. The challenges students and faculty face and the lessons we have learned through travel have prompted my activism group to focus on suicide prevention and awareness. Roosevelt students are invited to learn to teach suicide prevention and awareness using a hands on curriculum created by Ballard High School students. The activism projects give us the chance to take what we have learned this year in Hands for a Bridge and our passions to make change. This program has touched me and given me the opportunity to take the topics of inclusion, stress, and support I am passionate about and create an opportunity to get a dialog going throughout Roosevelt. Even if we just touch one person's life and make them feel more included and safe at Roosevelt High School, then this project will be a success.

- Bayley Peterson

