



New Program on Race and Social Justice at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School

This fall we launched a new program at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School, focused on philosophical issues of social inequality in general and racial inequality in particular. Thurgood Marshall is an interesting and unique school. The school has a General Education program, which serves neighborhood students who are almost entirely students of color, with about 70% qualifying for free and reduced price lunches, and is also one of the Seattle’s hosts of the “Highly Capable Cohort (HCC),” which serves students who are mostly white and Asian, largely from middle to upper income families.

The school’s General Education and HCC programs have in the past been almost completely separate, and the school has for the past couple of years been working on ways to ensure that all the children have access to a rigorous and enriching education. Connecting the community and giving the students in the two programs experiences working together is one of the school’s goals.

As part of that effort, four of us from the Center – Karen Emmerman, Dustin Groshong, Jana Mohr Lone, and David Shapiro – are leading philosophy discussions all year for all fifth grade students, approximately 125 children, in groups that are a mix of students from the General Education and HCC programs, with a focus on social justice and race issues. Also involved are College of Education researchers Bridget DuRuz, David Phelps, and Debi Talukdar, who are audio-taping the sessions and taking field notes in order to evaluate, among other things, which students are speaking, which students’ speech elicits uptake from other students, and the level of inquiry taking place.

As part of the program, we are also facilitating a monthly philosophy Professional Learning Community (PLC) with all of Thurgood Marshall’s fifth grade teachers. At our first session in October, we discussed strategies for responding to students who come to school with negative ideas about particular groups of people, ways to encourage questioning and discussion rather than providing answers, and how to discern each child’s interests and goals.

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From the Director

Jana Mohr Lone

This school year has opened for the Center with several exciting new programs and events! We began the fall with two events aimed at educating family and community members about the benefits of encouraging children's philosophical exploration.



In late September, I spent the day on San Juan Island, teaching philosophy demonstration classes in the elementary school and working with district teachers, and giving a public lecture in the evening to parents and family members, teachers, administrators, and other community members on "Raising A Philosophical Child." This event was part of our continuing partnership with the San Juan Island School District and their efforts to bring philosophy into their schools, following a series of workshops and demonstration classes taught by Karen Emmerman last winter.

In early October, the Center, with the support of UW's Central Development Office, held an event for a packed group of parents and children about ways to engage in philosophical conversations with children. The event was held at [Post Alley Café](#) in the U-District, and a big thank you to owner (and Philosophy Department Advisory Board member) Marcia Evans, for contributing the space as well as the coffee and delicious appetizers. We hope to host another similar event in the spring.

We are also pleased to announce that our website has been redesigned and now features more easily-accessible information about our work, as well as additional and downloadable [lesson plans](#), including more than [110 sets of discussion questions for philosophy through children's literature](#). Thanks so much to Kate Goldyn, our Outreach Coordinator, for all of her hard work on this project, and to our web developer Dave Ventresca from [Web Garden Consulting](#) – we highly recommend Dave!

Other coming events of note include a presentation about pre-college philosophy to all 60 Teacher Candidates in the Elementary Education Teacher Program at the UW College of Education later this month, our upcoming fourth annual High School Ethics Bowl in February, and, for the second year in a row, a visit from students at Colegio Newland Campus Juriquilla in Queretaro, Mexico – a dozen 6th and 7th grade students will be visiting the Center and participating in some of our K-12 classes in April.

Focus on the Classroom

Karen Emmerman, *Philosopher-in-Residence at John Muir Elementary*

The plurality of themes that can be found in a single picture book is always striking. *A Boy and A Jaguar* by Alan Rabinowitz (illustrated by Cátia Chen) offers a chance to think about childhood, difference, animals, home, what it means to feel alive, and issues of neocolonialism, all within the same story.

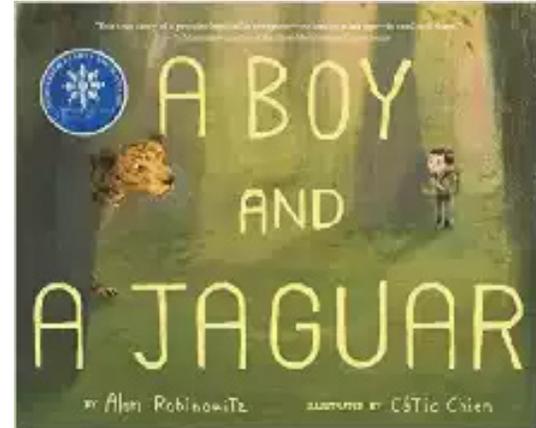
The eponymous boy in *A Boy and A Jaguar* is a stutterer. He finds that the only times he can speak without stuttering are when he sings to himself or speaks with animals. He avoids people and relishes

his relationships with the non-humans in his life, particularly the jaguar at the Bronx Zoo. Disturbed by her captivity, he promises that if he can ever find his own voice, he will speak up for animals and keep them from harm. The boy grows up, learns to speak without stuttering, and becomes a strong advocate for jaguars and other wildlife.

