

Small Talk

Freedom songs from Robben Island to Chicago [Update]



[M. Klonsky pic]

February 2nd

'Best assembly ever' --Kenwood Academy Kids

The **Robben Island Singers'** Chicago tour is starting to get some press. Check out the coverage in [today's Tribune](#) and this report on [WBBM radio](#). I watched the singers completely capture the kids at **Kenwood Academy** yesterday. When one of the former prisoners told about how their hunger for things to read led them to smuggle books and newspapers into the cells, everyone in the audience was focused. Later the auditorium erupted in song. This is what teaching/learning is supposed to look like.

This was sent to me by **Diane Fager** at CPS, who was one of the event's key organizers:

*After the assemblies and media stuff, they did a Q&A with student leaders in a big circle. incredible.... then the Robben Island Singers were with the choir. the choir sang incredibly beautiful songs to them and vice versa. at the end, the RPS, per the request of the choir director, taught them the African National Anthem. They all practiced for about 15 minutes. Then the choir, with the RIS, stood up and gave the African National Anthem salute, (right hand in a fist and held up to our shoulder), and sang the anthem together. I truly had goose bumps all over me and tears in my eyes; it was so moving. This has turned out better than any of us could have imagined and it is because of the RIS; all of the hard work done by the schools and **Jeff/Jennifer [Spitz]**; and embracing the small schools' philosophy- (to the best of my unsophisticated knowledge of small schools/Dewey/Freirean philosophy: 'learn by doing; learn from the point of reference of where the student is at and what is relevant from his/her experience and then move from there; close inter-action and group learning between teachers, administrators and students; incorporate the arts and other innovative forms of expression to bring the experience home; and let everyone be the teachers and the students including the administrators, the outside people, the teachers and most importantly the students. The kids said that it was the "best assembly that Kenwood H.S. every had".*