

**WORTHY
WAGE
POEMS & STORIES**

Introduction

Telling, reading, and acting out stories are activities early educators use every day with children. Teachers and providers participating in the child care compensation movement (1972–2000) used their skills in creating and telling stories and poems to convey messages of power and self-determination while honoring the tools of their trade.

The stories and poems in this collection are a sample drawn from various archives. Authors and dates are listed when known. These stories were circulated in newsletters; they were shared and sometimes performed in various venues and freely adapted to fit the moment as local campaigns often added their own twists. They were not intended to be published works, simply creative expressions of their time, designed to empower and engage early educators and to enlist allies in the movement.

If you know of additional stories and poems, we invite you to share them with us at cscceinfo@berkeley.edu.



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Stories



If the Shoe Fits: A Worthy Wages Fairy Tale

This story was fabricated by Jim Morin of Madison, Wisconsin, and Marcy Whitebook of Berkeley, California, to encourage teachers to break the silence around their worthless wages and poor working conditions. Jim Morin is a former child care teacher, director, and child care union organizer. He also served a four-year term on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Board, taught at the community college level, and wrote extensively about teacher empowerment and organizing. Marcy Whitebook is also a former child care teacher. She was a founder and Executive Director of the Child Care Employee Project (CCEP). This story was originally published by CCEP in 1990 and used with permission by local campaigns around the country. The illustrations that accompany this version appeared in a reprint of the article published in The Language of Money and Family Child Care (Windflower Enterprises, 1993, pp. 7-10).



Once upon a time, not long after the last dragon was slain, there was a kingdom ruled by men. They controlled everything. The banks, businesses, government, industry, entertainment, medicine, education -- even the family. Whenever the king gave speeches to his subjects, he always spoke of how much he loved children and how important they were for the land. The king, as kings always had, spoke of the dignity of families, of justice and equality, and of the importance of learning. But it was all a charade. He was really the king for men.



During these times, the women of this kingdom learned their place. The few who were rich kept themselves beautiful and did the kind of things men liked. Most women stayed home, cooked, cleaned and raised babies. If women were poor, they did all the work at home and then worked outside, as well. Things went on like this for a long, long time. But times changed. More and more of the women in the kingdom had to work outside the home if there was going to be enough food to feed their babies. And some of the women even found that they liked the outside work. They said they felt fulfilled and challenged and satisfied as they made their way in what they used to call "a man's world."

Now, when the women went to work, or went to schools to train for their work, they needed a place for their children. Usually it was the women's job to find a place for their children. Women looked to other women, many of whom also needed jobs, for in this kingdom only a few good men cared for children. The king knew that women who took care of children were paid only a small pittance. But the king also knew the women of his kingdom were much too smart to accept this arrangement. They, like everyone in the land, agreed that children were the kingdom's most precious resource, so why would their caregivers earn only the minimum wage?

The king knew that the only way to get a cheap pool of workers for these hard and stressful jobs was to trick them. So that is what he did: he called in his chief sorcerer, the OLD MAN who lived with the OLD WOMAN in the shoe. The OLD MAN remembered that his wife got through many a day because she loved the children, even when she was beside herself with exhaustion. So the OLD MAN cast a spell on the women of the kingdom, including his wife. From that day forward, any woman who chose to care for other people's children, whether in her home, the child's home, or in a child care center or school, would ignore the working conditions and wages. She would only consider that she loved the children and that they needed her.

The spell was a powerful spell. It worked even in the most unexpected circumstances. Women believed the myth even when they didn't have enough money to care for their own children, had to work second jobs, or take in more children than the rules permitted. This was the way things were supposed to be. Some of the women would even chant in public,

“We love kids; we’re not in it for the money!” “We love kids; we’re not in it for the money!”

The spell was unbroken for a long, long time. (You might be able to see traces of it even now.) But gradually its grasp weakened. Some of the women caregivers had jobs that were so hard that even a magic spell couldn’t smooth over everything. Many decided that, magic or not, they had to get out.

