

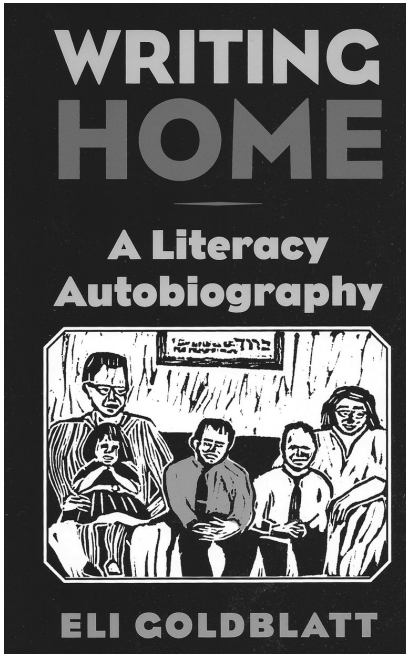
A Hitchhiker's Guide to Community:

An Interview with Eli C. Goldblatt

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Though born in Ohio, Eli Goldblatt would soon be able to call several more cities home as his father moved the family to Army posts in the United States and Germany. It was this transience that pushed Eli to develop significant relationships quickly and to cherish them long after the family had moved again. This focus on relationships and a sense of movement through the world is something that continues to inform Eli's career as a professor of writing and a community partner in literacy education. Just as a hitchhiker and a driver build their brief relationship through narratives, we also harness the power of narratives to build our relationships with others, with our communities, and with our world.

Eli C. Goldblatt was born in 1952 in Cleveland, Ohio, and grew up on Army posts in the U.S. and Germany. After earning his B.A. at Cornell University and working in farming, manufacture, and carpentry jobs,



he attended Case-Western Reserve Medical School in 1975-76. He taught science, math, and English for six years in an urban alternative high school in Philadelphia, traveled in Mexico and Central America in 1980, and received an M. Ed. and certification in biology from Temple in 1982. He finished both an M.A. in literature (1984) and a Ph.D. in composition studies (1990) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is currently the Director of First-Year Writing and a professor of English at Temple University. He also directs New City Writing, the

community outreach arm of the writing program. NCW sponsored the Temple Writing Academy for four summers (2007-2010) and supports students working with Tree House Books, a literacy/literature center near the Temple campus, and other programs in neighborhoods of North Philadelphia.

Recently, the three of us had the privilege of talking with Eli about his career in grassroots and institutional literacy education, his continued work with community partner Tree House Books in Philadelphia, and his most recent publication, *Writing Home: A Literacy Autobiography*.

In our interview with Eli, he discussed the idea of social frames as ways we come to understand the narratives of our communities and, therefore, our places in the world. Frames help us understand social cues and where we fit into narratives, yet it's important to step into different frames or to turn frames on their heads from time to time. They're a bit like coloring books; sometimes it's necessary to color outside of the lines. As Eli told us, "I suspect that the mind wants to have the emotional impression that things are intact....I think

frames are both really valuable themselves and really valuable when they break. Even if it hurts.” Eli’s notion of frames and movement through and across relationships came into play throughout our conversation with him.

For example, Eli’s artist wife Wendy Osterweil exposed him to communication in modes beyond writing. The cover art for *Writing Home* is a linoleum block carving by Eli and is based on a childhood family portrait taken either in San Antonio, Texas, or on a base in Germany—the family is unable to say where because, as Eli points out, all Army housing tends to look the same. In the portrait, Eli is about eight years old, pictured in the middle. For Eli, exploring multiple modes of expression has led to reflexivity as both a teacher and a researcher, something for which his work is well-known and widely respected.

At *Reflections*, we wondered how Eli encourages social-frame transience and enhanced reflexivity in others—his students, his colleagues, and his community partners. “That’s an easy question,” he quipped. In his graduate teaching practicum, Eli asks his graduate students not only to write, but also to draw. They are uncomfortable at first, embarrassed even, but encouraging them to move past these feelings is important so they experience a discomfort similar to that which their students have when learning to write in academic discourse for the first time. In academic and public spheres, verbal and visual literacies tend to be perceived as separate entities. While reading and writing are assumed to be primary literate acts, visual literacy has traditionally been granted considerably less curricular focus and intellectual privilege.

