

# Writers in Residence



SPRING 2021

*UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON COHORT*

In the US, over 48,000 youth are confined in  
juvenile or criminal justice facilities.  
In Ohio, about 2,200 youth are held in juvenile  
or criminal justice facilities.

They have been separated and isolated  
from family, friends, and members of the  
community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of them feel forgotten, alone, & scared.  
This is for them.

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## **University of Dayton Cohort**

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# MISSION AND VISION



## Teach

We teach creative writing to youth who are incarcerated.



## Empower

We empower our residents' voices.



## Assist

We assist in their re-entry into society.

**We strive** to reduce the recidivism rates of our residents and participate in the transformation of the juvenile justice system.

# VALUES

## Justice

We believe in creating an environment where justice becomes visible, where restoration from wrong is possible, where people are seen as more than their worst moments, where people can create a future not doomed to repeat the past.

## Empowerment

We believe that our residents can build their self-esteem, resilience, and power through working on their writing, their reflection, their communication, through the creative writing workshop experience.

## Relationships

We believe in fostering genuine, strong, and long-lasting relationships as well as walking with our residents as they navigate the path to re-entry.

## Dignity

We believe that our residents deserve to discover and recognize their own dignity and self-worth through our creative writing workshops. We also believe that if we respect ourselves, our residents, and our student volunteers then we successfully lead by example.

## Community

We believe in the power of community. This means that we continually welcome and accept our residents into our communities because they belong to an environment that promotes individuality and empowerment, especially upon re-entry. We also believe in the creation of a collaborative atmosphere that amplifies all voices together in a spirit of mutuality and kindness.

# COHORTS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

## Cohorts

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Capital University    | 5 John Carroll University |
| 2 College of Wooster    | 6 Marietta College        |
| 3 Heidelberg University | 7 Oberlin College         |
| 4 Hiram College         | 8 University of Dayton    |

## Community Partners

- Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility
- Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility
- Lorain County Juvenile Detention Home
- Medina County Juvenile Detention Center
- Montgomery County Center for Adolescent Services
- Portage-Geauga Juvenile Detention Center
- Seneca County Youth Center
- Washington County Juvenile Center





# OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

## Year to date:

### Average

- 25 residents
- 8 student volunteers
- 97 hours
- \$2,457.70

### YTD

- 590 residents
- 139 student volunteers
- 1,681 hours
- \$43,443.44

## Spring 2021

### Average

- 40.75 residents
- 8 student volunteers
- 98.25 hours
- \$2,498.50

### YTD

- 326 residents
- 37 student volunteers
- 393 hours
- \$10,689.60

## Fall 2020

### Average

- 27 residents
- 9 student volunteers
- 74 hours
- \$1,890.30

### YTD

- 109 residents
- 18 student volunteers
- 223 hours
- \$5,670.89

## Spring 2020

### Average

- 13 residents
- 8 student volunteers
- 105 hours
- \$2,657.44

### YTD

- 76 residents
- 56 student volunteers
- 627 hours
- \$15,944.61

## Fall 2019

### Average

- 20 residents
- 7 student volunteers
- 110 hours
- \$2,784.59

### YTD

- 79 residents
- 28 student volunteers
- 438 hours
- \$11,138.34

Half of our cohorts launched this spring, which actually yielded our highest outputs compared to other seasons.

To clarify how we track our outputs, we take attendance at every session because our service population remains to be extremely transient, generating the total number of residents. However, some of the residents participate in our program more than once, so we averaged the total number of residents from every cohort to produce an approximate number that represents how many residents we engage weekly. We replicated the same calculations for our student volunteers too. The Independent Sector values volunteer time at \$27.20/hour; we multiplied this dollar amount by the total number of service hours for every student volunteer.

Read more about our outputs, outcomes, and impact at  
[www.writersnresidence.org/impact](http://www.writersnresidence.org/impact)

# *A letter from the* ***Program Director***

Dear reader,

Before you read any further, allow me to educate you about our program model.

We facilitate weekly creative writing workshops with 5-12 undergraduates from a college or university for 10-15 residents at a juvenile facility in Ohio. Each creative writing workshop lasts 12-weeks during the spring, summer, and fall, and each session runs for 60-90 minutes, teaching our residents various writing techniques, texts, and themes from diverse and dynamic authors.

