

Writers in Residence



Spring 2022

Circleville JCF Cohort

For the 49,000 youth confined in a juvenile facility in the US.

For the 2,200 youth confined in a juvenile facility in Ohio.

These youth have been separated from family and friends. Many of them don't feel seen, heard, or understood.

Their creative writing in this text rewrites the stereotypes and biases of a juvenile in detention.

This is for them.



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Property of Writers in Residence Library

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Mission

TEACH.

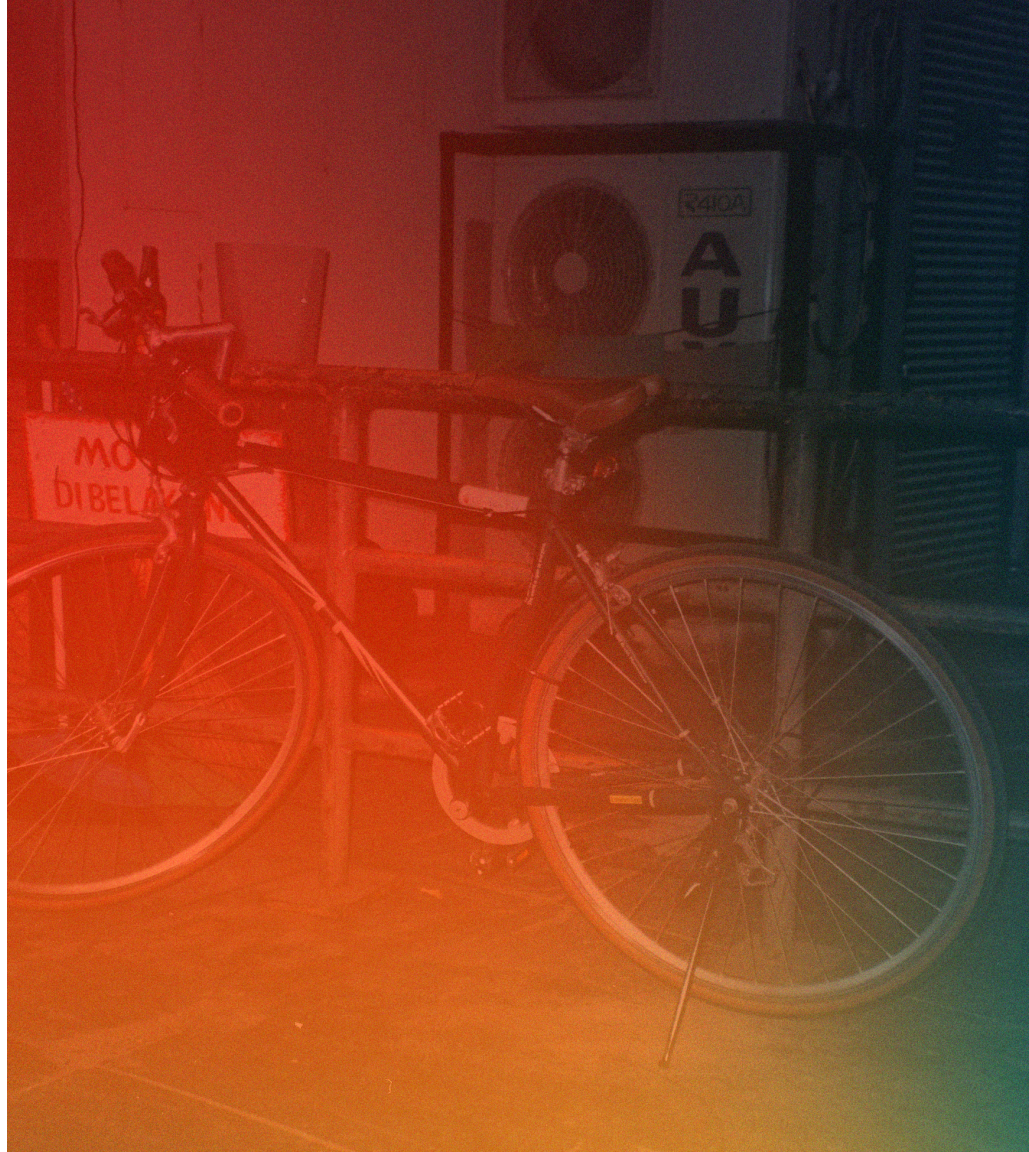
We teach creative writing
to youth who
are incarcerated.

