

Writers in Residence



SPRING 2021
HIRAM COLLEGE 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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Hiram College 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

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

***I Come From
a Place
Where People
Come From***

Hiram College

A letter from the **Cohort**

Dear reader,

This chapbook represents the second semester of working with Portage-Geauga Juvenile Detention Center Residents via Zoom. As we were able to become more adjusted with the platform, get our residents the proper microphones so we would be able to hear them better, and our volunteers became more comfortable with the controls, our workshops became even more thoroughly enjoyable. Despite the occasional connection issues and technical difficulties, we managed to pull off a successful series of workshop due to the hard work of the JDC residents. We are grateful to our residents for joining us each Tuesday evening and sharing their writing, experience, and humor. We truly enjoy spending time with them and hated when it was time to press the red Leave Meeting button.

We chose to title this chapbook *I Come From A Place Where People Come From* after a line from one of the poems contained within. We believe this to be fitting as it sums up one of the core beliefs of WIR; the problems of mass incarceration and child poverty are not far-away issues that we can simply dismiss, nor do they only affect a small part of the population. It is all around us, and indeed these kids come from all around us. These kids are just that: kids.

One important thing to remember about these kids is that many of them were not able to have the same consistent and quality early education as others their age (and our volunteers) have enjoyed. This can be due to poverty, insufficient accommodations for learning or developmental disabilities, and their schooling being interrupted by incarceration. The works you will read will include grammatical and spelling errors, but

they do not diminish the quality of their work in the slightest. We were able to have very candid and personal discussions with our resident this semester, and we know some of the hardships they have overcome. We have kept the spelling and grammatical errors both to celebrate their triumph over adversity as well as to maintain the honest, unfiltered voices of these young writers.

While we wish we did not meet under these circumstances, with our core group of residents we were happy to see them grow throughout our workshops. Their writing consistently improved and we are incredibly excited to see where their writing will go in the future. Our volunteers really appreciate the consistent work the residents put in in every single workshop, because this program could not function without their enthusiastic participation. We as a cohort value that our residents were brave enough to share their feelings, experiences, and personal stories with us this semester.

Most important to our volunteers are the treasured memories we have accumulated over these last ten weeks. We will always remember our spirited debates on the best musicians and worst brands of chips, our discussions on the concepts of memory, love, and perspective, and, of course, their kindness and consideration towards us and one another. At the end of one of the workshops one of our volunteers decided to show the residents their dog. We will never forget the smiling eyes and masked faces crowded around the monitor, nor the heart-melting words *man, I needed this. It's been too long since I've seen a dog.*

So we'd like to thank the PGJDC staff for making this possible and for their invaluable help in setting up workshops, our faculty advisor Mary Quade for keeping us on track and helping us design curriculum, and Zachary Thomas for making this whole program possible in the first place. Most of all, though, we want to thank our residents.

Untitled

Cosmo

Life: tomorrow's never promised live it up

Love: loyalty over love

Love: life ends but love lives on

Advice: what you give is what you get

Advice: truth can be hurtful

Questions: do people listen or hear?

Food: Swenson's; galley boy potato teezers milkshake

My Thoughts

Sam

I rarely give in to negative vibes.

Some people say life is good.

I believe people can change gradually.

Life is what you make it.

People say make a good goal.

I will be great in life.

The end

Bicycle

Cosmo

like a bike i go from place
to place. it's always a mystery
where i'll end up. if i start
down a hill there really isn't
any way to stop me. All you
can really do is jump off.
you can give it a
paint job or change
some parts but it'll still
be the same bike. You
can decide to use it or go
your own way

The Life Like the Wind

Sam

I am like the wind, you learn to deal with me
but you can't contain me. I'm always calm
but wild inside. I'm free but feel
trapped. You can't see me but I'm
always around. I cool you off
when you feel hot. I help you
travel from place to place but
you can't ever say thanks. When
you go outside and you feel a
breeze, just know I'm here. I
am like the wind, you never
know where I'm going to end up.

Akron

Harris

I come from Akron where
No where is safe.

I come from nothing,
Just the sound of gun
Shots and screams.

I come from Hamilton
Road where we active
247.

I come from poverty,
Where nothing is easy.

I come from a broken
Home, that cant never be
fixed.

Im going to be 18 Arril 2nd,
Ill be an adult,
Im going to Kent, I will
be 18

Untitled

Smith

I come from the cracked hands of a woman
who wasn't scared of nothing
who has less money then everyone
I come from a women who doesn't hate
but dislikes people
I come from where blacks and whites
would shoot
I come from a place where dreams
and hearts get broken
I come from nothing where people kill and steal
I come from people who used to work in fields
I come from a place called Cleveland

Im going
Home 2021
feb. 22
Im going to become
a track star.
Im gonna be the
best. Im gonna
Turn my life around
from the bottom
up Im going to
be on the top.

