

My brother and I, we spent our school days restless alongside the children of the city's wealthy. And our nights - we spent sleepless Spanish Harlem nights amongst the city's poor. Nothing but blue skies for some - and little beyond narrow streets for others. So somewhere between street and sky, our school was founded. And our father, The Preacher, the way he walked *down these mean streets*, he gave us little room to choose. So we chose the streets, *and that has made all the difference*.

25 years ago my brother said "Let's start a school." I am so glad he did. We began with the patriot's principle that all children are created equal. And we put the pursuit of happiness, grounded in Aristotelian virtue, at the center of our life together. And in this Age of Anxiety, we have found true serenity in Spanish Harlem. Meanwhile, so much joy is lost in this city. Children strain under the weight of hostile homework, testing, and tutoring regimes; fade away in the glow of spectral friendships, framed in an iPhone rectangle - or tremble in the fear that *the one who knocks* will tear their mother away.

But on 103rd Street we have built an enduring, defiant *love among the ruins*, and  
**The State of the School is strong!**

And this strength is in no small part due to my beloved colleagues, past and present: I am so fortunate to share so many smiles and victories with you.

Meanwhile, the lingering autumnal heat has been sending shivers. One more *inconvenient truth*. And now some share whispers, in neighborhoods like this, that *winter is coming*.

Yet, 25 years ago my brother said, "Let's start a school." I am so glad he did. If only just for this. This moment with these poets. These children that come from people who honor the teacher, the moment, and the dignity of labor. They hold family and Holy Bible - or the Holy Koran - so close. Besides my colleagues, I know of no finer group of Americans. These people with low incomes and the highest of values. Our families have survived servitude, crossed deserts and seas, and endure a mad Pharaoh raging in his dotage. Quite biblical and classical has been their passage. They are not the chosen people, but we tonight are the chosen, because these beautiful people have chosen us. On 103rd Street, they reawaken us all to the American Dream.

Yes, Gluck+ has *built the wall* - and *a roof right over our heads*, and *we share the shelter* - of our home of the free and the brave. *A place for us*, where daily we restore some balance to a nation that has been sent reeling.

But this evening, it is time to move beyond a sleepless childhood, past patriot's dreams. With body and spirit forged by the austerities of sport and stillness, the rigors of a true liberal arts education, and our loving fellowship, these poets, our happy warriors, have become the ones for whom we have been waiting.