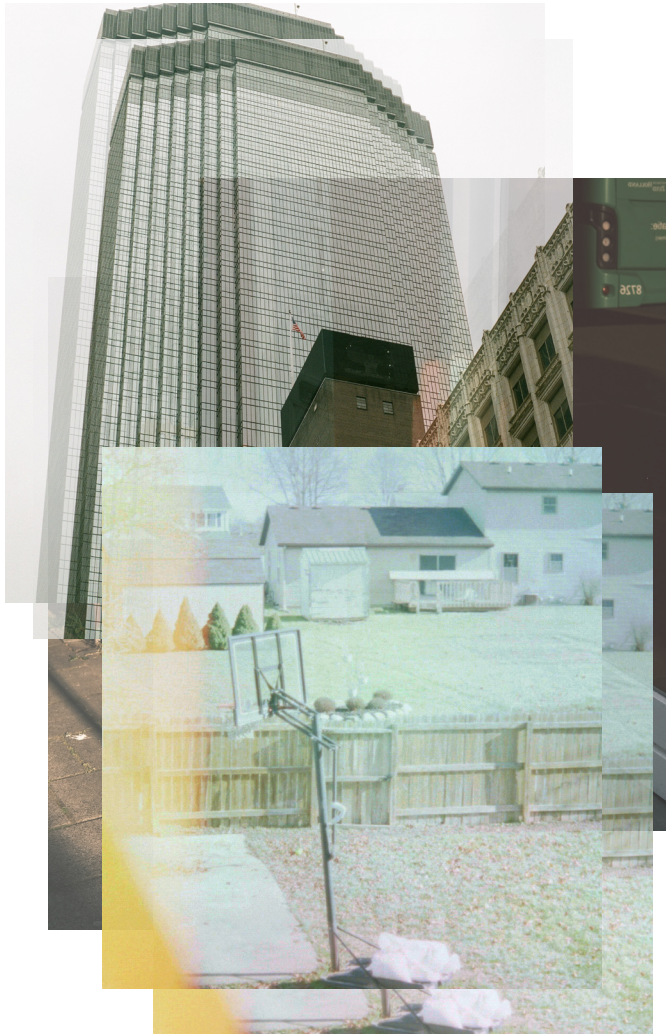
EMPOWER.

We empower our
residents' voices.

ASSIST.

We assist in their
re-entry.





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.

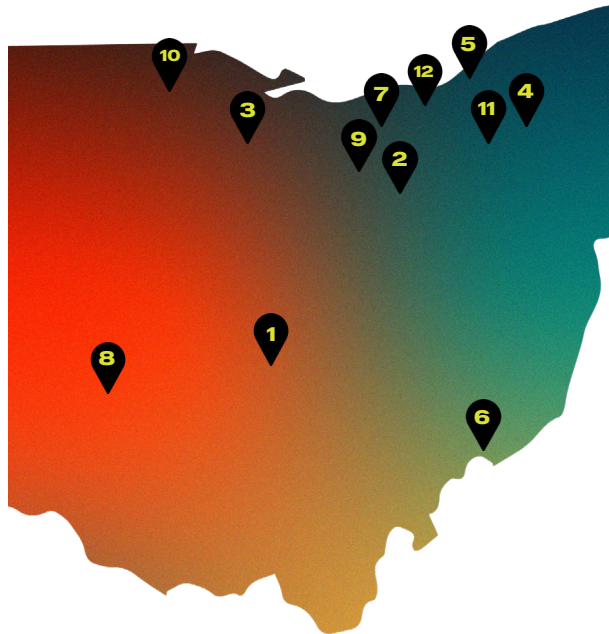
EMPOWERMENT. We believe that our residents can build their self-esteem, resilience, and power through working on their writing, their reflection, their communication, through the creative writing workshop experience.

