

Authors-for-Literacy Readings at the United Nations

Authors-for-Literacy events have been taking place since 2006

All contributions taken in at the "Authors-for-Literacy" books-signings benefit literacy projects of the 'UN Staff 1% for Development Fund

May, 2018

Presentations by Elizabeth Strout, Katherine Vaz and Major Jackson



Pat Duffy introduces authors
-photo by Francoise Bouffault



L-R: Katherine Vaz, Elizabeth Strout and Major Jackson
-photo by Francoise Bouffault



1% Fund members Elizabeth Scaffidi, Chuck Appel, Alice Harrison, Kathryn Kuchenbrod, Pat Duffy and Robert Johanssen with guest authors
-photo by Francoise Bouffault



Francis Dubois with guest authors Elizabeth Strout, Katherine Vaz, Major Jackson
-photo by Francoise Bouffault



Book Signing
-photo by Elizabeth Scaffidi

"Did anyone ever die in your arms? That was a question often put to Nathan after Vietnam. People needed to look at someone who had looked at that. They wanted to paint a few scenes and run them together, to enjoy the shudder at a distance, coloring in the details at their leisure – the single, one hundred shades of green."

"The Love Life of an Assistant Animator" from The Love Life of an Assistant Animator and Other Stories by Katherine Vaz

"The UN Somali driver speeds by a small herd of white cattle prodded along by a desert farmer.

Rust-colored dust in its wake clouds barbed-
wire suburbs of white tents and make-shift shelters
of twigs and branches breeding the plateau faster
than malarial flies. I have come to Dadaab like an actor
on a press release, unprepared for the drained faces
of famine-fleeing refugees, my craft's glamour dimmed by hundreds of infant graves,
children
whose lolling heads' final drop landed on their mothers'
backs like soft stones..."

from "The Dadaab Suite" from Roll Deep by Major Jackson

"...And then Angelina saw her mother suddenly rise and walk into the street. An old man was crossing, he was weaving – not with drunkenness, it seemed, but with some malady of age. It was surprising to Angelina how quickly her mother moved to him; in the light from the streetlamp Angelina saw the old man's face, and it was not just the way he smiled up at her mother, it was the humanness of his expression, the warmth and depth of his appreciation, and as her mother helped him across the street, Angelina saw then her mother's face briefly in the light as well. Perhaps it was the angle of the light, but her mother's face had a momentary brilliance upon it—as Angelina saw her mother take the man's hand, saw her mother help this man across the street..."

from Anything is Possible by Elizabeth Strout

June, 2017
Presentation by Patricia McCormick, author of *Sold!*



Pat Duffy updates on 1% fund projects



Patricia McCormick, author



Audience



Book signing



Author Patricia McCormick with 1% Fund team of volunteers:

(L to R) Lorraine Farquharson, Diana Djangiryan, Chuck Appel, Alice Harrison, Patricia McCormick, Joyce Yuan, Robert Johanssen, Josh Cohen, Pat Duffy, Suzanne Tisserand, Sergei Zalesov, Andrea King, Liz Scaffidi



Author Patricia McCormick with 1% fund Secretary Chuck Appel

Happiness House

"Finally we turn down an alley and arrive in front of a metal gate held fast with a heavy chain. Uncle takes a key from his vest, opens the lock and hurries me inside.

"Will Auntie be here?" I say.

"Who?" He is distracted, locking the chain behind us.

"Auntie Bimla," I say. "Will she be here?"

"Later," he says. "She'll be here later."

Beyond the gate, a man lies sleeping in front of a door.
Uncle nudges him with the toe of his boot. The man rises, lets us in, then locks the door behind us.

The place is dark as a cave, and it smells of liquor and incense.

As my eyes adjust, I see a dozen sleeping girls, some in the corners, some on rope cots.

"What kind of place is this?" I ask uncle.

"Happiness House," he says. "Auntie Mumtaz will explain it all to you."

