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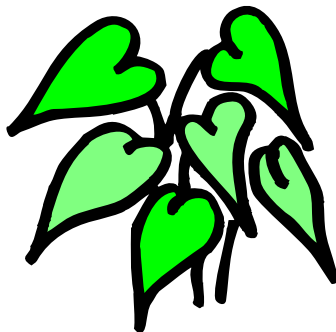


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**all write news**

## SUMMER READING BOOK REVIEWS

*[For the past several years our summer issue has presented brief reviews of an eclectic assortment of books that A.L.R.I. staff (and sometimes others) would like to recommend as good reading and as resources for adult basic education staff, and we're doing this again this year. Many of the books discussed here can be found in the A.L.R.I. library.—Ed.]*



**HARD ROAD TO FREEDOM: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**, BY JAMES OLIVER HORTON AND LOIS E. HORTON (RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2001)

This is a very readable, very comprehensive history of African-Americans in the United States. The first half chronicles the development of the “peculiar institution” of slavery up through the Civil War and presents the lives and culture of slaves in the various regions of the country. The second half deals with the hopes of Reconstruction (dashed by the onset of Jim Crow segregation and white supremacy), the evolution of African-American communities in the North and in the cities, and the on-going struggle for civil rights, up to the present day. Though much of this can be found in separate works dealing with the origins of slavery, the Revolutionary period, the abolitionist movement, the Civil War, the retrenchment of segregation, the Harlem Renaissance, and the civil rights movement, this book compiles all these topics into a complete history of African Americans in a single volume. It's a valuable educational resource that teachers in ABE, ESOL, GED, and EDP/ADP programs could certainly draw from when seeking material on this crucial aspect of U.S. history.

—Steve Reuys

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## CREATING A CLASSROOM THAT'S SAFE FOR STUDENTS WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

*by Carole Sousa and Marjorie Jacobs*

**T**his past year the authors received a mini-grant from the A.L.R.I. to create and provide staff development for their colleagues at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge on “the effects of stress and post-traumatic stress in adult basic education programs.” They assembled and created a variety of resource materials and presented a workshop to CLC staff on this topic. One of the handouts, compiled by Carole and Marjorie from their own experience as well as suggestions received from other CLC staff, described what teachers can do to help make their classrooms feel safe for students who may have undergone traumatic experiences in their lives and may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. We're reprinting these suggestions and guidelines below, along with some of the other resources they identified for those who want to look into this further. All the materials from the mini-grant can be found in the A.L.R.I. library. —Ed.]

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**Please share this newsletter with others at your program. The deadline for submitting material for the next issue is: August 15.**

## CREATING A SAFE CLASSROOM

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## TEACHER/STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Take the time to get to know each student as an individual with individual strengths and problems. Show appreciation of differences and commonalities. Treat students as equals and celebrate who they are, including their culture and ethnicity.

2. Be cheerful and encouraging, creating a loving, compassionate, accepting and non-judgmental atmosphere which fosters hope and the possibility for positive change.

3. Use playful humor to promote a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Practice patience, validation, and respect. If nurtured, the human spirit is very resilient.

4. Teacher accessibility is very important. Try to be available to students either before or after class. Also, if a teacher has information that a student has suffered from a traumatic experience, it is important, before addressing topics that

may trigger a negative response, to discuss the upcoming topic with the student outside class and give him/her the option of not participating.

5. Take care of yourself emotionally, psychologically, and physically. If you are not in good health and are under chronic stress, you will

not be functioning optimally for your students. If you are “burned out,” you cannot be there for your students. You might not be as patient, intuitive, energetic, clear, and attentive as you could be. Commit yourself to getting a yearly physical, eating well, exercising on a regular basis, sleeping well, and/or having a relaxation practice that you enjoy, such as meditation, drawing, dancing, doing crossword puzzles, knitting, baking, writing, etc.

## CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. Pleasant surroundings are important. Decorate your classroom with plants, fabric, and pictures.

2. Let students sit where they may feel most comfortable as long as they do not engage in disruptive behaviors with other students. Some students suffering from PTSD may have a strong preference to sit near the main door or close to the teacher.

3. Be aware of who is being paired up, particularly if students are from countries that have engaged in war, violence or conflicts with each other. Also, watch for levels of comfort between men and women.

