

# Book Reviews: *The Freedom Writers Diary* and *Teach with Your Heart*

**By Patrice A. McCarthy**  
*Deputy Director and General Counsel, CABE*  
**Lisa Steimer**  
*Sr. Staff Associate for Program and Convention, CABE*

In her books *The Freedom Writers Diary* and *Teach with Your Heart*, Erin Gruwell brings alive the struggles and successes of her high school English students. *The Freedom Writers Diary* contains excerpts from the work of her students, and *Teach with Your Heart*

recounts Ms. Gruwell’s own experience with the Freedom Writers. Together, the books tell the story of an inspired teacher and her ability to impact the lives of students that many have given up on.

Erin Gruwell used the book *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* to teach her students about intolerance and misunderstanding in the lives of others, and to see the parallels in their own lives. Using the writing of their own diaries is a tool, the students became inspired to be a catalyst for change, beginning with their own lives. Ms. Gruwell used literacy and writing to teach tolerance.

*Teach with Your Heart* demonstrates how these students helped Ms. Gruwell identify the most effective way to impact educational reform. Her mission is quite clear - ensuring that education in the United States meets the needs of each child. The

experiences of both Ms. Gruwell and her students, as told in both books, are quite powerful. Whether or not you are an educator, you will pull for Erin and her students to overcome the many obstacles they face. They manage to pull off some pretty remarkable feats in the process. This inspired teacher and her students serve as a reminder to all of us of the impact one person can have on the lives of others and the positive ripple effect that can ensue.

Erin Gruwell, the Freedom Writers, and her nonprofit organization, The Freedom Writers Foundation, have received many awards, including the prestigious Spirit of Anne Frank Award, and have appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show, Primetime, Good Morning America, and The View. All 150 Freedom Writers went on to graduate from high school.

Ms. Gruwell will be speaking at the CABE/CAPSS Convention on Friday evening. Both *The Freedom Writers Diary* and *Teach with Your Heart* will be available for purchase following her session.

Proceeds from purchases of these books will go to The Freedom Writers Foundation. Ms. Gruwell will be signing copies of her book immediately following her Friday evening session.