Almost every woman (and the few men) who took care of other people’s children were dissatisfied with their wages. They were also unhappy because, even though the king said their work was important, nobody else seemed to think so, except a few of the parents and, of course, the children. When they went to festivals and tournaments, people weren’t interested in what they did. Most of the caregivers expressed their discontent by leaving child care work. Things got so bad in what came to be called the child care workforce that nearly 50 percent of those who worked caring for young children left their jobs each year. Many of those who left were heartbroken, some were discouraged, and not a few were relieved. Some took teaching jobs with older children, which while not well paid, at least allowed them to make a decent living. But most went to work in the royal burger parlors or horse stables where they could make more money.

This exodus of caregivers continued for many years, ignored by all but a few people in the kingdom. Young women setting out to find jobs avoided child care; the work was worthy, but the wages were worthless. As you might expect, the king was not too happy. He reminded the women who

took care of children that their work was too important to quit: quality child care enables children to start school with a head start; it gets women off welfare; supports the family, and is good for business. This convinced some women, but many continued to seek other jobs.

So the king called upon the sorcerer again. The king asked the OLD MAN in the shoe to cast an even stronger spell. This time the OLD MAN cast a "Name Game" spell: just call yourself "professional," he told the caregivers, "and you'll be happy to stay on your job."



The OLD WOMAN who lived in the shoe heard her husband and the king plotting. She became so angry she didn't know what to do. (Or did she?) At the first opportunity, she went to a meeting of caregivers in her community. "Do you know why we are paid so little for so much work?" she asked. To her surprise, most of the women had answers:

We are paid so little because child care is considered women's work, and the king and his men (and even some of the women) don't believe it is skilled. They think anyone can do it.

We are paid so little because families aren't used to paying for child care, and they are reluctant to do so because rent, food, and fuel costs keep going up.

We are paid so little because families think mothers' wages should only cover the cost of child care, and yet women in the kingdom earn less than two-thirds of what men earn.

We are paid so little because the king spends all our taxes on bombs and bankers, instead of babies.

Next the OLD WOMAN asked, "Do you realize what is happening to our land because we are willing to do so much for so little reward?" Once again, all the women knew:

We are hurting the children because we are underpaid. Children have to deal with too many caregivers, many of whom aren't trained and don't interact appropriately with them.

We are hurting families because we are underpaid. Each time a caregiver leaves, the children get so upset that parents are up with them at night or leave them each day sobbing in a stranger's arms.



We are hurting ourselves because we are underpaid. If we stay in child care, we are so poor we cannot meet the needs of our own families. If we leave, all of our experience and education goes to waste.

We are hurting businesses because we are underpaid. Parent workers can't concentrate because they are worrying about their children or are missing work to cover for some child care arrangement that has just fallen apart.

The women went home that night thinking about things differently. They could hardly wait for their next meeting. When it began, the OLD WOMAN, who was now a regular member of the group, asked, "Do you know why things don't change?" The women rushed to give reasons:

We can't complain. The economy is bad. Many people are losing their jobs; they don't want to hear our troubles.

Next the OLD WOMAN asked, "Do you realize what is happening to our land because we are willing to do so much for so little reward?" Once again, all the women knew:

We can't complain. Parents can't afford to pay more for child care. There's no place where the money can come from, unless of course the king stops making bombs.

The OLD WOMAN smiled with pleasure as the women talked late into the night. She knew that her plan to break the spell was working. The women began to see how they themselves made the spell possible. They began to speak out:



"We are too silent. How many of our parents know what we earn?"

"As long as we don't ask for more, we're saying that things are ok the way they are."

"We act as if our work is worthless when we agree to accept such low wages for our work."

"We are afraid of being told we are selfish. Why do we think so little of ourselves?"

A few of the women were terrified by all these words and ran away. But most others nodded their heads in agreement. As the long night ended and the day began, the women knew the spell had lost its hold on them.

And that was it. The spell was broken. What seemed so reasonable only a few days before now seemed unacceptable. The more they looked at how willing they had been to sacrifice their own needs for the good of everyone else, the more stunned they became. How did it happen, they wondered, that so many of them had been acting as if getting dirt wages for hard and challenging work was the way things were supposed to be? Why were everyone else's needs more of a priority than their own? Why had they considered it "reasonable" that they work for poverty-level wages, so that parents could continue to afford child care services? Why had they allowed themselves to suffer especially when they knew the toll it took on the children?

