

WRITERS IN RESIDENCE



A Bullet Has Two Eyes

Spring 2020

For the 48,000 youth who are incarcerated in the U.S.

For the 2,100 youth who are incarcerated in Ohio.

Their narratives will be rewritten.

Their voices will be freed.

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Mission



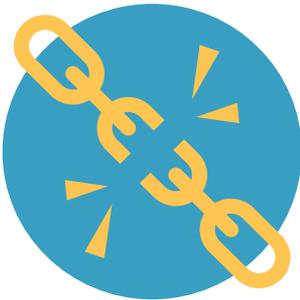
TEACH

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

The data below summarizes and compares the impact of our fall and spring sessions:

Fall 2019

- 4 Cohorts
- 25+ Student Volunteers
- 65+ Residents
- 75+ Direct Service Hours

Spring 2020

- 6 Cohorts
- 56+ Student Volunteers
- 76+ Residents
- 86+ Direct Service Hours*

*The original projection was 190+ direct service hours but couldn't be fulfilled because of the coronavirus pandemic, which suspended our program halfway into the spring's creative writing workshop for all of the cohorts.

As we continue to expand and develop more cohorts across Ohio, our impact will continue to increase as a result. We will educate more student volunteers about our organization and the juvenile justice system and those student volunteers will teach creative writing to more youth, or residents who are incarcerated.

Visit writersnresidence.org/impact to read the entire report.

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
- 5 Marietta College at the Washington County JC
- 6 Heidelberg Univ. at the Seneca County Youth Center*



*A select group of students from the Seneca County Youth Center came to Heidelberg University's campus for the creative writing workshops.

Letter from the Program Director

Dear reader,

“What makes Writers in Residence successful?”

LJ Sylvia and Lila Mills from Neighborhood Connections asked me this question during an interview about our program’s literacy impact. I provided several different reasons that are responsible for our program’s success but ultimately, I believe that our success, or the “magic” of our program stems from fostering relationships and building community with our residents.

This year marks Writers in Residence’s third anniversary! As I reflect on our program’s genesis and growth, I feel ecstatic and conflicted. At the beginning of this year, we announced our annual goals:

1. Expansion and Development
2. Re-entry Mentorship Initiative
3. Diverse Financial Resources

We will have cohorts in the southwest region of Ohio by the end of the year teaching creative writing workshops in juvenile detention facilities across the state; we will launch a re-entry mentorship initiative that will provide our alumni residents with the same mentorship from the inside but on the outside to reduce their recidivism rates; we will diversify our financial resources to sustain the organization’s growth and development. Even though this progress energizes me, this same progress also affects my ability to foster relationships and build community with our residents.

Occasionally throughout a creative writing workshop, I’ll check-in on the residents, the student volunteers, and the staff. Without fail, a resident, then two, probably three at a time will ask: “Where you’ve been at? You don’t want to see us no more?”

I explain: “I’m working on expanding the program to be at other facilities, so I can’t come every week.” They usually respond: “So? And? They’re not me.” Of course, they’re right! But they’re also one of many youths under the state’s supervision and in its custody, and our program intends

to impact as many of those youths as possible so they too learn the value of creative self-expression in an environment where their thoughts and feelings, their voice, and their existence are marginalized.

Fr. Greg Boyle, a Jesuit priest and founder of Homeboy Industries, says: “We go to the margins so folks at the margins make us different.” If we take Fr. Greg Boyle’s quote even further, our residents and student volunteers alike make each other different because fostering relationships and building community requires a mutual exchange of vulnerability. In a survey, a resident described their favorite part of the creative writing workshops: “Outsiders coming to talk to us.” In a different survey, a student volunteer explained how the creative writing workshops impacted them: “You make quick and deep connections with the residents and if a [student] volunteer is receptive, it’s near impossible not to be affected.” Together as a community, the residents and the student volunteers offer themselves up to read and write, laugh and cry, and to examine and empathize.