Writing studies, however, has more and more frequently emphasized the importance of multimodal composition in scholarship ranging from analysis to production in composition pedagogy, visual rhetorics, and writing in digital environments. Dale Jacobs, for example, calls multimodal literacy “the ability to create meaning with and from texts that operate in print form and in some combination of visual, audio, and spatial forms as well” (181). We see Eli’s conception of social frames as one helpful way of understanding the power of movement among modes of composition. Writing in the twenty-first century

requires an increasingly complex set of skills in alphabetic, visual, and multimodal literacies. Further, practicing writing in academic, workplace, civic, personal, cross-cultural, and aesthetic discourses is a rich and practical approach for helping students to develop skills that will transfer far beyond the socio-cultural frames of the writing classroom, which is exactly where Eli and other community literacy partners aim to go.

At Tree House Books, for example, Eli encourages participants to write, draw, and even record voices for projects that reach into their own communities, homes, and workplaces. More than that, Eli works to upend the narrative compositionists tend to tell themselves about their roles in community literacy education. Too often, he says, we find ourselves conducting community-based projects based on the guilt we feel about issues of access and agency. Instead, he asks composition and rhetoric teachers and scholars to think about community literacy through a paradigm that is not based on guilt. His work calls upon us to move beyond the concept of providing a “service” to others. By tying together these slippery notions of guilt and service, we create a problematic relationship between those who offer the service and those who have a perceived need. Furthermore, while the goals of community literacy centers are at the heart of the idea of improving lives through literacy education, and the intentions of these programs are certainly good, in Eli’s view, the concept of a *center* for literacy is becoming an outdated notion. To him, community building is not necessarily about bringing literacy and community to the people or creating a center where people might gather for instruction. Instead, it is about bringing communities of people together in various ways in various settings to collaboratively explore their own literacy practices. In this way, Eli calls for us to de-center the concept of the center in favor of emphasizing programs that build connections among people and places.

When Eli talks about writing, literacy, and service learning, it quickly becomes clear that, for him, relationships are both substance and mooring. Just as his family’s frequent moves from one military base to another highlighted for him the necessity of making and maintaining friendships, he believes that it is also necessary to ground literacy practices in relationships. Doing so, suggests Eli,

means that these practices—and the decisions associated with them—are effected in the context of real lives. That is to say, literary practices that are anchored to relationships reflect the dynamics of a particular relationship, a way of being, a place in the world. For Eli, the substance of relationships manifests in the stories that get told, how those stories get told, when they get told, and how they change over time, place, and cultural shifts. Narratives move us through relationships, networks, frames—whether it is the University's relationship with a community partner, someone who is negotiating class lines, the driver who needs to share his story with the hitchhiker he has picked up, or a working mother discussing her day at home with her family.

Reflections: So Eli, as we were getting acquainted, you mentioned that you learned most of what you know about composition and rhetoric—if not much more—from your mother, who was a government bureaucrat in Washington. How so?

Eli Goldblatt: She worked for what used to be called Health, Education, and Welfare and then Health and Human Services. When she retired, she was in the Office of Statistical Management, which was where people had to apply to use government money to do large-scale surveys, and she was a very, very skilled and great writer and a very skilled bureaucrat. She was very canny about the things that people were really talking about. We don't really talk about bureaucracy very much in rhetoric, and it's terribly important. One of the really sad things in my mother's life was when she retired. She had boxes and boxes of papers on fairly important issues she had worked on over the years, particularly about health. She was hoping that she could interest a rhetorician in writing about the archive, but you couldn't really pry into those documents unless you knew a lot about rather arcane health policy issues already. The papers were very alive for her, but there was nobody else who could really care. When she got rid of it all, it was sad for her, but I think it was also quite liberating.

