



Across Ohio: Voices from the Inside
2019

Writers in Residence

Across Ohio: Voices from the Inside

2019

Cover Art by Rose Dolan
Cleveland, Ohio

*For the twenty-one hundred
juvenile residents behind bars in Ohio.*

*And for Juan and any resident
who has passed away.*

*and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom*

– Maya Angelou

Mission:

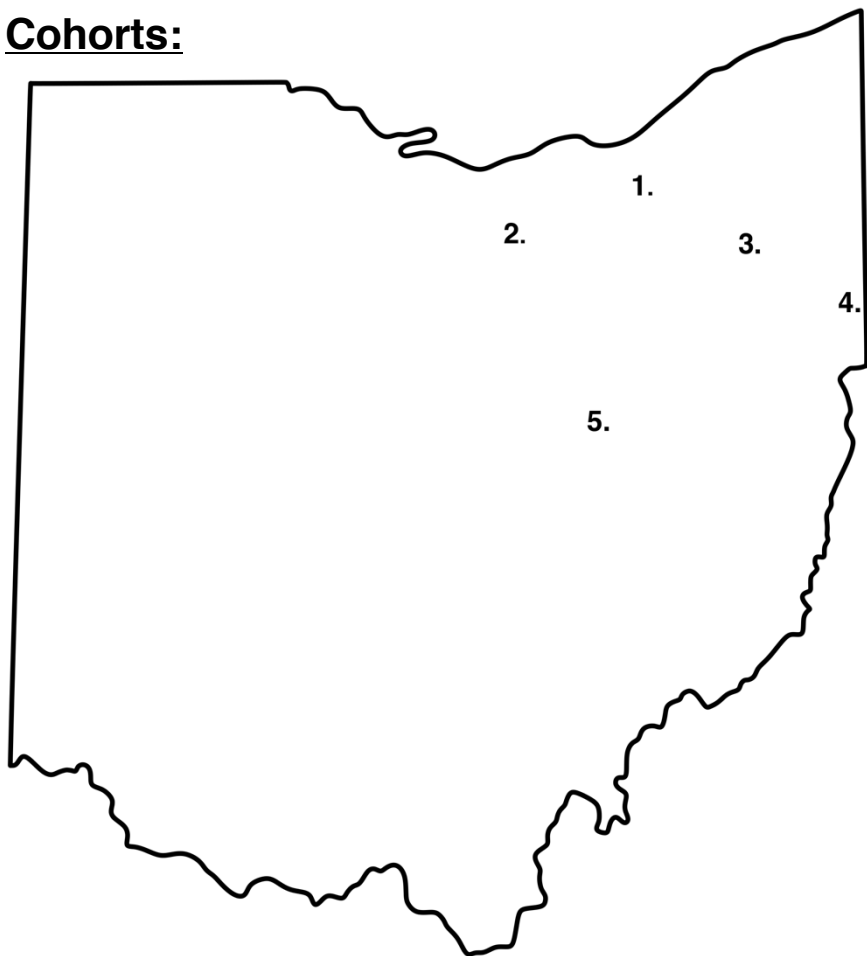
Writers in Residence facilitates creative writing workshops for youth who are incarcerated in juvenile detention centers, fosters a genuine, long-lasting relationship with the residents, and frees their voices through the distribution and showcase of their creative writing in our published chapbooks shared with the community.

Vision:

Writers in Residence works toward increasing the residents' literacy levels and reducing their recidivism rates through creative expression and constructive reflection. We hope that this disrupts the residents' thinking to create change within themselves and the community's thinking about the juvenile population whose human dignity deserves recognition.

For more information,
visit writersnresidence.org

Cohorts:



- 1. John Carroll
- 2. Oberlin
- 3. Hiram*

- 4. Youngstown State*
- 5. College of Wooster*

*These cohorts will launch for the first time in the fall of 2019.

Dear Reader,

To quote the great James Baldwin, writing to his nephew: “I have begun this letter five times and torn it up five times.” I want to tell you so much but there is so little space to describe the moments that have led to the publication of this year’s chapbook.

So, I will say this instead: there is something truly inspirational, even magical, when residents write in a place of complete vulnerability where we finally witness their true selves without them fronting, or projecting false selves, to survive in an environment that doesn’t value creative expression and constructive reflection. Luckily, our creative writing workshops give residents the resources to reach that place for 90 minutes over the course of 12-weeks during the spring and fall semesters. And this chapbook is the result of those creative writing workshops.

For the first time in our history, we had two collegiate cohorts, John Carroll University and Oberlin College, facilitate creative writing workshops for residents at juvenile detention centers in a single semester, which makes this chapbook in your hands the physical evidence of our expansion across Ohio as well as the physical existence of the residents’ voices from the inside. In many ways, this chapbook amplifies the residents’ voices to be heard, to be read, to be dignified like mine and yours.

I have read Maya Angelou's "Caged Bird" almost weekly since August of last year as a constant reminder to myself, perhaps as a mantra at this point, that the work that we're doing frees the residents' voices.

Their arms and legs may be shackled, their bodies may be caged, but their voices may never be silenced, "for the caged bird/ sings of freedom."

