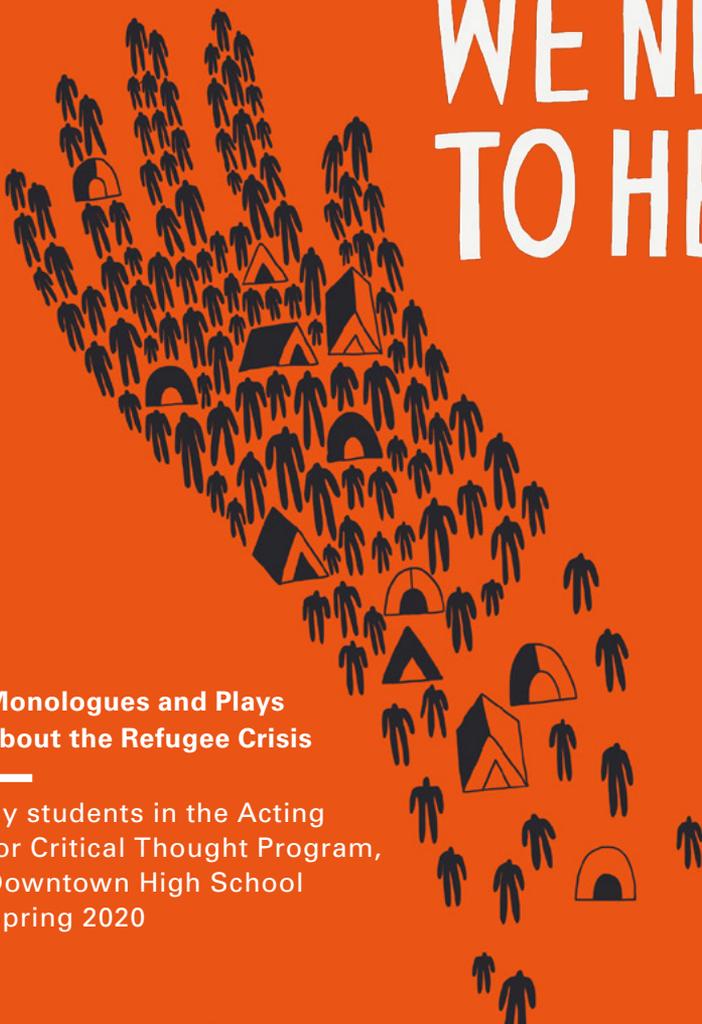




WE NEED TO HELP



**Monologues and Plays
about the Refugee Crisis**

By students in the Acting
for Critical Thought Program,
Downtown High School
Spring 2020

THIS BOOK CONTAINS MATURE CONTENT

826 Valencia encourages students to write pieces that are meaningful to them. In this vein, these monologues from Downtown High School address a range of issues. Several pieces raise difficult topics, including bias, racism, and discrimination. This book is intended for mature audiences, with topics, themes, and language that may not be suitable for younger readers. Recommended for readers sixteen and up.

WE NEED TO HELP



MISSION CENTER

826 Valencia Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

TENDERLOIN CENTER

180 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

MISSION BAY CENTER

1310 4th Street
San Francisco, CA 94158

826valencia.org

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The views expressed in this book are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of 826 Valencia. We support student publishing and are thrilled that you picked up this book!

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Bryant Hernandez
WE NEED TO HELP

We have to help the people who come for asylum in the United States because they come here from their homes thousands of miles away, with no money. They risk their lives to come to this country, just to get kicked back. I want to show the public the horrible environment inside the refugee camps because they aren't clean and they are all dirty. Also to talk about how, in these refugee camps, they don't have enough food and water to supply the whole camp, which means people don't have the things they need to survive and keep healthy, and we need to help them!

Patricia Canales
JUST LIKE US

We NEED to help. These people are human just like us. Refugees are being forced out of their homes and have no other choice but to start a new life somewhere else. The United States NEEDS to help refugees the most it can, not just with asylum, but also with the journey they take to get where they have to go. The refugee camps are in disgusting conditions. There are some camps that don't have the necessary resources at all. The government doesn't want to give up any more money to give these people something so simple, like water. It's not only adults living in these camps. It's also children, babies even. The women at the camps are so scared of being raped by the men that they hide in their tents most of the day. The government can help by giving more money to the refugee camps. We're not asking for all the money, but just enough for the people to survive and live like humans instead of animals. Even us non-refugees can help by volunteering at the camps or donating. It doesn't necessarily have to be money, it can be something so simple, like clothes. Let me remind you again that these are people who are less fortunate than us. We need to do something, and fast.

