

ADULT LITERACY COMMUNITY

Quarterly articles, features, and highlights



Year of the Rabbit

New Year, Full of Possibilities

"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."~ C. S. Lewis

WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE:

Happy New Year! I hope you had time to say farewell (or get out!?!) to 2022 and that you're feeling hopeful about 2023. Inside this New Year edition you'll find writings and book reviews submitted by adult learners. We've also devoted several pages to get-to-know adult literacy staff members and long-time tutors and facilitators, along with features on: Idioms, Family Literacy, and Celebrating Tutor-Learner Work and more.

- **HIGHLIGHTS**
- **GLOSSARY**
- **INTERVIEWS**
- **IDIOMS**
- **STUDENT WRITING**
- **AND MORE!**

New Years and goals go hand-in-hand. With Learner goals at the heart of our program work, we're offering three workshop-trainings for current tutors on how to accurately report your learner's goals online. Please see page 5 for these three goals-reporting training dates (January – February) and plan to attend one.

And...for the first time in a very long time, I can say that we are looking for new volunteer tutors. Please help us by sharing our New Tutor Training dates (Pg. 3) with others who may be interested in becoming a tutor in 2023.

A. Adams

Adult Literacy Supervisor
Sonoma County Library

American Culture Corner

Groundhog Day, celebrated on February 2nd, is when a group of men pull a groundhog out of a log and if he sees his shadow, then it is believed there will be 6 more weeks of winter.

Valentine's Day is celebrated on February 14th each year. It is traditional on this day that lovers express their affection with greetings and gifts.

Who were they?

Anna May Wong is considered the first Chinese American movie star.



Anna May Wong

Born in Los Angeles in 1905, Wong's career spanned movies, television, and theater. Despite her talent, Hollywood limited the roles she could play, so Wong eventually went **abroad** to perform in Europe. She died in 1961 at age 56.

Anna May Wong continues to make history as the first Asian American featured on a U.S. quarter.



**bell hooks aka
Gloria Jean Watkins**

Gloria Jean Watkins, better known by her pen name bell hooks, was an American author and social activist. The focus of hook's writing was to explore the **intersectionality** of race, **capitalism**, and gender.

Over the course of her lifetime, hooks published over 30 books. She died in December of 2021 at the age of 69. She opted not to capitalize her name, hoping to keep public focus on her work instead.

Glossary

abroad: in or to a foreign country or countries

intersectionality: the complex way the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap or intersect in each individual's life; but especially in the experiences of individuals or groups who are marginalized based on their gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.

capitalism: an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit

omen: an event regarded as a sign of good or evil

polo: a game played on horseback where the objective is to drive a small hard ball through the opposing team's goal with a long-handled, wooden **mallet**.

mallet: a hammer with a large wooden head

ghetto: a poor area in a city occupied primarily by a minority group or groups

osmanthus: a species of plant native to eastern Asia

condominium: a building with a number of individually owned apartments

expatriate: a person who lives in a foreign country

plow: to turn and break up soil
mole (in this newsletter context): traditional sauce and marinade originally used in Mexican cuisine.

hominy: a food produced from dried maize kernels

Help Us Spread the Word - New Tutor Trainings

Do you have any family or friends who want to become a tutor in the Adult Literacy Program?

Our program has expanded to include English language instruction as well as literacy tutoring. Call us in advanced so we can answer any questions and get them registered for one of the new tutor trainings below:

**Thursday, January 12, 2023:
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM**

**Tuesday, April 18, 2023:
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM**

**Thursday, February 23, 2023:
3:00 PM - 4:30 PM**

**Monday, August 21, 2023:
3:00 PM - 4:30 PM**

Gratitude Project and Día de los Muertos Reflection

Thank you everyone who participated in the Gratitude Project as well as the Día de los Muertos ofrenda project! They were both a great success. We loved reading about what you are grateful for and learning about your loved ones who are no longer with us.

Check out these photos of our ofrenda and the fall window display we made:



2022 Día de los Muertos Ofrenda



2022 Gratitude Window Display



2022 Gratitude Window Display

Student Writing

The Feeling of Autumn

By Leslie Yang

When I see the first fallen leaf at the end of summer, I sense autumn is approaching slowly. As many leaves fall, I feel something stuck in my heart and mind. I don't know why, but this feeling comes every year at this time.

