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The NYC Board of Education Mandates Pledging Allegiance [poem]

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Kate Abell

KATE ABELL, a fourth-grade teacher and math staff developer at P.S. 11 in Manhattan, works in her own neighborhood, where, before becoming a teacher, she was a housing organizer. She is the mother of two boys and teaches science for teachers at Bank Street. She had previously made several Earthwatch trips to Baja, CA, where she fell in love with spiders. She has been part of a writing group with other teachers for five years and considers it the single most important thing that allowed her to regain her equilibrium after September 11.

Flags flying
Fervent voices lifted
A star-spangled pressure cooker of emotion
The stock exchange synonymous with freedom as we struggle
To make sense of a world
Where deliberate calculations cause
Peopled towers to fall
On others trying to help.

There is solace in ritual.
But this one is flawed,
Pitting as it does one pledge
Against another.
Filling our void
By drawing a line in the sand.

A substitute for the world village
It takes to raise a child—
Seeking community by calling on
God to bless America.

It makes people feel better.

Likewise, heroin.