*from **Sold!** by Patricia McCormick*

May, 2016

**Presentation by Christopher Cerf and Henry Beard, authors of
*Spin-glish: the Definitive Dictionary of Deliberately Deceptive Language***



Authors Christopher Cerf and Henry Beard



Pat Duffy, Chris Cerf, Henry Beard, audience



Audience, with (L to R): Alice Harrison, Francis Dubois



Chuck Appel, Alice Harrison, Kam Cheong Chiu, Melissa Tam



Audience, with Robert Johannsen, standing



Prof. Kasozi, Kate Parry, Katherine Vaz, Liz Strout

"Do you speak Spin-glish? Well, if you speak English, chances are you've been using Spin-glish for a long time, most likely without even knowing it. For example, have you ever overslept and missed a meeting and blamed your absence on a "scheduling error"? Tried to weasel out of a parking ticket because of an alleged "meter malfunction"? Explained that a bounced check was the result of an "unanticipated negative cash-balance accounting issue"?

...If you answered yes to even one of these questions, you're already on the road to mastering the devious vocabulary of verbal distortion, and with our indispensable bilingual dictionary as your guide, you'll soon be earning your B.S. in B.S. – or better still, your coveted Spin Doctorate...:

More examples:

efficient use of space: overcrowding

enhanced interrogation techniques: torture

entitlement reform: slashing benefits

involuntarily leisured: fired

zero-tasking: doing nothing"

*from **Spin-glish: the Definitive Dictionary of Deliberately Deceptive Language**
by **Christopher Cerf** and **Henry Beard***

June, 2015

Reading by Roger Lipsey, author of *Dag Hammarskjöld: A Life*



Pat Duffy, Roger Lipsey, Francis Dubois



Roger Lipsey speaks



(L to R): Susan Lin, Liz Scaffidi, Alice Harrison, Chuck Appel, Roger Lipsey, Jane Asante, Robert Johannsen, Pat Duffy, Andrea King



(L to R): Alice Harrison, Roger Lipsey, Francis Dubois



Book signing



Pat Duffy with Roger Lipsey

"Hammar skjöld knew two unlike worlds very well. The world of politics and political leaders, deception and honesty, violence and kindness, reflection and the search for solutions. And another world: a world of inwardness and prayer, of self-scrutiny and ancient wisdom, of periodic return to 'a centre of stillness surrounded by silence that nourishes, situates and restores'. In the first world he was nearly always with people. In the second, nearly always alone with his own person and his God. In both worlds he was a lifelong inquirer with initiative; it wasn't enough to pass through, contributing cautious splashes of oneself here and there. In the world at large he strove to summon the best of himself, look carefully and imaginatively, and act as wisely as possible."

*from **Dag Hammar skjöld: A Life** by **Roger Lipsey***

April, 2014
Reading by author Uwem Akpan



Giampaolo Pioli of UNCA, with
Sabina Altumbabic of LCP



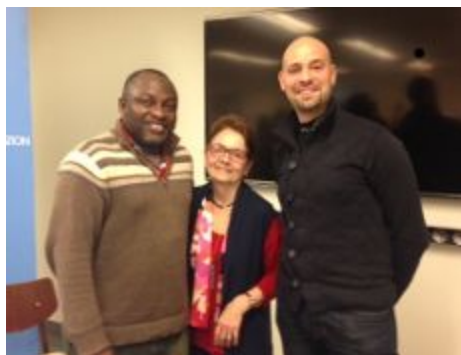
Uwem Akpan, the author



Pamela Falk of UNCA, Pat Duffy of 1% Fund



Audience Participation



Uwem Akpan, Pat Duffy, Marco Comandini



1% Fund and event volunteers

I'm nine years and seven months old. I'm home playing peekaboo in my room with my little brother, Jean. It's Saturday evening and the sun has fallen behind the hills. There's silence outside our bungalow, but from time to time the evening wind carries a shout to us." Our parents have kept us indoors since yesterday.

Maman comes into the room and turns off the light before we see her. Jean cries in the darkness, but once she starts kissing him, he begins to giggle. He reaches up to be held, but she's in a hurry.

"Don't turn on any lights tonight," she whispers to me.
I nod. "Yego, Maman."

