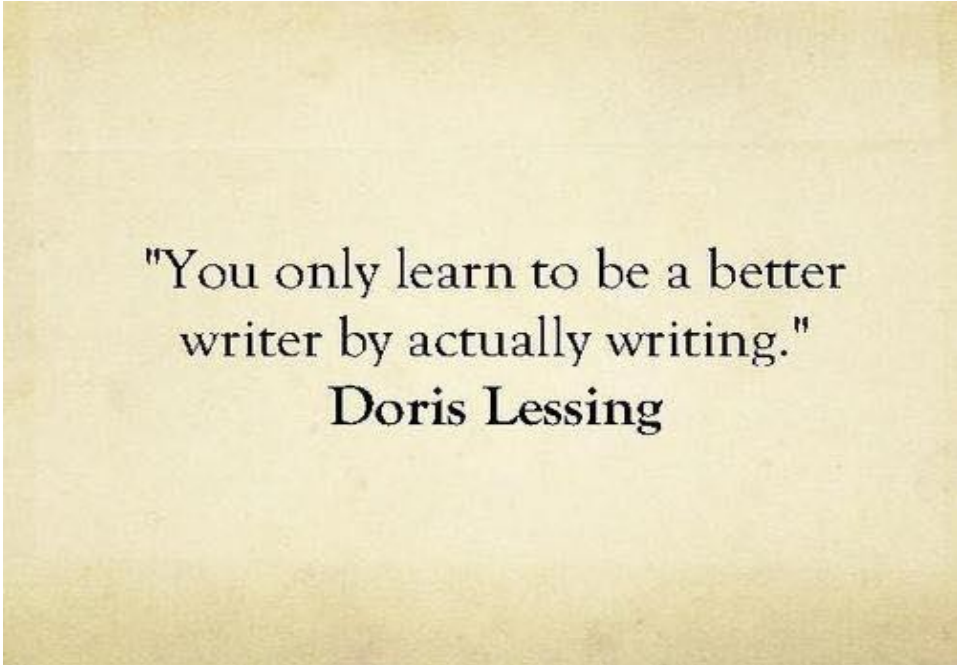


LSU Writing Project

an official site of the National Writing Project



INVITATIONAL SUMMER INSTITUTE ANTHOLOGY 2017

A rectangular image of aged, yellowish paper with a slightly textured surface. Centered on the paper is a quote in a black serif font, followed by the name of the author.

"You only learn to be a better
writer by actually writing."
Doris Lessing

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Note: we resisted the convention of listing contributions in alphabetical order, rather, we arranged them as we saw them fitting, each piece separate yet belonging to a whole.

Anthology Introduction

*Creating writers
through classroom community
in just two short weeks.
~Haiku from Taylor, 2017*

Trapped within the confines of a university classroom, two weeks might not seem like adequate time for intense, meaningful bonding to occur among a group of near strangers. However, it is possible if you have a powerful enough experience or a potent mechanism to unite them all as participants and learn about each other and from one another. Like a magic elixir, we found the ability to bond in resistance poetry.

During the 2017 Invitational Summer Institute, learning about poetic forms, exploring word arrangement, examining structure, playing with thought and language, and writing our own poetry served as the means to form lasting and influential bonds. Building on their work from the 2016 National Writing Project Summer Institute featuring the writing of poetry, Co-Directors of the Invitational Summer Institute, Margaret-Mary and Erin once again selected the common text by Linda Christensen & Dyan Watson, *Rhythm and Resistance: Teaching Poetry for Social Justice* published in 2015 by *Rethinking Schools* from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This text carefully guides the writer through many forms of poetry which inspires him or her to think about how one is affected by or a part of issues of social justice. Writing and sharing poems which expose one's roots, praise loved ones, sing up ancestors, ponder alternate or different endings to life events, and evoke thoughts of forgiveness helped to build a community. Additionally, the writers learned and discussed means of incorporating the arts into poetry writing and publishing in connection with how to teach poetry writing to students from Pre-K to 12th grades.

Participants expressed amazement at how quickly their inhibition to write or teach poetry dissolved away. As one participant wrote on day 3, "It is actually becoming easier for the thoughts to flow onto the paper. Who would have thought that we actually would be excited about writing?" By the end of the experience, not only had relationships been forged, but bonds had been established beyond collegiality as friends. The writing process came alive as evidenced in these participants' thoughts:

"To my new writing family, THANK YOU for sharing this amazing journey with me." -2107 Writing Participant.

"I will miss these inspiring women and getting to share our writings and poetry every day." - 2107 Writing Participant.

The 2017 Invitational Summer Institute was a success. We were tentative at first, then we opened ourselves to the magic and words bloomed. We laughed, we cried, we critiqued ourselves and each other, and we wrote, and wrote, and wrote. In these pages, you will find writing from Institute attendees. Enjoy these pieces and the individuals they represent. And Geaux Write!!

