



**ICSA Annual International Conference
Manipulation and Victimization
Montreal, Canada
July 5-7, 2012**

**Coming to Terms with Your Story:
A Pre-Conference Writing Workshop for Post-Cultic Recovery**

Facilitator: Karen Pressley

Wednesday, July 4, 2012 (10:00 am – 5:00 pm)

After leaving a high-demand group, how do you come to terms with the people, events, and countless details of the memories that shaped that time of your life? Outside of counseling or talks with caring friends and family members, exploring the fertile subject matter of your experiences can be an otherwise daunting, seemingly irreconcilable task without a means of connecting the dots and coming to terms with your personal story. Your story is composed of countless moments, scenes, and choices that may hold difficult, tragic, repressed, or even magical events and circumstances. This Writer's Workshop focuses on the healing qualities of writing that can help you to make sense of your experiences, re-establish your well-being, and re-discover your personal voice. We'll use techniques that help you to create meaningful accounts that not only document memories, but that can help to diffuse the impact they might have on your thoughts and emotions. These techniques are based on research that shows that writing is a productive, healing process that has been found to reduce physical and emotional illness in people who write regularly.

As a participant in this workshop--and whether or not you consider yourself a skilled writer--you are addressed as a writer with a voice, an author with an authoritative position over your life story. If you have been more accustomed to being the object rather than the subject of your circumstances, particularly if you have been denied authority in the group, writing about your life can play a significant part in erasing years of invisibility and interpretation by others. With the goal of "write or be written," you will learn writing techniques that will enable you to express the hard-won, deep layers of truth that you might discover but not otherwise share as part of daily social communication. As one writer said after developing a memoir, "Each time the authentic words break through, I am changed."

The teacher of this workshop is a writing professional, a university instructor of composition, a published author, and a former sixteen-year cult member. She believes that writing is empowering, whether you write to lay bare your soul with absolute frankness for others to read and learn by, or you simply want to make sense of your life for personal healing purposes. By guiding you to put pen to paper as you explore your experiences through these specialized writing techniques and exercises in this three-part workshop, she will show you how writing can bring the very needed joy that comes from transforming your subject matter into material that helps you to grow while you create something of value for yourself and, if you choose, to share with or to help others.

The writing workshop will take place on Wednesday July 4, 2012 (10:00 am to 5:00 pm), the day before the ICSA Annual Conference in Montreal, which takes place July 5-7. The location will be the conference site: Holiday Inn Select Montreal Centre Ville Downtown.

Next

Cost

The workshop is free but open only to conference registrants (select one-day registration if you only want to attend the workshop). Space is limited and preference is given to former members of cultic groups who want to write about their experiences.

Sign-Up Required

In addition to registering for the conference, you must sign up for the pre-conference workshop. Here are the steps:

1. Go to ICESA's Event Home Page: http://icsahome.com/infoserv_respond/event_conferences_workshops.asp
2. Explore the links to the left, under "Conferences." These provide information on accommodations, fees, directions, etc.
3. Click "Register" on the upper right.
4. Note the yellow box, "How to Get a Discount Code." Click on the survey that is appropriate to you (ICSA member, nonmember, full-time student). The survey helps us plan.
5. Toward the end of the survey you will be asked if you want to participate in the writing workshop.
6. Click "submit" and receive the appropriate discount coupon code (\$50 - \$225).
7. Look left at "Buy Now"; select the option for you; proceed to checkout, look for the box in which to enter your discount code.

If you have already registered but did not sign up, write ICESA: mail@icsamail.com.

About the Facilitator

Karen Pressley is an Instructor of English composition at Southern Polytechnic State University in Atlanta, and is the managing director of KAP Communications Inc., specializing in writing, editing, and desktop publishing (www.karenpressley.com). Karen holds a MA in Professional Writing and a BS in Communication (Media and Public Relations). As a former 16-year Scientologist, she directed its Celebrity Centre International Network and later worked at the church's International Management headquarters. Since departing Scientology in 1998, she is consulted regularly on Scientology issues by media, former cult members, and their families. She is a guest speaker for radio and television shows, conferences, seminars, and academic classes. Her first two books about Scientology, *Chasing After the Wind* (Broadman & Holman, 2001) and *Escaping Scientology: An Insider's True Story* (New Hope, 2006) were suppressed from publication. She authored several entries for Baker *Dictionary of Cults* (forthcoming, 2011) and numerous articles on Scientology. In 2009, Karen developed the Hegemonic Communication Model (HCM) that shows how a cult member's personal expression, critical thinking skills, and creativity are affected by charismatic leaders. HCM is illustrated in "Creativity and Cults from Sociological and Communication Perspectives: The Processes Involved in the Birth of a Secret Creative Self," co-authored with sociologist Miriam Boeri for "The Last Draw: Cults and Creativity," a special issue of the *Cultic Studies Review* (Vol. 9, No. 1, 2010), presented at the 2010 ICESA Conference. Her forthcoming book, *Experiencing Creativity: Breaking Free from Spiritual Abuse and the Emergence of the Creative Self*, provides a theoretical framework for understanding how cult rhetoric suppresses members' critical thinking, personal expression, and creativity. Her latest projects include development of a writing workshop for ex-cult members that focuses on writing to heal through the power of the narrative, to speed recovery and improve critical thinking skills in post-cult life.