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.

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.

SCHOOLS



- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Capital University | 7. Oberlin College |
| 2. College of Wooster | 8. University of Dayton |
| 3. Heidelberg University | 9. Baldwin Wallace University |
| 4. Hiram College | 10. Bowling Green State Univ. |
| 5. John Carroll University | 11. Case Western Reserve Univ. |
| 6. Marietta College | 12. Cleveland State University |

Circleville JCF
 Montgomery County CAS
 Seneca County YC
 Portage Geauga County JDC
 Cuyahoga Hills JCF
 Cuyahoga County JDC
 Washington County JC
 Medina County JDC
 Cuyahoga County JDC
 Lorain County JDH
 Indian River JCF
 Wood County JDC
 Franklin County JDC

JUVENILE FACILITIES

Impact

To understand our impact on our residents, we survey them at every creative writing workshop.

These surveys give us quantitative and qualitative data so we can provide our residents with a high-quality program experience.

Our Creative Writing Workshop occurs in spring and fall seasons for 12-16 weeks. Each session runs for 60-90 minutes either in-person or remotely via Zoom or Teams and consists of 10-15 residents, 5-7 student volunteers, and 1 teaching artist. Then, we publish, showcase, and distribute chapbooks filled with our residents' creative writing inside juvenile facilities, on campuses, and throughout the local communities to raise awareness about the juvenile justice system.

Visit writersnresidence.org to learn more!

FY 2022

Average

78 residents
5 student volunteers
56 hours
\$1,680 valuation

Total

621 residents
36 student volunteers
449 hours
\$2,242 valuation
8 cohorts

Year to Date

Average

34 residents
7 student volunteers
82 hours
\$2,148 valuation
5 cohorts

Total

1,403 residents
195 student volunteers
2,356 hours
\$63,776 valuation
12 cohorts

For Living We Were Born

Circleville JCF Cohort

Dear reader,

We were really amazed at just how much the youth opened up to us, especially in a short amount of time together. We would talk about the dreams we had not only for ourselves but for our children and families too, and the communities filled with people and places that helped create who we are today. Everyone was motivated to contribute and support each other throughout the program.

For example, one of the creative writing workshops that sticks out to us the most occurred in week 4 when we discussed our parents and we realized that while they may have raised us, we don't have to be the same as them. Simple as it may sound, some of us had never confronted this idea directly until then. Moments like these were responsible for the great poetry that came out of the juvenile facility this spring because the youth who were there really worked for it.

The residents' high-level of perseverance, their innate ability to continue living despite everything in front of them and behind them, is an attitude that we saw reflected in a lot of the residents and in the poem "Life is Fine" by Langston Hughes: "I could've died for love—/But for livin' I was born," which inspired this chapbook's title. Despite whatever hardships they had faced, the youth had dreams and hopes for something out of their lives; they all refused to die because for living they were born, and they are going to make something out of that life they were given. Otherwise, they wouldn't have come to our sessions, and they wouldn't have written the poetry and prose that they did.

M4 Circleville JCF Cohort



Untitled

AC

I am a very handsome man.

Fun

Intelligent

Funny

Short

Where you are doesn't tomorrow.

I like a lot of food.

Do I want to be here?

Be your truest self, no one else.

Just let your heart take you.

Hyper, Handsome, Respectful

JS

Life is hard never give up

Eating food everyday gets you healthy

Brotherly love is a strong bond

Follow your dreams till the end

Can you overcome the struggle?

Untitled

AA

I am tall, skinny, intelligent, helpful, caring and loving

I'm lost then I'm found

Love is like a car ride, are you going to go on a road trip?

Life is a roller coaster

Some things are better left unsaid

Watch me

Untitled

TL

I am a very handsome man

I am a very smart man

I am a happy person, sometimes

I am a responsible person, always

I am a respectful person, always

I am a funny person, creatively

I am a creative man, mind wise

Do I like to educate others?