Maybe the ending of one thing and the beginning of another remind me of mortality, and they are the cause of my anxiety. Maybe I fear the change, I don't know what's ahead and feel out of control. Maybe I worry about uncertainty, I don't know how I face and adjust to it.

In such moments, I try to stop thinking and simply sense the world around me. Seeing red maple leaves, I forget to move forward. After a gust of autumn wind, sycamore leaves cover a whole street that seems like a yellow rug, and I walk on it as if I am in a drawing. Seeing orange pumpkins makes me feel happy and joyful. Whether I like the fall or not, it is here.



Sycamore leaves



Osmanthus flowers

This fall I have another feeling: nostalgia and homesickness. I'm here, but my parents are across the Pacific. I imagine this feeling transforming into an airplane ticket. It can bring me to my hometown to see the maple leaves turn to red once again in front of my living room window, sycamore leaves change to yellow on the sidewalks, and **osmanthus** is in full bloom and fragrant. I hope to see my parents. I long for my sister and friends. I am looking forward to reuniting.



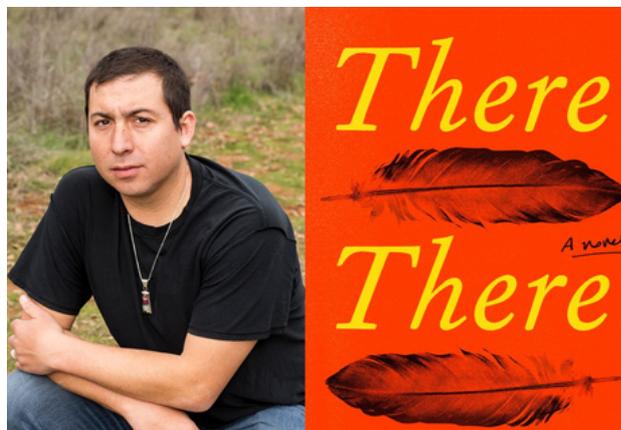
Maple leaves

Student Writing

***There There* by Tommy Orange**

Book Review by Brandon Miraflor

I would like to suggest that the book *There There* be made available to advanced readers in the Adult Literacy reading program. Tommy Orange, the author, builds on basic reading concepts and challenges readers to master adult vocabulary. Knowing this was the author's first attempt at writing a book intrigued and encouraged me. The storyline in *There There* is ingenious and presents more complex concepts than the others books I have read in the program.



Tommy Orange and the cover of *There There*

There There is tailored for knowledgeable readers who have a solid grasp of fundamental reading skills and are primed for new challenges. I tend to read quickly and have an appetite for engaging books; my vocabulary is typically broader than beginning readers. I'm hoping to encounter more books like this in the list of the library's approved reading material. I believe that reading advanced books increases my vocabulary and knowledge of how to correctly use complicated words. This type of reading helps me clearly decide what I want to say. The knowledge I gained from this book gave me a lot to talk about with others.

*The Adult Literacy program now has copies of **There, There** in our collection.*

Tutor Goals Reporting Training

Goals are the heart of our program and as the new year rolls in, we want all our learners to meet their goals. Another Goals reporting period is coming up in February, and we want to get you ready to report on all the goals your learner has met since the last report. We will be hosting Reporting Workshops with instructions, demonstrations, and Q & A about how to fill out your goals report to maximize the amount of goals met for learners.

We are strongly encouraging tutors to sign up for **one** of these three workshops. This workshop is for every tutor, even if you have done the report before. Save the date and look for an email from us with registration links for each session.

Tuesday, January 31, 2023: 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Wednesday, February 8, 2023: 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Thursday, February 16, 2023: 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Get To Know Tutor Bob Alwitt



Bob Alwitt

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a chemist when I was a kid. I was fascinated by chemistry. I ended up pretty close; I became a chemical engineer.

What was your first (or favorite) job?