Louis Fowlis
DEAR MR. PRESIDENT

Mr. President,

People are dying in our neighboring region (Central America) from civil wars, gang violence, and corruption in the governments. You won't allow people to seek asylum? People are looking for a chance to live in peace, put their children in schools, and put food in their mouths, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their heads. They are not here to hurt anyone. They are here because they chose to survive and not to die. The American government has more than enough resources, programming, and money to provide that asylum. I'm from San Francisco, where I grew up with people who had to risk their lives to be able to work, go to school, and sleep without their lives being threatened. So Mr. President, why won't you provide aid? Like, wake up, Mr. President. Hundreds are dying as we speak, so give them the asylum they plead for. Make the right choices.

Thank you.

Chayla Pettus

DEFINITION OF A REFUGEE

Long nights...almost dying...bombs dropping in their countries. Do you really know the definition of a refugee? One who's been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disasters. Stop being selfish and thinking about yourself. There are people dying. They are traveling miles and miles to look for help on this journey! Leaving everything they had back home, and we take everything we have for granted. We're not thankful enough for what we have, like fresh water, fresh food, and plenty of resources that those refugees don't have. A little, ten-year-old Syrian refugee, Hiba Nabulsi, left Syria for Turkey, which she called, "a journey of the death." Only a few were not afraid of reaching the regional waters. One plane, one f—ing plane, saved this child's life. She was smuggled from Greece and has been at the Refugee and Migrant Reception Centre since then. All it takes is for you to help, for us to help. We can't change the past, but we can change the future. We have to help.

Aniya Bibbs
WE GOTTA HELP

We have to help!

Refugees are people who have fled their country. In 2017, 65.6 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide. A lot of people are losing their lives by trying to look for a better future. It's not right, because refugees deserve a place to live. Worldwide, refugees mostly do not live in refugee camps. At the end of 2015, they were living in collective centers, transit camps, and self-settled camps. We, as a community, should help people by putting ourselves in their shoes. What you didn't know is the top refugee-hosting countries are Syria (6.7 million refugees), Afghanistan (2.7 million refugees), and South Sudan (2.3 million refugees). In 1951, Convention travel was a travel document issued to a refugee by the state. There are around eight thousand to 11,684 Afghan refugees in India.

Marvin Decuire
DO YOU KNOW?

Do you guys realize what's going on with the refugees around the world? These people don't have clean water or even enough water to drink. The sacrifices that people make for their families include starvation and death. Us just sitting here, living our best lives like there ain't people out there like refugees who need our support. Would you wanna be in that situation? Would you wanna go through all this, then have no type of support? What I wanna do is reach out to you young adults and older adults to make a change. For example, years ago, the number of refugees who were able to enter the U.S. was like eighty thousand, and that was under Obama, but Trump became president and slashed it down to eighteen thousand. Not even all eighteen thousand can resettle in the U.S. or become asylum seekers. I say that we should put these refugees into consideration because these are people who need our people and need our care. Especially us low-income people should understand because we feel like we're not getting treated right by the government, so just imagine the refugees. The refugees who aren't getting treated right are in the same position as us low-income people. The refugees who aren't getting treated right look like me, a colored person. They're people who can't afford certain things. We need to make a change.

Victor Escorcía Tellería

WE HAVE TO HELP REFUGEES

We have to help refugees because they are not healthy and they have families, and if we don't start doing something, they will start dying. According to the United Nations' International Organization for Migration, "The project has recorded the deaths of 33,631 people, including 2,469 in 2019." This project tells us how many people died in 2019. Thirty-three thousand, six hundred and thirty-one people have died because people do not feel safe inside of their countries. And the fact that their governments and presidents don't care isn't right, because some of these people leave their loved ones and never see them again.

Lorena Logovii Ioane
DO SOMETHING

This is for the governments all over the world. There are lots of problems going on within this world and y'all not even doing anything about it. You refuse to do anything about gun violence, you refuse to do anything about police brutality, and you refuse to help refugees specifically. As you probably heard, or maybe not, there are over 70.8 million refugees at borders all across the globe. Refugees are fleeing their home countries due to many reasons, such as civil war, persecution, and wars started by other countries most likely for small, unnecessary reasons. Let me tell you from a personal level. My great-grandparents were trying to get to the shores of American Samoa fifty-eight years ago from Western Samoa due to gang-related reasons, but what happened? They got stuck at the border in Western Samoa. When they were just arriving, they witnessed a girl being pulled away from her tent at night and that's not right. My great-grandma was traumatized as a woman because she thought, *What if it could happen to anyone within the camp?* There are so many things going on within the refugee camps that you guys don't know about because you're just cooped up in your offices, not worried about anything. But some of you just sit there knowing these things are happening, not doing a damn thing about it. How many stories will it take for any of you to actually take action?