Then, we publish, showcase, and distribute chapbooks like this one filled with our residents' creative writing inside juvenile facilities, on campuses, and throughout the local communities to raise awareness about the juvenile justice system and advocate for juvenile justice reform at the end of every creative writing workshop.

Maya Angelou said: "I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." When I reflect on this quote in light of the COVID-19 pandemic that forced our in-person program to become remote since the fall of last year, I hope she is wrong. I hope that our residents never forget what we discussed, what we demonstrated, and how we made them feel seen, heard, and understood as well as inspired, optimistic, and supported because they matter: what our residents think, say, and do matters not only to us but to everyone. They possess as much value as anyone else regardless of their circumstances.

We remind them of this every workshop and session while we write poetry and prose; build positive peer relationships; and create a safe environment for them to find relief from their stress, anxiety, depression, and anger. This chapbook serves to remind you of this too, so please consider reading our residents' creative writing with an open mind and a heart.

Zachary Thomas

# ***Let's Get Real***

*University of Dayton*

# *A letter from the* **Cohort**

Dear reader,

Sometimes during our creative writing workshops, our residents would say: "let's get real!" They wanted all of us to be genuine, vulnerable, and connected. That's why the title of our chapbook is *Let's Get Real* because their poetry and prose embodies these qualities, which reminds us about the significance of the arts and youth development.

We really enjoyed learning about our residents through our conversations as well as their creative writing. That's how we discovered how much we had in common with them. Whenever a resident read a piece that was really personal to them were the best moments. This highlighted the similarities between their emotions and our emotions.

Everything was true, raw, and unrestricted. We saw their hopes, fears, and dreams that they chose to share with us. Actually, we were afraid that the remote program model via Zoom would require us to engage with youth who would be closed off and unwilling to participate. That was very far from the reality. From day one our residents brought their



energy and passion to each session, involving themselves fully to this new experience for the juvenile facility and our university. The creative writing workshops improved repeatedly week after week.

Our residents have endured more in their lives than what most individuals deal with their entire lives. Our residents have made mistakes in their lives and they are learning from those mistakes to create a better future for themselves. But their mistakes shouldn't define their character nor their possibilities.

We want to thank our residents, our leader Zach, all of our student volunteers, and the staff because together we created a space to easily build relationships with each other that dismantle the barriers between us.

The University of Dayton Cohort

# Untitled

Te'Nae

- 1) Your life is worth more than you know
- 2) My love for is going to be limitless
- 3) Good is my coping skill
- 4) My mistakes are my Destiny
- 5) Do you really love me?

# Untitled

Imari

1. I will find true happiness soon
2. Steak bowls from Chipotle taste great
3. Show no love, receive no pain

# Untitled

Alexus

1. You're a diamond in the rough
2. Lost but not forever
3. The best food is brain food
4. Don't give up, keep going
5. Why is it this hard?

# Untitled

## Angel

Life: When life gives you lemons make lemonade

Love: Love hate relationship

Food: I cant wait to eat my moms food again

Advice: Honesty is key

Questions: What are you wearing Jake from state farm

# Untitled

Rachel

1. I am beautiful
2. My love is special
3. I am thick and proud of it
4. I want some subway
5. Life's better with friends
6. Am I just paranoid?

# Untitled

Mykala

Life – Life is one of my strongest values

Love – The love word is as strong as the hate word

Food – My favorite type of food is seafood

Advice – Just keep pushing. Never give.

Questions – Who's really there for me?

# Untitled

## Masonique

- I am going to remain humble through life situations
- You can never say I love you too much
- The best food is seafood
- Learn from your mistakes today so you don't make the same ones tomorrow
- The pain from some love is a little bit equal as



# Untitled

## Angel

I come from poverty, where I had to steal everything  
I needed. Drugs was everywhere I turned even in my  
veins. The streets are a cold place. Kill or be Killed, Do  
what we had to do to make a living. I know more about  
drugs then I do anything else. Cold winters, hot summers,  
Broken doors, boarded up windows,  
But im going to get myself and my family out the  
mud, and right my wrongs.