When I was a college student, I had a summer job working at the General Foods factory in New Jersey in the laboratory, helping them figure out ways to make better Maxwell House instant coffee. That was my introduction to real life engineering and real life chemistry.

What is your favorite book?

I don't have any favorite books at this point. My son just gave me a copy of *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* by Ed Yong.

What is your favorite food?

Anything my wife cooks.

Bob has been a volunteer tutor with the Adult Literacy Program for almost a decade. He and his wife signed up together in 2013 and Bob has remained a dedicated tutor ever since. Bob says his motivation comes from "just wanting to make positive use of my time and reach out to people."

Bob has adapted to changes in the program over the years including the shift to online tutoring sessions after the pandemic began. He finds that there are many positives to the virtual learning environment such as flexibility and privacy. "It works very well for me and for both of my learners. In one case, she is in Petaluma and I'm in Sonoma. We wouldn't be able to be together if it wasn't online. It's so much more convenient and it saves time."

One of Bob's favorite tutoring resources is the website, [education.com](https://www.education.com). "They have good stories for reading and the questions make the student think about what they read, not just the words but what was being implied. What's the concept? What's the theme? It makes them think about these things in a deeper fashion than just learning words." Bob also finds that "Making use of the library eBook capabilities can be useful if both the teacher and the student borrow an eBook copy and go along together. It's the same as sitting shoulder to shoulder."

In order to keep adult learners motivated, Bob says it's important to "Build learning activities around the needs and interests of the student. Find out what they're doing to earn a living, what kinds of things they would like to improve on, and then build your lessons around those things." Bob recalls the time he helped his learner prepare for a resident meeting at her **condominium** complex. "She felt confident enough after we had been working for a while to stand up at the meeting and speak in English to express whatever thoughts she had in public. She was very proud of being able to do that, and I was proud of her for that."

Bob's advice to adult learners: "Take as many opportunities as you can to speak and read English in your daily activities." Bob points out Family Literacy Services, which provides free books to families to encourage reading in the home. "One of the good things about the program is that you're sending them children's books to read to their children or grandchildren and those are in English and those work well. I want to thank the program for doing that."

Get To Know the Adult Literacy Staff - Alisa Adams



Alisa Adams

Supervising Coordinator

Favorite book/What are you reading right now: I loved reading *The Swimmers* by Julie Otsuka. Her style of writing is very distinctive, and I found that reading it created a meditative mood where I could think about human nature and how we all struggle to explain and deal with things that interrupt our lives and routines. It was also about the inevitability of changes that affect us all and those that affect us on an intimately personal level. Very moving.

First job/Work experience: Medical transcriber for a local doctor's office. I learned to spell a lot of interesting words I'd never heard of before and how to look things up in a medical dictionary.

Favorite holiday food: See's Candy. The one-pound box, please!

Hobby: I love to dance, but I'm resting because my knee has been hurting me lately. I dance the Argentine Tango, and I've been loving Samba dance classes as well.

Favorite thing about working in SCL Adult Literacy: I work with kind, fun people, and we get to try to help people in our community connect so they can accomplish something they want to accomplish in their learning lives. It's Free, it's a library program, and I love hearing about how it positively impacts adult learners and volunteer tutors out in the community.

Holiday Wish/#1 thing you're looking forward to in the New Year: They say health is the greatest gift, so I'm going to wish for that now and in 2023 - Health and Understanding!



My favorite place: Mt. Tamalpais



Favorite Dance: Alisa & Alejandro striking an Argentine Tango pose



Favorite Guys: Husband Alejandro and son Django



Favorite Dog: Addie as the "Retriever of Peace" Happy Holidays!

Get To Know the Adult Literacy Staff - Christine Whyte



Christine Whyte
Literacy Associate

Favorite book/What are you reading right now: I would say my favorite book in the last year is *Cloud Cuckoo Land*, a novel by Anthony Doerr. He's had other best sellers, but this is his most recent. Doerr is a master storyteller of a tale that takes place over three centuries: past, present, and future. The story has amazing plot twists and just keeps getting better and better.

First job/Work experience: My first job was in high school working as a cashier at K-Mart. I learned early on how to deal with all kinds of people. But my first profession, and formative years career-wise, was being an editor for technology magazines in San Francisco.