The relief when the spell was finally broken was enormous. Women told each other how hard their jobs were, how much responsibility they had, and how much they had to give in order to do their jobs right. They told each other the bad things that they would never let happen again. No more hollow talk about children as the future of society. No more self-doubt about their skills or their rights as employees. No more despair that nothing they could do would make a difference. No more resignation in the face of a problem too big to do anything about. No more silence in the face of personal exploitation. No more magic.

The women decided to talk with every caregiver in the land about this problem. They also began talking with parents about the role they would have to play in creating a solution. The women called this work the Worthy Wage Campaign and began building a kingdom that truly valued children and their caregivers. Many years after the terrible spell was broken, other women set aside one day a year to walk for Worthy Wages and to honor those who took the first steps. The tradition continues. . .

Cinderella: Another Worthy Wage Fairy Tale

The origin of this alternative Cinderella story is unknown, but several different versions can be found in the Worthy Wage archives as local campaigns made modifications to fit their needs. In one version, the fairy godmother is a union organizer, and in another, the leader of a local campaign. In the present version, the magic of the moment takes a back seat to the magic of teacher power, “the kind of magic that comes from joining with other teachers to do things together to make your life better.” Some versions are written as a narrative, while this version is a skit that was adapted and performed by the Western Massachusetts Worthy Wage Coalition. The adaptation was written by Cathy Leger and Sherri Carola; no date is given.

NARRATOR: Once upon a time, not that long ago, actually yesterday, there lived a poor, poor, hard-working child care worker named Cinderella.

CINDERELLA: I am a poor, poor, hard-working child care worker.

NARRATOR: Cinderella and all the teachers who loved preschoolers and toddlers and babies worked for low, low, low wages. They loved their jobs and wanted to stay, but they needed to have enough money to support themselves and their own families.

The leaders in their kingdom had to spend money on so many projects.

LEADER #1: There are roads to fix all the potholes after the winter. There's police pay. Fire protection. Bridges.

LEADER #2: A lot of money goes toward our public schools. There is never enough money!

NARRATOR: One night, Cinderella received a phone call from her friends.

FRIEND: Hey Cindy, want to go dancing with us Friday night? I've had a really intense week at the newspaper office. I need some fun in my life. I need to boogie. You haven't been out with us for a long, long time, you know.

CINDERELLA: (sigh) I can't go, really. I have to work at my second job. If I don't, I won't be able to pay my rent. My old car is giving out on me, too.

FRIEND: But Cindy, you're a teacher, a professional, same as us. I've seen you with your class! You're great! You handle so much every day taking care of those children! And you really teach them how to be independent and how to get along with each other. Mothers and fathers couldn't hold down their jobs without all of you at the day care centers! Why do you have to work two jobs? I'll never understand that.

CINDERELLA: Yes, I am a professional, but I guess the kind of professional that doesn't make any money. I know I have a very responsible job, sure. Remember when nurses and public school teachers were so underpaid? ... Well, that's me now. I have to go now.

— PAUSE —

CINDERELLA: (sighing, then throwing her arms up) Oh, I need a fairy godmother!

NARRATOR: POOF!

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Cinderella, you're not the only preschool teacher who feels this way! You need magic -- the kind of magic that comes from joining with other teachers to do things together to make your life better. And Cindy, give yourself a break. Take the night off on Friday. Go dancing with your friends.

NARRATOR: At the dance, Cindy met some new friends.

(They boogey.)

One was a woman who was campaigning for the next election. One was a man who taught in high school. Cindy liked them very much. Suddenly -- at midnight -- Cindy felt very tired. She remembered she had to get some sleep for her second job in the morning. She wrote a good-bye note on her pay stub.

NEW FRIEND #1: Where did Cindy go? Oh, here's a note from her. But she forgot to write down her last name or her address or phone number.

NEW FRIEND #2: When will I ever see her again? Hey -- this is a pay stub! That should help us find her. You know, this is very low pay. WHERE DO PEOPLE EARN SUCH LOW WAGES??

NEW FRIEND #1: Yes, this is low pay! I thought my job at the office didn't pay what I deserve, but this is ridiculous. Maybe she works at a pizza place. I've heard they don't pay very well. Let's go look for Cindy there.

NARRATOR: And so they went to a pizza place. They showed someone the pay stub to see if Cindy worked there.

WORKER: (laughing) No! Nobody here works for such low wages!