Koran Mathis

WE HAVE TO HELP REFUGEES

The journey refugees take when leaving their country is very dangerous! Adults and children risk their lives every day when walking because they have to constantly watch their backs for soldiers and the animals at night. The methods refugees use to get across the border are dangerous as well. Many have been found in trucks and tunnel trains, and more than thirty-seven thousand refugees were found hiding in a tunnel train. An African teenager was struck by an oncoming train in the tunnel, and more have died by similar journeys like that. We can make their journey easier by supplying them with a safer way of transportation.

Children my age and younger are hungry and dehydrated due to the lack of supplies, such as food and water, at the refugee camps. Refugee camps also don't have any medical supplies for the sick, elderly, and injured, or a place to bathe. We can help by sending supplies they need or some money to the organizations that help them. It doesn't have to be a lot. Anything is better than nothing.

Refugees should be granted asylum because they are from war-torn countries going through political and economic problems. Our government refuses to give them asylum because they think the government in their country hasn't done anything to make them leave the country, and they send them back to a country with war, inhumane living conditions, and gang violence. If you were in their shoes with your family, you would want a safe country to stay in, so why not give it to them?

Calianna Maua

REFUGEES ARE HUMAN TOO

Good morning,

My name is Calianna, and I want to talk to you about refugees. For some people who don't know what a refugee is, a refugee is a person who is forced to leave their home country.

In this world, there are 25.9 million refugees, and one half of them are children. In this world, there are 70.8 million people forcibly displaced worldwide. The reason they are fleeing is because of gangs, natural disasters, enslavement, villages burning down, people being a target for government and gang attacks, and more.

Yeah, yeah, we have been through a lot, but not like them. We, the people, should help give them a chance because all of these refugees are people like us. They're not sleeping at night, because they're afraid and scared, so scared they have nightmares. They walk thousands of miles without shoes. They swim and risk their lives just to escape. Their clothes are wet, but they can't wash and dry them like us. They live in camps with their children and families. They don't have clean water to drink. They only get a little amount of water, and that little amount is for drinking, washing, and laundry—everything.

Everyone has a voice. Refugees have a voice, and they call us for help. It's just no one is listening or hearing them out. No one is helping them, and why aren't people helping them?

Refugees are good people. We are all good people; so if we are good people, why didn't we know about this or help them out?

Now that we do know, what are we going to do about it? What are we going to do about this pain, this torture, this human disaster?

Alexander Pena

BEING IN THE SHOES OF A REFUGEE

A sixteen-year-old speaks to the government in order to convince the government to help out in the refugee camp.

We have to help the conditions in the refugee camp. Imagine if you were to wake up in a refugee camp. What would you first do? Maybe go outside to see who you are with, where you are. But you missed one important thing. Can you guess? Conditions in the refugee camp. Everyone needs water, right? But living in a refugee camp, most likely you are not able to get the cleanest water, and you are drinking dirty water that can cause death. Ain't that scary? Dying from drinking water. A recent study estimated that, worldwide, nearly one thousand children died from diarrhea each day in 2013, primarily from lack of clean water and sanitation. Did you know half of the refugee camps in the world are unable to provide the daily water minimum of twenty liters of water, about five gallons, per person each day? Not only are you struggling with water, it's also not having enough food, clean clothes, and safety for everybody, and gangs and police not helping in the refugee camp. They are doing the opposite, and guess who is not helping the refugee camp? The government. The government spends millions of dollars, maybe billions of dollars, on stuff they don't need or use, but can't help by spending money on where the help is needed.

Can you imagine the journey that refugees are taking just to look for a better life for themselves and their kids? The journey is a lot of walking, and you never know the conditions of what you are walking to. Can you imagine you are home, right? Then *boom*, a natural disaster happens, and you have to take as much stuff as you can get, like food, water, money, clothes, documents, first aid, family pictures to remember them and how they look, and you have to leave. What's your next move? Maybe follow people leaving too?

You and the other people are walking for hours, then stop to relax. When you wake up, you keep on walking till you get to the refugee camp. After a couple of weeks, you get there with your clothes all muddy, smelling bad because you don't take showers when you are walking to the refugee camp. Taking a shower is the last thing you should care about.

