



*Bob Barker Didn't
Supply These Poems*

2019

*For all youth in Ohio who are incarcerated so
their voices may be freed, heard, and
understood as a call to reform the juvenile
justice system.*

Table of Contents

Letter from the Program Director	2
Mission	4
Impact Report	5
Cohorts	6
Letter from the Cohort	7
Residents' Creative Writing	9
Acknowledgments	42
Vision	43

Letter from the Program Director

Dear reader,

In Ohio, there are close to 2,100 youth in the state's custody according to the Sentencing Project's report from 2015. Ohio's Department of Youth Services recorded a daily facility population of 530 juveniles at all of their prisons and treatment centers, 53% of juveniles are black, and the county with the highest admissions is Cuyahoga with approximately 20%. The Justice Policy Institute highlighted in their 2014 report that it costs approximately \$200,000 to incarcerate a juvenile for a year compared to approximately \$10,000 to educate a youth for a year in Ohio.

These facts only illuminate a small cog of the juvenile justice system's overall mechanical design that for many youth break down their contact with the outside world, their hopes and dreams, and their human dignity.

For 12 weeks, our residents produced creative writing during workshops designed to teach them about different genres from diverse authors so their voices may be freed, heard, and understood by you as a call to reform the juvenile justice system because these are just kids locked inside cages.

Before you read this chapbook, I want you to open your mind and your heart because our residents have done the same to share their work; I want you to separate our residents from qualifiers such as juvenile, delinquent, felon, convict, gang-banger, and criminal because these terms don't define our residents. Then, after you read this chapbook, I want you to ask questions and search for answers; I want you to share this chapbook with everyone around you; and I want you to remember what my mentor Dr. Philip Metres told me: "Their souls are the art."

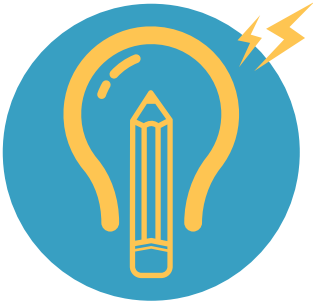
Despite being broken down by the system, by life, by fear, our residents managed to transfer their souls through writing for you to read.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zachary Thomas". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "Zachary" written above the last name "Thomas".

Zachary Thomas
Program Director for Writers in Residence

Mission



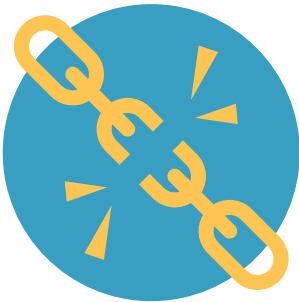
TEACH

creative writing to youth who are incarcerated in jails and prisons.



FOSTER

a genuine, long-lasting relationship with the residents.



FREE

their voices through the distribution and showcase of their creative writing in published chapbooks shared with the community.

Impact Report

This impact report summarizes all of our cohort's work during the fall semester from August to December:

4 Cohorts

29+ Student Volunteers

66+ Residents

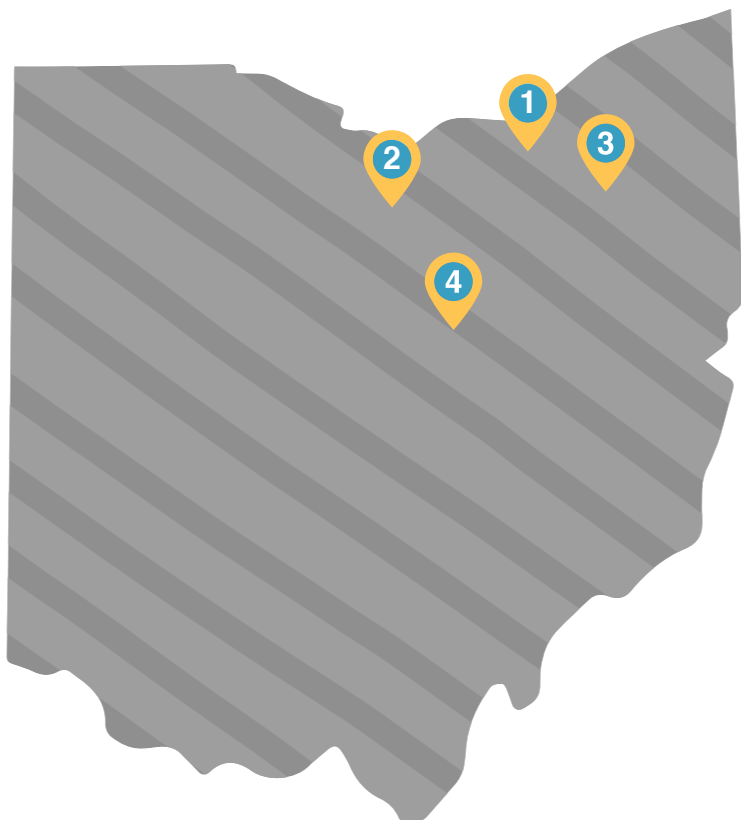
72+ Hours

These totals highlight our program's expansion and development with more cohorts from colleges and universities employing our mission and vision at juvenile detention centers across Ohio. If we compare these totals with the impact report from 2017, which marks the origin of the program, we would see a tripling and quadrupling difference in the number of residents, student volunteers, and service hours.

