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Sky Juice: Students Writing Hope

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SKY JUICE: STUDENTS WRITING HOPE

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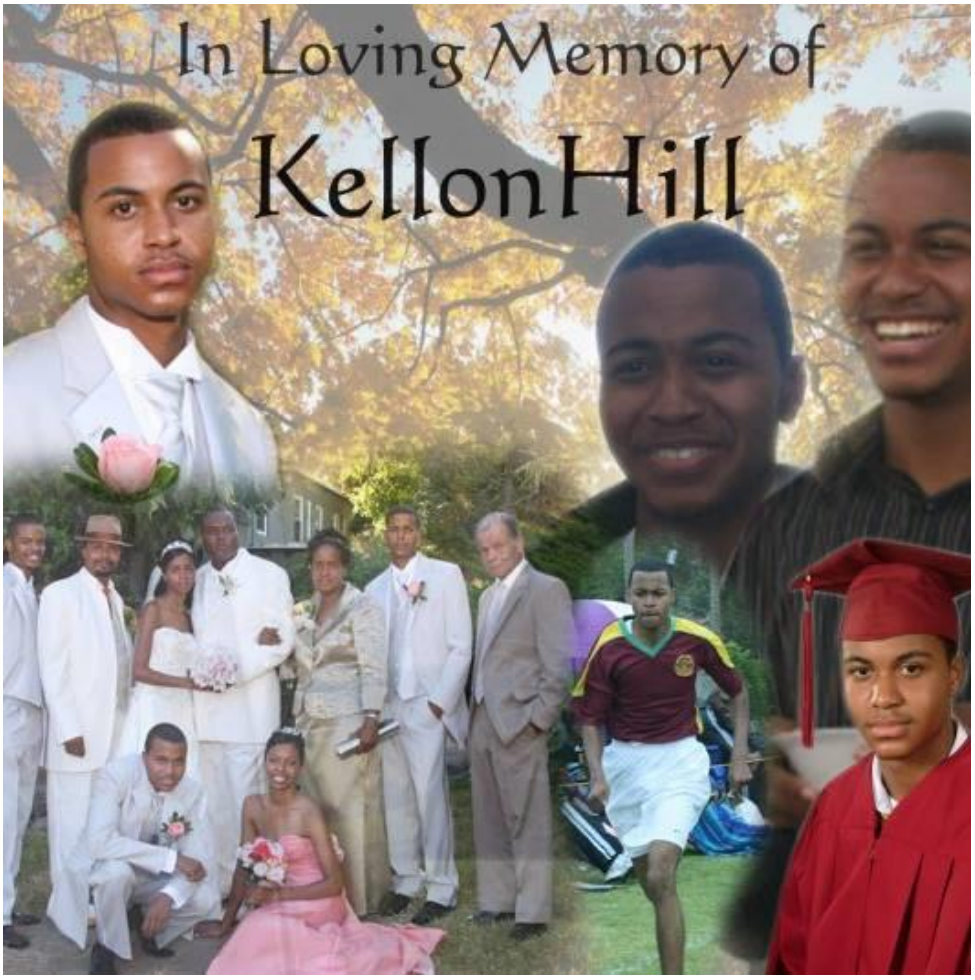
This narrative dissertation looks at students' writing, and discusses how, after 15 years of teaching, a first year composition teacher felt compelled to change her pedagogy. Having recently lost her nephew to murder and concerned about the anti-social climate in her home, Bermuda, the researcher implemented a pedagogy intended to encourage students' voices and a sense of hope. The researcher's student-centered pedagogy required students to write books about 'what they were burning to tell the world,' as well as afterwords that, through the prism of hope, reflected on what they had written in their books. The data for the study included the students' completed books, their afterwords, interviews, and an email questionnaire. Seventeen students from 2 of the teacher/researcher's freshman writing classes volunteered to participate in this study. The topics explored by the students were varied and diverse. But because the concern of the researcher was for the violence in her community, the focus of this study is on those students' books that discussed violence, including their afterwords. The students wrote about the gun-related murders that have taken place in their island since 2003. In their books they address what they perceive to be the causes and effects of the violence, reflect on Bermuda as it was before the anti-social behavior, but they also express hope for change. Their writings show different perspectives of the violence, largely based on the impact that the violence has had on their own lives. The varying perspectives of the students' writings can be seen to be reflective of the various demographics in Bermuda.

Dedication

For my nephew, King Solomon Kellon DeVent Hill (October 24, 1989-August 10, 2008). You were but a babe, snatched away in your youth; yet, you made a difference in your young life. You made change. Sleep in peace, my nephew; sleep in peace.



Kellon at his oldest sister Kina's wedding, two months before he was murdered: From left to right--Kyron (oldest brother), father (Daniel), Kina and husband (Dion), mother (Gail), Kudre (brother), grandfather (my dad-Roland Hill), sitting in front with Kellon is Keira (youngest sister).

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There are several people to whom I have the deepest gratitude for their guidance, support and prayers. First and foremost, I thank God. I can't begin to express my gratitude to God for His unfailing protection and guidance as I made this doctoral journey. Without a doubt this journey has made me acutely aware of how much I need Him in my life and that I am who I am because of His presence in my life. I never could have made it without Him.

I thank my parents, Roland and Sylvia Hill. My mother is deceased, but I can feel her smile. I can feel her simply looking at me, smiling with pride and admiration—"*I knew you could do it, Sharon, girl."* I thank my parents for instilling those very important values in my life, values necessary for my success. Although neither of my parents was educated beyond high school, they stressed the important of education to each of their six children. More importantly they raised their children to believe in God. This was probably the most important value they could have instilled in my life. Although, in my early years, I didn't always adhere to the path that they chose for me, it was because they introduced me to God at a young age that I knew where to turn when I thought I couldn't make it through this journey.

Of course there is no way that I could have completed this journey without the guidance from my mentor and Advisor, Dr. Claude Hurlbert, a phenomenal teacher and guide, champion of the oppressed, protector of the environment, the epitome of humility, a man for whom I have the utmost respect. For his guidance and support I will be eternally grateful. I will also be grateful to him for opening my eyes to change—to my year of change. Dr. Gian Pagnucci and Dr. Gloria Park, thank you for agreeing to be a part of my committee. Your knowledge, your wisdom and your input have been invaluable. Thank you, simply thank you to both of you.

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being my role model even when I didn't realize you were. Jennifer O'Mara, (my cousin/my sister) and Jacquie Wade your belief in me, your support and your prayers helped bring me through. Marion Roberts, you listened to me talk, read and even cry, and you supported me through it all. Thank you. My nephew, Vernon Wears, thank you for listening to me go on and on about my research, for your support and for your prayers. Ben Williams, thank you for being there, for helping me, for supporting me and for your never-ending prayers. I could always rely on you to stop whatever you were doing and send up a prayer for me whenever I needed it, which was pretty much all the time. Many thanks to all of my family (siblings, aunts and uncles), who were pulling for me and praying for me. Steven Brown, thank you for planting that doctoral seed so many years ago. Dr. Geoffrey Rothwell, thank you for all of the help you gave me with my research, and thank you so much for your continued encouragement and support. Thank you to the members of my cohort, especially my dear friends Eda Azizoglu and Bader Algubaisi (a.k.a Charlie), Anyango Kivuva and Maha Mathaer. And of course, I thank each of my students who agreed to be participants in my research. Without them, none of this would have been possible.

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Gavin Virgil and Tevon Virgil, my dear son, whom I love with all of my heart, I thank you both for your quiet support. I thank you for your love.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Seeds for My Study

I enjoy my job as a teacher; I'm passionate about what I do. Therefore, it stood to reason that in pursuing my doctoral degree, that I find a research interest about which I could feel that same passion. A couple of things happened in my life that helped me to decide on my research interest. I am going into a little narrative digression here. Do I have to? No. But, Pagnucci (2004) says, "Stories are how we think . . . how we talk." And he suggests, "Placing myself into my writing helps me figure out exactly where my vantage point is, where I'm standing, where I'm coming from, and where I'm going. We've got to figure ourselves out in order to figure other people out . . . we have to find some way to write ourselves into the story if we want to understand it" (pp. 77-78). So, I am writing myself into my dissertation in order to get a better understanding of where I am at and where I am going. Besides, Trimmer (1997) says, "We need to tell our teaching stories if we are to understand our teaching lives" (p. xv). Our personal stories and our teaching stories are very often intertwined, they are intertexted. So, here's my story, or rather, here is one of my stories. It is a story that radically impacted my life, my personal life and my teaching life. A few years before I arrived at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, my young, college-bound nephew was set upon and killed by a group of five teenagers, ranging in ages of 15 to 18 years old, just days before he was scheduled to leave the island for university. He was beaten and repeatedly stabbed when he resisted these kids' attempts to rip his gold chain off his neck. The kids were caught and the case went to court. All but one of them got off, largely because the witnesses to the incident, who were nothing more than teenagers, were too afraid to speak up. After these kids got off, there seemed to be an

increase in gang violence and with it an increase in the number of gun-related crimes in Bermuda. My nephew's murder and the apparent increase in crime fuelled my research.

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It's August 9, 2008, and it's cricket season in Bermuda. Cricket is an English sport. Bermuda as a British colony is big on cricket in the summer time and football (soccer) in the winter. Today is a Western Counties game. Western County cricket is a tournament that sees cricket played amongst cricket teams from the Western parishes of the island, teams who are members of the Western County Cricket Association. Today, the team I support, Somerset Bridge Recreation Club (SBRC) and Willow Cuts Cricket Club (WCCC), are playing. The air is festive; the day is beautiful. It's a sky blue, cloudless day. It's hot, but it's a beautiful day for cricket. There are various colors of easy-up tents scattered around the outskirts of the Somerset Bridge Recreation Club field and between overs of the cricket match, music can be heard blaring from some of these easy up campsites. There's no music in our campsite, because even though we're watching the game live, I like to have a portable radio so that I can listen to the live commentary of the game. There's good fun rivalry between fans of both teams. Next to Cup Match, the County games (Western and Eastern counties) are the next big cricket events of the summer. County games, like Cup Match, are always a festive, party atmosphere for me and my friends. There's usually a group of about ten of us who get together for these games. There's always plenty of food: baked chicken, potato salad, pasta salad, red beans and rice, baked macaroni and cheese, curried goat, and of course there's plenty of liquor: beer, wine, rum, rum swizzle, etc. I usually do the cooking for these events, so I have been up since about 6:00 a.m. finishing off the cooking which I began preparing the night before, so that I can make sure I am at the field in time to see the first ball of the game.

Before you know it, it is 7:00 p.m. and the game is over. It's been a fun day. There's been a lot of friendly trash talk, and there are a lot of drunk people walking around the field socializing, and visiting campsites. Darkness has set in on what has been a very long day. Bermudians are hospitable people by nature, so I have spent the day catering to my own group of friends, as well as any other people who stopped by our campsite for a drink or for something to eat. It's about 10 p.m. and I'm ready for my bed. I've put in a twelve hour shift, so we decide to start packing up. Everyone begins packing in their cars the chairs they have brought with them. Because most of the camping equipment used for these events belongs to me, I always have the most to pack up. A couple of my friends, including my godson, Shannon, help me load up my car with the stuff I brought to the game--easy-up tent, cooler, a small table and a few chairs. Fortunately, I live very close to the field, so I don't have far to go and my godson follows me home on his motorcycle, so he can help me unload my car. Once we reach my house, we take everything out of the car, leaving a lot of the stuff on the porch to put away the next day. I've been on my feet catering to people all day, so we sit down to have a nightcap, me a glass of wine and he a Dark n' Stormy (Bermuda black rum and Bermuda ginger beer). The wine makes me sleepy, so I thank Shannon for his help and tell him I'm going to bed. We say our goodnights, and I'm in bed and sleep by about 11:30 p.m.

I've been asleep for a couple of hours, when I'm awakened out of my sleep by the phone ringing. I roll over and look at the clock. It's 1:45 a.m. Who in the heck is calling me this hour in the night, I'm thinking; probably one of my drunken friends. Not impressed, I reach for the phone.

I hear a sort of strange voice on the other end of the phone. "Sharon, they killed my son." For a minute, I don't recognize the voice.

"What? What? . . . What you say? . . . Who's this? . . . Daniel?"

"They killed my son," my brother says again in an odd sort of way. My mind is not clear, because he has woken me out of my sleep. I can't think.

"What are you talking about, Daniel? Who killed your son? Who killed your son? What? Is this a joke? Ya, not even funny! How? What happened?" the words are tumbling out of my mouth.

"They stabbed him."

"Daniel, Daniel, where are you?" I'm getting a bit frantic now.

"I'm at the hospital. They killed my son. . .," he says again in a voice I now recognize as pain-filled.

"Okay, okay, I stutter; "I'm on my way, Daniel. I'm on my way."

I hang up the phone, throw on the clothes I had taken off a couple of hours earlier, slide my feet into a pair of flip flops that are beside my bed, grab my cell phone, car keys and my purse. I knock on my son's bedroom door as I pass by. "Tevon," I call out through his closed door. "I'm going to the hospital; something is going on with your Uncle Daniel. He just called; something happened to Kudre." I dash out the door.

The hospital is about a half hour drive from my house. I jump in my car and head for the hospital, praying I don't run into any police along the way. It's the weekend. The police are usually parked up at various junctions, looking out for drunk drivers, so I know I need to be careful and alert. But my mind is not clear. I've been out in the sun all day, drinking, and I've just been woken out of my sleep. This is gotta be some sort of weird joke Daniel is playing, I think to myself. But if it is a joke, it's not funny. What the heck! Why would somebody stab Kudre? I wonder. What the heck! Somewhere in the back of my mind, I know it's not a joke,

but I'm still praying that it is. Twenty minutes later, I pull into the hospital parking lot. I dash through the emergency entrance doors and tell the lady behind the reception window that I'm looking for Daniel Hill. Just then someone, I can't remember who, came out and told me the family was down the corridor in a room to the right. I dashed down the hall, rounded the corner and standing outside in the hallway was my sister, Deborah. She looked at me, a sort of dazed look on her face.

"What's going on?" I ask her.

"They k-k-killed K-kellon," she stutters quietly.

I look at her for a minute as the name sinks in.

"WHAT?" I practically scream at her. "KELLON? What are you talking about? I thought it was Kudre?" I say.

Suddenly I realize that I didn't ask my brother, when he called, which son he was talking about. My brother, Daniel, has five children—two girls and three boys. Kellon was my brother's youngest son; he was the baby. He had just graduated from high school and was due to fly out of the island to attend university sometime within the next few days. The reality of the situation hit me like a ton of bricks. "Oh my God! Oh my God!" Deb and I wrapped our arms around each other and sobbed.

"Where's Daniel and Gail?" I ask Deb. Gail is my brother's wife.

"Daniel's in there," Deb says, nodding her head toward a green door in the hallway. "I'm not sure where Gail is," she adds. "I wanna see him," Deb says.

Just then my brother comes out of the room. I hug him; I hug him tight. Tears are running down my face. For some reason, he seems amazingly calm.

"Where's Kellon, Daniel?" I ask.

"You wanna see him?"

"Yes," Deb and I answer simultaneously.

Daniel takes us through the double doors, leading into the Emergency department and into a room. As if asleep, there lay my nephew, my brother's youngest son, on a bed, shirtless, with a small puncture wound near his chest. Gail, his mother, silently stands vigil over her baby boy. I look at Gail, and know there is nothing I can say. She stands there silently. Afraid to go near her, I hug her with my eyes. Standing on the other side of the bed is Kyron, my brother's oldest son. He stands there quietly, shaking his head. I put my arm around him. There are no words. How could he be dead? "He looks like he's sleeping, doesn't he," says Daniel, as if he is reading my mind. He does look like he is sleeping, like he is just gonna open his eyes any minute. I touch him; he's still warm. We stand there for a while. Then, unable to bear the calmness of that room anymore, Deb and I leave to go to the family waiting room.

The family waiting room is full. Since I hadn't gone in there when I first arrived, I didn't realize there were so many people in there. My two oldest sisters, Janet and Lois, are there, their faces wearing bewilderment and pain. My youngest sister, Heather, is there. Some of my aunts and uncle. My nieces and nephews. And there is my Dad, looking like he has aged another ten years. We had just lost my mother three months ago and now this. We had lost my mother to cancer; that we could understand, but this! We sat broken and helpless, not knowing what to do. What could we do? What could we do? After a while, we did the only thing we knew how to do at a time like this. We sat and we prayed; we prayed for Daniel and Gail. We prayed for Kina and Kyron. We prayed for Kudre and Keira; the rest of Daniel and Gail's children. We prayed for each other. We prayed for comfort; we prayed for strength to get through this. We prayed. And we prayed. I prayed; I prayed for my other nephews, my other siblings' sons. I could see

that look in their eyes; I could see vengeance. Strangely, I don't remember seeing my nephew, Kudre, my brother's other son; the one who I initially thought had been the victim. But he must have been there. He *had* to have been there.

There were so many questions. What happened? How did this happen? Kellon wasn't a trouble maker. Gradually the story started to unfold as the family sat in that room. Kellon and one of his cousins had gone to a beach party, a party for a teen girl who was leaving the island for school. Her mother was hosting the party. Kellon wasn't actually on the beach. There is a road that leads down from the main road to the beach. Several of the people attending the party had parked their cars and bikes along this road. Kellon was parked and sitting on his bike on this road that led down to the beach. While sitting there, a group of kids—four boys and a girl, between fifteen to seventeen years olds--came along. They had been drinking and started behaving in an unruly and threatening manner. "Someone's gonna get beat up tonight," one of them chanted. Kellon was wearing a heavy gold chain with a cross pendant. One of the kids decided to snatch the chain off Kellon's neck. Kellon wasn't a big guy; slender build, about 5 foot 10. But he wasn't going to let some guy just snatch his chain. Anybody else might have let it go and forgotten about the chain. After all, it was five of them. Not Kellon. But who would expect a group of kids to gang up on one guy over something that didn't even belong to them in the first place? A fight broke out. Kellon wasn't a troublemaker, but he was no punk either. His dad had paid a lot of money for that chain and he wasn't about to let someone snatch it from him. People started screaming "fight, fight," and everybody went running to see what was going on. When this happened, the other little thugs jumped in. One of the kids hit Kellon from behind, breaking a cane across his head. Another one of them hit him with a crash helmet, while others kicked him and punched him. This was one guy--fighting off five kids. They beat him. They

kicked him. They punched him. And they stabbed him--several times, using a knife and a screwdriver. Kellon fought back, but he never stood a chance against the five of them. He staggered, dropped to his knees and died there on the spot. His teenage assailants, rather than run up the hill to the main road, ran down the hill to the beach, taking a circuitous route, which led them onto the beach and back to the main road via a small hotel property that bordered the beach. They caught a taxi and went home, to one of the kids' house. Open and shut case, right? Five kids gang up on one kid at a party where there were several witnesses? Definitely an open and shut case, right? Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Prior to my nephew's murder our island had seen an increase in crime and violent behavior. Tim Smith, a reporter for the *Royal Gazette*, wrote, "Bermuda had seen a disturbing spiral in gang violence throughout 2008 but nobody was prepared for the tragic stabbing of Kellon Hill at a late-night Elbow Beach party" ("Violence spirals with tragic stabbing of Kellon Hill"). Smith was right because the violence we had been experiencing was between rival gangs. No, no one was prepared for the stabbing of a young, innocent college-bound teenager. My family was left to bury and mourn the senseless killing of a son, a brother, a nephew, a cousin, a grandchild, a friend, a baby. About Kellon's funeral, Sarah Lagan wrote, "More than 500 mourners packed into Kellon Hill's funeral to remember the talented teen whose 'bright life was extinguished violently and senselessly.' There was standing room only . . . as crowds of hundreds of faces turned up for the murdered 18-year-old's funeral. The three policemen guarding the entrance to the church stood as a stark reminder of the mindless violence that had brought the people to congregate there" ("Kellon had aspirations to make any parent smile"). Not only was my family devastated by this tragic loss, but our entire island community was rocked by Kellon's death. This wasn't a thug on thug crime; this was an innocent young

man. "He was said by Police to be an innocent victim with no gang affiliations — simply a young man sitting on his motorcycle in the wrong place at the wrong time" (Smith 2009, "Violence spirals"). The irony is that in Kellon's last year of high school, only months before he was murdered, he wrote a research paper on this very topic, "Youth Violence: The Cure for Unproductive Youth." In this paper he discussed how kids were becoming desensitized because of the neighborhoods they lived in. "If a child comes from a rough neighborhood where they see violence everyday they can become desensitized." Seeing violence or engaging in violent behavior doesn't bother them. He also wrote that "weapons are becoming more lethal. . . . Gangs and teenagers are using weapons on each other such as guns, knives and other deadly tools." Who would have thought that Kellon would have been lying dead mere months after writing this paper as the result of stab wounds inflicted by a knife and a screwdriver?

Yes, it was indeed horrible, simply horrible, especially since the assailants were young teens. No one, not even my family, really thought that those kids set out to kill my nephew. They wanted his chain and they expected him to punk out when they snatched it. They certainly didn't expect him to put up a fight to get it back. But he did, and it cost him his life. While we didn't think they set out to kill him, neither did we think that they would claim innocence. But that's exactly what all five of them did. All five of them pled not guilty. It was revealed in the trial that a couple of them had blood on their clothes. They had beach sand on them from when they ran onto the beach to escape. And, there were witnesses. Sadly, many of the people who were there were too scared to testify. They were kids. The birthday girl was only fifteen, so most of the people who attended the party were young. And the ones who did testify were badgered and torn apart by the defense lawyers. Some of these kids, the assailants, had "Queen's Counsel," the highest lawyers in the British court of law, representing them. At the end of the

day and after two trials, the first one being declared a mistrial because the jury was hung, all but one of the kids walked free. One of them, seventeen year-old Kellan Lewis, was found guilty of manslaughter and guilty of carrying a bladed weapon; he was sentenced to twelve years in Westgate Correctional Facility, Bermuda's maximum security prison.

Did the sentencing of this young man bring an end to crime, or even a decrease, in crime in Bermuda? No; not at all. If anything, there seemed to be an increase in gang-related crime, and not just any crime, but gun-related murders. I mean, after all, you can kill a person, an innocent person no less, and get off with what amounts to a slap on the wrist. Why would anyone involved in criminal behavior be deterred after seeing what happened in the "Kellon Hill" case? Crime didn't go down. In fact, it seemed to escalate. People no longer feared going to jail or punishment. In fact, the kids who killed my nephew, the ones who got off, just became more bodacious. They felt invincible; they walked without fear. They continued to attack and intimidate people. I know. I lived in the same neighborhood as three of them. I passed them on the street, regularly. I knew their parents. They knew me, from the neighborhood and from seeing me in court almost every day during the trial. No, what happened with those kids did absolutely nothing to deter crime in Bermuda.

My nephew was murdered in August 2008, and things only got worse. In 2009, there were four gun-related murders and a staggering seven gun-related murders in 2010. Of course, there were other acts of violence, fights, with and without weapons (knives, machetes) and shootings, during this time as well. So, was it merely coincidence that we saw the number of gun-related murders radically increase around the same time as four of the five kids who murdered my nephew got off, without even so much as a slap on the wrist? I don't think so. The whole of Bermuda was stunned when those kids got off. People were in stunned disbelief.

The radio talk shows on Bermuda airways talked about nothing but the injustice that had been done in the "Kellon Hill" case. Politicians, judges and lawyers talked about changing laws. There was talk of curfews for young people. There was even talk of charging parents for their children's deviant behavior. This was after it was discovered during the trial that one of the parents had covered up evidence and had even verbally threatened one of the prosecutors in the case. People wondered, what was happening to our young people? Why were we seeing kids who seemed to have no moral compass?

One day I sat talking with, Jacquie, one of my girlfriends, on her front porch about the escalation in violence in our once quiet and peaceful island. We were still trying to make sense of the outcome of the trial, and trying to make sense of all the violence and antisocial behavior that was permeating our island. Jacquie's twenty-one year old daughter, India, sat nearby listening to our conversation. "You guys, it's simple," she interjected. "It's because these young people today have no hope. They just don't care, because they ain't got no hope." Jacquie and I looked at each other, unable to respond as we considered her words. We knew that India knew what she was talking about because she was familiar with that street life. India's revelation bugged me for a long time, but it didn't take on significance until much later. My nephew's murder changed me, albeit unconsciously. It opened my eyes. But first, I have to tell you about D'Angelo.

The Two Faces of Bermuda--A Snap Shot . . . The 'Other' World

Stopping on his way out of the classroom, about two weeks into the fall 2010 semester, a young man stood in front of me after one of my freshmen composition classes. With a pair of dark, slightly worn, inexpensive Puma sneakers, he wore a dark colored T shirt and baggy jeans. Thank goodness the jeans were not hanging down below his boxer shorts, like most young men

were wearing them in Bermuda at the time. Neither was he wearing a lot of bling. There was an air of humility about him. He was about medium height, fairly solid in build, like a lightweight fighter. His mocha colored skin was inked out, with slits cut into in his eyebrows. Although I later learned that he was fresh out of jail, I could tell from his writing history profile, which he had submitted the week before, that he had something; he was a writer; he had stories.

He stood in front of me that day in early September and in a strange, quiet, somewhat hesitant voice said, "Ms. Virgil, you don't know," shaking his head slightly. "You don't know what I've been through." I looked at him silently, not knowing what to say. My heart did a little double beat. A strange sort of feeling came over me, the kind of double beat feeling a mother gets when worried about her child. It was only later I realized that what I thought of as a 'strangeness' in his voice was pain. I could sense tension, fear, I could sense that he was on the run, if you can run anywhere in Bermuda. The island is only 22 miles long, but he was on the run, ducking and hiding from anyone who didn't come from where he came from. In Bermuda, especially for a young man, where you come from, whether East or West, town or country, can determine your life or death.

Gang expert Alexander Rollins, claims there are "eleven gangs" in Bermuda, two more gangs than the nine parishes of roughly 2 square miles each that make up Bermuda (as cited in Pearman 2011, "Expert lifts lid;" see Appendix A). Gang formation sees the island divided on the basis of town and country. You have the far eastern end of the island, the far western end of the island, and in the middle is the city or capital of Bermuda, Hamilton, which is referred to as 'town.' Any area outside of 'town' is referred to as 'country.' The 'town' area is the nucleus for gang activity, with as many as four gangs in that area, the most notorious being 'Parkside' and '42' (pronounced 'four-two'). Living a stone's throw away from each other, the members of

these two rival gangs are neighbors and were once friends, at least up until the "late 2000s", claims Rollins (as cited in Pearman 2011, "Expert cop quizzed"). Sometimes brothers, cousins, god-brothers are members of rival gangs, so they're fighting, and at times, killing their own blood. Any gang operating outside of the town area may be referred to as country, with the most notorious of these groups being M.O.B. (a.k.a. 'money over bitches'), a gang located on the far west end of the island. For the most part, you only need to be born in, or live in, any of these areas said to have gang affiliation to be considered a gang rep (representative).

I never got a chance to find out where, D'Angelo, the young man who stood in front of me that day in the fall semester of 2010 was from, whether east, west or town. He was only 18 years old, but he looked so much older, not in his face, but in his eyes, eyes which although unmarked with age lines, looked deep, dark and empty. There was an oldness in his eyes that comes with a life lived on the street, on the rough side. They were eyes that had seen too much and none of it good. But since he wasn't flashing expensive sneakers or bling (gold), his possible gang involvement was probably nothing more than that of a foot soldier, rather than anyone of consequence. As he stood in front of me that day and I looked into his eyes, while trying not to, my throat constricted, my nose began to run, water sat lightly around my eyelids and I blinked quickly several times; the mother in me struggled to maintain composure. I moved half a step towards him before I caught myself, but I so wanted to hug this kid whom I didn't even know. Instead, I stood there speechless, not knowing what to do, what to say. I wanted to say something that would help him, something that would reassure him, something that would give him hope, but I didn't because I really didn't know what to say. So, I said the 'teacherly' thing: "D'Angelo, you have potential, I can see it in your writing; please try to hang in there."

Wah wah wah wah. . ., sounding, I'm sure, like Charlie Brown's teacher. D'Angelo stopped coming to class.

One day, a few weeks later, a couple of girls who were in the same class with D'Angelo waited to speak with me after the class. I hadn't seen D'Angelo since that day in mid-September. Timid, but brave enough to approach on behalf of their friend, they asked, nearly in unison, "Ms Virgil, D'Angelo wants to know if it's too late for him to catch up."

"D'Angelo? D'Angelo wants to come back to class?" I asked. Without waiting for them to answer, I said, "Yes, yes, please tell him to come back; tell him I'll help him, I'll make sure that he catches up. Tell him it's not too late."

But, D'Angelo didn't come back. I don't know what happened to him. Several weeks later when I asked the girls about him, disappointedly, they shrugged their shoulders. "We told him what you said, Ms. Virgil. . . . dunno. We dunno know wur he is."

For the next few weeks, I looked for him to come through the door of my class—hoping he would come back. I used to scan the newspaper every day, looking for stories of interest for my students, but one day I realized that I was looking with more intensity. It was as if I were looking for something specific. It dawned on me that I was still looking for D'Angelo, looking for a story about him, still wondering what had happened to him. Tears creep into my eyes even now as I think about him. I know I will see more D'Angelos as the years move on: young men who seem to have no sense of hope, because the lives they live are the lives they are born into, each one of them prevented by fear for their own life from moving outside of a 2 square mile area on a tiny island, an island fighting against the rip currents of drug and alcohol abuse, and gun violence. It is against this landscape that I hope to make a change.

In 2010, an article in one of Bermuda's newspapers reported, that "Heroin addiction ha[d] reached record highs" (Jones). And now more recent reports by both, King Edward Memorial Hospital's Chief of Emergency Room, Dr. Edward Schultz, and Dr. Ernest Peets Jr., programme coordinator at drug addiction charity, *Focus*, have revealed that heroin has become the drug of choice over cocaine and crack cocaine (as cited in Hainey, 2013). Anti-social behavior has spread, like the swells of the ocean, to our children. The island's only daily newspaper, *The Royal Gazette*, reported on a survey which found, "One third of Primary 5, Primary 6 and Middle 1 students had tried drugs, cigarettes or alcohol. Some students admitted trying alcohol at the age of six and marijuana at seven" ("Children as young as seven," 2013). Minister for Public Safety, Michael Dunkley, said government is now looking at tightening drinking laws in efforts to curb anti-social behaviors. He also expressed concern about the survey which revealed that children as young as 12 were taking their first drink ("Govt to tighten drinking laws," 2013). Even more disconcerting is a story in *The Royal Gazette* which revealed that Bermuda has a higher per capita murder rate than that of the U.S. and the U.K. (Strangeways, 2011). On an island where guns were once relatively unheard of; shootings and murders became the norm, a terribly disconcerting norm. Sadly, because we are such a small place, there is perhaps no one who hasn't felt the impact, directly or indirectly, of this increase in murders, and I'm no exception.

As a composition teacher, it is imperative that I recognize and acknowledge that times have changed in my island home, and consequently, in my classroom. We used to be family and community-oriented. We used to be a care-free people, a serene and tranquil island. We used to be referred to as the 'isle of paradise.' That has all changed. Subsequently, our students have changed, which means that I will have to change as well. Teachers have the ability to touch

lives, but probably none more than college composition teachers because virtually all students enrolled in a college degree program have to take a Composition course. A composition teacher is positioned in a way whereby she can impact thousands of lives over the course of her career, positioned possibly in a way whereby she can effect change in her radically changing community through her radically changing students. Perhaps the composition teacher is positioned, like Esther, "for such a time as this" (Est. 4:14), a time of change, a time of turmoil and unrest. We must teach towards a better world. So my nephew's murder, the increase in crime and perhaps the realization that I would have more 'D'angelo stories sparked my search on how I could teach towards a better world, a healthier world.

Bermuda is Another World

Just as there are two sides to a story, there are definitely two sides to Bermuda. One side of Bermuda is the Bermuda that robbed me of my nephew, the Bermuda that has seen an increase in gun-related violence, the Bermuda that sees a growing number of youth who don't have any hope. This is a Bermuda that many older Bermudians have difficulty reconciling with the one that they know. This 'other' Bermuda is not the Bermuda that tourists see when they visit our Island. Bermudian musician and song writer, Hubert Smith, penned the song, "Bermuda Is Another World," Bermuda's unofficial national anthem, which captures this world perfectly:

> Bermuda is another world. Seven hundred miles at sea and the way the people greet you is a friendly melody. To touch a flower in the morning, to listen to a honeybee, to hear a bird who sings a song, just to say that he is free. Bermuda is another world. Turn around I'll tell you why. Just to watch the morning sunrise from the sea up to the sky. To look across on the harbor and see the multicolored sail. To waterski on the waters that always leaves a snowy trail. Bermuda is another world. Turn around and you'll be gone. But

there will always be a memory that will linger on and on. And someday I'll hear you say, just as I have said today, Bermuda is another world.

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sscml-amGC4)

Smith's song is a song that many visitors to our island fondly recall hearing when they walked through Bermuda's airport on their visit to our island. Yes indeed, Bermuda is another world.