I use my humor to fit in.

Life

JM

Life!

Life is what you make it

Food!

Eat healthy and stay disciplined

Love!

I won't let someone hurt me

Advice!

Don't overstress what you can't control

Questions:

Why is it harder to be honest?

Untitled

JH

I am funny, handsome, and smart. Short, kind, responsible.

I am not weak

I strive to become a better me

I protect myself from getting hurt

When I fail, I use it as motivation

Untitled

ER

Life is a mess

Eat big, get big

Cold heart, warm body

The strong is not physical, but is mentally prepared

Love is a beautiful lie, death and despair is a painful truth

I Am a Good Person overall

EK

Life

I will never sell a dream

Food

I will eat a lot of food

Love

I won't trust no one who's fake

Advice

Always take your shot at life

Questions

Are you leaving or are you riding?

Untitled

AK

I am funny, hyper, dumb, chunky, respectful and fun.

Life is full of many mistakes

Always be yourself, not someone else

Life is like a puzzle book

Loyalty is the key to everything

We want food, please and thanks

My Neighborhood Life

AC

I am from listening to music to cope with pain

And barbeques for fun and games

Where hot dogs are cooked and made in a park on a beautiful day

I am from going to a Bengals game on a Sunday night to hoping nothing

bad has happened when you're here and seeing siren lights.

I am from neighborhoods, but you can be and accomplish anything you want.

Untitled

JS

You may see me cry but it's of happiness

Untitled

JB

Hyper, funny, smart, kind, respectful and responsible

Life

Your life is full of mistakes

Food

Eating healthy is a good habit

Love

If I open up, don't close me

Advice

Never try to be someone else

Questions

Who do you wanna be in ten years?

Untitled

JS

I am from where you see crimes getting made.

I am from the smell from the drugs in the air.

I am from the sound of cars driving by and gunshots.

Growing Star

AA

I am from a quiet neighborhood where it smelled like fresh cut grass
and you can hear and see brand new corvettes.

I am from a nice house surrounded by nice homes of all sizes

I am from where you talk with your friends and family and play call
of duty

I am headed to an even bigger house where I can work out, meditate,
sleep, and pray with a big family helping the future be better than me.

Lifestyle

AK

I am from where you see the streetlights on and don't care

I am from where you see tweaked walking around where you never
know what they're up to

I am from where you smell drugs and garbage

I am from where you hear loud cars and police chasing people that
were fighting

I am from Kings highway

Who I Am?

JB

I am from riding bmx and skateboards til it was dark.

I am from the smell and sound of flowing water and loud traffic.

I am from the sound of ambulances and police sirens all day from overdoses
and accidents.

I am from the Hocking Hills and all the tourist locations.

Untitled

JM

I am from where my dogs play in the backyard while I cut the grass, look-
ing over to see my daughter putting sand in her mouth from her sand pit.

I am from where taking care of my daughter is all I long for.

I am from where making good memories and eating ice cream with my
daughter.

Untitled

JS

Not to grow up so fast

Not to be a follower, be a leader

I Am What I Am

JH

I am from poverty, where you don't really know who to trust.
I am from a broken home, where all you can smell is drugs and see needles.
I am from a place where you hear gunshots, police sirens, and dogs.
I am from a place that doesn't define me.
I am from a place with no parents and I manage to get a meal.
I am from where I am.

Untitled

AK

How to get through life without using violence or illegal ways they did,
How to not quit and keep trying,
I wish she taught me how to take care of myself before everybody else,
I wish he taught me how to be everything

Hey Chubs,

It's okay to go through struggles but if you keep trying, you'll make it.
Just keep helping your family and try to make it out of brokism.

Untitled

AC

How to cook, drive, love, pursue my dreams,
how to lose, handle situations,
how to be better as a person,
how to raise a kid.

Untitled

JH

Hey,

I thought that you could maybe teach me how to be resilient, strong. How to love.

I thought that you could maybe teach me how to not give up when things get hard. I thought that you could teach me that it's okay to allow yourself to fail to pick yourself back up.