4. At the beginning of a semester, the teacher and students of each class should make rules for a respectful, com-

fortable, safe learning environment. Confidentiality needs to be included and discussed so that everyone’s privacy is respected and trust among students is fostered. Students need to feel comfortable to openly tell their “stories.” These rules should be posted in the classroom, and every student should have a copy. Periodically, these rules should be reviewed, especially when new students enter.

5. Make your class as predictable and calm as possible. If you have students who react negatively to a frenetic or excitable environment, try to adjust the environment accordingly. Match their excitability with calmness. This usually results in changed behavior on the student’s part.

6. Stop any teasing or mocking behavior immediately. Establish rules around giving and receiving student-to-student feedback; for example, only positive feedback should be given, no apologies or self-sabotage, and only “thank you” to compliments.

## THE LEARNING PROCESS

1. Let students know it is okay to make mistakes. Remind them that making mistakes is part of the learning process. Affirm each and every student openly in the class and individually. This can create an atmosphere where there is an exchange of ideas among the students and between the students and teacher.

2. Participation in classroom activities should be voluntary as much as possible, although students should be strongly encouraged to join in classroom activities. You can facilitate this process by telling students it is okay to make up stories and not tell your own. Give them permission to say, “My friend...” or “My neighbor...” You can also give students permission to decline to answer specific questions by telling them it is okay to say “Pass” or “I’d rather not say.” If a student continually refuses to participate in an activity, the teacher should notify his/her counselor who will individually meet with the student and report back to the teacher.

3. In eliciting discussions and writing assignments, stick to the present as much as possible. If you are addressing events in the past, try to steer students toward happy, positive memories and/or experiences. First, ask them what things/moments were enjoyable and happy. For example, instead of asking students to “Write about your family,” ask them to “Write about your favorite family story” or “Describe the best day you ever had in your family.” In this way you can avoid tapping into past traumas.

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4. Begin your class with a game or activity that is fun to get the students involved, laughing, and feeling relaxed.

5. Encourage journal writing as an outlet for students' emotions and thoughts, especially for pain and suffering, and as a way to get feedback on your teaching. It can also improve their writing skills and help them learn to express their feelings in a safe way. In reading their journals, if you discover a student has experienced trauma or extreme stress or is depressed, whether or not it relates to a present or past experience, alert his/her counselor after getting the consent of the student.

6. Do not lead students in meditation or guided visualization unless you have received adequate training and have practiced the method yourself and feel confident. It is quite common for flashbacks or subconscious memories to occur when students who have suffered from trauma get relaxed and their minds become open, focused, and quiet.

#### FURTHER RESOURCES

Hamblen, Jessica, and Paula Schnurr. *Mental Health Aspects of Prolonged Combat Stress in Civilians*. National Center for PTSD. ([http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/disasters/fs\\_civilians.html](http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/disasters/fs_civilians.html))

Jacobs, Marjorie. *A Mind/Body/Learning Approach to Counseling*. 2002. Focus on Basics, 10/02.

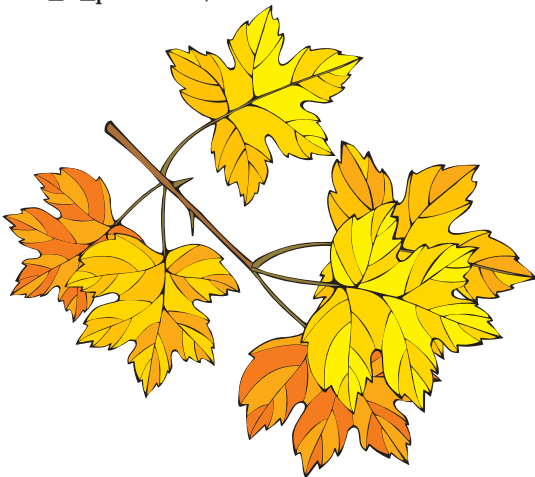
Kerka, Sandra. *Trauma and Adult Learning*. 2002. ERIC Digest #239.

*Massachusetts Domestic Violence Programs*. The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence. ([http://www.janedoe.org/safety/safety\\_dv\\_shelters.htm](http://www.janedoe.org/safety/safety_dv_shelters.htm))

*Rape of Women in a War Zone*. National Center for PTSD. ([http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/specific/fs\\_kosovo.html](http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/specific/fs_kosovo.html))

*Take on the Challenge*. The Women, Violence and Adult Education Project.