But what does freedom sound like?

Freedom sounds like the longing to go home and spend time with your mother, father, son or daughter; freedom sounds like the acceptance of responsibility for past wrongdoings; freedom sounds like the passionate unwavering love between two people; freedom sounds like the pain that breaks you and builds you back up again; freedom sounds like you reading what the residents wrote and keeping their stories close to your heart and mind.

– Zachary Thomas

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John Carroll

Ohio Department of Youth Services

Dear Reader,

The residents of ODYS exemplify what it means to follow in the footsteps of great writers. These men don't write for fame, glory, or financial benefit. They create the following works to express their inner selves, to give voice to their deepest thoughts and emotions.

Throughout these sessions, the residents have spoken of their fondest memories, possible futures, darkest moments, and of those who have left a significant impact on their lives.

Over several years, our team has witnessed these men insert each of these elements into a form of written work. Writing has become an outlet to express themselves to a world that appears to have forgotten them. By reading and spreading these works, their stories and thoughts are brought into the light.

– John Carroll Cohort

Spring Lock Up

Tev

In spring as the bell rings for most teens, all we hear
is the cling of shackles and cuffs.

Being locked up as a teen is rough. We all walk
around trying to be tough but in all reality, this
place does some messed up stuff.

We watch our peers fall and fumble. But in the end,
all they want is a quick rumble. To argue and fight
because they cannot realize the one they fight,
might be their chance to fight the system.

The way they walk and talk it is as if we are on a line made
of chalk.

When we fall off, we restart it and it never ends.
This circle is messed up but as I watch, the trees
come to life and the colors change. I look for hope
as the weather warms and the bars stay cold. All
one can think is when will I go home.

Both Parents Are Locked Up

K.D.

I have been away from my daughter for almost two and a half years. Away from her now I can imagine her watching Elmo. Now if I was there with her I would be holding her tight. I see myself in her eyes, her skin color, her smile, her hair. I want the relationship with my daughter to be amazing.

Portkey

P.B.

Ohhh man I remember when my grandmother used to make my medium-rare steak. She made it to the f—ing max. Like bruh. She made my mouth water like it was so good. The perfect tenderness the perfect amount of taste and how juicy it was man. Brotha you'll want to marry my grandmother's cooking. Hahaha! But I'm not through man she can cook. When she starts cooking I would watch her just to see how she would make that steak. But as I would watch her we would start talking. Sometimes the conversations would be so deep that she would start to cry. But normally we would talk about how I treat a female. She would always say: "Never look down on a female. You can only help her get off the ground or get in bed." She would also say: "If you love her forget her looks, her body, her money, just start looking at her heart." So we'll talk about that for a while. But she would always end our conversation with: "If you plan on marrying her make sure you choose someone who you knew for years. You'll understand why sooner or later. I sure hope later because your life is still growing and continuing to go on." I would say: "Okay grandmother." She would look at me with evil eyes and say: "Get out of my face," and start laughing.

Kill Me

Tev

won't you celebrate with me for I have
created something greater than I
never will I say goodbye
based on the fact that I will
one day die as I await him I
realize the things that make
me live also make me die
as I rest here in the
divine home
of
Heaven.

Locked Up

Zach

As I'm locked behind these doors,
always thinking about my life.

Every night I wonder why I'm here
then remember I was dumb and wanted
to face my fear.

As the days go on my mom
wonders when I'm going to come home.

Every night I lay in wonder
the same all alone.

But I already feel as if I'm home.

And being locked up makes you feel all alone.

Observation Pt. 1

Tev

Blonde hair blue eyes tells
No lies the beauty when
The corners of her mouth rise
In her
Writing
Is where
Her true self lays
If she wants them to
Her Dreams will fly
You
Want
To know
Why because of her brilliant
Mind and still I have yet to
Find the perfect words to
Make her shine in her own light

One and Only One

Jonathan

Why do people laugh at me
When I say I love one girl
Is it really blasphemy
To say she's my only pearl

Is it wrong to love someone
Am I wrong to question it
Talking 'bout this ain't no fun
Damn I really hate this sh—

The Lord gave me an Angel
Someone I love oh so much
I look at her as my jewel
Something only I can touch

I can tell her every day
“j'y suis, j'y reste”

If I

P.B.

If I were an apple

 You be the worm

If I were the fiend

 You be the drug

If I were the heart

 You be the beat

If I were the trapper

 You be the money

If I were the prisoner

 You be the shabangs

If I were a rapper

 You be my label

If I were the waves

 You be my grease

If I were the king

 You be the queen

 You be the cig

 I'll be the flame

 If I were the cape

 I'll be the push start

My Brother Saving My Life

K.D.

One night me and my brother went out to buy my mother some ice cream and we got to the store and bought the ice cream and on the walk back home we had to walk through a different neighborhood to get home but my brother didn't know I had beef with people out there so we walk halfway through and almost got home. The people I was beefing with was out there standing around and as soon as I walk pass they got to jumping me. My brother helped but when I got stabbed he grabbed me and started to drag me to my mom's house and called the police.

The 1 4 Me

P.B.