Izabelle Trujillo
DEAR DONALD

It's more than them wanting to overpopulate. They aren't just a bunch of rapists, gang-affiliated savages, murderers, and animals... War, mass starvation, homes ruined, whether it's from man or Mother Nature. There are children being raped, young boys being trained to be soldiers, gang violence, and ransom in Central America. Why the f— would they stay!?! Would you stay? No, because you can't even strain your brain hard enough to even try to put yourself in these shoes, the shoes that have walked miles and sailed on boats, with nothing but the clothes on their backs and the hope in their hearts. They want peace, education, food, and resources. A home, they want a home where they can escape the ugly and grimy reality outside. They want to be able to sleep and have long, safe dreams, to let their imagination run and paint whatever they want. Meanwhile, you're in your third dream; it's time for you to wake up. Bombs, gunshots, yelling, crying, screams of mothers and children; but you wouldn't understand that Donald... right? You wake up to birds chirping and knocking on the door that breakfast is ready. I don't expect you to be able to fully get it, why would you? You hire refugees to work for you though: they clean up your s—, press your clothes.

Refugees aren't animals when they're doing the stuff you're too lazy to do for yourself. How do they do it? Americans find the culture so foreign, and they don't know if they want to steal it or make us change it. They love the mansions we build, they love the food we cook, they love the fast, hard work, yet they absolutely hate us in this country. They don't care how long it took to get here, or what we went through trying. They care about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, yet everything they do goes completely against their precious American morals. "The land of the free?" with hardworking immigrants being grabbed off buses,

BART trains, sidewalks, and even at work. Refugees know you don't want them here, Donald, but who the f— are you compared to their children, wives, mothers, sisters, and brothers? They ain't coming to America to rape people, or to kill people, or to create gang violence. There's home for that. They're trying to escape, and live the American Dream like everyone else is trying to do, and they have every right to want to be American or not. We have to help!

Jalin Washington
IN THIS WORLD

In this world, Britain is home to just 0.6 percent of the world's refugees. In this world, more than fifty-three percent of the world's refugees are from just three countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia. We have to help refugees. Why? What if you had to run away from home? Wouldn't you want someone to help you? What if you had to leave home because you feared for your life and kids' lives? I can't even imagine having to flee my home, especially if I had children. Imagine having to walk over one thousand miles somewhere. People shouldn't have to walk across water with children and possibly drown, and people shouldn't have a low stock of basic things you need to survive. I'm sayin' this to say, show empathy to others because you don't know if you could be in the same situation.

Giovanna Yoque-Lopez
REFUGEES ARE PEOPLE

We have to help. This is for our so-called president and government. I'm here to tell you guys and make you understand the risk and dangers refugees face on a daily basis. Refugees are people just like us, and what they go through is unbelievable, but all that we do is ignore them and move on. I thought we were supposed to welcome people, make them feel loved, and help them succeed, but all we do is make them our slaves instead of giving them the life they deserve, a life like ours. We are treating them like animals, like they don't deserve the opportunities we have. Imagine your family and your kids going through that. Imagine the struggle they would go through every single day, finding a lot of ways to survive without any help. There are a lot of stories about what refugees go through, and one of them is mine. I want my story to be heard. I want people to know what I went through, how scared I was, thinking I would not make it to this country and not have the life I now have. I was only nine years old, and what I experienced I would not want any other person to go through.

How did I make it? How did I survive? Why did my family decide to leave? A lot of questions to ask, but my only answer would be, "God was by my side all the time." Before I tell you how my brother, my mom, and I went on this journey, let me say why we left our country. We decided to leave because of gangs, natural disasters, a lot of violence on the streets, killings, etc. . . . It is sad how a beautiful place can turn into a horrible place to live in. Is it our fault? Is it our fault all of this happens? Is it our fault we get forced to join gangs? Is it our fault innocent people get killed because gangs want to kill? Is it? We go through this just to satisfy one person. We people have feelings too, you know. We suffer from deaths, violence, etc. . . . Me only being seven years old, and I have experienced gangs shooting at each other. One night, my mom, brother, aunt, and I were headed

back from church when gangs started shooting right in front of my eyes, but thanks to God, he protected me from getting shot at while I was only seven years old. Imagine your kids being in such a situation. Wouldn't you want to protect them? Wouldn't you want to give them the best life they deserve? Would you want them to experience stuff like that? Would you? This is why refugees, including myself, decided to flee out of our countries, to escape from danger.