*What Is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder?* National Center for PTSD. ([http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/general/fs\\_what\\_is\\_ptsd.html](http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/general/fs_what_is_ptsd.html))



## NEWS FROM THE A.L.R.I.

#### STAFF CHANGES

As many of you already know, Katy Hartnett has resigned from her two half-time positions here at the A.L.R.I. For the past few years Katy has been serving as both our ESOL Specialist and our Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator. She has taken a new job at the Immigrant Learning Center in Malden, and for a while she had thought she would try to continue in her role here as ESOL Specialist, but she decided that time was not going to allow that, so she has taken off both of her A.L.R.I. hats. We're very sorry to be losing someone with her teaching and training experience, knowledge, and skills. We want to thank her for her work here and to wish her well in the future!

#### WEB SITE ON IMMIGRATION FOR ESOL LEARNERS

Rebecca Pomerantz, a teacher at the International Institute of Boston, received a mini-grant this past year from the A.L.R.I. to create a website on immigrants in Boston for low-literacy ESOL learners. This website can be found at <http://www.alri.org/lrc/immigration> and is a great resource for ESOL teachers and students. The first part of the website contains sections entitled "Famous People," "How Do Immigrants Come?" "Who Are They," "Songs About Immigration," "Numbers of Immigrants," and "More Immigration Stories." The second part focuses in on specific immigrant groups prominent in Boston. The website is full of pictures, information, maps, music, and more, so, if you're a teacher who's working with low-literate ESOL students, you might want to check out this new resource.

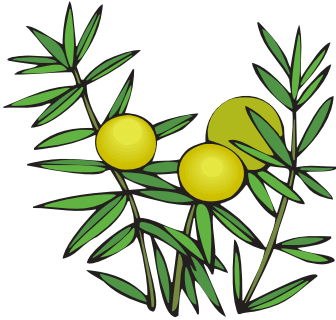
The *All Write News* is published every two months by the Adult Literacy Resource Institute/SABES Greater Boston Regional Support Center, which is primarily funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education, the Boston BRA/EDIC/ Jobs and Community Services Department. All signed articles represent the opinions of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the A.L.R.I. or its staff, nor does material included here necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Massachusetts Department of Education or the federal government.

Please send all material for the newsletter to the editor, Steve Reuys, at the A.L.R.I. (E-mail address: [steve@alri.org](mailto:steve@alri.org); regular mail address: see last page of this issue. If sending by regular mail, please include, if possible, a computer disk (Mac or PC) with material saved as a "text only" document.) For more information or for permission to reprint articles, please call Steve at 617-782-8956 x14. Complete issues of this newsletter published since March, 1998, can be found in PDF format in the "Publications" section of our web page at: <http://www.alri.org>.

## SUMMER BOOKS

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**PORTRAIT IN SEPIA**, BY ISABEL ALLENDE (HARPERCOLLINS, 2001)



Recently I found tucked away in old papers a duplicated copy of Isabel Allende's *La Casa de los Espiritos/House of the Spirits*. Because at one time the book was unavailable in this country and sold out in most others, it had been carefully copied from the

original in Spanish and brought over by a friend from Puerto Rico. There it was all the rage, especially in feminist and leftist circles. Finally, a Latina tale written with the passion and boldness of a Gabriel Garcia Marquez by the niece of another hero, the murdered Socialist President of Chile, Salvador Allende. I remember reading it and liking the story, but secretly being disappointed because Isabel Allende seemed to be copying the style of Garcia Marquez, the master of Latin American magical realism.

Many years later and after reading many more books by writers who try to write magical realism (what I call "realismo magico run amok") I have come to appreciate Isabel Allende. She is a good storyteller with a flair for words and she writes about women's lives with insight and honesty. Allende is also now a much better writer than she was in 1984, when *House of the Spirits* was first published. Or perhaps more accurately, she is an uneven writer—sometimes spinning tales that are pure fiction candy and, at other times, tiring us with rapid fire details that mask a lack of depth. *Portrait in Sepia* is more of the latter. Reading it I felt like I was watching one of those fast-moving early films before they figured out the technology to slow them down. There are a lot of details and happenings in this story, which is not unusual in an Allende novel, but in this one many of the details seem there just to fill the page—at least until the end, when the voice of the protagonist, who is telling us her life, catches up to the present. Then, her "voice" gets stronger, Allende slows down the sequence of events, and we get a better sense of who Aurora has become.