Favorite holiday food: Hands down, it's pecan pie, which I don't eat at any other time of year. I find it irresistible and every pie is different.

Hobby: Throughout my adult life, I've had two passions: dancing and traveling. Currently I'm studying Flamenco dance from Spain and Samba from Brazil. As far as traveling, Europe has always been my favorite travel destination and I still have a fantasy about becoming an **expatriate** one day.

Favorite thing about working in SCL Adult Literacy: Working for the Adult Literacy program has been my favorite job ever because it's so meaningful and interesting. I really enjoy helping motivated adults change their lives in ways that help them and their families succeed at what is important to them.

Holiday Wish/#1 thing you're looking forward to in the New Year: After three years of pandemic, wildfires, elections, insurrections, and medical crises my strongest wish is for a drama-free 2023.



Georgy, my hero, the ultimate survivor



Gondola in Venice



Flamenco in Red

Get To Know the Adult Literacy Staff - Jo Ayala



Jo Ayala

Literacy Associate

Favorite book/What are you reading right now: I am currently reading *Unbound: Transgender Men and the Remaking of Identity*. I think it is fascinating to read other people’s stories of transition as I start my own journey.

First job/Work experience: My first “real” job was as a 7th grade teacher. I worked at a small public charter school in Petaluma and taught English, History, and a selection of electives like Podcasting, Sewing, and Board Game Design.

Favorite holiday food: Roasted Veggies! They have been on my mind since our oven broke Thanksgiving day. I can’t wait to enjoy those warm veggies soon!

Hobby: I love making zines! Zines, for those who don’t know, are small, handmade magazines consisting of whatever you want. I make zines about things happening in my life and enjoy using collage and the written word over it as a way of expressing myself and my ideas. When I’m not making zines, I enjoy hiking and backpacking.

Favorite thing about working in SCL Adult Literacy: I love getting to work in a quiet office all day, compared to the classroom – it’s heaven. I can’t say enough about my amazing coworkers, the tutors, and learners I get to work with on a daily basis who make this program possible.

Holiday Wish/#1 thing you’re looking forward to in the New Year: I can’t wait to celebrate 9 years of marriage with my husband, Justin.



Jo and their husband, Justin



Chamomile



Vanwa



Several



Willow

Get To Know the Adult Literacy Staff - Leti Soria



Leticia Soria
Literacy Specialist

Favorite book/What are you reading right now: I'm currently reading *Humankind: A Hopeful Story* by Rutger Bregman. I'm finding the book interesting and the author's optimistic perspective is refreshing although I'm not sure I agree with all of his points.

First job/Work experience: I used to live in a dairy farm and one of my first jobs was **plowing** a corn field! My uncle taught me how to drive the John Deere tractor and off I went to work the field on my own for a few days. It was a pretty fun and memorable experience!

Favorite holiday food: Growing up in a Mexican household, our holiday food tends to be Mexican dishes. One of my favorite dishes is **mole** with a side of red rice.

Hobby: I really enjoy cooking/baking and going for walks with my dog Toby. I like putting on my favorite playlists that I specifically make for my walks. I also really enjoy painting!

Favorite thing about working in SCL Adult Literacy: I joined the Adult Literacy team six months ago and everyone has been so kind and welcoming. I've enjoyed learning about the program and getting to know the team, tutors, and learners. I feel very lucky and appreciative!

Holiday Wish/#1 thing you're looking forward to in the New Year: I'm looking forward to the fresh feeling of a new year. It feels exciting and I hope 2023 is a good one!



Chocolate pie Leti made



Toby



Leti



A few of Leti's paintings



The cornfield Leti plowed as her first job

Student Writing

The Shadow

by Alicia Caldera

I was on the phone talking with my cousin about my sister who is in the hospital in Mexico. I was looking out the window at a flower garden when all of a sudden a black shadow swept across the window. I got a strong reaction: I got goose bumps on my body. I saw the shadow as a bad **omen** about my sister. I was thinking the worst, but my cousin said, "Don't worry, she will be fine." But that night I couldn't sleep, I was afraid I would see the shadow again. Since that day I haven't had any reaction to the omen, and my sister is getting better.



