

A VOICE OTHER THAN MY OWN

RESOURCES FOR LBS LEARNERS





TABLE OF CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES	3
READING PASSAGES	5
WRITING EXERCISES	32

HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

These packages were created to integrate discussions of diversity into LBS learning experiences. It is important to note that not all people in a group have the same experiences. These packages are about starting a dialogue and creating a culture where difficult and complex issues are discussed.

Use the powerpoint “A Voice Other Than My Own” to introduce the topic of bias and diverse experiences. There are discussion notes under each slide to help you lead the lesson.

The lesson includes reading and discussing 1 or more passages. These passages offer diverse perspectives. Some may be familiar to learners. Others may be completely new. Pick 2-3 passages to share. Print them off beforehand so learners can follow along. Questions to help encourage discussion are found in the powerpoint notes.

You may decide to include reflective writing prompts as an add on to this mini-lesson. They are included at the end of this document.

HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

It's important to know that while voices in the passages are representatives of these groups, the tools were curated by a group of white women. While discussions of bias and privilege occurred in hopes of prioritizing objectivity, we all walk with our past experiences.

This project incorporates bibliotherapy which is a non-clinical, developmental intervention that promotes connectedness and wellbeing through guided reading. In this context LLN is using bibliotherapy as a social arena for the discussion of the experiences and perspectives of underrepresented groups.

The development of these tools were funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training & Skills Development. They were developed by Literacy Link Niagara who hired Ashley Hoath-Murray & Associates to complete the work. With their bibliotherapy experience, Literacy Network Durham Region supported the creation of materials. Additional project support was provided by Adult Basic Education Association, Literacy Link South Central and Rideau-Ottawa Valley Literacy Network.



When We Were Alone



DAVID A. ROBERTSON

JULIE FLETT

When we were your age, at home in our community, being with family was the most important thing. We played with each other, did chores together, and shared everything. But at the school I went to, far away from home, they wouldn't let us be together.

My brother and I were separated like day and night.

"Why were you and Nókomis separated?" I asked.

"They didn't like when we were with family," Nókomi said, "because when we were together we thought too much of home."



But sometimes in the winter, when we were alone, and we were sure that nobody could see us, we would find each other. We would take off our mitts, and in the crisp, cold air we would hold hands so we could be with each other.

And this made us happy.

"Now," Nókóm said as she reached over and held my uncle's hand, and mine, "I am always with my family."



Anthem

By Leonard Cohen

The birds they sang
At the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what has passed away
Or what is yet to be
Ah, the wars they will be fought again
The holy dove, she will be caught again
Bought and sold, and bought again
The dove is never free
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in
We asked for signs
The signs were sent
The birth betrayed
The marriage spent
Yeah, and the widowhood
Of every government
Signs for all to see
I can't run no more
With that lawless crowd
While the killers in high places
Say their prayers out loud
But they've summoned, they've summoned up
A thundercloud
They're going to hear from me
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in
You can add up the parts
But you won't have the sum
You can strike up the march
There is no drum
Every heart, every heart
To love will come
But like a refugee
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in



NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC


EVERY

HUMAN

HAS

RIGHTS

A PHOTOGRAPHIC DECLARATION FOR KIDS

BASED ON THE
UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
WITH POETRY FROM THE  COMMUNITY

FOREWORD BY MARY ROBINSON,
FORMER UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Some people see only skin deep, but there is so much more to a person than the color of their skin. Why would you hurt me just because I'm different? Just because I don't look like you? Nobody has the right to mistreat me just because I don't look, think, or act like you. When will this world learn that everyone was created equal? If everyone looks, thinks, and acts exactly the same? Imagine what a world that would be. But all I'm asking for is that you show me some respect, even if you don't think I deserve it.

13

—Kathryn Buonantony, age 13



The right to worship or not worship as you choose is protected in numerous countries. From left to right, these pictures show a Balinese Hindu in Indonesia; Christian children in the U.S.; and a Muslim woman in Dakar, Senegal.