Flying into Bermuda is always a pride-filled moment for me when returning home from overseas, especially if I happen to be sitting next to a first-time visitor to our island. The intake of breath by the visitor as they gaze out the window never fails to bring a smile to my lips and to my heart. The beauty of the Island, this jewel in the middle of the Atlantic, as seen from the air, is absolutely breathtaking. White caps frothing, fishing boats and other sailing vessels looking like mere toy boats from the sky. First time visitors to our island, if they're fortunate enough to fly in from the western end of the island, can't help but be awed by the many shades of blue of the ocean, the white rooftops and the pastel colored houses. Their arrival on the island continues their awe as they take in the various shades of green of the flora interspersed with the reds of the Hibiscus, the pink of the Oleander, the white of the Myrtle. Driving along on the left side of our narrow, winding and litter-free roads, the visitor is struck by the freshness of the air.

"The air, the air smells so different here," said my Turkish girlfriend Eda when she and her husband, Reha, visited me for the first time in early October. "What is it?" she asked. "Why does it smell like that?"

"It's the salt," I said. "It's the salt breeze coming off the ocean." Surrounded by the ocean, you can't help but smell it. Their reaction to my island home fills me with that sense of pride and I smile quietly.

Then there are our beaches. Bermuda is renowned for its pink and white sand beaches. Standing in the water, looking down and seeing your toes wiggling on the ocean's floor is an experience in itself. Almost no one comes to Bermuda without visiting our famous Horseshoe Bay Beach, a beach rightly named for its horseshoe shape. Eda and her husband could not resist the cool blue waters of Cooper's Island Beach, another of our beaches located at the far eastern end of the island, even though it was October.

Bermuda as "another world," as articulated in Bermuda's unofficial national anthem, is the one that tourists know and the one that older Bermudians remember. For a very long time, tourism was the 'main' pillar of our economy, and Bermuda prided itself on having a first class hospitality industry. Couple this sense of pride with the fact that most island children are raised to use their manners, especially to adults; and you'll find that Bermudians are typically a friendly and courteous people. It is this hospitable, tourist-friendly Bermuda that many older Bermudians remember. In fact, courtesy is one of the hallmarks of Bermudians. They are known for their interesting blend of British, Caribbean, and American accented greetings: "Good morning," "Good afternoon," or "Good evening." And when they greet you, they *expect* a response, something many visitors quickly learn. The following is a typical encounter which demonstrates 'Bermudian Manners 101.'

A male tourist riding along on a moped on our winding roads, with his wife travelling, nervously and shakily, a little ways behind him pulls up and stops beside a young man walking along the South Shore.

"How can I get to Horseshoe Bay Beach?" the tourist asks as his wife comes to a shaky stop not far behind him.

"Good afternoon," replies the young man.

"How can I get to Horseshoe Bay Beach?" the man asks again, with a sort of sideways look at his wife."

"Good afternoon," the young man says again.

"How can I get to Horseshoe Bay Beach?" the tourist asks again, but this time somewhat louder, thinking the man must have a hearing problem.

"*Good afternoon*!" the young man says again, but this time with more emphasis.

"Oh, I'm sorry; good afternoon," he says, his skin from the neck up now appearing flushed. "Can you tell me how to get to Horseshoe Bay Beach?" he asks again with a somewhat sheepish look on his face.

"Sure," says the young man, smiling; "Just follow this road for about half a mile until you see a big pink hotel up on the hill on your left. Continue past the hotel for about another quarter of a mile. You will see a white restaurant, Tio Pepe, with tables and umbrellas outside on the left. Take the first right turn after you pass the restaurant and follow the road all the way to the bottom of the hill. You can't miss it."

"Thank you," the tourist replies.

"You're welcome," answers the young man, still smiling. "Enjoy your visit to Horseshoe Bay. Make sure you don't leave your belongings unattended on the beach."

The previous situation is typical and it is a situation that is very common in Bermuda. When Bermudian speak, saying, 'good morning' or 'good afternoon,' they expect to be answered in kind. That's just part of our culture. But a lesson in Bermudian Manners 101 is not always like the previous encounter. Take the following blog narrative which recounts a visit by David Colman, a Canadian business and industry consultant and repeat visitor to our Island in which he reflects on his and his wife's experiences in Bermuda:

It all started on our first full day on the [island]. . . . Barb and I were trying to find a church ruin in St. George's. With a smile on my face and my very pleasant voice, I asked a man, "Where can we find the ruined church in the town"? Now, already I can see you parsing my question and determining how else I could have asked it. Believe me, because of what the man said next, I've been doing that ever since it happened. Here is his response. With a big smile on his face he said, "First of all, good afternoon to both of you and welcome to Bermuda. The church you are looking for is called the 'Unfinished Church' and, if you come to the corner, look you can see it. Thank you for coming to Bermuda and enjoy your stay". I had no shovel, but if I had, I couldn't have dug a hole deep enough. But his message was clear. In his respectful and candid way, he had told me that in Bermuda we always greet people first before discussing anything else. He was absolutely right and I had no excuse. . . .

Next, I'd like you to imagine, for just a moment that you are sitting on a bus. It's rush hour. You are off to work. The driver has stopped the bus, waiting for a woman who is at least two hundred yards away, running for the bus. We wait and we wait. As she eventually gets on, she thanks the driver and they exchange a few pleasantries as if they are the only two people in the world. Then as she huffs and puffs her way to her seat, she says good morning to everyone on the bus – everyone. At the next stop, another passenger gets on and greets everyone on the bus as well. This, as it turns out, is quite common practice in Bermuda. . . .

Now don't get me wrong. There are people with excellent manners wherever we go. It is the extent of the politeness in Bermuda that is so striking to me. But why here in Bermuda? My short answer to that is I just don't know. I simply don't have the facts to

be certain, but I do have some thoughts on the matter. Firstly, at a minimum, I think it is a choice, a choice made by this island society that this is the way they want its people to behave. To achieve this choice, de facto they have adopted a couple of tenets: lead by example – a good example; and encourage – no, demand – that the island's children follow the adults' example. A few weeks ago I was standing at the shore of Jobson's Bay on the island's south shore. . . . A man was in the water with his two young sons. He said hello to me and immediately reminded his boys to say 'good morning' to this stranger. They did without further encouragement. At another time, Barb was in a shop in St. George's. The owner said to her little girl, "Did you say 'good morning' to the lady – because if you did, I don't think she could have heard you"? And just the other day, a young boy accidentally ran into me while riding his bike. There was no harm done. His grandmother, who was nearby, did not apologise to me on his behalf. She made sure that he apologised directly to me. He did so as though it was second nature.

I'm the first to admit that my 'research' here is not science but just a bunch of stories. But every example we came across seemed to involve parents, family members, and yes, even bus drivers. The thought 'it takes a village…..' often came to mind. Respect, through politeness and manners, seems embedded in these islands' environmental DNA.

But whatever the reason for this outlook on life, regardless of my musings, for six weeks Barb and I have been but two of the beneficiaries of it all, to which we say a polite and heartfelt ' thank you' to these wonderful people. ("Where's your manners?")

So, yes, there is another side to Bermuda and Bermudians pride themselves on their use of manners, so much so that they find it somewhat offensive when it is not reciprocated. Most

people do still try to raise their children to demonstrate good manners. And yes, tourists are very often the recipients of this well-mannered behavior. Randi Stirn from Baltimore shares her experience of Bermudian hospitality with *Royal Gazette* reporter, Ceola Wilson. Stirn says she was lucky enough to be seated next to Bermudian, Gladys Maderios, on a flight from Boston to Bermuda:

> Over the course of the two hour plane ride, this vivacious, energetic ray of sunshine told me all about her native country. "A born and bred Bermudian, this woman proudly shared her knowledge of her homeland, openly and honestly. Gladys informed me of where to visit, where to eat, sites not to be missed and places only the locals know about. "In mid sentence, she interrupted, 'why don't I take you around myself? I'm free this Thursday and Saturday, just give me a call!' Ms Madeiros gave the visitor who was not used to "this kind of unprovoked hospitality, warmth and friendship." …

True to her word, Gladys Maderios took Stirn and her family on a tour of the island. Stirn says, "She [even] offered us freshly baked banana bread and ginger beer. . . . This woman was truly divine. Without reservation, she opened up her entire day just to show us a good time. Even more striking, she opened her heart and home to us, treating us not like tourists, but like family" (Wilson, 2013, "I have never experienced"). Gladys Maderios' demonstration of kindness is not an anomaly. Most Bermudians are genuinely decent and considerate people. Finighan (2014) reports, "Bermudians may have a well-known reputation for being warm and welcoming, but visitors to our shores are still overwhelmed by the hospitality of their hosts." A Bermuda Tourism Authority's survey of 2,000 tourists who visited Bermuda in 2013 revealed that "the friendliness of the Island exceeded the expectations of almost two-thirds of visitors" (Finighan, 2014). Some of the hospitality displayed by Bermudians may stem from our being a

country depending on a tourist industry, but most of it may be simply the pride we feel about our island and we love to show it off. We are proud of this little rock, this little piece of heaven in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and most Bermudians reflect that sense of pride.

But lately, for many Bermudian residents, Bermuda seems to have morphed into two worlds, separate and distinct, "another world," and the 'other' world. There's the safe, untouched world that tourists see and there's the 'other' one in which many locals live. We are an island, but we are not so isolated as to be untouched by the world of which we are a part, at least not any more. After all, we are only a two hour flight, or less, from many major cities on the East coast of the United States. Almost anything that you can imagine happening in the U.S. can and sometimes does happen in Bermuda. It is this two faced, changed landscape which forms the backdrop of my dissertation.

A Narrative Reflection

So, a few years after my nephew's death, I enrolled in Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Composition & TESOL program. It was about six weeks into my first semester, around October of 2011. In this little town in Pennsylvania, without friends or family, I found myself in a very self-reflective space, a space that lead to me becoming deeply spiritual. Time alone has a tendency to make a person self-analytical, self-critical. At the time, I often questioned myself about what I was doing. Where was I going? What was the point of this degree? What was my purpose? Being in this space, this self-analytical space, lead me back to my roots and I began to read the Bible more. One day I read a Bible text about hope—about how trials and tribulations are intended to build patience, character and "unshakeable" hope. I read this text and alarm bells seemed to sound in my head, as the text brought to mind India's (my friend Jacquie's daughter) comment about Bermuda's youth not having any hope. That's

when it dawned on me—my purpose and the answer to my soon-to-be mentor, Dr. Claude Hurlbert's question—"How do you change the world, Sharon?" I read this text and it dawned on me that I *had* to try to find a way to instill hope in my students. My research had to be about instilling a sense of hope and my composition classroom was the ideal place to try to do this. As Hurlbert and Totten (1992) aptly say, "The English classroom . . . is a good place to begin reading and writing and talking and listening together for a more . . . ethical society and for a safer and healthier world" (p. 2). This was my purpose; to try to create a "safer and healthier" and more hopeful world for my students. I wasn't even sure if it was possible, but I knew I *had* to try to help my students see that all is not lost, that there is hope, hope for each one of them, and hope for our Island. Only a dot on most maps, Bermuda is, nonetheless, our island, our home, our hope.

So, my research looked at the personal narrative writings of my students, the writings they did in my Freshman English class. I encouraged my students to write out of their personal experiences. Students write best when they write about things that they know about and, writing about their personal experiences would be more meaningful to them. In fact, Park (2010) says, we need to "have students engage in personal narrative writings that provide meaningful ways to connect their academic learning with their personal journeys" (p. 53). While Park was actually looking at finding ways for students, particularly L2 students, to be more comfortable in their academic roles, the use of personal narratives to make connections can certainly be applicable to all students. Students will always write better when writing out of experience. When students write out of their personal experiences, teachers can help them connect their personal lives with their academic worlds, which may result in more meaningful learning. My research examined the way writing personal narratives influenced voice and hope in my Bermuda College freshman

composition students. I asked my students to tell me their stories. I asked them to write their worlds. I wanted them to see that as they 'WRITE' their worlds, they had an opportunity to 'RIGHT' their worlds, and that for as long as they were writing, they could write any ending they chose. The ways in which writing narratives may or may not change the perspectives of the authors (my BC student writers) has not been thoroughly examined. My dissertation is a starting point. Bermuda, although only a very small island of approximately 63,000 people, is still a part of the world. My students deserve a right to write their worlds, they deserve a right to be heard.

What is Hope?

Hope, in an ideal, peaceful world may be the desire for stability or the maintenance of that peaceful state of being. In a not so peaceful world or in tumultuous times hope may be the desire for something different, the desire for change. Unless the intent is one of vengefulness, it is the desire for a change for something better than what is currently being experienced. Hope is that thing that allows us to survive in challenging times. But because we are all individuals, occupying our given worlds, hope is different things to each of us. Without question, hope does not have a universal definition. In fact, Webb (2013) asserts that "hope is not a singular undifferentiated experience and is best understood as a socially mediated human capacity with varying affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions" (p. 397). In essence, hope is different things to different people; it is something that is individually defined based on one's circumstances. It is a complex concept and neither is it something that is easily crystallized. Snyder (2005), who devised a 'hope theory,' believes that hope has to do with goal-setting and the way one goes about achieving those goals. He defines hope "as the perceived capacity to: (1) develop workable goals; (2) find routes to those goals (pathways thinking); and (3) become motivated to use those pathways (agency thinking) (Snyder, 2005, p. 72). Goal setting is

important for both students and teachers. As it pertains to teaching hooks (2003) rightly says, "Educating is a vocation rooted in hopefulness" (p. xiv). And, Fotinakes (2014) asserts, "Hope . . . is the purpose of education" (unpublished dissertation). After all, why else would we educate accept to bring about change, a positive change in our students? Ward and Wampler (2010) claim, "For years therapists have suggested that hope is an important catalyst in the process of change" (p. 212). Perhaps more importantly, Freire (2004) says, "Hope is an ontological need," it is the essence of our being (p. 2). And, Webb (2013) concurs with Freire: "Hoping is an integral part of what it is to be human . . .." (p. 397). Living without hope can be a very dangerous thing, for what do you have to live for if you do not have hope.

Yet, hope is not just for the desperate and the downtrodden. My students have hope, something which becomes evident in the writing of their afterwords. Jimaye has hope for others, Patrick has hope for his generation, and Deanna and Latreece have hope for Bermuda. I have hope that my pedagogy has the potential to empower my students, encourage voice in my students, and perhaps, where needed, be therapeutic for my students. Indeed, hope is that thing that sustains life and it is my hope that I can affect change in my island, in my classroom, in my students through my pedagogy of hope.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

This is Where I've Been; This is Where I'm Going

Over fifteen years of teaching freshman composition, I had revised and refined my peer evaluation forms and my grading rubrics so that they were consistent with the information that I 'gave' students about each rhetorical mode that I taught: exemplification, compare/contrast, cause and effect, definition, argumentation/persuasion. Notice, narration was not one of the strategies. In fact, my English department may be considered to be a member of the anti-narrative camp, who thinks stories are for kids, for high school. Stories are seen to have little value in higher education. For my English department, what is important is the form, the strategies. Students had to be taught the rhetorical strategies or modes. Teaching them the modes is what would ensure that they were prepared to write for their other college courses and thus, would ensure their success. And I guess I had come to believe this, too. In truth, though, our lives are comprised of narratives; "we live by our stories, we also live in them" (Okri 1997). Our stories, the stories of our parents, the stories of the other people in our lives not only help to define us, but they also help us to understand our world. Pagnucci (2005) asserts that "we need to exchange stories with each other in order to make sense of our worlds" (p. 3). But in a course in which the focus is on modes or strategies the students' voices may be stymied, or worse, silenced. I can recall many times when a student had written a wonderful cause and effect essay, when the assignment was actually to write an exemplification essay. The student had something he wanted to say, but because it didn't adhere to the specific guidelines, it was considered wrong and thus not meeting the requirements of the assignment. I now realize that in order to avoid stymying the voices of my students, I must un-cuff them from these rhetorical strategies, from

the forms, and allow them the freedom to write their lives without restriction, to see their lives in print, because I believe that as long as they're writing, there is hope. There is life in writing. Writing allows them to sort things out, to work through what is often a process of self-discovery. As long as they are writing and sharing their stories, they are learning things about themselves and sometimes about others. Writing helps them to grow and change. Writing their lives allows them to see that they have the power to write any ending they wish. But, I didn't always think this way.

As I reflect on my teaching past, prior to my enrollment in Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Composition & TESOL program, I remember that teaching rhetorical modes, focusing on form was not something I deliberately chose to do. Rather, it was a pedagogy I had to adopt and get used to, much like the school uniforms I had to wear as a child. All of Bermuda's school children wear uniforms. I hated the uniform, but I had to wear it, so I had to get used to it. When I started teaching at Bermuda College fifteen years ago, I was expected to put on their pedagogical uniform, which meant teaching the rhetorical strategies, so I did. I shortened the hem a bit, made a few tucks here and there; made it more to my liking, to my taste, but still; it was *their* uniform. Fifteen years ago it worked; I had to make it work. After all, I needed a job. I had recently changed careers. I had left a business environment and went back to school to become at teacher.

When I changed careers many years ago and returned to school in the early 90s, I was determined to make a difference, to create life-long learners as a teacher of English. I was an older, non-traditional student, but still young enough to be idealistic. I wanted to show my students that learning could be fun. So when I was introduced to what was still a semi-new way of teaching writing that put students at the center, process-based writing, I was excited. Hairston

(1982), in looking at Thomas Kuhn's 1963 publication of *The Structure of the Scientific Revolutions*, saw the value of the changes Kuhn claimed were taking place in the sciences, and she saw how those changes were relevant to the teaching of writing and the changes that were happening in the field of composition. Hairston saw the "move to a process-centered theory of teaching writing [. . . as] a paradigm shift" (p. 77). For me, process meant a focus on the student, allowing him a voice, collaborative learning so that the focus was on the process of learning, it meant revision and revision and revision, the messy aspects of writing. So, I understood, as Perl (1980), Olson (1997), and Murray (1982) pointed out, that writing is not a linear activity; instead it is recursive. And Murray (1982) was right; "the job is never done, for writing is never final" (p. 7). A writer is never done writing, for he will always find something that he could have said differently, more articulately, more eloquently, or even better. I liked the idea of process-centered teaching of writing that put students at the center, and that encouraged collaborative learning. I don't think my education in the 90s involved a discussion of 'rhetorical strategies.' That was something I was only introduced to when I joined the English faculty at Bermuda College.

But after so many years of wearing the uniform of 'rhetorical strategies,' I found myself focusing more on the strategies and less on the students, gradually moving away from a student centered teaching pedagogy. I guess I chose the easier way, the more convenient and comfortable way merely because I had become used to it. But my efforts to be comfortable led me away from my initial view of teaching—that of empowering students and making my teaching student-centered. I had begun to focus on the strategies because it was easier to simply grade the student based on whether they had effectively implemented the assigned strategy. I claimed to give them a voice in that they were allowed to choose their own topic, but then I took

away that voice by handcuffing them to a form, to a specific rhetorical mode. I wanted the students to 'get' what I was teaching them, but on my terms.

As I continue to reflect on my teaching past, I recall one evening I sat grading essays, comparison/contrast essays to be exact, for my freshman composition class. As I normally do, I was sitting on my sofa, my feet propped up on the coffee table alongside my Vaio laptop, sipping from a mug filled with freshly ground Guatemalan/Antiguan black coffee when I began to feel my shoulders tightening, my eyebrows drawing together of their own accord. Gradually it dawned on me; I was irritated; I was irritated with the paper I was reading; no, I was irritated with my students' writings in general. I tried to think, to focus, to focus on what I was reading, but my mind wandered. I tried reading aloud, so I could *hear* the paper, but I constantly reverted to reading in my head, which resulted in the paper sounding like someone was slowly dragging their fingernails across a chalk board, and subconsciously I cringed. I was sick of reading these papers, sick of these topics: high school vs. college; shopping abroad vs. shopping in Bermuda; going to school abroad vs. going to Bermuda College; my life as a carefree teenager vs. my life as a teenage mother; girl fights vs. guy fights, passionless topics, all topics that leant themselves to formulaic development. I was, and still am, of the opinion that students write best when they write out of their own experience, when they write out of their held knowledge, so I always allowed my students to choose their own topics. Very often, though, I would have to throw out a list of possible topics, usually ones that former students had done, topics that I knew had worked for the given strategy. Not a semester passed without at least one student whining, "Ms. Virgil, I need a topic; I dunno know what to write about." Nervous and unsure of my reaction, they would wait until class was over, come up to my desk, corners of their mouth down, face somber, mumbling dejectedly, "I dunno . . . . Wha um spose to write about?"

"Well, what are you interested in? What do you like to do?" I prodded. "You must have something you like. You *have* to write out of what you know, because that's the only way you are going to find some pleasure, some enjoyment in your writing," I added.

Allowing them to choose their own topic, I thought, would make them find writing more enjoyable because they would be writing about something that they were interested in, rather than something the teacher assigned. So, why, then, was the writing so lifeless, so boring and so unexciting? Maybe it was about more than simply having the freedom to choose their own topic. Maybe it was more to it than mere topic choice.

It was fall 2011 and a couple of months into my first semester at IUP that I read Lad Tobin's (2004) book, *Reading Student Writing: Confessions, Meditations and Rants* for Claude Hurlbert's Composition Theory class. In this book Tobin takes an honest, self-critical, sometimes scathing look at what he does in his writing classroom. He bravely held up the mirror, the mirror that revealed all of his teacherly flaws, faux pas and foibles (and mine as it turned out, as well), and was surprised at the truths revealed. What he discovered was the fact that his students' writings that had become dull, lifeless and boring had more to do with him, than with his students. As I read Tobin's story, I realized, to my chagrin, no, to my horror, that I was no different, and like Tobin, I was forced to ask myself, "Why . . . was I holding on to teaching and assigning forms of writing that generated so little excitement for my students and me?" (p. 115). And then I read Tobin's next line, his confession: "At some point I lost my way as a writing teacher and began reading primarily to assess whether my students understood what I told them or more simply to get through that damn pile of essays on my desk" (p. 118). Suddenly I remembered that night I sat reading comparison/contrast essays on my living room couch and the irritation I felt with my students' writing. I thought about how I had to give students topics when

they were unable to come up with a topic on their own. But when I gave them topics, they were topics that made it possible for them to develop an essay in accordance with the assigned rhetorical strategy, topics used by previous students many years before. So while they were topics that leant themselves to development, using the particular strategy, they were old topics, topics that held little interest for them. As a result, their writing lacked life and energy. Reading their writing, then, became tedious and boring. I remember that night I sat reading through those comparison/contrast essays, with my computer opened to Google, just in case I needed to type in a word, a phrase, a sentence that sounded suspect. Reading Tobin's book opened my eyes. Now, as I think back to that night, I realized that I was looking too hard for evidence of plagiarism, something, anything that would release me from the responsibility of having to continue reading the student's essay. The realization that I was purposely looking for evidence of plagiarism, filled me with a sense of guilt. How had I become so out of touch? Cynical?—the very trait I abhorred. Tobin was right. I had "lost my way as a writing teacher" (p. 118). Horrified! I dropped Tobin's book in my lap. I felt as if I had been stripped of all my clothing on a street full of people, no, worse; stripped of all my clothing in front of my class. Horrified! I was horrified because I was guilty and I was horrified by the revelation of my guilt. Tears ran down my face.

For the past fifteen years, well, maybe for the past ten years, I had been doing my students a grave disservice, I had been practicing insanity. I had been doing the same thing over and over and over. Even the topics I threw out as possible topics were the same, the same ones used by previous students. And *that* was the problem! The students had changed; they were not the same students that walked into my class fifteen, ten or even five years ago. The world had changed, technology had changed, but I remained the same, stuck in the habitual, traditional way

of teaching freshman composition, even though everything around me was crying out for me to change. Slowly but surely I had allowed myself to be taken hostage by *form*, form as dictated by the mandate of my English department, a department which valued academic, scholarly writing and saw teaching the rhetorical strategies or modes as the most effective way of ensuring a student could write academic, scholarly prose. Pagnucci (2004) argues, though, that "essayistic literacy is not the exclusive means by which one can create knowledge in the world, a view that is too often subscribed to within the ivory towers of academe" (p. 2). But the tragedy was that while I had succumbed to form, I had allowed my students to become collateral damage. I had become caught in the undertow of form and structure, and I held onto my students, taking them down with me. I thought I was empowering my students by allowing them to choose their own topics. But there was a concern even with those students who were able to come up with their own topic, without my help. The fact of the matter was that their writings in some hegemonic way were not *really* their own writings, particularly since they were forced to adhere to the form or mode, whereby their writings became confined by a given form as indicated by the assignment. "This kind of instruction," says Hurlbert and Blitz (1991), "serves mainly to industrialize composing by teaching students to assemble meaning, whether linearly or recursively, rather than to challenge the politics and economics of the markets in which these skills are supposed to be useful" (Resisting composure, p. 1). Ashamedly I admit, of this I was guilty, guilty of teaching my students to assemble meaning, with the meaning of the strategy being the most important thing.

But, my return to school to pursue my doctoral degree forced me into a questioning, self-analytical space. Now I was reminded of the time, a very long time ago, before I put on that uniform; a time when I really was student-centered. I concur with Fulkerson (1990) who says an

"unexamined course is not worth teaching" (p. 410). Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Composition & TESOL program showed me that not only did I need to examine my course, I needed to examine myself. Most people, however, are resistant to change. We simply get used to a way of doing things, because it works for us, or because it causes us the least discomfort. Truthfully, sometimes we simply get set in our ways. Sometimes it is about 'us' or 'me' and what works best for me. And, I am really no different. For 15 years I successfully taught the rhetorical strategies, or modes, using *my* process-oriented pedagogy in my freshmen composition classroom. My eighty percent average pass rate, I thought, attested to the success of this pedagogy. Yet, adhering to a focus on form because it was the way I was used to doing things clearly had become problematic. Traditions are only as valuable as the meaning created through their practice, the created meaning that is shared by those involved in the ritual. When devoid of created meaning, traditions can only be imbued with new value through change. Classroom practices, traditions, when devoid of meaning for our students, cry out for value and demand change. When I realized that my focus had unconsciously changed from the students to the strategy, to the form, and worse, that I had become oblivious to the students as individuals with their own voices, I realized that I had to do something. Reaffirmation of the need for my change was highlighted for me in a couple of unusual ways.

Sky Juice (A Critical Reflection)

I was working on my dissertation and because life can get in the way, I thought my writing would be more productive if I left the island. So, I spent the summer of 2013 with my longtime friend, Diane and her family. Diane and I, friends since we met as undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in the early 90s, are just finishing our

morning walk around her Juniper Landing neighborhood, in Greenville, North Carolina, when a soft rain begins to fall. Lifting my chin to the sky, the raindrops kiss my uplifted face.

"In Bermuda we call this 'sky juice'," I grin, looking sideways at Diane.

"Hmm . . . sky juice; I like that," she says, smiling quietly. "Riiight, because Bermudians rely on rain for their water supply."

"Uh huh, the best water of all, straight from the heavens. . . . But we really prefer it rain at night." Diane's eyebrows raise, prodding for further explanation.

Having visited my island home a couple of times, Diane knows that most of our water supply comes from God, literally; from the heavens. We rely on the rain to fill our water tanks, tanks that are built underneath our houses prior to the construction of the main house itself. Our white slated roofs are painted with a whitewash that purifies the rain water as it runs off the roof, channels down through a drain pipe and into the tank beneath the house. The sound of rain as it runs into our tanks, sometimes flowing full like a river, sometimes just trickling like a tap that hasn't been properly turned off, other times like a massive waterfall, is sweet music to the ears. Rain water, the best water of all because it is water straight from the heavens, fresh rain water; 'sky juice.' There's nothing quite like it.

As I think about the rain, the 'sky juice,' and the fact that "many a Bermudian household consumes more than it can catch and/or store, especially in times of drought" (Desilva, 2011), I am struck by this sudden thought. Like most Bermudians, I look forward to the rain for obvious reasons; we need water to survive. Without the rain, we are forced to buy water, water that has been treated using a reverse osmosis system, from water companies that charge about $75 a load of about 1,000 gallons and no one typically buys less than two loads at a time, depending on the size of your household of course. The water that we buy is nothing like water sent from God.

Drinking processed water, bought water, tastes like nothing less than the additives used to purify and preserve it; it barely taste like water at all. On the other hand, drinking rain water is like . . . drinking the rain, chlorine-free, metals-free; water poured straight from God's own water pitcher in the heavens.

Yet, despite the importance of rain water, we would much rather that the rain doesn't infringe on us and that it come only at night. Rain at night serves its purpose in that it fills our tanks and waters our crops, but more importantly, rain at night is less of a bother, it's less inconvenient in that it doesn't interfere with our everyday existence, our daily schedules. It occurred to me that my desire for rain at night is not very unlike my early years of teaching when I taught using traditional texts and adhered to traditional forms or modes. While these traditions *may* have served a purpose, I now realize I only adhered to these traditions because it was like Bermuda's rain at night—less of a bother, or more convenient. The tradition, or practice, of teaching the modes certainly made things less complicated, as I didn't have to think of some new way of teaching, some new way that would make my life a little less comfortable.

A Narrative Aside: Kudre's Story

A couple of weeks into my visit with Diane, during that summer 2013, one of my work colleagues sent me a Facebook message, telling me to check out this story, a sermon really, that was being streamed over the Internet. Although not a theology-major, bona fide, ordained preacher, the speaker, Kudre Hill, had been invited to speak on this day by the church's head pastor. His sermon, as do many sermons, consisted of a series of stories interwoven, stories that were separate, independent, but ultimately knitting together to become interconnected and interdependent--whole. Many preachers engage in "*narrative preaching* . . . fashioning the sermon as a contemporary parable" (Tucker, 2008).

Interestingly enough, a part of the young man's message had to do with our need to break with tradition, a message grounded in Acts 3: 1-10, which recounts Peter's healing of the lame man who spent his daily existence begging outside the "temple gate called Beautiful" (Acts 3: 2). With the rhythmic, musical cadence characteristic of black southern preachers, he explained that most people who regularly encountered this lame beggar looked at him and saw only a man begging for coins: nickels, dimes and quarters, but what the beggar really wanted was change of a different sort. And, Peter gave him that change, not in dimes and nickels, but physical and spiritual change. Kudre explained that too many churches were concerned with dogma, adhering to traditions and rituals; scared to make a bit of noise and really give praise to God because it might be looked at as offensive to some or even different, breaking with tradition, or, as a move away from the way praise is normally expressed. Too many people sit stoically on their hands when in their hearts they really want to jump and shout like David. What many lame church members need, members who sit in church week after week, with their hands out begging, beseeching the pastor for coins, nickels, dimes, quarters, some nugget of spiritual sustenance, is change. "If it don't make change, it don't make sense," declared the young speaker in that rhythmic tone. It's time to do things different, "we need to make some noise in normal quiet places," he said. There are too many lame beggars sitting in church pews. Like the lame beggar at the "temple gate Beautiful," we need change; we need change to a state of wholeness. As it turns out, Kudre's sermon was not just a message for his listening congregation; it was *his* story *and* his family's story. It was also part of my story. The story of the lame beggar was in and of itself a story, but it was a story intended to inform the stories of others; it was interdependent. The lame beggar's story was inter-texted in the stories of Kudre and his family's story; it was a

story interwoven, a story that derived meaning through its nature of independence, dependence and interdependence.

Kudre told a story of his life, his life prior to becoming actively involved in the church, a life that saw him involved in antisocial behavior and gang activity. He told the story of the night his younger, college bound, brother was attacked and stabbed multiple times by a group of teenage thugs (four boys and a girl) just days before he was to leave the island for school in Huntsville, Alabama. He shared the horrifying experience of arriving at the hospital, trying to fight pass the doctors to get to his baby brother, only to be told that he had to leave the operating room, calm down, and let the doctors do what they had to do, if he wanted his brother to make it. He recollected how he went out to the hospital parking lot and prayed; prayed what he now knows was an insincere prayer, because all the while he was praying, he was vowing to get revenge on those who had attacked his brother. His brother died that night, leaving him devastated, broken, in turmoil, questioning why God would take his baby brother, the innocent one.

Not long after his brother's murder, mostly out of fear for his own life, his parents sent him abroad to college, where he was eventually forced to confront and deal with his grief. He found himself in a very lonely space, a space where there was no one, he said, except him and God. Eventually, he came to realize that it wasn't enough for parents to take their children to church, as his parents did with him and as their parents before had done with them. It wasn't enough for his parents to merely follow in the footsteps of their parents in taking their children to church. It had to be about more than a ritual or a tradition. Off the island, away from the comforts of home, away from friends and family, Kudre , even though he had been raised in the

church and went to church on a regular basis, came to realize that he had been sitting in the pew as a lame beggar, a beggar who needed change.

Kudre concluded his sermon, which for the most part was a story, with an appeal to the lame beggars sitting in the church pews to come down to the altar. Gradually, people both old and young made their way to the altar. I was transfixed to my computer screen, watching this live streaming as Kudre shared his story. I felt the water creeping into my eyes as I watched him make a further appeal, a more impassioned appeal; an appeal to his own father who was sitting in one of the pews.

"Don't make me come and get you," he said, his voice cracking as he fought back tears. "You know I'm talking to *you*. If you need me to come and get you, I will." "I'm coming for you," he said as he made his way down the isle.