Children are always interested in talking about animals, so this book is the perfect catalyst for thinking with them about animal captivity, animal exploitation, whether animals in fact need humans to speak for them, and why animals' needs are invisible to so many people (as the boy notes in the story). In a second grade class, students drew pictures of captive animals and then reflected about what those animals would say if they could communicate with humans. In other classes, students talked about children's voices and animals' voices and children's experiences of being silenced or ignored.

One could easily use the book on multiple days to explore the myriad questions it raises. For example, the boy feels he is "broken" because of his stuttering. Can people really be broken? Why do we sometimes feel broken? Are we "broken" if we are different from how people expect us to be? At one point in the book, the boy (now a young man) says he feels at home in the jungle and more alive than ever when he is there. Can a person feel at home when alone in the forest with bears? What does it mean to feel alive? Are there times when you feel more alive than others?

(continued on page 3)



Focus on The Classroom (continued)

This book could easily be used in high school and college-level philosophy courses as well. The questions already discussed would be entirely appropriate for older students, but the book also raises interesting issues regarding race and neocolonialism. One of the great dilemmas in animal and environmental ethics is what role privileged white people from affluent nations have in telling less affluent countries what they should do to conserve their local wildlife. In the book, the boy has grown up and he sits with the Prime Minister of Belize to advocate for jaguar conservation programs there. The image is striking: a white man lecturing to a panel of men of color about conservation. For older students, this part of the book poignantly raises questions about race, privilege, and the role people in privileged countries should or should not play in the conservation affairs of the less privileged countries of the world.

Philosophers in the Schools



This fall our [Philosophers in the Schools program](#) involves over 25 philosophy classes in Seattle public school classrooms in six elementary schools and two middle schools, as

well as three philosophy classes (for students in grades 2-3, 4-5, and 6-8) in the [UW's Robinson Center Saturday Program](#), led by faculty, graduate students, and volunteers involved in this effort, as well as a number of undergraduate students enrolled in our fall UW classes. We are also grateful for the continued support for this program from the [UW's Pipeline Project](#).

We are in the fourth year of our philosopher-in-residence program at [John Muir Elementary School](#), and very fortunate to have Karen Emmerman (Ph.D. philosophy, 2012) continuing to serve in this role. We greatly appreciate the support of the [Squire Family Foundation](#), which has funded this position for the past four years.

Philosophical Silliness in Kindergarten Philosophy: What Makes a Book, a Book?

Sara Goering, UW Center for Philosophy for Children Program Director

In late spring 2016, my children and I discovered the book *The Book with No Pictures* (by BJ Novak, famous for his role in the TV show *The Office*). It's a funny book that, in its own phrasing, "probably seems *boring and serious*" given its lack of pictures, but turns out to be hilarious. In the early pages, the author explains to the wary child listener: "Here is how books work: Everything the words say, the person reading the book has to say." The book is then filled with ridiculous sentences and sounds, including things like "I am a monkey who taught myself to read" and "My head is made of blueberry pizza," interspersed with small words representing the reader, insisting that it isn't *true*, and begging to be allowed to stop reading. The first ten or so read-alouds of the book left my children in stitches, with tears of hilarity rolling down their faces as they gasped for breath.

Nearing the end of my year with a Kindergarten philosophy class at John Muir School, I decided it was time to make space for something both philosophical and silly. In the next session, we started with a question: *What makes a book, a book?* As experienced Kindergarten philosophers, they had quite a bit to say. They offered various possible answers: paper with words on it, a story, pictures, a cover, an author made it, etc. As they pondered, they raised possibilities to explore the limits of their definitions. Is a book still a book if it was torn in half? Would the answer depend on whether you could still *read* the story in it? They demonstrated their philosophical skills of analysis, as they contemplated how a thing comes into and goes out of existence, and how we might define the concept "book."