2



Everyone has the same rights.

It doesn't matter what **GENDER** you are.

It doesn't matter what **COLOR** your skin is,

what **LANGUAGE** you speak,

what **RELIGION** you practice,

how **RICH** or **POOR** you are,

how **DIFFERENT** you are from those around you,

or what country you come from.

It doesn't even matter whether your own government agrees with these rights.

Your rights are in **YOU** no matter what.

I wasn't born a minority. But a three-metre fall at the site of our house addition in 2016 rendered my legs useless and left me a full-time wheelchair user. Before that, as an able-bodied, white, non-transgender, straight woman, I never had to contend with the fact the world wasn't made for me. So, imagine my surprise when I re-entered the world on wheels after my accident and discovered that my value to society felt diminished.

Before I was paralyzed, I never knew a few stairs could mean the difference between feeling included and feeling ostracized. Before I was paralyzed, it never crossed my mind I might go somewhere and not be able to use the bathroom. Before I was paralyzed — while I was never habitually punctual — I never thought I'd be late to my daughter's swimming lesson, circling the parking lot with her in tears because the few accessible parking spots at the community centre were occupied. Before I was paralyzed, it never occurred to me I might not be able to take my children to soccer because access to the fields required stairs or a dangerous attempt to push myself up a steep hill. Before I was paralyzed, I never thought my life would change in such a way that would bring these issues into the spotlight — for me, and for the people who know and love me.

But then I was paralyzed and found what didn't change were my responsibilities as a parent and a partner. It didn't limit my desire to go shopping, to attend events or go to restaurants and hotels.

What it did change was the vantage point from which I saw the world.

CBC "Let me be that person you know in a wheelchair, so we can all think about how to be more inclusive" by Codi Darnell, June 2021

Life Lines

Poems to Uplift and Inspire



It mattered
to that one



Melanie Korach

The Mirror

When you look in
the mirror do like
what you see?

Can you smile at
yourself confidently?

When you look in
the mirror can you
honestly say:

"I like who I am.
I'm happy this way."

When you look in
the mirror do you like
who you are?

Do u peer real close?
Or do you look from
afar?

When you look in the
mirror do you find it
tough?

Do you love what
you see?

Do you think you're
enough?

M. Korach



TRANS LOVE

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TRANSGENDER
AND NON-BINARY VOICES

EDITED BY FREIYA BENSON

THE RENTS

Silver

*I want to write about my parents,
but it's hard
because what I want to say isn't always kind
and it isn't always good.
I want to say to them
you know you messed up right?
I want to say to them
when you use my old name, my old pronouns
that it cuts me like a knife.
I want to shout at them
it is so easy
it's just a few words you need to change
you do it all the fucking time with everything else
you even correct people when they call your dog he
so why can't you do it with me?
I want to ask them why
why is my chosen name so hard for you to say?
why don't you give enough of a shit about me to use she?
why do you say you love me*

FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIP

and want to see me
and know how my life is
then push me away
with your sharp hard words?
That's what I want to say.
God fucking damn it.

So anyhow, I have therapy.

Because I know that if I say these things
they'll say
we didn't know
you never said
you played with cars
you liked the colour blue
you were our boy, and we can't let go of that right now.

My tongue is divided into two BY QUIQUE AVILÉS

My tongue is divided into two
by virtue, coincidence or heaven
words jumping out of my mouth
stepping on each other
enjoying being a voice for the message
expecting conclusions

My tongue is divided into two
into heavy accent bits of confusion
into miracles and accidents
saying things that hurt the heart
drowning in a language that lives, jumps, translates

My tongue is divided by nature
by our crazy desire to triumph and conquer

This tongue is cut up into equal pieces
one wants to curse and sing out loud
the other one simply wants to ask for water

My tongue is divided into two
one side likes to party
the other one takes refuge in praying

tongue 21
english of the funny sounds

tongue
funny sounds in english
tongue
sounds funny in english
tongue
in funny english sounds

