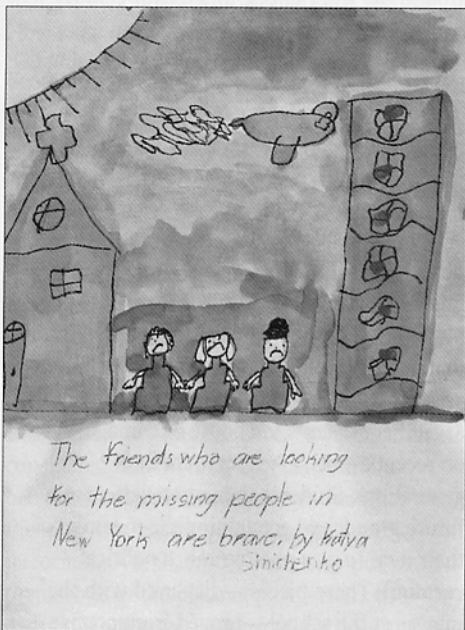


Some People Are Brave

BY CARL NAGIN

A second grade teacher at Bryte Elementary School in West Sacramento, California, Dawn Imamoto hoped she would not have to explain



Second-grader Katya pays tribute to the friends of those missing after September 11.

the September 11, 2001, events to her students. Unfortunately, the principal at Bryte was having surgery on September 11, and no directives or instructions were forthcoming from the district.

So, the next day, Imamoto set aside her lesson plans, gathered the children in a circle, and invited them to share comments and questions about what they knew:

“Will they attack us?”

“What if they come to Bryte School?”

“Why is this happening?”

“I knew I had to help them deal with their fears, help them feel safe,” said Imamoto. “I couldn’t stop thinking about how to comfort them.”

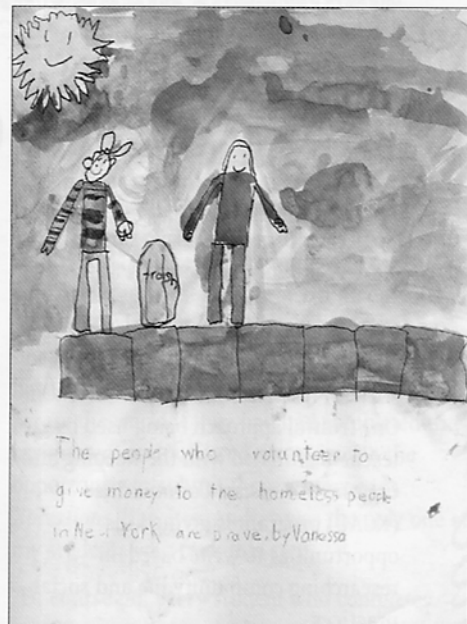
That meant pulling down a map and showing where the attacks had occurred — 3,000 miles away. *We are safe*, she told them. “I thought I was lying in saying that,” Imamoto recalled ten months later. “We’re so close to the state capitol. I was scared myself.”

Before the attacks, her class had been working on a unit on bravery, reading stories focused on that theme, including Florence Parry Heide’s *Some Things Are Scary*, a humorous book about fear. For Imamoto, the point was to get students to understand that “to be brave, we have to overcome what we are afraid of.” She decided that Heide’s book offered a perfect model for her children, one they could use to create their own publication, based on their understanding of bravery in the context of the events of September 11.

The result was *Some People Are Brave*, a work that has caught the eye of many teachers, parents, and others. In the book’s introduction, Imamoto describes the production process:

Together we made a list of all the people we thought were brave during the September 11 attack. We talked about what each person or group of people did that showed bravery. Each student was responsible for writing, illustrating, and painting a page of the [people] they thought were brave . . .

Writing this book helped my students deal with the tragic time. What my students



Vanessa’s depiction of help for the homeless suggests brighter times for the people of New York.

could not express orally, they were able to do in writing. Writing and publishing this book has brought my class closer and given us hope.

CARL NAGIN is a freelance editor with the National Writing Project. He has worked as a staff reporter for the Public Broadcasting Service series *Frontline* and has written for the *New Yorker*.

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