NARRATOR: Next they went to the supermarket and the convenience store. They showed the pay stub to a cashier.

WORKER: (laughing). No, I don't do too well. But I make more than that! I'd quit that job!

NARRATOR: Then they thought of a pet store, where people groom dogs and cats.

WORKER: No way! Are you kidding? I earn more than that!

NARRATOR: They stopped in a restaurant and asked a waitress. They showed her the pay stub.

WAITRESS: I make pretty good tips here. I couldn't live on that pay. My rent is more than that!

NARRATOR: And so, after searching all day, they still hadn't found Cinderella.

FRIEND #2: You know, I have to pick up my nephew at day care. Want to come along? We've spent the whole afternoon trying to find Cindy. I guess it's not going to happen.

NARRATOR: (to audience) You know who they're going to find at the day care, don't you?

NARRATOR: When they walked in, Cindy and two other teachers were talking to one of the LEADERS.

CINDERELLA: You know, we have to get better pay. We work very hard. When I come here after working a second job on the weekend, I'm so tired. I snap at the children sometimes, and of course, the children don't understand why.

LEADER: There is no money to spare for child care in the budget.

CINDERELLA: I'm thinking of quitting. My co-teacher left during the winter. He couldn't support his family. The children in the class really trusted him... and could count on him...and now he's gone. You know, that kind of experience can affect children's basic trust throughout their lives. There's no future in this job. I love being with the children. People say I'm good at it. We get children to say no and settle arguments. Now we have to stand up for our rights. Don't you understand?

LEADER: (to the audience) I've never heard this complaint before. No one has ever called me about pay for child care workers.

(to Cindy) Aren't you mostly just a babysitter anyway? What's so hard about your job? It doesn't take any special training, does it?

(to the audience) Anyway, I've never heard from any parents at day care centers. When I hear from parents about public school, then I know I have to listen.

FRIEND #2: We've been looking for Cindy today. We found out that people at pizza places, supermarkets and convenience stores, and restaurants make more than Cindy does! We went to a pet-grooming store. People who work with animals earn more than people who work with children!



ALL TOGETHER: CHILD CARE WORKERS HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT JOB THAT IS WORTHY OF WORTHY WAGES.

NARRATOR: Cindy had helped a lot of people -- her old friends, her new friends, the leaders, even her fairy godmother.

All PLAYERS: (to audience)

- We're going to have to figure out a way together, aren't we?
- We don't want to forget the magic of working together.
- It matters how fresh and alert our teachers are, doesn't it?
- We don't want good teachers leaving our centers, do we?

The Little Red Hen

There are many different versions of this popular folk tale. In some of them, the Little Red Hen bakes bread; in others, she builds a house; and in some old renditions, a menacing fox is involved. In this unique re-telling, the Little Red Hen (a.k.a., a Child Care Teacher) and some of her colleagues discover the power they have to make changes, even when others initially decline to help. Shirley Dean of the Chicago Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) sent this version of the story to the Child Care Employee Project (CCEP). We present it below with a few modifications by Marcy Whitebook (CCEP). Special thanks to Shirley and Chicago AEYC's Commission on Salaries and Working Conditions for permission to reprint the story from Child Care Employee News (Spring 1990, Vol. 1.1).

Once upon a time a little red hen worked with her chicks in a day care center. She worked hard to meet the chicks' needs. All day, every day, she:

Helped the chicks dress ... and undress; wiped noses and bottoms, put on Band-Aids, wiped tears away, comforted the children with a warm hug or a comfy lap, stopped fights, and helped children learn to negotiate. She swept up crumbs from the floor; tightened loose nuts on wobbly furniture and trikes; fed the chicks and often cleaned up; brought things from home for the dress-up corner, watched for bargains on equipment. And, in between, she planned and put out games and activities, read stories, and sang so the chicks could have fun and learn!

And, while the chicks slept, she wrote reports, met with parents or other teachers, and thought about the young ones.

In the evening ... she went to bed early!

Now, every payday when this little red hen cashed her paycheck, she wondered how she was going to make ends meet. The price of everything just kept going up and up and up! She considered taking an additional job like so many other hens had done, but she gave everything she had to the children and there was no energy left. She thought about quitting ... but she really loved her job. She had to have more money! But how was she going to get it?