So in some ways, that's an introduction to the way I think about many of these issues and the reason that I wrote this last book—because I realized after you do community engagement work for a while, you really have to ask yourself, “What's my personal stake in it?” “How did I get to doing this?” “What's driving me forward?” Once you start asking that, you have to go back and look at your own literacy roots and say, “What's pushing me on this?” Because—I just finished doing a little writing on this—you can't do this work out of guilt for very long. Almost everybody at least starts with guilt in the mix. But guilt is a very poisonous emotion, and it will eventually undo any good work you do, so you have to look at it—as Saul Alinsky would say—through your self-interest.

R: That's something we were wondering about. What leads you to the kinds of questions you ask and the kind of teaching you do? You have a very interesting background; you've done so many interesting things, from poetry to medical school, and then, of course, your work with service learning and community literacy. What do you think are the underlying factors or sparks that lead you to the work you do?

EG: Well, I probably can't tell you. I can just keep throwing things up and saying, “Well, does that fit?” But one of the big things in my life is that, at least for the first 13 years, we moved all the time. Being in the Army, you're always making friendships, and then they're gone. So you become very sensitive to how to make a friend quickly and how to hold onto that friendship, even when it's not there anymore. And you value, at least if you have a certain kind of mind—I mean, there are plenty of people who really just get turned off from any relationships at all—but if you do have some basis for caring about other people over a long time, you become really committed to the relationships you do make.

If I look at everything I've done in the last thirty years, it really keeps coming back to the necessity for grounding all literacy acts in relationships. You could make the argument that, when literacy becomes unmoored from relationships, it becomes most destructive. You're probably following the newspapers nationally about how education is being cut. Here in Pennsylvania, our governor just cut

30 percent out of the state support for Temple—at least that's what he wants to do.

I was talking to a friend of mine this morning, and the best we can figure is that people who can cut that much out of public education from higher education and k-12 education are people who really have no concept of how other people live and grow. They make decisions that are not grounded in the lives that are being affected by these decisions. That's a problem for the broader performance of the literacy act, and I find that especially true in school. School is filled with these abstract pronouncements that teachers make, that textbooks make, that principals make, and the more students are disconnected from the origins of those statements and even the consequences of those statements, the less they care about what's going on around them in schools. If you came from Mars and landed on our planet and you watched young people marching off to these buildings where they sit, bored and disconnected, for six to eight hours a day, you'd think, "What kind of civilization is this?" That drives me. I find that it's an issue I might do a little bit about.

R: You said in the introduction to *Writing Home* that teaching connects us, to students, and...

EG: Yes. Teaching connects us, if it connects us. There are many for whom teaching disconnects. When I teach new teachers, that's the thing I stress over and over again. Above anything else, this is a human act, and no matter where it is, whether it's in a college classroom or you're out talking to people on the street or in a community center, you have to really recognize how much everybody is bringing, their own human dramas, to that present situation.

R: In your ideas about writing that occurs inside and outside of school, you seem to be hinting at social constructivist theory—the idea that our individual consciousness and our social consciousness are always linked somehow. That seems to suggest, as you were just saying, that teaching is a human act, can really lead to reflexivity. You seem to constantly reflect on your teaching practices and your work in the community. How do you encourage your students to think

that way about writing, or how you encourage your colleagues and community partners to think that way about writing or literacy?

EG: One of the things that I try to do when I teach my practicum is to always have us work in multiple modes. For instance, I try to get people drawing, especially English graduate students, because they almost always feel really embarrassed.

Getting people to work in modes that dramatize the cognitive processes in different ways is what leads to new reflection. I'm doing a senior seminar right now with English majors, and our research question is, "What did you learn in college?" So during the first four weeks, we looked at reading theories and material on intellectual and emotional development in college. Then their first assignment was to list every book they've read since they started college, and it's been really fun. I did an activity on Tuesday where I had people paired up. One person was facing the screen and the image I was projecting, and the other person was facing the wall, the other way. The person facing the screen had to describe a painting that I put up, and the other person had to draw the painting as it was described by the first person. It just worked beautifully. My wife is an artist, and she teaches art education, so we're always talking about our teaching and devising these devilish doings in our classrooms. Getting English students to draw is a great model for thinking about the constructivist quality of reading— but outside of the process of reading that people are so familiar with that they are totally unaware of how much they are constructing as they read. It's a tremendous advantage for me to be talking to Wendy about her class because she pushes me to come up with all of these other ways that both sidestep, but really parallel, the kinds of literacy practices that I'm teaching.