I thought you could maybe teach me not to have so much hate in your heart. I thought that maybe you can teach me it's not okay to be neglected.

I thought that maybe you could teach me to not allow depression to be your best friend. I thought that maybe you could teach me how to strive to be a better person each day and learn from your mistakes.

Untitled

AC

Hey, I thought that maybe you can teach me how to be kind and enjoy my childhood. To not be in the streets and to not have me in an environment where I don't feel safe to play on the porch.

Hey, I thought that maybe you could teach me how to be a man and how to be the perfect father figure for my kids to come and how not to be in and out of a child's life. Having them wonder when they're going to see their parents again.

Untitled

TL

Hey, I thought that you can maybe teach me how to be a kid and not have to rely on a gun to keep me safe because of the decisions I made beforehand. Maybe teach me how to be a successful employee/businessman so I wouldn't have to sell drugs to be my main source of income. As well as teach me to be a better leader. So, I could've taught my friends that went to an early grave to choose a different path instead of the one which let them 6 feet under.

Untitled

JB

You may see me cry
But the tears will be of happiness
You may see me sigh
But that will be of relief
You may see me exhausted
But that's because I'm trying
You may see me reaching out
But that's because I really need it
You may see me stressing
But that's because I'm being pushed
You may see me as a bad person
But that's because you don't know
You may see me struggling
But that's because life is hard

Thoughts

KC

Hey, I wish you could teach me to rely on school on sports and not the streets. I wish I was not so impulsive and more of a humble beast.

Untitled

JM

Hey, I thought maybe you could teach me that life doesn't always have to be so chaotic and exciting and that it is okay to be bored. Also, how to stop and think about your choices because some decisions I've made have had an impact in my life and if I would've stopped for a second to think about my choices and how my choices will affect me. I could've avoided a lot of pain I've caused to myself and others.

Untitled

AK

But I will not be sad
I'll put my hands up put the gun down
I'll have my toes curled and my feet straight
We'll have our struggles in life but we won't give up

Untitled

JH

You may be cry but I will never bend or fold
You may see me cry but I am not weak
You may see me cry because sometimes it's okay to cry

Untitled

JM

You may see me cry but that don't mean I'm weak
You may see the worst in me but that don't mean I'm bad
You may see as a criminal but I've overcome more than your average Joe
So, I see a warrior road to riches, here I go!

Untitled

ER

You may see me cry, you may see me falter, in this life that we live,
can't get this weight off my shoulders.

One moment we're alive, the next we are dead, when shall we realize
the beauty in our bitter end.

Life asked death, "why do people love me but hate you?"
Death said, "Because you are a beautiful lie, and I am a painful truth."

The strong is not the one who overcomes people with his strength, but
the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger.

The Prophet
Mohammad

Untitled

KC

Dear older me,
I'm proud of you for accomplishing
Being one of the more successful business-
Man in sales, man. I'm also proud of
you for buying your mom dukes the
mansion you wanted to buy her.
Dear younger me,
I'm proud of you for realizing everybody
ain't real and it's off the choices you
made changed me and got me where
I'm at today. I Love you Forever, demon!

Untitled

AK

For my people that supports me and care for me
For my family that got my back and don't give up on me
For me being the best guy I can be

Untitled

AK

My emotions were not allowed to be shown
And if they were you had to, say it was joy

Untitled

JP

The streets. . .not how they
was back when
I was out
of jail. . .These days
people shooting and
killing people 4
a name but won't
shoot or kill some-
body 4 reasonable
reason. . .Younger me. . .
thank you 4 some
of the situations
you put yourself
in if it wasn't
4 you I wouldn't be who i
Am 2 day. . .
To my future
self, I really
hope you did
what I had planned
4 you so you
can travel and find
yourself

Untitled

AC

You may see me cry
But that's better than crime
You may see me lie
But there's truth behind it

Untitled

KC

This is for my people who gave up a mind is a terrible thing to waste
This is for me

Untitled

AC

Dear Mariyon,
You're still learning, still becoming a man
And I'm sorry your life was so tragic
At a young age, but I promise it'll get
Better.