Crossing the Line by Kareem Rosser

Book Review by Janice Bowens

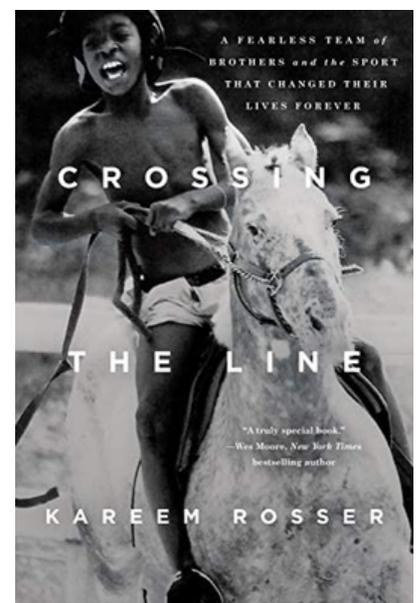
Crossing the Line by Kareem Rosser is a true story about the will to make it out of "the Bottom" in Philadelphia. Kareem, a young Black teenager, triumphs over poverty and hardships by becoming involved in the sport of **polo**. His story is an astonishing achievement. Kareem's effort and determination enable him to move out of the **ghetto**, "the Bottom."

Kareem Rosser and his three brothers accidentally discover the Work to Ride Program near their neighborhood. Work to Ride is an inner-city program that teaches poor youth the responsibility of caring for horses and, in exchange, they get to learn how to play polo. Lezlie Hiner, the Director, created the Work to Ride program because of her childhood love of horses. Besides the Rosser boys' experience on the streets of the Bottom, polo became the second most dangerous game of their lives.

Kareem shares hardships and joys as he grows up. He endures the murder of his closest friend and deals with drug abuse that challenges his family, from his grandmother to his mother. Riding became Kareem's way to freedom, his way of crossing the line -- to be the first.

The Rosser boys turn into Black cowboys from the Bottom of west Phillie. Their polo team becomes competitive and wins tournaments. This is a warm and tender story that follows Kareem and his family over several decades; it's about love and loss, friendship and family.

This book is riveting and I recommend it. The Adult Literacy Program has copies of *Crossing the Line* in its collection.



Celebrate Your Work Together

All entries generated from tutor reports -
THANK YOU!

- With the help of his tutor, Rickey registered to vote and voted for the first time. Congratulations, Rickey!
- Student put together a PowerPoint presentation of her Family Tree for her class assignment. She included an English and Chinese (bilingual) presentation of her family, complete with pictures and written words.
- My learner continues to be very eager to learn and improve his business by polishing his communications w/clients via texting/writing. He was happy to see his Thanksgiving gratitude letter in the window of the Adult Literacy offices, as he put a lot of work into writing it.
- This student continues to be an eager learner and we are both enjoying the book *The 5 People You Meet in Heaven*. This has generated a lot of discussion about American culture and things unique to American life, as well as lots of new vocabulary words including slang terms. We had a wonderful and very long discussion on the history and meaning of Thanksgiving.

Get to Know the Conversation Class Facilitators



John Jay

Interviewed by Leticia Soria

When John retired from his job managing a center for donor information for the American Red Cross, he wondered what to do next. "I just said to myself, alright John, what do you bring to the table and that's when I began to feel like speaking English was a skill that I could share." A few months later, in 2015, John found his way to the Adult Literacy Program where he became a tutor and English Conversation Class Facilitator.

As part of the rotating group of facilitators who lead the Wednesday 11:00-12:30 pm class, John wants learners to feel comfortable practicing their English conversational skills. "Some people hesitate to participate because their English isn't as good as the others. I just try to get them to

dig into their vocabulary and their experiences and talk about it like they would maybe with their neighbor or with somebody at work." One of his favorite things about being a facilitator is "when the students comment at the end, 'thank you teacher for this class', because it makes me feel like it's been a very good use of my time and that it really helped them to make progress."