Then I showed them the beautiful book *The Lion and the Mouse* (by Jerry Pinkney), a picture book with no words in it. They granted that it was a book, even with no words, but they were divided on whether it had a story in it. Some kids were certain the pictures *told* the story. Others thought that we could each interpret the story differently, based on how

we understood the pictures, so there wasn't really a story but many stories. Still others thought there wasn't a story at all without words. They struggled to reconcile their initial definitions of "book" with this outlier.

After a brief discussion of *The Lion and the Mouse*, I then read them *The Book with No Pictures*. They laughed, of course, and could see where this discussion was going. I asked them if *this* item was indeed a book, given their previous insights about collections of words, stories and pictures. They were sure it was a book, and a very fun one at that, but they noted that it didn't actually have much of a story in it (despite all the words). This led to conversation about what makes a collection of words a story, and also why we read books (for fun, to learn things, etc.). They pondered how we make pictures in our minds when we read non-picture books (and if we all have different pictures in our minds even with the same story). Eventually, they wanted to consider what makes a book a *good* book? They were thinking critically together about reading, and why we do it, touching on a variety of issues in metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics, and developing their thinking together. This little book club did it all with a unique combination of glee and perplexity.

As I started to wrap up the session, we ended up with one last question. Why is the idea of a hippo named Boo Boo Butt (from *The Book with No Pictures*) so *funny*? I couldn't read that page aloud without the whole group *screeching* with laughter. We noted that a hippo name Boo Boo Elbow or Boo Boo Arm would not evoke such delight. One child suggested: "Butts are kind of not a thing we talk about, so saying it out loud is really funny." Indeed!

We ran out of time, but I could already hear other kids exploring that claim, and thinking about similarly described words that are NOT funny. Philosophy for children helps young people reflect on their own experience, contemplate their beliefs and reasons, and even investigate their senses of humor. They may not have heard Socrates' famous line, "The unexamined life is not worth living," but they know the delight and satisfaction that comes from examining it together.

Graduate Student Fellows

This year the Center has three graduate fellows – two from the College of Education and one from the Department of Philosophy. We are very grateful to alum Dan Gerler (BA, Philosophy and Psychology, 1983) for his generous gift supporting the fellowship program!



Bridget DuRuz is a Ph.D. student in the Education Department at the University of Washington where she is also a coach for Teacher Candidates. She has degrees in Philosophy and Curriculum Design, and comes from a teaching career in gifted education K-8 and as a specialist in both math and music. Her research interests center around creativity and equity, and bridging the role of Philosophy for Children and methods in Teacher Training. She leads P4C sessions for Kindergarten, 1st grade and 5th grade. She attributes being a third generation native Seattleite - exposed to the pioneer and entrepreneurial spirit of the Pacific Northwest - to her appreciation of creativity and ingenuity and to her curious nature of all things connected.



Darcy McCusker is a third year graduate student in the philosophy department. Her work in the philosophy department focuses on feminist philosophy of science. Before starting at UW, she taught high school math for three years. She has a Masters in education from St John's University. She has worked with Johns Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth summer programs teaching philosophy, and is looking forward to being involved in philosophy for children with Seattle public schools.



David Phelps is a graduate student in the Learning Sciences program at the University of Washington. He has explored young children's love of learning in a variety of settings—a Reggio Emilia school in Vermont, a school for underprivileged children in Peru, a care farm for youth in the Netherlands, a philosophy for children program along the Ohio River, and an afterschool Mancala club in Seattle. He enjoys designing and playtesting imaginative games and simulations for young children.

High School Ethics Bowl

We are excited to announce the [2017 Washington State High School Ethics Bowl](#), which will be held on February 4, 2017, at the University of Washington School of Law. The Ethics Bowl is a collaborative yet competitive event in which teams analyze a series of wide-ranging ethical dilemmas. Last year over 100 high school students and teachers and 40 judges, lawyers, UW faculty and other educators participated.

Unlike debate, Ethics Bowls do not involve teams forced to take adversarial positions or hold fast to assigned perspectives. Instead, students have a forum in which to engage in dialogue, and they are judged on the quality of their analysis – how well they reason through the issues, organize and present arguments, analyze a case's morally relevant features, and respond to commentary and questions – and the degree to which they engage in a thoughtful, civil exchange.

