pursuit. As teachers, we ought to expand students' understandings of their own experiences and encourage students to value the differences they see in others. Through team-building activities, teachers can work with students and with one another to support a climate that values all participants and supports learning.

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Poetry Out Loud

for Nicole Louw
2015 Poetry Out Loud Alabama Champion

A skinny Puerto Rican boy,
proud of his country (ashamed of his country),
confidently performs the naked buttocks of William
Carlos Williams's "Danse Russe,"
looks in his mirror, and finds
a skinny Puerto Rican poet.

An imaginative South African American girl from
Alabama agrees (but disagrees) with a first-generation
American immigrant who remarks—sharing
his corrupted vision of politicians, businessmen,
and lovers—that Alabama is the most racist
place on earth. She voices Tony Hoagland's
ageless speaker: "This is not a test / and everybody passes."

The Puerto Rican boy and South African Alabamian girl
redefine American, finding a shared language to teach each other
a new way to speak—to discover on stage the voices
of poems
and Puerto Rico
and Alabama—
and unfurl in the rhythms of
poetry out loud.

—Jonathan S. Loper
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