My tongue sometimes acts like two
and it goes crazy
not knowing which side should be speaking
which side translating

My tongue is divided into two
a border patrol runs through the middle
frisking words
asking for proper identification
checking for pronunciation

My tongue is divided into two
My tongue is divided into two

I like my tongue
it says what feels right
I like my tongue
it says what feels right

POOR-BASHING



The Politics of Exclusion

Jean Swanson

Raised to poor-bash

↓ I interviewed Mary Smith (not her real name) in a hotel in Ottawa in 1997. As a representative of low-income people from Saskatchewan she, like me, was attending a NAPO board meeting. She told me she was raised to poor-bash: "I think poor-bashing first affected me when I was about five years old and I could hear my dad sitting at the kitchen table talking to his neighbours, saying, 'We should just go on welfare like the rest of those sons 'a bitches, quit working so hard,' and so on. I think he was a person with an attitude about the poor, that they are all lazy, useless, and good-for-nothing people. To be on welfare would be the ultimate form of degradation to him."

Smith's father's "attitude" rubbed off on her, she admitted. "I've been guilty myself of snubbing [people on welfare]. In Estevan when I was a nice little middle-class mother, we had a problem relating to a single parent who was on welfare," Smith related. "We used to wonder what they did with their time, going to bars and what not," she said.

"Then I became a single parent and a poor person, someone who had to go on welfare. I think the hardest thing in my life was walking through that welfare door being full of shame and degradation and personal failure and looking at suicide because I couldn't support my kids in a way that they deserved to be supported and seriously feeling that to take my own life would be the best possible solution." A good friend stopped Smith from suicide and helped her realize that she wasn't to blame for not having a paid job.

Many of the people I talked to observed that it is often those who are most at risk of needing welfare in the future who carry around a lot of society's hatred for people who already receive it. But they may face a crisis—their job ends, their spouse leaves, their health deteriorates—and when they have to resort to welfare their feelings about people on welfare are transferred to themselves with devastating personal consequences, like Smith's suicide attempt.

For Smith, the poor-bashing continues, even in her own family. "In my siblings I think there's poor-bashing by ignoring the fact that we don't have as much as they do. They don't want to know, and they can be very critical. For example, last time I went to a NAPO board meeting, my sister heard how much my babysitter was paid. [NAPO pays low-income board members child-care expenses so they can attend meetings.] So she said, 'Oh, welfare must pay pretty good.' She doesn't even know the difference between welfare and NAPO.

"I still find it hard to get away from the shame of my own poverty," Smith said. "This past month I signed up for a new careers training program and the teacher is a poor-basher. She told me how she feels that the food banks are grossly misused. She doesn't want her taxes going to people who smoke and drink booze and I'm sitting there smoking with her, but I'm not one of them?"

The owl and the chimpanzee

By Jo Camacho

The owl and the chimpanzee went to sea
In a beautiful boat called The Mind
The owl was sensible, clever and smart
The chimp was a little behind
The owl made decisions, based on fact
And knew where to steer its ship
The chimp reacted a little too fast
And often the boat would tip
The waves would come and crash aboard
The chimp would start to cry
Large tears would roll right down his face
Afraid that he would die
The chimp and the owl would wrestle at night
When the world was quiet and still
The chimp would jump up and rock the boat
And the boat would start to fill
Then the owl stepped in and grabbed a pail
And started to empty it out
And the chimp would start to get quite cross
And would often scream and shout
The battle continued night after night
Until the chimp started to see
That if it let the owl take control
A more peaceful night it would be

SCARS

&

STARS

JESSE

THISTLE

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *FROM THE ASHES*

ST. STELLA

She became a paramedic—
I knew her in high school
years before this addiction bound me in
shackles.

Many times, at Kennedy and Queen,
in the dead of night,
she was the only person
there, in her ambulance
as I scoured the streets for change
and maybe a little money.

She noticed one evening,
me, alone and waiting for a midnight bus that
wasn't coming.

