Update on Class Lives Story-Sharing Events

“In a world that is ruled by class and capitalism, but where we are told talking about money is wrong, Class Action events are such a welcome reprise, where we learn more about our own stories by listening to others.”

–An audience member at a Class Lives Event

Thanks to many generous supporters, Class Action carried out the wish of late co-founder Felice Yeskel with the publication of Class Lives, an anthology of essays by writers from across the class spectrum. We believe that one first step to a world without classism is sharing stories, and this anthology embodies this value.

Class Lives traveled the nation in a series of 10 book events from December 2014 through June 2015, effectively spreading class stories and engaging audiences in nine cities: Boston, Springfield and Northampton, MA; Minneapolis; Denver; Seattle; New York; DC; and twice in Philadelphia. Not only did diverse contributors read their pieces, but the audience members were invited to share their own class stories as well.

One such story was told by a ten-year-old girl who detailed her family’s trip to Jamaica on vacation. Upon seeing the immense poverty and the racial divide, she began to recognize her privilege:

“I have a house. I have food. I have fresh water. I have an education. That’s all I’ll really ever need to get by and it was a given. But [Jamaican] people who live in poverty have to work for the essentials that many of us take for granted. And one day I hope that will change.”
A member of Resource Generation, a group of people who use their privilege to work for social change, spoke of her parents’ inability to see themselves as well-off:

"There is always someone richer who we can point to so that we don’t have to acknowledge our own role in redistribution. But also, scarcity is a feeling that exists at all class levels, even when it not a reality."

These events were a notable success for the Class Action mission: class experiences were shared, audience members and contributors alike learned more about the experiences of those from other class backgrounds, and many left with the desire to do more to reduce inequality.

“As a working-class person from poverty, I had no doubt that there was a lot of passion, a lot of caring, and there was impromptu and sincere communication.”

-Fisher Lavell, Class Lives contributor and Class Action trainer

The 10 story-sharing events were just the latest chapter in the ways we’ve used Class Lives to reach out to draw new constituencies into class conversations. Our marketing to college faculty got a boost when we began offering free discussion guides for social science and English classrooms. To get the guides: www.classism.org/class-lives/classroom-materials/

And if you haven’t yet contributed a story or read the stories in our online class-story-sharing portal, check it out at www.classism.org/class-lives/stories/.

Class Lives breaks the taboo on revealing our class experiences across class and race lives. More than just a book, we’ve made it into a vehicle for social change.