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**BALTIMORE SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS THEATER TEACHER AND ACTRESS RELEASES
CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT HEALING THE BULLY**

Maria Broom's The Village Bully aims to curb bullying through circles of love

Baltimore, Md. - (January 12, 2015) - *The Babemba tribe of Africa believes each human being comes into the world as good. When a person acts irresponsibly or unjustly, he/she is placed in the center of the village circle. Work ceases as everyone gathers around the accused. One at a time, each member of the village, tells every good thing they can remember about this person...every incident and experience that can be recalled with accuracy. All of his positive attributes, strengths and kindnesses are recited carefully and at length. The ceremony may last several days and ends in celebration. Now the person can remember himself.*

Inspired by this old African ritual, Baltimore School for the Arts theater teacher and notable actress Maria Broom penned *The Village Bully*, a story/poem that tells of young Michael Jose Jamal and his classmates, and how they learned from their teacher to create a 'circle of love' to help the boy let go of his bullying ways.

"*The Village Bully* is a way to introduce another culture's loving and healing tradition to this society's youngest citizens," said Maria. "Teachers, counselors and parents are constantly looking for ways to help children create a world of love and kindness, and this effort offers them an opportunity to reduce damaging angry behavior."

Exquisitely illustrated by California artist John Malloy, *The Village Bully* introduces a simple practice specifically designed for classrooms and group settings. With this in mind, Maria has launched The Village Bully Project in which she is gifting a copy of the book to every first, second, third and fourth grade teacher who wants to share this practice with their students.

"The project's goals are to help curb bullying and poor behavior, to stimulate innate habits of forgiveness and compassion in children, and to introduce the power behind the circles of love," said Maria. "This is truly something I believe everyone can relate to, and these circles can become a powerful tool for all."

Published by Otter Bay Books, *The Village Bully* is available for \$15 and can be purchased by visiting <http://mariabroom.com/village-bully>. Support for The Village Bully Project comes from Suzanne Pratt of the Laurene Straughn Pratt Foundation, the Community Conferencing Center, Markim Multimedia Group, The Baltimore Homa Community and PW Feats, Inc. For a glimpse of the story/poem, visit <http://vimeo.com/106880573>.

About the Author

Although nationally known as an actress for her recurring roles in HBO's "The Wire" and "The Corner," Maria Broom is also a storyteller and dancer with more than forty years of experience throughout the world. A Fulbright Scholar, Maria is a Baltimore native who has received many awards and honors including the Eubie Blake Award, the Sarah's Circle Award and the 2004 Governor's Arts Award for Individual Artist. In 2007, she was named, Artist of the Year by Young Audiences/Arts for Learning. As a recipient of an Open Society Institute community fellowship grant, Maria established a unique mentoring program in inner city schools and beyond, called the Dance Girls of Baltimore. "Like" the project on Facebook at www.facebook.com/villagebully.

About Baltimore School for the Arts

Baltimore School for the Arts is a nationally recognized public arts high school that provides its students with intensive pre-professional training in the arts in conjunction with a rigorous academic curriculum. BSA graduates go on to the most selective arts and university programs nationwide and achieve prominence in theater, film, music, dance and visual arts. Additionally, BSA's highly acclaimed TWIGS program offers free after-school arts instruction to 700 city elementary and middle school children from schools across Baltimore, as well as other outreach initiatives to thousands more. Founded in 1979, the school is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year as an integral and vibrant part of Baltimore's educational and cultural communities.

Baltimore School for the Arts, where the arts change kids' lives.

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