Aurora del Valle (literally Dawn of the Valley), the voice in *Portrait in Sepia*, is the granddaughter of Eliza Sommers, the main character of Allende's previous novel, *Daughter of Fortune*. A swashbuckling kind of novel, *Daughter of Fortune* spins a delicious tale that starts in Chile when Eliza is left abandoned on the door of an accidental English missionary and his sister, a spinster who secretly writes pornographic novels. Eliza grows up and eventually stows away in a ship to California, pregnant and in search of her lover, who had been stricken by the fever of the Gold Rush of 1848. In her search, Eliza passes as a man roaming the wild

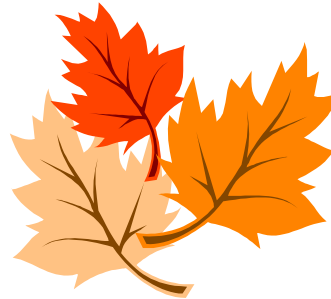
and woolly gold mining camps, and eventually marries the Chinese doctor who saved her life during the voyage from Chile to California.

After *Daughter of Fortune*, the reader is left wanting more of Eliza Sommers, but in *Portrait in Sepia* we get broad-strokes details instead. Eliza has turned into a respectable matron who bakes fancy pastries for the wealthy of San Francisco, and it is in her pastry shop that she meets Paulina del Valle, the voracious matriarch of a rich Chilean-American family. We had already met her in *Daughter of Fortune*, where she is depicted as a ruthless glutton, not just for cream-filled pastries but in all business and family dealings. Paulina is not a very sympathetic character, and we are dismayed when Eliza gives her Aurora to bring up. Aurora is the product of Eliza's only daughter and one of Paulina's sons, a decadent and spoiled rich boy. Tragedy had struck and Eliza couldn't take care of Aurora any longer, which is how our protagonist ends up being raised in Chile.

It is to Chile that Paulina returns with Aurora, triumphant and rich after many years in California. In typical Allende fashion, the country's political turmoil towards the turn of the century is woven into the novel. But the details, fast and furious as they are told, still seem flat and uninteresting, and I simply flipped the pages to avoid them. All in all, *Daughter of Fortune* is a much better read, and it is best to take *Portrait in Sepia* out of the library to flip through the pages and catch up with some of the favorite characters from the first book.

—*Maria E. Gonzalez*

**NICKLE AND DIMED: ON (NOT) GETTING BY IN AMERICA**, BY BARBARA EHRENREICH (METROPOLITAN BOOKS, 2001)



What's it like for women coming off of welfare and others in the overcrowded ranks of the poor to try to survive as minimum-wage workers in this country? Writer Barbara Ehrenreich decided to try

to answer this question first-hand by attempting to do it herself. She worked as a waitress in Florida, a home cleaning "maid" and a nursing home assistant in Portland, Maine, and a Wal-Mart functionary near Minneapolis, each for a month at a time. In each case she tried to put a roof over her head and food in her stomach and to meet other necessities on the income of a minimum-wage earner. She entered this challenge with a number of significant advantages: good health, a car, no children to feed and care for. (Not to mention the psychological benefit of knowing that her condition was temporary.) And yet, she found supporting herself in the minimum wage economy to be almost impossible, with the lack of affordable housing being the primary diffi-

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## SUMMER BOOKS

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culty. (Being childless for this experience, Ehrenreich didn't have to confront the other major difficulty for women coming off TANF—coping with the needs of their kids while still managing to hold down a job.)

Ehrenreich's approach was to explore the lives of the working poor, not through statistics, qualitative studies, or interviews, but rather by attempting to live the life herself, if only for rather brief periods of time. The advantage is that we get Ehrenreich's witty and perceptive voice communicating the experience to us. The disadvantage is that it is still a transitory, outsider's view, rather than that of someone for whom this is real life. All in all, just living the daily life—on paper—of someone struggling to manage on minimum wage makes a fascinating and compelling story.

—Steve Reuys



#### BOOKS ON GARDENING AND OTHER SCIENCE THEMES

In late May I dug up some of my perennials and brought them to the Spring Perennial Divide at the City Natives Nursery in Mattapan. The nursery is part of the Boston Area Natural Network, and information on urban and community gardening can be found at their website

(<http://www.bostonnatural.org/home.php>). The Perennial Divide is a friendly, energizing morning, with people from around the area sharing, talking and learning from each other.

