

# *Beginnings xi*

A PUBLICATION OF ADULT STUDENT WRITING OF THE

**Ohio Writers' Conference**

OHIO LITERACY RESOURCE CENTER



## Foreword

I have been fortunate enough to travel to many places across the U.S. to read and present my work. Last year, I had the great pleasure and honor of speaking at the Ohio Literacy Resource Center's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Ohio Writers' Conference in Columbus. On that cold day in May I spoke about truth—how it is double edged—both a burden and a joy. I talked about how in writing and life we must 'bear' our truths as we might bear weight and how this is not easy. But if we can stand it, if we rise to the challenge, our efforts transform into another kind of bearing—our efforts bear fruit. Yes, there is a kind of joy, pride, satisfaction that comes at the end of our labor whenever we face fear, which is what telling the truth requires. It is what writing requires.

I gave my speech about truth. Then, once I was done speaking, I spent the rest of the day listening. I listened to former author/scholars, to current graduates of ABLÉ programs read their work and tell their stories. Now, thinking back on what I heard that day, and meditating on exactly what I might say in the foreword for this year's *Beginnings xi*, I am reminded of these words: "Poetry is Not a Luxury." This is the title of one of Audre Lorde's most famous essays. And the sentiment these words express never felt more true, more resonant, more alive, than on that day and in my memory of it. One after another of the ABLÉ authors/scholars stood up and read, stood in front of a microphone and at least a hundred people. Their copy of *Beginnings 10* in hand, they stood behind their own words and truths. But what was felt and said struck me as entirely essential. No, not a luxury at all. A joy maybe, a pleasure, but also a necessity.

Poetry is not a luxury. No writing is. Writing is rather a great requirement of life, like food or breath, a matter of survival. The personal reflections, pieces of fiction and memoir, as well as poetry in these pages are crucial. But they are also

great gifts. And like all gifts, these pieces benefit all involved—giver, receiver, accidental witness. We give ourselves to the work of writing. It gives to us. We let what we've made fly into the world so that it may give to and serve others, a gesture that is so gratifying to ourselves.

Audre Lorde also said, "When I dare to be powerful—to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."

Writing does require an acquaintance with fear. But at some point, whether we befriend fear, stare or shout it down, wade quietly through it, or maybe, as Lorde suggests, set it aside, fear is nothing next to the need for truth and the expression of vision. And it is nothing next to dreams—the theme of this year's issue of *Beginnings*.

That is what they showed me last year, one after the other in a great line snaking through the big white tent. And it is what these pages in your hands represent. This great gift of words, a reminder of what writing is and can be—truth, vision and dream combined and brought to light. I wholeheartedly congratulate you, the authors of *Beginnings xi*, on your achievements represented in these pages. They are many. They are boundless. And, finally, I admire the courage you all mustered to walk through the fire of fear in service of your dreams.

**Lee Peterson**

Author