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LSU Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute 2017 Cohort

Bottom Row Left to Right: Amber Smith, Erin Casey, Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell, Taylor Adams. Top Row Left to Right: Emily Avery, Claire Fisse, Bonnie Wilder, Amy Pan, Becky Armour, Rachel Boudreaux, Laura Williams, Theryl Augustus

Poetic Expressions

Justify

(A Collaborative Poem)

My laugh

justify

My intelligence

Myself

Justify, justify, justify

Say it enough times, and it almost loses its meaning.

Why do we justify things?

Is there anyone who doesn't justify?

What purpose does all this justification serve?

Is it good, is it bad?

Do I need to justify my justifications?

Here is what we justify:

Why I have no interest in dating

Why I will never ever have children

Why my house is never clean

Why I don't eat that much

Why I eat so much

Why I care so much

Why I don't care...

We justify – defend – validate – explain – rationalize – excuse –
substantiate – vindicate – resist – cover – protect – we justify.

Created as a collaborative exercise wherein all participants were invited to add to a poem in progress. Early on, we fell into the habit of justifying our words, thoughts, and expressions, so used this poem to stop that practice and examine why we were feeling the need to justify.

This belongs to all of us.

Final edit and arrangement – Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell

My Name is Mama

By Erin Casey

Between my birth certificate
and my marriage license
I have 4 names:
One inspired by a new teacher at my mama's school in 1972,
One from my French grandmother,
One from the Scotch-Irish family immigrated because of a potato famine,
And one chosen to take to be united with my husband.
But,
None of these are the name I hear at least 30 times a day-
Mama.
Mama, Mama, Mama, Mama...
Over and over again.
Sometimes evoking love in my response, sometimes inducing irritation
Between the requests.
"Mama, can I have a popsicle?"
"Mama, what's for dinner?"
"Mama, have you seen my shoes?"
"Mama, tell him to leave me alone!"
This word, Mama, makes my head turn left and right.
I try to hold on to my patience,
Try to be a sweet Mama and not a
Fussy one.
I looked up the word Mama.
It's a universal word, you know.
Most languages have this "mmm" and "a" sound for Mama
Because it's easier for babies to form
in developing little mouths
And can be murmured when little lips are
Wrapped around a warm breast or bottle
Looking up with love and sweet eyes.
And that's why I love this name
Mama.
Because my four babies are what makes me
Me – no matter how old they are or how old I am, and
I love being their Mama.
"Mama, can you read me a story?"
"Mama, can you scratch my back?"
"Mama, will you come tuck me in?"
"Mama, I love you."

EVERY DAY

By Rachel Boudreaux



Every day I wake up and dress
My hair goes in a bun
Am I going to a party, or maybe the beach?
Every day I find myself here

Every day I feel the heat on my face and arms
I dream that I am frolicking on a sandy white beach
Every day I find myself here

Every day I hear the loud machines forcing themselves to spin another day
I dream they are noisy visitors to my serene beach
Every day I find myself here

Every day I stare into the endless spinning thread
I dream of the endless cotton white beaches
Every day I find myself here

Every day I walk across the creaky wooden floor
I dream of crossing the boardwalk to the beach
Every day I find myself here

Every day I pray for my dreams to come true
Every day
But, every day I find myself here

What if every place was the same?

By Amber Smith



What if every place was a Twin City?

Would they all have public transportation?

Would they all have skyscrapers?

Would they not?

What if every place was a town?

Would it be somewhat noisy?

Would it be somewhat quiet?

Would all the stores be the same?

Would they not?

What if every place was a countryside?

Would there ever be any noise?

Would all the animals be the same?

Would all the food be the same?

Would it not?

What if every place was a suburb?

Would there be any city to go into?

Would they all just have houses?

Would all the houses be the same?

Would they not?

What if every place was a desert?

Would there be any water?

Would there be any snow and rain?

Would there be any cold?

Would there not?

What if every place was a rain forest?

Would there ever be any sun?

Would there be any people?

Would there be anything to do?

Would there not?

What if every place was the same?

Would everyone be the same?

Would everyone do the same things?

Would everyone like the same things?

Would every single person be happy?

I think not.

Love and Peace Haikus

By Amy Pan

Love

爱

Love is an oak tree...
Steady and unwavering;
It provides comfort.

Peace

和平

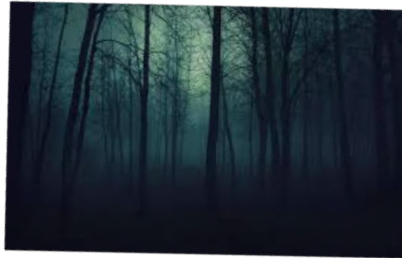
Peace is having strength...
Simple, serene, and soaring;
It provides stillness.