Giovanna Yoque-Lopez
CUANDO ME FUI

The following monologue is written from a refugee's perspective, drawn from a series of interviews with a woman who fled Guatemala.

“Cuando me fui de mi país, me partió el corazón dejar todo atrás, mi familia y mi bello país, Guatemala.”

Sabía que me tenía que ir, dejar todo atrás para poder tener una mejor vida, para poder darles a mis hijos una mejor vida. Tuve que tomar la decisión de irme de mi país. The situation in which we lived was dangerous, with many killings and the poverty of our country. In our country, there were not many opportunities to survive and be able to overcome the many challenges we face. En este país lo que quiero para mis hijos es que agarren una mejor educación y sabía que ellos no podrían tener eso en Guatemala porque eramos low-income and couldn't afford to pay for my kids' schools. I was an immigrant. I came through the desert, walking with a group of people. My children and I left our home in November, walking many days in the desert without being able to drink or eat anything. I suffered the cold at night and the great heat that was in the day, but thanks to God, he gave me the strength to survive and not leave my kids alone in this country. The group that I was traveling with to the United States was caught by border patrol and took us to a detention center, border patrol caught us and took us to a detention center where they take immigrants who cross the border. I was there for months, and when it was time to get out of there, I thought they were going to send me back to my country and I would not see my kids again. But all thanks to God, they decided to release me in the United States and I was able to see my kids once again. My children arrived in December and I arrived in March 2011. When it was time to cross to the United States, my kids had to cross alone with people they didn't know, and for me, that was the worst experi-

ence and the hardest decision that a mother could take just to make it easier for them to cross.

I'm telling you this story to tell you that sometimes you have no choice but to make the dangerous decision to leave your home for a better home for you and your family. These decisions are still happening nowadays because people need to somehow provide necessary things for their family. This was my story. Now imagine what refugees go through on a daily basis to be able to have a healthy life for themselves and their family, and the struggle they go through to survive on the journey they take.

Danasia Mark

WE DIDN'T HAVE ANYBODY ELSE

Written from the perspective of a Syrian refugee reflecting on his experience as a young boy coming to the United States, this monologue was inspired by an interview between the author and subject.

“I was a sweet little boy. Thrown out in the street. To defend myself. Then, in another language. And I was bullied a lot.”

When we came to this country, I saw how much my parents suffered. It made me cry every night. I was so tiny that I couldn't help but to cry. There was a war in Syria, which is why we became refugees. The United States took us in. When I came to the United States, I was very scared about how people would treat me. The hardest thing was the people, the language. It was also a very bad time. It was the late '60s, early '70s. The Vietnam War was still going on and we were not welcomed in the United States. We didn't have anybody else. We were refugees when we came here. So we were just defending and helping each other. The United States still looks at us as refugees. I'm telling you this story to let you know that we want to be respected for who we are. When we first came here, they were throwing things at us and telling us to go back to our country.

I'm telling you this story because I want you to know how it feels to be alone and how it feels to take care of yourself every day, from food to surviving the war: not having your parents around because they're always working. Don't ever give up, just keep pushing because you never know what might happen, you might make it out and go back to normal. The world needs to know this because a lot of people don't know or care about refugees.

Ashly Portillo Mena
READY TO START

Through interviews with a refugee from Thailand, the author learned about the experience and created this monologue, written from the refugee's perspective.

“When I was kid, we lived in a refugee camp.”

In Thailand, we were in camps that were surrounded with metal gates and armed guards. It was pretty scary: we just walked around naked, and no one could come in or go out. One day my mom said we're going to go to America. We were told that we had to go buy clothes and socks, and at that point I didn't even know what socks were. In order to go to the United States, we had to get shots that left me with a scar on my arm. Living in the U.S. wasn't easy, because my parents weren't financially stable, and seeing them working every day so hard to bring food to our table really inspired me to work hard and be grateful for what I have.

I'm telling you this story because I want to inspire people that if you start with no success, it doesn't mean that it's going to stay like that. I motivate myself to work hard every day because I don't want to go back to the way it was when I was younger, because it was a hard experience. Now that I'm settled and confidently stable, I'm ready to start the life that I always wanted.

ABOUT 826 VALENCIA

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

826 Valencia is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting under-resourced students ages six to eighteen with their creative and expository writing skills and to helping teachers inspire their students to write. Our services are structured around the understanding that great leaps in learning can happen with one-on-one attention and that strong writing skills are fundamental to future success.

