

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 3, 2016



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**Refugee high school students share heartrending ‘Stories of Arrival’ in poetry**

SEATTLE WASH. – Students who have immigrated from poverty-and war-torn corners of the world are finding their voice at Tukwila’s [Foster High School](#).

Through an innovative language-learning program, they’re telling their heartrending stories through poetry, which will air during National Poetry Month (April) on public radio 91.3 KBCS FM.

The [Stories of Arrival](#) program allows students to share personal stories about their journeys to the United States. Learning through poetry provides students with individual mentoring to improve their English writing and speaking skills, while recognizing their past. The narratives honor the individual character and cultural identities of each student. The project takes place in Carrie Stradely’s English Language Learning classroom. Stradley co-directs the program with Founder Merna Ann Hecht.

Among featured poets are Bu Meh from Burma, who writes about the hardships of her homeland, and how her family was forced to leave their country for a better future. Aryan Arab, another Foster High School student, reflects on memories of her home town in Somalia.

The project was crowdfunded through Indiegogo with additional support from community partners including the [Jack Straw Cultural Center](#) and [Inspirus Credit Union](#). In December, students recorded their poems at Jack Straw (Seattle). Additional support comes through [online donations](#) made by the public.

In addition, their [stories are on exhibit](#) at Inspirus Credit Union [in Tukwila](#). Viewing is open to the public Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

“It was a privilege to witness the process of how poetry came into the lives of the young people who participated in this project,” said Project Founder, Co-Director and Teaching Poet, Merna Ann Hecht. “Most all of the students in the project had not previously written poetry. They learned to write with the poet’s specificity, naming the names of loved ones and friends left behind, designating certain days and times, qualities of light and sounds, foods and festivals—things, events, and people, beloved and familiar to them from which they had been uprooted.”

According to [Niche](#), Foster High School is one of the most diverse high schools in Washington, with students hailing from all parts of the world.

**About Inspirus Credit Union**

Founded in 1936 by a Seattle math and journalism teacher, Inspirus serves about 80,000 members across Washington who share a passion for education. With \$1 billion in assets, Inspirus operates branches in Seattle and Spokane. Its philanthropy model includes education-giveback programs that allow members to direct charitable contributions to schools in their communities. Employees also donate upwards of 800 volunteer hours a year in support of education. In addition, community education representatives provide free financial seminars, professional development, and recognition to school employees statewide. For more information, visit [inspiruscu.org](http://inspiruscu.org).

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