She can keep me out of trouble, she always helps me remain humble, she's the one recovering the fumble, she understands every word even when I mumble, she helps me up when I begin to stumble, when it comes down to her I'm always ready to rumble, her love is nothing like a cookie, it never crumbles. That's when I realized she's the one 4 me.

Growing Up

Zach

Growing up was rough

I got introduced into a lot of stuff

At a young age I thought I was grown

When my parents tested it and put me out all alone

Then I ended up gone...

Mother Nature

Tev

The vibe is right
sky with no light

except the one I follow
and touch just right

the whistle next to my
ear makes my breath
disappear

the roll of the sea
as wet as can be

I almost feel free

Won't You Celebrate with Me

P.B.

won't you celebrate with me for I have
the most beautiful girl on earth.

She makes me smile, she lives
near me. She's an educated black

woman. People try to talk to

her while I am in jail, telling

her I'm only giving her jail talk,

telling her I only want some

pu— which is a lie. But

won't you celebrate with me

for I have the strongest,

most loving, caring, sweetest female

on earth.

Love

Zach

The girl I gave my everything
to left me all alone, broke me down
and threw me like a stone

It felt as if she broke
every bone

As I drift away in my
thoughts lost like a dog

Always on the run and
still have not found love

I wish I could just
grow wings and fly like
a dove

I just need my mom's
tight hugs

Wooden Frame

P.B.

Mattress and soft pillows
Two dressers and a closet
A window that is broken
No heat because it's broken
I'm shivering because it's cold
Sitting in silence yet there is noise
I stay awake yet I'm asleep
I feel like yawning but I scream
When I scream I whisper
I feel at home but really in a jail.

Snowflake

Tev

Let the snow dust the grass

Let the snow fall so fast

Let the snow forever last

The dances across the sky

The snow all looks different I wonder why

The snow sparkles as it slowly floats by

And I love the snow

Misanthropist

Jonathan

Many people think I'm crazy
I think I disagree
Sorry to tell you that I am
Ain't that too many people care
They just don't understand
Hell erupted from all around me
Running from those I can
Once they find out that I'm crazy
People will run away
I find myself thinking at night
So what would people say
That I'm a hater of mankind

Her Tev

Her eyes are bright blue skies
Her laugh makes my day fade away
Her loose hair falls perfect in her face
And when she looks at me I smile for
the first time in a while I feel that
what I do is worthwhile I can't
describe the feeling I get
when she reads what I
wrote about her and
she smiles like there
is nothing else she
would rather do
than stand
here with
you

Life

P.B.

I don't know how to begin this. Life is a gamble. Every day people take their chances with that gamble. Some become millionaires, others end up poor. Life is unfair. Life is what we make it. Everyone's question is what is life? Why does life give bad people good lives and vice versa? Why do bad things happen to good people in this life? Why does the word friend mean enemy in this life? Why doesn't the world care about young people anymore in this life? Why does the next man have to shoot, kill, rob the next man in this life? Now ask yourself what is life?

Celebrate

Zach

won't you celebrate with me for I have
a brother from the struggle,
that used to take me down without a juggle,
we did everything together,
I was thirteen when he got me to smoke,
then I realized it wasn't no joke,
my life was taken at a young age.
It was like I was blown away with a 12-gauge.
He tried to knock me down
but I refused to frown.

The Last Time

Dalton

Her eyes, full of tears
while mine, crystal clear
thinking of the ocean
that set into motion
this distance
between us.

My words, heartbreakingly steady
unravel hers, poison ready,
saying the separating memories,
the broken chemistry,
still here,
between us.

But now,
all is quiet,
in this house,
no longer,
a
home.

In Jail

P.B.

The worst feeling ever, you're always from home. You only can see loved ones a limited amount of time. You're always told what to do, when to lay down, when to wake up, where you can and can't go. It hurts most of us. Put yourself in our shoes just to see if **you** can survive in jail.

The Hood

Tev

As the music plays
with guns ablaze
in these streets
I was raised
for selling the most
work I was praised
people saying toting
guns is just a phase
while I'm on the phone
setting up hella plays
but to these suits
the hood is a maze
man what if these
were my last
days

Nothing Like Me

Leak

You ain't go to jail and your best friend lost his life on your birthday. You ain't have to pay that price
you wasn't in the whip just sitting at the light then guns pull up on you and you get shot twice
so how the hell these guys gonna compare themselves to me.

They ain't never rob the plug 30 bands in a week
they ain't never leave nobody dead in these streets
Pops then heard I caught a body, now my Pops can't sleep
you ain't start shooting and you hit your man first
dead in the chest yeah I been through the worst
you ain't have a son and you missed his freaking birth
cause you're stuck in jail, you don't know the way it hurt
you ain't like me, you ain't like me at all
you ain't never seen half the stuff I have seen
you ain't have a son and you never seen him crawl
first time you get to meet him he's already standing tall.
Seeing him walking, trying his best not to fall
smiling made this cold dim room light up
with Jay and love
made me realize how much I have been missing out on and
can't help but to cry.

Grandfather

Zach

One fall day my grandfather had come and got me and took me to the woods to go squirrel hunting with my first rifle. He would always take me to do things that we both enjoyed because my father never did anything to bond with me but my grandfather did. I remember on that cold windy fall day and the crunching of the leaves and the bare trees. And that day is when I shot my first squirrel.