I tensed up, my throat constricted, tears streamed down my face as I watched Kudre walk down the aisle and take *my* brother's hand, his father, and lead him to the front of the church. As I listened to Kudre speak, the words he had been repeating throughout his message, resounded in my head—"If it don't make change, it don't make sense." What is the point of raising our children to go to church every week; "if it don't make change"? What is the point of enduring the loss of a loved one; "if it don't make change"? What is the point of teaching; "if it don't make change"? Kudre's right: "If it don't make change; it don't make sense." Kellon's murder *had* to make sense; it had to make change.

Pause . . . Flashback

"Fine tuning; these research questions need fine tuning," my advisor's words, written on my three-chapter dissertation draft, resonate in my mind as I write my research questions. I stare at my computer and think, How can I fine tune these questions? What exactly is my question or

questions? What do I want to know? What is my research interest? Schaafsma and Vinz (2011) say as narrative inquirers, because we don't always know what we are seeking answers to, we simply have to write. "Writing is a way to puzzle out a situation, think through a series of events, or focus your research interests," encouraging you to "let the mind wander and wonder" (Schaafsma and Vinz, 2011, p. 51). Smiling, my mind wanders to thoughts of the last time I saw my friend, Diane.

"Write, Sharon, write it down!" Diane yells at me, as we are sitting enjoying our morning coffee together in her red-walled dining room. "You've got all of these great ideas! Write them down so you don't forget them. Capture the details!"

"But, but . . . where will they go?" I mumble. "I'm not sure how I'll fit them in?"

"Don't worry about where it fits, just capture the thought, the memory. Paper, paper! Where is a damn piece of paper when you need it?" (laughing) "Here, here; write on this," she says, thrusting a paper plate that she'd grabbed out of the kitchen cabinet in my hand.

I smile at her enthusiasm, her enthusiasm for my thoughts, my ideas, my dissertation, my stories, and once again as I have done so many times over the past twenty years, I whisper a silent prayer, thanking God for bringing Diane into my life.

My plan was to collect the writings of my students to explore their experiences. But my advisor was right; that wasn't enough. My thoughts, my questions needed to be fine-tuned. What was I looking for, exactly? Honestly, I wasn't sure and I probably wouldn't be sure until I read their stories. I wanted to know their experiences, but I wouldn't be able to pose a question or questions about their experiences until I heard them. I guess I wanted to know how these experiences came to be their experiences, and what were the social, cultural, and/or political implications? Schaafsma and Vinz (2011) might say that my "inquiry involves working out of

these *first-told stories*, recognizing they contain deeper stories and glimpses into people's beliefs, assumptions, and experiences" (p. 50). With narrative inquiry, it seems that, I'm working backwards. I gather the stories and then I fine tune my questions about the stories. Schaafsma and Vinz, and my friend Diane, are right; I need to write to see what I'm thinking, to see what it is that interest me. Sometimes we don't know what we think, until we write it. My mind wanders and I find myself wondering about an incident that happened in my composition class some time ago. I take the paper plate from Diane and I begin to write.

Flashback, Too

It's the spring 2010 semester and I'm in my 10:35-11:25 a.m. freshmen composition class, my first class for the day. As I normally do before I go to my first class, I scan the headlines of the *Royal Gazette*, Bermuda only daily newspaper. Lately, all the news has been disturbing and grim, reports that reveal we are in desperate times, as our Island is gripped in fear over repeated incidents of gang violence. We have just come through the Easter weekend, ironically a time in which many are reminded of the goodness of God. Yet, this holiday period has seen events that only confirm that many of our young people seem to have lost their moral compass. This holiday period has seen a father gunned down in front of his two young children while out flying kites with them on Good Friday, another young man shot and another stabbed at an event which took place in a neighborhood recreation club. Today, Monday, the day after the Easter weekend, the *Royal Gazette's* front page story is consistent with recent reports: "Shot girl, 17, listed 'critical' after being hit four times" (Smith and Dechabert). What makes this story so horrifying is for one, the victim is a young girl and two, the shooters simply fired randomly into a crowd; simply horrifying. This story and the other events of the weekend play over in my head as I walk to class, wondering what my students will have to say about it.

When I get to class, as expected the students are talking about the weekend's crime activity. Many of them are appalled by the incident that saw a father shot in front of his kids, as indicated by the comments that circulated the room: "Oh my God!" "How could anybody do that in front of the guy's children, though?" "This island is just getting worse!" Yet, there seemed to be a sense of apathy about the other shooting and stabbing incidents that occurred that weekend. The incidents were mentioned, but quickly passed over. But maybe what I perceived to be apathy was really not apathy at all. Maybe it was because those other incidents were overshadowed by the pure horror of a father murdered in front of his young children. This is the spring semester and many of these students in this freshmen composition class have come through my College Preparatory Writing II class the previous fall semester, so I know several of them.

One of these students in this class is Tina, an 18 year old, kind of quiet, conscientious student. She's somewhat plain looking, not unattractive, but she's yet to arrive at that developmental level that would reveal her beauty. She's polite, humble and seems to be spiritually grounded, the kind of student I thought would certainly find the shooting the night before horrifying, or at least disturbing. She sat through the whole class, quietly, as we discussed the events of the past weekend. Having recently suffered through the brutal murder of my own nephew, anything involving violence, especially murder, re-opened those wounds. Some of the students in my class were aware of my loss, but many were not. Tina realized that I had been upset by the incidents. On her way out of class she stopped in the doorway, turned back to me and says, "Ms. Virgil, it's only a lil shootin," shrugging her shoulders slightly. My mouth drops open. For a moment I am speechless as I look at her. "A bullet don hurt that much," she adds.

Finding my voice, I ask, my voice slightly raised, "What? Are you serious, Tina?" "How would you know how a bullet feels, anyway?"

"Somebody told me," she says. "It jus kinda stings."

Out of all of the students in that class Tina was the last person I would have expected to show such little concern. Maybe this reaction by Tina was a clear indication that our youth were becoming more desensitized.

That conversation with Tina played over and over in my head ever since, probably because I had recently lost my nephew, but mostly because I am still trying to figure out what's going on in the heads of our Bermudian young people. How has the violence that now permeates our island become an acceptable, or to be expected, culture of violence? Blitz and Hurlbert (1998) succinctly describe this phenomenon: "Ours is a society that tolerates violence more and more as a natural part of life and sees peace more and more as an abstraction" (p.1). Blitz and Hurlbert are referring to the United States, of course, but their views are certainly relevant to Bermuda. Peace should not be viewed "as an abstraction." Maybe I can't change the world, but hopefully I can change a life, one student at a time, by allowing them the opportunity and space in which they can write their words, their worlds and maybe in so doing, 'right' their worlds. But first, I needed to enter their worlds by way of their writings, learn their lives, and learn their experiences.

So Here's My Plan . . . My Pedagogy

My study involves the implementation of a new pedagogy strikingly different from any other previously seen at Bermuda College. With the purpose of fostering hope through student writings, the best example I have seen implemented is by Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Composition Professor, Claude Hurlbert. Hurlbert, whose composition classes are developed

around the production of student books, says he hasn't used a traditional textbook in his class in more than ten years. Hurlbert (2006) believes, "Composition textbooks are a distraction from the realities of the places in which we live. . . . Our students are living particular lives in specific places, and they carry the places of their pasts with them, even as they worry about the places they will inhabit in the future" (pp. 353-354). Essentially, the world as presented in many of the published textbooks is incongruent with the world that many of our students occupy. This is especially true of my island students. Yet, when they enter the walls of academia in pursuit of higher education, they don't automatically leave those worlds behind them. Yes, we can introduce them to other worlds, other places, but we can't disregard their worlds. Those worlds, those "particular lives in specific places" need to be recognized and embraced as part of who they are, because where they come from will help inform where they are going. Through his student-centered book-writing pedagogy, Hurlbert recognizes and emphasizes the individual student and the "particular lives" they live. Park (2010), like Hurlbert, believes that students should be encouraged to write out of their experience, as well. Hurlbert and Park are by far not alone in their validation of the personal narrative. There are several other composition scholars such as Frankie Condon (2012), Caroline E. Heller (1997), Gian Pagnucci (2004), David Schaafsma (1993), Joseph F. Trimmer (1997), and Victor Villaneuva (1993), to name just a few, who stress the importance of narrative. Hurlbert (2012) says, "Telling the stories of who we are sheds light on who we are, and this, in turn, helps us to critique who we are" (p. 9). When students write their own lives, they more clearly see themselves and others, making them more able to understand and analyze their own lives and their place in the world.

My student-centered pedagogy of hope engages students in the narrative writing of their lives. So the purpose of my study is to provide an environment in which students can feel free,

free and comfortable enough to speak through their writing. I want to *hear* what they have to say when given the opportunity to speak for themselves. I want to read what they write when given the opportunity to write about something that happened or was happening in their life. I wonder how they may find that writing themselves, writing their lives creates hope in their radically changing social environment. My research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What do my Bermuda College students say when given the opportunity to speak through their writing?
2. Do my Bermuda College students address social, cultural, personal issues/experiences when they choose their own topics in my freshman writing classes?
3. How is hope evidenced in my BC students' book-writing project?
4. What do my BC students say about using my student-centered, book-writing pedagogy of hope?

One of my study's aims is to create an environment in which students speak freely about issues that concern them. What are their experiences? As I think about my students and their experiences I am reminded of Pierce Brosnan's narration of the film *Disneynature, Oceans*:

> A boy comes running up and he asks, "What exactly is the ocean, what is the sea?" You could hit him with a lot of statistics and Latin names, but the answer isn't something you'll find in a book. You'll have to see it for yourself. You have to hear it and taste it. You have to feel its power. To really know the ocean, you have to live it.

The only ones who can tell us their experiences are our students since they are the only ones who have lived them. In order to understand their experiences, we have to allow them to speak for themselves and we have to listen. And, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) believe that "narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience" (p.18). Another important aim of

my study is to see when writing about their experiences whether they show evidence of hope in their writing. Students' narrative writings, writings that speak their lives, are the best type of writing for a study such as this, a study that explores students' experiences.

The type of "essayistic" writing that students normally do or the type of writing that my students used to do, in freshmen composition has been questioned for some time. Pagnucci (2004) argues that "essayistic literacy is not the exclusive means by which one can create knowledge in the world, a view that is too often subscribed to within the ivory towers of academe" (p. 2). Downs and Wardle (2007) say that there is this assumption that FYC (first year composition) is supposed to prepare students to write for all of their other college/university courses. They argue, however, that there is no "unified academic discourse" that can prepare students in this way and they doubt whether students even transfer knowledge from their FYC class to other classes (Downs & Wardle, 2007, p. 552). It is Downs and Wardle's belief that "[b]y teaching the more realistic writing narrative *itself*, we have a theoretically greater chance of making students 'better writers' than we do by assuming the one or two genres we can teach them will automatically transfer to other writing situations" (p. 558). And Elbow (1991) says he understands the need to teach students academic writing as they will need it for their "various courses throughout their college career" (p. 135). But, he adds, students also should have fun writing and they have fun when they are telling stories and giving pleasure to others with their stories. Assigning long research papers that may have no interest or relevance to the students will not inspire them to write.

All too often I have had one of my students say to me, "I used to like writing in high school, until my teacher started assigning those long research essays and those boring topics." Students will write best and be more enthusiastic about writing when they are interested in the

topic. Elbow (1991) says, "We need to get students to write by choice because no one can learn to write well except by writing a great deal—far more than we can assign and read" (p. 136). And students may be more inclined to write if they have some choice in the topic. Because of the lack of agreement about the aims of freshmen composition, or, because as Downs and Wardle (2007) argue, there is no "unified academic discourse," many are willing to explore new ways to teach composition (p. 552). We have to find ways that are student-centered, ways that make the student feel that their interest is at heart, and it *should be.* Having students write and produce their own books, for instance, not only makes them feel as if their voice has been validated, but it also gives them a sense of purpose. No longer are they writing an essay to merely turn in to the teacher for a grade. They are producing something meaningful, something over which they have ownership; something in which they get to say what they want to say.

So, with this new pedagogy, which I call my pedagogy of hope, instead of assigning essays on the various strategies as I used to do, students wrote a book; their own book. Initially, my plan was to give students a selection of questions from which to choose to generate their books because I didn't think it would be fair to thrust one single topic on them, a single topic that might imply that I could really experience things from their perspective. Postman and Weingartner (1969) claim, "Even the most sensitive teacher cannot always project himself into the perspective of his students, and he dare not assume that his perception of reality is necessarily shared by them" (p. 60). As I think back to that day in my composition class with Tina and reflect on her views about the teenage girl who was shot, I am forced to recognize that no matter how well I think I know my students, no matter how wonderful a rapport we may have, clearly my perception of reality is not theirs, my perception is not shared by them.

So, Postman and Weingartner (1969) propose a list of questions for possible exploration, from which I initially planned to borrow the following three questions:

1. What do you worry about most?
2. What, if anything, seems to you to be worth dying for? How did you come to believe this?
3. What's a good idea?

These are some interesting and provocative questions, especially the one about what is worth dying for, since so many of Bermuda's young men are doing just that—dying. I had also planned to include two other questions, a question that Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Professor Claude Hurlbert uses in his Composition classes to provoke his students, "What are you burning to tell the world?" and a question O'Reilley (1993) says she was confronted with in her early teaching days during the Vietnam war era; "Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?" (p. 9). O'Reilley's question posed at this time, in the second decade of the 21st century, and in this 'other' location (Bermuda) is deliberately provocative and should yield some interesting responses, I thought. Because a major aim of my study is to allow opportunity for students' voices, I also wanted to be flexible enough to accommodate suggestions from my students. Although, I did think that these questions were broad enough that they shouldn't have a problem generating a book based on one of them.

But as I said, this was my initial plan—to provide a selection of questions from which they could choose. While waiting for the Institutional Review Board to process my request so that I could proceed with my research, I had an opportunity to practice this new pedagogy in one of my composition classes, although I hadn't yet begun to collect any data. This was a good opportunity because it gave me the chance to work out some of the kinks of this pedagogy. In

this initial class I did provide the students with a selection of questions, but I came to the realization that all of the questions on my list (what do you worry about most?; what's a good idea?; what is worth dying for?; is there any way to teach English so people stop killing each other?) could actually come down to that one question: 'what are you burning to tell the world?' So, I decided to follow Hurlbert's lead and have this one question as a prompt for my students' books.

I would have loved to have followed Hurlbert's lead further and not have an assigned textbook for this course, especially since many times students are unable to connect with the reading material found in the traditional composition reader, particularly the essays that are supposed to be models for writing. Hurlbert (2012) argues against the use of traditional textbooks, saying that "one thing remains the same: even a cursory glance at textbooks of the last fifty years demonstrates that nothing much changes in them even as our students continue to change. What was once argument is now multiculturalism; what was once multiculturalism is now cultural studies; what was once cultural studies is now argument again—circulation without progress" (p. 169). Changing the name of something doesn't mean that that something has changed; you are merely calling it by another name. But, the students have changed; they are not the same students of fifty years ago, or even five years ago. My English department uses a common text for all composition classes, the *Longman Reader*, which we have used for many years. But does this mean that it is a good text because we have used it for many years? Absolutely not! I have to admit, however, that it is probably the best text for meeting our course objectives.

In the past, when I used the *Longman Reader*, I tried to choose selections that I thought my students could connect to. While the phrase, "bombs bursting in air," might have been

meaningless to them, considering they are not Americans, I encouraged them to see that tragedies can befall us all, as Beth Johnson's essay, "Bombs Bursting in Air" tries to show through her many examples (Johnson 2009, p. 215). While my students may not get why a man would tell a story about a little boy attending ballet classes with his sister, I tried to get them to see beyond the actual ballet classes to the ultimate outcome of his having attended these classes, as discussed in Jacque D'Amboise's essay, "Showing What is Possible" (D'Amboise 2009, p. 405). Getting them to understand things such as losing a hand for stealing, the overcrowding of many prisons, or getting a life sentence for a minor criminal offence such as stealing because it is your third offence, as Stephen Chapman discusses in his essay, "The Prisoner's Dilemma," was a bit more difficult (Chapman 2009, p. 374). For one, Bermuda, like most of western civilization, simply do not engage in such punitive measures (amputation) for criminal offenses. Secondly, Bermuda doesn't experience the type of overcrowding seen in many prisons in other parts of the world. Ultimately, most of my students saw the assigned essays merely as stories, stories that had nothing to do with them, but stories that they had to read merely for a grade.

So what are the chances of adopting a textbook that is relevant to Bermuda? There's probably no chance, unless the text was written by a Bermudian specifically for Bermudians. Even that could prove problematic because everyone's experiences are different. I am no longer sure that we should be making our students read the same essays that were read by our students twenty years ago. While I'll grant that the essays may be meaningful, they are more meaningful in the context of 'teaching literature,' but probably not in the context of teaching writing. Now, as I teach writing, I use the textbook as much as I have to, but I no longer ask my students to read the essays in the text. Of course, they may choose to read them if they wish, but reading them is no longer required reading. But since I am required to teach them the rhetorical strategies or

modes, I use the text to introduce them to this information. The *Longman* text does have a pretty good discussion of this information. Now, though, I discuss the strategies as 'tools' that they need to use to write their books. So, I introduce them to all the 'tools,' including the ones that we don't normally teach in our composition classes—narration and description, which I now believe are just as useful and valuable, if not more valuable, as all of the others: exemplification, comparison/contrast, cause and effect, process, definition, and argumentation/persuasion. Emphasizing these strategies as tools that they may use to help organize their writing takes the focus off the strategies and instead shows them that they have the choice of which tools they will use. Unlike my previous pedagogy, they are not handcuffed to a strategy, but instead have at their disposal in their toolboxes various organizational tools. This is now the extent of my use of this textbook.

So now, instead of reading the essays in the *Longman Reader*, the writings that students produced in response to the question, "what are you burning to tell the world," served as the texts for my course and for my study (Hurlbert 2006; 2012). I realize that there might invariably come a time when a student may not be able to connect with something about which a peer group member has written about. Yet, there is a difference between a student who fails to connect with one of his peer's work and the work of an author published in a traditional composition reader. Reading and responding to a peer's work is more immediate, since the peer is right there in the room, in the group. Unlike the author in the composition reader, who cannot follow his/her writing around saying to their reader, "this is what I mean," the writers of the texts in my classroom are there and can speak to any concerns a reader might have, if need be. Hence, because students are writing about things that are meaningful to them, because they are writing

their lives, the students' texts, as produced in my composition class, become much more meaningful than any composition reader could ever be.

I remember when I returned to Bermuda College to resume teaching after spending an intensive year and a half of doctoral studies in Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Composition and TESOL program. It was August 2012, and I was returning to BC a changed person from when I left. I was armed with a different pedagogy and ready to change the world, or my Bermuda College students at least. Before, I was teaching essayistic writing. While I encouraged students to choose their own topics, my focus was on essayistic, formulaic writing. But, IUP, or more specifically, composition Professor Claude Hurlbert, taught me the importance of students' stories, that narrative writing could be scholarly writing. Hurlbert introduced me to the student-centered book writing project that he uses in his composition classes (Blitz and Hurlbert, *Letters for the Living*, 1998 and Hurlbert, *National Healing*, 2012). Consequently, he taught me that with this student-centered pedagogy that allows students to tell their stories I could provide an opportunity for them to see more clearly their place in their world. And, Blitz and Hurlbert (1998) question, "What is the point of teaching people to read and write if we are not also trying to teach them to understand the world and to make it better?" (p. 55). This pedagogy is akin to hooks' (1994) notion of "educat[ing] as the practice of freedom" (p. 13). Rather than seeing our students as merely beings in our classrooms looking for knowledge, educating as the practice of freedom encourages us to "teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students" (hooks, 1994, p.13). It is a means of teaching that requires me as the teacher to "transgress those boundaries that would confine each pupil to a . . . assembly-line approach to learning," to dare to step away from what I know, from that formulaic, essayistic writing (hooks, 1994, p. 13). This shift from essayistic writing was a major and radical shift for

me, moving from a person who never taught narrative to encouraging students to share their stories. But change is sometimes scary; and it can be difficult, especially when you are used to doing things a certain way. But, then of course, there is no growth without change. What would have been the point of the year and a half of my life spent at IUP, if I merely went back to doing what I always did? I had grown in that time and my composition classroom needed to reflect that growth, that change. Yet, I was so used to my old syllabus that discussed writing essays; I knew it by heart. But the syllabus I held in my hand that day was different, it was new and I was apprehensive (see Appendix E). I have to admit that while I was excited about the changes I was making, I was also a bit nervous. To be honest, even after fifteen years of teaching, I was always a bit nervous when I walked into my classroom on the first day of the semester. But this was different. This was different because I was different and so was my pedagogy. I was nervous, but I was also very excited. But, I knew that what I was doing, the changes I was making were good changes. So, that day I walked into my classroom a different person, my new syllabus in my hand, with a prayer in my heart and I let go; I let go of the nervousness that normally accompanied me on the first day of class.

I stood in front of my composition class that day, wearing a sky blue Tottenham football (soccer) jersey, with 'Lennon' on the back, the name of Tottenham's right wing player. The football jersey was a deliberate choice because almost everyone in Bermuda is into football. Practically everyone has a favorite English premier league football team, so the jersey was intended to show me as approachable, rather than as the 'other.' I noticed several of the students, guys and girls, taking note of my jersey and a whisper crept around the room—'she's a Spurs (Tottenham) fan.' As usual I introduced myself as Ms. Virgil, identified the class, Freshman English 1111, and asked them if they were in the right class. Many of them nodded their head

quietly, some of them answered, yes, almost all of them looked at me nervously as I sat on the desk at the front of the class. The class was a mix of first-year students and students who had come through Bermuda College's preparatory writing classes. They were also a mix of traditional and non-traditional students. Then I asked each student to introduce him/herself, tell the class a little bit about themselves and tell us why they were in this class. The shy ones spoke quietly and only revealed a little about themselves, while others were bolder. The bold students stood up; gave their complete name with lots of details about their lives.

Once we were done with the introductions, I went over the syllabus. I always read over the syllabus because even though I know they can read, past experience has taught me that many of them don't read the syllabus. So I always go over the syllabus in the first class and make it clear that they are responsible for whatever is on the syllabus. We discussed the required texts for the course, the course objectives and the class policies. I also made them aware of my contact numbers (office and home), which were listed on the syllabus, my office location and my office hours. At this point I told them that I am probably the only Bermuda College lecturer that gives my students my home phone number. "It's unlisted, but I want you to call me if you need me. It's for your personal use. Just don't write it in any bus stops," I told them. This last part drew a few snickers, and I could feel them starting to lighten up and seem less nervous. Most importantly, I explained to them that it was important that they understood that we, as student and teacher, from here on were involved in a relationship. In order for our relationship to work, we must have communication. Without communication, our relationship cannot work. "You have my numbers, both home and office, and you have my email address. So call me or email me to let me know when you're not going to be in class or if you're having problems making an assignment due date. I am always more understanding and flexible when I know what's going

on," I told them. "That's what being in a relationship is all about." I looked around the room at those 25 students and said, "I'm here for you and I will do all that I can to help you succeed in my class." I could almost feel everyone in the room exhale and the mood seemed to lighten just a bit more. I love what I do and I think it's important that my students feel my passion, so I try to convey that passion on the first day.

Now that I had gotten them to relax a bit, I went on to discuss the course reading and writing assignments. When I told them that they were going to write a book, some of their faces lit up with excitement, but most of them looked at me in shocked disbelief. Finally, one of them questioned, "A book; a whole book? About what?" "How many pages?" another asked. "Well," I said, "you're going to write a book about what you're burning to tell the world." Smiling, I said, "Your book will be about whatever you want it to be; something you are burning to tell the world." "Cool," one of the two girls sitting on my right said. "Yeah, I like writing," said the other. "Listen, you'll be fine," I said, trying to reassure the rest of the students. "If you have a problem coming up with a topic, we can talk about it. But it's important that you understand that you are being given a very unique opportunity here. You are being given the opportunity to write about anything you want," I told them. Some of them still looked a bit uneasy, and I tried to reassure them that it was going to be fine. I went on to explain that the class would follow a collaborative learning workshop format, which meant that any writing they did would be considered public writing, writing that they would invariably share with their peers. Again, there was that look of unease from one or two of them. While I had faith in this new pedagogy, I didn't want to force it on anyone. Bermuda College, although a very small community college, usually offers about 5 to 7 sections of Freshman Writing. So, I made it very clear to the students that if they didn't feel comfortable with my class, then they should consider joining another

section. There was usually another section that ran parallel to mine and even if it were full, the teacher was usually flexible enough to allow a student to join the class. I hoped they would choose to stay and experience this new pedagogy, but I made it very clear the choice was theirs. All but one student who was there that first day of class were there for the next class. As the semester wore on, I became more comfortable with this new pedagogy. Of course it was much more work because it was new. And there were times when I thought about going back to doing things the way I used to, but that wouldn't have been fair. No, it wouldn't have been fair to give my students the opportunity to say what they wanted, to encourage them to use their voice and then take it away. Besides, it was awesome watching my students interact within this new pedagogy.

This student-centered book writing pedagogy proved to be much more effective than reading and responding to a composition reader. For one, as the reader of the essays in their peer group, there was the benefit of proximity. While the students may start out not knowing the authors of the writing they had to read, they eventually got to know them. They got to interact and raise questions with their peers, something they couldn't do with the authors in a composition reader. Also, because they had to read and respond to their peers' manuscripts, verbally and in writing, they learned to become more critical readers as they provided feedback for their peers. They were required to pose questions in their feedback, questions intended to assist them in being more critical as they read (Appendix B). Some questions students posed included: "How would it change your meaning if you explained aggressive violence?" "How would it change your meaning if you gave examples of threatening words?" "How would it change your meaning if you were to explain how this present crime culture which resulted in boundaries was first started?" As writers, when they received feedback from their peers, they

came to recognize the importance of audience. One student wrote on a peer's page, "I like that you took our comments into consideration and incorporated points about [issues] we asked about on this page." Additionally, and maybe more importantly, as I walked around the room, watching and listening to them interact, it seemed that they were building relationships. They came to understand each other's stories and they seemed to develop a sense of empathy. They drew strength from each other, they encouraged each other, and they were supportive of each other. One student wrote about being raped. One of her peer's wrote on her manuscript: "You never understand what someone is going through unless you go through it too. I am sorry you had to experience such trauma." Another comment was, "I am still amazed by your topic and I'm glad you felt comfortable enough to share with us. Continue writing and I encourage you to love the skin you're in. . . . Keep smiling." If someone wrote on a topic that was too difficult or emotional for them to read, it was not uncommon for one of their peers to offer to read it for them. Once, I had a student ask me if she and her group could move next door to an empty classroom because some of the material they were reading was sensitive and emotionally evocative. And students who showed ambivalence or reservations at the beginning of the semester came to see the benefits of the collaborative writing and reading workshops. One student wrote, "In the beginning I was very nervous to introduce my story to my classmates. I was always embarrassed about my past and I was afraid that they would judge me. Now I feel that I can teach others to never judge someone by what they see on the outside." Another student who was returning to Bermuda College after some time off, wrote, ". . . when we were first given this assignment in class I laughed to myself and wondered how in the world I was going to be able to do this. My exact response was 'Oh Lord I come back to this school and Virgil's gone all deep on me!' I honestly did not know how I was going to accomplish this task. But I did and I

am very grateful for this opportunity." They listened to new stories and sometimes to stories similar to their own and they came to see that they were not alone. They grew to feel comfortable and confident about their writing. One student wrote in response to another who was writing about his absentee father, "I've enjoyed reading your story. I can relate." And another student wrote, "I love that you are opening up on such a touchy subject." And this was exactly my hope; that I would be able to create the type of workshop Hairston (1992) says we need in our writing classrooms, "student-centered workshops designed to build students' confidence and competence as writers" (p. 180). Yes, there was usually one group that danced around the edges, threatened with implosion. The fragility of this group was usually because people were frequently missing, which meant that people were not on task, which in turn made it difficult for the group to flow smoothly. Generally, though, most groups were productive and functioned very well together.

This student-centered book writing pedagogy, with its collaborative learning environment, creates a sense of hope amongst my students. They grow, they bond and they develop self-confidence. More importantly, most of them see writing as creating feelings of hopefulness. As I reflect on what I do in my classroom, I realize that my pedagogy shares many traits with Snyder's "teacher as a purveyor of hope" (2005, p. 75). Snyder (2005) says the teacher as a purveyor of hope is a teacher who is caring and spends time with her students. She sets goals and engages in effective planning to ensure that students can achieve those goals. Teachers as purveyors of hope also "raise the motivation" of her students by being continually enthusiastic themselves about what they do (p. 75-79). In this sense, I purvey hope. I do all I can to create an environment that is caring, compassionate and supportive so that learning is fostered, encouraged and enjoyed. My classroom is "alive with learning-learning both the

material . . . and learning to respect oneself and fellow students" (Snyder 2005, p. 81). Hope, in an ideal, peaceable world, may be the desire for stasis. Hope in the social climate that currently exist in Bermuda, is the desire for something different, something better, the desire for change. This is my pedagogy of hope.

But Am I Too Close?

Researchers have raised concerns about teachers who study their own classroom. There are those who say that college students can be perceived to be a "vulnerable" group when participating in classroom research, mostly because they are seen to be in a "dependent relationship to the researcher" and as a result "may find difficulty in resisting co-operation" (Social Research Association, 2002). And Clark and McCann (2005) say that students "may experience overt or subtle pressure from lecturers to participate in research, particularly if it is presented as a learning opportunity" (p. 43). Given this concern and to avoid any possible impropriety I have attained signed consent forms for all students participating in my research. More importantly, to eliminate feelings of undue pressure or coercion I arranged for these consent forms to be issued and collected by one of my colleagues, a process which I will discuss later.

While there may be reservations about classroom research, many scholars (Emig, 1971, Berthoff, 1981, Mohr and MacLean, 1987, Goswami and Stillman, 1987, Daiker and Morenberg, 1990, Hurlbert and Totten, 1992, and Blitz and Hurlbert, 1998) have written about other teachers who research their own students or about the research they themselves have done in their classes. Hubbard and Power (2003) assert that teachers are in the best position to conduct research in their own classrooms. Hubbard and Power (2003), both teachers, say, "We teacher-researchers bring to our work an important element that outside researchers lack—a sense of place, a sense

of history in the schools in which we work. Because of our presence over time at our research sites, we teachers bring a depth of awareness to our data that outside researchers cannot begin to match" (xiv). One cannot argue that teachers hold a certain level of expertise when it comes to their community, their school, and more importantly, their classroom. Furthermore, teachers also have a care and concern for their students that others may not have. Such care and compassion can serve to make students feel safe and comfortable. Toma (2000) argues that being close to your participants, as is seen in the teacher-researcher situation, can result in the collection of better data because the researcher is close to her participants. Toma (2000) further asserts, ". . . subjective researchers cannot separate themselves from the phenomena and people they study. The process of research is a transaction between two people" (p. 178). Brooks (1997) says, qualitative inquiry "seek to comprehend and explain or describe phenomena, . . . [to] explore with the aim of discovering what exists that is of importance in the situation, engage in a more natural function, and are carried out in natural environments" (p. 139). Toma and Brooks describe the role of the teacher who conducts research in her own classroom as a subjective, qualitative researcher.

As a researcher in my own classroom, I am and always will be a teacher first. My job as a teacher, as an effective teacher anyway, demands that I establish a rapport with my students, a rapport that is transactional. They learn from me and I learn from them. I use their input and their feedback about classroom issues to inform my teaching. I don't think that I can be a good teacher if I didn't consider what they have to say. Neither do I think that I can be a good teacher if I do not do all I can to ensure my students success in my class, something I do regardless of whether I'm doing research or not. At the end of the day, effective teaching should be subjective in some way, but, I don't have control over the stories they write in my class because they are

not my stories, they are not my experiences. My job as a teacher/researcher is to create an environment in which they feel comfortable writing their stories, sharing their stories, sharing their voices. The idea, hopefully, is to have them feel comfortable enough to write and write a lot, so that as Hurlbert (2012) says they ultimately "become better artists of and activists in their own lives. And in [the] process they learn to address their worlds" (p. 182). And this is it! This is what I would like to see them do—speak to their worlds.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE SAY

Change Has Got to Come—the Narrative Change

More and more scholars and compositionists are turning to narratives for study and research. Some would actually argue that there has been a narrative turn (Dhunpath, 2000; Gannett, 1999; Schaafsma, Vinz, Brock,and Susanis 2011; Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Stanley and Temple 2008). Stanley and Temple (2008) say the narrative turn is demonstrated by the "mushrooming of popular as well as scholarly interest in lives and stories and the widespread academic engagement over the last few decades . . ." (p. 275). And, more recently, Malea Powell in her Chair's address at the 2012, 4Cs stressed the importance of telling stories, saying we need to rethink the way we do things. "We have to learn to re-see what's in front of us, all around us, underneath our feet," asserts Powell (2012, p. 402). At the 2012 4Cs conference Powell called for teachers to recognize the "multivocal knowledge" found in our students' stories (p. 403). The recognition of different interpretations as a result of different experiences, different stories, is important, and these experiences (stories) *are* as Powell says, right in front of us. Dyson and Genishi (1994) say that stories have "the potential for empowering unheard voices" (p. 4). This is important because all students should have a voice, a voice that is heard. All too often people's stories are lost, or silenced because they are different. Yet, it is that very difference that we need to hear. Recognizing, appreciating, embracing and validating difference demonstrates a willingness to grow.