# Untitled

## Imari

I come from the heart of the ghetto  
where kids younger than me are dying  
I come from drugs being the reason  
why I had clothes on my back and a  
bed to lay.

I come from the projects where unless  
you turn on the light, the roaches gone greet  
you at the door

I come from a home where promises  
always get broke and men got chose first  
But I'm going to be better than what  
I've seen growing up

# Untitled

## Masonique

1. I come from the struggle where young babies  
grow up with no mothers.
2. thugs on the block are tryna make another  
dollar by the hustle.
3. crackheads are steady begging for cash
4. Oh look down the street it's another car crash
5. but I'm going to choose to do better
6. and when they speak on me they gone to  
say yeah she came from the bottom but she's on  
a higher level.

# Untitled

## Mykala

1. I come from Westwood, it aint too ghetto,  
but it's still the hood
2. I come from living off dope money, I aint proud,  
but shoot, I was hungry
3. I come from a single parent mom taking care of three,  
I love the woman so much. She's the one who made me
4. But I'm going to be somebody, I know I will never  
be a nobody

# Untitled

Alexus

I come from my grandmothers love.

I come from the city of youngstown

I come from food stamps & welfare

I come from one of the worst parts of youngstown

I come from raising my brother

I come from an addicted mother

I come from disappointment

But I'm going to thrive regardless and break the

Chain

# Untitled

Te'Nae

I come from the Dirty Slums called  
Case, I come from A city filled with  
youngs deaths. I come from A home  
where my mom is Doing what she  
gotta do for her kids without any help. I come from  
a place where kids 9 and 10 is  
out hustling. I come from A  
place where I witnessed robberies,  
but Im going to go home and be  
that high school grad with No  
juvenile charges and A changed  
mindset.

# Untitled

Rachel

I come from a place of powder  
Where everyone competes for power

I come from a family you can't see  
Cause we were masks that says we're happy

I come from a place of hate  
Where everyone bullies to stay safe

I come from a place of homelessness  
Cause jobs are something people loss it here

I come from a block of psychos  
Who beat people up cause they think there whackos

I come from a poor place  
Where people rob each other to their face

but I'm gonna be different  
for my children

# Untitled

Imari

I remember when me and my sisters was at p.o.c park and this little girl that look like the mom off rugrats threw a ball at my sister and pushed her off the swing and I dragged the girl to a mud puddle and me and my other sister threw her in the mud. the thing is she used to think she was a bully and I wasn't goin her name was shariyah and she aint have no edges. Moral of the story, behind mines, we an go to war with all yours 100 and loose no sleep.



# I Remember

Te'Nae

I remember when I met you, and I didn't know how I felt. I also Remember talking to you and feeling you out to see if we were going to be cool, I Also remember how you made a joke When I was mad and I Knew we were going to be cool, I Also remember saying that I'm always going to be here for you And you saying if I need anything you're here for me.

# Untitled

Rachel

I remember when the bullies saw the weakness in you. They bullied you, and I had to do something, so I fought for you cause I knew you couldn't. You were weak like me but I had a little power in me to fight, honestly I'm always rooting for you, I'll always want to be there to help you off your knees.

# Untitled

## Masonique

I remember when it was me and you friend and we was at a Park and we saw these girls and they was like what yall looking at do yall want to fight so you was like wassup We can throw these things all night.

# Untitled

## Angel

I remember when I first met Brandon. It was love at first sight! I Ask him to take me on a 4-wheeler ride, we was gone till midnight! After that we was with each other every day. A couple months later we moved in together. If anybody would get smart with him, or did him wrong, I would get smart with them!

# Untitled

Alexus

I remember when my mom's boyfriend snatched up my brother and I punched him in the side of his head.

# Untitled

Johnae

I think this picture is saying that the kids can be different and can live their best life. They can be whatever they want to be. They have to be someone they are not and they are wild and they have different faces but on the same face.

# Untitled

Te'Nae

I see a group of people with a lot of different emotions and a lot of different backgrounds. I see broken bodies, I see mismatch clothes, I see power in their own ways. I see broken homes. I see homelessness, maybe hopelessness. I see Grown kids being forced to be an adult but still a kid in their mind.