Drugs

by Becky Armour



drugs necessary, prescribed
healing, rescuing, soothing medicinal, therapeutic,
recovery, restorative
addicting, mild-altering, changing destroyer, predator
killer



To Joan

by Emily Avery

You were the child of farmers
of tending sheep
and learning to sew

You were raised
in a custody battle
one nation trying to pull you from your
home
the other desperate for you to stay

When inspiration from above
told you to expel those intruders
and crown your king
in the name of France
you understood your destiny

And when they told you no
you took their clothes
and gave them your hair
and in a flash of white
you took your country back

Your name spread through men's ears
Jeanne D'Arc
Joan the Maid
Maid of Orleans
but the only sound they heard was
heretic
and liar

And so they took you
and tried to burn your name out of their ears
forever

You scorched that marketplace
in Rouen where 10,000 people
watched you burn
because you took their clothes and fought
like women were never meant to

Your fire burned into
the men who put it there
and even in death they feared you

"Burn her twice" they said
as your ashes descended
to the bottom of the Seine

But as your body burned
and your ashes drowned
your heart
beat
on
and that heart
will beat
forever
forever in men's ears reminding them of what
you
did

Margret Ginette

By Taylor Adams

You were just an adolescent girl when they sent you away.
Your father was gone, and your mother was too busy.
Too busy for you? I can't imagine

Your new home was filled with many others
Not linked by blood, but by love.
They had rules, chores, and more rules.
You said the structure was appropriate and it's what you desired.
Tough love.

You were dragged out of your home after years of growing up there.
Back to mother you went.
No brothers, no sisters, no family to be around,
Just your mother and you.
You loved your mother,
But it was lonely, so lonely.
That's why you said you did it.

"Jumped out of the frying pan into the fire!"

Married at 16 to a selfish man.
Two children by 19.
Working and worrying consumed your life.
Troubled about money, your kids, and your safety.
You were drained by the blistering hand of a drunken man-
Leaving in the night, you ran with your two girls.
From Shreveport to New Orleans, your new haven.

Starting over, starting free.
You never gave up. I admire that.
Even though you were *just* a woman,
You were presented with multiple opportunities in the work force.
Ambition is what got you there.
Working tirelessly to provide a stable home.
Your girls were your focus. Always.

That's why,
You let *him* go by.
Why worry with it? you thought

He chased you and you were not amused.
He was divorced and had two boys of his own,
It seemed as though you were meant to meet.

New Year's Day, you let your worries leave your mind.
That's when you realized,
He wasn't *just* another guy.
You didn't need him, that was true,
But he let you be you.
He was gentle, not like the one before.
Kind, loving, handsome are just a few ways you described,
The man who called you the apple of his eye.

Married at last,
You knew it was right.
You never thought you could feel such delight.

Things started moving quicker,
And before you knew it,
Two more girls were added to it.
Your family quickly grew as you looked around,
Realizing there were eight of you now.

6 children.
20 grandkids.
9 great-grandkids... and still more to come.
50 years of marriage.
How did you make all of this happen?

Your insight, your love, your strength has molded your family.
First a lonely child now surrounded by tenderness and laughter.
You never imagined life becoming so grand,
You dedicate it all to the Great, Holy man.
Maw-Maw I love you.

My Sister's Conniption

By Bonnie Wilder

Oh looky there what a wonderful place to sit
I don't think they will mind if I rest for a bit

Bonnie What are you doing you don't know these people
Do you see those plants? Do you know if they're lethal?

How lovely it is to sit on this porch
But to keep the mosquitoes away I'm gonna light her tiki torch

Do not light that torch! What if things catch fire!
What other acts of lunacy are going to transpire?

Well... Let's check the door just to see if they're home
I won't bother with knocking; I'll just use this stone.

BONNIE LAURA WILDER have you lost your mind!
You are breaking and entering. Do you know that is more than a fine?

It's cool, calm down. The key was under the stone,
now do you think she would mind if I borrowed her phone.

They are gonna call the police on you, you oblivious fool.
That's it! I'm coming to get you before you feed me more bull.

Robin, chill I talked with Miss June.
She walked me right in and gave me tea with a spoon.
We are both sitting here laughing at your conniption fit
and we are looking at doctors for your lack of wit.

I hate you.

I love you too Robin.

Stones and Bones

By Laura Williams

*Sticks and stones may break my bones
But words will never hurt me.*

Truth?
Inaccurate.

Bones heal.
Words sink into the subconscious and sprout
Tendrils slipping so far down they can't be found.