John believes in "the importance of being able to speak English well in order to succeed and be happy in the U.S. We are such a single-language country that if people can't speak at least some English and be understood, they're going to have a much more difficult time." When asked if he has any advice for English language learners, John says, "Listen to as much English as possible. Whether it's listening to KQED radio, or participating in a group like this or setting aside 15 minutes at dinner to speak English with family. So speak, speak, speak and listen, listen, listen. I think that would be the best advice and keep coming to class!"

For more information about Conversation Class and how to sign up, see **Ongoing Classes Open to All** on the back page of the newsletter.

Idioms

Each newsletter, we will bring you a new English idiom.

Tongue-In-Cheek

(not serious):

Anna made a **tongue-in-cheek** remark to John and he got mad because he thought she was serious.

She was **not serious**.



Hands Down

(Easily and without much effort, without question):

My favorite holiday food is **hands-down** Pecan pie.



Family Literacy Tips

Did you know: children who can describe things and events can have conversations and "tell stories" about what is happening in books, and this helps them understand what they hear, and later, what they read. These early literacy skills are called "narrative skills."

Here's how to encourage narrative skills:

- Read books that have words or phrases that repeat. Encourage your child to say the repeated phrase with you each time.
- Re-read books so your child can become familiar with the story, making it easier to retell the story.
- Invite your child to retell the story.
- Encourage your child to tell you something from her own experience related to what happened in the book.
- Use puppets or props to tell the story to help your child remember it; have your child use props to help retell the story.



What's Cooking?

Have a favorite recipe or food related story to share? Send it to

literacy@sonomalibrary.org

My Traditions at Christmas

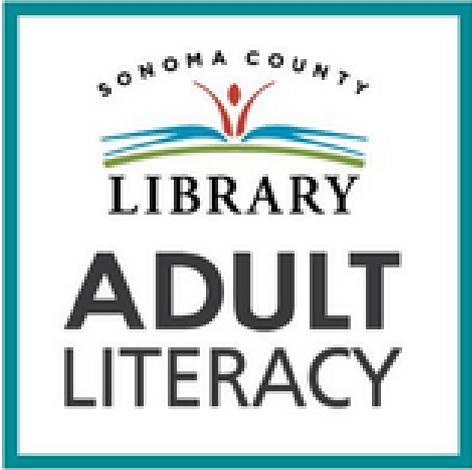
By Violeta Murillo

I am from Mexico from the state of Guanajuato. I have a memory of special foods we normally ate around Christmastime, which are: pozole and tamales.

Pozole is a soup made with **hominy**, pork, dried chili, garlic, spices and water. Tamales are made from corn flour dough, meat and chili sauce wrapped in a corn husk and then steamed.

I like all kinds of foods (Italian, Chinese, American, etc.), but I'll always still have pozole and tamales for Christmastime.

This story was originally featured in our 2017 Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy Collection: Bringing Our Stories to the Table.



Adult Literacy Office

Our office is located inside the
Central Santa Rosa Library, 2nd floor
211 E Street
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Adult Literacy Hours

Our office is open Monday - Friday
10 AM - 3 PM

You can reach us at (707) 544-2622 or
literacy@sonomalibrary.org

How to Submit Your Work

Submissions to the Adult Literacy Community newsletter are welcome! We cannot guarantee publication, and materials cannot be returned. Please include your name, address, and telephone number. Student writings and photos can be sent by email to: literacy@sonomalibrary.org

How to Get Involved as a New Tutor

Call to preregister for an upcoming new tutor orientation:

Thursday, January 12, 2023 - 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Thursday, February 23, 2023 - 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Tuesday, April 18, 2023 - 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Monday, August 21, 2023 - 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Ongoing Classes Open to All:

Join our Conversation Classes for practice speaking English at all levels. Classes take place on Zoom on the following days:

Wednesdays 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Thursdays 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Find and register for classes at

sonomalibrary.org/conversation

Upcoming Library Holidays 2023:

January 1 - Library Closed - New Year's Day

January 2 - Library Closed - New Years Day Observed

January 16 - Library Closed - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 20 - Library Closed - President's Day

March 31 - Library Closed - Cesar Chavez Day