She was stumped! But the problem was not going away. The only things going away were the other hens who worked with her, who were leaving to work at the local farm where they earned more.



Finally, being of a rather practical nature, she decided that what she needed was an idea. So she set out to find one.

She talked with the cat.

She talked with the dog.

She talked with the goose.

“Will you help me find an idea that will raise salaries for those who care for little children?”

“Not I,” said the cat. “The budget is too tight. We need new equipment, and the insurance rates are going up.”

“Not I,” said the dog. “Child care is too expensive now. We can’t afford our house payments, and we need a new car.”

“Not I,” said the goose. “Other things like traveling to Jupiter and fighting the drug war are more important.”

“Then I’ll do it myself,” said the little red hen. And she did — with a lot of help from her co-workers. A small group of hens from her center and other programs and family child care homes got together and clucked. They thought and thought and clucked and clucked. Finally some began to say, “It’s time to do something. We need action.”

So the little red hen and her friends called on the WECA Compensation Commission. They got the latest facts about child care salaries and their effect on children and returned to the cat, dog, and goose. "Please, children are in jeopardy. Won't you help us find a way to raise salaries so we can recruit and retain qualified providers to care for our children?"

"Not I," said the cat. "There is no money."

"Not I," said the dog. "We can't afford anything more."

"Not I," said the goose. "Isn't your salary just pin money?"

Again the little red hen said, "Then we'll do it ourselves." And they did. The next week all the hens called in sick one day in protest against their inadequate wages. The centers and homes closed. Those who ran or owned the child care centers were besieged with calls. The parents of the chicks were frantic, so were their employers. A panic spread through the community. The hens could bring the city to a screeching halt!

Recognizing their power, but not wanting to abuse it, the little red hens asked again, "Can you help us find a way to raise salaries?" This time the response was different.

"Oh, yes," said the cat. "I will calculate the full cost of care and let families know what their fees would be if you hens did not subsidize our center through your low wages. And I am also going to institute a sliding fee scale so I can raise rates according to what families can afford."

“Oh, yes,” said the dog. “I will pay the new rates. But I can’t pay as much as you need. I will talk to my employer, though, about a child care benefit.”

“Oh, yes,” said the goose. “I will go to my state legislator and ask her to explore a wage upgrading bill like they passed in Massachusetts and New York that led to higher salaries. And I will go to local business and community leaders to explore a community fund to support good in-service training.”

The little red hen and her friends got \$1 an hour more. Not enough, but a start. They felt good about themselves and hopeful that they could continue to work in the field. There was more work to do, but these hens weren’t afraid of work if it led somewhere. Some decided to join a union to help them improve their workplace; others joined an advocacy organization to work on legislation. And now they had supporters. The cat, dog, and goose had learned that they had to help find the bread!

The Story of ABC Child Care Center

This story was written in 1992 for the Worthy Wage Campaign by the Seattle-based early childhood trainers and advocates Margie Carter and Deb Curtis. Since that time, it has been used in hundreds of training sessions and advocacy meetings around the country. We share it here with the authors' permission because it captures so many of the issues involved in "taking on turnover" in child care centers. The artist/illustrator was Joan Newcomb.

Once upon a time -- it could have been yesterday or today -- ABC Child Care Center served families with children from six weeks to five years old. ABC Child Care is a happy, loving place where people have worked hard to create a family environment. Three years ago, the program became accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



This is Cathy. She used to work at ABC Child Care but left three months ago to work as a parking lot attendant for \$12.00 an hour. Cathy is still friends with people at ABC. She didn't want to leave. She loved working with children and even took some child development classes to get better at it.

Here is Cathy on the phone to Sonja, a teacher who still works at ABC.

"Sonja, I really miss the kids."

"They really miss you too. Casaundra asks about you every day."

"Oh, don't tell me that. I feel so bad. My new job is really boring. It doesn't challenge me at all. Here, if I make a mistake, the only harm that's done is money lost on parking stall."



“But I make so much more money that I’m getting all my bills paid off. You know what? They’re going to be hiring again. I told my boss I knew someone who might want the job. What do you think?”



Sonja is torn, but knows she can’t resist this offer. She’s already had to train two people since Cathy left. Sonja is exhausted, frustrated, and having a harder and harder time stretching her pay check to make ends meet. She goes to Joyce, the director, to tell her she’s leaving for a better-paying job.