Visit writersnresidence.org/impact to learn more.

Cohorts

- 1 John Carroll University at the Cuyahoga Hills JCF
- 2 Oberlin College at the Lorain County JDH
- 3 Hiram College at the Portage-Geauga County JDC
- 4 College of Wooster at the Indian River JCF



Letter from the Cohort

Dear reader,

Twelve weeks ago, when we showed up at Portage-Geauga JDC with a handful of pens and stack of notebook paper, we were eager to get writing. Meanwhile, the residents had no idea what to expect—they walked into the classroom without even knowing what the class would be. Yet, that day, and every day after, they came with open minds, jumping into the unknown with courage and creativity.

As we tapped out meter on our desks, brainstormed imagery, and debated the poetic meaning of DaBaby’s lyrics, we got to know each other as writers and as friends. At times our discussions were goofy and full of jokes. Other times our conversations turned serious as the injustices of the justice system and fears about what life would bring next loomed over the room.

To some, this freedom of expression may seem small, but as people shared their perspectives, both out loud and on the page, we began to see just how powerful this freedom can be. We may not always hold the same perspectives represented in the works we read, but we value the way that writing allows people to share what they feel, to have agency in their own narratives.

When we read the songs, poems, and stories in this chapbook we hear echoes of the writers' voices in our head. To us, that's a mark of good writing. It takes talent to capture a personality in just a few words. We hope that, as you read, you too will get a sense of the funny, charismatic, smart kids we got to know. And maybe someday you'll attend a poetry reading, listen to a song or pick up a book and find these same voices again; we hope so.

We are so grateful to the residents for sharing their stories with us and we're so excited to share their work with you.

Sincerely,
The Hiram College Cohort

P.S. The title of our chapbook, *Bob Barker Didn't Supply These Poems*, references the clothing line worn by our residents. Bob Barker is a company that supplies detention centers with everything from equipment to the uniform orange slides the residents wear. Despite the forced conformity in outerwear, the residents still express themselves by picking up a pen and sharing their thoughts. All the poems are supplied by our residents' collaborative efforts, creativity, and emerging voices.



Hiram College

Portage-Geauga County JDC

Six-Word Memoir

James

Funny, athletic, generous, outspoken, caring, nice.

Six-Word Memoirs

A'muary

1. My life is not that fun
2. I hang with the wrong people
3. My mother is like my father
4. Sports didn't go as I planned
5. Life can sometimes be very hard
6. Never put your trust in friends
7. Friends can also be your enemies
8. It's coo to leave your homies
9. I can only think of eight

Six-Word Memoirs

Anthony

1. I am very good at sports.
2. I am very smart in class.
3. I am very tall, shy, young.
4. Chipotle-bowl: white rice, black beans, lettuce.

Six-Word Memoirs

Slade

1. I like to go to school.
2. I like to play my PS4.
3. I don't like getting into trouble.
4. I like to play football alot.
5. I like to play cards alot.
6. I'm a black African American male.
7. My favorite colors are red, green.
8. I like to ride bikes alot.
9. I like to play basketball alot.
10. I love to drink apple juice.

Six-Word Memoirs

Evans

1. My favorite game was GTA before
2. Sometimes I hurt with no explanation
3. I wish I had a tiger
4. I question myself with second chances
5. I put tattoos on my neck
6. The court is my happy place
7. When I use drugs it's regretful
8. All done it's your turn again

Six-Word Memoirs

Tayvonn

1. I have nothing I don't know
2. Can I go home soon please
3. Put the team on my back
4. Six foot five but still growing
5. A lot on my mind now
6. Touch her heart through your words
7. Up all night I can't sleep
8. When I'm sleep I'm most awake
9. Skittles are the best candy ever

Six-Word Memoirs

Brown

1. My tattoos are symbolic also creative
2. My pain runs so so deep
3. I am my brother's keeper forever
4. I really love overseas women alot
5. I love everything about Cleveland, Ohio
6. Jerusalem to Myrtle Beach to Cleveland
7. I really really love making music
8. I really really love basketball