I'm also sorry you have to experience jail to open up
your eyes because if it wasn't for jail you'd probably be dead.
I'm sorry, but don't you be because I already went through
it for you.

Untitled

AC

My hands were told to be up to protect yourself
My body was told it must be elastic to pain and always get back to my
regular state
My emotions were not allowed to show so you won't seem weak but it's
okay to show your emotions and express your feelings

Untitled

AA

My hands were told to be a weapon
My body was told it must be a vest to the shot
My emotions were not allowed to show but I am just a laid back, relaxed,
chilled person

Untitled

JH

My hands were told to be used right
My body was told it must never bend or fold
My emotions were not allowed to come to light but what's in the dark
must come to light

Untitled

TL

You may see me cry but with every tear comes a laugh of joy

You may see me cry

Life

JB

My hands were told to be tools

My body was told it must be a temple

My emotions were told to be a safe, locked up and only I know the
code but my safe has been cracked, the code has been exposed

Untitled

JS

My hands were told to be used wisely

My body was told it must be itself

My emotions were not allowed to let anyone in but time to let my
loved ones in

Untitled

JH

This is for my west side people who taught me that you can't trust the
people you call your friends

That our community is not like other people's community

This is for my Westside people

This is for Shiesty and that who would slime their own family out
for money

This is for me

I had to teach myself the ins and outs of life and for nights I went
without food and water

I am better than what people think I am

Untitled

TL

This is for my people who stay strong

This is for my people who loyalty never wavered during tough times

This is for my people who lost loved ones to the community but never lost
their love in the community

This is for my people who learn to make money from a not so good hustle

This is for my people who don't judge the way others grieve for their fallen

Untitled

AC

This is for the community that made me
for all the people who passed in for their mothers persevering and staying
strong
for the beggars because they continue to prove people wrong
for me to continue to stay strong while locked up

Untitled

JB

For my people in Logan who didn't judge me and supported me
For my Muslim brother and sisters who put trust and Allah to lead us on
the right past
For my family who has been there too good and bad
For me being the best I can in life

Untitled

KC

My hands were to be steel
My body was told it must be invincible
My emotions were not around to be shown

Death Date Awaiting

JH

To Ones I Care About
Be yourself.

I love you and would do anything I could for
You Y'all could never do anything to make me
change, but I appreciate y'all even though y'all
gave up on me, but all is well, carry on.

To Ones Who don't know me
I'm trying to do right; I swear it's no one
to believe anymore for people I love, I miss
so much in so many people, but I can't be
happy 😞 Whose here? remember all great moments

To ones Who wanna kill me
Be my guest LOL
Because I'm going to do it when the times
Right anyway
Ha
Ha
You lose 😊

Thank You to my Younger Self

JH

Sometimes I get sad thinking about the things we been through, life was hard and still is, I'm sorry that I didn't know how to communicate back then, I'm sorry for not reaching out and asking for help when I needed it the most. I strive every day to become a better person and trust me it works depression is not my best friend anymore I'm leaning how to be happy now So, thank you for always being here for me through every difficult situation b/c it made me stronger 😊 thank you for not committing suicide.

Untitled

KC

You may see me cry but I will never give up at accomplishing my goals
Being the person my mom raised me to be

Acknowledgements

We want to acknowledge the following individuals for their time, energy, and resources devoted to Writers in Residence:

- Residents and Juvenile Facility Staff
- Student Volunteers and Cohort Advisors
- Staff, Teaching Artists, and Contractors
- Board of Directors, Community Partners, and Donors

It takes a team to achieve what Writers in Residence does, so thank you to everyone involved!

When you donate to Writers in Residence

Your contribution sustains our Creative Writing Workshop with teaching artists, writing materials, snacks, and chapbooks.

Your support assists our residents who are reentering into their communities with limited access to social services including housing, employment, food, health care, and education.

Your generosity educates our local communities and government officials about the juvenile justice system's traumatic effect on our youth.

**Visit writersnresidence.org to donate
or scan the code below.**



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