

X _____





FOR YOUTH
IN DETENTION, OR
IN THE COMMUNITY
WHO ARE WHAT THEY SAY, AND
BECOME WHAT THEY DREAM

...

INFORMATION

WRITERS IN RESIDENCE
FALL 2025
HIRAM COLLEGE COHORT

PRINTED IN CLEVELAND, OH
Outlandish Press

BOOK AND COVER DESIGN
Angelo Maneage
angelomanagethewebsite.com

CONTENTS

6	MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES
8	SCHOOLS AND FACILITIES
10	IMPACT
12	FOREWORD
14	LETTER FROM THE COHORT
18	ARTIFACTS
76	WRITERS IN RESIDENCE IS...
78	REENTRY MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE
82	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MISSION

We teach creative writing to youth who are incarcerated to empower their voices and assist in their re-entry into society.

VISION

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.

RELATIONSHIP. 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. We continually welcome and accept our residents into our communities to promote 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.

8

OHIO

1 A

C

4 3

2 B



SCHOOLS AND FACILITIES



- ¹ OBERLIN COLLEGE**
- ² HIRAM COLLEGE**
- ³ JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY**
- ⁴ CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY**



- ^A LORAIN COUNTY JDH**
- ^B PORTAGE COUNTY JDC**
- ^C CUYAHOGA COUNTY JDC**

IMPACT

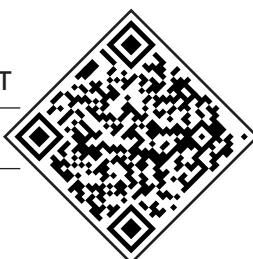
We determined the graphic elements and creative writing artifacts in advance to place this chapbook in the hands of every resident published by the final workshop.

As a result, the outputs only highlight a portion of the cohort's and the organization's impact from this program season.

The residents also complete surveys before and after every creative writing workshop, providing us with quantitative and qualitative data so we can evaluate our outcomes and ensure a high-quality program experience.

TO LEARN MORE, VIST

writersnresidence.org



Hiram College Cohort, Fall 2025

Chapbook	1
Residents (direct contact)	131
Residential Participants	48
Residents Published	33
Teaching Artists	1
Student Volunteers	11
Hours	140
Artifacts (pieces generated)	70
Workshops	9
Fiscal Valuation	\$3,910

Dear reader,

FOREWORD

At the intersection of literary arts, higher education and the juvenile justice system, you will find Writers in Residence: the only organization in Ohio that transforms the lives of justice-involved youth through creative writing and mentorship. Since 2017, we have seen those transformations at juvenile facilities throughout Ohio.

Our Creative Writing Workshops (CWWs) are weekly, in-person engagements during the spring and fall for nine to 11 weeks. We contract with local writers to teach 10 to 15 residents—most of whom are between 13 and 18 years of age - in each workshop. Our teaching artists use the work of writers who represent their color, cultures and creeds, creating prompts that explore universal human experiences.

We also engage five to 10 undergraduate volunteers from nearby schools to participate in each workshop, becoming positive peer mentors and helping us to:

- Increase residents' literacy levels and writing disposition;
- Build their self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-awareness;
- Publish their creative writing;
- Advocate for them.

Our work includes a passionate and committed staff, teaching artists and college cohorts who believe in our mission and in the promise of the young people we serve. Our board of directors is equally devoted to honoring our mission, vision and values.

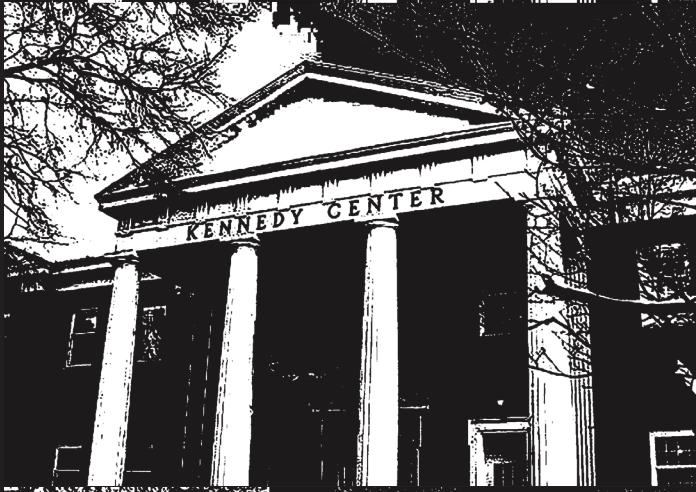
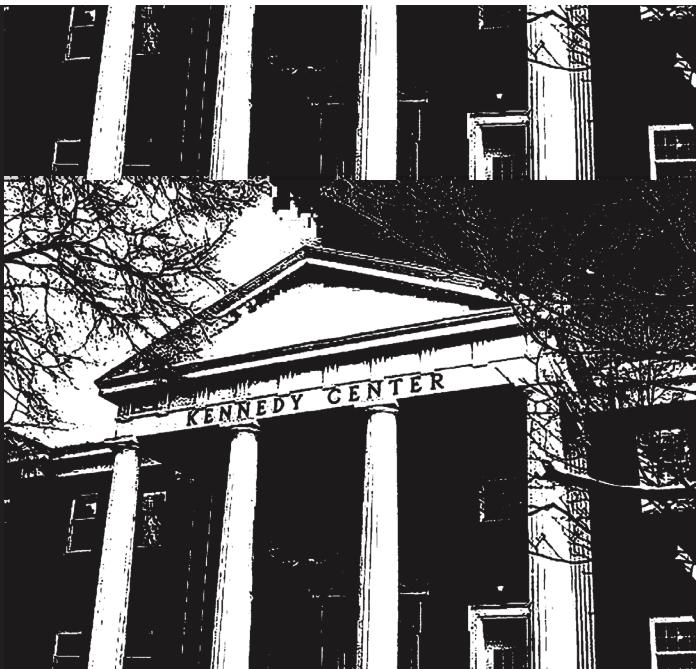
There are challenges that come with our work—for example, the brief periods of time our residents have to write original pieces; institutional delays and other interruptions to the proper editing of their work. Many residents would further revise their poetry and prose if given the chance.