Further, Park (2011), who has vast amounts of experience working with L2 students, discusses the "Cultural and Linguistic Autobiography Writing Project," which she organized for her adult ELL (English language learner) students. She highlights the importance of story-telling

to her students' learning. Her students grew in confidence and she saw "one of the strengths of the CLA (Cultural and Linguistic Autobiography) writing project was the development of writing skills through the construction of student's own narratives" (p. 160). She writes, "Having confidence in one's abilities to write is one of the most important psychological components in improving one's actual writing skills. This increased confidence, coupled with heightened awareness of the power of collective stories, helped the adult ELLs come to understand and experience the process approach to writing" (Park 2011, p. 167). Park's study speaks to the benefits of allowing students to tell their stories. Her students showed an increase in confidence when allowed to tell their stories and they saw the benefits of collaborating, of sharing their stories. Students are more inclined to continue to write if they feel good about their writing, if they develop a sense of confidence. They are more inclined to develop confidence when they recognize that their stories like those of their peers are valid. But, there are other scholars who extoll the virtues of storytelling as well.

While Gay (2010) says that stories can be used to "entertain, educate, inform, evoke memories, showcase ethnic and cultural characteristics, and illuminate abstractions," (p. 3) they also can be used as a means to communicate and to understand experiences. Bruner (1996) has long recognized the value of stories in understanding our experiences. He says stories are part of our existence; we make sense of our experiences with stories. Bruner (1996) elaborates, "We frame accounts of our cultural origins and our most cherished beliefs in story form, and it is not just the 'content' of these stories that grip us, but their narrative artifice. Our immediate experience, what happened yesterday or the day before, is framed in the same storied way. Even more striking, we represent our lives (to ourselves as well as to others) in the form of narrative" (p. 40). And, Baumeister and Newman (1994) say, "People's efforts to understand their

experience often take the form of constructing narratives (stories) out of them . . .” (Abstract). Stories help us to understand our experiences and they help us to communicate and share those experiences. Further, Atkinson (1998) advocates for the use of narrative, not only for the tellers of the stories, but also for the listeners or readers. Atkinson (1998) writes:

> Storytelling is a fundamental form of human communication. It can serve an essential function in our lives. We often think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story. . . . What generally happens when we tell a story from our own life is that we increase our working knowledge of ourselves because we discover deeper meaning in our lives through the process of reflecting and putting the events, experiences, and feelings that we have lived into oral expression. (p. 1)

Clearly, what this means, then, is that storytelling is transactional and as such telling stories does not only benefit the teller of the story, but the listener or reader as well. Atkinson (1998) says, “Life stories can help other people see their lives more clearly or differently and perhaps be an inspiration to help them change something in their lives” (p. 2).

But, Blitz and Hurlbert’s (1998) book *Letters for the Living* truly epitomizes the value of narrative, students’ narratives. Blitz and Hurlbert, both composition teachers, break new ground with this book. They are the first teachers/writers to use their students’ writings in the telling of their stories. Many of the stories their students tell are heart-wrenching and most times disturbing, but they are stories that document their lived experiences. They are stories that give voice to their students in their respective composition classes. Pagnucci says, “What I’ve found . . . is that giving students the chance to write narratives allows them to find personal meaning in their work” (Schaafsma, Pagnucci, Wallace, and Lambert Stock 2007, p. 298). Not only does writing narratives allow students to find meaning in their writing, but it also empowers them with

appropriate power, the power of self-expression as an honest representation of the self. McBride (2006) recalls her writing experience, an experience which brought about feelings of personal fulfillment and a sense of empowerment:

> The penultimate semester of undergraduate school, I took a class entitled, Writing and Personal Identity, which, at the risk of sounding dramatic, changed the course of my life. For the first time, writing made sense to me. I could see a purpose in it, and I understood how writing helps one understand she is. [sic] I wrote a paper and told the story of being a middle child in a family of four (an older brother and younger twin sisters). I didn't even know that I was a middle child until I wrote that paper, and I certainly didn't know that being a middle child bothered me slightly. It was a heady feeling to write for a purpose and to write towards understanding. . . . The middle child paper was one of those autobiographies that I needed to write or tell in order to make sense of my world. (p.6)

McBride's experience is indicative of the personal fulfillment and sense of empowerment students may feel by writing their own stories. Narrative writing also allows for the opportunity to explore the unconscious, to learn things about oneself that the writer may not even be aware of until after writing. McBride (2006) discovered her unconscious thoughts as she wrote "towards understanding."

Although, studying narratives is not new, as people have been telling stories for as long as we can remember and then we have told stories about the stories that we tell, says Clandinin (2007, p. 35). What is new, he adds, is the use of narrative inquiry as a research methodology (p.35). And, Schaafsma, Vinz, Brock and Susanis (2011) claim that "narrative inquiry has gained acceptance in many fields, but particularly in education . . ." (p.3). To demonstrate narrative inquiry Sara Brock "stories a 'literature review'. . ." using the "'screen' of her life . . . [to show]

that reading through our lives, our bodies, and our stories provides more meaningful contexts for understanding the ways reading can work with the purposes of our scholarly work" (as cited in Schaafsma, Vinz, Brock & Susanis 2011, p. 36). What this means is that scholarly writing does not always have to be impersonal, especially when we make personal connections, those connections afforded us by, and through, our lived stories. Further, Bell (2002) discusses a major advantage of narrative inquiry: "Narrative allows researchers to understand experience. People's lives matter, but much research looks at outcomes and disregards the impact of the experience itself. . . . Narrative lets researchers get at information that people do not consciously know themselves" (p. 209). More scholars are using narratives as our academic worlds become increasingly more multicultural. Park (2008) shares her personal story as a non-native English speaking teacher (NNEST), her awakening to her multicompetency, and how she came to recognize that she could "capitalize on the very nature of [her] second language learning and educational journey as a bilingual teacher," in her own ESL classroom (p. 20). Park's research interest, teachers' narratives and their evolving identities, is exemplified in her study of five East Asian NNEST ("I'm never afraid of being recognized as an NNES," 2012).

While Pagnucci (2004) values the use of narrative in the composition classroom as well as for use in research, he argues that "entrenched antinarrative views continue to make aligning oneself with the narrative camp a troubling prospect" (p. 1). He tells the story of how one of his colleagues, Mark, was met with resistance from other members of faculty when he wanted to introduce a story course, "Stories of Self and Other," into their university's graduate program (p. 6). Pagnucci somewhat shamefully admits that he didn't back Mark's proposal. He kept quiet, mostly because he was new to the University at that time. He felt very dejected by his colleagues' resistance to the idea of a story course and more so by their view that "story writing

wasn't real academic work," especially since he believes that "[s]tories are how we think. How we talk. . . . Stories are what make us human" (Pagnucci, 2004, p. 7). Indeed, how can we separate stories from human's existence? What happens to people when we take away their stories, their narratives? We silence them. Tobin (2004), however, counters the argument against the teaching of the personal, or narrative, writing. He argues that narrative have been viewed as worthy of study for some time, noting renowned narrative writers such as George Orwell, E.B. White and Virginia Woolf to support his position (Tobin 2004, p. 113). Besides, we need stories; we need stories just as much as we need the non-narrative information that sometimes helps to make up our stories.

A student-centered writing pedagogy, in which students write a book, allows students to write their lives. What *do* students say when they are allowed to say what they want? What do students write when they are allowed to write what they want? How do students write when allowed to write as they choose? As Bell (2002) says, "Narrative lets researchers get at information that people do not consciously know themselves" (p. 9). So, what previous inarticulations break through the unconscious in this process of writing and reading personal narratives? Students need to be allowed, encouraged, to think, to speak through their writing about things that they want to speak about, to write about *their* ideas, not ours. Students are more than merely empty vessels waiting to be filled as posited by Freire's notion of the banking concept (1972, p. 58). Students should be introduced to the tools necessary to assist them in the telling of their stories. Which of those tools they deem necessary to help them tell their stories should be something entirely up to them. Forcing students to use a particular tool or strategy, forcing them to adhere to a given form in the telling of their story essentially restricts them and possibly silences much of what they would truly say if allowed to do so.

There's No Reason to Argue; Together We Can Change the World

As two sides of the same coin, both narrative and anti-narrative are necessary to each other and at times share a common goal. Anti-narrative information is the seminal support through which great narratives resonate their truth—making narrative and anti-narrative at times dependent and interdependent. Superficially, narrative and anti-narrative appear so entirely different that the gulf between them invites, if not outright physical hostilities, at least an uncomfortable verbal antagonism.

Recently, I attended a 4Cs (Conference on College Composition and Communication) in Las Vegas at the Riviera Hotel and Casino. One of the sessions was "The tyranny of argument: Rethinking the work of composition," chaired solely and bravely, by Gian Pagnucci. I say bravely, because the title of the session alone had the potential to draw fire, maybe even hostility, from adamant anti-narrative pedagogues. The speakers on the panel consisted of renowned scholars such as Claude Hurlbert, accompanied by his Graduate Assistant, Anyango Kivuva, Christina Kirklighter, Todd DeStigter, Kami Day, Frankie Condon, Nancy Welch and Gian Pagnucci who spoke, and chaired this session. Also scheduled to be on the panel, but unavailable for that day, was David Schaafsma. Perhaps anticipating a large crowd, the session was held in the hotel's Grande Ballroom A at 8:00 a.m. After twenty minutes waiting in line at the café in the hotel's lobby for coffee and a bagel, I wondered, why in the heck 8:00 a.m.! Or, perhaps the selection of this large and impersonal room was intentionally symbolic of the very impersonal nature of the session's topic—argument.

Arriving at the ballroom a bit late, the panelists, looking rather small up on the stage from the back of the room, were already seated, and the session had already started. There was a small crowd of about twenty attendees, although it may have been more, as I made my way up

near the front where I was sure I could hear the panelists. Each of the participants spoke and while each of them seemed to recognize the worthiness of argument, stressed the need for and extolled the benefits, albeit in different ways, of narrative. I only realized when I turned around, once the floor was opened to discussion that the audience had swelled to about a hundred people. One attendee, a thirty-ish, dark haired, bespectacled man, dressed in a sort of red, black and gray plaid shirt with dark pants, who apparently had been waiting for this moment, who seemed to have prepared for this moment evidenced by the piece of paper in his hand, which he constantly referred to, stood to ask a question of the panelists, or at least he *said* he had a question. But he didn't actually ask a question, instead he engaged in a very long diatribe about the need for argument in the composition classroom. It seemed that he missed the part where the panelists concurred with this position during their presentations. Several of the panelists attempted to address his comments, but it seemed that the attendee already had his mind made up that the session was about 'us vs them'; 'narrative vs anti-narrative'. He dominated the floor, and a sense of uneasiness seemed to creep into the room, until a young lady sitting at a table just behind me to my left decided to say something. I don't even remember what she said, but I know that her interjection provided the opportunity for the Chair, Gian Pagnucci, to steer the discussion away from what seemed to be becoming a fruitless and verbally antagonistic situation.

Reflecting on that session and the hostility that was fortunately averted, I am reminded of something Sun Tzu, ancient Chinese military general, strategist and philosopher, wrote:

> In battle, there are not more than two methods of attack—the direct and the indirect; yet these two in combination give rise to an endless series of maneuvers. The direct and the indirect lead on to each other in turn. It is like moving in a circle – you never come to an end. Who can exhaust the possibilities of their combination?" (p. 17).

The debate that rages on between the narrative and the anti-narrative pedagogues can be seen as a battle, a battle that Sun Tzu suggest, is pointless when clearly, together, the two sides are more powerful. Many fail to recognize that the narrative pedagogue and the anti-narrative pedagogue can coexist, more importantly, they *need* to coexist. Narrative and anti-narrative often stand alone, apart, a fist clenched, in battle. Conversely, when these positions intertwine, their union becomes more than what they were apart. A fist clenched relies on its own strength. Unclenched, hands clasped, the two become stronger than they could ever have been apart.

Yet, this antagonistic and sometimes combative stance is perpetuated by the academy because stories, narratives, are seen as inferior to argumentative, non-narrative writing. Pagnucci (2004) speaks to some of the ways the academy perpetuates this divide:

> Serious academic work is viewed as writing expository prose. People are not asked to write stories for undergraduate- or graduate level work. Stories are viewed as light, simple, unimportant. Students see no models of stories to emulate in their scholarly work, and they get little encouragement to pursue knowledge in story form. Like all hierarchies, the hierarchy of genre works to keep some things at the top and other things at the bottom: stories are kept in the basement while theoretical texts reside in the penthouse. The selection of readings for students, one of the central guiding forces of students' educational lives, is clearly antinarrative in its orientation. (p. 22)

But the truth is we need both narrative and anti-narrative writing. They work together, they inform each other, they are each necessary, they are interdependent. Independence is not the ultimate goal. It is penultimate, a mere resting ground, a transitional phase, to be superseded by interdependence. We are intended to move from dependence through independence to interdependence. Narrative and anti-narrative function independently, yet their greatest success

resides in relying on each other and stories require, demand a seed of truth, factuality in order to resonate with readers, in order to become truly great narratives. The best narratives resonate truth, fact. The best factuality inspires stories. If you really want to understand "dry, yeast-less, factuality," you must have the stories that go with it (Martel, 2001, p. 64). And Perl, Counihan, McCormack and Schnee (2007) say, "When research . . . is written as narrative, one of its strong appeals becomes clear: stories attract and hold readers, drawing them ever more deeply into a conversation they might otherwise miss or abandon" (p. 307). Stories are what make meaning, stories are the springboard from which factuality arise, and from factuality comes the best stories. Although, anti-narrative, academic research writing may be perceived as separate and as far from narrative writing as "the east is from the west," (Casting Crowns 2007) the two methods are as two sides of the same coin, sharing common purpose, goals and sometimes common data, making them somewhat alike, although different.

Who's Telling These Stories?

Bermuda College's student population, like many community colleges in the United States, is diverse in age, race and ethnicity. It is important to note that while the description of my BC students may seem somewhat incongruent with the picture that many have of most American college/university students, my descriptions are based on what I have observed during almost twenty years of teaching at Bermuda College. It is a known fact that most American college students have part time jobs and they work their way through college. They are also known to take out loans to assist them. Many Bermudian college students work as well, but many of them work so they are able to afford luxuries such as an IPhone, clothes, and that all important indicator of their rite of passage, a bike (motorcycle). Their college tuition and fees, in many cases, are paid by their parents. In studying my students' writings and experiences it is

important to "understand the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives that shape, and are shaped by, the individual" (Clandinin, 2013, p.33).

First of all, there are the traditional, high-school students, most of whom look fresh, innocent and untainted. These students don't usually have a lot of tattoos or body piercings and those who do have piercings tend to give away their newness by constantly playing with them, most evident by those girls who can't stop rolling their tongue ring around in their mouth or twirling their eyebrow ring. Traditional students usually have brand new textbooks, which they stack on their desk alongside their brand new, yet to be written in, three-subject notebook, with newly sharpened pencils and new pens. These students don't write their names in their textbooks sometimes because one of their peers who took the class before them told them they could sell their books when they are done with the class, so they shouldn't write in them. But mostly, they don't write their name in their books because they didn't have to pay for them; their parents did and they are not old enough to appreciate the cost of replacing a textbook once it's lost. They simply have not learned how to value things like textbooks that they didn't pay for in the first place. It's usually traditional students who forget and leave their textbooks in class, outside on a bench or in a computer lab—without a name written on the inside covers.

We also have, like many community colleges, a non-traditional student population which can range in age from twenty four to fifty plus. These are students who may have been in the workforce for a number of years and returned to college seeking to either finish a degree they started when they first graduated from high school, to change careers or just to upgrade their skills. Most of these students enroll in night courses, whereas traditional students typically only take a night course if a day section of a given course is full. Non-traditional students have a look of maturity; they don't generally look as innocent and fresh. Girls may have tattoos, most times

small ones, on their legs, their hands or on the back of their neck. They may have tongue rings, lip rings and eyebrow rings as well, but they tend to wear them differently. Such rings are part of them; they are used to having them, so they don't draw attention to them. A dead give-away for a non-traditional male student is his clothes. They usually come to class straight from work wearing a job uniform, whether it's the white shirt, sometimes with stripes on the shoulders; the kind a ship captain or an airline captain wears, navy blue Bermuda length shorts, navy blue knee-high socks, with the polished black shoes of the custom's officer, prison officer, or police officer. Or perhaps it's the khaki colored or blue Dickey shirt and pants, with construction boots or construction shoes worn by many of those in the trades (plumber, mechanic, electrician, or construction worker). Female non-traditional students are usually office workers. They too may wear the uniforms of their respective jobs, along with a name tag with their company's name and a swipe access card around their neck or attached to their waistband. The high heel shoes they wore to work in the morning have been replaced by flip flops or sneakers by the time they arrive for their 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. class. The students are mostly Bermudians who come from working class families. Bermuda College, which is NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) accredited, and the only tertiary institution of higher education on the island, while providing a firm foundation and various associate degrees and certifications, is also cost effective for those students who can't afford to go abroad to school. Twelve credits can cost between $1,072.50--$1,605.00 per semester, which is about 20% of what it would cost to go to college in the United States and about 50% of what it would cost to go to college in Canada. The foundation provided at the college, along with the financial savings makes it an ideal start for one's college career.

Even though Bermuda is a small island, its population is diverse, with a mixture of black, white, brown, red and yellow students. Where the United States is said to be a melting pot, Bermuda can be seen to be a melting teapot. Bermuda College's student population closely correlates with the island's population which is majority black. In 2010 Bermuda College's student population was approximately 64% black, 7% white and approximately 29% of mixed race (FactBook, Bermuda College, 2009/2010, p. 42). Comparatively, according to Bermuda's most recent census, 2010, Bermuda's population was 64,237. For this census, 54 % of those questioned identified themselves as black and 31% identified as white. The count for non-Bermudian was 13,516 persons (p. 3). In terms of ethnicity 7% of the population is Portuguese (Azores), 4% is Asian and 13% Caribbean (2010 Census, p. 3). Bermuda College's 2010 census report showed that out of the population of 1313 students, 7 were Asian. A further more specific demographic breakdown was not included in the BC census data. Portuguese are classified as white in Bermuda College's census data. There has always been a Portuguese presence in Bermuda, but now the Asian population seems to have surpassed the Portuguese. According to the Bermuda 2010 census data the number of persons born in the African and Asian countries who were living in Bermuda rose substantially (2010 Census p, 7). This change invariably ripples through the BC student population.

So, in this melting 'teapot' that is Bermuda we have a possibility of multiple languages, including English, Portuguese, and any number of Asian and African languages. The majority of these students who speak a language other than English are "*balance bilingual* who [have] acquired *simultaneous bilingualism* in a case of *childhood bilinguality*" (Canagarajah 2006; p. 589, emphasis in original). However, most of the students who attend Bermuda College are either born on the island, or arrived in Bermuda at a very young age, and most of them have been

educated in Bermuda's school system, so they are fluent in English and really don't have an accent that distinguishes them as a speaker of other languages. But indeed, many of these students, Portuguese, Asian, African, speak another language at home. Scholars, especially world Englishes scholars, say that this diversity in the student population is something that needs to be considered to ensure that classrooms are more inclusive and not discriminatory. Kubota and Ward (2000) say, "In a community that values linguistic and cultural diversity, communication is a two way-way street. . . . On one hand, a nonnative speaker of English continues to improve his/her English communicative competence, while a native speaker of English, on the other hand, tries to listen and understand different varieties of English with patience, empathy, and unbiased attitudes" (p. 81). While the former is a natural outgrowth of continued attempts to communicate, the latter requires continued effort, consistency and compassion on my part as a teacher; it is not a natural outgrowth, so it remains a goal on which to concentrate, if I am to illicit better participation in my classroom. Moreover, say Kubota and Ward (2000), it is simply wrong to discriminate and judge a person's "abilities and intelligence based on what forms of language they speak" (p. 81). It is not much different from judging a book by its cover. Such discriminatory and judgmental behavior deprives the reader/listener of the richness that might otherwise have been experienced.

Not only does Bermuda College have students with multiple languages, but we sometimes have students with other learning needs, which may require attention to different learning styles (aural, verbal, physical, social, solitary, visual, logical). It has long been documented that students have different ways of knowing and these different ways need to be addressed in order to best facilitate the learning of our students. Sometimes those different ways of knowing may mean that the teacher has to take a different approach. Ahad (2006), who

acknowledges that colleges have seen an increase in the diversity of their student population, conducted a study at a small community college on the island of Bermuda. She found that many of the faculty lacked knowledge about learning styles. Ahad (2006) says, "This lack of knowledge disadvantaged educators and students alike when endeavoring to maximize learning potential (p. 1). Parris (2009) raises similar concerns and says, "Some students are falling through the cracks because teachers are failing to address unique learning styles . . ." (as cited in Moniz, 2009). As individuals, students will come to the classroom with different learning styles and such differences will need to be taken into consideration. Rather than judgment and discrimination, we need inclusivity. Student-centered pedagogies make consideration of these differences easier to accommodate.

The creation of a student-centered classroom is important to our students' success, but even more so for students who are second language learners. Tucker (2000) strives to make her classroom student-centered, which is seen in her student-driven syllabi, syllabi that are co-constructed with the students, whereby showing students that their voices are important and that their interest is at heart (p. 203). Canagarajah (2006) also appears to have student-centeredness as an aim, particularly as it relates to L2 students. He calls for the "pluralization of composition" which should make the teaching of writing more inclusive (p. 611). He believes that there should be less focus on multilingual students' mistakes and that their writing should be viewed as a variety rather than error (p. 611). And, Horner and Trimbur (2002) in an attempt to put the focus of concern on the students, especially L2 students, argue for an "internationalist perspective capable of understanding the study and teaching of written English in relation to other languages and to the dynamics of globalization" (p. 624). Students are coming to college from different linguistic spaces. Some are native speakers of English with different learning

styles, and different needs. Some speak English, but a dialect so different that it may sound foreign. Others are bilingual, and some are even multilingual. As composition teachers we must meet the students where they are at, if we really want to help them succeed in their college career. Canagarajah (2006), Kubota and Ward (2000), Ahad (2006), Parris (2009), Tucker (2000), and Horner and Trimbur (2002), are calling for a pedagogy that gives more consideration to the students. They are asking for teachers to be less exclusionary, less discriminatory, whether intentional or otherwise, and to be more student-centered.

Clearly, my BC students come from different linguistic spaces, bringing with them "rich and varied language and cultural experiences" (CEE Position statement). As a result of these various linguistic spaces they may be monolingual, balanced bilingual, trilingual or more. They also come from different cultural backgrounds and this increased diversity in population makes it difficult to speak to a unified culture. Political commentator, Walton Brown (2012) asserts that Bermudians do not really have a culture because we don't have a "common identity," an identity that signifies what it means to be Bermudian. But, there are some things such as holidays that are considered to be culturally Bermudian. For instance, Good Friday is a holiday that almost all Bermudians celebrate. It's a day for family, flying kites, eating codfish cakes and homemade hot cross buns. What makes Good Friday cultural has more to do with the way it is celebrated, rather than any religious practices. Then there's the 24th of May, or what is now called Bermuda Day, a day which sees Bermuda celebrate its heritage. There is a half marathon race to begin the day and the afternoon is capped off with a parade. Every nationality of the Island is usually represented in the 24th of May parade festivities. Brown (2012) writes, "Our Island has a rich heritage, celebrated in song, dance, sailing vessels, food . . . . Our community cannot but have been enriched by the cultural contributions of the wider Caribbean, Europe and Asia, in

particular." Our culture, if not born out of all of these geographic areas, certainly has been altered because of the inclusion of people from these regions.

Probably the best holiday of the year, and the one that most will argue is culturally Bermudian, is Cup Match, which falls either on the last Thursday and Friday in July, or the first Thursday and Friday in August. On rare occasions the holiday may fall on the last Thursday in July and the first Friday in August. The first day (Emancipation Day) of the holiday signifies the freeing of slaves in Bermuda and the second day (Somer's Day) celebrates Admiral Sir George Somers who founded Bermuda in1609. Almost all Bermudians celebrate this two-day holiday, even if it means that they simply don't work that day, as it is a public holiday; all banks and government offices are closed. All workers, by rights, are entitled to have at least one of these two days off from work. In fact, because so many Bermudians often "took off work" to attend the cricket match the government of Bermuda made these two days a national public holiday in 1946 ("The annual cup match in Bermuda, 2012"). The people who celebrate Cup Match will either spend the holiday on the beach, camping at one of the many camping grounds around the island, or they go to the annual two-day cricket match that sees two teams from opposite ends of the island (east/west) facing off. Thousands of people stream to the match, wearing their respective team's colors—dark blue and light blue if you support St. George's (the east end) or red and navy blue if you support Somerset (the west end). Many of these spectators have spent thousands of dollars to ensure prime seating at the match. There's always a lot of fun, trash talk in the weeks leading up to the match, not only face to face, but all over social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well on the radio airwaves. "Cup Match has grown to encompass so much more than cricket. . . . Amidst the fanfare and revelry of events surrounding Cup Match, there's a sense of respect amongst Bermudians, whatever side of the island they hail

from and team they're rooting for. With this comes rejoicing, and an appreciation for freedom. Cup Match manages to bring everyone together, even those who do not call Bermuda's sandy shores home" ("The annual cup match in Bermuda, 2012"). Cup Match is *the* holiday that Bermudians look forward to all year (italics for emphasis).

While Good Friday, 24th of May and Cup Match are the three holidays that are firmly embedded in Bermuda's culture, there are also certain foods that are culturally Bermudian. Foods such as the traditional Sunday morning breakfast of cod fish and potatoes. Cod fish and potatoes is usually served with either a stewed tomato sauce or an onion and butter sauce, along with avocado pear and banana. Then there are codfish cakes and hot cross buns, which are served on Good Friday. And Christmas simply wouldn't be Christmas without cassava pie. Cultures are born out of traditions and these holidays and these foods have a deep tradition in Bermuda. These holidays, especially 24th of May and Cup Match, as well as these foods are synonymous with Bermuda.

Bermuda's population is growing in diversity, and as a result we have cultures within our Bermudian culture borne out of the various ethnic communities of our melting 'teapot.' These various ethnic groups may find sustaining their cultures challenging because there are so few of them. Invariably, they tend to melt into the Bermudian culture, but this does not mean that these various cultures should be ignored, especially in our classrooms. When students of different cultures are recognized, respected and validated in our classrooms, respect is instilled. Respect for others begins with respect for self, just as caring for the earth and its oceans begins with the puddles in our own backyard. Fitts, Winstead, Weisman, Flores and Valenciana's (2008) study of 19 bilingual student-teachers highlighted the need to "develop either culturally responsive pedagogy or a social justice perspective" (p. 361). And Gay (2010) asserts, "If educators

continue to be ignorant of, ignore, impugn, and silence the cultural orientations, values and performance styles of ethnically different students, they will persist in imposing cultural hegemony, personal denigration, educational inequity, and academic underachievement upon them" (p. 27). Yes, it is important that we recognize and respect the various cultures that make up our classrooms.

Faria (2001), a Portuguese-Bermudian graduate student, using a cake-making metaphor in her Master's thesis explores the issue of cultural hegemony as it pertains to Portuguese-Bermudian students. She expresses concerns that "Bermuda's schools [may use] a 'cookie cutter' approach to the education of people with unique needs," specifically bilingual Portuguese-Bermudian students (p. 4). Faria says that she seeks to "give voice to the experience of Portuguese individuals who have integrated into the Bermudian community" (p. 5). The implication here is that Faria feels that Portuguese students in Bermuda, as a result of a one-size-fits-all system of education, are being silenced. Gay (2010) and Park (2011) agree that students' multicultural needs must be met in the classroom. When teachers recognize and accommodate the multicultural nature of their classrooms, they "*deliberately create cultural continuity* in educating ethnically diverse students" (Gay 2010, p. 27, emphasis in original). Park (2011) embraces this cultural continuity by allowing her students, participants in a Cultural and Linguistic Autobiography Writing Project, to write out of their experiences. Allowing students to write out of their own experiences in composition classes recognizes, celebrates and validates students' respective cultures.

The social climate in Bermuda, as mentioned earlier, has become unhealthy. Sadly, we now have an island full of young people whose only purpose in life is to drink, do drugs, sit on the wall and make a buck in any way they can. Many of our young people have no sense of

purpose and no hope for the future. Years ago, Bermuda was an island where people safely left their doors unlocked, where open windows caught fresh breeze, an island where you only heard about the possibility of guns somewhere else. Few personally knew of anyone using them. Reading about gun related crimes, drive-by shootings and murders are no longer drawing the shock response it used to. Indeed, Bermuda's social climate is in a state of unrest. Whenever you see acts of resistance or rebellion in a community, you are usually dealing with inappropriate acts of power. It may be simply perceived power or the lack thereof, but people resist most fiercely when either forced or when perceived choices seem to be taken away, when they run out of options, when their ability to provide for themselves and their families is compromised or crippled; when they feel . . . powerless.

Oliver (2000) conducted a study of the perspectives of violent men on the causes for violent crime among black men in Bermuda. The study which looked at two focus groups at Westgate Correctional Facility, Bermuda's maximum security prison, had as its purpose to "examine the 'lived experiences' of a sample of violent offenders to enhance understanding of how such men attribute meaning to their involvement in violent behavior" (Abstract). The general consensus was that most of their violent crimes stem from a sense of powerlessness, hopelessness, voiceless-ness, their inability to make a decent living in their own Island home. Their frustrations were compounded by the fact that their government was making more jobs available to "non-black foreign nationals" (Oliver 2000, Abstract). Bermudian black males do seem to have a more difficult time securing employment than women or their white male counterparts. Given the challenges they face in finding employment, although definitely not an excuse to go out and commit crime, their disgruntlement about foreign nationals is understandable. Mincy, Jethwani-Keyser, Haldane and Pouncy (nd) report, "Until recently,

Bermuda boasted the second highest per capita income in the world, but Black Bermudian males have been unable to secure their fair share of the country's remarkable economic opportunities" (CRFCFW). Indeed the social unrest within a community correlates directly with feelings of powerlessness. This sense of powerlessness can lead to feelings of hopelessness.

Many issues of power are grounded politically and economically and Bermuda is no exception. Under a bipartisan political system, similar to the one in the U.S., Bermudians may endorse either the Progressive Labor Party, currently in power or the conservative, recently turned, 'wanna-be' liberal party, the United Bermuda Party/One Bermuda Alliance. The United Bermuda Party ruled from the time of Bermuda's first election in 1968, until they were finally toppled by the Progressive Labor Party in 1998. Although the PLP have a number of white members and supporters, it is a predominantly black party. Predominantly white, the United Bermuda Party recognized the need to present a more inclusive front after their loss in the 1998 election and eventually folded, only to rise again, like the Phoenix with a new look, showcasing more blacks, as the One Bermuda Alliance.

While Bermuda may not have people engaged in 'occupy' movements, there is certainly the air of discontent with regards to our economic climate, and the government's response to our situation, as indicated by Oliver's (2000) study of violent men incarcerated in Bermuda's prison. Like the U.S., the economic power in Bermuda is in the hands of a very few. It was hoped that the change from a conservative (UBP) government, after thirty years of rule, to a labor (PLP) government in 1998, would have righted much of the imbalances with regards to the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. But, it's not easy to right an inherited system of inequity. Neither is it easy to adjust to having absolute power when one has never had it before, as evidenced by the PLP

government. Things did not change, as hoped, under the labor government. The rich continued to get richer, and the poor just tried to survive, even when it meant engaging in criminal activity.

One of the major bones of contention for many Bermudians, under the UBP leadership, was our school system. During their time in government the UBP built a "mega-high" school for all of the island's children, or more specifically, for all of those who couldn't afford to go to private schools (Egan, 1995). Even though experts, brought in from Canada, told the then minister of education that such a mega-school wouldn't work on an island as small as Bermuda, they (the UBP) built the school anyway. This was of particular concern because at that time, the early to mid-90s, students from various high schools around the island were engaged in fighting between each other. Why in the world would you see fighting going on between schools, and then turn around and build one huge mega-school, putting all of these students together in one place? To deliberately enclose these children of opposing factions in the same space invites confrontation and increases hostilities. In fact, there were reports of violence in the new mega school two days after it opened its doors, violence which led to teachers threatening to strike (Hainey, 1997).

Unfortunately, the only people impacted by this decision to build this mega-school were the poor and the working class. Before the school was even built, Gloria McPhee, a former Minister of Education (UBP) from 1972-1976 argued that the school was a mistake, "ill conceived," and referred to its construction as a "demon scheme" (Egan, 1995). McPhee asserted that the school would be attended by "low income blacks" and that it would "play a deadly role in the total polarization of races" (Egan, 1995). Many of the ruling UBP politicians of that time (mid 90s) either enrolled their children in private schools or they sent them off the island to boarding, preparatory schools. When the labor government (PLP) finally managed to

wrest power from the UBP after more than thirty years as the opposition party, many breathed a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, rather than try to right the wrongs in education done by the previous government, the PLP only compounded the issue as they built *another* mega high school, and what was worst, they built it in the *same* area as the previous one. Many kids now simply won't go to school out of fear. The fighting within schools and between schools of such close proximity may just be one of the reasons for the increase in high school drop-out rates. There was a time, around the 1970s, when there was a stop gap for our young man who decided to drop out of school for whatever reason.

