



ILLUMINATIONS

Great Writers on Writing

June Jordan

“

And so poetry is not a shopping list, a casual disquisition on the colors of the sky, a soporific daydream, or bumpersticker sloganeering. Poetry is a political action undertaken for the sake of information, the faith, the exorcism, and the lyrical invention, that telling the truth makes possible. Poetry means taking control of the language of your life. Good poems can interdict a suicide, rescue a love affair, and build a revolution in which speaking and listening to somebody becomes the first and last purpose to every social encounter. [...]

Why should power and language coalesce in poetry? Because poetry is the medium for telling the truth, and because a poem is antithetical to lies/evasions and superficiality, anyone who becomes a practicing poet has an excellent chance of becoming somebody real, somebody known, self-defined, and attuned to and listening and hungering for kindred real voices utterly/articulately different from his or her own voice.

This outward and inward attunement seems to me a most reasonable basis for the political beginning of a beloved community: a democratic state in which the people can trust the names they have invented for themselves and for each other.

”