But what happens when our student volunteers can’t meet our residents at the margins because it’s dangerous to everyone’s health and safety? We adapt to engage our residents despite the temporary suspensions announced following Governor DeWine’s state of emergency to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Because the novel coronavirus disrupted our creative writing workshops halfway into the spring semester, we decided to publish a chapbook filled with our resident’s artifacts so they would still have physical proof of their hard work even though we couldn’t workshop or revise any of their artifacts. Then, we launched a letter-writing initiative with the help of 75+ volunteers (not including student volunteers) from our larger community. Finally, we piloted virtual creative writing workshops via Zoom at some of our juvenile detention facilities depending on their capabilities.

In a matter of days when the first cases of the coronavirus appeared, this global pandemic exposed our nation’s weaknesses and strengths. I hope that exposure inspires us to serve and advocate for those in our community who are on the margins, or on the brink of becoming marginalized because we’re all in this together as humans.

Best,
Zachary Thomas
Program Director for Writers in Residence



Oberlin College

Lorain County JDH

Addiction

Emma

Smoking weed popping pills
doing lsd is a lot but not
for me do it all night and that's on sight

When I was 11 I turned 13
cuz ion mess with 12

don't catch a case
before you get laced
all the drugs it's like
im a god

My name is Emma im from the
west you better get dressed
cuz you is a mess

Untitled

Seanelle

I am smart

I am beautiful

I am a good writer

I am good at organizing

My dream job is the medical field

I am 15 years old

I like to color

My favorite sport is basketball

I am a happy person

I have a lot of friends

I like watching tv

I am 5 feet 4" tall.

My weight is 134.

I am a high school student.

Six-Word Memoirs

Jaiden

I am always smiling, fun, athletic.

I am smart and good at basketball.

Six-Word Memoirs

Duke

I am a smart young man.

I am needing to go home ASAP.

Disappointed I got caught by police.

Go to college and get degree.

Six-Word Memoirs

Nas

I am funny, unique, athletic, kind.
Disappointed that police keep harassing me
Get some money, do my thang!

Six-Word Memoirs

Jeremiah

Would you have fun playing football

Do you like hitting the gym

It's not fun being in jail

Sports is fun to play always

Grandmas are always good for help

Six-Word Memoirs

Frederick

1. You hurt me so i left.
2. No more tears left to cry.
3. I gave you my heart, you
4. decided to break it, not forgiven.
5. I was hot, now I'm cold.
6. Laughs can turn to tears, fast.
7. Hard times don't last forever, [___].
8. Do not give up, keep pushing.
9. Can't get you out my mind.

Six-Word Memoirs

Dre'Mirre

Like money, don't like school, dang.
My son, my future do better.

Six-Word Memoirs

Karlos

i play basketball but i'm a**
i got caught up inna system
life dont change unless you do
the street aint never gone change
never let a ni**a change you
real ni**as dont fold under pressure
ni**as aint really what they claim
that gang bangin sh*t aint cute

Free Write

Allissa

Self love is the best love.

The past don't define you, you define you.

Live today like you'll die tomorrow.

Be yourself, even if thats the last thing you do.

you are the best version of yourself.

your in charge of your fate, embrace it.

your struggles and hardships make you stronger.

make today a reason for tomorrow. *

Try your hardest, in the end it's worth it. <3

Never let anybody dull your sparkle.

Be your best reason to keep going. *

Kill people with kindness, or silence.

Work your hardest, you'll appreciate it more.

Six-Word Memoirs

Faith

1. cameron you left way too soon
2. my heart is cold and blue
3. you watch me every single nights
4. you will never leave my sight
5. i love you, never a doubt
6. while your flying through the clouds

Untitled

Faith

My name is faith im from
out west where ni**as dont play
they ah shoot through your
chest with 22.3s
and that no cap

Fonzzftfoe

Faith

My name is fonzzftfoe im from that
foe where it gets violent so if you
walk though you better have your
tool

cuz I aint lying

Dear Me, Myself, and I

Frederick

Keep your head up, and keep fighting. You have people in your life that cares about you even when it doesn't feel like it. Don't make the same mistakes twice, do what you need to do, do what you have to do to protect yourself. I'm not the only kid who have had rough times. Listen to adults, not all of them are right or make good choices but don't worry, be happy

Sincerely me.