Around the 70s, Bermuda's booming hospitality industry functioned similarly to the way the fast food industry functions for high school kids in the United States for our island's young people. The hotels were an option for those who were not, for whatever reason, into academics. Economist and Bermuda College Senior Lecturer, Craig Simmons, says for many young black men getting a job working as a busboy in one of the island's hotels was seen to be a "rite of passage" (Personal interview). The hotels with their busboy positions were ideal for young people, especially young men who dropped out of school because they could get a job as busboys in one of the many hotels on the island. From this position they worked their way up to a waiter's position, then on to a position as a dining room or restaurant captain, and quite often to a position in management. Many of them did just this, worked their way up through the ranks in the hospitality industry. However, when the UBP government, who were in power at that time, switched the focus from tourism as our major source of revenue to international business, the hospitality industry ceased to serve this function. Hotels, in order to cut cost, eliminated the busboy's position, that position that gave many young men a foot in the door, took them off the streets and allowed them to get on the job training.

With the elimination of the busboy's position, many young men were now out of work and, thus, unable to get the training to become waiters. Hence, this move by the hotel industry saw the removal of that "sector of the economy that could accommodate large numbers of unskilled people, black or white," says Bermuda College Sociology Professor, Geoff Rothwell (Personal interview). Hotels began to require applicants for the waiter's positions to have experience which ultimately opened the door to an influx of foreign workers. There were now fewer options for working class people, says Economist Simmons (Personal interview). And since our young men were dropping out of school, there certainly weren't places for them in our newest pillar of the economy--international business (IB). So, this shift from tourism as the main economic pillar to one that saw an increased focus on international business (IB) opened the door to not only foreign wait staff in the hotels, but also more foreign workers in international business (IB).

This influx of foreign workers did not just affect jobs; it also had an impact on Bermuda's housing. The rental market was driven by a "market-relationship, which by its very nature is impersonal" (Simmons, 2013). Bermudian landlords had impersonal relationships with their foreign tenants, and for many landlords this was seen to be the ideal or perfect relationship. More foreign workers meant that greedy landlords got greedier. With the growth of international business (IB), rents in Bermuda skyrocketed. A three-bedroom apartment or house, prior to the influx of IB, could cost as little as $1,200. With IB, landlords began charging exorbitant rents, particularly since they were renting to people in the international business community, who were not only making six figure salaries, but many of them had their rents subsidized, so landlords were guaranteed their rent. Now, a three-bedroom apartment or house can cost in the region of five thousand dollars, or more, depending on the location.

Ultimately, the shift from tourism as the main pillar of Bermuda's economy to international business (IB) had a devastating effect on the working class segment of Bermuda's population. Bermuda, like other parts of the world, has a significant number of single-parent households, a demographic that continues to see growth. In fact, according to Bermuda's last census there was a 23% increase in single-parent households between 2000 and 2010 (2010 Census of Population and Housing, p. 45). This economic shift was particularly unfriendly to those single parent households, households that were usually headed by females. You may have single mothers, usually with only a high school diploma, trying to raise one, two, or three children on their own. If there are male children in the household, they often feel obligated to help their mother in any way they can. So, it is not uncommon for these male children to drop out of school to seek employment, but opportunities are few for high school dropouts. Other than Kentucky Fried Chicken, there are no fast food franchises in Bermuda that young people can use as a stepping stone. It's a difficult situation for many young Bermudians, especially those raised in single parent households. They can't get a decent job, so of course they can't afford the kinds of rents landlords charge. Young people in Bermuda can choose to either finish high school and go to college or make a living by hook or by crook. Sadly, for many of them it is by crook. What's even sadder is that many mothers turn a blind eye when their child becomes involved in illegal activity because they need the financial help. And then those who do decide to go to college are constantly torn and tested. Faced with the challenge of coming up with money to pay college tuition and the astronomical cost of textbooks, the life of a street pharmacist often looks more tempting.

Bermuda College students who make up my class come out of these culturally and linguistically diverse environs, and many feel disenfranchised and either apathetic about, or

disgruntled with, our current government. Many of them live in fear of the increase in anti-social behavior and gun related crime that engulfs our island. Some of them do not. Some of them have simply adapted to the times as they see it. My students come from this space. My students occupy this space. This is their world. But, all is not doom and gloom, however. There are, of course, students who come out of more healthy and positive spaces, spaces where family and friends are seen as valued and contributors to healthy growth and development. Some of my students come from this healthy space. Some of my students come from that place that tourists know; the place where "Bermuda is another world," but there are many others who come from that 'other' world of Bermuda.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Change the World? . . . This is How I'm Going to Do It

The students who participated in my study were drawn from two of my Freshman English classes at Bermuda College. One class, which was a night class, initially consisted of 20 students, with 18 completing the course. The other class, a day class, initially had an enrollment of twenty 22 students, with 18 completing the course. Students drop a class or simply disappear for any number of reasons, reasons we don't always know. Of the 36 students completing the course, 17 (47%) agreed to participate in the study as revealed by the signed voluntary consent forms. These consent forms were administered, in my absence, by a fellow colleague, Bermuda College Sociology Professor, Dr. Geoffrey Rothwell. The voluntary consent forms were held by my colleague until after the final grades were submitted. There were actually 14 students from my night section and 10 students from my day section who signed the voluntary consent form. However, half (7) of the students who signed the consent form from my night section were dual enrollment students, high school students who were simultaneously taking college classes. These dual enrollment students were ineligible because they did not meet the age requirement (18 years old) for the study.

The students who signed the voluntary consent form were traditional and non-traditional students, ranging from about 18 to 40+ years old. Although my classes are usually a reflection of Bermuda's demographic--black, white, Portuguese, West Indian and other ethnicities--the students who volunteered to participate in this study were all black. One of them was from the West Indies, Trinidad to be exact. And one was of East Indian heritage, which she revealed in her story. Regardless of the heritage of my students I offered them understanding and

compassion. I offered understanding and compassion to all my students, but especially to those who entered my classroom with a desire to cross over into a more positive space. I hoped that the creation of a learning environment that was compassionate to who they were as students, as individuals, would encourage them to speak with, speak to and speak out against their environment through the writing of their lives; at least, this was my hope.

My composition classes have always and continue to follow a collaborative learning workshop format. In this collaborative learning environment students served in two roles, one as a writer and one as a reader. Students were expected to engage in writing workshops, particularly because I believe that students do better when they play an active part in their learning process. In most of my classes I usually had 25 students, which I divided into 3 groups of approximately 8 students. This group allocation is done randomly with a deck of playing cards, using the ace through to the seven in three different card suits. If need be, I add or subtract from a given suit based on the number of students in the class. If there are twenty four students in the class, then I have the seven through to the ace in the Hearts, the Diamonds and the Spades. After I have removed the remaining cards from each suit (Hearts, Diamonds, Spades) along with the Clubs, the suit that is not used, I shuffle the deck. Each student picks a card to determine their group assignment. In order to ensure fairness, and randomness, I record which group the student is in as soon as the card is picked. There's a reason why I record the student's group allocation immediately.

What I discovered in my pilot run of this pedagogy is that students are not always honest. The first time I used this group allocation method with the pilot study all of the students picked a card and *then* I recorded their respective group on the board. I know, not so smart, right? Well, there were three friends (girls) all sitting next to each other. I expressed some concerns about

this little group before I began the draw. I told them that if they ended up in the same group, then I reserved the right to change them to another group because I thought groups are more effective when members are new to each other; it allows for more learning and growth. But, since the group allocation was supposed to be completely random, I figured there was no chance that all three girls would pick cards from the same suit, so I allowed the students to convince me to let them keep their cards regardless of what card they chose. As I said, every student picked a card. Well, wouldn't you know; those three girls ended up in the same group! It was only later in the semester that they, laughingly, admitted to me that they had switched cards. So, lesson learned. So, the students who participated in this study chose their card and revealed their group allocation immediately in order to ensure that the process was indeed random.

For the workshops each student signed up for a day when he/she would workshop one page from their book manuscript. Given the length of the class, which was 80 minutes (day class), we managed to workshop approximately four students' papers per class, which meant that it took two classes to get through a single round of reading workshop in which each student in the group had a page read. On the other hand, my night class was 3 hours, so we were able to complete a whole round of workshop in one class. To ensure fairness, I again had the students draw a card from their suit, with the ace being the highest and working down in the suit order (ace, down through seven). The person whose drew the ace would have first choice in where they wanted to go in the rotational order for the writing workshop. They would choose their order, then, working from the person with the ace down through to the person with the seven. Whatever order they signed up for in the initial workshop, this was the order that was maintained throughout the semester. As writers, they produced drafts of their books.

The student-writer, whose paper was scheduled for workshop, had to bring a typed, one-page, single-spaced document from any section of their working manuscript prior to the class that he/she was scheduled to have their paper work-shopped. The writer had to bring sufficient copies for each member of their group. If there were eight people in the group, then he/she had to bring seven copies. These seven, one-page texts, produced by those students who were scheduled to be work-shopped, became the homework for the students in each group. This meant that documents that were scheduled for workshop had to be distributed to the group members *at least* the class prior to the scheduled workshop. The number of workshops varied based on the progress in the course. But, students brought a *different* one-page document for each round of workshops. It was imperative that work was produced in a timely manner, so that students were able to do their homework. Ensuring that students produced their work in a timely manner was a bit of a challenge in the beginning, until students got used to the workshop process. Of course, I knew if people did not bring in their pages because I was always circling the room and observing them at work. Evidence of their timeliness in the production of their pages for workshop was also revealed when students turned in their responses for their group at the end of each round.

The students' role as readers required that they read all of the texts provided to them by their group members prior to the class scheduled for workshop of those papers. The student as a reader provided written feedback directly on the individual's one page manuscript. Readers were graded on their responses to their peers. They made copies of the feedback they gave to their peers, wrote copy on the copy, gave the original to their peer, and gave the copy to me to put in their response folder. I kept a response folder for each student. I also gave them a handout to assist them with their responses. (see Appendix B). These responses were grouped according to the round of workshop, so if a student didn't receive a peer's writing in time for them to do their

homework, they documented this (attached a post it note) so that they were not penalized for missing responses. They were not allowed to correct or edit their peers' papers for things such as spelling or grammatical errors. The aim of this activity was three-fold. One of the aims was to teach them to respond to their peers' writing. Consequently, in teaching them to respond they should become more critical readers. Hopefully, then, this (becoming more critical readers) translated into their becoming more critical writers. Berthoff (1981) says, "One of the most useful things to learn about teaching writing, and thereby teaching critical thinking, is to learn to ask questions about meaning" (p. 115). So, they were provided with some guided questions to assist them in providing responses to their peers such as:

1. How would it change your meaning if you added . . .
2. How would it change your meaning if you deleted . . .
3. How would it change your meaning if you moved . . . (Berthoff 1981, p. 115).

And Hurlbert (2012) says because "student writers . . . can quickly take offense when their writing is criticized, [he] insists on students using questions when responding to each other's work" (p. 186). Posing questions puts the responsibility on the writers to consider the issue without readers appearing to be too critical. The writer is then forced to answer questions about meaning as it pertains to their writing and through this process learns, hopefully, to see his/her writing from the readers' perspectives. Rather than repeatedly writing out 'how would it change your meaning if you . . . ,' students used the abbreviation, H.W.I.C.Y.M.I.Y. They could also respond by saying, 'I would like to know more about_____'. Additionally, they had to include an 'I like_____because_____' statement (Hurlbert, 2012). Writing an 'I like' statement encouraged readers to look at the positive in the students' writings. Finally, students had to include an endnote. The endnote had to address the writer by name, as doing so

forced them to engage with the writer. In the endnote, rather than simply writing 'I liked or I enjoyed reading your manuscript,' students were encouraged to show reflective thought about what they had read. They could not simply say I enjoyed reading your book; they had to qualify their response. The recipient of the feedback used the collective comments or questions received from their peers to make revisions to their writing. Sommers (2013), says this collaborative type of learning is beneficial to students. She believes, "The more students read of one another's work, the more they learn; the more they learn, the better they write" (p. 31). In this student-centered approach, my students engaged with writing and they engaged with each other.

Students also wrote afterwords for their books. The afterword was a minimum of one page, single spaced. This afterword assignment was a significant part of their book, as students had to reflect on, not only what they had written, but also how they felt about using this student-centered pedagogy. There were at least two things the afterword was intended to accomplish. For one, it assisted me in meeting certain course objectives as specified by my institution, Bermuda College, by having them respond to a list of guided questions. More importantly, though, it assisted me in achieving one of the aims of this pedagogy, namely an exploration of the issue of hope as perceived by the students. A discussion of hope was included as one of the guided questions.

As I mentioned previously, my institution requires that I teach the various rhetorical strategies, so these strategies were introduced to my students before they actually began writing their manuscripts. Essentially, I introduced them to the tools they needed to write, such as understanding main ideas, the purpose of an outline, the rhetorical strategies or modes, and MLA documentation. Unlike my prior teaching of composition, however, I did not handcuff them to a particular strategy and demand that they produced an essay that adhered to the guidelines of that

rhetorical strategy. Instead, I provided them with the tools, asked them to write, using any of the tools they wanted, and encouraged them to be aware of the ways in which they were thinking, because indeed, we do all think in certain ways. Hence, the afterword expected them to reflect on the writing of their manuscript and address questions such as: (see Appendix C)

1. Which tools did you use in writing your manuscript? Why?
2. How do you feel about what you have written and why do you feel as you do?
3. How does what you have written in the early stages of your manuscript compare/contrast with what you have written in the later stages of your manuscript?
4. What is **your** definition of "hope?" Is there evidence of hope in your writing? If yes, provide clear, specific and developed examples from your manuscript.
5. If there is no evidence of hope, provide clear, specific and developed examples from your manuscript.
6. To what do you attribute this presence or absence of hope?
7. Is there anything/s that you would change in this manuscript? If so, how and why?
8. I believe that as long as you <u>WRITE</u>, you have the opportunity to <u>RIGHT</u> your life. Moreover, "as long as you're writing your life/your world, you can write any ending you choose." How do you feel about these two statements and why do you feel as you do?

Considering that I would have had previous discussions with my students about the various strategies, or tools, used for writing, these questions were intended to encourage them to think about their writing in a critical way, using those very tools. Because MLA documentation is another institutional course objective, they had to research some aspect of their afterword, incorporate at least two approved sources and provide a correctly formatted works cited page for the sources used. Two sources were sufficient to demonstrate their ability to follow MLA documentation guidelines. Hopefully, in writing their afterwords students see how *their* writings fits into the broader social, political, cultural or linguistic context of their world, which helped

them to see their work was actually meaningful and purposeful. The afterwords, then, highlighted "the confluence of the psychological and sociological elements of composition studies" and showed how "students [were] addressing the world in their books" (Hurlbert 2012, p. 189). Their afterwords clearly showed that they were 'writing,' and hopefully 'righting,' their worlds.

Finally, students were asked to participate in an interview. They agreed to participation in the interview process by noting it on the voluntary consent form. The interview, like a part of the afterword, explored how they felt about using this pedagogy of hope in which they were allowed to write freely. Since a part of the afterword was intended to explore the issue of hope and the student's writing in the context of their definition of hope, the interview was used to fill in any gaps, if any, and to have them share their views and feeling about what they had written and how it fit into the broader social, political, cultural or linguistic context of Bermuda. Initially I had planned to conduct these interviews near the end of the semester, but issues of confidentially as outlined by my university's (Indiana University of Pennsylvania) Institutional Review Board made this somewhat problematic.

Again, the students who participated in this study were required to sign a consent form, which for reasons of confidentially, was administered by one of my colleagues. Since the signed consent forms were administered and held by one of my colleagues until after end of semester grades were submitted, I had no way of knowing, and nor should I, who the participants were. Moreover, not having access to these students until after my grades were submitted made interviewing them difficult since by the time my end of semester grades were submitted they were finished for the semester. This meant that the interviews had to take place during the following semester, if the participants were still attending Bermuda College. Some students do

go abroad to finish their education rather than completing their associates degree at Bermuda College. The downside to this was that there was always a possibility of losing some students. On the other hand, students may tend to be more thoughtful in their responses during the interview after they had time to grow, re-read, and reflect on what they had written in their books. Interviews conducted later rather than earlier might actually be more useful, more telling. Of course the best laid plans can, and sometime do, go awry.

Interviewing the participants who agreed by way of the voluntary consent form proved to be more troublesome than I initially thought. Of the 17 students in the study, 13 of them agreed to participate in the interview. Unfortunately, I was unable to reach all of these students since the earliest opportunity for me to reach out to them was the following semester. Some of the students were still attending Bermuda College, some were attending only at night because they now worked full time, others had gone abroad to school and some had simply dropped out. Making face to face contact with some of them on campus was helpful but was still problematic as there always seemed to be a schedule conflict. I decided the best way to reach them was to send out an email to all who agreed to the interview to determine whether they were still interested in participating. Ten of the 13 participants who had agreed to the interview replied to my email, and expressed a willingness to participate in the interview. Of the 10 respondents, I was only actually able to interview 2 of the students face to face. Because I thought it was important to allow these students who had expressed a desire to participate in the interview to have their say, I decided to go a different route in ensuring their voices were heard. Unable to meet with the other 8 students in person, I sent them an email survey/questionnaire. Five of the 8 students responded to the email survey. So while 13 students agreed to participate in the interview, for reasons such as the student had left the island to attend school abroad, or a student

had dropped out of college or for reasons of scheduling conflicts, I was only able to collect this type of data (face to face interview/email survey) from 7 (54%) of the 13 students. However, because I had decided to focus only on the books that discussed violence in Bermuda, I was able to gather data from those 4 students—2 of them I met with face to face and 2 of them responded to the email survey/questionnaire.

Ultimately, I wanted to know what students said when given the opportunity to say what they wanted. I encouraged them and facilitated the writing of their books throughout the semester. At the end of the semester I had amassed a collection of their writings and other data sources (face to face interview/email survey) through which to read and hear their voices. The collected data included:

- Students' finished books
- Students' afterwords
- Students' response folders
- Students' interview transcripts
- Students' survey responses

Students submitted hardcopies of their finished books. I thought about having all of the books submitted via email, but I didn't think it was safe to have such important data collected *only* electronically. The finished books provided evidence of students' experiences and subsequently students' voices. The afterwords provided evidence of their writing in the context of this pedagogy of hope, in the broader Bermuda College/Bermuda context, as well as evidence of their feelings about using this book-writing pedagogy. The response folders capture their feedback to their peers' writings. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and served as part of my data collection. The email survey was also part of my data collection. The interviews and the email surveys provided additional feedback on their writings as the students deemed appropriate. But more specifically, the interviews and email survey provided feedback about the pedagogy of

hope and whether writing their book helped them to arrive at a sense of hope. The interview was semi-structured and included questions such as:

1. How do you define hope and how has your definition changed since the writing of your book?
2. What did you learn from writing your book, about writing, about yourself?
3. What would you change about your book?
4. Do you have any other comments/suggestions you would like to make regarding your experience?

While the face to face interviews were semi-structured, I found that I needed to be more specific in my questions with the email interviews, so the questions were different from those posed in the face to face. The email survey included the following questions: (see Appendix D)

1. How do you define hope? How has your definition of hope changed since writing your book?
2. One of the main objectives of this pedagogy is to allow students to speak, to allow them a voice. Do you feel that you were given a voice? Explain.
3. Did you see this as an empowering experience? If so, how?
4. What did you learn from writing your book, about writing and about yourself?
5. How is writing your story/writing your world connected to hope?
6. What else, if anything would you like to share with me?

One of the aims of this pedagogy is to afford students a voice, a voice that becomes especially important in a multilingual, multicultural classroom. Park (2010) says all too often students, especially L2 students, are challenged with "writing tasks that have minimal, if any, connection to their multilingual and multicultural immigrant experiences" (p. 51). While

Bermuda's L2 population is small, there is a presence and these students should not be ignored and treated as if they don't exist, as if they are just another Bermudian student when clearly they come from a different linguistic and cultural space. Quite often, though, even native English speaking students find it difficult to connect with some of the writing tasks that are usually attached to the traditional composition reader. As a result of writing assignments that many students have difficulty relating to, students are discouraged and have little interest in learning English or in learning writing.

Kivuva (2014) in her dissertation writes of a student who had this challenge. The student was asked to write about capital punishment. The problem was that he came from Africa. He had no idea what capital punishment was, so his challenge was two-fold. Not only was he learning to write in another language, but he was also being asked to write on a topic about which he has absolutely no knowledge (Unpublished dissertation). So, while such a topic is deemed to be very meaningful, it was irrelevant to the student. Park (2010) posits that what these students need is more "student-centered writing tasks" in which they can write about things which they know, or out of their experiences (p. 51). Forcing students to write about things that they are not knowledgeable about nor interested in may have the effect of discouraging them or silencing them, which can in turn hinder their success in the class.

Because most students who enter college, at least Bermuda College, have to take a writing course, Composition teachers have the opportunity to try to make a change in the world, to help in some way. Helping students to write better is a start. Maybe English can be taught in such a way that people stop killing each other (O'Reilley 1993). Maybe we can provide hope through the teaching of writing. Maybe as students write they really do come to see that they can write any ending they choose. Just maybe they can write their way to hope. I think about this

time Bermuda is experiencing, this time period of anti-social behavior, and I realize that composition teachers' skills and their talents as teachers should be used for such a time as this. The teacher who has hope and exhibits that hope can foster hope. I have hope that my island home can return to a state of peacefulness with a renewed sense of unity, a sense of community. His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, says we are all a part of each other. He makes an ardent call for peace:

> Peace does not mean all our problems will disappear. As long as human beings exist, there will always be some differences among us. Peace means restraining from violence and using common sense when there is a possibility of conflict. Genuine peace can be engendered through understanding that all human beings are like us in wanting happiness and not wanting fear and stress. The idea of distinction between "us" and "them" is now outdated because in today's reality everything is interdependent. Therefore, we should embrace the idea that the entire six billion human beings are part of "us." . . . All of us should aim to make this a century of peace and compassion. (Foreword, Kielburger, Kielburger and Page, 2010)

Yes, we are "interdependent," especially in an island as small as Bermuda. We are in some ways all related and all a part of each other. And anti-apartheid revolutionary and South Africa's first black president, the late Nelson Mandela, reassures us that there is hope when he says, "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." We must teach love by showing it, and we must have hope, so I must show it.

My pedagogy of hope is one that allows students to write and share their stories in an environment in which they feel comfortable doing so, an environment that exudes care and compassion, an environment that fosters learning and hope, an environment that fosters change. People tell stories to understand lived experiences, sometimes to uncover what the conscious mind doesn't know. Sometimes we don't know what we're thinking until we say it; sometimes we don't understand what we're saying until we write it, and sometimes we don't know what our writing means until it is read. Through this student-centered book writing process which sees students writing, sharing and reading their peers' books, change takes place. Through this pedagogy students come to see their writing differently. They come to see that they are not simply writing for the teacher. They are not merely writing an essay to complete an assignment to get a grade. One student wrote, "Writing this book has definitely made me feel like I have accomplished something good. Although this is not my first piece of writing, I feel that it is definitely one of the best and most gratifying [pieces of] writing I have ever produced." They begin to see that they have a vested interest in the production and sharing of their book. Students begin to see that they can truly touch lives through their writing. It is a writing experience that comes to be seen as an act of reciprocity. Hope may be the expectation that things will change for the better. My change in my pedagogy has resulted in students who are supportive of each other, students who are actually involved, students who write with a sense of purpose, students who demonstrate growth throughout the semester, particularly in their level of self-confidence, and students who are hopeful about their writing for the future. Their afterwords tell me this. I have changed; my pedagogy has changed and in so doing I am fostering change in my students. My pedagogy of hope, with its expectation for something better, is one that engenders change and engenders growth in my students, and in me.

The students in this study, who wrote about violence, violence that touched them directly, indirectly, or about violence they observed from a distance, came to see as a result of their writing that all was not lost; there is hope. My pedagogy of hope is intended to be provocative, to provoke thought. Through their writings they became social activists for change, evidence of which can be seen in some of their afterwords and interviews. Rather than simply writing an essay about violence, they were more involved because they were sharing the story of their life amidst the violence in Bermuda. Their involvement in the writing of their stories or in the telling of their lives encouraged them to seek solutions to the problems that permeate our island. Of course, we can't really expect our first year composition students to have solutions to social problems that we ourselves don't even know how to fix. But we can at least get them to think about solutions. My pedagogy of hope is intended to help students see that writing is hope; that thing that sustains us, that thing that allows us to survive, and that thing which makes us keep on pressing on.

CHAPTER FIVE

WRITINGS AND VOICES

The Students' Writings

"We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives" (Okri, 1997, p. 46)

What follows is a collection of my students' stories, stories written in a freshman composition class. The students in this study, including those who participated in the interview and the email survey, were voluntary participants, rather than the result of random selection. There were 17 students from two of my Freshman English classes who agreed to allow their writings to be shared in this study. Some of the students who participated in this study preferred not to use their own name, so many of the names are fictitious. The voices, the topics or themes in the stories were as varied and diverse as were the students who wrote them. They wrote stories about education, family, tragedy and loss, interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal conflict, innocence and experience, choices and regret, sexual abuse, mental disability and they wrote stories about violence. Because my desire to change my pedagogy was born out of my own experience with violence, namely the brutal murder of my nephew, I chose to make the focus of my research those books that discussed violence, particularly since it was the social unrest that was permeating our island that provoked my research. So while there were 17 students who signed voluntary consent forms, the four stories that deal with violence are the focus of my research. As I present their stories, I try not to appropriate their writing, but I do, where necessary, make grammatical changes or corrections to ensure clarity and coherency.

Although the students in this study address the topic of violence, they approach the topic differently, particularly in terms of perspective. As I said previously, Bermuda is a place where

almost everyone knows everyone else. This means that almost everyone has been touched by violence, if not directly, then indirectly. It is understandable, then, that one's perspective on violence is largely determined by how they have been impacted by it and how much of a vested interest they have in seeing change in our island home. The four books that I discuss in my dissertation are organized in terms of the perspective. Two of the books take a close look at the violence as the writers share their story of how their lives were impacted when they lost someone close to them. These two books are book-ended by two books that share a more objective look at violence in Bermuda. So, discussion of the books begins objectively with Jimaye's story, followed by the more personal stories of Deanna and Latreece, and then concludes with a different, but also somewhat objective view, found in Patrick's book. In this sense then, the books can be seen to be organized in a way in which we are objectively walked into some of the stories that are representative of Bermuda's people, before we are confronted with stories that share the horrors and personal pain felt by some members of our community. While all four students conclude their books with a sense of hope, the last book written by Patrick not only expresses a sense of hope, but the writer seems to epitomize hope in that he refuses to become a statistic.

Jimaye's Story

Jimaye's was the first in this selection of books collected from my students on violence. Jimaye, was a petite, fresh out of high school student, fair skinned in complexion, brown eyed, long auburn colored hair, with a spray of freckles lightly dotting her face. She was quiet and usually just sat and smiled, rather than engaging in classroom conversation, unless she was encouraged to do so by me or one of her peers. Although she was quiet, I got the sense that she was purposeful and focused. She always took notes, and her assignments were always in on

time. She was rarely late to class and never missed a day. She was there for a reason, to get an education, and she was determined to get it. Her goal was to become a primary (elementary) school teacher and Bermuda College was her first step towards that goal.

In her book, Jimaye discussed the gun related crimes that had been permeating our island for several years. She began with a discussion of the first shooting in 2003 of a young man, Shundae Jones, who was shot multiple times while sitting in a car outside of a nightclub in Dockyard, the most western end of the island. Jimaye wrote, "Little did we know that this was an early warning for what Bermuda was about to encounter, and unbeknown to us the problem was only going to get worse." Yes, as she noted, the gun violence did get worse as there were several other shooting murders. But the next incident Jimaye discussed was one that occurred seven years after the first shooting of Shundae Jones. Jimaye was only five years old at the time of the first shooting she discussed. Given the choice to write a book about what you are burning to tell the world, Jimaye wanted to say something about the violence that was permeating our island, and almost everyone in Bermuda remembered that first fatal shooting of young Shundae Jones in Dockyard. While Jimaye would have been too young to remember it, she certainly would have heard about it. Everybody had heard about it because it was something so out of the ordinary for our island, so it made sense, given the topic that she chose for her book that she started with that first memorable shooting. Writing about every shooting murder that had occurred since the first one in 2003, may have been too much, so it seems that she has chosen to look only at a select few of those murders.

The next incident that Jimaye recounted was a shooting that took place on Good Friday, 2010, when she was twelve years old. While there were ten murders that took place during the seven years between Shundae's murder in 2003, and the murder that happened on Good Friday,

2010, she was perhaps still too young to be aware of them. At twelve years old, middle school age, kids are a bit more in tune with what's going on around them. Kimwandee Walker was the next murder victim Jimaye wrote about in her book. Even though she didn't name him specifically, I was familiar with this shooting and the two books that follow Jimaye's also discuss Kimwandee's murder. Good Friday, she wrote, was one of Bermuda's most "popular" and most family-oriented holidays. It was a day when families got together to fly kites and eat fish cakes and homemade hot cross buns: "Families all over the island would spend their day at their neighborhood's biggest [sports or school] field fly[ing] kites, play[ing] various games such as marbles, football [soccer], softball, or listen[ing] to music and just hav[ing] a good time." However, on Good Friday, April 2, 2010, instead of fun, games and the celebration of family and community, a man was gun downed, shot multiple times, by two men, dressed in dark clothing on a bike (motorcycle), in front of his two young children as they flew their kites. She wrote that the shooters rode off leaving everyone on the field in "complete shock and disarray." The man was pronounced dead at the scene, leaving Bermuda to ponder many questions: "Who would have thought that a simple holiday could turn into one of the worse days in Bermuda's history? Who would have thought that out tiny island would turn into what can now be referred to as a 'battlefield'? Who would have thought that innocent children would be the witnesses to a cruel murder?" And, she added, the violence "was far from over."

Jimaye wrote about other shootings that had rocked our island. One incident took place in a barber shop on a Saturday afternoon. Another murder involved the shooting of a young man, Lorenzo Stovell, who was confined to a wheelchair. He was shot multiple times while sitting on a bus in his wheelchair outside of Woody's Drive Inn Bar in Dockyard. He had been travelling on this bus with a group of young ladies, one of whom was celebrating her birthday

when two men dressed in all black, wearing black helmets with dark visors came on the bus and shot him. She wrote about the attempted murder of a couple outside of a movie theater. Although the couple survived this shooting, their unborn baby wasn't as fortunate. Finally, she wrote about the shooting of a young man, Gary "Fingers" Cann, who was shot multiple times in her neighborhood. She recalled being awakened to the sounds of sirens. She said she ran into her parents' room to find out what was going on. Her mother called her aunt to see if she knew what had happened, "because she was always the first person in our family to know about anything that happened." She said that she and her parents were "shocked" to learn that this shooting had occurred in her neighborhood. Her mother told her to go back to bed and that they would talk about it in the morning. Jimaye wrote, as she walked backed to her room"my mind was wondering who could have got shot? Who could shoot someone in my neighborhood? I quickly came to the conclusion that I would not know the answers to these questions until the morning so I drifted off to sleep."

Ironically, Jimaye lived in that part of the island designated as 'MOB' territory (Money Over Bitches, a gang in the far western parish), but her existence in this area seemed to be somewhat insulated and sheltered. While Jimaye shared her stories about these various shootings, it seemed that she was distanced from these incidents of violence. Her pensive wondering ("Who could shoot someone in my neighborhood?") suggested a sense of naiveté or innocence about the area in which she lived. Her naiveté is highlighted by police sergeant and gang expert, Alex Rollins (2011) who said if someone from outside of that area, particularly a "rival," ventured into M.O.B. territory, they could be shot simply because they didn't come from that area ('"Parkside gun' used in numerous shootings"). And further, Randolph Lightbourne (2011), a man who survived being shot multiple times, while giving testimony in his alleged

attacker's trial, said, if you were not a member of M.O.B., but went into their territory "it was open season" ("Witness details structure of MOB gang"). Yet, Jimaye seemed surprised that someone had been shot in her neighborhood. One can exist in an environment, but not really be a part of that environment. In other words, a person can be in the world, but not of the world. But, this may have something to do with what Christie (2000) calls "social distance" (p. 23). Social distance affects the way we view things. How close (distance) we are to violence, meaning whether or not we have been exposed to it directly or indirectly, will determine our perception. So as a Bermudian, Jimaye was in this world, this world that saw Bermuda ravaged by gun-related violence, but she was not really able to identify with it, because she had never been exposed to it, directly or indirectly. She's outside of that immediate world. L. Driedger and J. Peters (1977) claim that there is an increase in social distance when one is unable to identify with someone, something, or what they call the "outgroups" (Abstract).

