

UMASS/BOSTON

INSIDE THIS  
ISSUE:

- Conse- 2  
quence  
Magazine
- MFA/BPL 3  
partner to  
pilot writing-  
workshops  
for kids
- Kris goes to 3  
Kenya!
- Temporary 3  
Press  
publishes  
Another Book
- Student 4  
updates

# MFA Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

SPRING 2009

## AWP Conference, Chicago 2009

By Angela Voras-Hills

### AWP Conference, Chicago 2009

On the plane to Chicago, the guy next to me asked where I was headed. When I told him I was on my way to a writer's conference in Chicago, he asked, "Oh, who do you write for?" I stammered out, "Uh...me? I'm a poet." Thus ended our conversation.

As it was my first time at the conference, I decided I would attend as many events as possible. The first day, after waking at 4 am to catch my flight and sitting in on two poetry readings, I nodded off during "A Tribute to Albert Goldbarth." I decided to pace myself for the rest of the conference, but how could I with so many wonderful discussions going on?

I limited myself to one pedagogy panel, which addressed alternative approaches instructors may incorporate to encourage writer development. Particularly interesting was a discussion of how the current workshop setting encourages students to maintain one voice, as opposed to exploring others. The speaker argued that workshop participants come to expect a voice from a writer and will base their critiques on the voice to which they have grown accustomed. The panel suggested exercises to combat this and other failings of the current workshop environment.

For fun, I attended several poetry readings, most notably the "Tribute to Elizabeth Bishop," hosted by UMass Boston professors **Lloyd Schwartz** and **Joyce Peseroff**, along with several other distinguished poets (you can listen to Lloyd reading Bishop's "Breakfast Song" on the UMass Boston Creative Writing MFA Facebook page). I also sat in on an enthusiastic debate on the line between short-shorts and prose poems, which led nowhere, but was enjoyable to watch. Early on Saturday morning, a panel of recently tenured instructors discussed how to land a tenure-track position after graduation. Each of their stories merely affirmed that there is no prescribed method to attaining a spot in a university, and that if you really want it, and the stars are properly aligned, it might be possible to get the position of your dreams.

When I was too overwhelmed to sit in on another panel, I headed to the bookfair, where approximately 700 booths and tables featured presses, literary magazines, and writing programs. There were scheduled book signings; free journals, buttons, and candy; and great prices on books. I scoured the tables for free things, passing up Hobart's offer of a free shot of whiskey with any purchase. By the end of the conference, I had collected so many free journals and half-priced books that it took me five minutes to cram my carry-on into the overhead bin.

On the flight back to Boston, I reevaluated my writing life: was my last prose poem really a short-short? Have I settled for one poetic voice? And, really, who do I write for? While the trip raised questions I'm still working out, I relished being surrounded by approximately 8,000 writers in a city with amazing, inexpensive Thai food on every corner.

## George Kovach founds *Consequence Magazine*

**George Kovach**, an MFA student in poetry, has founded, edited, and published *Consequence Magazine*, a new literary magazine that addresses the culture of war. **Jeremy Lakaszcyck** (fiction) and John Lewis are the associate editors of the inaugural issue.

A well-attended celebratory reading was held at the Barnes & Noble-BU Bookstore reading room and it was filled to capacity. There were over 100 people in attendance and, George notes, “we had to bring in extra chairs.”

**Askold Melnyczuk**, associate professor in the MFA program, gave the keynote address. A reading of

work by contributors followed. Among the contributors who read were **Barbara Perez** (poetry) whose powerful poem, “Brisance,” took the air out of the room and **Jeremy Lakaszcyck** (fiction) who read from George Miles’, “A Soldier’s Journal.”

Other contributors who read their work included John Anderson, Annaliese Jakimides, Jennifer Markell, and Jane Collins.

A lively panel discussion followed the readings, which tackled the topic of the intersection of war and literature. Panelists included contributors **Mark Pawlak**, **Kevin Bowen**, and **Tom O’Grady**, all faculty here at UMass Boston, and Annie

Finch, the director of the Stonecoast MFA program at the University of Southern Maine.

All in all, the publication is off to a phenomenal start! George notes that the sales, subscriptions and contributions at the event totaled more than \$700.

For more about *Consequence*, visit :  
[www.consequencemagazine.org](http://www.consequencemagazine.org)

Cover of  
*Consequence*  
 Magazine, courtesy  
 George Kovach



# Kris Evans goes to Kenya!

**Kris Evans** (fiction) was invited to attend and participate in “The Bread Loaf Slice Conference” in Nairobi, Kenya this past April. While at the conference, she co-taught a poetry workshop for high school students on using sensory detail in writing identity poems, and co-lead a teacher workshop on teaching creative writing!

The conference, “is aimed at realizing the Bread Loaf tenet of dismantling the classroom walls so that not only students but educators in

one part of the world can interact with others in another part as they write, research and collaborate in the quest for improved pedagogy in the English classrooms.”