Pain

Kevandre

Pain, pain is when you're incarcerated for years and can't see your loved ones when you want to.

Pain, pain is when you're at your lowest point and someone who you thought was there walks out of your life.

Pain, pain is when you lose your brother to gun violence and can't never get him back.

Rider

Tev

That ride of die
Smoke and fly
Take your time
Hit it right

That love and hate
Hot and heavy
Then slow and steady

Her state of mind
That bump and grind
Take her breath from behind

That take over the world type sh—.

Realize this Is About You

P.B.

Even though I don't know you I seem attracted to you. The way you smile, it feels like you light up the whole room. The sound of your voice, feels like it soothes my mind. The sparkle of your eyes, feels like you're inviting me into your soul. And your body makes it feel like we can make a rhythm no one else can make.

Realize this is about you.

We can be like Michelle and Barack, Tommy and Keisha, Romeo and Juliet, Stephen and Ayesha, Remy and Papoose, take over the world type sh—. Do things only me and you will know type sh—. Kiss in places only me and you are allowed type sh—. Me and you against the world type sh—. Treat you like a queen type sh—. Every king need a Queen type sh—. Realize this is about you.

Riding on the Verge of Death

Jonathan

When daylight turns to darkness
And there is no way to see
How am I supposed to find
The one who is meant for me

Simple as though it may seem
It is not that hard to find
All I need is to hurry
To find the one who is mine

Once I find the one for me
I will have to settle down
Holding my true love in my arms
Giving her a silver crown

Birds will fly high in the sky
Just to find a place to nest
If they cannot find that place
They won't stop to take a rest

I'll fly as high as I can
Just to find the one for me
Once I find her I will say
"You're my lock and I'm your key"

I'm looking down at the ground
Searching for my one true love
Will she come to me tonight?
Holding a white turtle dove

Looking down I think I see
The girl I always dreamed of
She glows with sweet compassion
Oh she must be my true love

I couldn't believe my eyes
When I saw who this girl was
She has come to me at last
Giving me a little buzz

I'm standing in front of her
Wondering what she might say
Is she really mine to be
Has it come to be that day?

She opens her mouth to speak
For what I expect to be
I have waited all my life
For she who belongs to me

"I thank the Lord Almighty"
She says in a quiet tone
"For he is with me at last
I am no longer alone"

Hand in hand I walk with her
Under the black star-filled night
She looks at me, eyes so blue
Damn what a wonderful sight

Left foot, right foot, left again
We walk until early dawn
Why can I hardly hear it?
The playing tune of a song

I stop to think of the song
I once heard ages ago
It's been just a year or two
Since I've been to that one show

It's starting to rain on us
As we get closer to home
Did God give all this time?
To be with you alone?

I reach down and grasp your hand
I know it's not some big dream
You look at me with a frown
Then open your mouth to scream

Some things are meant to happen
And this is one of those things
Is it a life or death deal?
If death let me take the sting

I float above a white bed
confused to see myself sleep
have I really died tonight
God don't let me fall too deep

I see her in the corner
the girl I call my true love
a bandage above her eye
gives evidence of a shove

I'm starting to remember
the lights and sounds of a car
speeding at us all too fast
I had to push her afar

I felt the wind as I flew
and thought I was flying
lying in a pool of blood
I thought that I was dying

Floating above the white bed
I am still looking at me
why does my body look still?
Is this really what I see?

My vision is fading fast
could this be the end?
Am I beginning to die?
I'm starting to ascend

I open my eyes to see
My true love holding my hand
Is my time slipping by fast
Like an hour glass' sand

I realize this is real
It is not some stupid dream
I look around this white room
I'm not dead as it may seem

I'm looking into her blue eye
And see a tear slowly drop
Why is she starting to cry?
Why can't I tell her to stop?

She looks down to see my face
Was she this beautiful before?
I open my mouth to speak
But no words would come anymore

My mouth is starting to dry
I think I need something cold
Will I ever speak again?
I've things to say truth be told

She finally gets the clue
And gives me something to drink
My voice is returning to me
I can speak without ink

I tell her I want to leave
She tells me I have to stay
I start to get myself up
She puts me down anyway

I'm ready to leave this place
It's already been four days
I sit in this bed and rot
While I wait to get away

They finally let me go
It's the dead of the night
Why'd they do something stupid?
Why this time it just ain't right?

Year after I'm released
I'm now just getting better
It was a Monday evening
When I got the dreadful letter

Doctor says it's terminal
Here comes death to take its toll
Why's it got to be my love
Here comes death to take her soul

Is it raining in my house?
Or is it my tears that fall
I can't sit here anymore
That is when I get the call

I tell her to stop crying
And to slow down and talk slow
“What’s wrong,” I kindly ask her
That’s when I go frigid cold

She’s holding on by a string
while I hold on to her hand
I look into her blue eyes
her life goes by like quick sand

Tears slowly fall down her face
When death gets a good firm grip
I sit and drown in sorrow
It’s just a bad acid trip

It’s a stage of depression
I know it’s not an excuse
but in the corner lay rope
then came the thought of a noose

They found me later that day
slowly swinging from my neck
it was nothing but selfish
I did it but what the heck

The grave stone is green with moss
and years and years of decay
there I lay with my true love
from here on out day to day

As I Look

Dalton

As I look
across this ocean of life
I see the timeline
even the ending by knife
no regrets,
even as light shines through the dark
I see love
first created at the park
I see
death, no
life.