"Come with your brother." I carry Jean and follow her. "And don't open the door for anybody. Your papa is not home, I'm not home, nobody is home. Do you hear me, Monique, huh?"

"Yego, Maman."

"Swallow all your questions now, bright daughter..."

*from "My Parents' Bedroom" from **Say You're One of Them** by **Uwem Akpan***

February, 2014
Historian and UN Scholar, Stephen Schlesinger



Pamela Falk (UNCA President), Stephen Schlesinger



Pat Duffy with the author



Stephen Schlesinger, Aug Lin, Alice Harrison,
Peter O'Connor



The Audience



Naima Charafi, Deborah Fairchild, Javier
Zanon, Pat Duffy, Stephen Schlesinger

To Eleanor Roosevelt

March 4, 1961

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I have just returned from Latin American to find your most welcome letter. I hesitated a long time before accepting President Kennedy's invitation to come to Washington, because I regard myself as essentially a scholar and a writer, and hated the thought of interrupting my work on "The Age of Roosevelt"; but in the end, I reflected that no American historian has ever been privileged to watch the unfolding of public policy from this particular vantage point, and I concluded that I could not decline. I know this experience will very much enrich my historical understanding.

The best news of all is that you have agreed to rejoin the Delegation to the U.N.!

Sincerely yours,

Arthur

*from **The Letters of Arthur Schlesinger Jr.**, edited by **Andrew Schlesinger** and **Stephen Schlesinger***

November, 2012
Reading by Pulitzer Prize winner Elizabeth Strout



Front row: Elizabeth Scaffidi, and author
Elizabeth Strout
Back row: Michael Cassandra, Francis Dubois,
Tyler Radford,
Razmee, Muriel Glasgow, Nancy Colbert, Pat
Duffy, Alice Harrison



Pat Duffy with the author



Stephen Schlesinger, Aug Lin, Alice Harrison,
Peter O'Connor

"And then as the little plane climbed higher and Olive saw spread out below them fields of bright and tender green in this morning sun, farther on the coastline, the ocean shiny and almost flat, tiny white wakes behind a few lobster boats – then Olive felt something she had not expected to feel again: a sudden greediness for life. She leaned forward, peering out the window: sweet pale clouds, the sky as blue as your hat, the new green of the fields, the broad expanse of water—seen from up here, it all appeared wondrous, amazing. She remembered what hope was, and this was it. That inner churning that moves you forward, plows you through life the way the boats below plowed the shiny water, the way the plane was plowing forward to a place new..." (pp. 202—203)

*from **Olive Kitteridge** by **Elizabeth Strout***

December, 2011
Reading and presentation of Oscar Hijuelos



Emmanuel Soyer, Head of UN Language Programme,
welcomes audience at Oscar Hijuelos reading



Pulitzer Prize winning author, Oscar Hijuelos,
signing books



Author Oscar Hijuelos and Event team member
Pat Duffy



Post-reading reception with Oscar Hijuelos with
(from L to R): Jodi Nooyen, Alice Harrison,
Marlenys Villamar, Pat Duffy



"...Even though the brothers already knew how to speak a polite if rudimentary English that they'd learned while working as busboys and waiters in the Havana chapter of the Explorers Club on old Neptuno Street ("Yes sir, no sir, please don' call me Pancho, sir) the twisted, hard consonants of the English language never fell on their ears like music. At dinner, the table piled high with steaks and chops, platanos and yucca, Cesar would talk about walking on the street and hearing a constant ruido – a noise—the whirling, garbled English language, spoken in Jewish, Irish, German, Polish, Italian, Spanish accents, complicated and unmelodic to his ear. He had a thick accent, rolled his rrrrrrr's, said "jo-jo" instead of "yo-yo", and "tink" not "think" –just like Ricky Ricardo—but got along well enough to charm the American women he met here and there, and to sit out on the fire escape in the good weather, strumming a guitar, crooning out in English "In the Still of the Night". And he could walk down the street to the liquor store and say, "One Bacardi dark please..." And then, after a time, with bravado, saying to the proprietor, "How the hell are you, my friend?"..." (p. 2)

*from **The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love** by Oscar Hijuelos*