We take those challenges in stride as we empower residents through creativity and community. In *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951), one-time Cleveland resident Langston Hughes wrote,

*Go home and write
A page tonight.
And let that page come out of you—
Then, it will be true.*

Thank you for reading these truths from our Writers in Residence.

LORI ASHYK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



LETTER FROM THE COHORT

Dear reader,

Thank you for your support! We really appreciate it, but our residents admire you even more!

The residents work hard at their craft, and we are proud to bring their work to you. We admire that the residents are able to come up with such exciting work. Some pieces are the pinnacle of comedy, while others are full of raw emotion. But no matter the tone, each artifact is creative and incredible.

Working with the residents is so enjoyable because they make us laugh. We shed our nerves at the door and talk with them like old friends. Sometimes new volunteers may get slightly apprehensive at the idea of going to a JDC, but that apprehensiveness always dissipates as soon as they meet the residents. So many times we have gone into the JDC feeling down or tired from the day, but by the end, we leave feeling so much better. Just being able to talk to them brightens our day and we are always glad for our time together. Time is a common theme in the residents' work. As they share their time with us, they write about their pasts, their presents, and their futures. From their writing, we know they are so much more than their current situation.

To our residents, thank you for always being down to smile, laugh, and engage with us. We appreciate that even on rough days, you are willing to come out of your shells to speak and produce writing or other artifacts with us. We are so glad that you desire to be heard and hope that you continue to want to express yourselves. **We know that you are so much more than just a number.**

We'd like to thank Sadie Owens, our teaching artist, for all of the energy she brings to each session. We'd also like to thank Spencer Dolezal, Courtney Mauck, and Mary Quade for all the support they provide for us.

**“FROM THEIR WRITING,
WE KNOW THEY ARE SO
MUCH MORE THAN THEIR
CURRENT SITUATION.”**

...



Our workshops are more enjoyable with the three of you to help us along. We would also like to thank the staff at the juvenile facility. Your patience and kindness is such a big help during the workshops!

At the end of the day, dear reader, we hope that you remember we are all human.

In the words of a resident writer, "give people time."

We thank you all from the bottom of our hearts,

THE HIRAM COLLEGE COHORT



+EKPHRASIS

(Spring 2025)

S U M M A R Y

This creative writing workshop combined literary arts and visual arts through a poetic form called ekphrasis, which Calil “Just C.O.S.” Cage and Leah B demonstrate in their poems “Negro” and “Negra.” Cleveland-based artists and art from the Cleveland Museum of Art inspired the residents to produce ekphrastic poems.

P R O M P T

Write a poem or a story about your self-portrait. Include specific, concrete details that expand the visual narrative.

OR

Write a poem or story about any artwork from the Cleveland Museum of Art. Include specific, concrete details that expand the visual narrative.



The lady is very African, and she enjoys taking photos. I think she is a photographer? She enjoys taking pictures of herself.

I have always felt like I was being watched or judged.

Some days I feel as if someone is watching trying to tell me who I am but not to me.

Hatred,
I see it in her eyes,
every time I pass her,
I can only feel despised
But when she takes my picture,
I sit here in my mind,
and wonder how such hatred
could come from those cold eyes
hatred.

Why does she judge me?
I see it in her face.
Maybe she was judged,
but maybe for her race.
Judging isn't right.
It's time we change our pace.
The pace of how we judge things
will be our end of fate.