Sorry Mama

P.B.

Growing up without you was hard. It turned my heart cold. I was seven years old, watching you pass really traumatized me. It really hurt. Ever since then my life will never be the same. I went to jail six times. I went down for four years. All I can say is I'm sorry Mama.

I stole from people, I hurt people, I messed up perfect opportunities and all I can say is I'm sorry Mama.

I hope that when I choose my career I don't screw it up if I do all I can say is I'm sorry Mama.

When I grow old and have a wife, kids, if I get divorced and can't see my kids no more all I will say is I'm sorry Mama.

For all the wrong I've done I'm sorry Mama.

Believe Me Mom

Orion

Mom

No matter what I did you was always there
even when you couldn't get me out of your hair
your love is real
your love is fair
I stole everything from you
but you showed me you cared.

You helped me up every time I would fall
and when I got locked up
you still answered my calls
we both know it's hard to see the light
when all we do is fight
it doesn't make it right
but at the end of the night
we still reunite.

Sometimes I think you don't know how I feel
but you probably been through worse
I'm just keeping it real.
I stole money
a lot of money
but you still provide a meal
if it wasn't for your love
I would have been killed.

You love me mom
and I love you

I know I told you a lot of lies
but mom please believe me
in this poem I'm telling the truth.

Sun

Zach

Let the sun hug you

Let the sun heat your body while it turns your skin red

Let the sun draw you in

The sun makes you warm and comfortable

The sun makes your body relax and be calm

The sun draws you in and hugs you tight

And I love the sun

6 Word Memoirs

P.B.

1. Babies made daily gone the next
2. How can love really hurt you
3. Friends are now enemies are forever
4. I want to be the president
5. Where were you my loving father
6. I'm 20 and still asking questions
7. Be who you want to become
8. What does life mean to you
9. I will never leave my brotha
10. Water flows like wind at night
11. Smiling is the invitation to conversation
12. When does the pain ever stop
13. Love is a drug I'm addicted
14. When she smiles I start smiling
15. Touch the soul through her eyes
16. Touch her heart through her words
17. Tough love is the realest love
18. Sleeping alone can never satisfy me

What Makes A Woman Special?

Zach

My woman left for drugs and a dealer that supports her habit. I miss her comfort and her company. I miss her smile. I really don't want her back but I still want her as a close friend. So I probably wouldn't say f— you to anything.

6 Word Memoirs

Tev

1. I'm here today then gone tomorrow
2. I live to die another day
3. I write to keep myself away
4. The voice inside scared to die
5. I will stay to leave again
6. I find my thoughts in smoke
7. Driving fast as the shade casts
8. Darkening light refuse to fight myself
9. Mind blown forever on my own
10. Smoke to free the real me
11. Lost to you found to me
12. Time flies by till you realize
13. Being grown never felt so alone
14. Love lasts long hate dies fast
15. Games never played are always lost
16. Live in me dead to her

Love

Cameron

Brighter than the Stars
more beautiful than life itself
smooth and elegant like the ocean
but I pray there are no waves

flowing softer than a gentle breeze
the only thing that could bring me to my knees
always trust and never lie
wonderful emotion behind her eyes

My Hood, People, Street

Zach

I didn't have a hood, it was an apartment complex and it wasn't good. They sold drugs and never showed no love and no hugs. The people were horrible but the street was so adorable. All the kids run around loose like a goose. The drug dealers made me want to deal, rob, and steal. So I followed, growing up my parents found it hard to swallow.

Observation Pt. 2

Tev

Lazy hair
falls softly
in to place
when she
writes she
drifts to
her private
space with
perfect grace
she has
her own preferred taste in what hangs
from her waist and she looks picture
perfect like flowers in a vase all I want to
do is find my place, I want to find the perfect
words to make her place in my loving arms.

Story of My Life

P.B.

Have you ever woke up one day and your mother is gone. I mean gone and she won't come back. Well I have, watching her take her last breath is traumatizing. I was seven years old. Scared out of my mind. Ever since then I have grown in a couple of ways. I've grown to become cold hearted towards love. I also have grown to never disrespect a female. I was hurt and in the midst of me being hurt I have done things I regret. Doing things I shouldn't have done cost me my freedom and I only did what I was doing because it was hard for me to live. Barely had electricity, food, money, clothes, everything. So my goal for every day was I have to eat and feed my family. I will never know what it will feel like to be okay. Because: just because I'm gone doesn't mean the problem is too. I have been shot also robbed trying to make sure me and my family eat. When I was home I felt like I was alone.