Ted is Sonja’s co-teacher. He is an enthusiastic, bright young man who thought it would be fun to work with kids. Ted has no background in child development or experience juggling the multitude of tasks involved in running a classroom.



He’s alone in the room right now while Sonja is off talking to the new director. It’s hard for him when his co-teacher leaves, even for a few minutes. Both he and the children depend on her a great deal.



See Joyce, the director of ABC Child Care, with her head in her hands. See the tears in her eyes. See the scream forming inside her. See all the names crossed off her substitute teacher list.

In the last six months, Joyce has had to find four new teachers. How will she ever be able to reassure the parents in Sonja’s room, now that Sonja is leaving?



Here is Maria, who has two children: Malcolm, eight months old, and Casaundra, age four. Maria was glad to find ABC. It seemed just right for her family's needs. But one month after she enrolled her children, one of Malcolm's caregivers left. Then Casaundra's favorite teacher, Cathy, left.

Maria has a lot of stress from her job, and her children have started waking her up several times during the night. But who can she talk to about her concerns for her children? She had just begun to confide in Cathy, and now Cathy is gone.

Casaundra has learned to write her name. Every day she works at the art table making pictures with hearts. She always asks Ted or Sonja to help her write "TO CATHY" on her hearts. Today she is making a picture for Sonja too.



Malcolm is in the infant room. He cries a lot more than he used to. He's driving his new caregiver crazy.

There is no end to this story. It is repeating itself over and over again in child care centers all across our country. This is a story that needs to be told in all kinds of settings, to all kinds of people. It is not a naptime story.



Telling this story must wake people up before it is too late.

Poems

Imagine

Beth Menninga,
Minnesota Worthy Wage Campaign

Imagine a society where young college students vie to get into the early
childhood program,
Where a manly aspiration is to be a head teacher in a child care center,
Where a family provider is the center of all eyes at a party when she says
what her job is,
Where a Head Start teacher's family displays her CDA diploma on their
living room wall,
Where a preschool-age teacher is sought out by a child's third-grade
teacher for advice,
Where family members proudly say that teaching in early childhood has
been in their family for generations.
Imagine commercials with child care professionals selling products (like
doctors and dentists seem to do so often).
Imagine how much a society like that must value its young children
When those who care for them and educate them are so revered.

We Are Worth More: A Call and Response

Wanda Montgomery,
Wisconsin Worthy Wage Campaign

Why are we worth more? We are dedicated.

Why are we worth more? We are nurturing the future.

Why are we worth more? We are educated.

Why are we worth more? We have families, too.

Why are we worth more? Our health depends on it.

Why are we worth more? Your children depend on us.

What are we worth? More money.

How will we get it? Fight for Right!

Child Care Professional Poem

Linda Rowdy, commissioned for the first annual
Child Care Workers Care Day, 1984

We sow the seeds on the other side of the water,
and never see the harvest turn to flower.

Yet we dance in the colors of the day
and know the power of the bursting bud.

We teach the children to sing

Though we will hear the song but faintly

Falling across the water.

And the loud applause

Will not sound for us

Only the soft stirrings of peace on the children's hearts

And the thunder of the ages in their veins.

Naptime's Over

Naptime's over, ain't no time to relax.
Naptime's over, time to face the facts.
Naptime's over, get up offa your backs
...NAPTIME'S OVER.

When we ask open-ended questions
We give kids freedom to express,
But when we ask for higher wages,
We gotta keep on askin' 'til the answer's YES.

Teaching conflict resolution
Helps children when they disagree
When we negotiate conditions,
We need to be resolved to fight for dignity.

Getting down to child level
Allows us to communicate.
We need a level playing field.
That's why we join together to negotiate.



Naptime's Over (Continued)

Naptime is quiet time for children.
It's good for girls and boys.
But teachers organized for justice
Join hands and raise their voices in a joyful noise.

I hear the trumpets blowing bravely.
I see the banners flying free.
I see the gentle giant waking.
The Union rises up in solidarity.

Naptime's over, ain't no time to relax.
Naptime's over, time to face the facts.
Naptime's over, get up offa your backs
...NAPTIME'S OVER.

Worthy Wage Poems and Stories

ECHOES



cscce.berkeley.edu/projects/echoes