Paul Fleischman has written a book called *Seedfolks* that reflects the commitments and connections of a neighborhood garden. Thirteen people in a Cleveland neighborhood begin to grow small gardens in a trash-filled lot. Each chapter of the book is an individual's story of coping with her/his life and of finding a place in the garden. The book is classified as a children's book but most of the characters in the book are adults. Many are immigrants and one is a young woman in a GED program. Over the spring and summer, neighbors plant their seeds. Their determined individual work leads to conversations, cooperative activities, and respect for each other. The harvest is more than tomatoes, pumpkins, swiss chard, and beans.

Here are some other books with gardening themes and information that can be found in the A.L.R.I./Boston SABES library:

Burns, Marilyn. *This Book is About Time*. (Brown Paper School Book) Little, Brown and Co. 1978. (QB 209.5

.B87) Chapter 7: Nature's Amazing Clocks. Certain flowers have a reliable rhythm for opening and closing. For example, bindweed, a wild vine similar to the morning glory, closes at 4 pm and the African marigold opens at 7 am. Carl Linneus, a Swedish naturalist, designed a flower clock illustrating this pattern.

*The DK Nature Encyclopedia*. DK Publishing Inc. (QH 48 .D56 1998) Includes sections on Ecology, How Living Things Are Classified, and Plants. Excellent pictures and charts.

Derwing, Tracy M. and Judy Cameron. *The Environment and You: An Interactive Approach to Literacy and ESL*. Detslig Enterprises. 1991. (New) Unit 10: In the Garden. Readings and activities about compost.

Echaore-Yoon, Susan. *Agriculture*. (Read to Work) Cambridge Adult Education. 1997. (New) Reading lessons with information on jobs in farming, horticulture, animal care and gardening.

Fleischman, Paul. *Seedfolks*. Harper Collins. 1997. (New) Also available in the Children's Room of the Boston Public Library (J FIC Fleischman).

Lockhart, Gary. *The Weather Companion: An Album of Meteorological History, Science, Legend and Folklore*. Wiley Science editions. (QC 870 .L63 1988)

*Meteorology*. (Project Earth Science) National Science Teachers Association. (QC 869.3 .S65 1996) Activities to help understand why it is still raining. Also readings and poetry, such as:

Let the rain kiss you.  
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops.  
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.  
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.  
The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof at night.

And I love the rain.

—Langston Hughes

And here are some non-garden science library resources:

*The DK Science Encyclopedia*. DK Publishing. Inc. (Q121 .D67 1997)

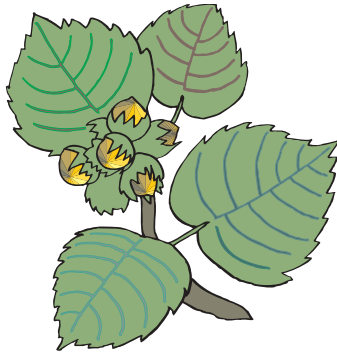
Chancer, Joni and Gina Rester-Zodrow. *Moon Journals: Writing, Art, and Inquiry Through Focused Nature Study*. Heinemann. (QB 582 .C48 1997)

Gomez, Stephen, Heather McKay, Abigail Tom and Kathleen White. *Eureka: Science Demonstration for ESL Classes*. Addison-Wesley 1995. (New)

Strohmaier, Rose. *Science Within Reach—A Manual for Teaching and Learning Science in Adult Literacy Programs*. Kingston Literacy. 1998. (New)

—Sandra Darling  
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## SUMMER BOOKS



*People's History of the American Revolution* and it ably lives up to its intentions, presenting the Revolution through the eyes and words, not of the usually-seen political and military leaders, but of the common people who lived through those times. With chapters on the protesters who preceded the start of the war, the soldiers who fought in it, the various loyalists and pacifists, women, Native Americans, and African-Americans, it looks at the Revolution from the perspective of individuals usually denied their say in the construction of history. Including these voices is, of course, often difficult to do, for the words that would tell us, years later, what these people thought and felt—the original source material on which historians depend—may not be so easy to obtain. After all, many were illiterate and unable to write at all, while the words of those who could write were seldom preserved for posterity. Nevertheless, Raphael has assembled an impressive amount of this original source material uncovered by historians and quotes liberally from these letters, diaries, memoirs, and other documents.

