



My arms ache

by Joyce Stalker

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My arms ache from embracing this machine
The right arm is stretched out to move the
mouse on the green pad
The left one is poised, always at the ready
Tensed to capture a fleeting, brilliant thought.

Once my arms embraced the world.
I stood on empty foreign beaches
Held them outstretched to the sky
Captured the wildness of waves and wind and
sun.

Now I sit desperately seeking 500 words to
move your world.
500 words to penetrate the numbing demands of
your endless emails.
500 words to create a mood so that you might
embrace my ideas.
500 words to convince you.

But I don't do 'academic' very well any more.
I'm fed up with being measured
Well-referenced, well-published, well-crafted.
I have eight years, maybe ten, maybe fifteen until
retirement
I want to make a difference.
I've always wanted to make a difference.
And now I want to make a difference now.

I want the widening gap to close
I want the streets to be safe after dark for
women
I want deaths in Africa to be as important as
those in Kosovo
I want us all to feel shame for the people who
sleep under the bridges
I want poverty to foster strength in those who
suffer it so that they demand changes
I want structures that care, nurture and
encourage
I want wealth to carry with it responsibility

At night, my arms embrace my sanity
My lover's laughter, admonishments and touch
Soothe the throb of my muscles.

Together, we de-construct our day
Talk of lives we have touched
Paradigms we have shifted
Concrete ways in which we think we might have
made a difference
Created a better world.

Together, we re-construct our lives and make
plans to re-capture
The feeling of standing on empty foreign
beaches
Arms outstretched to the sky
Capturing the wildness of waves and wind and
sun.

And the ache eases.

Joyce Stalker is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. Her research interests include women and adult education, the potential of adult education to realise social justice, and equity issues. She keeps sane by running, boogie boarding and sewing. Please send feedback on this Commentary to <info@ala.asn.au>.