February, 2009
International Mother Language Day Reading



Elizabeth Little

"...I love the patterns of language, the bits of grammatical code that takes a series of sounds and makes sense of them. I love new words, new sounds, new structure. But what I love best is this: each foreign language that I learn is both deeply familiar and entirely new. Every language has the same basic bits and pieces that I use every day. And every language puts those pieces together in a different – and oftentimes dazzling – way. For me, studying language is like having a never-ending supply of mind-blowing Pixies cover songs. I love the theme; I thrill to the variation." (page 23)

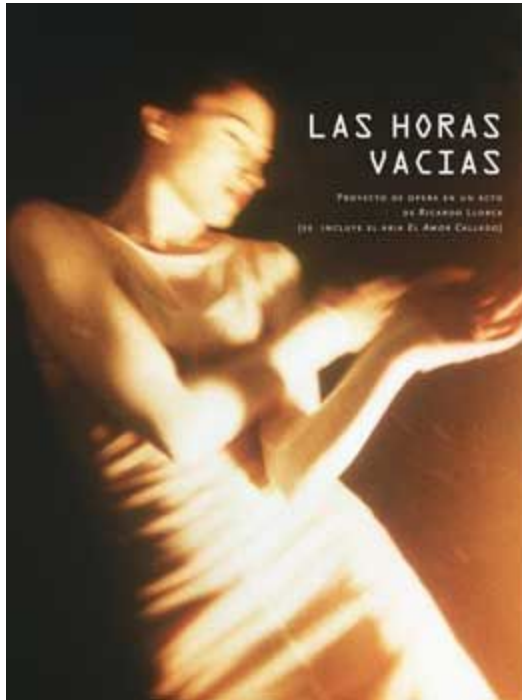
"for me, language isn't just an opportunity to flex my mental muscles. Whether I'm traveling abroad or sitting at home, language is nothing less than a great adventure. It's full of culture, history, humor. And yes, sometimes even humiliation. Language is, at its heart, about humanity – and there's nothing more human than being humbled. But even though I may misconstrue verbs or mispronounce words, the only real mistake I can make is to let the things I might get wrong keep me from finding out what's right."

Only a lucky few of us will ever have the opportunity to hop from city to city and country to country, to see all we want to see of what the world has to show. But that doesn't mean we have to miss out on all the fun. There are nearly seven thousand known living languages in the world, and each one is an odyssey of its own. Don't let fear keep you from finding out firsthand. Pick up a grammar guide, listen to a language tape, turn on a foreign film. Let go of your doubts, uncertainties, and insecurities and start exploring – there are worlds out there just waiting to be discovered.

And here's a head start: bon voyage." (p. 186)

from ***Biting the Wax Tadpole: Confessions of a Language Fanatic*** by **Elizabeth Little**

November, 2008
New York Opera Society



Volunteers for the Opera Society Event

October, 2008
Paul Aster and Cecilia Vicuna



Paul Aster signing books



Post-reading reception for Paul Aster:
Historic UNCA Club (L to R): Javier Zanon, Paul
Aster,
Mary Regan, Francoise Bouffault, Pat Duffy

"...The night is still young, and as I lie here in bed looking up into the darkness, a darkness so black that the ceiling is invisible, I begin to remember the story I started last night. That's what I do when sleep refuses to come. I lie in bed and tell myself stories. They might not add up to much, but as long as I'm inside them, they prevent me from thinking about the things I would refer to forget. Concentration can be a problem, however, and more often than not my mind eventually drifts away from the story I'm telling to the things I don't want to think about. There's nothing to be done. I fail again and again, fail more than I succeed, but that doesn't mean I don't give my best effort." (p. 2)

*from **Man in the Dark** by **Paul Aster***



Filmmaker Jonas Mekas and poet Cecilia Vicuna in UNCA Club, post-reading

"'Being' is a compound of three forms: 'to grow', 'to set in motion'
And 'yes it may be so.'
To be not an *estar*, but a way of being."

*from **Instan** by **Cecilia Vicuna***



Filmmaker Jonas Mekas celebrates the Lithuanian language