This national competition has grown rapidly in recent years, and the winner of the Washington State High School Ethics Bowl will advance to the National High School Ethics Bowl, which will be held in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in April 2017. In addition, the four trophy-winning teams will participate in a "Day in Olympia," which will include private tours of the Washington State Supreme Court (and attendance at an oral argument session), Capitol Building, and the Governor's Mansion), and a lunch reception with Supreme Court justices.

We invite Washington high schools to participate in this year's Ethics Bowl. High schools can have up to two teams, and each team typically includes three to five students and a coach (ideally a high school teacher). A UW graduate or undergraduate philosophy student is assigned to each interested registered school as a resource to help the team prepare for the competition. More information is available on our [website](#).



For Parents

Leta Goldberg

Children are Wondering....

About all kinds of philosophical questions and especially the myriad of issues raised by children's stories. On October 6, I attended an event that the Center held for parents, family members, children, UW students, and community members, about children's philosophical thinking. Jana Mohr Lone, Center Director, opened the event, speaking to the crowded room about the importance of encouraging children to "ask questions" and participate in philosophical inquiry and describing the success of the Philosophers in the Schools Program. The event was held at the [Post Alley Café](#), which is owned and operated by Marcia Evans, a UW philosophy alum and member of the Department of Philosophy Advisory Board.

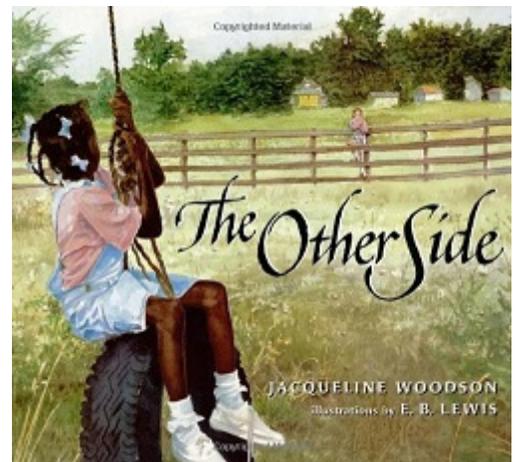


Sara Goering, the Center's Program Director, then read to the group the picture book [The Other Side](#) by Jacqueline Woodson. The story is narrated by Clover, who lives in a house on one side of a fence that separates the black townspeople from the whites in the town. Clover's mother tells her not to climb over the fence, because it isn't safe. That summer Annie, a white girl Clover's age, begins sitting on the fence each day, by herself. The story involves the girls' developing friendship.

The group then broke up into small groups of 6-8, including adults and children, to consider the following questions:

- Was it safer for Annie to climb over to Clover's side of the fence than for Clover to climb over to Annie's side? Why?
- Were Clover and Annie friends? What makes them friends, or not?
- Does race define a person? Is it an important part of our identity?
- What does the fence represent?
- Are there many kinds of fences?

The questions facilitated many animated conversations, facilitated by Center staff, including Karen Emmerman and David Shapiro. In the group of which I was a part, the young boy in our group contributed facets to our discussion that the adults hadn't considered. It was inspiring, when we all came back together to talk about the experience, to observe how much the children had added to the various group exchanges.



Our biases often lead people to think that philosophy is an academically challenging and difficult subject, one that is unlikely to interest children. Yet the event demonstrated to me that children are excited about philosophy, and aroused my own curiosity regarding education and the various paths possible. I am a writer and am now working to create children's stories that can inspire philosophical thinking and questioning.

Supporting the Center

Philosophy in schools makes space for children and youth to explore together some of the foundational questions in life that matter most to them. Students often observe that this is one of the few places in school that they feel empowered to ask their own questions and seek their own answers, building their confidence in their own perspectives and ideas.

We need your help!

The Center's work is largely made possible through individual donations. Gifts from donors help fund our Philosophers in the Schools program, the Philosophy for Children graduate fellowships, the High School Ethics Bowl, our parent programs, and our annual workshop for teachers.

We are working to build our capacity to keep philosophy in the schools continuing and growing! Resources are needed to provide more support and education for teachers and reach more young people eager for engagement with essential questions and sustained inquiry.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Center Today!

You can donate online [here](#).

You can also send a check to the Center for Philosophy for Children, mailed to:

UW Center for Philosophy for Children
University of Washington, Box 353350
Seattle, WA 98195

Your gifts make all the difference - thank you very much!

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Thank you to our board of directors for all of their support!

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