Oberlin

Lorain County Juvenile Detention Home

Dear Readers,

When Zachary Thomas reached out to our school about this project in September of this year, I did not know exactly what I was taking on. It was 8 months after my first email exchanges with Zach that we actually found ourselves in the halls of the Lorain County Juvenile Detention Home working with residents and producing work that took all of us by surprise. In those 8 months we cut through red tape on the side of the college as well as the Detention Home, we recruited a small but hardworking and committed team of workshop facilitators, and we readied ourselves for an opportunity unlike anything we had done before.

Our first visit with the residents of the Lorain County Juvenile Detention Home left us giddy on our short drive home. Crowded into Zach's car, we swapped stories from our men's and women's workshops, and exchanged breathless expressions of awe at what we found when we were welcomed into the day rooms of the Detention Home. What we found were voices seeking light and stories previously left bouncing around the insides of heads before they found a home on loose leaf paper or the backs of our printed curriculum.

Each week, the residents we worked with came eager to learn and eager to share their unique perspectives in any way they knew how—through raps with rhythms counted out on fingers as they wrote, through songs sung with closed eyes, through games of hangman, and of course through their writing, which we present to you here.

It has been a strange experience, though a pleasure, to watch as our numbers have dwindled or grown, as court dates came and went, as stories we were only beginning to unearth disappeared from our sights the very next week. But with all the uncertainty and turnover that these such facilities represent, the passion and honesty shared with us remained one gripping and calming constant.

Thank you to the residents of the Lorain County Juvenile Detention Home for sitting with us for an hour and a half each week and allowing us the privilege of being a sounding board for your lives and for your stories. It has been a joy and a privilege to work with you and we truly hope the time we shared has allowed you insight into the depth and beauty of your own voices.

– Oberlin Cohort

Knife Through the Heart

Brandon

Pain is a way of life

Pain is what you feel when you're lonely at night

It's waiting in jail for letters nobody will write

Pain is like a knife to the heart

It soon turns to depression in the dark

Untitled

Bri

won't you celebrate with me for I
have been taking care of and raising
babies since I was six and being in
here is the only break I've had. I do
everything for my family and it's a lot of
work. I do have a lot of patience
but to take care of my
siblings and mom I had to do
things that I regret.

Depression

Joshua

Roses are red

Violets are blue

I hate being locked-up

I want to be with my mom

This is why I'm depressed.

The Summertime Poem

Alivia

The summer is the best
The summer lets us breath
The summer is a break

Swimming is so fun
you have the chance to run
to play and be free of school
puts me in a great mood
and I love the summertime.

Untitled

Nevaeh

Pain, pain is what young infants mock to.
Pain, pain is when others fade away far and beyond
every battle and fear come
and hunt "U," left to face
on my own
I reached to the sky
and touched his hand
so he can guide my
way.

Graduation Party

Camron

won't you celebrate with me because when I graduate I'm gonna throw a party and celebrate and have lots of food and there's gonna be lots of colors and it's gonna be on a FRIDAY!

Sitting in Jail

Brandon

Pain is sitting in jail for selling them dimes

It's what you see in the courtroom through your mama's eyes.

It's getting released and seeing someone else with your girl.

It's respecting her decision because you know that you failed.

It's the cuts on your wrist that you hope go away.

You remember holding her and crying while you pray.

Now it seems all of her memories of you have faded away.

Untitled

Austin

won't you celebrate with me for I have a different kind of life. I have a model born in Ohio both white and male. I have high expectations for myself. I can't find happiness or rage but I love my father. Come celebrate with me after happiness is found.

The Winning Shot

Adessa

Dribble dribble goes the basketball
crowd silences as they watch in
awe

three seconds till the buzzer
goes

then it's the end of the show

1: he steps

2: he shoots

3: happens in slow motion

crowd watches with their mouths
open

bank shot then it's in the net

buzzer goes

his team won the game

smiles to his momma

for the team walks away

he looks to his coach and says:

I love basketball

while his coach shakes his head.

In the Mid-moon Light

Matthew

won't you celebrate with
me for I have danced
with the Devil in the
mid-moon light.

Best Things About Summer

Aaliyah

I love when the sun
comes out.

I love when the beautiful
flowers come out.

I love when my brothers' and
sisters' faces light up when
we are at the pool.

Diving into the pool is like
diving into bed. I love when
I float in the water. I love
when the sun is out so I can
eat ice cream.

I love summer.

Whoop Whoop

Ryan

won't you celebrate with me for I have
beat overdoses an all-out psychosis
LSD bad tabs took me
to a place filled with the Dead
to figure it out. It's all
in my head the voices
contaminate the holiest of thou.
I'm going crazy can't get them out now
friends and family, my mom saves me
you cannot be shamed from wickedness
in thee.

Summer Sunshine

Grace

Let the sun's rays kiss your skin
Let the days get longer
and the ice cream shops open

The summer is warm
The summer sunsets are pretty
The summer flowers are bright and colorful

I love summer

Untitled

Marquell

won't you celebrate with me for I am thankful for being on this earth, for my family and having a mom that cares about me and being a dad to my kids: I'm gonna overcome and be the best dad to my kids because I never had a father in my life. When I get out I'm not gonna see this place again and be the best role model to my brother and sister, my kids.