Ravenna

Sam

I come from empty fridges and Poor pockets
I come from Junkyard hillbillies who Can't hold a job
I come from 209 Jefferson St. where my dad would
always abuse me
I come from the environment that surrounded me,
drugs that my family consumed
I come from 800 infirmary Rd. where they watched
me grow up
I come from a place that me and my friends call
Stoners Ledge where we would smoke
I come from a place called Ravenna where anything is possible
I come from a Place that People come from
I'm going to a place I can call home
I'm going to do better than my ancestors that came before
I'm going to be all that I
can Be

Ravenna

Cosmo

I Come from a Place different that Yours.
I Come from a Place where a lot of People
try to be something they ain't. I Come
from a Place where things Can turn tragic.
I Come from a broken environment into
a broken home. I Come from a Place
to worry about but you don't have
to worry about everyone. I come
from a Place where ends don't meet. I come
from a Place where you Pray for the best
but prepare for the worst. I come from a
Place full of ruin where beauty once was.
I'm heading For the stars and the backdoor. I'm
going down a road toward reunification but at the
same time I'm going away from it. I'm going
to be better than where I'm from

Untitled

Dominic

I remember that time when me and Tyler were at a football game and somebody he had beef with was trying to jump him with his friends and I stood right by him the whole time making sure they wouldn't touch him. My friend was going to get jumped and I basically stepped in and helped him and told them to go off and do they own thing or they aren't gonna like what's going to happen.

Untitled

Sam

I remember when we were at the group home and I ran, and you called me from your android phone crying telling me "Please come home" cuz you didn't want me to get into trouble and I tried to call you back but I had no WIFI so it didn't go through so I walked down Main Street back to the group home and from that point on I never wanted to hurt you again. Instead, I wanted to protect you from getting hurt cuz you mean the world to me & we have always had each other's back through thick and thin. I love you Chenny forever.

Love,

Sam <3

Untitled

Cosmo

I remember when you came to me when you were at your lowest. When you looked up to me as a lifeline. I remember the times we weren't eating, and we were taking off some plates both literally and metaphorically. I remember the first I saw your demons when you had that bad trip and you thought cops were coming. I remember our first time running when the plan went south. I remember the times it was 3 to 2. I remember all the times when we looked to each other for help when we had nowhere else to go.

Besties

Julia

I remember when you got in this fight and I told the other girl she had to go through me before she got to you because you did not do anything wrong to get that and that is why we are Best friends now. I remember that same day, you helped me out when I was having a panic attack and that you had to carry me out of the lunchroom. But on the same day, the other girl started punching you and I tried to get her off you. But A.J got her off you because I could not get her off you but she also punched me too and when she punched us we were just talking to each other and you were talking to M because you liked him and we were just asking him questions and to see if he liked you and he said maybe so yay.

Thank you.

My Little Baby Goat

Julia

It was at 12am on a school night
When you were born. I had to help
you find where the food was, and
this was in the barn. Then the next
day was a school day and you
almost died that day so we helped
you out and got you food and
from there on you thought I was
your mom and I miss you little
one Rip my man

Love Mommy

Chocolate Chip AKA Goat

Julia

I remember when you would go to
the bathroom and you would jump
up on me and fall asleep on
me.

Untitled

Cosmo

there used to be a family of possums living in
a tree outside of our house that used to
eat out of our trash and one time we just
forgot to take the trash out and they
just left

The Death of a Soul Mate

Sam

When I was little, my grandma had a dog named Rex. He was a shiny tan beautiful dog who was hyper for days. He would run around the house for hours at a time and would not get tired. I Loved him. Whenever I would come over he would lay with me and as I got older so did he. He eventually quit eating and running and then died. But the memory of him burns in my mind forever. I loved him and I always will. He was the Best thing in my life.

Good Days

Cosmo

When my Photo was taken, we were about to
Go trick or treating and I was a ninja. I remember
Another Photo from When I Was in like first grade, it
Was me and my brother and sister waiting on the bus.
In the photo you can kind of tell that it's our first day back at
School cause we all look kind of nervous and after the other
Photo was taken we all went trick or treating.
I brought my bike
With one of the only years that I for real remember trick or treating.
Both of those Photos are on my mom's old Facebook.
My mom took both of those Photos. In the School Photo we were on the
sidewalk at the end of our dead-end road there was a nice house on the
corner and a corner store and some railroad tracks behind us.
That's back when life was good, and I didn't have to worry about what would
happen on my way to school. I think I had on a blue shirt and my first pair of
Jordans.

Untitled

Josh

My photo is when I was in 5th grade at my last football practice when it was raining and it was all muddy and we were all covered in mud all of my friends smiling and happy. There was a goal post and a big hill with a big fence and all the boys parents were standing behind it.

Untitled

Harris

It was hot. Everyone was leaving.

The score was 14 to 36. I was happy

My Nephew was in my left arm and my helmet was in

my right. The gates were filled with people leaving. My girl was by my sister.

My girl kept saying I looked good. I changed outta my cleats to my Jordans.

