

# Eye On Entertainment

## Freedom Writers Phenomenon Explodes onto the Silver Screen!

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In 1994, in Long Beach, California at Wilson High School, a first-year English teacher named Erin Gruwell was creating hope for a classroom full of "un-teachable, at risk" students for the first time. To these students, each day that they woke up every morning was good enough. Most of them were in opposing gangs, and struggled to survive through the day. After all, to them, they were "at war."

Gruwell was shocked to see how much teachers had given up on these 14 year old students. The majority of them, in the beginning, did not even know what the



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Holocaust was, yet all most all of them had been shot at sometime in their lifetime. Inspired by The Diary of Anne Frank, she gave them each a composition notebook to keep their own journal and to tell their own story. For the first time, these students had a voice. The words Gruwell read shocked her.

"When I arrived at juvenile hall," one anonymous Freedom Writer penned, "it was scary. They treated me like a criminal. They even took my mug shot. This was my first experience setting foot into a caged place. I was unlike any of the people surrounding me. Caged like beasts were murderers, rapists, gangsters, and robbers. The first-night was the scariest. I heard sounds I had never heard before. Inmates banging on walls, throwing

up their gang signs, yelling out who they were and where they are from. I cried my first night."

"School . . . why bother going to school? What's the use of going if I don't have a place to live?" another tainted Freedom Writer scribbles in their composition book.

The name "Freedom Writers" comes from a play on the words

"Freedom Riders," in reference to the 1961 civil right's movement bus rides from Washington to New Orleans to protest segregated bus seating. The Freedom Riders had something to fight for, and so did the Freedom Writers - the right to be heard.

Gruwell fought and won the opportunity to teach these students all the way to their senior year. In 1998, all the students of her class graduated high school. Most went on to col-

lege, and some even are currently attending graduate school.

Her passion and drive changed the lives of her students, and now, her story is inspiring millions around the world with the 1999 published compilation of The Freedom Writer's Diary and several other books based around her story. She recently had a movie made about her story, starring Hilary Swank playing the part of Gruwell. Gruwell currently also heads The Freedom Writer's Foundation, which is a nonprofit organization to help spread The Freedom Writer Method into schools across the world. You can visit the website and make donations at: <http://www.freedomwritersfoundation.org>.

interact with each other, which is presented very well. Through the blood, gore, violence, and horror comes a heart warming story while at the same time very sad.

Pan's Labyrinth was nominated this year for six Academy Awards including Best Foreign Language Film (since it is entirely in Spanish with English subtitles) and received a 22 minute long applause at the Cannes Film Festival. It would not be hard to not only say this movie is Guillermo's best, but one of this year's best in film. Pan's Labyrinth is a must see movie and easily deserves four out of four stars.

- JOEY DiCAMILLO



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"Freedom Writers" is now playing at a theater near you, starring Hilary Swank as the inspirational Ms. Erin Gruwell.

### Fireside Music Series: Chinua Hawk and Wes Mingus



Photo From Myspace

Chinua Hawk and Wes Mingus graced us with their musical talents during this month's first Fireside Music Series performance. On Feb. 1, the two filled the

Lion's Den with their collaboration of funky guitar rhythms and soulful vocal vibratos. Having played together for almost four years now, the two have created their own unique sound taking influences from Motown, blues, funk, and even modern pop music. "They have a vintage-modern type sound," says

Mallory Anthony, a freshman at Delco. "They take that old soulful sound, but add they're own new age style to it."

"We like to keep our sound real natural,"

says Mingus. Natural indeed, the two created a room full of emotion with just an acoustic guitar and a singer. Covering old and new hit songs, Hawk and Mingus played all the crowd favorites. With a little encouragement, Hawk had a lot of students singing along with him. At one point, during "My Girl," he completely stopped and let the students sing the chorus of the song.

Chinua Hawk and Wes Mingus have played at a few different Penn State campuses as well as venues all across the east coast. For a list of their upcoming shows or for more information in general you can visit either musician's website at [www.myspace.com/chinuahawk](http://www.myspace.com/chinuahawk) or [www.myspace.com/wesmingusmusic](http://www.myspace.com/wesmingusmusic).

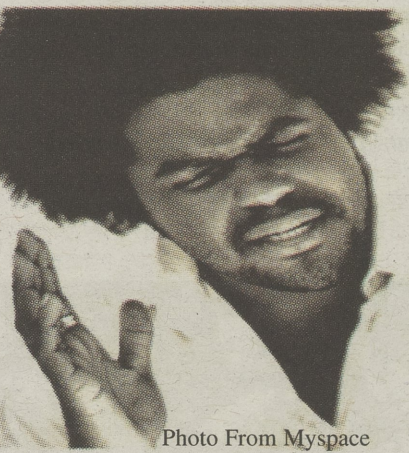


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- PETER SPIZZIRRI