“Come clean up at my place,” she said, as if
stardust was caught up in her hair.

I don't know how she drove with me all ripe
in the passenger seat.

She let me shower when we got to her place
offered the couch
gave me twenty dollars, a pack of smokes
and let me tell her of a man who used to live
inside this old heart.

She turned off the lamp after
and went to bed in the next room.
As quiet sank in, I stole away in the night
ashamed that I had nothing to offer

this girl I once went to school with.
This girl who still cared to remember
this, the paramedic-saint of Peel Memorial;
a hospital they tore down
many years ago.

Too Black

by C'Moore Productions

They take my kindness for **weakness**.
They take my silence for **speechless**.
They consider my uniqueness **strange**.
They call my language **slang**.
They see my confidence as **conceit**.
They see my mistakes as **defeat**.
They consider my success **accidental**.
They minimize my intelligence to "**potential**".
My questions mean I'm **unaware**.
My advancement is somehow **unfair**.
Any praise is **preferential treatment**.
To voice concern is **discontentment**.
If I stand up for myself, I'm too **defensive**.
If I don't trust them, I'm too **apprehensive**.
I'm deviant if I **separate**.
I'm fake if I **assimilate**.
My character is constantly **under attack**.
Pride for my race makes me "**TOO BLACK**".

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE
GLASS
CASTLE



JEANNETTE
WALLS

"Walls has joined the company of writers such as Mary Karr and Frank McCourt who have been able to transform their sad memories into fine art." —*People*

A MEMOIR

→ "Nosiree," Mom said. She didn't approve of glasses. If you had weak eyes, Mom believed, they needed exercise to get strong. The way she saw it, glasses were like crutches. They prevented people with feeble eyes from learning to see the world on their own. She said people had been trying to get her to wear glasses for years, and she had refused. But the nurse sent another note saying Lori couldn't attend Emerson unless she wore glasses, and the school would pay for them, so Mom gave in.

When the glasses were ready, we all went down to the optometrist. The lenses were so thick they made Lori's eyes look big and bugged out, like fish eyes. She kept swiveling her head around and up and down.

"What's the matter?" I asked. Instead of answering, Lori ran outside. I followed her. She was standing in the parking lot, gazing in awe at the trees, the houses, and the office buildings behind them.

"You see that tree over there?" she said, pointing at a sycamore about a hundred feet away. I nodded.

"I can not only see that tree, I can see the individual leaves on it." She looked at me triumphantly. "Can you see them?"

I nodded.

She didn't seem to believe me. "The individual leaves? I mean, not just the branches but each little leaf?"

I nodded. Lori looked at me and then burst into tears.

On the way home, she kept seeing for the first time all these things that most everyone else had stopped noticing because they'd seen them every day. She read street signs and billboards aloud. She pointed out starlings perched on the telephone wires. We went into a bank and she stared up at the vaulted ceiling and described the octagonal patterns.

At home, Lori insisted that I try on her glasses. They would blur my vision as much as they corrected hers, she said, so I'd be able to see things as she always had. I put on the glasses, and the world dissolved into fuzzy, blotchy shapes. I took a few steps and banged my shin on the coffee table, and then I realized why Lori didn't like to go exploring as much as Brian and I did. She couldn't see.

Lori wanted Mom to try on the glasses, too. Mom slipped them on and, blinking, looked around the room. She studied one of her own paintings quietly, then handed the glasses back to Lori.

"Did you see better?" I asked.

"I wouldn't say better," Mom answered. "I'd say different."

"Maybe you should get a pair, Mom."

"I like the world just fine the way I see it," she said.

But Lori loved seeing the world clearly. She started compulsively drawing and painting all the wondrous things she was discovering, like the way each curved tile on Emerson's roof cast its own curved shadow on the tile below, and the way the setting sun painted the underbellies of the clouds pink but left the piled-up tops purple.

Not long after Lori got her glasses, she decided she wanted to be an artist, like Mom. —

