

Green Ribbons

At an open reading human beings
establish a certain connection
with one another, the kind
that only poetry can provide:
words spoken,
 heard,
 felt.

At least, that's what we strive for,
though often—I have to admit—
in the end it is hard to tell how well
we have actually succeeded.

I come to this one with a box
of green ribbons, part of a new campaign
for survivors of Hurricane Katrina
still scattered across the country
because even after so many months
there are no homes for them to return to,
 no jobs,
 no schools,
and no one in an official capacity
who even seems to notice anymore.

So when I get up on stage,
before sharing my few minutes
of poetry, I explain how I will pass
the box around, ask people to take a ribbon,
along with one of the fliers explaining
why we are engaged in this campaign.
“Put a dollar in; more if you can.
The fund directly benefits survivors
in New York City who are in need.”

And when the reading is over
I find more dollars waiting for me
than there were people in the room,
am reminded of words spoken,
 heard,
 felt,
decide that at this reading, at least,
I have no need to wonder
whether the human beings present
established a certain connection
with one another, the kind
that only poetry can provide.

Steve Bloom
January 2008