In addition to participating in this conference, Kris blogged about her travels. You can read about her experiences here:

<http://www.traveljournals.net/travelers/travelkris/>

You can read more about the conference in the Kenyan newspaper *The Daily Nation* at this link:

<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/594032/-/item/0/-/5hbd97z/-/index.html>

**“Our Goal,”  
said GPD Joyce  
Peseroff, “is to  
get students  
excited about  
reading and  
writing,  
feeding their  
imagination  
and teaching  
different ways  
to play with  
language.”**

## MFA Students and BPL Librarians Pilot Workshop Program for k-12

Beginning this May, MFA students will pilot a new program with the Boston Public Library, running a series of creative writing workshops in two branch libraries partnered with Boston public schools. **Gene Kwak, Barbara Neely** and **Jon Papas** will work with Grove Hall teen librarian Amy Fiske and students from Jeremiah Burke High School. **Barbara Perez, Shea Mullaney, Greg Stenta,** and **Angela Voras-Hills** have volunteered to work with K-8 students in the Honan-Allston branch with children’s librarian Sherry Eskin. “Our goal,” said GPD **Joyce Peseroff**, “is to get

students excited about reading and writing, feeding their imagination and teaching different ways to play with language.” The pilot includes three sessions of both poetry and fiction writing, with a public reading from a published collection of student work for the final, fourth session.

The program is part of UMass Boston’s evolving partnership with the Boston Public Library, beginning with Prof. **Cheryl Nixon**’s graduate class preparing an exhibit of rare books and manuscripts from the library’s collection that opened last summer to rave reviews. After as-

sessing the pilot, the MFA program hopes to offer for-credit internships with the BPL that will include more branches, extended programs, and a stipend for interns.

# Student Updates

**Alex Gang** (poetry) founded Temporary Press with co-conspirator **Jeffrey Taylor** (poetry) and published *Another Book*, which includes contributions from MFA students and faculty alike. In addition, he won the UMass Boston Biathlon and has been named Biathlete of the semester.

**Jessica Eldredge** (fiction) just got engaged and is moving to Arizona for eight months before returning to finish her degree.

**Kris Evans** (fiction) was invited to participate in the "Bread Loaf Slice Conference." In addition, she is an *Astrea Lesbian Writers Fund Finalist, Fiction* (2008/2009). She was also an attendee at the AWP conference in Chicago.

**George Kovach** (poetry) founded *Consequence Magazine*, a magazine "focusing on the culture of war in the twenty-first century." A well-attended celebratory reading was held at the Barnes & Noble at BU on March 20th, 2009.

**Jeremy Lakaszcyck** (fiction) represented the UMass Boston MFA program, alongside Joyce Peseroff as a panelist on "Teaching Our Students to Teach Creative Writing" at the AWP conference in Chicago.

In addition, Jeremy placed third in the Playboy College Fiction Contest for his story "Casual Encounters".

**Shea Mullaney** (poetry) helped launch the *Breakwater Review* along with **Michele Harris** (poetry) and **Angela Voras-Hills** (poetry). He is the online journal's tech-guru. Shea is currently a TA for Prof. **Patrick**

**Barron's** capstone course, "Literature and Landscape," and will be an intern at Hanging Loose Press over the summer. You can check out the *Breakwater Review* at [www.breakwaterreview.com](http://www.breakwaterreview.com)

**Jon Papas** (poetry) is working on a collaborative art piece with New York based writer and artist Bendi Barrett. The result will be a book-length series of poems.

**Barbara Perez** (poetry) won a full scholarship to attend the New York State Summer Writers Institute at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs. Details can be found here:

<http://cms.skidmore.edu/odsp/programs/arts/writers/>

In addition, Barbara has won the Academy of American Poets Prize for the second year in a row! The announcement was made by poet Frank Bidart at a campus reading on May 5, 2009.

Congratulations to **Jeffrey Taylor**, **Alex Gang**, and **Jon Papas** for being named Academy of American Poets Prize runners up.

**Lily Rabinoff-Goldman** (fiction) is working on a collection of linked stories about summer camp that will become her thesis.

**Greg Stenta** (poetry) published his poem, "A Dialogue on Egon Schiele's Painting, *Embrace (Lovers II)* in the inaugural issue of the online journal *The Ledger Line*. <http://theledgerline.umwblogs.org/>

**Jeffrey Taylor** (poetry) has been involved in a number of projects. He has published a chapbook entitled, *don't put it in your mouth*, as well as publishing work in *Subtle Tea*, *The Centrifugal Eye*, and *Enormous Rooms*. He has also collaborated on a project with **Alex Gang** (poetry) to found Temporary Press, publishing *Another Book*. Jeffrey also collaborated with fiction student **Gene Kwak** on the book *a small, good thing*.

**Angela Voras-Hills** (poetry) attended AWP 2009 in Chicago and along with Michele Harris and Shea Mullaney, launched *Breakwater Review*. Angela also was awarded the Martha Collins Prize for a poem she submitted to *The Watermark*.

**Joleen Westerdale** (poetry) was invited to participate in a reading for national poetry month at her graduate alma mater, Simmons College.

**Jenn DeLeon** (fiction) was accepted to the Voices Summer Workshop in San Francisco where she will study fiction with Junot Diaz for the first week and then partake in a residency one-on-one workshop with Ana Castillo the second week.

In addition, Jenn was among eight emerging Latino/American writers this year to be accepted into the Macondo Writing Workshop in San Antonio with Sandra Cisneros. You can read more about the Macondo Foundation here:

<http://www.macondofoundation.org/history.html>