I try to do these kinds of moves wherever I am. At Tree House Books, where we're working with young kids, and college students are doing the tutoring, it's a really mixed curriculum. There's a lot of artwork, and they've done some ethnographic work interviewing people in the community about some historical developments. I think that the more you can get people both thinking harder about their own backgrounds but also being put in unfamiliar situations and seeing themselves connected to people in ways they never saw

before, the better. The more our natural tendencies both to construct new meanings out of new situations and to develop relationships that ground new learning, the more visible it all becomes.

The other big issue is trying to get people out of their social class framework. It's so easy for us to say something like, "Well, everybody I know is doing X. In my generation we all did Y." We very seldom can stop and say, "Well actually the people I regarded in my generation were probably something like ten percent of the total population." We were having dinner last night with my son, who is 25, and he said, "Everybody you knew when you were growing up was a social activist. How come they're not social activists now?" We tried to tell him, "Well, most of the people we know still are social activists but not the way they were in the '70s or the '60s." There were an awful lot of people who—you know, they talked about our generation as always marching the streets and smoking pot and all of the things that people did—an awful lot of people weren't doing those things. One of the most clarifying experiences I had as a college student was hitchhiking. When you hitchhike, you have no idea who's going to pick you up, and whoever stops to pick you up is usually quite different from you, at least back in those days. They didn't pick you up for their health. They picked you up because they were tired and needed someone to talk to, or they needed you to tell them a story. Usually what happened was they picked you up because they wanted to tell you *their* story.

Hitchhiking was really helpful for me because it allowed me to go a lot of places for practically no money, but it was also really helpful for me because every time you get in a new car, you're in a different frame, and you have a different look at the social lens through which Americans see their own country and the world. It's really fun to get people together who really have a very different sense of what the most urgent things in their lives are. What can they assume will always be there? What can they assume won't? What will the future look like?

That's one of the reasons I think community-based learning is so important, especially for college students. For middle-class students, college is a place where you're finally old enough that you have some

control over what you're going to study, and you are probably more open than you're going to be for many years in being surprised about things. But if you go through that whole phase without really stepping off the campus, then you can be surprised intellectually and even emotionally with new relationships and broken love affairs but without being surprised in terms of social class. You could be a sociology major; you could even get a PhD in it, but unless you step outside the campus, step outside the social frame, you're not going to live the discrepancy that social class divisions generate in people's cognitive maps.

R: Is there an analogy for how we look at literacy and how we look at writing that we can make with the idea that things are so different now, that we don't do those things any longer?

EG: I don't know that there's an analogous situation. You could probably come up with some possibilities. In hitchhiking, you learn so much about stepping into holes and just going to the new place. I was a rider with a guy who was a waterbed salesman in Arizona when waterbeds were really new. I don't think I'd even seen a waterbed. A couple of rides later, there was a guy who had been a sergeant in Panama, and he was being court marshaled because he had two wives. You know, he was really a trip. These people just really wanted to tell you their stories. They'd sit there and all you had to say was, "How ya doin'?" Sometimes, as long as you were willing to sit and listen, you'd get a real education for free. In one way, the analogy is—my son has all these weird facts that he gets from the Internet, some of which are true and some which I don't think are. He's got a job where, if he has a moment, he uses the computer to go on these wild trips, learning about all kinds of weird things. Some of them I really question, but he uses it that way, and I think many people do; they just go from link to link to link to learn about whether fruit flies live inside bananas or not.