Jimaye's separation from this world seemed further highlighted when she wrote of the barber shop shooting: "I could just imagine taking my cousins to the barber shop on a Saturday afternoon, and . . . they witness a bloody murder. . . . What a horrible way to spend your Saturday afternoon." Her language seems to 'other' her, or at least sets her apart from people who experience such violence. Clearly this was not something that happened to her or any member of her family; it was something that happened to other people. Jimaye, in reflecting on these murders wrote, "There was a time when crime was almost nonexistent in Bermuda, but this is no longer the case. Violence is occurring almost every day." Things have escalated, she reported, from simple fist fights to "innocent bystanders dodging bullets." And she noted that most of this violence was black on black. She questioned: Why are blacks killing blacks? Why do they feel it is okay to take another life? What do they get out of committing such heinous

acts? Again, her language here, particularly her use of third person, is language that seems to indicate a distance between her and the people involved in this violence. Although she was black, she was not a part of that black community that was engaged in violence, she was not connected in any way to those individuals. It may be, however, that Jimaye is just practicing what she has been taught. More than likely she has been taught, like many other high school students, to never use the "first person" ("Using first person in an academic essay: When is it okay?"). There isn't a semester that passes with several of my students asking me whether they can use first person in their writing. They have been taught in high school, and some of them in college, that they are not to use "I." But the notion that students should not use the first person when writing, "is perhaps the most unfortunate writing myth that handicaps inexperienced writers" ("General guidelines for using the first person"). Of course, there is nothing wrong with writing objectively, especially if that is the only perspective you have, as is the case with Jimaye.

Jimaye attempted to understand those participating in this anti-social behavior. She wrote that most of the problems stemmed from a "lack of guidance," mostly because there was usually an absence of a father figure in these young men's lives. Troubled young boys were looking at the gangsters as role models because these gangsters had the material possessions that they wanted: "True Religion jeans, gold chains, fancy watches, pretty bikes [motorcycles] and many girls. To the average youngster this is the life when you don't know any different." Yet, it's difficult to understand and find answers to the hard questions regarding the reasons for this anti-social behavior. Sadly, a person didn't necessarily have to be a gang member to be a victim of gang violence, and neither was it only children from single parent homes who committed violent crimes. Jimaye, although somewhat uninformed in her thinking, the important thing was that she was thinking, thinking about the cause/effect relationship of the gun violence in our

island. Her causal analysis seemed somewhat superficial, but it was appropriate for someone as young as she. While students liked having the opportunity to write on a topic of their choice, I wanted them to think about their book topics outside of the context of our freshman composition class. I encouraged them to consider further exploration of their topics in another class, such as sociology.

As I read Jimaye's book, I couldn't help but feel that there was something missing, something that had to do with the tone of the writing. Her tone was consistent with essayistic writing, which writes or reports objectively. This made sense since she didn't know, nor was she connected to, any of the people about whom she wrote, so she seems to be more journalistic in tone. While I had given the students the opportunity to write a book about what they were burning to tell the world, about some aspect of their world, Jimaye chose to write about something she had heard about or read about, which was fine, but it really wasn't a world she was a part of. There was that social distance. Yet, the fact that she wrote about it suggested that it was something she cared about, even though her writing seemed to lack emotion. Jimaye's absence of emotion seemed evident when she wrote about when her mother told her about the shooting that happened in her neighborhood:

> She told me that it was a murder. A young man by the name of Gary, "Fingers" Cann had been shot dead. She said that he and his girlfriend were going to her house. As they pulled up in the driveway, they got out of the car. Suddenly a man dressed in all black, with a scarf covering his face appeared out of nowhere. He held his gun up in the air. He told both of them not to move. He opened fire shooting Gary numerous times. Gary fell to the ground and the man was still shooting him. His girlfriend, who was standing right there to watch her boyfriend getting shot quickly ran inside her house and called 911

immediately. With tears running down her face she kept talking to Gary to try to keep him alive. Blood was everywhere. When the authorities and ambulance finally arrived at the young girl's house they pronounced the man dead. [sic]

This was a horrific incident that Jimaye shared with the objectivity of a seasoned reporter.

I wonder, though, can we do a disservice to our first year composition students when we encourage them to distance themselves from their worlds by giving them topics, sometimes topics about which they have little interest, and by asking them to remove themselves from their writings by requiring that they write in the third person. Is it possible that when we give students topics, instead of allowing them a choice, that we inhibit them? Finding her students papers boring, Rebecca Gemmell decided to make some changes in her twelfth grade literature class. Gemmell (2008) recalls the resistance she met with when she tried to change her approach to teaching. What she found, she says, ". . . they didn't want to have to think that hard. They wanted me to tell them what to write. It was easier that way. And it was what they were used to. . . . They had been taught that there was no place for personal opinion . . ." (p. 65). Some students do indeed like when a teacher assigns topics; they prefer specific boundaries. Some want to know what exactly it is that the teacher wants. But, many of my first year composition students have complained that they hated when teachers gave them topics. The interview with Jimaye revealed that she was one of those students who was used to being given a topic and possibly preferred to be given one. She said that the book writing experience was "very different" from the type of writing she had done before, which was mostly "analysis."

Once she learned, as a result of the afterword assignment and the interview that the whole purpose of my pedagogy was to instill hope, or to encourage the maintenance of hope, she suggested that maybe students should have been given "specific topics that show hope because

some people might write on their own lives." But, it was their voices, the stories of their lives that I wanted to hear. I had reminded my students throughout the semester that their voices were important. I'm not sure if she felt I had tricked her and her peers in allowing them to write on any topic, when ultimately I was trying to instill hope. Somehow I feel giving them topics about hope would have confined them in some way and may have distracted them from the telling of their story. Writing their own lives, their own worlds, by sharing a part of their world in the writing of their books, was exactly what I wanted students to do. And the only ones who could write their worlds, who could share parts of the lives they lived, were the students themselves. I didn't want to dictate topics to my students because I had come to realize, after years of teaching, that my perception was not necessarily my students' perception. When I asked Jimaye how she felt assigning topics would affect students' voices and their freedom to choose their own topics, she changed her mind and decided that maybe giving the students topics wasn't such a good idea after all, because they might not be able to relate to the topics that were given to them. She also said that she liked having the "freedom" to choose her own topic. But assigned topics was something that Jimaye admitted she was used to, and the absence of connection, or emotion, on such a profound topic suggested that she was perhaps used to writing about topics in an objective manner. As I had already suspected, during the interview which I conducted after the book was finished, Jimaye told me that her story was written from an "outsider perspective," and that she had never been exposed to violence, directly or indirectly. Her perspective, however, does not mean that she is any less concerned with the social health of our island. In response to my question of whether she would change anything, Jimaye said, yes, she would: "Instead of talking about specific events, I might have talked more about my feelings about what has happened and centered it more on how I feel about violence and what I feel can be done to make change."

Deanna's Story

Deanna's is the second in this collection of books on violence in Bermuda, written by my students. Deanna had caramel colored skin, long, flowing, black, shiny hair, full lips, big, dark, beautiful eyes, with a generous portion of hips and behind. Deanna lit up a room whenever she walked in, flashing her Colgate commercial-like smile. There was an air of surety and confidence about her. Even at the young age of eighteen, I looked at Deanna and I couldn't help but be reminded of Maya Angelou's poem, "Phenomenal Woman:"

> Pretty women wonder where my secret lies,
> I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
> But when I start to tell them,
> They think I'm telling lies,
> I say,
> It's in the reach of my arms,
> The span of my hips,
> The stride of my step,
> The curl of my lips,
> I'm a woman
> Phenomenally,
> Phenomenal woman,
> That's me.
>
> I walk into a room
> Just as cool as you please
> And to a man,
> The fellows stand or
> Fall down on their knees,
> Then they swarm around me,
> A hive of honey bees,
> I say,
> It's the fire in my eyes,
> And the flash of my teeth,
> The swing in my waist,
> And the joy in my feet.
> I'm a woman
> Phenomenally,
> Phenomenal woman,
> That's me. . . .
>
> It's in the arch of my back,

The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style,
I'm a woman
Phenomenally,
Phenomenal woman,
That's me. . . . (Angelou, 1978)

Like the woman Angelo speaks of in her poem, Deanna was not "built to suit a fashion model's size." She wasn't fat, but neither was she tall and model thin. Also, like the woman in Angelou's poem, she carried an air of self-confidence; an air of phenomenality. Maybe it was "the sun of [her] smile," or perhaps "the grace of [her] style" that gave her that air of confidence. Deanna, unlike Angelou's woman, was cute; she was very attractive. Deanna and Jimaye were friends, but their books were as dissimilar as the two of them were in appearance, particularly in terms of perspective. A major difference was that Deanna lives in that 'other' world of Bermuda. She came from the hood, that area known as 'Parkside' (one of the notorious town gangs). Not only did she live in this area, she experienced first-hand the impact of violence in her neighborhood. She was there.

Deanna began her book with a Prologue, drawing the reader in and foreshadowing the events to unfold within her book: "Hysterical screams and chaos was all we heard [coming] through the window and downstairs of my house. . . . Moments later our curiosity had answers and from that day on my neighborhood and my life would never be the same." Her actual story recounted the remembrance of happy times, a time when she and her twin brother were looking forward to their sixteenth birthday. In much the same way that American kids looked forward to getting their driver's license at the age of sixteen, Bermudian teens have a similar rite of passage. You have to be eighteen years old to get a driver's license in Bermuda, but you can get a bike (motorcycle) license at the age of sixteen. Because we are such a small island, cars are limited to

one per household, unless you are a taxi driver or doctor; then you are allowed two cars in that household. But, almost every Bermudian kid lives for the moment when they turn sixteen. It is truly a rite of passage. Deanna writes, "Every Bermudian child's dream is to get a bike on the day of their [sixteenth] birthday, with the helmet to match." Having your own bike means you no longer have to "rely on your parents for transportation, [and] . . . you become more independent and responsible." She's worried, though, that she might not get a bike because her mother is a single parent of four children. And since she is a twin, it means that her mother has two children who were looking forward to getting bikes for their birthday. These two bikes could cost her mother "roughly about seven thousand dollars," says Deanna. But her brother had decided that he was going to ask their godpa to get his bike, and sure enough, he did. Her twin brother gets his bike and is ecstatic and her mother is relieved and thankful that she no longer had to figure out how she was going to buy two bikes. Yes, getting a bike at the age of sixteen is imbedded in Bermudian culture.

Another significant part of Bermudian culture is Good Friday. Deanna wrote about this particular holiday in her book, echoing some of Jimaye's discussion:

> In Bermuda [on Good Friday you wake] up to the house filled with an aroma of fishcakes and homemade hot cross buns made from perhaps your granny, nana and most likely your mama because the recipe was passed down from your granny and your great granny. You can find kids outside playing marbles and fathers and mothers teaching their kids to put up their kites or having competitions on who could put their kite up the fastest. . . . Most importantly, it's a holiday you share with your loved ones and create a tradition for the families you may have in the future. In my neighborhood, we weren't just neighbors we were a big family who looked out for each other. . . . We were closely knit, as the

> majority of us had lived there for ten years or more. Peat Lane was all I knew; I had lived there my entire life and loved the relationship that I had with my neighbors. . . . We had a tradition that everyone in the neighborhood would go to Victor Scott Primary [Elementary] School field before we went anywhere else. We either flew kites or just sat off and relaxed before we went our separate ways. We had tents, fun castles, and a Dj set up to enjoy the festivities for the day.

Deanna, like Jimaye, sees Good Friday as a holiday that celebrates family and community because the people who live in her community are not just neighbors; they are family. It's a holiday that fosters traditions and a sense of hope for the maintenance of those traditions, so they are passed on to families of the future.

But this Good Friday, April 2, 2010, the week of her birthday, was different, very different. Her two brothers had already left home to go to Victor Scott's school field next door. She and her girlfriend were getting ready to go out to celebrate the holiday when they heard, "Pop. . . Pop. . .Pop. . .Pop. . ., Pop" sounds coming through the window closest to the field They ran to the door looking for her brothers. Her older brother came running into the house, followed shortly thereafter by her twin brother, who had tears running down his face. He punched the wall, and screamed, "They shot him, they shot my godpa; it's blood everywhere coming right out of his head by his eye . . . they shot him!" "N-no . . . it couldn't . . . is . . . is he . . . is godpa . . . dead?" Deanna stuttered. "They killed him; he's just lying there bleeding out of his eye and body right in front of his kids," her brother screamed. Eventually, one by one, everyone walked out to the field. The horror that had been enveloping our island for the past several years, the horror that was slowly becoming a part of our culture had swept through Deanna's backyard, with tsunami-like force. The violence was no longer happening out there, in

someone else's yard; it was in her backyard. Filled with anguish, Deanna said, "The sight of [my godpa's] bright red blood gushing from his head was enough to traumatize [me] for the rest of [my] life." The reality of what had happened sank in as she now realized that "we no longer lived in the safe paradise known as Bermuda. We now live in the Bermuda where a man gets shot in broad daylight on Good Friday in front of his kids and loved ones. It felt as if we were in Harlem or the Bronx where violence like this is common. However, it was right here in our backyard, an agonizing memory that we could never forget . . .".

I remember when the news of this particular shooting broke. I, like everyone else in Bermuda, was shocked at the pure horror of it, mostly because it was a horror that happened in front of the man's young children. I was filled with disgust that this shooting took place on a day symbolic of love and selflessness. These murderers were no respecters of persons, children or the elderly. They committed this heinous deed on a day when the community, old and young alike, had come together in unity. As I read Deanna's story I couldn't help but think about the dead man's children. How do you erase that image? How do I teach love or hope to these children who I may very well find sitting in my college classroom one day, these children who have been dipped and washed in such violence? Deanna wrote, "You never know the feeling [of pain and loss] until it hits home and happens to you." And she's right. Unless it has happened to you, you can't begin to imagine the pain of such loss.

However, she admitted that this was not her first exposure to gun violence, albeit indirectly, as one of her closest friend's dad had also been murdered. He lived in her neighborhood. The loss of her godpa was harder because he was her godpa and it happened almost outside her door. And worse, she now had to look out her window at a field that used to be her backyard, her playground, now a "crime scene." Her godpa's death was a loss that the

community shared. She said anyone would have thought a government official had passed away because there were so many people at his funeral. She wrote that "there were silent waterfalls falling from our eyes. The silence in the air . . . held the message that when you cry, I cry, we cry together." Following the funeral and the burial, there was the wake, a reception for family and friends. His friends made sure that her godpa's day was done right and that it lived up to his nickname, Biggs—"Do it big, or not at all." Deanna was 'in' and 'of' this world; this 'other' Bermuda. This was her world. Her story lives. Because of her love for her godpa, she wrote her heart.

Deanna was connected to this world, so she understood it in a way that many others didn't. This world that Deanna was a part of was not very different from Beowulf's warrior society where acts of violence, especially murder, demanded vengeance. She said she knew that there would be repercussions to her godpa's murder. She thought about his kids who witnessed their father's brutal murder, especially his son. She questioned, "Can we blame him for growing up wanting to retaliate and find his father's murderers?" She recognized that her godpa's murder had opened the door to so many other problems. Deanna wrote that we now had: "Another single parent home added to statistics. A daughter without a father to tell her how a man should treat her, so she searches for love in the wrong places. There's another boy without a father to teach him how to be a man and how to treat a lady." But his kids were not the only ones affected that day. That day saw her brothers horrified, petrified and running for their lives. Her twin brother's school work suffered, "his temper became shorter and he became nonchalant" about things that he once cared about. Her older brother who was also on the field that day had looked the killer in his eyes as he rode through the gate to enter the field. He now feared for his life and no longer went out like he used to, and when he did, he was constantly looking over his

shoulder. Deanna said, "Before her godpa's shooting, her brother had been contemplating moving abroad; now he was more convinced that he was going to take his family and leave the island. As for her, Deanna said she dealt with the murder of her godpa by repressing the events of that day. Pushing it to the back of her mind made it easier for her to deal with. Unable to remain in that neighborhood that had claimed the life of their loved one, her family moved the year after the tragic shooting.

Yet, still others were affected by this incident. Her godsons, aged three and four, were also there that fateful day. They now ran around "telling their friends that their godpa got shot with a gun." Reading about these kids saddened me. It saddened me because at that young age when they are supposed to be learning about right and wrong, wrong may be seen as right or okay, at least. It is seen as okay because they become desensitized. They become desensitized because the violence is becoming part of their norm, part of their culture. Several studies have looked at the impact of the exposure to violence on children (Osofsky et al, 2004; Guerra, Huesmann and Spindler, 2003; Singer et al, 1999; Garbarino, Bradshaw and Vorrasi, 2002). Garbarino, Bradshaw and Vorrasi (2002) and Guerra, Huesmann and Spindler (2003) agree that children who are exposed to violence can become desensitized. Guerra, Huesmann and Spindler (2003) say that "viewing violence as normative may desensitize children to its true consequences, resulting in a streetwise mentality . . ." (p. 1563). A further outcome of this exposure to violence is that these children are at "risk for later violent behavior" (Osofsky et al, 2004), becoming "perpetrators of further violence" (Child Trends, 2013). And, Anthony Peets, who works as a counsellor at one of our island's primary/elementary schools, says that the children talk about the violence because it's happening in their neighborhoods. "They express concerns about being safe." He adds that "from a psychological viewpoint . . . prolonged

exposure to violence does have a deleterious effect" (qtd. in Strangeways, 5 Dec. 2011). What do we do about the children who are exposed to such violence? How do we save them from becoming the aggressors? How do we save them from becoming the victims? Deanna said, "The neighborhood has not been the same since." She lived in fear, always looking over her shoulder, especially after dark. She said "girls had been shot, too, innocent ones caught in the cross fire." The people in the neighborhood loss respect for the police because there were those who willingly supplied information about the bike the culprits were riding, but the police didn't act on it. "We not only lost our respect for them, [the police] but we lost faith in them [and their ability] to be an integral part of the solution to the violence in this island. There are so many people that are affected by my godpa's death and death in general that there will never be enough pages in a book to tell these stories."

Deanna sees the challenges facing our island as problems that affect us all, so she believes that solving these issues will require everyone's help. She says Bermuda needs to stand together: "[U]ntil we have unity in Bermuda and work together to end this [violence], we are simply working against the solution. People are only going to wake up when the loss knocks on their door." She asked some serious questions: "How many doors does it have to knock on for us to pay attention and work together? How many funerals do we have to go to before it becomes an eye-opener? How many lives have to be taken?" Deanna, unlike Jimaye, is 'in,' and 'of,' this world. She knows it, she understand it. You can hear it in her tone. Her tone reveals an insider perspective. Because she is 'of' this world, part of this world, she has more of an interest in seeing change. She sees herself as having a part to play. For Deanna, it's "we" need to come together, rather than 'people need to do this or that.' She identifies with this world in a way that Jimaye never can, nor I, for that matter. You have to live in that world, be of that

world, in order to really understand it. Otherwise, one can only try to imagine. Even though Deanna is of this world, she appears to have followed the Apostle Paul's advice to the Romans; she has not "conformed" to this world: (Rom. 12:2, *BibleGateway.com*).

Because I was unable to interview Deanna face to face, she responded to the email survey/questionnaire. Much of what she had to say is recorded here verbatim, so as to capture the accuracy of her responses. She wrote about her definition of hope and about voice. Deanna said that her definition of hope hadn't changed since writing her book. For her hope was "the driving force that prevails when all else fails you." Hope is that thing that keeps her believing that something good can still happen. The devastation of her godpa's murder in broad daylight in front of his kids almost destroyed her sense of hope, but she admitted that writing her book helped her to heal. Writing my story gave me the "closure that I needed [after] that tragic experience in my life." In response to the question about whether writing her book allowed her a voice, Deanna wrote:

> I can definitely say that I was given a voice through this pedagogy. I discovered my voice and I didn't realize how deeply it [my godpa's murder] affected me, until I really sat back and reflected in order to put my thoughts on paper. It was so therapeutic to feel like I was finally being heard, the voice unknown, and the voice that spoke for the numerous others who were affected by this devastating murder. All those infuriating feelings I was able to turn into a voice of my story within my godpa's story that still today affects so many lives, including mine. As people we tend to hold in the pain and hurt or even the stories the world needs to hear. However, this class gave me the opportunity to be heard, to express myself through writing, and be a valuable asset to my healing from the tragedy in my life. All it took was for my teacher to allow me to use a

> pen and paper as my voice, and I truly believe that my voice needed to be heard, not just for others, but I yearned to hear the voice I was holding in.

Deanna is right; sometimes people hold in their pain. A lot of times people are unable to speak about things that are hurting them or bothering them, choosing instead to keep them bottled up inside. Sometimes, though, a person will speak through their writing, but they must be given the opportunity to do so, for themselves and at times for others, as well. James Pennebaker, a psychology professor at The University of Texas at Austin is a pioneer in using writing as a healing process, particularly for those who held "powerful secrets." Pennebaker claims, "When people are given opportunity to write about emotional upheavals, they often experience improved health. . . . When we translate an experience into language we essentially make the experience graspable" (qtd. in Griffith, 2014). Deanna could have written on any topic she chose, but this book-writing pedagogy allowed her to speak about the particular world she occupied, and in so doing, she provided insight into her world. Writing her book allowed her to retrieve from the recesses of her mind that awful experience she had locked away.

With the ability to say what you want, to have a voice, usually comes a sense of empowerment. In response to the question of whether she saw writing this book as an empowering experience and if so how; Deanna wrote:

> This served as an empowering experience for me because I not only grew from this, but I was also able to hear the voices of others in my class and their silent stories that they were burning to tell the world. In the process, we learned so much about others, their deepest secrets. Despite the fact that some of us were strangers, these stories connected us in a way that I can't explain. Although it took hard work to write these chapters and to receive the constructive criticism from classmates and our teacher on how we could make

> it better, it was all worth it. On a more personal aspect . . . [writing the book] served as closure for me. Although, I will never fully have closure until my godfather's murderers receive justice. But even if that never happens, I was able to broaden my thoughts and forgive them for the inner struggles they face that can turn a heart so cold as to commit murder. Another parent who had lost a son to gun violence told me "Hurt people, hurt people." Those words are powerful beyond measure. . . . We need to let the anger go, let the negativity go, and work together towards the solutions instead of adding fuel to the problems and this project helped me to see that bigger picture.

Deanna felt empowered by the fact that writing her book allowed her to look beyond what happened to her, to look beyond her loss to try to understand the "inner struggles" of the two men who took her godpa's life. Rather than being held captive by anger, pain and suffering, she has been able to let go, or, at least to an extent.

Other questions in the survey asked Deanna to discuss what she learned about writing, about herself and how writing her story was connected to hope. Deanna wrote, "I learned that writing can take me to another world, a world where nobody can tell you your thoughts are wrong or right, where your opinions aren't ridiculed or criticized, and most importantly I learned how healing writing still is for me." She admitted that she used to write poetry in a journal whenever she felt down. Writing this book reminded her of the therapeutic value of writing and that she needed to use her voice again. "This experience gave me the kind reminder of how therapeutic writing is for me and how [writing] can help me to see things for what they really are because it's my thoughts right in front of me, not just in a wrecking ball of confusion in my head. Therefore, [writing this book] served as a well needed wakeup call that I needed to use my voice again even if it means just through pen and paper." Her story, she said, was connected to a

desire for hope for her island. She hopes that one day the violence will be completely eradicated. "Currently it seems as if our community is waiting for it to hit home [for the violence to land on their doorstep] before they wake up and figure out that things have gotten out of hand, that this gun violence has become the norm in our island we once knew as 'paradise'." Deanna explained that she was writing in hope that maybe her one voice would affect many hearts before it's too late. Deanna concluded her email survey: thank you for educating me and allowing me to educate myself on the "effect my voice can have on people and myself."

Latreece's Story

Latreece opened her book with a loud, clap of thunder, the kind that makes you draw breath and look up at the sky in trepidation. It's the kind of thunder that gets your attention, and lets you know the heavens are going to open up. She began her book with a dedication to all of those who had lost their lives to 'gun' violence since 2003. She created a dark, gray clouded, picture-list, centered on the dedication page, of each of the 27 victims names, alongside which she recorded the date each lost his life:

> This book is dedicated to all of the victims and families of the victims who have lost their lives to the senseless gun violence in the island of Bermuda. Since 2003 Bermuda has seen an increase in gang crime and as a result the following lives have been senselessly taken from us.
>
> Shundae Jones- April 28, 2003
> Jason Lightbourne- August 24, 2006
> Shaki Crockwell- August 24, 2007
> Aquil Richardson December 25, 2007
> Kenwandee Robinson- May 22, 2009
> Kumi Harford- December 5, 2009
> Gary Cann- December 15, 2009
> Shane Minors- December 17, 2009
> Perry Puckerin- January 3, 2010

James Lawes- March 19, 2010
Kimwandee Walker- April 2, 2010
George Lynch- May 6, 2010
Dekimo Martin- May 28, 2010
Frederick Maybury- June 14, 2010
Raymond Rawlins- August 9, 2010
Colford Furgeson-February 4, 2011
Jahmiko Leshore- March 1, 2011
Randy Robinson- March 31, 2011
David Clarke- April 17, 2011
Jason Smith- May 1, 2011
Stefan Burgess- January 8, 2012
Joshua Robinson- June 23, 2012
Lorenzo Stovell- September 23, 2012
Michael Phillips- October 14, 2012
Malcolm Augustus- December 25, 2012
Ricco Furbert- January 23, 2013
Haile Outerbridge- January 23, 2013

Of course, I was aware of the 'gun' violence on our island, but seeing the names listed like this was truly a 'wow' moment as the horror of it hit me full in the face. Every now and then the media might report on the number of gun-murders, but I had never actually seen the victims listed like this until Latreece presented them in her book. This may seem like an insignificant amount to people outside of Bermuda, but for those of us who make up the 60 thousand plus residents of Bermuda, this is way too many gun murders. Per capita we have a higher murder rate than that of the U.S. and the U.K. (Strangeways). These are startling statistics for a place that used to be referred to as the 'Isle of Paradise'. Latreece's list clearly showed a pattern of what could be perceived as retaliatory shootings beginning in 2009 when there were four shooting murders, then seven in 2010, then five in 2011, and five in 2012. The last shooting in January 2013, was actually a double murder. It is against this backdrop of what Bermuda police gang expert, Alex Rollins, refers to as, "revenge shootings and revenge murders; a tit for tat

mentality" that Latreece wrote her book (as ctd. in Pearman, 2013, "Gang involved in tit-for-tat").

Latreece, in her mid-twenties, was a bit older than the other students in this study. She was very attractive with a caramel, toffee colored complexion, meticulously shaped eyebrows over dark brown eyes, most times wearing her hair pulled back in a bun at the nape of her neck, and dressed somewhat conservatively in dresses or pants suits. She was conservative in dress, without appearing matronly. She worked full time and took classes mostly at night or during her lunch hours during the day. Her dress, apart from the flip flops she had obviously slipped into after finishing work, was more appropriate for the office environment in which she worked. Latreece, unlike Jimaye, had been touched by the violence that permeated our island. Although she had not been touched like Deanna had, she had been close enough to have a vested interest. Her vested interest in the well-being of our island was born out of two things: first of all she had been touched by the violence in that she had lost a friend to it and second of all, and probably most importantly, she was the mother of a young son.

Latreece began her book with the story of the murder of her friend, Lorenzo Stovell. She wrote about how she learned about the murder of her friend one Sunday evening as she lay in bed unwinding and "mentally preparing . . . for the work week ahead." A police officer friend of hers sent her a text to say he couldn't respond to her last message because he was on the scene of a shooting in Somerset, the western end of the island. Latreece said, when she read the text, she "immediately rolled [her] eyes" and wondered, "well, who now?" Although a bit irritated at what was now becoming all-too-common news, she tried to find out who the victim was, by calling one of her friends. Because Bermuda is such a small community, finding out information like this is usually just a phone call away. "In Bermuda word travels faster than the speed of

light." Latreece wrote that she had just dozed off to sleep when her phone woke her and she learned, to her horror, that the shooting victim was Lorenzo. Lorenzo had been the victim of a shooting before, a shooting which left him paralyzed and in a wheelchair. Apparently, he was on a bus with a group of party goers. It is common practice for Bermudians to rent a bus when they go out partying and bar hopping, particularly when there is a large group of people celebrating someone's birthday, a bachelor party or a bachelorette party. Lorenzo had been travelling with a group of people celebrating a young lady's birthday. When they stopped at this one particular bar, he decided to stay on the bus with the bus driver. While he and the bus driver sat waiting for the group to return, someone came on the bus and shot him as he sat in his wheelchair on the bus. As it turns out, this is the same shooting that Jimaye wrote about in her book. In a chapter she titled "Wheel Chair Slaying," Jimaye wrote about how two guys dressed in all black, with dark helmets and dark visors covering their faces came on the bus as it was parked outside Woody's Drive Inn Bar in Dockyard and shot Lorenzo multiple times. While neither Jimaye nor I knew this shooting victim, I now know someone who did—my student, Latreece. With all of the gun violence going on in our island, it is always likely that someone connected to the victim or even the shooter will end up in my class.

Latreece wrote of the impact her friend's demise had on her. Lorenzo's "death shook me and opened my eyes to appreciate the people in my life and to cherish every moment and every conversation with them and to never take that time for granted." Latreece questioned, "[W]hat kind of person could do this to a helpless disabled man?" I remember when this shooting happened and I remember thinking, like Latreece, what kind of person would shoot someone who was already paralyzed, someone already condemned to a life of misery? Almost all of Bermuda remembered the first shooting which left this young man in a wheelchair, so the very

callousness of this act was enough to send the island reeling. Losing her friend to gun violence caused her to reflect on the reasons for the increase in violence. She wrote that there were those who blamed the partygoers for leaving him on the bus, but she saw something deeper. Latreece seemed to see many causes. She said that "society" was responsible. "It's the fault of the parents who neglected to raise decent young men but instead raised and enabled killers. It's the fault of the person who decided to tip off these killers and led them straight to where Lorenzo was like a sitting duck." While Latreece claimed that parents are sometimes responsible for not doing a better job at raising their kids, the problem is that some of these killers actually come from decent homes. Some of them have actually had good upbringings. Patrick, another one of my students, makes this claim in his book which I will discuss later. Moreover, I know at least two young men who sat in my class at one point, both raised in good homes, one of whom told me that he had decided to be a teacher, an English teacher, but now he sits behind bars for violent crimes. His brother had been gunned down, and I suspect he became caught up in the violence because he was seeking revenge. The other young man who was in my class got caught up in the gang life literally because he was related by birth to the gang members. He was a good young man, but the ties that bind can see some of these young men engaging in anti-social behaviors. In truth, ineffective parenting is not always the reason why some of these young men go bad.

I know firsthand that it is very hard to lose a loved one to violence. I'm not sure one can truly understand this type of hurt and loss until it lands on your doorstep. The loss of her friend made Latreece realize that violence could knock at anyone's door. "As shocked as I was at the gun violence that was unfolding in my island, nothing could have prepared me to have it hit this close to home and to have to live this nightmare that many have had to live before me. . . . I have

seen the anguish that those left behind have had to endure, but never did I imagine that I too would be left to mourn the loss of such a good friend." Latreece now empathized with all of those families who had lost loved ones because now she was forced to walk in their shoes. Losing her friend also made her reminisce about a time before, about a Bermuda before all of this violence began.

Latreece reminisced, "I remember a time when Bermuda was not about what part of the island you lived in or what 'hood you rep.' . . . It's hard to imagine that such a small place can be divided and separated by invisible boundaries that once crossed can mean danger." This "jail like atmosphere" is not the Bermuda that she used to know. In the old Bermuda, kids played together and there was a strong sense of community. Latreece reflected on this 'old' Bermuda:

> I remember children were raised by their families, neighbors, teachers at school and even strangers on the street. The whole community played a role in bringing up the youth, administering discipline when needed, telling stories of their childhood growing up and offering positive advice and direction. I for one can remember getting licks at school [punishment, administered with a cane or belt] and then when I got home receiving a whole new set of licks to accompany the licks I already received. There was nothing you could do growing up that would slip under the radar and go unnoticed. At some point 'what you did in the dark came out in the light,' usually by way of a 'friendly' phone call from a family friend to inform your parents on just what you were up to. Evidently, our people believed that 'it takes a village to raise a child,' as everyone chipped in to help mold us.

Latreece recalled that everyone participated in raising children and homes were open to everyone, especially children, who lived in the neighborhood. There was never a need to lock

your doors or question the background of a kid that entered your home. People borrowed sugar or cream, or anything else they might need from their neighbors. Kids raided their cabinets and fridges for goodies to share with their friends in the neighborhood.

She continued that there was a time when guns were pretty much unheard of in Bermuda. Bermudians took pride in letting visitors to our island know that we didn't have a problem with guns. In fact, she wrote, the only place you usually came in contact with a gun was in the Bermuda Regiment, Bermuda's army. But things changed, and we now see a "new Bermuda":

> The familiar sound of children's laughter echoing through the neighborhoods has been replaced by gun shots, screaming and sirens as we have entered into a war, a war amongst ourselves. Fear has swept through the country; people begin locking their doors more, enjoying a glass of wine at home instead of at the bars, screening the friends of their children and overall just being more cautious, all of this because of the heartless beings that walk amongst us taking lives when some of them have yet to even give life.

She is right. Depending on where you live, the sounds of gun shots have now become the norm. I used to frequent my neighborhood bar, just to hang out with friends at the end of the week. When I found myself always sitting so I could face the door, looking around for a quick exit just in case, I knew it was time for me to simply stay home, and enjoy my glass of wine. A few months after I stopped going to that bar, someone rode into the parking lot where people were sitting on the verandah socializing, pulled out a gun and tried to open fire. Fortunately, the gun jammed, so no one was injured. Yes, as Latreece points out, things have changed. It seems to me that the problem is that many people seem to have become used to the change we see in our community. Latreece confirms, "Once upon a time was not that long ago, yet we have grown to accept and live with what has become of our island and have settled into a lifestyle that no one

should allow themselves to become accustomed to. . . . In order to take back this county we need to claim it as our own and pride ourselves on what Bermuda was once upon a time." If we have not simply become used to this behavior, then we certainly have come to see it as 'expected' behavior. My student Tina's reaction to the shooting of the teenage girl seemed to confirm this. Tina, as I mentioned earlier, was the quiet, homely, Christian young lady who told me that getting shot was not a big deal, as it "just stings a little bit."