One of the most interesting aspects of the books is its revelations on why not all of those who opposed the rebels were Tories acting out of allegiance to Britain and the king. Economic and social issues played out in complex ways, as did the old adage that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Class issues surfaced as some groups of poor whites (such as tenant farmers) saw the conflict as an opportunity to fight against the upper-class patriots whom they saw as oppressing them for decades. Various ethnic and religious minorities were more concerned about their future under a “majority rules” American government than under a continuation of British control. Most African American slaves, of course, saw no reason to fight for the freedom of their hypocritical masters, and many escaped to and signed up with the British forces. And most Native Americans saw the ever-expanding colonists as their primary enemy and, with some exceptions, allied themselves with the British in this conflict.

—Steve Reuys

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**A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**, BY RAY RAPHAEL (THE NEW PRESS, 2001)

The New Press has embarked on a new series of “people’s histories,” inspired by Howard Zinn’s popular *People’s History of the United States* and with Zinn himself serving as the series editor. The first volume to appear is this



**JEFFERSON'S PILLOW: THE FOUNDING FATHERS AND THE DILEMMA OF BLACK PATRIOTISM**, BY ROGER WILKINS (BEACON PRESS, 2001)

In his short but very readable and engaging book, well-known author Roger Wilkins wrestles publicly with two fundamental questions: How can he explain or justify his patriotism and that of millions of other Black Americans who, in looking at the history of this country,

confront hundreds of years of slavery and the racism that still infests our national consciousness? And, how can we reconcile the greatness of our country’s founders in promoting concepts of liberty and equality (Wilkins focuses specifically on Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and George Mason, the prime force behind the Bill of Rights) with their status as slave-owners who denied this freedom to African Americans in the country and the government they created, taking no steps in the direction of eliminating slavery and indeed carving the institution into the Constitution they constructed? The second question confounds and yet simultaneously answers the first. For, as much as Wilkins is angered and anguished by this country’s history of slavery—he himself traces his ancestry back to slaves—he celebrates the opportunities, the freedom we have to work to correct the country’s flaws. And that freedom exists largely as a result of the founders’ vision and commitment to creating a democratic republic. For Wilkins, this is the true contemporary meaning of freedom, not market capitalism or uncaring individualism or unthinking nationalism, *but the freedom to make things better.*

Overall, Wilkins’ purpose is to neither excuse nor condemn but to attempt to explain the blindness of the Founders who ignored the contradictions inherent in their struggling for liberty for some while perpetuating slavery for others. He shows how they were born into a system of white privilege that relied on the labor of slaves (symbolized by the title image of Jefferson’s pillow, on which the future president was carried as a child by slaves) and into an ideology of racism that proclaimed blacks to be less than human and therefore not deserving of the freedom sought for “all men.” They inherited this system and these beliefs, yet, in refusing to challenge them, showed none of the courage and conviction they displayed in opposing colonialism and monarchy and waging a war for independence.

—Steve Reuys

*Sandra Darling is the Librarian, Maria E. Gonzalez is SABES Coordinator, and Steve Reuys is Staff Development Coordinator at the A.L.R.I.*

## SIGN UP NOW FOR THE NEW ABE BOSTON E-MAIL LIST!



For the past few years the A.L.R.I. has maintained an e-mail list containing the addresses of several hundred adult basic education practitioners in the Boston area, which we have used (very sparingly) to communicate urgent news to the field. However, this list was of limited utility, since it only allowed *us* to send messages to *you*, and was time-consuming to maintain in its current form.

So we've decided to phase out the old list and in its place to set up a new and different sort of list—an e-mail list server through which anyone on the list can communicate with all others on the list. We think this will be a useful step in promoting communication among everyone in our field in this region and will further promote the use of e-mail as an efficient way of distributing important information.

The list will allow the A.L.R.I./SABES to continue to send out announcements to the field, and it will also allow ABE practitioners and programs in the Boston region to get information out to one another about events, job postings, and other items relevant to practitioners in this area. (Please note that this is NOT intended to serve as a discussion list. Also, to ensure that the list is being used for the proper purposes and in an effort to minimize spam, the list will be moderated and all posts will be subject to administrator approval.)

We invite all those involved in the ABE field in the Greater Boston region to sign up now. To join this list, go to <http://lists.literacytent.org/mailman/listinfo/abeboston>.



## **CALL BEFORE YOU COME IN!**

Summer brings vacations and reduced staffing, so if you're planning on coming in to the A.L.R.I. during July and August, it's a good idea to call ahead to make sure we will be open and the person you're hoping to see will be in. Also, this summer we expect our building to be closing at 5:00pm on most days, as it has in previous years. In particular, the A.L.R.I. library will not be open during its regular evening hours on Tuesdays during these two months.

Have a great summer!

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