There is a simultaneity of information that the Internet allows that has certain similarities to hitchhiking. The difference is that it doesn't have quite the pronounced class markings on it. You don't get the ride from the broken-down guy who's been drinking for three years and is trying to get himself to Memphis. But you do have access to

all of these different kinds of enthusiasms that come out of some economic urgency or the need to make yourself professional, and you do become savvy about how to legitimate something if you spend much time on it. But your body's not there; it's not quite the same thing. It's also not quite the same thing as the enthusiasm for studying abroad because, very often, the study abroad programs have to be, for their own legitimacy, pretty safe and also pretty quartered off from the life in the country. If you're lucky, you happen to step off the curb and run into somebody who has a very different attitude. If you're working in Jamaica, for example, you realize that, actually, there are a lot of problems in Jamaica. It's not like there are no problems in Jamaica. I think people do come back with that, but I think it's a very isolated experience that happens almost by accident. That's a very hard question.

There's an increased desire to police class lines in our current culture, but a young person who is bound and determined to see things differently, will. Even the Army, when there was the draft—and believe me, I am not waxing nostalgic about the draft—a lot of people on both the left and the right will say that one of the really extremely valuable functions of the draft was that the kid who went to Harvard and the kid who worked at his father's gas station in Indiana would be together in basic training. People make it into something that's very sentimental, but there really was something very profound about it. That was certainly my experience growing up in the Army, and I write about that in the new book. It's not that class went away. Class is very, very clearly marked in the Army. You see it on people's shoulders. If they're not the adult who's in the Army or in the military, you can see it in which houses they live. But at the same time, we all played baseball together; we all went to school together. We were aware of who lived in the sergeant's quarters and who lived in the colonel's quarters. There was clarity about social class, yet there was a constant mixing of social class. We live in so many more gated communities now that a lot of people just don't get those kinds of experiences.

R: This idea of relationships and building and losing relationships is very interesting: fleeting relationships, like you have with hitchhikers; a student doing an ethnographic study of an area; or

more long-term relationships. And this idea of words and homes — you mention something at the end of your book's introduction about people making their homes with written words, which is also evident in your discussion about hitchhiking. Could you talk a little bit more about why you think stories and narratives are able to provide this sort of home for us.

EG: Well, I suspect—and this is not a well-grounded, scientific observation—that the mind wants to have the emotional impression that things are intact. Again, I come back to this idea of frames. I think frames are both really valuable themselves and really valuable when they break, even if it hurts. Really, you can think about a narrative as an expression of the intactness of a frame because the narratives we tell each other regularly always have lots of cues about what's up and what's down, who the good guys are and who the bad guys are. They have all these gender markers; they have all these things that establish how we're supposed to do things, where we're supposed to laugh, for example.

That's why, thinking about the question of multilingual writers, one of things that's the mark of somebody who is imperfectly or uncomfortably assimilated into another culture is that you can't really tell when to laugh at a joke. When I lived in Latin America—in Mexico and Guatemala—that was always the hardest thing. That was kind of my main ambition in life—to get to the place where I knew when to laugh.

Really, in another sense, you can laugh when you know where the doors and windows are. You know what constitutes the floor and the ceiling. So when something comes along that looks like a floor but is really a ceiling, that's funny. We're always telling each other stories that say, "We're ok, right? We're in the same room, right?" I have a very dear friend who moved to Philadelphia a long time ago for a short while and was totally uninterested in sports. One day he came over to our house and said, "I just figured out how you can always have a good conversation in a bar. You can always sit down and say, 'How 'bout them Phils?'" "I don't even need to know anything about the Philadelphia Phillies because they'll just talk."

That's really about being. That's why it's so uncomfortable, for example, if you're a boy who grew up with two mothers and you go to a middle school locker room for gym where people start making gay jokes. You want to laugh because you want to be part of the boys, and you want to accept that you have the same story everybody else has. But your story is really different from the story that they're assuming. In fact, who knows? The guy who's telling the story might have two dads. That's unlikely, but it's possible. But the framework gets reinforced, and everybody's either got to go along with it, or they've got to say, "Let's break this frame and do something else," and that often causes a fight. So narratives are great, except when they're not, right? They enforce an intactness which allows for a feeling of safety. And in a classroom, safety is the absolutely most important thing to establish, at least at the beginning.