Latreece also explored some other ramifications of Bermuda's anti-social behavior in her book. We now see mothers "[c]alling their sons on the phone to check on them the minute they hear news of a shooting." Mothers lie awake at night, waiting for the opening and closing of the door to signal the safe return of their son. Some families have had to leave the island, relocating to the U.S., the U.K. or Canada to ensure the safety of their family. Yes, people are fed up and calling for change. After every "devastating incident" there is a cry for peace and an end to the violence. There are marches and candlelight vigils to show community support. It's not just the family members and other members of the community calling for an end to the violence, there are politicians, lawyers and law enforcement officers as well. What Bermuda needs is "enough people who believe that enough is really enough! People who are fed up with burying their children, sons, fathers and friends," she asserted. Bermuda needs brave and courageous people who are not afraid to make a stand.

But she does believe that there is hope. This is the way she sees our situation:

> The problem in Bermuda started with change, a negative change. Change in the way children are now being raised, change as a result of the negative attitudes adopted by citizens, change in the birth of guns to the island and so forth. It was a negative shift which has now led us to want change, change back to the positive direction. Although

> the damage cannot be undone, the dead brought back to life and no mend for the broken hearts left shattered, change can provide hope and promise.

Latreece seemed to fault parents for not raising their children better. For her, such ineffective parenting in turn resulted in children becoming involved in anti-social behavior, behavior that escalated to the use of guns. It seemed that Latreece felt that change should start with the parents. Maybe she's right. Garbarino, Bradshaw and Vorrasi (2002) say, "Parents who are concerned that their children may become victims or perpetrators of gun violence can alter their parenting behavior to compensate for dangers in the children's social environments. . . . Research reveals that well-monitored children and youth are less likely to smoke, use drugs and alcohol, engage in risky sexual behavior, become antisocial or delinquent, and socialize with deviant peers" (p. 81). So, as a young mother of a five year old son, she committed to making a change for his future. We have several many mentoring programs on our island. She wrote in her book that she plans to commit to taking a young boy under her wing, whom she can impact positively. Latreece ends her book as powerfully as she started it. "Now you have heard throughout this book that the problem Bermuda faces has claimed the lives of our young men. Some of you may be able to relate to this and some of you may not, some may have heard about the victims and some may have not. In the beginning of this book I provided you with the names of all the victims, but . . .

What is a name without a face?”

Shundae Jones

Jason Lightbourne

Shaki Crockwell

Aquil Richardson

Kenwandee Robinson

Kumi Harford

Gary Cann

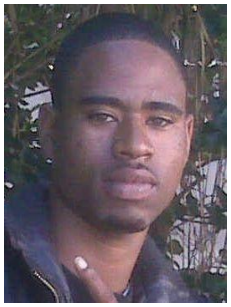
Shane Minors

Perry Puckerin

James Lawes

Kimwandee Walker

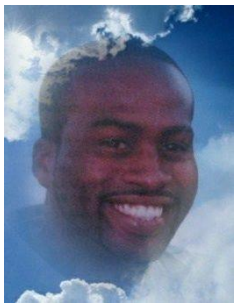
George Lynch



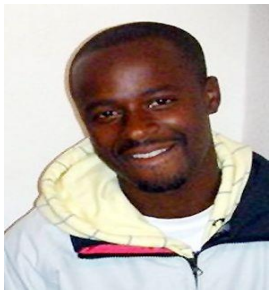
Dekimo Martin

Frederick Maybury

Raymond Rawlins



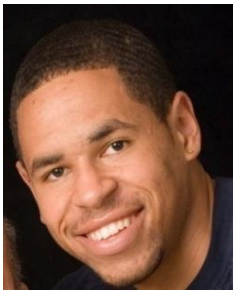
Colford Furgeson



Jahmiko Leshore

Randy Robinson

David Clarke



Jason Smith

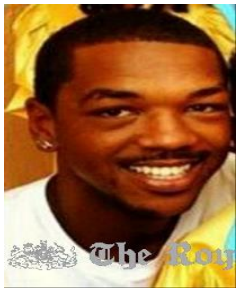
Stefan Burgess

Joshua Robinson

Lorenzo Stovell

Michael Phillips

Malcolm Augustus



Ricco Furbert

Haile Outerbridge

Your Son

If you don't make a stand for change!

She believed that the use of statistics could have added more to her book, thinking that statistics would have created "a gasp effect." I believe, however, that the way she listed the names in the beginning of her book and the way she pictured every victim at the end, including the silhouette with the message about 'your son' does just that, produces a "gasp effect." In fact, I think it produced a more chilling effect.

Latreece, like Deanna, participated in the email survey/questionnaire. She reported that her definition of hope is "having the ability to 'cling' to faith that a positive outcome is achievable if you are passionate enough about whatever it is you want to achieve." Latreece said before she wrote her book she felt the gang violence in Bermuda would never get any better. However, writing her book led her to believe that all hope is not lost, if you truly believe in change and are committed to change. It appears that writing her book helped Latreece to write her way to hope.

It is important that students are afforded the opportunity to speak, to have a voice. In affording them this opportunity, hopefully, we bestow them with a sense of empowerment. About voice and empowerment Latreece wrote:

> More often than not in a classroom setting the teacher will dictate the topic and layout of a piece of writing. Given the opportunity to write on a topic that I was passionate about gave me a chance to speak freely where I otherwise wouldn't have. Most controversial issues affect people greatly. However, most people are often afraid to speak up out of fear of being ridiculed. I would say that writing my book gave me a big voice, . . . My book was my opportunity to release all of my feelings and thoughts on this issue.

Richard Ruiz says it's important to remember "that voice is not synonymous with empowerment . . . For voice to be empowering, it must be heard, not simply spoken" (ctd. in Quiroz, 2001, p.

328). Latreece admitted that she definitely felt a sense of empowerment by this book-writing experience. She reported that she felt as if she was given the "authority to express exactly what [she] felt." She was able to write freely without worrying about being wrong because it was her own story. Writing her book showed her that she was "a very passionate and selfless person," who cared deeply for those who had been affected by violence in a major way. She also realized that there are many who think that all hope is lost, but she doesn't see this as the case at all. Like Deanna, she believes that the "solution to the problem lies within us all and that we have the power to change it." Latreece has been touched by the violence, so she now feels somehow compelled to do something about it. She shares Deanna view that our anti-social problems need to be dealt with collectively, as something "we" need to work together to find solutions.

Patrick's Story

Patrick was the only male student in my study who chose to write about violence. His book was a collection of various stories written out of his life's experiences. I have included it because, for one, he did have a couple of chapters that discussed violence, albeit from a somewhat different perspective. But the main reason why I have included his book is because Patrick's story is the epitome of hope. All three of the previous books speak, in some way, to the issue of the absence of the father in a young man's life as being part of the reason why these young men engage in anti-social behavior. Patrick lives that life of which they speak; life without a father. As I read through his manuscript, I saw that much of what he wrote about had some sort of connection to his father. He began with the story of his father, a story which unfolds, unfortunately, like many other stories told by young black men, Bermudian or otherwise. It is the story of boy meets girl, boy marries girl, boy decides his friends are more important than his family, boy leaves girl to single-handedly raise three children on her own.

Patrick wrote this story of pain and abandonment. He told how his father eventually became an alcoholic and how he blamed himself, as he pondered his part in his parent's breakup:

> Oftentimes I look back on the day he abandoned us and wondered if it had anything to do with me. Like maybe if I was the ideal son he was hoping for he would have wanted to stay. I mean, I don't play sports. I'm not interested in watching them. It just doesn't excite me and never has. I could tell this bothered him just by the look on his face when he realized I wasn't as enthusiastic as he was when his football [soccer] team was victorious. Looking back, sometimes I even caught myself faking excitement just to gain approval from this man I looked up to and wanted to be just like. But now I know. I will never be like him, I will never abandon my family like he did and his father did and his grandfather did. I vowed that I will break this devastating cycle that leaves fatherless children and broken hearts in its wake.

I could not help but feel the pain and feelings of abandonment as I read Patrick's words. Patrick's feelings of guilt about the breakup of his parents' marriage is not uncommon for children of divorce. Many teens actually believe that it is somehow their fault when their parents get divorced (New, August 2010 and *A Teen Guide to Divorce*, 2009).

Patrick recalled that the relationship with his father after his parent's divorce was "harsh and cold." Dr. Alan Booth, professor of sociology and human development, who studied the effects of divorce on family relationships says the "closeness between fathers and teens is harmed the most in divorce (ctd. in Kendricks, 2013). Booth adds that the mother plays a significant part in this relationship, as she is usually the one who determines "whether, how often, or how much kids see their dad" (ctd. in Kendricks, 2013). Portnoy (2008) says unresolved conflict between the mother and the father can create problems that result in the

father becoming "disengaged or totally absent" and feeling "marginalized in their children's lives" (p. 128). In such cases children may "perceive their fathers to be less caring" or even "doubt whether their fathers loved them at all" (p. 128). Patrick's relationship with his father was compounded by his father's drinking problem, which he recalled created some embarrassing moments, such as the time his father came to his school drunk and began "lecturing" him in front of his whole class. Because he wasn't into sports, Patrick says he was often left feeling less than adequate, "less than a man, less than human." His father simply couldn't understand that he would much rather stick his head in a book than go outside and play sports. "He would always ask me why I didn't go outside and play football [soccer]. I never really had an answer for this question. That's just how I always was. I would much rather escape the harsh reality of the world into a fantasy dimension encased in a book," Patrick wrote. Yet, out of this less than ideal relationship with his father came some positives. He developed a remarkably close relationship with his mother. He determined to never be the type of person that his father was. His father, with all of his negative behaviors, helped to define the young man Patrick became. He determined to be everything that his father was not, every good thing, that is. That meant that he kept his head in a book, rather than in sports. Watching his mother overcome obstacle after obstacle while single-handedly raising three children, taught him how to persevere.

Patrick determined that he would become a teacher, a career choice which was also born out of the relationship, or lack thereof, that he had with his father. Patrick knows firsthand that too many of Bermuda's young males are growing up fatherless. Because they have no father figure in their life, they were looking for some sort of role model. They don't see it in the schools, Patrick said, because there are very few male teachers. The lack of male teachers meant that they were looking other places—the streets. They see the glitz and the glamour, the money,

the cars, and the women. "They see these gang members living what they perceive to be the perfect life. They see this and want it too, and with no positive male role model to tell them there are other ways of attaining this level of success, they fall into the black hole that has claimed the lives of fathers and sons island-wide." Patrick sees this and he wrote about this. He knows what it's like to come up without a father and he wants to do something. "I want to do more than just exist on this earth," he wrote. "I'm not saying I'm going to change the world but I will change lives. I feel that is my destiny." Patrick is the epitome of the young man who uses adversity to propel him toward something more positive.

Patrick's book also proved to be an eye-opener, debunking the definition that I (and probably many other adults and teachers as well) held of gang members, Bermudian gang members anyway. Many young men, I've come to learn from my students' writings, are labeled as gang members literally because of where they live. Patrick shared some insightful information about today's young people and their so-called gang affiliation:

> The life we live is not always the life we choose. People don't go to sleep thinking of fluffy clouds and rose petals and wake up the next morning thinking only of hate and violence. It's a psychological thing, something that slowly occurs overtime. I mean one day you're shooting marbles with god brothers and cousins at a family reunion, then ten years later you're shooting bullets at the very same people. But how can a human make this drastic change in their behavior? . . . It doesn't take much for somebody to be classified as part of a gang or to get caught in the web. Where you reside, who you take pictures with, where you sit at lunch [when in high school] are all factors that may seem minor and insignificant to the average adult can be life changing to the average teen. . . .

> Living in any given part of the island, you are stamped as part of that neighborhood gang and attempting to remove that stamp is not easy work.

Notice Patrick used the pronoun "we," which suggests that he identifies with this world in which he lives, this world of violence. He understands it because he is coming up in this environment. But what Patrick is saying here is that young people don't necessarily go out and join gangs. There are gangs that are affiliated with various neighborhoods and people (young men in particular) are deemed to be members of those gangs simply because they live in those areas.

He also discussed in his book the resentment he feels about the way older people judge and makes generalizations about young people, especially when the very people complaining are the ones who raised these young people. He took exception with the fact that many older people tended to stereotype young people. Many older people say of his generation: "[They're] the generation of teen mothers and fatherless children. [They're] the generation of gang violence and gun crimes." He expressed resentment for the way that older people generalize about his generation, the way they seem to have this 'them vs us' mentality. But, even with these stereotypes, Patrick said he still had hope for his generation. He admitted that his generation had some bad seeds, but he also believed that his generation also had some of "Bermuda's most brilliant minds. Future doctors, lawyers and politicians." Bermuda can return to a state of peace and he is convinced that it will be someone from his generation that will spark that change.

Patrick's book made me aware of the generalizations that people of my generation make. I am forced to look at myself, and others of my generation, through the eyes of Patrick. I am forced to recognize that if I am going to be an effective teacher, I need to stop generalizing, stop judging, and I need to listen. While Patrick, through his writing, holds up the mirror to my

flaws, his manuscript also fills me with a sense of hope. His generation is our hope and as Patrick clearly said, they are not all bad.

I also interviewed Patrick, an experience which, like his book, proved to be both interesting and enlightening. In the interview, his definition of hope—the understanding that things will get better—remained unchanged from what he had shared in his manuscript. But he admitted that his definition of hope had changed from a negative emphasis to one that was more positive. Patrick had taken the course with me before in the previous semester as a dual enrollment (high school/college) student. Being young and not very settled, he didn't do as well as he could have. Even though he didn't fail, he decided to retake the course to bring up his grade. Patrick said the first time he took the class his definition of hope was more negative in a sense. "I thought no matter how low you are there is always someone lower than you, someone going through something worse than you." Hope for Patrick, then, was wishing that there was someone worse off than he was. It didn't have anything to do with looking forward to a positive change for himself, but rather hoping that someone was in a worse state than he was. Writing the book this time, however, made him look at hope in a more positive way. Patrick explained that he changed his view after reading the book of one of the members of his group. Patrick was intrigued by his peer's book and said that he felt "compelled to read the whole book." The book that changed Patrick's view of hope was written by a young man who had seen his father murdered, stabbed to death in front of his eyes, when he was a child. Patrick said the student told him that "writing about the death of his father was therapeutic for him," so he figured if this guy could use writing to help him, then why couldn't he? So he began to look at writing his own book as therapeutic. He admitted that writing his book changed his outlook on life, even though he didn't think it would. Patrick told me, "I am much more optimistic having written this book."

Patrick sat across the desk from me in my office. The more he talked, the more I sensed his excitement at being given the opportunity to talk. His eyes became wide, he had this grin on his face and he started kind of bouncing, or rocking, in the chair. He was bubbling over, excited by the opportunity to talk about his writing experience. I found his excitement refreshing, so I let him talk:

> I was never a depressed person. I was always a happy person, but happiness and actual satisfaction with life are two completely different things. I have moved into a happier space and I think writing my book helped me to do that because I got a lot of stuff off of my chest that I had been harboring. . . . After I wrote my book I really thought about the lack of my father's involvement and how it dramatically impacted my life. That is what helped me to decide on my career goal. I want to help educate, but I also want to help inspire. One of my favorite quotes from Tupac is, "I'm not saying I'm going to change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the mind that does." So that's what I want to do. I want to ignite change. . . . Too many teachers are teaching just to teach because they see it as a secure job. You can tell the difference between teachers who teach with passion and teachers who teach just to collect a paycheck.

Patrick told me that writing his book allowed him to express himself; it afforded him voice. He said he used to "dislike writing because we were often told what to write and usually about topics that I had no interest in. Sometimes the topics were twenty years old, but the world is not the same and students are not the same." Writing this book taught him that he has the power to write any ending he desires. Moreover "I learned that writing is therapeutic and I learned that everything does eventually work itself out. I also learned that I do not have to let my memory of what could have been affect my vision of what could be," Patrick said. He was clearly excited

about being able to share his views about writing and his passion and desire to become a teacher. It was refreshing talking with him.

During the interview, Patrick also discussed the first time he took the course with me. That first time he said "he wrote on something generic. It wasn't personal. It was more about the shift in culture in Bermuda with the gang violence." The way he discussed his previous topic was very telling. The fact that he viewed gang violence as a "generic" topic and as a "shift in culture" spoke volumes to the way he and many young people view their world. Patrick's comment reinforced my belief that students and teachers (me at least) do not share the same perspective. Our worlds are different. In order to understand their worlds, we have to allow students a voice, allow them to invite us into their worlds through their writing, and then we *have* to listen.

Afterwords

All students wrote afterwords for their books, using a list of guided questions to assist them. Some of the questions were included because of institutional requirements (Appendix C), specifically requirements mandated by Bermuda College's English department. More importantly, though, there was a question that asked them to speak to their definition of hope and to provide evidence of hope, if any, from their manuscript. I also included two statements for their consideration: "as long as you <u>WRITE</u>, you have the opportunity to <u>RIGHT</u> your life" and "as long as you're writing your life/your world, you can write any ending you choose." Because I wanted them to write freely without the dictates of a topic or anything else that might inhibit their writing, I did not provide the afterword guidelines until they were pretty much finished their books. Many of the afterwords provided insight with regards to their views on hope.

Jimaye, who took an objective look at violence in Bermuda, considered the issue of hope in her afterword. She defined hope as the desire for things to get better. She believed that there is hope for Bermuda, hope that "these young men engaging in these cruel acts" of violence can turn their lives around, but she said that it was up to the "individuals to want to change." She wrote that many of them engaged in this behavior because of a "lack of self-worth" and the "lack of guidance." She asserted that these young men needed to have goals, but possibly because she had never been touched by any of the violence she didn't clearly understand how to address these issues. For her, it was simply a matter of individuals wanting to change. In fact she wrote, "I don't see how they wouldn't want to [change]," since changing means that they no longer risk getting locked up or killed and since changing would allow them to "live a more productive life." Indeed, Jimaye believes there is hope for change, but for her that change starts with one person—him (the criminal).

Jimaye did, however, provide a rather interesting observation about the violence that had been swamping our island. She claimed that the violence in our island had also had a "positive effect." She wrote, "[The violence] has led to . . . hope. If everything was perfectly fine in our island, we wouldn't feel the need to have a sense of hope because we simply wouldn't need it. The effects of hope lead to a more concerned community working towards progress," towards a healthier Bermuda. Certainly, it's true that there has been an outcry from the various members of the community, including the police, politicians and especially the families of the victims, for peace. And Jimaye believed, "If we all stand together and want change and hope for change it will happen, sometimes not when we want it but it will happen. Hope is all that we have left." While she has hope for our island, her view of how that hope is achieved is very idealistic. It seems that she doesn't understand that it's not enough to simply hope. As Freire (2004) says,

"Alone, [hope] does not win. We need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water. . . . Just to hope is to hope in vain" (p. 2). Yes, Jimaye has hope that Bermuda can turn the corner towards positivity, but an expression of hope is all she is able to muster, probably because of a lack of a clear understanding of the world of which she speaks.

In her afterword, Deanna took a rather creative approach to her discussion of hope. She demonstrated hope through a poem:

> He's just a little black boy.
>
> Little black boy fighting little black boys, when little black boys once fought the system for being treated unequal compared to the non-colored boys.
>
> There's just that little black boy killing other black boys, who's probably his cousin,
>
> But you know it doesn't matter when the streets are buzzin'.
>
> You know that little black boy, always proving the stereotypes true.
>
> Just got his sixteen year old girlfriend pregnant, turned to the street to make ends meet, so he had to drop out of high school.
>
> There goes that lost black boy, lost his father to the streets, now in a single parent home.
>
> He's left to provide for the family, so on the streets he's left to roam.
>
> He's just the little black boy, sitting behind bars,
>
> He lost the dream at the age of twelve of being an engineer, now got caught living the dream of a street hustler in the fancy cars.
>
> The abusive black boy, who watched his father beat his mother to death,
>
> Followed in his father's footsteps because that's what he knew best.
>
> What about the unfortunate black boy who went to school hungry?
>
> Got caught stealing pocket change to pay to do the laundry.

The stories in our society are prevalent.

Yet we treat them as if they are so irrelevant.

Is there hope for these little black boys who probably don't even know how to read?

When all we see is increasing negative statistics in our newsfeed.

Can they spell hope and tell us what it means?

If I had to tell them, I'd say it's optimism about the future, for example your future aspirations and dreams.

Let's invest in the little black boy, that all little black boys can be,

Legit educated young man straight out of University.

Get a job, have respect, create a family, it's much easier to break the cycle's chain,

Be the mirror of what our ancestors like Martin Luther King proclaimed.

Yet, still you might ask, does she have hope in these little black boys?

YES, I do have hope for these little black boys.

In the lines of her poem Deanna recounted the story of the little black boy's existence on the streets. She recognized that the little black boy's battle had turned from one where he once fought the system of inequality to one where he is now fighting his own people and in some cases his own family, "his cousin." Garbarino, Bradshaw and Vorrasi (202) say that "children exposed to violence may do poorly in school and stop hoping for a productive and happy future" (p. 83). The little black boy's existence, as Deanna discussed it, seemed to be rooted in hopelessness, but she still believes there is hope for these little black boys, if we "invest" in them. Unlike Jimaye, Deanna believes that it's not only up to the little black boy, but others need to help. Her poem demands an emotional response for the little black boy's existence.

There is the suggestion that the little black boy's existence is an existence that one in born into, rather than one that is deliberately chosen.

But Deanna has hope for the little black boys, believing that these young men just need to see the potential they have. Everybody has gifts and talents and "committing crimes, selling drugs, and murdering others are neither gifts nor talents," she wrote. She also posited that there are a lot of "living testimonies walking on our streets today that have had a chance to change their lives around." These are the people who need to step up to the plate. "We need more unity in our community to provide hope that things can get better," Deanna said. Initially, when she experienced the ruthless murder of her godpa she felt there was no hope for Bermuda. However, writing her manuscript made her look at things differently. She came to see that change has to start within. She cited the rapper, Notorious B.I.G.: "We can't change the world, unless we change ourselves." When we point fingers, looking to lay blame and responsibility we need to pay attention to the fingers that are pointing back at us. She has grown as a result of the life-changing experience of the murder of her godpa. She now sees that we need to do what we can to be part of the solution rather than simply looking to lay blame. "It takes a village to raise a child, [we need to] regain those villages." Writing her book was "rejuvenating" and made her look at life differently, more positively. She now uses her struggles to propel her towards success.

Latreece wrote in her afterword that her manuscript was one of the most gratifying pieces of writing she had ever written. As a young mother watching so many young men fall victim to gang violence she felt compelled to write on this topic. She said people have their own definition of hope, but she believes "hope is the promising thought that anything is possible and anything can be accomplished if you simply believe," but it's up to us as a people to bring about

the change we want. "This book not only serves to bring to light a very pressing issue that Bermuda faces but also provides hope that with change we can return Bermuda to the island it once was before the eruption of gang violence. It looks to give the reader the promise of hope that it is not too late to take back our island and persuades the reader that it is up to them to make this happen." Writing this book has allowed her the opportunity to have her voice heard through her writing, as she was able to free up and relieve herself through her writing. Latreece concluded her afterword, "Upon completing this book I myself have been encouraged to promote change and to be an advocate for others in my country. Realizing that we as a people have control of the outcome and direction this island goes I believe that there is still hope of putting the current issue to rest and moving forward in a positive direction."

Finally, Patrick also wrote of hope in his afterword. He rightfully said hope is different things to different people and one's definition of hope will vary based on one's personal circumstance. But for Patrick, "Hope is the understanding that things will get better." He admitted that he never thought he would ever be able to talk about the "lack of his father's presence" in his life. He now sees that writing can be therapeutic for many people, whether they are writing song lyrics, poetry or just writing their thoughts. Patrick said the form of your writing matters little as long as you know that when you write, "you possess all the power in the world to change the future and reconcile your past." When I read this, I thought, "Wow!" I couldn't help but be reminded of Nigerian storyteller Ben Okri (1997): "If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives" (p. 46). Patrick recognized through his writing that there is hope, hope that things will get better because he can change his "future and reconcile his past."

The afterwords were indeed useful in revealing the students' views of hope as well as whether there was evidence of hope in their writing. All of the students in this study, Jimaye, Deanna, Latreece and Patrick, showed evidence hope. Yet, there seems to be differences in the way the students perceive hope for the future of our island. These differences appear to be based on how each student identifies herself/himself within this 'other' world of Bermuda. Jimaye has very little connection, if any, with this world. She may know people who have been touched by the violence, but fortunately for her, having never been touched by it directly, she has difficulty in identifying with it. Hence, her hope for change is grounded in the individual and his willingness to change himself. She did say that "these young men need constructive programs to keep them focused and off the streets," but she didn't posits any such programs. Jimaye wrote, "Hope is all that we have left." Because she doesn't really identify with this world of violence, she has difficulty posing solutions, but rather lays the onus on the individuals (criminals) and hopes that they will change. In contrast, Deanna clearly identifies with this world. As a member of this community, having lost her godpa to violence, she recognizes that it's easy to stand back and point fingers and to attribute blame. But she recognizes that the problem is bigger than that; it's bigger than the little black boy who is out there shooting and killing. Therefore, for Deanna, while she has hope for her community, she sees it as a problem that everyone needs to play a part in. She sees the issue of violence as one involving the community, so for her it needs a community response, a response that sees us reclaiming the village that raises the child. Latreece also identifies with this world. She identifies because she has been touched by the violence as she has lost a friend as a result of gun crime. She believes there's hope for change, but she recognizes that the change has to start with her. The recognition that change must start with her may largely stem from the fact that she has more of a vested interest

in seeing a healthier Bermuda, more so because she has a young son who is coming up in this community. Finally, there's Patrick, who although hasn't been directly touched by violence appears to have a clear understanding of the world because he has friends and family members who have been either exposed to, or are part of, this world of violence. He knows this world. While he doesn't identify with it, he understands it. He views this world somewhat differently, though. He sees the climate of violence that we are experiencing simply as a cultural change, something that is merely part of his world, a world that simply poses different challenges than those experienced by the previous generation, my generation. But, Patrick seems to be the epitome of hope. Patrick could be the little black boy about whom Deanna writes, the little black boy who is raised in a single-parent home. He is the little black boy who knows that he is labeled based on where he lives, but deliberately chooses to not let where he lives define him. Patrick is the little black boy for whom Deanna has hope, the little black boy who recognizes that he has the power to write his future and reconcile his past. He is the little black boy who has decided that he is going to "break the cycle that leaves fatherless children and broken hearts in its wake" and instead become a role model by becoming a teacher.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Our stories are so very important to our existence. Stories are what maintain us and sustain us. I didn't dictate topics to my students. I merely asked them to tell me a story about what they were burning to tell the world. And they did. My students wrote their world; they shared their world through their stories and in so doing allowed me to enter their worlds. The stories my student shared were as diverse as the students who made up my class. Did I expect to see more students discussing violence? Given the social climate of the last few years; I have to say, yes, I did. After all, as a Bermudian, I am "part of the storied landscape," so I am acutely aware or what's going on in Bermuda (Clandinin, 2013, p. 24). But more than a specific topic, I wanted to hear their stories, their voices. I wanted to know what they say when given the opportunity to say what they want, how they want. I wanted them to feel comfortable inviting me into their world. Their stories were like sky juice, needed, but sometimes an inconvenience. Their stories came like the rain; some soaked into us, some hit us with the force of hurricane rain, some drizzled, some were like mist. And, like sky juice we wanted them to come at night, when no one was listening, because their stories could be an inconvenience. We would rather these stories be more convenient and less discomforting.

Jimaye, Deanna, and Latreece's stories, are like the thunderstorms that we have seen sitting on the horizons, hoping they won't come, but knowing they eventually will. These final three stories are the stories that deal with the social ills that plague my beautiful island home—Bermuda. These are stories of gang violence. All three of these writers takes a look at the violence that has been plaguing Bermuda for the last several years. They do at times cover some of the same incidents, but the stories are very different. For instance, while Jimaye clearly is

concerned about the violence going on in our island, fortunately for her it becomes evident that she has never been actually touched by. She is in this world, but she is not of this world. Deanna's story is about as close to an eyewitness account as you're going to get. Her story recounts her godpa's brutal murder in front of his two young children on Good Friday, 2010. While Deanna deals with the loss of her godpa, she recognizes that there are other issues to consider. She calls for unity in taking back our community. Latreece's story also recounts the loss of a loved one. She lost a friend who was shot multiple times, a friend who was already confined to a wheelchair from a previous shooting. Latreece's book is very impactful in the way she first presents the names of all of the gun victims and then presents their pictures. All three writers conclude that they do believe that there is still hope for our island home. But, it will take the village, says Deanna.

Patrick covers many issues in his book. Again, his book is included because he is the fatherless child of whom Jimaye and Latreece write. He is in some way symbolic of the "little black boy" of whom Deanna writes. But he deals with the abandonment of his father and it seems that his lack of relationship with his father is the catalyst for most of the issues that he deals with in his young life. Patrick explained that for a time he thought he might be at fault for the break-up of his parents' relationship. Yet, it is because of his parents' break-up that he comes to have a very good relationship with his mother. It is also the absence of his father that seems to be the catalyst for his decision to become a teacher, because there are not enough male role models in education and there are too many young men growing up without a father. He also takes issue with the way older adults look down on young people. Patrick argues that most of the older generation clearly forgets that they are the ones who raised these kids they are complaining about. Writing his book helped him to deal with the loss of his father while he

looks forward to becoming a teacher so he can impact lives. Rather than becoming another kid on the street because he is fatherless, Patrick uses his situation to propel him forward. Rather than wallow in self-pity, he seeks to help others. It is his belief in himself that inspires his belief, and hence hope, in his generation and their ability to change our future.

I went to Indiana University of Pennsylvania, enrolled in their Composition & TESOL program and was determined to figure out a way to do what I do, teach writing, but better. I wasn't really thinking about change. But as I said earlier, sometimes we don't know what we're thinking until we write it. So even though, in hindsight, I knew that there was something wrong, something nagging at me, I didn't know what it was. So I wasn't thinking about change until I enrolled in Claude Hurlbert's 'Theories of Composition' class. I had it in my head that I was good at what I do and I wasn't changing it for anyone. But in that class, after reading Lad Tobin's *Reading Student Writing: Confessions, Meditations, and Rants*, I was exposed; I was stripped naked. I was scared to look at myself in the mirror. But, I was forced to confront myself and engage in some very serious self-analysis. I had to change. So, I did.

I completely changed my pedagogy. While I always allowed my students to choose their own topics when writing, I was guilty of handcuffing them to the strategies. If they had a problem coming up with a topic, then I would suggest one. The problem with that was the topics were usually topics written by my students 5, 10, maybe even 15 years ago. And then I made them write within the constraints of a given strategy/mode. I cringe as I write this now. It's seems so simple now, the fact that I needed to change. But all too often we get stuck in a way of doing things and many times we continue to do it, because it's easier, it's convenient and less of a bother. That's why we (Bermudians) prefer rain at night because rain in the daytime is too much of a bother; it's inconvenient. But, Okri (1997) says, "If we change the stories we live by,

quite possibly we change our lives" (p. 46). I changed my life, the story I was living by, and I changed.

I took the handcuffs off and allowed my students the freedom to write, without constraint. Yes, there were still institutional objectives that I needed to meet and I did. I just did it within the construct of my new Hurlbert-influenced, student-centered book-writing pedagogy. I taught them the tools, I gave them the theory, and then I turned them loose to demonstrate their ability to use any of those tools they wanted to produce a book, their book of what they were burning to tell the world. Yes, there were some challenges. I had students who wrote well, and I had some students who didn't write so well, but all of them had ideas, their *own* ideas of something they were burning to tell the world and they were excited about having the opportunity to say what they wanted, uninhibited. For the ones who were not so good at writing, they'll get it. They just need to keep writing and they need to find enjoyment in their writing. Students need to have fun writing and they have fun when they are sharing their stories with others. Elbow (1991) is right when he says, "We need to get students to write by choice because no one can learn to write well except by writing a great deal" (p.136). This book-writing pedagogy provided my students the opportunity to write, and to write a great deal. It also allowed them to see writing as more purposeful because they were not simply writing a paper to turn in for a grade. They were producing a book, their *own* book.