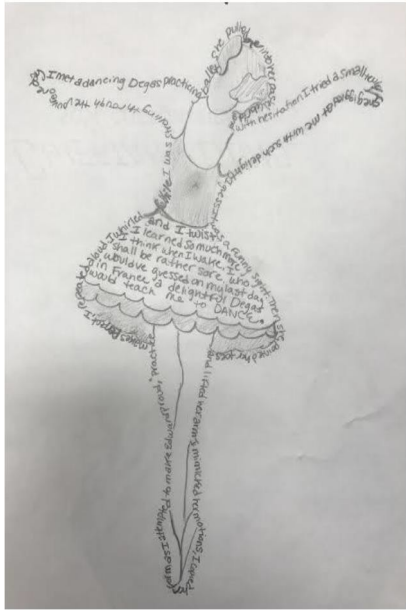
Bones ache where they once broke;
Words poison, infect, tint everything.

Physical hurts can be mended.
Scars on the soul don't show
So how can care be given?

Be wary with words.
You can never know what burdens others carry.

Naptime at the Louvre

By Claire Fisse



While I was
strolling at the Louvre one day I met a
dancing Degas practicing ballet She pulled
me into her pastel world
And with hesitation I started to twirl

She giggled at me with such delight
I guess I was an amusing sight
Then she pointed her toes and lifted her arm
I mimicked her motion and copied her form

As she attempted to make the impressionist
proud
“Practice makes perfect” I repeated aloud
I whirled and I twisted, I learned so much more
I think when I wake I will be rather sore

Who would have guessed on my last day in France
A delightful Degas would teach me to dance?

Mississippi Mary

By Theryl Augustus

Mary, you remind me of the color of a lightly brewed cup of coffee with two drops of cream. A brown eyed, big legged, black beauty queen. Born in Mississippi to a King and a Queen.

Mary, my marvelous, magnificent, mother:

I remember you standing in the door to greet us upon returning from school.

Smelling the aroma of red beans flowing through the house.

Seeing the glare of light on the shiny wood floor

The floor you spent hours cleaning on your hands and knees.

I remember you telling us to go play and don't leave the yard,

somehow, I found that hard to be.

Calling us into the house to eat our scrumptious supper.

Sounds of soaps blasting the TV.

Sliding my legs under the crispy clean pressed sheets you put on our beds.

I remember you dressed and walking out the door to start a new shift.

Pressing my hair and popping the hell out of my head, saying "Be still girl so I can finish combing your hair."

Preparing us for bed for school the next day.

I remember you being a wonderful mother.

Queen

I don't know what happened to you

Mary my beautiful, big leg, brown eyed,

black beauty queen.

Postscript

In June 2017, twelve women came together to write, a group of educators representing early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school, and adult literacy. From an English teacher to a social studies educator, from teachers of the gifted to a music educator, and from elementary generalists to diagnostician, we came together. Some of us had lifetimes of teaching experience, and one of us taught for the first time this semester. Two weeks and what started as a yawning chasm of time passed like a wink of the eye. We began, and then, our time together was over.

Through the genre of poetry, we practiced the craft of writing and perfected the art of sharing. The strange became familiar as we grew accustomed to, then embraced each other's ways – ways of seeing, thinking, and expressing. And while we didn't always agree to one another's perceptions, we learned to accept our differences in terms of outlook, lived experience, and perspectives. For these 75 hours, our lives meshed, and we lived the writer life.

Every summer, across the United States, in approximately 200 local sites serving all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, writing happens.

LSU Writing Project Mission Statement:

The Louisiana State University Writing Project (LSU WP) promotes the exploration of writing, writing research, and how to share writing best practice among educators (established 1985).

The LSU WP develops teacher capacity in writing and leadership capacity in writing. Through intensive professional development, the LSU WP extends writing knowledge and expertise, drilling down to how writing expertise translates to students. The cornerstone of the project is annual LSU Summer Invitational Institutes. Through participation in the LSU WP, we develop a leadership cadre of local teachers – teacher consultants (TCs) – who have participated in these institutes in the teaching of writing, and in turn, function as local experts and facilitators at their schools and districts.

The LSU WP Summer Institute targets teachers from all grade levels ranging from Pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade+. LSU WP Summer Institutes seek to foster the human initiative of preparing teachers in the area of writing instruction so that they can return to their respective schools and provide quality instruction to their students and serve as model writing instructors to their colleagues and peers. The LSU WP serves ten parishes (counties) in south Louisiana: Ascension, Iberville, East Feliciana, East Baton Rouge, Pointe Coupee, St. Charles, St. James, St. Helena, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana Parishes.

For more information about the LSU Writing Project, visit http://uiswcmweb.prod.lsu.edu/education/Research_and_Outreach/LSU_Writing_Project/item49299.html

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