Then there are times when you have to be able to step out of the frame that everybody is carrying, the stories that everybody assumes to be true, in order to get to a different story that includes other people or lets you see things in ways you've never seen them before. That's why it's so important that the classroom be safe, so you can go to places that otherwise would seem pretty unsafe. In cognitive psychology, or in, say, Piaget's model, there's always this move to get to the place of discrepancy or cognitive dissonance so you can develop, go to the next stage. Almost every developmental model has some version of that. Again, you think about stories as establishing the version of development now. Then the story gets surreal or postmodern, and that's because it's breaking up and having to move to another level of narrative. I don't know if level is the right word there, but again, another frame. Let me just say, I use the word frame also in the way physics uses frame, as in a gravitational frame, where you could have a gravitational frame in Tokyo that has a sense of what's up and what's down, which will be very different from the gravitational frame in Stockholm, which would be different from the gravitational frame on the moon. Every one of them has an up and a down; it's just that the up and down is in a different direction.

R: I'm interested to know what you see as the future of service learning [and community literacy] going. What do you think needs to happen?

EG: We have a unit called Community Learning Network, which is actually doing well, and you could see in that name that our goal in developing this is that we get away from the idea of service and we get away from the concept of center. We see things more in terms of connecting with people, doing lots of different kinds of things in different venues, and I'm happy with the way that's working.

And I think that's a little different than other models because the "center" idea gives the sense that you know what the right way is and you're teaching other people the right way of doing it. Our approach requires saying, "Gee you're doing a really interesting thing here. And do you know that somebody over here is doing something a little bit like what you're doing? You two should talk." So the people who work in gardens and the people who work in architecture and the people who work in public health can have more to talk to each other about as opposed to everybody just going to the center.

To me, that's an important new way to organize community-based learning. I think that as universities, particularly public universities, become defunded by their states and their local governments, (although I don't think it's ever going to get zeroed out, and I think that they'll find their way back to supporting higher education at some point), some very profound changes are going on. We're not going back to the grand days of land grant universities.

R: As a kind of an isolated entity in the community?

EG: In terms of funding, but not only funding. I mean, Governor Corbett could not make the kinds of cuts he's making in higher education if the public at large hadn't also really lost the sense of what higher education is for. I think [that's] what's really at stake doing community-based learning: to rearticulate and rediscover anew the purpose of the relationship between generating new knowledge and people carrying on their day-to-day lives in the American economy.

Our mainstream idea of the connection between knowledge and economy is a figure like Steve Jobs. That is, knowledge has to be about economically productive discovery. I guess I would come back

to the relationship idea. In my mind, community-based learning and university/community partnerships are about forming entirely new relationships among the various people who think they know or people who are helping other people think they know. I hate to evoke the “general public,” but I mean people who see their lives in terms of work and family and not particularly in terms of education as a major preoccupation or occupation. I think if we can’t figure out how universities, and for that matter K-12 schools, are intimately involved with the lives of the rest of the culture, we’re really in serious trouble.

Universities are already so much like gated communities that public relations are sometimes the only points of interaction between the campus and the community. I think that in a much larger way, presidents and provosts see community engagement as an opening for making major claims that really aren’t substantiated. Those of us who do this kind of work have to be really careful about not being used and not using our partners. But at the same time, community-based literacy initiatives are really about rethinking what universities *are* and what their relationship is to the rest of the economy and the rest of the culture or cultures.

R: To follow up on that, we wonder what you see the role of *Reflections* being, or a journal like *Reflections* that’s focused on rhetoric in society, community literacies, and service learning. What do you see as *Reflections’* role in this field or in our culture?

EG: There are many functions for a learned journal. On the one hand, the function—which is not a shameful function—is to publish things that people in this area write so that they can get jobs and promotions and tenure. I don’t know how much longer there’s going to *be* any tenure, but that’s not a bad thing because what we’re trying to do is substantiate that this kind of work really matters.

