

Murmurs...

In school I could hear the murmur of voices  
reading, laughing. They seeped into the hallway  
under the gap beneath the door.

There were portraits of important people,  
important white men  
up on the wall in the entryway  
under a slightly tattered American flag.  
They looked like the ghosts of order.  
We knew they'd be there watching,  
making sure we didn't  
step too far out of line.

Now, the entryways have metal detectors,  
giant rectangular gates.  
Instead of a "hello,"  
Students are greeted with an  
"I don't trust you."

In school I could smell  
ink and paint,  
those hopeful chemicals  
that spill words and dreams  
into the world.

Now you smell  
fear.

By Erin Moore

Written on April 17<sup>th</sup> 2010 Suspension Stories event in "*There's No Comparison for Adults*" workshop facilitated by the Neighborhood Writing Alliance. In this workshop, adult participants recalled and wrote about a time from their youth that mirrors the school discipline situations today which sometimes end in arrest.