

Review

Sine Cera: A Diverse City Writing Series Anthology: Two Old Guys From Brooklyn Salt Lake City, SLCC Community Writing Centre

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Writing centres do not often publish the work of people who attend them. Perhaps this is a paradoxical omission that this anthology may help to remedy, since it demonstrates the value of showcasing workshop writing. The pieces in *Sine Cera: A Diverse City Writing Series Anthology* are, as Series Coordinator Jeremy Remy says, “pieces that might have been left unheard” from a community “built around our words,” a selection of snapshots with all the personal intimacy that you might experience as someone explains to you the pictures in their family album. The collection includes many forms of writing, letters and anecdotes as well as poems and stories. The writers are of all abilities; irrespective of this some of the selections engage you poignantly or in a belly laugh or demand that you look at them again to see what you almost missed, and even the shortest pieces tell a good story.

Peggy Dean’s “David” is one example, recounting in just 182 words of everyday realism how a working class knight rescues a distressed damsel. Martha Carter’s “My Life” is another briefly told story of love found in hard places. Perhaps in other circumstances such straightforward autobiographical truths would be the reason these stories might be passed over, but they also indicate the challenges

the writers have dealt with in getting to where they now are. Near the beginning of her story Carter writes about how she and her mother moved to Tempe Arizona: "We got on the bus and went to the Apache Hotel. We paid for a room with a kitchen in it. We stayed there a long time." These stories don't say much directly about how hard life might be, but you can read it clearly enough in these stark, unembellished details.

A good number of the contributions illustrate one of the fundamentals of good writing, which is to write about what you know. Many, consequently, deal convincingly with family experiences. "Evie's Story" by Chanel Earl is a deft tale that begins in a child's fantasy world and crashes out of it into an adult realisation as a young girl comes to grips with her mother's terminal illness, managing at the same time to convey the strength of the relationship with her father and the sensitivity with which he tries to help her understand what is happening. Cyndi Lloyd describes the dilemmas her gay brother faces in getting his family, which has strong ties to the Church of Latter Day Saints, to accept his sexuality and identity. Kenneth Koldewyn's "Grandpa Vern aka My Bill Gates" warmly explores how the relationship he shared with his cool Grandpa led to his learning how to use computer technology. Raymond Briscoe deserves the accolade for the funniest selections in his droll anecdotes of travel experiences with his family.

As an exercise, a writing centre publishing this material is doing a great deal for its students in generating their confidence and encouraging their pride in their work, as well as demonstrating to other writing group members that they can achieve similar recognition. As a broader principle, it is vital to any writing program. As Willinsky (1990:186-7) remarked nearly a couple of decades ago "publication is the principal post-writing activity for the serious writing program; it is intended to demonstrate a regard for the students' work, treating their word as if it counted in the world."



Works Cited

- Willinsky, J. *The New Literacy: redefining reading and writing in the schools*. New York: Routledge, 1990.