826 Valencia comprises three writing centers—located in San Francisco’s Mission District, Tenderloin neighborhood, and Mission Bay—and three satellite classrooms at nearby schools. All of our centers are fronted by kid-friendly, weird, and whimsical stores, which serve as portals to learning and gateways for the community. All of our programs are offered free of charge. Since we first opened our doors in 2002, thousands of volunteers have dedicated their time to working with tens of thousands of students.

PROGRAMS

FIELD TRIPS

Classes from public schools around San Francisco visit our writing centers for a morning of high-energy learning about the craft of storytelling. Four days a week, our Field Trips produce bound, illustrated books and professional-quality podcasts, infusing creativity, collaboration, and the arts into students’ regular school day.

IN-SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

We bring teams of volunteers into high-need schools around the city to support teachers and provide one-on-one assistance to students as they tackle various writing projects, including newspapers, research papers, oral histories, and more. We have a special presence at Buena Vista Horace Mann K–8, Everett Middle School, and Mission High School, where we staff dedicated Writers’ Rooms throughout the school year.

AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING

During the school year, 826 Valencia’s centers are packed five days a week with neighborhood students who come in after school and in the evenings for tutoring in all subject areas, with a special emphasis on creative writing and publishing. During the summer these students participate in our Exploring Words Summer Camp, where we explore science and writing through projects, outings, and activities in a super fun, educational environment.

WORKSHOPS

826 Valencia offers workshops designed to foster creativity and strengthen writing skills in a wide variety of areas, from playwriting to personal essays to starting a zine. All workshops, from the playful to the practical, are project-based and are taught by experienced, accomplished professionals. Over the summer, our Young Authors’ Workshop provides an intensive writing experience for high-school-age students.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

We offer a roster of programs designed to help students get into college and be successful there. Every year we provide several \$20,000 scholarships to college-bound seniors, provide one-on-one support to two hundred students via the Great San Francisco Personal Statement Weekend, and partner with ScholarMatch to offer college access workshops to the middle- and high-school students in our tutoring programs. We also offer internships, peer tutoring stipends, and career workshops to our youth leaders.

PUBLISHING

Students in all of 826 Valencia’s programs have the ability to explore, experience, and celebrate themselves as writers in part because of our professional-quality publishing. In addition to the chapbook you’re holding, 826 Valencia publishes newspapers, magazines, books, podcasts, and blogs—all written by students.

TEACHER OF THE MONTH

From the beginning, 826 Valencia’s goal has been to support teachers. We aim to both provide the classroom support that helps our hardworking teachers meet the needs of all our students and to celebrate their important work. Every month, we receive letters from students, parents, and educators nominating outstanding teachers for our Teacher of the Month award, which comes with a \$1,500 honorarium. Know an SFUSD teacher you want to nominate? Guidelines can be found at 826valencia.org.

826 NATIONAL

826 Valencia’s success has spread across the country. Under the umbrella of 826 National, writing and tutoring centers have opened up in eight more cities. If you would like to learn more about other 826 programs, please visit the following websites.

826 National
826national.org

826michigan
826michigan.org

826 Boston
826boston.org

826 MSP
826msp.org

826CHI
826chi.org

826 New Orleans
826neworleans.org

826DC
826dc.org

826NYC
826nyc.org

826LA
826la.org

826 Valencia
826valencia.org

IT'S ALWAYS A GOOD TIME TO GIVE

WE NEED YOUR HELP

We could not do this work without the thousands of volunteers who make our programs possible. We are always seeking more volunteer tutors, and volunteers with design, illustration, photography, and audio editing skills. It's easy to become a volunteer and a bunch of fun to actually do it.

Please fill out our online application to let us know how you'd like to lend your time: **826valencia.org/volunteer**

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

Whether it's loose change or heaps of cash, a donation of any size will help 826 Valencia continue to offer a variety of free writing and publishing programs to Bay Area youth.

Please make a donation at: **826valencia.org/donate**

You can also mail your contribution to:

826 Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA 94110

Your donation is tax-deductible. What a plus! Thank you!

We Need to Help is a product of the Spring 2020 Acting for Critical Thought Program at Downtown High School. Through the semester-long, interdisciplinary curriculum, student playwrights read plays, attend theater productions, write monologues and ten-minute plays, and perform their work. In preparation for this final performance, they take acting classes each week at the American Conservatory Theater and receive writing support from 826 Valencia's volunteer tutors.



This book contains mature content.

Recommended for readers sixteen and up.

826valencia.org



A nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting under-resourced students ages six to eighteen with their creative and expository writing skills and to helping teachers inspire their students to write.