~Frederick

Untitled

Matthew

To myself take a moment in life before you start
to think life is a comedy and look around the
People you love stop this madness of course
You put the laugh in slaughter but imagen
life with seeing your father happy and mother
Happy take a deep breath under the water
Stop being Dragged Down into the DARK
Because some One in your life will wanna
be with you i dont mater if they are
Black White hispania europen chinesse
Japenes who ever learn to love
Your self and your parents
And learn to stop hidding in the
PARK.

Untitled

Xavier

Dear Zay,

Don't be worrying about everybody else. Don't be letting people get to you. Ask for help when you need it. Don't forget to do things to better yourself. I hope you are keeping your head up. I love you and miss you and hope you learn from your mistakes. I know your gonna go through something in life but you can do this to help you. Go for walks, you can call you uncle, talk to your friend gary. I love you be strong I'll see you soon.

Zay

Untitled

DreMirre

I only know one thing to be true
my mother's gone so I gotta do it for you
she taught me how to keep the skies blue
but sometimes it rains so I gotta push through
You might find it hard to understand who I am
I'm having a son gotta step up and be a man
Just trust me I swear I've got my own plan
I'm not trynna get stuck in circles like a fan
when you're scared i'll be brave

Untitled

Nas (+ Boo)

Ohio is mad Plat & full of corn
When my cousin died i promise I was torn
that shit hit me hard, it struck like a thorn
Every spring is a reminder he was born
In that cell you cant relate to my pain
so many things go around & around in my brain.
it was hard to see my moms go insane
can't get away from it, even with a plane
I grew up hard headed
My brain is where the truth's embedded.
I aint to be payed with they just dont get it
That's the truth. feel free to spread it
I cant control my feelings
But I can control my dealings
Everybody needs healing
just imagining it gets my mind reeling
I been balling on two different levels
I keep going - won't ever settle
Im never scared I always been a rebel
I'm the bass, and the treble
I never had to struggle
Im chillin in my own bubble.

Untitled

Joe

To start visiting to my brain more
And to stay out of trouble so I
Don't end up back in Jail

Dear Jailen

Jailen

Stay up my ni**a love you boii
you gonna be my ni**ga's foe life. I got your
back bra I got you. And I'mma help you
with yall [problems].

-

you will get out
put your trust in god.

Favorites

Frederick

My favorite flowers are pink, but the sky is so blue
who's the prettiest I have no clue,
hair, and, heels, and finger nail glue,
my grandma's my favorite
and im hers to.

2 Months, No Tears

Frederick

I try to stay strong when im alone,
i'm used to running away and staying gone.
Being cold im a shivering bone,
pretty brown skin, i love my tone.

Being incarcerated behind locked doors, walking on
nothing but cold floors, I miss my friends and cleaning my
pores, man I miss my mom to the very last care.

2 month in DH, no tears to cry, so much pain can't
even lie, and breakups so hard to say goodbye, my life's
an open book, now it's time for it to fly.

Raised

Frederick

I was raised by my Granny to never give up
was raised by the dance floor and to always keep my head up
I was raised by running away when times got hard
I was raised by stronge women I love with all my heart.

Untitled

Connor

I come from parts where no one
would dare to go. and thinking
why do we live to die. Death gotta
be easy cause life is hard.

Then I come from the parts
where you would love to go.
hearing the sound of peace and joy.

I come from the lost couple mins
in the world with my mom. To where
Im crying on the floor. thinking why
her?

I come from hearing the buzzing
of tattoo needles going in my skin.
getting things off my mind instead
of complaining all the time.

I come from the first time coming
to jail. Sitting in not knowing where
Im going to go. Then coming 2 jail
not wanting to go

I come from riding dirt bikes
and drinking beer with Mollys boyfriends
on everyday of the year.

I come from watching a bullet
fly through someones head. Alone at
8 years old in the cold left alone.

