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The Mini-Writers of Massachusetts

Through Books of Hope (BOH), a creative writing program that enables young teens to become authors, over 96 books have been produced since 1999.

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## [Education]

At a time when most young teens are still perfecting their reading and writing skills, a young scholars based in Somerville, Massachusetts are publishing their own manuscripts with Books of Hope.

Through Books of Hope (BOH), a creative writing program that enables young teens to become authors, over 96 books have been produced since 1999. The program was started by a former New York City school teacher, Anikah Nailah, who had come to the Boston area to write and by chance took up residence across the street from a public housing project.

Quickly, she realized that youth in the community had few constructive activities to be involved in and as a result hatched the idea of Books of Hope. Since then, BOH has met at least once-a-week in borrowed space in the housing development and engaged neighborhood youth, as well as those from surrounding communities, in creative writing workshops with the goal of their authoring books.

The youth involved in this program are given the opportunity to participate in the publishing process as well.

This past month BOH enabled five of their protégées to travel to New York City to participate in Harlem's annual book fair. In contrast to many of the vendors scattered throughout 135<sup>th</sup> street, there was a table filled with eager young authors: Maishka Antoine, 14, Manisha Ducasse, 16, Keisha Jean-Louis, 16, Jessica Jean-Louis, 18, and Rose David, 18.

Each young author has already worked towards publishing their own book.

Maishka Antoine- "Lightning Strikes" (2008) and "Black Rainbow" (2009); Manisha Ducasse- Contributing writer to the anthology "4 Black Girls"; Keisha Jean-Louis- "Love Hurts" (2009); Jessica Jean-Louis- "Broken Home and Other Tales from the Hood" (2008); and, Rose David- Contributing writer to the anthology "4 Black Girls."

Soul has been directing BOH since September 2006.

All five BOH participants didn't hesitate to show their enthusiasm.

**For more information on Books of Hope go to**

<http://www.somervilleartscouncil.org/programs/artwow/booksofhope/>