# Untitled

Rachel

Kids in this day and age don't know what they want to be. They try to be different people but it's hard when so many things happen like pandemics and protests for equal rights. Sometimes kids turn down the wrong road and end up stuck in anger and sadness or in a cell but only life was easier for kids if only there was no pressure cause it's hard to be yourself when everyone says you're someone else



# Untitled

## Masonique

I feel like this is a collage of kids put together from different backgrounds that is being forced to grow up faster than they want I also see two hands held out like they begging for something some of the kids don't have on shoes so they are probably struggling.

# Untitled

## Angel

All he looked forward to were the parties.

Until he started to get sick.

Now he is all alone trying to fit in.

Wearing his raggedy old cloth's that he always wears. Leaning away from the crowd, not knowing whether to follow the other kids or just do him.

# Untitled

Alexus

As kids we are forced to change...

But regardless we ALL find

A way

# Untitled

## Ma-Raya

I see all different colored people. I also see kids that want to be kids but can't they struggle because they fumble they fumble but want to be humble.

# Untitled

## Masonique

I feel so weightless in space and I seen  
Megan da Stallion doing the race She was clutching  
a brief case filled with heels she bought yesterday  
I love this chick so much because she has such  
a pretty face.

# Untitled

Rachel

What I like about space

is that I go there when my mind's in a

race it's calm, roomy and soothing and

it makes me happy it really makes me feel  
joy.

# Untitled

Johnae

Meteor's gliding across space.  
Catching fire as it keeps going.  
I would find a pizza shop labeled  
"space pizza" only for \$1 for large, because  
they get customers every blue moon.  
I'm having a great time here.

# Untitled

## Angel

I feel as I am floating  
like clouds.  
my hair is bouncing up and down  
as I float in different directions.  
I looked up and my heart dropped.  
In front of me was my grandpa bob.  
How could this be true?  
He already died on december 27 2011.  
Now that he is back in my life  
Imma make the most out of it.  
We are both reunited and light as  
Air.



# Untitled

## Alexus

Floating through the stars  
No matter where you are  
At least I'm no longer behind "bars"  
I see her... the one that brings me  
down to earth  
She is how I know my worth  
To me she's somebody to you she's nobody  
her name is Masonique  
and our friendship is not so bleak  
She is my person

# Untitled

Te'Nae

Me and Nba youngboy in space vibin.  
We laughing and rapping about  
Freedom. He said freedom, freedom  
everywhere there's no time in the air.  
Big moon, small rock, tick tock on  
the clock. Alone in my mind, but  
not in the sky, I see my Auntie  
Approaching and give a loud  
cry. We laugh and cry, but the  
tears Are moving because were  
in the sky.

# Untitled

Johnae

1. the sunrise comes up.  
I become heartless until,  
Jacob comes to save.
2. When sunsets again.  
I become more heartless now,  
because he left me.

# Untitled

## Ma-Raya

I love my mom to  
death touch her and  
you will be laid to  
rest.

# Untitled

Alexus

It was cold outside  
When I was removed from home  
Walking in the snow sucks

Masonique is pretty  
She is genuinely funny  
She is My best friend

# Untitled

Kaya

HOB GOBLIN  
SNEAKING AROUND MY CALM SOUL  
LEAVE ME ALONE NOW

I GOT ME ONLY  
I WILL NOT ACQUIESE, NAH  
IM TO DUBIOUS

MANIFESTATION  
UNIVERSAL MESSAGES  
ACCUMULATE ME /OR/ EVERYWHERE AROUND

IM WATCHING ALL  
READING, OBSERVING, I KNOW  
WITH MY EARS, NO FEARS

# Untitled

## Masonique

I was heartless til  
I meet Timya and fell in love  
and now she is my sunshine on a cloudy day

I like chips with dip  
on the block I see all the crips  
licking their lips tryna get a kiss

# Untitled

Rachel

I love cats

But some people don't

I hate Jail

I am fu\*\*ing sad

I hate life so much

Sorry I'm sad.



