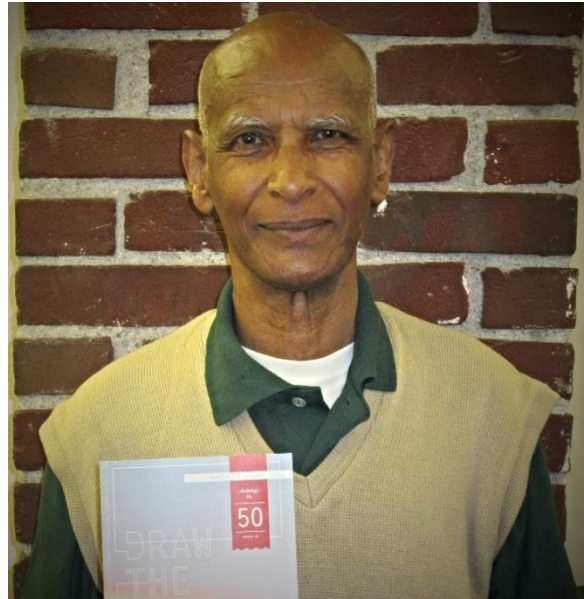


Featured Writer Interview with Girma Wakeyo

Girma has always loved to learn. He practiced community pharmacy in Ethiopia, his home country, and is now studying to earn his license to practice in the United States. When he isn't studying for his education, he is studying for fun, researching any subject that interests him at Powell's Books and the public library. He says he enjoys the atmosphere as much as the books. He likes being in the community, seeing and meeting interesting people.

He came to the United States to be near his daughter, who was attending college in Portland, and he now lives here with his wife and children. He participated in a Write Around Portland workshop through REACH at Allen Fremont Plaza. His piece "When the Wind Blows" was published in the Spring 2016 anthology, *Draw the Outside*.



Blowing Wind

by Girma Wakeyo

When the wind blows, the trees and flowers look so thrilled and happy. The branches of trees swing back and forth, left and right as if they are dancing to the rhythm of a popular music. The flowers appear to be blowing with the wind as though they are delightfully accompanying a musical band at an annual parade. The petals are scattered all over the area decorating the ground with a mosaic of colors and filling the air with aroma and fragrance one cannot get enough of.

When the wind blows, the surface water in oceans, seas and lakes move up and down in rising and falling undulating rhythm creating waves pleasant to watch, and making sound that is musical to the ears.

When the wind blows, it is enjoyable to watch the clouds gliding one on top of the other and gracefully moving apart, thinly spreading out into the open space and filtering the rays of the sun in such a way that they would reach us in moderate intensity.

However, the wind is not so gentle, kind and friendly all the time. There are times when the wind goes wild, blowing hard and fast, causing so much damage and destruction to homes and properties. It sometimes brings so much unexpected rain to an area inundating it with devastating flood. At times, it behaves so brutally that, cars from parking lots are tossed just like the fallen leaves on the ground, trees are uprooted and a whole village is brought to the ground and demolished.

Even though, anything unpredictable can happen, let's always think positive and hope for the good things we enjoy when the wind blows.

© 2016 Girma Wakeyo and Write Around Portland

Interview with Featured Writer Girma Wakeyo

Interviewed by a Write Around volunteer

What drew you to join the Write Around Portland workshop?

The first attraction was actually interaction with the people. A poster was posted at my apartment, and I thought, well, this would be a good opportunity to meet community members and have more interaction with them. It will give me the opportunity to know them better. So that's why I signed up for the program. Then when I started the workshop, I got more interested in writing.

Was there something you liked best about the workshop?

Yeah, listening to stories. We get so many things that you wouldn't expect, you know, listening to people's stories. There are elderly people with so much experience, life experiences. You get so much knowledge and wisdom from them.

How did it feel to be published in the anthology?

That was something I didn't expect! When I was in the first meeting of the workshop, I was not expecting that my writing could be published in a book. When you told us that, that was a very exciting moment. And when I saw [my piece] in the book—that was great. It was very motivating.

And how was the [spring 2016] anthology release party?

It was... prestigious. I was proud to present my writing. Though small, it might be considered insignificant, but to be appreciated by such a distinguished audience was really something I could be proud of.

You said when you joined the workshop, it was to meet people. I'm curious, after the workshop, do you have more of a sense of community with your neighbors?

It made me get closer to the people. I came to know them more deeply. Who they are. The potential they have. The life experience they have. And that made me proud, that I'm living with such great people.

Did this experience change your writing?

Well, it was very hard work. And it encourages you to write more. Had I not participated in that workshop, those pieces wouldn't have come to my mind in the first place. Participating in the workshop was what prompted me to write on different issues. Also, you can find out a hidden talent.

Oh, interesting.

Yes, a hidden talent. Some people have talent for writing, but they don't know they have it. And that is a very stimulating opportunity. It's very, very helpful, very motivating to discover what is inside you, the talent that was hidden, that people didn't realize. And that's what I saw from the workshop.