

# Breaking Stereotypes

## Introduction:

This workshop will cover a series of lessons that I taught to a group of freshmen students at Franklin High School in Portland. Franklin is an urban school in South-East Portland with a diverse student body, with students from a wide range of cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. The lessons and materials covered today form part of a larger unit of study based on the novel, *Bronx Masquerade*.

## Purpose:

- To use classroom discussion in order to analyze the effect of stereotypes and to incorporate student experiences into the curriculum.
- To harness the power of poetry and language in order to provide students with a means of expressing their emotions, exploring their identities, and learning about other perspectives and points of view.
- To expose students to materials, voices, and stories from diverse cultures, perspectives, and traditions.
- To help students learn how to respect and interact positively with other people, regardless of their culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

## Unit Overview:

- Four weeks long
- Based on *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes – a collection of prose and poetry describing eighteen fictional teenagers attending high school in the Bronx.
- Students wrote three poems on a variety of topics, including the role of stereotypes in society, identity formation, and their communities.
- Students watched and discussed spoken-word poetry performances (Daniel Beatty, Suheir Hammad, Anis Mojgani, etc...)
- Final Project: an open-mike poetry slam where students shared their work with their peers