Six-Word Memoirs

Lukas

1. Jesus Christ I love cornbread man
2. Hot, hot sauce in my eyes
3. Stubbing toes in winter hurts man
4. My bed hurts my freaking back
5. I burned my house down accidentally
6. My cat clawed my eyes out
7. My mom hates my guts bad
8. I hate doing the dishes dude
9. I got disowned by my mom

Untitled

Corey

1. I'm in jail for a while
2. No one to love or hug
3. Have this pain I can't heal
4. I'm all alone in this world
5. Year of my life waisted away
6. I really really want some food
7. Baconator from Wendys is the best
8. But Frito Burritos are good too
9. I really want to be out

Untitled

James

One of my fears was losing my mom. The fear of losing my mom it was a huge blow to my brain and heart. I wasn't able to eat, sleep nor talk. It made me feel powerless, hopeless, and empty. It made me think what I could have done, something different maybe the outcome would be different.

I honestly don't know, I would say if you'd had the type of relationship with your mom like I did with mine then you'll have the same feeling. If that's one of your feels.

Untitled

Slade

I'm not afraid of nothing because my grandma always told me not to be afraid of nothing so I always told myself don't be afraid so that is why I'm not afraid of nothing but to be honest wit you I'm afraid of my family and this is the only thing I'm afraid of but other than that I'm not afraid of nothing.

Life Goes on People Come and Go

Tayvonn

I was chillin' with my friends
and they were playing with a gun.
They didn't know a bullet was in the
chamber and they pulled the trigger
the sound broke off like an explosion
BOW. I closed my eyes all I could hear
after was ringing. Pain is all I
thought about but I felt numb. Weird. I
open my eyes to stares and shocked
faces like they just seen a ghost.
I turn to my right and see a hole
in the wall then I realized that I
almost got shot in the head. Damn.
Almost lost my life to an accident.

Untitled

Corey

A person's pit bull started chasing me down the street so I had to hurry up and get somewhere elevated so I didn't get f**ked up by the dog. I was scared as hell of the dog cause it was vicious. It was like almost getting hit by a car.

Face My Fears

Mitchell

When I went to Cedar Point with my family and we had got on a ride that went high up in the sky. And they had forced me to get on it. I can compare it to sky diving because it's scary and life risking.

Untitled

Bryant

I ran into a bear on a camping trip. He was hungry so me and my friends used fire to make it scared so it left us to be so that made me feel like frightened and a lil scared but that made me think of me dropping 200 pounds on my chest.

JDC Flow¹

Mitchell

I'm in jail

I wanna go home

Bob Barker my clothes

judge send me home,

free free,

I'm in JDC

I got 2 more weeks

I'm finna be free

yeah yeah

orange slides on my feet

late night can't sleep

so I read

please free me.

¹ This piece remixes and parodies DaBaby's "Suge."

Untitled²

A'muary

I see the cops

I'm gone

I told her stop calling my phone

told my brothas that I'm coming home

yeah yeah

I'm on the block in the hood

told my momma my life gone

be good he be acting he not even hood

² This piece remixes and parodies DaBaby's "Suge."

Untitled³

Corey

Hell yeah

in for a year, I'm locked

I'm wearing Bob Barker flops

I got in a fight, I won

hell yeah

Can't go where I want

I might get out soon I'm lyin'

I'm a regular here, damn

hell yeah

³ This piece remixes and parodies DaBaby's "Suge."

Suge Remix ⁴

Evans

Glock in my pants and you
know I'm a blow body shells dropping
we up on the sco I smoke me
some bag then I go hit a sto
yeah yeah
I do what I [want] I'm good
I'm posted with SI—
in the hood know I'm stopping
the violence I should
yeah yeah
talking about guns I'm a
drop that I'm locked in
this cell I'm a get out
soon so hopefully I'm a be right
back

⁴ This piece remixes and parodies DaBaby's "Suge."

Untitled ⁵

Jeremiah

Damn

she liking my music

I'm deep in the paint where shits just confusing,

your momma just left I threw her

almost a million. She back in the club and I'm

back to my music

yeah yeah

⁵ This piece remixes and parodies DaBaby's "Suge."

Untitled ⁶

Tayvonn

Mama I'm sorry that I messed up
I didn't mean to do that I
was just trappin' and flippin'
them packs you know how I move that
I'm sitting alone in this cold cell
I shouldn't have to do that, fightin'
the demons in my sleep, I'm prayin'
that they don't attack, I'm in my
zone I'm just workin' tryna get out
I wanna go home, but it's coo
Imma be out soon.

⁶ This piece remixes and parodies DaBaby's "Suge."

Untitled

Evans

There's a basketball court called Emery where everybody be at, there's a freeway right next to it if you go down the street, it's a corner store next to a vape store, there's a Walgreens a little down from the corner and across the street the store is called JJ's and next to that there's a Boostmobile store, there's a little river on the side of JJ's and Boostmobile, then if you cross the street there's a tow truck company, then there's a hair store with a car repair shop.

