

Young Women's 2013 Summer Camps a Success by Andrea Nichols, Summer Camp Director

Young Women
Writing



for (a) Change

The spirit and soul of the Young Women Writing for (a) Change program was fully alive this summer! We enjoyed our largest participation since the summer of 2007. The girls and teens brought a special energy to our building during the month of June, and I can attest that they were fierce and brave in their writing this year. I am so proud of each girl for putting her voice into the writing circle and for making space to deeply listen to one another. I watched lasting friendships form. I heard tentative voices become bold, and I listened to girl after girl tell the truth of her life, our society, and our world. I was humbled by their courage and they taught me as much or more than I taught them.

I want to thank our phenomenal teaching team from this summer. Without their depth of leadership, our programs would not have been so successful. Avery Smith, Liv Linn, and Maggie Henke explored the theme of Friendship with our youngest girls. They wrote about being good friends to each other, but also explored the essential question of what it means to be a good friend to *ourselves*. Andrea Rotter, Hannah Goldman, and Liv Linn introduced the ideas of growth and expansion for the teens, and I was joined by Mindy Weaver-Flask, owner of Women Writing for (a) Change Indianapolis, to write about empowerment and intuition with the oldest young women in our program.

Each week we also welcomed guest artists in order to give the girls a full range of experiences and to show how visual art and movement can inspire writing. Natalie Hager from The Kennedy Heights Art Center taught the girls self-portraiture. Bet Stewart, of Intuition Theatre, led the girls in movement and theater games. Lexie Bean and Laura Grothous from Oberlin College shared their *People with Body Parts* project and led the girls in creating body maps. Sara Pranikoff, an accomplished Soul Collage artist from our own Women Writing for (a) Change community, led the girls in creating intuitive Touch Drawings.

I am still riding the wave of excitement from the summer and hope that we can carry the momentum into the school year. Here are a few testimonials from our participants:

I am taking new insight, new connections, new-found confidence, and courage away from this class. I also noticed a lot of people beginning to open up in their writing by the end of the class and it was great. It was great to hear all the laughter that occurred over time.

I really enjoyed this camp because everyone was really open and friendly and it was really easy to meet new friends. The exercises also made it interesting. I was afraid I would get bored because it's so long, but I actually wasn't. It was really awesome.

From this week I am taking a lot of comfort in myself and my body - a lot of respect for the power in there, how deeply I feel, my ability to communicate those things. The realization that I am my best advocate. But also, a deep desire to advocate for our circle, our relationships, and the work we've done here - the passionate and radical work of going deep into ourselves, bringing other women there with us, and empowering each other to tell the truth about our lives. What I've seen and heard here is a deepening to that truth - a taking full bodied ownership of it. That has been so powerful for me to witness and feel a part of. Hearing you give a voice to your stories has drawn out mine. Bearing witness to your fiery courage has heartened mine. I am fiercely proud to claim membership to this loving circle.