

## EDITOR'S NOTES

In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice contemplates how to get through a very small passage: "Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin.' For you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible" (Carroll, 1960, p. 21).

The arts have always had the power to intrigue and capture the attention of many of us, yet they still remain on the margin of most educational programs, often relying on "soft money" for their survival. This volume demystifies the experience of art making and makes a strong case for the arts as an integral part of adult education. Art is seen as a way of knowing (Allen, 1995) that releases the imagination (Greene, 1995), allowing creative learning to emerge. Art appeals universally to us all and has the capacity to bridge cultural differences. Art can also foster individual and social transformation, promoting dialogue and deepening awareness of self and the world around us. Some of the authors in this volume also see art as a vehicle for promoting emancipation and social justice.

This volume challenges the dominant paradigm of how knowledge is typically constructed and shared in adult education settings by focusing on how adult educators can expand learning opportunities and experiences (for their learners), as Alice has shown is possible. The contributors to this volume are actors, musicians, photographers, storytellers, and poets, all of whom also happen to be adult educators. In each chapter, the author describes how one or more forms of artistic expression were used to promote learning in formal or informal adult education settings. In each case, the purpose of education was not to teach art (not to develop expertise in acting or poetry writing, or create great works of art). By contrast, art was used as a means to access learning in subjects as divergent as English language acquisition, action research, community awareness, and social justice.

Serving as an introduction to the volume, the first chapter begins with a discussion of the limitations of how knowledge has been traditionally constructed in adult education contexts and offers new creative venues for teaching and learning. The arts are depicted as a form of indigenous knowledge that is often present but buried within us. The benefits of art for teaching and learning in a variety of contexts are discussed. Each subsequent chapter focuses on an art form in a particular adult education context. The authors describe how they have incorporated artistic ways of knowing into their practice on the basis of their own and others' research.

Chapters Two and Three are situated in higher education. In Chapter Two, Kristin Lems talks about her experiences bringing music into an adult English as a second language class. Music is the tool that unlocks learning potential for adults from a variety of cultural backgrounds learning to speak

English. Chapter Three is situated in a cohort-based graduate program for practicing teachers. Anne McCrary Sullivan guides her students in creating poems to deepen their understanding of research skills. She also discusses her use of poetry as a volunteer interpreter at Everglades National Park and provides examples of her own poems as catalyst.

Chapters Four through Seven focus on the arts in community-based education. In Chapter Four, Keith B. Armstrong describes a technique combining photography with autobiography. The participants of a residential community took photos, wrote about their lives, and shared them in a group context. According to the author, “art is a record of social interaction and inevitable power relationships.” People saw themselves in others’ work, and their dialogue led to greater understanding. In Chapter Five, Steven E. Noble talks about the popular theater experience he created with adults battling mental illness. Art became a way for these marginalized adults to come out of the closet and face the world. Through their performance, they educated the community about the myths and realities of mental illness.

Chapter Six, by Kevin Olson, takes a look at the role of music in building communities both historically and today, from the Chautauqua, civil rights movement, and early folk schools to powwows and other ethnic festivals and modern-day youth centers, senior centers, and social action groups. The power of music to emancipate and promote group solidarity is emphasized. In Chapter Seven, Bette Halperin Donoho takes an in-depth look at an urban community performance group where community members act out stories focusing on problem solving and bringing about social change.

Chapter Eight weaves together the themes and threads of the previous chapters and strengthens the case for incorporating the arts into adult education. It is our hope through this volume that readers will be moved to pick up a paintbrush or a lyric pen, or express themselves through their whole body. After all, as Alice knows, very few things are really impossible.

Randee Lipson Lawrence  
Editor

## References

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 Carroll, L. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*. New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1960. (Originally published in 1865 and 1872)  
 Greene, M. *Releasing the Imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

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