



## Obama

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Obama with helping to keep small businesses like Caffè Prada afloat during tumultuous economic times.

"When President Obama took office, across the country, businesses like this were struggling ... under the devastating effects of the recession," Prada said. "He has worked tirelessly to help us create good paying jobs right here at home and to create a brighter future for our families and our communities."

The businessowners shared their story during an outdoor media conference at Caffè Prada. The event was organized by Obama for America. As they spoke, a small crowd held Obama campaign signs.

"President Obama is fighting for small business owners like Ken and me," Prada said. "Supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses is vital to creating an economy where ... hard work pays off and everyone has a fair shot."

Cameron French, the North Carolina press secretary for Obama for America, said he believes that Prada's story of realizing the American Dream, even in a difficult economic climate would resonate with voters.

"We were looking for small business owners who were supportive of the president, and Alex's story I think is perfect," said French. "He understands the president is fighting to restore middle class security."

French says Obama has been a staunch supporter of

small businesses, as is evidenced by the 18 small business tax cuts that have gone into effect during his first term.

"It's important," French said of the cuts. "That allows people to hire, it allows people to get the economy moving."

Prada, who left his native country to escape an economy that faced hyper inflation and other major challenges, says he is proud of Caffè Prada's legacy of survival and perseverance. He hopes its success will inspire others to step out and begin realizing their own dreams of entrepreneurship.

"When you believe in something and you have a dream, you have to share it," he declared, "and hopefully, that will encourage people to do the same thing."

Mayor Allen Joines was also on hand. He also praised the efforts of the Obama Administration to help revive local economies to their former glory. Joines said the city has been able to restore 55 percent of the jobs it lost during the "Great Recession." He says having the support of the federal government has helped keep the city from hemorrhaging even more employment opportunities.

"We need all the help we can get to continue to grow this economy," said Joines, a Democrat. "...We're constantly facing battles from other countries trying to siphon jobs away from here. I believe the president is encouraging those companies to bring those jobs back to America."

# Young writers present at Harvard

BY LAYLA GARMS  
THE CHRONICLE

Authoring Action (A2) took a group of local young adults to the campus of Harvard University in Boston late last month.

Representatives from A2, a local nonprofit that engages youth through writing and the community through youth, were invited to give a presentation before an audience of 30 students and faculty members from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education on April 28.

"I see this as a step above a meaningful life experience," declared 15-year-old Marcus Lyles, one of eight A2 authors who were selected to make the trip based upon the pieces they produced for the project. "I see this as the beginning of the world's opportunities, and a chance to

prove to myself what I'm capable of. In the future, it could propel me to reach a realm beyond my own, which includes career choices and exploring fields where persuasive communication is needed."

The group was invited by Terryl Dozier, a former A2 program director and current grad student at Harvard.

"Our trip to Harvard was eye opening," said A2 author Willie Holmes II, a student at North Carolina A&T State University. "It was an experience that I will hold with me for the rest of my life."

Each of the A2 authors presented selected works during the presentation. A2 Founder Nathan Ross Freeman explained the group's process and challenged the authors to create new pieces on the spot.

Holmes wrote about the achievement gap and the emphasis the education system puts on test scores. He said he was emboldened by the Ivy League audience's response to his message.

"This experience has shown me that my words can be used to reach outside of the community I live in and make a difference," commented the 20 year-old. "It has given me the confidence to keep voicing my opinions, even if it goes against the popular agenda."

Lyles, a sophomore at Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy, also felt the audience was receptive to the



Nathan Ross Freeman (back row, center) poses with (from left) A2 authors Hunter McIntosh, Dionna Daniel, Marcus Lyles and Willie Holmes, all of whom presented at Harvard.

authors' message.

"Harvard's overall response was energetic, and positive. They received each of us together and individually, and were open-minded to our comments and answers," he remarked. "Their feedback was sincere inquiry, and it allowed us to answer their questions with great levels of honesty and enthusiasm. They were interested in a few of our personal experiences, and each of them had different levels of retrospection toward our initial statements."

Freeman said surveys completed by audience members revealed that Harvard students and faculty were "spellbound" by the A2 authors. During the visit, the organization also unveiled "Writing to the Senses," a K-12 lesson plan based upon the organization's signature writing process that has been in the works for several months.

"We broke new ground," Freeman declared. "We didn't just go up there and repeat what we have learned."

Though presenting before a group of grad school students might be daunting to some young people, Freeman said the presentation was in many ways business

as usual for the authors, as educating others is one of the components A2 leaders stress most. A2 members often perform before large groups during events for local nonprofits and other agencies.

"My students, from the moment that they come to Authoring Action, are taught to be teachers - that's real important," Freeman said. "Our mission is to do one thing: to reach as many people as we possibly can and to foster human development and change and education reform."

The authors made the most of their weekend-long trip. The group toured campuses of both Tufts University and Harvard, visited the Boston Museum of Fine Art, took in the Harvard Art Fest and visited the shops, street art, restaurants and cafes of Harvard Square.

Freeman says he plans to continue A2's relationship with Harvard, and hopes to bring authors back to visit the university on an annual basis.

For more information about Authoring Action, visit [www.authoringaction.org](http://www.authoringaction.org).

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