6 Word Memoirs

Aaliyah

1. Always be kind to yourself
2. You are beautiful all the time
3. When you fight I fight always
4. Being loved is the best ever
5. Eating is good for your Bri
6. Shoes is everything to me always

Untitled

Adessa

won't you celebrate with me
the L's I've taken
the W's I've lost
won't you reminisce with me
all the times that I've been
crossed
won't you sit and think with me
all the good that outweighs the bad
won't you stand and have a toast with me
for finally we are not sad.

Breathe

Camron

Let the breeze hug you

Let the breeze lift you up off your feet with comfort

Let the breeze whistle in your ear

The breeze sings like a group of birds.

Untitled

Grace

Summer, I love how the sun feels on my skin
and the pretty flowers and warm weather,
I love how the days get longer and
everybody is out of their houses, I love
going to the pool and lake to swim and
all the ice cream stores are open, I like being
able to just sit outside and enjoy the day,
I like watching the pretty sunset at the beach
and I love being able to go walk and
play with my dog at the park.

Pain

Aaliyah

won't you celebrate with me
for I have a family
that gives me light everyday
every time I wake
up and see their fake
smiles I see the pain
inside I see my mother's
pain I see my brother's
pain I see my sister's
pain but also when I look
in the mirror I see my
own pain and that I survived
from my past.

Connect

Jake

Let the sun strike you
Let the sun's rays reflect
off my skin that is burning
where the sunscreen protects.

The Humility's High

Anthony

I'm in my back yard hanging upside down w/ gaping wounds, have giant thorns sticking out of my eyes leaking blood. Knives drag down my arms and chest. Blood and veins pour over the ground. The smell of blood fills my nostrils. I see the darkness creeping through my eyes. And then complete darkness. Death is real. Suicide is realer. People ask why suicide is on my mind because of the traumatic abuse. I no longer feel pain. I see shadows and hear the calls of death's fate in life.

6 Word Memoirs

Aaliyah

1. Almost home seven months to go
2. I always love myself all day
3. I love my girlfriend so much
4. Hunger now need a cheeseburger now
5. Need a mother that loves me
6. I'm always trying to love myself
7. People say I'm beautiful but not
8. Music makes me feel better always
9. They don't care or love me

A Poem About Love

Lester

Love is sweet like candy

Love is infinity

Love is pure like the smell
of chocolate

Love is tough but you can
never give up!

Untitled

Emily

Pain, pain is how I felt when I
lost people close to me and
when my momma left
I was so depressed. I'm
trying to find a way but the time
goes slowly. I'm used to the pain
I'm used to the hate, I threw my
life away just to see you stay.
Then you left me on my own
trying to make it out fast and cold.

Untitled

Aaliyah

Pain, pain is my past pain
is every day I don't get to see
my family. I overcame
my pain by loving myself
and knowing that the past
doesn't define who I am and
that I'm loved in every way.

Untitled

Jomar

I like swimming and laying down in the sand
eating ice cream and boxing
and walking with my girlfriend
and being with my family.

Untitled

Marquell

Siting behind brick walls without being with your loved ones can bring pain into your eyes. Pain is a feeling that can hurt you and you can't get rid of it until you fix the problem that's hurting you! Sometimes pains are reasons that can change my whole day. I can laugh, smile and say I'm okay but deep down inside I'm hurt from my pain. When I'm home away from this place I will be okay but until then I'm going to have pain sitting on my heart.

My Pain

Adessa

Pain, pain is what I felt
when I came home from
school daddy nowhere in
sight
pain, pain is what I felt
when momma cried in her
sleep at night
I'm talking pain so deep
you're in a depression for
days
trying to find a way out but
you can't find a way
trying to beat down your
depression but the wall
won't break
my walls been up for so
long I'm used to it
seeing there's no way to
bust through it
trying to find an escape
but I'm closed in between
four walls
every wall says depression
so much it's endless
so every night I close my
eyes trying to end this
no one to talk to
no one to go to

they say I can
make it through
but I walk away saying
I don't believe you
they say I'm strong
but strong people get
up
I've been down for so
long if I get up
I'll have to learn to walk
again
no family in sight
no sign of what's right
no one I like
just people to fight
everything I look at is
a reason to cry
this is a pain that I always
hide
so when they ask if I'm
okay all I do is lie
I lie so good it seems
like the truth
this is how I feel
how about you?

Untitled

Tyler

During my birthday I usually go
through school and then celebrate
with my family. I love the
smell of the air when it's
rainy and all of the leaves are on the ground, when it's
fall it's cool out, not too hot, not too cold. During
a football game I love running
through the stadium with the crowd yelling and cheering,
the turf beneath my
cleats, and the sweat down
my neck.

How I Feel About the Summer

Marquell

I love the summer because I can take my kids to get ice cream and barbeque and have a good time with the family and take them to Splash Zone, IX Center, Cedar Point and a lot of places. The summer is my favorite season to me I can sit outside without a jacket, or a shirt. And going to the gym to work out and like going jogging.

The Pain I See

Aaliyah

The pain I see every day
it hurts me when I look into
people's eyes I see abuse I
see neglect I see rape I see
the hurt so why do people
do it knowing it ruins lives
if I can overcome my pain
you can to.