Untitled

Matthew

I come from a broken home,
I was from the West side of Cleveland cars catching on fire
My own father abusing my mother
Weed smoke threw my nose and in the air
13yrs old I used to think my life was a
Tragedy now i realize its a comedy Metallica
Play threw my speakers Emo satanic love my mother
Always told me to smile more now I see
The funny side now im always smiling!
You see i put the laugh into slaughter
I feel the cold twisted teas and vodkas and
Jack down my throught and to to pit off mikes hard lemonade
I feel the guilt when i whent to school
Drunk and i remember just laying in my
bed thinking about me my brother and my older
Sister parting with friends while my parents
and two sisters they were on vacation.
So father lay in bed full of
Saror. Last thing is i look at my self in
my mirror and i see my Dads face is him
remember that he was abusive and smoking
Also drinking ill never
be him ever while i still face
the world on my own and prepair
the worst and best in life. Im better
than him because i laugh and tell jokes all day
to my mother and love her!

Untitled

DreMirre

Poor crowded apartment with barely enough food to feed my family. Mixture of incents and weed breezing through my house, liquor and drugs laying around as if it was legal. All my brothers fighting over the last pack of ramen noodles. Mom who pushed me to play sports and do better but didn't do the same for herself. Therefore she ended up in an institution and I went with my deadbeat father just a kid confused and missing My mother like any other little kid.

Living with my grandparents felt like being smothered by two big walls but one of the walls having an exit door because they wanted me to be different but at the same time they did things you wouldn't think someone who loves you would do. They would beat me for spilling stuff or breaking things and as a kid I did that alot so I would get beat With tree branches extention cords, anything honestly, also they would only let me eat sometimes so I would only eat good when I sneak late nights, But as I ate at night I Would be trending in fear because I would be afraid to get caught At times I felt they hated me but they really wanted to get the wild, crazy side of me that I picked up from my mother But really that was just me and they kind of didnt want to except me as me so they found an excuse to punish me

Channel

Channel

I was by my mom.

I was raised on rice & beans

I was raised on pizza, chips and cookies.

I come from the united states of America.

21

Faith

I come from the ghetto on 21st
all you hear is gunshots

I come from a place were money
low, where alot of kids aint eatin

I come from a place where you
gotta be home at a certin time
so you family dont think your dead
I come from a place where the feds
shoot a bullet has two eyes

I come from a place where you
gotta check your house to
make sure aint nobody under
your bed

I come from a place
Where everybody smokes gas,
because it heals all the pain

I come from a place where
you cant even be outside playing
without being shot.

I come from a place, where
white people cling the purses on a
elavator.

Untitled

Brianna

I come from lorain.

I come from the west
side.

I come from 29th.

I come from 22nd

I come from 37th come from Palm elementry

Untitled

Alissa

“I come from” wwe monday night raw and late nights w my dad.
I come from tow trucks and cornerstore chicken and jojos on
late nights.

I come from stock car race nights to washing clothes for school
monday.

I come from 4 a.m. drunk stories and motorcycle drives with my
dad

I come from a mom who’s more my best friend than my parent.

I come from being 13 and cooking dinner instead of winter formal.
I come from old kid rock and bud light with my dad outside.

I come from hating my dad’s reasoning and involvement in me
but counting on him in times like this because hes all i’ve got.

I come from drugs and alcohol all around me everyday
trying to say no and stay strong but got tired more & more.

I come from my dad dancing til 4 am and getting up at 7 for work
I come from a long battle with LCCS to going home after 4 years

I come from not the richest family or the best family
but a family that stuck together through even the hardest times.

I come from something that wasnt perfect but it was real.
I come from challenging authority with my dad all the time

I come from exploring roads I shouldnt go down
to having to right my wrongs and fix my family <3!

Dear Bri

Brianna

to be happy you need
to finish rehab so
your not on the run and
you need to focus on
on yourself and not
do drugs.

Untitled

Seanelle

1. My sister because she complains alot.
2. I surround myself with people who aren't that great.
3. Charteristics are smart, beautiful and good at writing paragraphs.
4. hang around people that are motoviting, funny and cheerful

Acknowledgments

We want to thank everyone who has given us their time, talents, and treasure because our organization relies on everyone working together every week for several months to fulfill our mission and vision:

- Our residents
- Our student volunteers
- Our advisors and academic institutions
- Our community partners and juvenile correctional facilities
- Our graphic designer
- Our legal team
- Our founding members

Finally, we want to personally thank the Cleveland Foundation and the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards who continue to believe and support us.

Donate

Beyond supporting our mission and vision, your donation will also directly 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!