Untitled

Corey

Basketball hoops all around

Gas stations all over, don't leave your car runnin'

and get out, it's gonna be gone walkin' the streets, only white dude people lookin'

crazy. P.S., BP, Marathon, and Shell stay all next to each other, buyin' shells at 13

they don't care.

Untitled

A'muary

My favorite place got lots of people most is my friends, we shoot dice to have fun
while kids is playing with their friends, it got some dudes hoping for bread

Hometown

Anthony

I would take them downtown, go to a Cavs game or Indians game then after go to my neighborhood in Mayfield and go to Yours Truly and show them around Mayfield. When you're walking in Mayfield you will hear birds chirping and police sirens

My Hometown

Mitchell

I'll show them downtown Cleveland because it's a lot of places I can show [them]. I'll show where the Cavs, Browns, Indians plays. I'll show them the mall, the movies. Then I'll take them to my old hood and show them where I used to live and play at. We got a church, a court, [and] a Boy's and Girl's Club.

Sweet Home

Anonymous

Football, basketball teams – people hanging out on the streets, houses not filled, some shoes on lines, hearts – teddy bears in front of people’s houses, cars going back and forth, at the Y shoots going up through the nets wooden backboards, things carved into the trees, pot holes in the streets, wood layed out on the grounds, sometimes all you can hear is “bang bang” might even be right at you

Rubber Bowl

Blake

In my city there is alot of fun places to visit, like the old Rubber Bowl or the Derby Downs... But my favorite place is the Akron Skate Park. It has an awesome view of the Zips private air strip and the old Rubber Bowl and in the back the Goodyear Blimp Hangar.

Untitled

Brown

I'm from Cleveland where you can visit the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, they have programs for kids whose moms abandoned them, they have the Cleveland Science Center and the Great Steel Yard Commons, we can also take a trip to Lake Erie, not all that nice but it will do the job

Wonders in the World

Tayvonn

I go and look I see kids playing at the parks old people walking together. You hear laughs and wonder how long things have been going on. People that go to school can have good things to look forward to and do good things. Then in other places it gets bad. Will there be things that go on when you are sleep that go on when you're awake or does everything change when you close your eyes.

Untitled

Anonymous

As you walk through the town you will hear and see buses and cars zooming by kids in the streets playing a game of 1 on 1, parents outside doing yard work on a hot day, see everyone go inside as it starts to pour, kids sit inside playing video games as the parents cook dinner so everyone can relax, food gets done, everyone comes to dinner and after dinner they sit back and relax

Acknowledgments

We have to thank the following individuals that have supported our program with either their time, talents, or treasure because without them our program wouldn't exist.

Our residents

Our student volunteers

- Ellie
- Liz
- Jessica
- Rose
- Baraa
- Eric
- Natasha
- Olivia
- Joseph
- Laila
- Uma
- Maeve
- Cat
- Megan
- Savannah
- Sydney
- Morgan
- Sierra
- Jenna
- Madison
- Alexia
- Quinn
- Callie
- Graham
- Naomi

Our advisors, community partners, and academic institutions

- Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards – Karen, Courtenay, Lillian
- John Carroll University – Phil, Debby, Anna, all faculty/staff
- Oberlin College
- Hiram College – Mary, all faculty/staff
- College of Wooster – Anne, all faculty/staff
- Cuyahoga Hills – Erin, Scott, Mark, Jennifer, all of the staff
- Lorain Country JDH – Dave, Mark, all of the staff
- Portage-Geauga JDC – Jenn, all of the staff
- Indian River – Andrea, Aness, all of the staff

Our graphic designer

- Rose

Our founding members

- Rachel
- Michalena
- Anthony
- Zach

Vision



We work towards reducing our residents' recidivism rates by increasing their literacy levels through creative writing that gives them the ability to critically think, creatively express, and independently manage their stress, anxiety, and trauma. As our program grows, we will develop a pipeline between the “inside” and the “outside” for our residents to continue their writing and mentorship with our volunteers as well as benefit from our support network. Finally, we will start conversations with the help of our residents' creative writing to remind our communities about this marginalized population that deserves to be treated as human beings with dignity and educate our communities about the juvenile justice system to create change.

Donate

Your donation will allow us to continue teaching creative writing to youth who are incarcerated in jails and prisons; fostering a genuine, long-lasting relationship with the residents; and freeing their voices through the distribution and showcase of their creative writing in our published chapbooks shared with the community.

But beyond supporting our mission and vision, your donation will also allow us to:

- Educate our communities about the juvenile justice system.
- Support our residents re-entering back into society.
- Sustain our cohorts' ability to serve youth who are incarcerated.

Visit writersnresidence.org/donate or scan the code with your phone's camera below to donate!

