

# FOREWORD

## 'You changed my life'

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Dear Reader,

Thanks for being there, for listening, for reading. I'm happy to be writing. I've been doing that most of my life. For the past three decades, I've devoted my intellectual, creative, and spiritual energies to transforming academia's research practices. My own academic work has included poetic representation, memoir, essay, responsive reading, collaborative writing, epistolary, ethnodrama, and altered books. This new electronic journal, *Creative Approaches to Research*, far exceeds anything I might have imagined. Sound! Music! Visuals! Interaction! How dull of me to be only writing.

I had the great pleasure of being in Australia from 9 February – 22 March 2006, when this new journal was getting underway. I was delighted when asked if I would write a 'little foreword' for the first issue. And so I am doing so. And a little forward of me too.

While in Australia I met with people from artistic, creative, scholarly, research, and service communities. Some people were full into their careers, others were at the apex, and still others were new. Many of them said to me, 'You changed my life.'

My first response was to blush—I am *not* a rock star. But breathing into the compliment, I felt the pleasure of knowing that my work was influential—not just in changing research practices, but in changing people's lives. From the time I had become a full professor at a major research university (The Ohio State University—Columbus, Ohio USA), I had chosen to spend my 'academic capital' finding ways to create a welcoming community, a community that would honour differences in heritage, culture and voice. To use my sinecure differently, I felt, would be unethical and cowardly.

But something kept niggling at me about those four words—*you changed my life*.

'I did not change your life,' I imagine saying to Laura Brearley, the person responsible for bringing this journal in to existence. 'I did not change your life,' I imagine saying to Julie White, the person responsible for bringing me to Australia and one of the peer-review editors of this journal. 'I did not change your life,' I want to say again and again. But as I reflect on all of this, I realise that I am indeed happy to know that my intentions have been met—that my work has been instrumental in changing the academic community and its practices. But, I did not change your life. I may have been a catalyst—my work may have come your way just when you needed it—but *you* changed your lives. You are the ones who chose to act differently, to respond to your callings, to build community, to welcome others. So, dear reader, as this journal comes to your screen, may you find in it that which you need to know to change your life, should that be what you need to do, so you can be who it is you are and are meant to be. And I can't help think the models of creative approaches to research that you find will give you the courage and the strength to pursue your own way of knowing and telling.

If you choose to do this—to be true to your own being—you know what? Before long people will be telling you, 'You changed my life.' And you can write about that. Or sing or paint or dance about it. And what joy you will give to me—and the world.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Laurel Richardson** has multiple attachments to the Ohio State University where she is Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Associated Faculty of Women's Studies, and Visiting Professor in Cultural Studies in the College of Education. She specialises in qualitative methodology, gender, symbolic interactionism, the sociology of knowledge, and arts-based research. She has been honoured with visiting lectureships in many countries—most recently in Denmark, Iceland and Australia, where she was the Miegunyah Distinguished Fellow at the University of Melbourne. Laurel lives in Worthington, Ohio with her husband, Ernest Lockridge and their Abyssinian Red rescued cat, Mimi.

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