

ForeWord

FOREWORD THIS WEEK

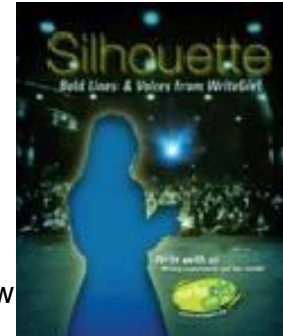
July 22, 2009

WRITEGIRL WORKSHOPS PRODUCE TEEN WRITERS

So many know the woes of the writer. The struggle, the scraping by, the rejection. But beyond the mass of cigarette smoke and rejection letters exists a new start to a writing career. A clean one. A mentored one. An uplifting one.

It's called WriteGirl.

Based out of Los Angeles, California, WriteGirl is an organization that provides writing workshops that aim to "give girls confidence to try new things, explore their goals, speak in public, meet new people, and express their views," Executive Director Keren Taylor told *FTW*.



Girls ages 13-18 are chosen from surrounding Los Angeles schools to participate in monthly writing workshops, Taylor said, "covering a different genre each month--from poetry to songwriting to journalism."

Just one day at a workshop offers guest writers, group writing activities, lunch, some sharing of the day's work, and even individual activities. For the individual portion, each girl is paired with her own mentor.

"The mentors are all professional women writers," Taylor said. Ranging from journalists with the *Los Angeles Times*, to screenwriters from HBO, to novelists, poets, and copywriters. These mentors give girls a wide-ranging and accurate taste of the writing world.

From September through June, girls write and grow from timid to outspoken, self-critical to self-assured. Some join whole-heartedly and ready for change, yet others join apprehensively because a mother or a teacher suggested it. "It is so satisfying to see how their initial ambivalence turns into passionate participation," Taylor said.

The ultimate finale is something even professional writers long for: publication. Each year, WriteGirl publishes an anthology with collections of stories from the teen writers and mentors.

Silhouette: Bold Lines & Voices From WriteGirl (978-0-9741251-8-3), is the group's eighth anthology. It includes pieces from more than sixty teens and professional writers as well as writing advice and activities.

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"Teen girls will enjoy our new anthology, *Silhouette*, as they read the stories and experiences," Taylor said. "The subjects and perspectives are varied and often emotionally intense...women, particularly mothers of teens, will find the book intriguing and surprising."

The June 14th Season-End Celebration for the book demonstrated this intrigue, as over 400 friends, family, and community members gathered at the Writers Guild of America Theater. They listened to guest actors like Peter Facinelli and Pamela Guest, but more importantly, all of the WriteGirl girls performed onstage.

"They didn't hold back" Taylor said, "they really let go and shared some very personal and very powerful writing with all of us."

Will WriteGirl ever empower girls in cities other than Los Angeles? Taylor certainly hopes so. "We just need the funding and resources to do so, ... but we are determined to continue to seek the support we need to thrive and grow."

Until girls from around the country can access the beauty in one-on-one mentoring and a varied writing education, each anthology from WriteGirl offers a small taste of the experience. "All of our anthologies, including *Silhouette*, contain writing activities--we call them 'experiments' to encourage the feeling of creativity and exploration in writers," Taylor said.

The writing and publishing world is known to be a hard, competitive, and challenging place. WriteGirl has changed that for hundreds of girls. "We work hard to create a fun, interactive, multi-media, hands-on, playful educational experience," Taylor said, "and girls respond with their feet by coming back month after month, year after year."

by [Samantha Breaux](#), Editorial