



Prologue

The editors of the Oxford English Dictionary have gathered numerous definitions of the word equity, most of them relating to the law, from "the recourse to general principles of justice to correct or supplement common and statute law" to "the value of a mortgaged property after deducting charges and claims against it." It's fascinating that the one definition listed as "long rare" is the most simple, the most potentially explosive. This definition tells us that equity is "that which is fair and right." This definition implies that under our shifting, and sometimes cynical, cultural formalities there may be a bedrock of something like goodness.

It is Luis Francia who introduced me to the term "cultural equity," which he had recently learned on an Academy of American Poets tour of California. I had complained to him that the term "multicultural" seemed inadequate to describe the value of a literary festival that would offer twelve writers, one of them the premiere poet of West-Indian culture, three of them African American, two of them Native American, one each Filipino

and Filipina, one Hispanic, one whose poetry has enlarged the existing canon by a refusal to let meaning give in to rigidity, one who finds the human on America's wide plains and, finally, one who finds the human on the wide plains of the Bronx. Yet the previous sentence, long as it is, only begins to describe the rich diversity of these writers.

What is fair and right about this group of artists is a very potent mixture of their unswerving loyalties to the crafts which they practice, their care for the talent that has been granted to them, their fidelity to their homelands, and their involvement in a new world order that is as fertile and various as the imagination itself. Enjoy!

We are also pleased to announce the inception of The Associated Writing Programs/Old Dominion University International Writers Center at Old Dominion University. This organization will work to promote awareness of international issues, cultures, and writers in American creative writing programs and it will facilitate international exchanges of writers and students. Watch for more information about this exciting project.

~ Janet Sylvester, Director, Literary Festival