Photo of Brother & Sister

Sam

It was a week after I got out of treatment. White shirt, black pants sitting on a still colored paper. I was only 17, she was 18, eye shadow, in a circular case, black outfit, white socks, brother and a sister, fun times at the house of our mother's maker, times we've not spent in a while. Food cooking on the stove top, coffee in the pot, 1 hour after our eyes open, we leave, disappearing from that place, that place with so many memories, memories we have made forever of the love we share with one another all going back to that Photo of me and my sis all over again. Back in that house, Back in that small room and a twin-sized bed. We share the love for that home back in our heads, Pink wall where her diploma hangs, we look back at that Photo missing all that we had. I couldn't imagine life being good before that Photo.

Untitled

Terriana

My photograph was taken back in 2018 with my family we went to an professional photo shot. We wear in all white with black jeans and white shoes. In are photo it had a lot of details in the background it was really pretty and had lots of flowers in the back. What wasn't in the photo that was interesting was it was no clouds but everything else was there

Untitled

Ty

This Photo is of me and my boyfriend holding hands in New York City. IN the photo you can see my right hand which has a bracelet he gave me in it and you can see his left hand and his hand tattoos holding my hand as the camera also points at the buildings as we hold hands. You cant see anything but our hands and what's in front of us. But after the Photo we danced a little and he picked me up, held me, swung me in his arms and kissed me while everybody stared as they walked past us. During this photo I was very happy and excited to see the city.

Isolation

Cosmo

- 1 isolation sucks
Camera locked on every move
all alone but watched

- 2 never aloud with others
two more days of this bulls**t
just me and myself

- 3 one choice led to this
Consequences have actions
never coming back

- 4 Orange slides blue shirts
Need to get out of this Place
white walls barbwire fence

- 5 One day I'll be free
they can't keep me forever
I'm on my way out

- 6 blue or green bed mat
uncomfortable blankets
this places gets to you
- 7 Phone calls rejected
No visit from family
family giving up
- 8 can't blame me for this
Product of environment
People don't get it

Untitled

Julia

- 1 Salty Barbeque
 Chips are so good, I Love chips
 are so good to eat

- 2 Friends are amusing
 They Help out with anything
 And everything too

Oof Means to Me

Julia

Why are you saying that?

You are so stupid and shut up

Oof you lost your bf/gf

Go off somewhere else

Why in the world would you do that?

Oof oof oof

Oof that hurt ha ha ha

Tweaking

Cosmo

You're acting dumb, bro you're tweaking
You got to chill all this ain't worth it
You just got out and you on the way back
You got six siblings think about that
Focus on your priorities
You tweaking bout old sh*t leave that in the past
Your time is gonna double if you don't chill
11 times in 3 years, this ain't the life.
Put it on some paper, speak about it,
Stop turning up cause you're angry at the world.
No more dope get out of the game.
You're running ruining lives, got momma's tweaking
22 days left, that's a nap
I'm done with my old ways, I'm never coming back

Untitled

Jeffrey

Blizzard

You are sweet and

Feel good on a hot

Day and when i eat the

Oreo's or reces it cocnehes

And you look so good

Untitled

Cosmo

Kiwis taste like the ocean
they look unpleasant but
Smell great. They feel
like fuzz on a new tennis
ball before it's been on a
Court. Kiwis smell
like freedom. They smell
like my grandma's kitchen
after grocery shopping

Ode to the First Food I Made

Julia

Potato you're like a sweet potato and you're soft and nice
and mushier in the middle. I love it when you melt in my mouth.
You look so creamy when I look at you same like you have
So much goodness in you.
I hear you pop when you're being cooked on the stove.
You need bacon to taste so good. You smell so good.
The bacon in you is chewy and salty at the same time.
You look so chunky and creamy at the same time you need
More meat in you and more sweet potato to taste anything
and more like rice

The Loss of Daddy

Julia

Dear Daddy,

I just lost 2 weeks now! I can't even say that you were a bad dad because you were the best dad in the world. You were old. You were only 67 years old like how old mom is now. I love you so much to the moon and back. You are my best friend. You know when I'm happy, sad, mad, and etc. I just can't believe that you're gone.

RIP Daddy.

RIP Best Friend

What's Done is Done

Cosmo

This is my letter to you, my future self.

You did your time now build back your bridges.

Don't put yourself in bad places you'll end up back here. Don't focus on others as much as yourself. Stay in your zone don't mind others' business. Bury your broken bonds f**k those who wronged you. They're not there now so don't worry about them. You did what you did you can't take that back. That's just some old sh*t so forget about that. Just try your best not to do it again. Try not to do wrong the way that you used to. Associate yourself with better people. Try to stay up, don't let no one bring you down. Do what you need to do and not what you don't. But make sure to have fun that's what life is about. And remember what's done is done don't ever look back.

—Cosmo

Untitled

Jeffrey

Dear future self, don't do anything
to get yourself back in jail when
you get out you need to get
back in school so you can
get a job and maybe even
play sports, save up money
so i can get a car
soon stay off of drugs
because obviously the get ya
nowhere in life but they can get
you locked up. Dear future self just
keep yo head UP.

Acknowledgements

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- 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 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.