# Brandon

## Angel

Brandon

He's my forever rock

Always there when I need him

unbreakable love

Loyal to him only

Brandon is my Happiness

For him I would kill

# Untitled

## Masonique

This is the kind of world we live  
in. Where you can't trust no one  
The same people that tell you they  
love you is gone be the same ones  
that when times get bad holding  
the pole up to you and your loved  
ones head yelling bro just give  
the dough up.  
(can't trust no one it's me vs me)

# Untitled

Jenelle

This is the kind of world we live in. The world we live in is divided in so many ways good and bad. My mom used to always say you want in one hand + sh\*t in the other see which one fills up faster.

# Untitled

Rachel

this is the kind of world we live in  
hurtin people just fore fun. getting  
angry then going off like a gun, honestly  
what has this world become?

# End-talk is Cheap - Actions Speak.

Kaya

This is the kind of the world we  
Live in Theres the light  
and the dark in this world. A lot of  
this world is made from Indoctrination  
not a lot of people try to expand their  
knowledge or look at different perspectives.  
I have met a very small amount  
of people who are different. The  
good may be disguised as bad. Im  
grateful to even have an opportunity  
to have a life on this earth b/c  
I have no true Idea where Im  
going next. The bad is beautiful  
there's beauty in the struggle.  
the world is losing Its humbleness  
but a lot of us are becoming aware.  
You gotta mind your business and  
protect your soul and energy. you  
don't got no one but yourself-watch your own  
back.

# Untitled

Te'Nae

This is the kind of world we live in  
a world where black men cant  
walk down the street without out  
being A menace. A world where  
little kids Grow up fast, a world  
where you get shot if you're at the  
wrong place at the wrong time.  
A world where there is poverty  
and helplessness. A world where  
they take your 3rd grade test scores  
to build prisons but all in all  
if we keep our hope alive, Everything  
will work out for its good, but the  
good die young. Big facts.

# Untitled

## Angel

This is the kind of world we live in  
a big ball of fire.

Where you can't trust anybody not  
even your family.

People Join a gang Just to be a part of something.

The darkness is taking over

# Untitled

Johnae

This kind of world we live in  
is cruel, cold & heartless. No one really  
cares about anyone anymore. "There  
is plenty of fish in this dirty sea."  
Someone wise told me just by the  
way you can view everything &  
everyone. Sit back & observe everyone  
& see how they all move.



# Untitled

Ariel

This is the kind of world  
we live in... With Police  
Brutality, racism, Hared, &  
Sex trafficking

# From the Inside Looking Out

Johnae, Te'Nae, Masonique, Angel  
Ma-Raya, Rachel, Ariel,  
Kaya, Shyeria, Jenelle

Thank you For lending us  
more than enough ears.

Thank you tolerating our  
nonsense

Thank you For attempting  
to understand and never  
Judging us.

Thank you For helping us  
come alive through poetry

Thank you For taking time  
out of your days to help  
us expand our knowledge  
and understanding

Thank you For accepting us  
as the way we are and  
not trying to mold us Into  
something were not

Thank you For bringing  
synergy to our unit

Thank you For seeing through  
our negative experiences

Thank you for showing  
empathy Instead of sympathy  
and Last off thank you for  
Listening to our stories.

# Acknowledgements

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- Student Volunteers
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- Community Partners and Juvenile Facilities
- Special Guest Authors and Artists
- Donors and Community Members
- Board of Directors
- Graphic Designer

Thank you for working with us to fulfill our mission and vision! We appreciate your time, talents, and treasure. This work relies heavily on collaboration, so without every stakeholder's contribution, then we would not be operational.

We want to express our endless gratitude for The Cleveland Foundation's and the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award's on-going generosity.

We ask that you please consider donating because your financial contribution will sustain our ability to teach creative writing to youth who are incarcerated to empower their voices and assist in their re-entry into society. Your donation will allow us to:

- Purchase programmatic materials (e.g., writing materials, technology, personal protective equipment (PPE), snacks, and chapbooks) for our creative writing workshops.
- Compensate special guest authors and artists to facilitate one or more of our creative writing workshops with an honorarium.
- Assist our residents who are re-entering society with very little or zero access to social services and resource to prevent recidivating.
- Educate our local communities and government officials about the juvenile justice system's traumatic effect on our youth.

Visit [www.writersnresidence.org/donate](http://www.writersnresidence.org/donate) or  
scan the QR code below  
with your smartphone's camera to donate!



Writers in Residence is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization incorporated in Ohio.