

## **Our Next Executive Director: Lisa Rocklin Shares Her WWf(a)C Story**

Recently, a gentleman I encountered at a public event asked me to explain the name of Women Writing for (a) Change, which had always confounded him. “Change from *what*? Change *for* what?” he inquired. It was brave of him to ask. I told him simply, for a change in self; for a change in perception of self in relation to others; for change that brings people together in an authentic way through the sharing of words—their own words in their own voices.

For me, that ‘change’ began as a recommitment to welcome personal writing back into my hectic life as a high school English teacher. My time was spent on everyone else’s writing but my own. After my first sampler class in 2006, I began signing up for weekend offerings and the Summer Core Class. I had no desire at that time to publish; I simply wanted to check in with myself through my words. I wanted to write poetry again; I wanted to write personal memoir. And there was nothing I was expected to prove or validate by attending writing circles. I just needed to show up with my writing and my commitment to be a good listener, a fully engaged participant, and an equal member in a circle of peers. My writing voice found a home here.

In 2015, I enrolled in the Conscious Feminine Leadership Academy in the hope of deepening my understanding of the work of Women Writing beyond the walls of 6906 Plainfield Road. How could I learn to take this way of being into my personal life and my classroom? How would the process change my perception of self? In what environments might I be able to facilitate and hold space for others in the way that I had been so skillfully held by many facilitators over many years and circles?

Those questions continue to be answered in an evolution that keeps me growing, both personally and professionally. This learning has allowed me to lead writing circles in the school where I worked, for both students and colleagues. I have facilitated outreach writing circles for incarcerated women and students at risk for or facing homelessness. I have written with and listened to youth in weeklong summer camps where voices arrive as 4<sup>th</sup> graders and quite often continue to flourish annually until they’re 12<sup>th</sup> graders. I have facilitated writing circles that weave reflective writing with art, music, history, nature, social justice, creativity, comedy, and grief. As a writer, I have pushed my comfort threshold by attempting stand-up comedy, spoken word poetry performance, and online poetry platforms where rejection is frequent but the satisfaction of submitting the work for consideration is exhilarating.

As is true for so many members of our community, Women Writing for (a) Change continues to foster my growth and leads me to take on new roles. After transitioning from a 21-year career as an educator to the position of Assistant Director of the organization in August of 2018, I am honored to accept the role of Executive Director beginning in January of 2020. My friend and mentor, current Executive Director Diane Debevec, inspires me with her leadership, collaboration, grace, and wisdom. As we work side-by-side through 2019, I am grateful for everything she has done and continues to do as the holder of this unique organization.

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Women Writing for (a) Change has a certain magic to it that I have yet to find anywhere else. Founded by Mary Pierce Brosmer in 1991, it has been well tended by many gardeners. It is part of the landscape of a vibrant writing community here in Cincinnati and in other cities around the country, where affiliates have bloomed. It's something the world needs. I am grateful to continue its tending and growing in the circle we make together as a community. It has been my pleasure to get to know so many of you in this community and I look forward to meeting more of you each day to learn how we can continue to best serve your writing lives.