

**StoryCorps Interview at Contra Costa County Library
Oscar Mansfield and Lora Osterloh**

Man: When I was a kid, books were very mysterious and kind of scary to me 'cause a lot of the kids my age were already reading and I wasn't quite there yet, so it was always kind of an intimidating situation. But, the first time I went to a library, was actually pretty magical. It was in San Francisco, where I was born and raised, and the sun was kind of shining on it, and, uh, it had this kind of this golden look to it, feel, and when we walked in it was very clean, lots of space. Our teacher kind of ushered us in, and sat us in the back, and told us "go pick out a book and read it to yourself or to a friend, to a classmate," and I was the only kid in the whole entire group who kind of just stood there, frightened, because I knew I was not going to be able to read a book like everyone else, so, it was very, very uncomfortable. So, I, I picked a book with lots of pictures. But, in a very unusual way, the library itself kind of eased a little bit of my tension. Just the way it looked; it was so quiet. They had these little tables just for us kids, which was nice, even though I was kind of by myself, I didn't feel too frightened after a while. I knew at some point I had to come to grips with this and be comfortable with books.

It's what I've always wanted and it was what I was always afraid of. And, I'm glad that Second Chance and you, and tutors like you, have literally just brought that out of me.

Because of your patience and you pushing me, and pushing me, to the point where it was, I was just bleeding [woman laughing], umm . . .

Woman: Oh, listen to you . . .

Man: I know.

Woman: . . . whine.

Man: Because of people like you, you, I mean, honestly, just an absolute love of books. I was like, "my God it's just like a whole 'nother universe."

Woman: You are so poetic. You have such an incredibly poetic soul . . .

Man: I never saw myself as a poet.

Woman: But you are. And, I mean, I can just take your words and write them down and show them back to you, and you recognize your poetry and you've written things for the project Second Chance . . .

Man: Yeah.

Woman: . . . annual journal that, that people just love. And the poem you wrote about your mother just still brings tears to my eyes. I mean, I so admire your creativity, and I think . . .

Man: Thank you.

Woman: . . . you, you definitely have that.

Man: You left a very powerful spark in me and I know when we stop working together, I hope that we're still in touch with each other. And, you know, every now and then I, I get a chance to see you somewhere, anywhere, just to say hi or . . . People like you can't be forgotten.

Woman: Wow.

Man: Never.

Woman: That's such a sweet thing to say.

Man: You can never be forgotten. You, you are part of my nucleus. Why? Because you helped *shape* who and what I am.

Woman: You've given the same back to me, certainly. I mean, meeting with you for five years, and two times a week, all the time, and you make me laugh—we've almost gotten kicked out of a library [man laughing] because we get so silly. We've had so much fun, and it's been such joy. And it's added so much . . .

Man: Yeah.

Woman: . . . you've touched me so much. And, no, you'll always be in my life. I couldn't bear to let you go at this point [man laughing].