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Welcome to Phillip Levine, U.S. Poet Laureate

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Dr. John M. Dunn  
Welcome to Phillip Levine, U.S. Poet Laureate  
Sept. 28, 2012

(Pronunciation: leh VEEN)

• Good afternoon. This is one of those occasions when I have an intense sense of how lucky I am to be the president of Western Michigan University. Not only am I able to spend a bit of time this afternoon with people on this campus I truly care about, but I also have the pleasure of welcoming a special guest both to this gathering and to our community.

Phillip Levine is the 18th U.S. Poet Laureate, a Pulitzer Prize winner, a two-time National Book Award winner AND, the person selected to judge the inaugural WMU New Issues Press Poetry Prize in 1998. While we admire Mr. Levine for those first three accomplishments, we treasure his connection to this University that is illustrated by the last.

The late Herb Scott who founded our New Issues Press and Poetry was once a student of Phillip Levine's and a longtime admirer of his work. Herb knew that having a judge of this caliber would help convey the quality of the prize he was launching. Phillip Levine agreed, and an important new prize was launched. That annual prize remains strong and, over the past 14 years, it has helped launch the careers of several important young poets from around the nation.

Phillip Levine, we are delighted by your visit and eager to share your reading with the many community members who will attend this evening. Our writing student, in particular, have been awaiting this day with great anticipation. It is my great
pleasure to welcome you and thank you for giving us the opportunity to hear your work. Welcome.