

## FOTOFEST PRESS ALERT

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Rebecca Hernandez, Student, KIPP Shine Prep.  
Photo by Melinda Phelps

## Houston-Area Students Speak Out with Writing and Photographs

**May 12-22, 2008**  
**FotoFest Headquarters**  
**1113 Vine Street, Houston, Texas 77002**

(HOUSTON, MAY 02, 2008) – Students from 16 area-wide elementary, middle and high schools are showing their work at **FotoFence 2008**. Students' stories and photographs address experiences from their own lives, their families, communities and dreams as well as global warming, immigration, neighborhood violence, and drunk driving.

At the opening of *FotoFence 2008*, **Mother's Day, Sunday, May 11, 2008, 2-4pm** at **FotoFest Headquarters**, students will read from their writings:

*When I feel happy, I'm a rocket in the sky, by an angel. I am ice cream dancing in a disco ball...*

– Elissa Benavidez, Aldine Academy

*...My mother is my favorite hero because she's has to work so hard to gave us a better life and she's trying to give us all the things we need... she's doing everything to give us a better life. She always talks to me and my brothers. She tells us that her dream was to be a nurse. She can't realize her dream because she only attended high school and didn't go to college...*

– Alejandro Camacho, Furr High School

*FotoFence* is the year-end project of FotoFest's **Literacy Through Photography** education program, designed to help young people achieve better communication and writing skills through the stimulus of photography. *FotoFence* is an exhibit of over 400 student-created posters with photographs and written essays. Literacy Through Photography has operated in Houston-area schools since 1990, reaching over 1,500 students annually.

With the school-based work, *FotoFence 2008* is featuring winners from the **Houston Press High School Photo Contest** and a special project with Baylor School of Medicine's **Transition Medicine Clinic**. The Houston Press High School Photo Contest awards prizes to three or four students monthly. A single \$1,000 college scholarship is awarded at the end of the year to one of the monthly winners. The winner of the scholarship will be announced at the *FotoFence* May 11 event.

In 2007, **Baylor College of Medicine** and FotoFest started a pioneering program for adolescents and young adults with chronic illness and disabilities. At Baylor's Transition Medicine Clinic, the young people are using Literacy Through Photography strategies to confront their disabilities.

*I have a secret that I rarely share with anyone... Many may wonder why exactly I have kept this secret in my young adult life. The reason starts when I was in elementary school, a very good friend of mine, who lived two doors down, called me 'arthritis boy.' This made me very mad, it made me feel different, or not 'normal.' It left me in a category all by myself...*

- Eric Schneider, Baylor Transition Medicine Clinic Program

Literacy Through Photography provides specially designed lesson plans centered around *SELF, FAMILY, COMMUNITY, and DREAMS*. Photographs serve as a catalyst for writing. By writing about their own photographs and their own lives, with confidence, students increase visual and verbal literacy skills while building cognitive thinking skills, self-esteem, and community awareness.

Literacy Through Photography teacher Melinda Phelps of KIPP Shine Academy says, "Children know most about themselves and their families. They are interested in talking about these subjects. They push themselves more because the themes are close to their heart, and as a result they feel more comfortable taking risks in their writing... The photographs bring out facets of who they are and gifts they have that are not always apparent in the regular classroom."

Participating schools include exemplary charter schools, inner-city schools dealing with troubling drop-out rates, and college preparatory schools. Thirty Houston-area schools used Literacy Through Photography during the 2007-2008 school year.

2007 in-school projects include a new partnership with **Writers in the Schools (WITS)**, the Houston non-profit organization that focuses on at-risk inner city students and "*engages children in the pleasure and power of reading and writing... in order to help students develop their creative and analytical thinking skills.*" Literacy Through Photography worked with WITS at Aldine Academy, Houston.

Literacy Through Photography is part of the teaching program at the first early education and elementary charter school opened by **KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program)** in the U.S., KIPP Shine Prep in Southwest Houston. During the 2007-2008 school year, 120 students; the entire second grade class; were taught using Literacy Through Photography.

Literacy Through Photography lessons are correlated to goals set forth in national curriculum mandates of *No Child Left Behind*, the National Council of Teachers of English *Standards for the English Language Arts* and the Texas Education Agency's *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills For English Language Arts* for students in third to 12th grades.

*I am that person that will be there for you when you are down and depressed. I can make people laugh but I can also make people cry. I would like to say I am like everyone else but that would not be true. I am different...That's who I am.* - Richard Freeman, Furr High School

#### **LTP SPONSORS 2007-2008**

The Favrot Fund; The Vale Asche Foundation; The Foundation for Southeast Texas; The Simmons Foundation; The Bruni-Smothers Fund; The Powell Foundation; FotoFest Board of Directors; Houston Press; JP Morgan Chase; Intermarine L.L.C.; Under The Volcano; Hexagroup; Contributors to FotoFun2008.

#### **EDUCATION PARTNERS**

Harris County Department of Education/Cooperative for After-School Enrichment (CASE), Houston Press, Transition Medicine Clinic Baylor College of Medicine, Writers in the Schools (WITS)

## 2007-2008 LITERACY THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Aldine Academy, Houston (WITS)\*; Amigos Por Vida, Houston\*; Bailey Elementary, Pasadena; Bethune Academy, Houston; Chinquapin School, Highlands\*; Cullen Middle School, Houston\*; East Early College High School, Houston\*; Eisenhower Middle School, Wyckoff, NJ\*; Eliot Elementary, Houston; Furr High School, Houston\*; Gardens Elementary, Pasadena; Helms Elementary, Houston\*; Jefferson Elementary, Houston; The Joy School, Houston; KIPP Shine Prep, Houston\*; La Porte High School, La Porte\*; Marshall Middle School, Houston; McWhirter Elementary, Houston; Patrick Henry Middle School, Houston; Pomeroy Elementary School, Pasadena\*; Raul Yzaguirre School For Success, Houston\*; Richey Elementary, Pasadena; Roosevelt Elementary, Houston; Sam Houston High School, Houston; Sinclair Elementary, Houston\*; Southmore Intermediate, Pasadena\*; Spring Branch Elementary, Spring Branch\*; Spring Woods High School, Spring Branch\*; Transition Medicine Clinic, Baylor College of Medicine\*; Velasquez Elementary, Richmond\*, Whidby Elementary, Houston; Young Elementary, Houston.

\* FotoFence 2008 featured schools

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Raheem Babajide, Student, KIPP Shine Prep. , Photo by Melinda Phelps