I strongly believe that those of us who are lucky enough to have tenured jobs have to devote a considerable amount of our time to help graduate students—and early on in their professional careers—do this kind of work. So in that sense, *Reflections*, *Community Literacy Journal*, and anybody else who publishes in this area needs to think about doing things to make sure that committees that look at this

kind of publication don't just discount it. So you want to make sure that what you publish is really well thought out, well-researched, really speaks to issues and isn't self-congratulatory.

On the other hand, given the kind of subjects that *Reflections* takes on, it then has an obligation that most other learned journals don't have, which is to think about multiple audiences for this work. Steve Parks' whole preoccupation with making primary documents accessible, I think, was a great addition to the journal. Steve is always so inventive. He really opened doors that nobody ever opened, so that was great. I think we do have to be aware that at least some—not necessarily everything—but some of what gets published in *Reflections* should be valuable for organizing work, for talking across partnerships. You want to say to somebody you're working with in a community group: "Do you think the members of this board would be interested in reading this article together and talking about it?" An article like that has to be written in a different kind of language than academic articles are usually written in. It might be fun—Steve and I talked about this in the past—to have in every issue at least one article that's identified as something like a public talking document or a community-organizing effort where we're really addressing a different audience. I think that makes this journal distinct.

Another really crucial audience is going to have to be K-12 public school teachers and principals—people who are thoughtful and who have goals that we can relate to or approve—to give that person something that he or she can share with the staff and colleagues. The faculty from the local university and faculty from the local high school should be able sit down and talk about what service learning is, and, of course, there are so many different ideas about what literacy is. We do this thing called instructional rounds here between our first-year writing program and one of the high schools not too far away us. It's being funded by a grant through an organization called the Philadelphia Education Fund, and it's really interesting.

In my book *Because We Live Here*, I talk about deep alignment, and I think these kinds of initiatives are really at the heart of deep alignment. You have to keep talking to each other about things: "When you use this term, what do you mean?" The term that really

came out recently was *pedagogy*. The high school principal came over to Temple when we did this faculty development day we called Halloween Carnival of Pedagogy. People dressed up, and we gave out a lot of candy, and we talked about what we were doing in our classes. Afterward, the principal—a terrific man—said: “You guys use pedagogy completely differently than we use it in our school. In our school, pedagogy means very specific techniques you use to accomplish certain goals in a classroom. You use pedagogy all different kinds of ways. You talk about strategies, whereas we tend to talk about activities or exercises or projects.” It’s really, really important to have some way of sitting down together and talking about what you mean when you say *pedagogy*. And I think that *Reflections* has a tremendous potential to do that among college professors, public school teachers and principals, prison wardens and inmates who run educational facilities, and many others involved with literacy.

We really need more safe places like *Reflections* and *Community Literacy Journal* to have meaningful conversations. A few years back, we had a summer meeting at Temple. I really felt that one of the problems community literacy scholars had at the time was that we did not get together. In some sense, people didn’t even really *know* each other; we only knew each other from our writing. Anyway, it was some years ago, but the cool thing is that there is another iteration of it that is coming this summer in Albuquerque. Michelle Kells and Juan Guerra were at the Temple meeting and were really enthusiastic about it. This summer, Michelle Kells is hosting it in Albuquerque in July. She and Juan have developed something they call Writing Across the Communities. She’s attempting to form a national organization that will keep people talking to each other.

One of the things I’ve really enjoyed over the years is putting together small-level conferences. We did one years ago at the public library for the Philadelphia region called Because We Live Here, which is where the name of the book came from. The phrase originally came from something Steve Parks and I wrote a long time ago. I think Steve was still at Temple when we did that conference and invited Linda Flower and others from Pittsburgh to join us. That was our first conference to get people thinking about community-based learning and literacy in Philly. We had high school teachers, and it was the first large-

scale program for Philadelphia Writing Program Administrators. PWPA has since done a few of others, on community stuff, on second language learners and recently on disabilities and writing. I feel strongly that the through-story in every case is the promotion of participatory democracy.

R: We've kept you a very long time, and we're very appreciative of your taking the time.

