



AHMHHA

All Healers Mental Health Alliance

Bringing Hope and Help in Times of All Hazards and Disasters

“When Did You Come Back?”

Today I read at the Light City Freedom School in the 9th ward on St. Claude Avenue. Cheerful little faces ran about the sanctuary of the church that sponsored the summer program. Three little girls with barrettes and bows tried to play Miss Mary Mack. Somebody was always odd man out. They giggled loudly. A group of teenagers shared overnight gossip and teased younger ones about who did their hair that morning. Others chomped on the morning breakfast before singing the Hallelujah Chorus, the African American version. Greetings went out to all. I was introduced and did the Read Aloud story for the day.

I read *Bright Eyes, Brown Skin* by Cheryl Willis Hudson and Bernette Ford. The pictures looked just like the kids I was reading to in the sanctuary. Few carried on private whispers while I read. They all seemed to pay attention. I congratulated them for survival and returning to live in New Orleans. They clapped along with me. I read the story of what is amazing and wonderful about being a child of color. At the end the children asked me questions. I was only supposed to take two; but I took six. They were tough questions like, “Do you like to read?” “Is it hard to read?” I said, “Sometimes but it was important to learn all the things I needed to know to take care of kids like you.”



The fourth question was “When did you come back?” A small slight girl in a black tee shirt asked quietly. I told her that I returned in October 2005. I asked her when she came back. She shrugged her shoulders. Then I asked, “Did you just come back?” She nodded and said, “Yes.” I said, “Welcome back. I am glad you are here.” She smiled.

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