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**PUTTING BAND AIDS ON BULLET WOUNDS – STORYTELLER COREY BLAKE
CULTIVATES REAL LIFE STORIES THAT CHANGE PEOPLES’ LIVES**

MUNDELEIN, Ill. (Nov. 30, 2009) — “I put band aids on bullet wounds.” That was the recent response from a social worker when Corey Blake asked what she did for a living.

“Suddenly, everyone turned and saw that woman for the first time,” said [Blake](#), author, president of [Writers of the Round Table](#) and CEO of the [From the Barrio Foundation](#). “They saw someone who knew her story and someone who recognized the disparity between the problem (bullet wounds) and their solution (band aids). There is no question that her knowing her own story can and will help her to change more lives.”

And that is Blake’s secret mission: to draw attention to storytelling as a generator of real change. Blake’s recent collaboration with Robert Renteria and his memoir, “From the Barrio to the Board Room,” is an example of how storytelling can inspire kids to not only show up, but to be an active participant in their education—because they can relate to and emotionally connect with an author and his story.

“In his book, Robert did what most of us are taught not to do; he aired his dirty laundry,” said Blake. “He takes readers through his life journey: a parent addicted to drugs and alcohol, domestic abuse, poverty, dropping out of school, gangs, and doing and dealing drugs. But Robert was able to steer his life in a different direction, and as a result his story now speaks to kids in a language that they understand.”

This fall upwards of 1,000 Chicago city students discovered through Renteria’s book and the From the Barrio Foundation’s free curriculum that hard work, dedication and staying in school are the secrets to success, and that gang violence is not a lifestyle but a death style. Another 600 kids are using the curriculum this month at Taft High School and Evergreen Academy in Chicago, East Aurora High School and East Aurora Middle School in Aurora, and Fontana High School in California. Students are learning to tell their own stories as a means of building their own confidence and self-esteem.

“Robert’s support will help us to build a climate of acceptance and a culture of support and community building where all members of our school community feel valued and supported and work together to support one another,” said Nancy Bartosz, assistant principal at Westmont High School.

By using stories like that of Renteria’s, Blake says that kids will find pride in the telling of their own stories, feel more visible in the world and will be judged less by their peers.

Through his work with the From the Barrio Foundation, Blake uses Renteria’s book and life to motivate youth. Even since writing the book and telling his own story, Renteria’s life has changed dramatically.

“He has gone from being successful to being significant,” said Blake. “Life changes when you know who you are, when others see who you are. Through story comes understanding. Through understanding, confidence is built. And through confidence, we make better choices in life. By helping them tell their stories, we empower students to become three dimensional to themselves and to each other... instead of remaining invisible.”

Blake works closely with authors so that they can transform their stories and become agents of change. To learn more about this unique storytelling process and how it is changing lives, contact Jennifer Geronimo at XXX.XXX.XXXX or email@email.com. For more information about Corey Blake, please visit www.writersoftheroundtable.com. To learn more about the From the Barrio Foundation and Robert Renteria’s story, visit www.fromthebarrio.com.

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