EG: Thank *you* – whenever I have a conversation like this, it's also rooted in conversations that I've been having in the last couple weeks.

R: We really appreciate it. Thank you for hitching a ride with us!

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Introduction to Enlightened Self Interest: A Game

Eli Goldblatt,
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Enlightened Self-Interest is a game about non-profit boards. When you play the game with people involved in university/community partnerships, at least one member of the board should be a university representative, but the game can certainly be played with any mix of member characters. It can also be played for longer and shorter times or with more or less advanced rules (see below). Purposes of the game include:

- to model the complex dynamics of non-profit boards for people considering board membership, cooperating with a non-profit, or currently serving on a board.
- to give players experience with rhetorical challenges in situations where argument and problem solving can really matter.
- to dramatize the way that well-meaning people of different backgrounds can easily misunderstand one another, mistake hesitance or deliberation for

recalcitrance, and grow frustrated with the slow pace of collective decision making.

- to encourage play within serious situations.

Start with the most basic rules of the game, but experiment with variations suggested here or developed in the course of further play.

Basic Rules

1. Before you begin play, decide in the group these fundamental characteristics of the non-profit organization you represent. The fundamentals need not be described in more than a few words and numbers—they can be elaborated in the course of play.
 - a. Demographics of the community served
 - b. Geographical location for the organization
 - c. Current operating budget
 - d. Number of employees
 - e. Service or function of the organization
2. One player must volunteer to be the Executive Director (ED). All other players must choose a card from the Board pile. Take a few minutes for the players to fill out brief notes expanding the biography or back story of their characters. Feel free to make the roles known to all, but the biographies are best shared as play unfolds. As noted above, if some or all of the players are associated with a university or college, the group may choose to designate one or more university members of the board.
3. Choose a card from the Situation pile. The ED is the only player who may change, alter, or add to the details of the situation but may be convinced to do so by members of the board. No additional funding can be sought once the budget has been set in the initial phase of the game (see **Advanced Rules** for variations), except in cases where a financial crisis has emerged.
4. Play begins with the reading of the Situation. The game ends when a plan for resolution has been voted on and passed by the board. If the ED does not agree to implement the plan, the

board may vote to terminate the ED and choose one of their own members as an interim, or they may decide to go back for further deliberations.

5. Once play has ended, debrief with the group about the results. You may want to answer questions such as:
 - a. What divisions or underlying tensions developed in the discussion and along what lines do the conflicts form?
 - b. How do people without particular expertise in a situation nonetheless contribute to the resolution of the problem?
 - c. In what way is money a limiting factor and in what way is funding not the major issue?
 - d. How does the vision or mission of the organization shape its actions under stressful conditions?
 - f. What do board members need to know to be more effective in their jobs.
 - g. How can rhetorical training contribute to the efficacy of a board?

Advanced Rules and Variations

Playing with a board and dice.

Once the fundamentals of the organization have been established, the group may decide to draw a board to play on. Rules may vary according to the specific goals of players in the game. Players may, for example, draw a board that represents a neighborhood, city, or rural site. Each area of the board might be associated with numbers of people that the organization serves, and the game involves a goal of accumulating a certain number of enrolled people. On the other hand, the game board might represent various external factors or funders with which the board and organization interact. In this case the goal might be to increase the budget of the organization by proposing a grant once the game marker is moved to the appropriate funder's space. Roll of the dice would determine whether or not the grant is accepted (determine the funder's percentage of acceptances and then vary the yes/no results, e.g. a highly selective funder might give out a large grant, but only doubles totaling over 6 will win the grant).

Write your own situations.

The Situations pile in this edition is purposely limited. Frequent players and facilitating teachers should come up with their own challenges to *Enlightened Self Interest*.

Add new board characters.

You may want to invent more eccentric, problematic, or visionary board members to enliven your game.

Decide on alternate winning endpoints.

The basic game puts an emphasis on resolution as the endpoint, and above we mention organization size or budget expansion as possible metrics for success. The board should decide on its own game endpoint at the outset.