Untitled

Jaylynn

won't you celebrate with me
for I have a life that I have lived
for 13 years. I have a family that
I love and they love me as well.
But we have been separated
for two years. I am in foster care
but that is not going to stop me
for I will be a veterinarian.

Untitled

Isaac

Pain pays off it makes you stronger
love pays off it makes you mature
at the end of the day
we all got hard feelings you just
gotta get through and sometimes
just listen.

Untitled

T'Nariya

won't you celebrate with me
a child is born
unplanned but a blessing
18 years to go
struggles and struggles
behind bars 6x
but I'll bounce back
and I'll overcome
won't you celebrate with me
soon to graduate
expelled but able to finish
glad we will all be
smiles and giggles
won't you celebrate with me
Zanyah my beautiful
11-month old daughter who means
the complete world to me she had
hazel eyes and pretty light skin
long but short curly hair and pretty
little hands. I love my daughter so
much I would be so lost without
her. When I go home I'm going to give
her the biggest hug and so many kisses.
When my daughter grows up I want
us to have the best relationship
ever. I want her to know that I'm mom
first her biggest supporter second and her
best friend third oooh my do I love

Zanyah she is so beautiful
and she makes my day everyday even
just thinking about her.

John Carroll Contributors:

Cameron is from Ohio. He's experienced a lot. He's made many mistakes. His poem represent beauty, but it comes from his pain.

Dalton likes to live his life to its deepest, taking in life 1000% through and through, seeing and experiencing the most he can. He loves the family he's created. He has a one-year old daughter and about four other sisters that has given him a needed sense of patience. He takes pride and happiness in raising his daughter. He loves life, even the "worst" moments because they remind us, him also, that he's human.

Jonathan is from Arizona. He's got two sisters and one brother that he knows of. His mother neglected him, and his father was in and out of prison or sleeping with other women. Since then he's been living with his grandparents here in Ohio.

K.D. came a long way from fighting to trying to go home from ODYS. He's trying to get his life together to see his daughter.

Leak is from Ohio. He's 20-years old doing a four-year sentence. He asks: "Wanna hear a joke? What did the people yell at the custodian at his surprise part? Supplies!"

Orion is 16-years old and he's been locked up for one year in ODYS.

P.B. is 20-years old, educated, African American, 5'7. He lost his mother at a young age. He was born in Florida, but lives in Cleveland. He's experienced a lot. The majority of his writing comes from his experiences. He's a very joyful person but on the inside he's very hurt.

Tev is 20-years old and 5'10. He says: "Free me and my brother P.B." He's been writing for nine years. "It's time to share." Tev says that he is a "poet for life." The motivation behind his work has blonde hair, blue eyes, a killer smile.

Zach has grown up.

Oberlin Contributors:

Aaliyah was taken away from her mother when she was 10-years old and put into foster care. She thought every bad thing was her but now she knows that she has hope for her life.

Adessa loves to rap. She is 15- years old from Ohio. She raps about anything and everything. Her rap name is Lil Queen.

Anthony is wickedly insane. He loves the feeling of Death's fate.

Austin has lived a hard life, harder than others and Writers in Residence gave him a chance to explore himself and his feelings about his life and he thanks them for that.

Brandon says: "Pain is something everyone feels and I would like people to know that they are not alone."

Camron is 15-years old. He's a gymnast with curly black hair. He has perfect black eyebrows with amazing backflips. He graduates in 2023 and has straight A's. He lives in Ohio but wants to pursue his dreams of walking the red carpet in Los Angeles.

Emily is 13-years old and her favorite color is blue. She loves dogs, cats, and hamsters. She also loves her family and friends. She hopes that you enjoy her part in this chapbook.

Isaac is strong-minded and a cool guy to chill with. He really likes people. He was raised in a hard place.

Jake is 17-years old from Ohio. He's big into poems because he's a musician and he feels like music is a type of poetry. He wants you to check out his music on SoundCloud: [White_JoyR](#)

Joshua is 17-years old and his birthday is in the spring. He's very sweet to people in his family.

Marquell shouts out Writers in Residence. He's the best father in the world. He loves his family. He will be home soon. He likes writing poems.

Matthew is 16-years old and was born and raised in Ohio. He had a bad childhood. His father abused him when he was a small boy and he did this for his friends Jayden, Ian, Seven, Kyle, and Lex. This is for the ones who have a hard life, keep your head up! Stay strong!

Naveah is 14-years old. She's an intelligent seventh grade student. She's also an active person. She socializes a lot with her community. She comes from a family of six.

Ryan is failing a drug battle against addiction. He's never able to see his real family.

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- The founding members:
 - Anthony
 - Michalena
 - Rachel
 - Zachary

Donate:

If you were moved by any of the residents' creative writing, then we encourage you to donate and support our mission and vision so we may continue this work, especially as our organization expands across Ohio.

Your donation and support will allow us to:

- Develop and maintain more collegiate cohorts across Ohio.
- Publish and showcase the residents' creative writing with the community.
- Create and manage an alumni program for residents on the outside re-entering into society.
- Educate and advocate for government policy that affects the lives of residents who are or were formerly incarcerated.

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