But, what is the point of all of this; what is the point of my change. "If it don't make change, it don't make sense." What did this mean in my classroom? It meant that I now had students who came to see that writing could actually be a process of self-exploration, a process of healing; that writing can be therapeutic and empowering, and that writing using this pedagogy can guide them towards a sense of empathy. Some of them started out writing, unsure of where

they were going. Quite possibly, the freedom to write without constraint was new so they had to feel their way. They learned things about themselves and they learned things about others through the workshops and through the sharing of their stories. McBride (2006) says, "Stories make us see other people as human beings regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, or beliefs." They forgave people who had hurt them and they learned to forgive themselves. They explored areas, deep dark areas of pain and hurt in the dark places of their minds; places they thought were locked off. They unlocked those places, removed the contents, examined them and in doing so, they were able to move on; to heal. They found it empowering because they now felt that their voice was validated, people wanted to hear what they had to say. Deanna's view of what this writing experience has done for her seems to capture the thoughts of most of her peers. She wrote, ". . . this class gave me the opportunity to be heard, to express myself through writing, and be a valuable asset to my healing. . . .I truly believe that my voice needed to be heard, not just for others, but I yearned to hear the voice I was holding in." Yes, students need to be heard. And they need to hear themselves speaking through their writing.

In the beginning, many of them looked at this writing assignment in fearful trepidation. And I didn't force my pedagogy on anyone. While I may believe that this is a healthy pedagogy that goes far in allowing students autonomy and voice, whereby empowering them, I was in no way hegemonic. I let them know up front what was expected of them in my class. I let them know that if they preferred to write academic essays, this was *not* the class for them. I let them know that they had a choice to stay in my class. The students who chose to stay in my class demonstrated bravery and a willingness to grow. They demonstrated a willingness to change and to be changed. The quiet anxiety and feelings of trepidation that some of them demonstrated at

the beginning of the course were replaced with feelings of growth and a sense of accomplishment when they saw their finished book.

I wanted my students to have hope, but I wanted them to arrive at that place where they felt they had hope on their own, not because I guided them there in an underhanded sort of way. I wanted them to arrive at an understanding about the power of writing on their own. I wanted them to see that no matter what was going on in their world, as long as they were writing they could write any ending they chose. If they were writing, then they were alive, they were living. Hope is not only for people in deep, dark spaces. Even when you are in a bright, positive space, a happy space, you can have hope, hope that you remain in that state of positivity. Hope is about having faith, perhaps not in who we are, but rather in who we may become. My students have hope. And I, too, have hope.

The year of 2011/2012, which I spent at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, was an extremely challenging year. However, the difficulties I faced that year developed perseverance in me, which in turn developed my character, and consequently created in me hope, unshakeable hope. There was a reason why I was in Indiana at that particular time, and it was about more than just getting degree. It was about change. Subconsciously I knew something was wrong; I knew something was missing in my teaching. But, it was the senseless murder of my nephew that opened my eyes to a need for change. So, as I said in the beginning of this dissertation, a couple of things happened to me that made me decide on my research interest, that made me rethink, revisit and revise the way I was teaching. First, there was my nephew's murder. Prior to that, I was naïve, innocent. Having the violence land on my doorstep made me aware that my family was not immune. It can, and it did, happen to us. The violence was no longer a problem experienced by other people. Kellon's murder opened my eyes. It opened my eyes and made me

see D'Angelo. Then there was Tina, the young lady who told me that a bullet "just stings a little bit." Tina made me aware of the shifting mindset among our island's young people. All of these things made me see that I had to make change. Then, there were a couple of things that reaffirmed my decision. That enlightening walk with Diane in the rain, in the sky juice, during the summer of 2012, coupled with Kudre's message convinced me that I was taking the right path.

Yes, the year 2011/2012 changed me, but I didn't realize that the seeds of change had actually been planted much earlier than my arrival at I.U.P. Without a doubt, though, I.U.P. changed me. Hurlbert's 'Theories of Composition' class changed me. All of that change resulted in a change in my classroom. I am now listening to the individual voices of my students. I am learning who they are and using their voices to inform my teaching. I have hope that maybe my change will cause a ripple effect, even if it only means that we think about the ways we teach writing. We as teachers need to better understand our students' lived experiences. Such understanding is crucial, I think, to the way we view writing. Moreover, understanding our students' lived experiences *may* just change the way we teach writing. I am not trying to discount other ways of learning about our students' worlds, such as research or even the media. Sometimes, though, if the truth be told, we may be too busy with our own lives, or too busy climbing the promotional ladder that we are unaware of what's going on with our students. But we should know. We should know what's going on in our students' world. Who better to tell us about their worlds than the people who occupy those worlds, than those who live those experiences? And no, I don't expect my students to have solutions to the many complex social issues of our society, especially when we have problems coming up with solutions ourselves. But I do believe that allowing them to write about the complexities of their worlds is a start, a

start to get them at least thinking about solutions. My class, my pedagogy is only a start. The change I have made in my composition classroom is a change towards social justice, in that 'all' students voices and stories are recognized, validated and celebrated.

So where do we go from here? We continue to listen. Who do we listen to? Our students. We can teach listening skills to our students more effectively by first listening to them. When we listen to them we show them that we care, and when we show them that we care, we show them hope. We need to model the behavior we want them to demonstrate, listen and hope. Why do we need to listen to them? Because they are the future. It seems that many students feel unheard—unimportant. There is a difference between what students think and say when they think no one is listening, when they're merely writing an assignment, and what they think and say when they finally understand that they have an audience. We need to understand their world and hope that they might understand ours, so that our past does not have to become their future. We need to foster hope. We need to show them that in 'writing' their past and their present, they can 'right' the future. Future research will be contingent on what is learned from continued communication, within the classroom and without. We have to listen to what they are saying because only then can we hope to understand their worlds. Also, another area of research might be one that looks at students who have produced books using this pedagogy to see how it translates to another discipline such as sociology. Do such students continue in the role of 'social activist,' and write for hope. My pedagogy of hope is only a beginning.

My Afterword

Reflecting on my dissertation brought to light several things. I came to realize that while I am the author of this dissertation, I am also one of the students of whom I write. I am the student who needed to write, the student who needed to write for change, for change in my classroom, practically, and for change in me, personally. I needed to change the way I was doing things in my classroom. But the story of that need for change was intertwined with my personal story, the story of my loss, the loss of my nephew. In retrospect, I realized that although independent stories, they are stories that are dependent and interdependent on each other. In recognizing how one story (the story of my nephew's murder) informed the other (change within my classroom) led to change, significant and necessary change for me, practically. That change is ongoing and my students' books presented in this study are only the beginning.

But, I also needed change personally. Reliving, through writing, the horror that befell my family early that Sunday morning August 10, 2008, was extremely and utterly painful. I realized that as I wrote that story, I walked in the shoes of my students. I wrote my story, the story of my nephew's murder and how it changed me; I wrote what I was burning to tell the world. But, six years later I'm still working on personal change. I recall that when my brother, Daniel, spoke at his son, Kellon's, funeral he told those present that he had forgiven the kids who murdered his son. He told those present, I "forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). And after the final trial in which the lone defendant, Kellan Lewis, was found guilty and sentenced to 12 years in prison, my brother when questioned by reporters about the verdict told them, "There are no winners" (qtd. in Roberts, "We will never be the same"). My sister-in-law, Kellon's mother, Gail, expressed a similar spirit of forgiveness. She admitted that her family's lives had been irrevocably changed, but she said, "I have a hope and I forgive them. I have to forgive them

because I have to go on and live, to be free. I feel sorry for him [Kellan Lewis] and his family and his mom. I know how I feel" (qtd. in Roberts, "We will never be the same"). Honestly, I know that I too have to move to a place of forgiveness. This is the personal change I am looking for, I'm praying for. Clearly, then, I, too, needed to write for hope. And I do believe there is hope. I received indication of that hope today, Monday June 29, 2014, just prior to me writing this afterword.

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I saw D'Angelo today. I SAW D'Angelo today!!!!! D'Angelo was the tattooed, young man who was in my class a few years ago, the young man on the run. It happened just by chance. Or maybe it didn't; since I'm one of those people who believe everything happens for a reason. But, I had to take my car to the shop to have the rear wheel bearings replaced and to have the mechanic look into a knocking noise that was coming from the front wheels. I decided against taking the car to the dealership because they usually tend to be more expensive. Instead, I took my car to a general mechanic, "Weir Enterprise." When I went to collect the car, the customer service representative told me that I needed to go to the car dealership and get shock mounts for the front wheels and for the gearbox, because they didn't have those parts in stock. Feeling a bit disgruntled, but I had to do what I had to do to get my car fixed, so off I went to the car dealership.

After a little bit of a wait, I was finally served by a young man who didn't seem to be very pleasant at all. I told him what I needed. Fortunately, the guy at "Weir Enterprise" had written the name of the parts on my invoice, so I gave this to the 'not so friendly' young man. He took the paper with the information about the parts from me, looked at it and then told me that he would need the chassis number for my car. This information is recorded on the license

(registration), so I told him that I'd run out to my car to get it. Three minutes later, I came back into the spare parts reception area and handed him the license/registration. He took my license and entered the chassis number into his computer. I noticed his brow furrow a bit, then slowly he raised his head, looked up at me and said, "I'm gonna have to go out there and get the number off the car because this number isn't right." "Oh," I said, clearly puzzled. Together we walked outside to my car. I questioned him about why the number was wrong. Essentially, he told me that TCD (Transport Control Department) had obviously made a typo when they entered this information on my license/registration. He copied down the number from under the hood of the car and we went back inside to complete my order. As I stood there looking at this miserable looking young man, a feeling of familiarity began to creep over me. I couldn't help but feel as if I somehow knew him from somewhere. Bermuda is so small that almost everybody knows everybody. Finally, in a voice indicative of my puzzlement, I asked, "Do I know you?"

"I'm not sure," he answered. "I was looking at you and thinking the same thing; that I know you from somewhere, but I'm not sure where I know you from."

"What's your name?" I asked, for the first time noticing the tattoos peeping out from his collar, as well as the one on his hand as he handed me back my license.

"D'Angelo," he answered.

"D'Angelo," I repeated, in a slightly raised voice. "D'Angelo! Oh my God! D'Angelo! I taught you."

"Ohh, that's where I know you from. Up de College," he said.

"Yes, I taught you at Bermuda College. Oh my goodness; D'Angelo! I wrote about you! I've been thinking about you! I wondered what happened to you!"

D’Angelo stood there looking at me, a slight smile starting to creep around the corners of his mouth.

“Look at you. Still wearing that gribble (grumpy/miserable) look, hiding that smile. Do you know how often I have thought about you? Wondered what happened to you?”

“Yeah, I messed up,” he said. “I should’ve stayed in school.”

“Yeah. And didn’t you send some girls to ask me if it was too late for you to come back?”

“Yeah, I did, too,” D’Angelo admitted.

“But, D’angelo, I told them to tell you to come back; that I would help you catch up.” I was so excited to see D’Angelo. The words were just pouring out of my mouth. And the more I talked, the warmer he got. Then D’Angelo said, “Yeah, I wanna come back.”

“That’s great! Yeah, I think you should come back. I think you have something, D’Angelo. I think you can write. I wrote that on your writing history profile, right?” D’Angelo smiled at me, fully, for the first time. “I wanna call you. Get you to help me get back in school.”

“Okay,” I said.

“Do you have a direct line?” he asked.

“No, but my extension is . . .”

“What about an email address,” he asked cutting me off.

“Sure my email address is svirgil@ . . .”

Cutting me off again, he handed me a piece of paper. “Here, can you write it down?” he asked.

"Sure," I said, writing my email address on the paper he handed me. I gave it back to him. "D'Angelo, you don't know; you've made my day, seeing you," I said, smiling at him. This time he gave me a genuine smile, a smile that moved from his lips and crept up to his eyes. "Thanks," he said quietly.

"Make sure you email me," I said as I walked out the door.

"Okay," he answered.

I felt like jumping in the air when I got outside. I was so happy to see D'Angelo. I had to tell someone, but who would this make sense to? Diane! Diane was probably the only person who would understand. Having spent the last two summers with her in North Carolina, working on my dissertation, she knew my story about D'Angelo. In fact, she had asked me just this past summer if I had ever seen him again. I called her right away and she was as excited as I was when I told her that I had just seen D'Angelo. I didn't even need to remind her of who D'Angelo was.

So why did seeing D'Angelo bring me so much happiness, so much joy? The fact of the matter is that I spent several weeks; months maybe, wondering about D'Angelo. I felt that I had lost him and that somehow I hadn't done enough to hold onto him. But here was D'Angelo, alive and well, working as a customer service representative in the spare parts department of a car dealership. Here was D'Angelo alive and well, telling me he wanted to come back to school. I was ecstatic! There was still hope after all.

I am a student who has found her voice by being allowed to tell my story. It is a story of my nephew, King Solomon Kellon Devent Hill. It is the story of how Kellon's story wrote my story. It is a story of how Kellon's story made me want to hear D'Angelo's story and the stories of all of my students. It is a story that has resulted in change, a much needed change. I also was

questioned by a reporter after the verdict came in on Kellon's case. "I feel for the Lewis family . . . . It's unfortunate he had to do this [sentence] on his own when everybody in Bermuda knows he didn't do this on his own. But maybe an important message has been sent to the Island about what happens when you don't speak up and take responsibility. Maybe it will do something to challenge this code of silence. Something good has to come out of this" (Roberts, "We will never be the same"). I actually didn't remember this interview until I read it while researching Kellon's story. But, something good *did* come out of it--change. Kudre, Kellon's brother, went back to school to study ministry. I changed the way I did things in my classroom. I changed, personally. It is only in the writing of my story that I am finally able to say, "I forgive them for they know not what they do." My nephew Kudre is right; "if it don't make change, it don't make sense." I can't wait to hear D'Angelo's story.

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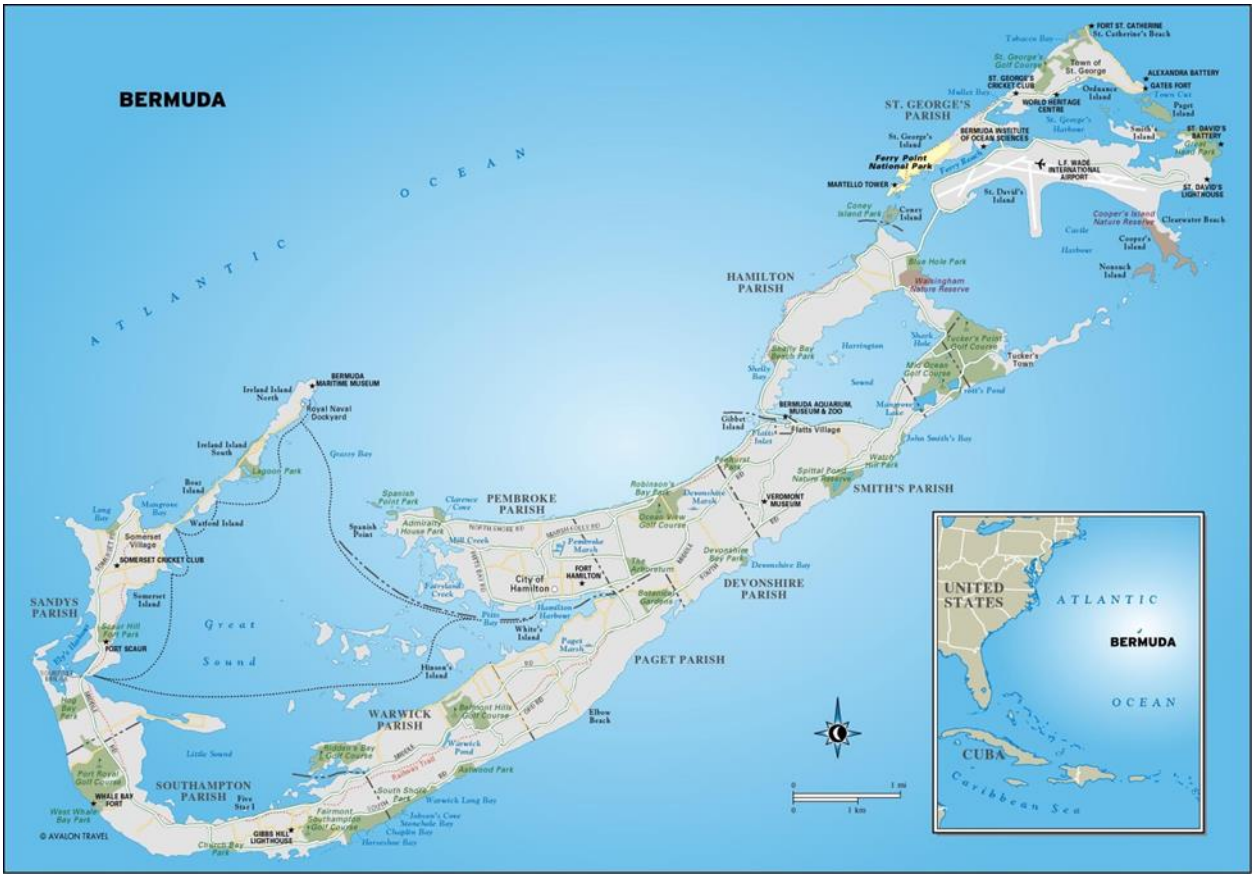
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Map of Bermuda



Appendix B

Guidelines for Responding to your Peer's Manuscript--Writing Workshop

Responding to your peers' writing is a very important part of the class. I keep a response folder for each student and you will be graded on your responses. Hence, if you want to do well, be sure to follow the guidelines listed below. The response activities are intended to assist you in becoming a more critical reader, and hopefully as a consequence, a more critical writer. Reading the writings of others can make you more aware of your own writing.

- You must have "at least" FOUR comments on each one-page manuscript that is submitted for workshop
- Use the abbreviation "HWICYMIY" (how would it change your meaning if you) when commenting on your peers' manuscripts.
- In addition to the HWICYMIY comments, you must include at least ONE "I like" comment. This means you must state something that you like about the document you are reading.
- Your four comments must consist of at least two HWICYMIY comments, at least one "I like . . ." comment, and at least one other comment. This other comment can be another "I like" comment, another HWICYMIY comment or an "I would like to know more about . . ." statement.
- Additionally, you MUST include a positive, encouraging endnote that reflects thought and addresses the writer by name.
- You must be sure to write your name, identifying yourself as the reader, on your peer's document.
- Be sure to indicate the date of the workshop and the round of the writing workshop (1^{st} round, 2^{nd} round etc.)
- You must record your responses directly on your peer's manuscript, alongside the sentence/passage you are responding to.
- You MUST make a copy of the document with your responses, marking it with the word "Copy".

- You must give your peer the original and the copy to me on the day that the paper is work-shopped in order to receive a grade for your response. Responses not received on the day of the workshop may not be accepted or may be penalized for being late.

Sample Responses

1. I like_____
2. HWICYMIY "added more description here"?
3. HWICYMIY "provided more detail here"?
4. HWICYMIY "changed _____ to _____"?
5. HWICYMIY "deleted this sentence/passage?
6. HWICYMIY "added dialog here?"
7. HWICYMIY "moved this sentence/paragraph to . . .?"
8. I would like to know more about_____
9. Write a reflective, positive endnote for every paper you read in workshop (i.e. S'naye, I like your use of description; you capture your reader's attention. I look forward to reading more of your writing).

Appendix C

ENG 1111--Information for Afterword

Assignment: You are to write an Afterword for your book. This Afterword requires that you draw on many of the tools/strategies that you were introduced to in this class. Your afterword, **using the prism of hope**, will reflect on your writing and consider where you go from here. Please look at your manuscript carefully and write a thoughtful, reflective Afterword in which you address the following issues:

1. Which tools did you use in writing your manuscript? Why?
2. How do you feel about what you have written and why do you feel as you do?
3. How does what you have written in the early stages of your manuscript compare/contrast with what you have written in the later stages of your manuscript?
4. What is **your** definition of "hope?"
5. Is there evidence of hope in your writing? If yes, provide clear, specific and developed examples from your manuscript.
6. If there is no evidence of hope, provide clear, specific and developed examples from your manuscript.
7. To what do you attribute this presence or absence of hope?
8. Is there anything/s that you would change in this manuscript? If so, how and why?
9. I believe that as long as you <u>WRITE</u>, you have the opportunity to <u>RIGHT</u> your life. Moreover, "as long as you're writing your life/your world, you can write any ending you choose." How do you feel about these two statements and why do you feel as you do?
10. Finally, explain where you hope to go from here (in your journey through life).

Your Afterword should be written out of the knowledge you hold and after careful, thoughtful consideration of your manuscript. You must have TWO outside sources (Ebscohost—full text articles, only) as well as a properly formatted works cited page for those sources. In order that I can verify your sources, you must include complete printouts of your two sources, including a print out of the works cited information from Ebscohost. **Sources other than Ebscohost MUST be approved by me and you are NOT allowed to use e-books.**

Appendix D

Survey/Questionnaire

My pedagogy (method of teaching) is what I call 'my pedagogy of hope.' It is my hope that in using the approach that I do that I would:

- give/allow my students voice
- empower my students
- and somehow instill a sense of hope within my students.

Answering the following questions would help me in my research.

1. How do you define hope? How has your definition of hope changed since writing your book?
2. One of the main objectives of this pedagogy is to allow students to speak, to allow them a voice. Do you feel that you were given a voice? Explain.
3. Did you see this as an empowering experience? If so, how?
4. What did you learn from writing your book, about writing and about yourself?
5. How is writing your story/writing your world connected to hope?
6. What else, if anything would you like to share with me?

(survey/questionnaire sent via email to students)

Appendix E

Course Syllabus

ENG 1111-01—Freshman English ***SPRING 2013***

Instructor: Ms. Sharon M. Virgil
Tues & Thrs—11:35 a.m.-12:55 p.m.
Brock Hall—B263
Email: svirgil@college.bm

Office: West Hall 306
Phone: 236-9000 ext. 4238 (office)
Phone: 234-3705 (home)

Office Hours: M —10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
T/Thrs—10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
W—10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Thrs—2:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

Required Texts: ***The Longman Reader,*** **Judith Nadell, John Langan & Eliza Comodromos, 10th edition**
Writing Research Papers: a Complete Guide**, James D. Lester, 14th edition**
Hodges' Harbrace Handbook **16th edition**

Required Materials: You should have loose leaf binder paper for journal entries and a folder for your works in progress.

Course Overview:
All students are required to take an English course. The aim of this course is to develop your reading and writing skills in an analytical and critical way. I think that this aim is best achieved in a collaborative learning atmosphere. Therefore, whenever possible, this course will follow a workshop format. We will begin this semester working in whole class reading and writing groups, and eventually move to reading and writing in small groups. You should know however, that all writing done for this course is considered public writing, meaning that it is writing that you will share with the rest of your peers.

Course Objective:
At the conclusion of this course most students should have a clear understanding of the various rhetorical strategies, demonstrate their ability to write clearly and effectively using the various strategies and demonstrate their research skills by effectively incorporating source material into their writing. Since the main objectives of this course is to ensure that students know and understand how to use the various strategies and how to incorporate researched material into their writing, I will provide you with these tools to achieve those objectives.

However, an equally important aim of mine is to try to ensure that you enjoy your writing experience in my class. Hence, this class is designed 1) to help you become a better writer by providing you the opportunities to compose multiple drafts of writing; 2) to help you improve your writing by helping you to experiment with your writing; 3) to help you become a better writer by becoming a better reader of your own writing and the writing of others; 4) to provide ways for you to evaluate your writing; 5) to create ways for making writing a means for accomplishing personally meaningful and socially significant goals.

Class Policies:
Your success in this course is contingent upon your attending all classes and completion of all assignments on time. You will also be required to write reflective, thoughtful journal entries as assigned, as well as reflective journals to the various strategies. All of these writing assignments must be typed using black ink (**on white paper only**),

double—spaced (unless otherwise stated), using proper margins and font size (**Times New Roman—12**), and using only one side of the paper. Please note the due dates for assignments as outlined on your syllabus.
When writing your responses to the various rhetorical strategies, I am particularly looking for comprehension of the material. Please type on one side of the paper only. **All assignments are due at the beginning of class**. Assignments not received at the beginning of class may be considered late. Assignments that are received late may be penalized by half a grade for each day that the assignment is late.

Since this course is designed in a workshop format, participation is of extreme importance.

You should also know that excessive absences can adversely affect your grade.

Also, I find it inconsiderate and disrupting to the class when people arrive late, so please try to be prompt. Additionally, there is nothing worse than having a class disrupted by people who insist on packing up before the class is over, therefore, I will ask you not to leave the class until I say that the class is over. If for some reason you must leave early, please let me know in advance.

Cell phones, IPods, IPads and any other type of entertainment devices are **not** permitted to be on while in class, as they can be disruptive. More importantly, you are not allowed to use your laptops while in class, unless I make it clear that we will be working with the laptops. In fact, your laptops should not even be open while in class.

If you are a student with a learning disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact Dr. Lisa Osborne in the Academic Resource Centre, located on the ground floor of the Library Building, at 239-4102 or losborne@college.bm

Student E-Mail Accounts
E-mail service is provided to all Bermuda College students. This account will be used by the College as the primary e-mail account for student communications and is tied to MOODLE for communications with faculty and other students. An e-mail address is automatically generated for a student who has registered and paid for a class at the College. ***Students are required to check their BC email accounts regularly for important dates, deadlines and notifications from the College.***

Lastly, as you share your writings we will undoubtedly find that there will be different reactions and interpretations to the materials. Given this, I will ask you to respect the various writings shared in this class. Keep in mind that we are all individuals with our own cultural baggage, and it is our unique cultural baggage that will determine how we read and react to the various readings.

Evaluation (Important note: Assignments may be changed to meet the needs of the class)
Your final grade will be a composite of the following: 1) Book Manuscript; 2) Published Book; 3) Foreword; 4) Afterword; 5) Response Folder; 6) Journal Entries; 7) Test; 8) Effort and Attendance; 9) Final Exam

Your **grade** for this course will be based on: items 1-8 @ 70% and the final exam @ 30%

1) Book Manuscript—Using the tools from your toolbox, you will write a book this semester. You will be given a selection of questions from which you will choose one to base your book upon. The book should begin with one specific event, located in one specific time and place. The subject matter can then be explored from there. Your book will be a memoir of sorts, for it will chronicle your personal investment in you topic. The style of your book will be established through class discussion, but its length will be at least **15 single-spaced (with an extra space skipped between paragraphs and dialogue blocked), typed pages** long. Your book must consist of new writing that has not been handed in for any other class at any time in your life.

2) Published Book—Later in the semester after much revision, you will publish your book. In class we will discuss desktop publishing, including fonts, margins, page-size, binding materials. You will then hand in **one** copy of the published book, plus the **Book Manuscript** and the **Manuscript Self-Evaluation Sheet.** Each book will have a foreword and an afterword and will include a main text, and a works cited section for both the foreword and the afterword.

3) Foreword—This semester you will read a book manuscript written by one of your classmates. You will then compose a foreword for their book. This foreword will be **two and a half single-spaced typed pages** long. In it, you will discuss the key issue in the book and connect your classmate's book to larger cultural or historical issues or trends, as well as your own experiences if they are relevant. This work will require research on your part. Your foreword will be given to your classmate so that they may publish it in their book, if they choose to do so.

4) The Afterword—This will be researched and written by yourself and will reveal careful and reflective thought on your topic.

5) Response Folder—Each of you will hand in a photocopy of every workshop paper (see Class Workshop below) to which you respond. Your Response Folder will be a record of how well you learn to respond to the writing of your peers in this class. So, at the end of each workshop, you **must** hand in to me your photocopies of the papers we work-shopped in class that day. Later photocopies will not be accepted, except if you were out of class for a legitimate reason, as deemed by me, on the day the papers were work-shopped.
   Please note: you will not receive credit for responding to the workshop papers unless:
   1) You return the original to its author on the day it is work-shopped and
   2) You hand in a photocopy of that original on the day we workshop it.

6) Journal Entries—You will be required to write a writing history profile, entries for the various strategies and other journal entries regarding the pedagogy.

7) Effort and attendance—Each of you will receive a grade that reflects:
   - the care you invest in writing assignments and how you meet deadlines. (Late work will not be accepted unless I decide circumstances warrant it.)
   - how you take a positive part in all class activities, including meaningful contributions to discussion; cooperation with others in groups; willingness to help others; attentive listening when others are speaking; an open, inquisitive attitude that is respectful of others
   - the quality and originality of the writing and responding you do for class

8) Final Exam—The final exam will be a common final. You must demonstrate your ability to use one or more of the tools (rhetorical strategies) you have in your toolbox, demonstrate your ability to incorporate source material into your writing, and demonstrate your ability to write an effective works cited page based on MLA guidelines.

Class Workshops:
As a *writer* of a workshop paper, you must photocopy and distribute to everyone in the class (or group, whichever applies) **one, typed, single-spaced** page of something you are writing for this course. Be sure to put your name at the top of the paper and identify the round of workshop. This distribution will be done **during the class immediately preceding the one in which the writing will be works-shopped.** This means that you must come to class with the workshop writing ready to hand out. The workshop handout may be a draft, but it must be sufficiently developed that the class (or group) will enjoy working on it. **If you fail to hand your writing out to everyone in the class during the class immediately preceding the one in which it will be work-shopped, you will not be given an alternative date and your 'effort' grade will be lowered.** We must adhere to deadlines; otherwise, the class will be left with less material to work with for that day.

As a *reader* of workshop drafts, you will regularly receive draft writing from your colleagues during the class before it will be work-shopped. You are responsible for making as many written comments and suggestions on that draft as possible—**a minimum of four with an additional endnote**—so that the writer will have many ideas for revision (we will learn in class how to make these comments and suggestions). **After you write your comments and endnote, photocopy the workshop paper and hand it in to me at the beginning of the class on the day we workshop it. In other words, please come to each workshop with the original (with your comments) and one photocopy of your peer's workshop paper. The original goes to the writer and the**

copy is for me to keep in your 'response folder.' Be sure to write your name on the paper that you workshop. You must follow all the steps to receive credit.

By the way, I don't give grades. You earn them!

IMPORTANT NOTE: You will be required to include researched sources in your Foreword and Afterword. The sources you use MUST be cleared by me to determine their appropriateness.

This is a tentative schedule, which is subject to change based on the progress in the course.

Jan. 10	Introduction to course: requirements, policies, grades, textbooks and materials. A writing history/profile--this is a piece of writing that will discuss your experiences as a writer thus far (app. 1 page). It should discuss how you feel about writing and why you feel as you do. **Assignment:** Read the material on Exemplification (pp. 175-182) in *The Longman Reader*, and then in your journal write what you understand the rhetorical strategy of exemplification to be. (Hereafter your text will be referred to simply as *Longman*)
Jan. 15	Discussion of assigned readings--Exemplification. **Assignment:** Read the section on Comparison/Contrast (pp. 335-342) in the *Longman*. **DUE: Writing History Profile** **Important Note: Whether I say it or not, you will be expected to write a journal response to each reading that discusses the various rhetorical strategies. You must bring these entries to every class.**
Jan. 17	Discussion of assigned reading—Comparison/Contrast **Assignment:** Read the material on Cause and Effect (pp. 381-389) in the *Longman*.
Jan. 22	Discussion of assigned reading—Cause and Effect **Assignment:** Read the material on Definition (pp. 431-436) in the *Longman.*
Jan. 24	Discussion of assigned readings—Definition **Assignment:** Read the material on Argumentation/Persuasion (pp.474-494)
	January 25th is the last day to withdraw without financial penalty (tuition only)
Jan. 29	Discussion of assigned reading Argumentation/Persuasion **Assignment:** Read the material on Writing an Outline on pp. 157-164 in the Lester text.
Jan. 31	Discussion of assigned reading and discussion of test on rhetorical strategies. **Assignment:** Study for test on rhetorical strategies.
Feb. 5	TEST---Rhetorical Strategies and discussion of book topics **Assignment:** Read a portion of the chapter "Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism" (pp. 107-116 in the Lester text) and complete a solid typed draft (single spaced) of one page of your book and bring to next class.
Feb. 7	Discussion of assigned reading--Plagiarism. **Assignment:** Continue work on your manuscript.
Feb. 12	Book Workshop **Assignment:** Continue working on your book manuscript
Feb. 14	Book Workshop **Assignment:** Continue working on your book manuscript
Feb. 19	Book Workshop **Assignment:** Continue working on your book manuscript
Feb. 21	Book Workshop--Groups **Assignment:** Continue working on your book manuscript and begin work on your Foreword.

Feb. 26	Library Research—Group/Discussion of Foreword/ Quoting Activities **Assignment:** Work on your quoting Activities
Feb. 28	Library Research—Group/Discussion of Foreword/ Quoting Activities **Assignment:** Work on your Quoting Activities
Mar. 4- 8	**M I D - S E M E S T E R B R E A K**
Mar. 12	Discussion of Foreword DUE--Quoting Activities and Lead-in activities **Assignment:** Continue working on your book manuscript. Have TWO copies for next class.
Mar. 14	DUE--Book Manuscript—1st draft **Assignment:**
Mar. 19	Foreword **Assignment:**
Mar. 21	DUE--Foreword **Assignment:**
Mar. 26	Book Workshop **Assignment:** **Today is the Last Day to Withdraw from Classes without Academic Penalty**
Mar. 28	Book Workshop **Assignment:**
Apr. 2	Book Workshop **Assignment:**
Apr. 4	Book Workshop **Assignment:**
Apr. 9	Afterword **Assignment:** Continue work on afterword
Apr. 11	Afterword **Assignment:**
Apr. 16	Book Workshop Afterword DUE **Assignment:**
Apr. 18	Book Workshop **Assignment:**
Apr. 23	DUE—published book; manuscript and manuscript self-evaluation **REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM**
Apr. 25 & 26	**R E A D I N G D A Y S**
Apr. 29-May 3	**F I N A L E X A M S**