THE FIRST QUSTIN

ANONYMOUS

On The first pic i see a man Drowning i see Boats i see
peopol Rocks animals sun set Boring collarfull so wut it
means to me is like someone That Got To finally Get to
know someone Be that Guy to know The year for the first
time.

THE INCISIVE WAYS

ANONYMOUS

You ever go outside and
look at the rain? I just can't
understand Amy Sherald's picture
because it is hard to explain.

Back in the day a picture
like this would be in all black
like ink. Is anybody wondering why
she is wearing a shirt that's
all pink?

IN A FIELD THAT I FOUND DIEING 6

in a field that i found dieing, butterflies had left me
crying, left me with a broken dream i guess this
lifes not what it seems, the rodes burned
meant more to me than what we now will
ever be.

DON'T WHINE OVER SOMETHING YOU STARTED. 9

“Don’t cry over the milk you spilled.”

+LETTER WRITING

(Spring 2025)

S U M M A R Y

This creative writing workshop gave the residents a chance to write letters to friends, family members, or (non) fictional persons inspired by Jy'Aire Smith-Pennick's letter "Dear Ira: I Want You to Know You Did Not Die in Vain," which was published in the Marshall Project. The Marshall Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization that seeks to create and sustain a sense of national urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system.

P R O M P T

Write a letter to any of these recipients: Friend, Family Member, Real Person, Fake Person, or Yourself.

The contents of the letter are for you to decide. You can re-remember a story. You can ask for advice. You can seek forgiveness. You can tell someone that you miss them.

24

WRITERS IN RESIDENCE
FALL 2025
HIRAM COLLEGE COHORT



King von how are you doing i wish i could see you again and just know Im in jail and i should be out soon and if i am not out of jail soon and just know keep thuging it out up there

Hey little sister, I know I've been away from the house, but it's only a learning experience, and I'm only learning now. Don't follow my actions and get in trouble like I did, and it's not worth getting into dumb stuff. Stay in school and don't get suspended or expelled. I can only say so much, and it's just up to you to take it to heart. I know I have no room to talk because I haven't listened to my advice, but only take this as learning from someone who has been through these consequences. I know our life wasn't perfect, but it gives no reason to act the way I do. Just please give stepdad and mom some slack. They already had enough crap from me, and I won't be at home most of your time growing up. I turn 18 in 3 years, and I will always love you no matter where I am, no matter how annoyed or mad I get at you.

Your big brother

THE WAY OF LOVE? IS THIS HOW IT GOES?

7

I met the love of my life, or at least I thought he was the love of my life. Turns out he's a nasty person. You know I miss him so much though. I can't write to him even if I on send it. I let people walk all over me. Then I'm the one who ends up hurt because I care way too much. I hear what people say, and I watch what they do. They try to control me, but when I give them freedom they go and do the same thing. They get made at me for so hypocritical. I'm not ready to get hurt again. I want love. I crave love and the loving touch from someone who's not my family. Someone that will understand me better than my own family. It's hard giving my heart away like I gave him.

+ GHAZAL

(Spring 2025)

S U M M A R Y

This creative writing workshop allowed the residents to explore a form of poetry called ghazal (pronounced “guzzle”) and the influence that women have on their lives through Kisha Nicole Foster’s poem “ghazal for black women.”

P R O M P T

Write to a specific woman who has/ had a positive impact on your life. Start with: “You are there when I...”

Format your poem into (5) or more couplets. The last word in the second line of the couplet should be repeated.

End your poem with: “I, [your name], am...”

28

WRITERS IN RESIDENCE
FALL 2025
HIRAM COLLEGE COHORT



You are there when I fall, away just a phone call, I
have missed you dearly, without you there's no one near to me.

You are there when I cry. I really don't know why, I
can't be without you, for when I am I'm lost, in a sea
unbreached with moss, a fallen log in an ocean, going through
the motion.

You are there when I'm lonely, not in person but slightly
homely, I miss you like as though you're my blood family, to me
you are and the last of them left, I'm alone but not
really. When I'm here you're gone as if theft, I
am thinking of you because I miss your presence. I really
really do.

You are there when I'm at my lowest of low. You tell
me you're there if I need a place to go, a glass
wall has trapped us that cannot be broken. I
feel like a left Chuck-E-Cheese token.

You are there as I light, like a fire in a
dark, like you're all alone on a big wooden
Ark, but I am here with you, stuck on the
big wooden ark too.

You are there when I am down,
up, sad, happy, depressed.

You're happiest when you
are helping people.

You're always there for me
no matter what happens.

You always are better
when you are thriving.

**BE THANKFUL FOR
THE LITTLE THINGS**ANONYMOUS

You are there wen i need you and wen i need to talk to you to
my mother and to sea shell lady thx for the sea shell to S Thx
for teaching

You are there for me
when I feel alone.

No matter the time of day
when you're there I don't feel alone.

I can call you on the phone
or see you during the day, so I'm not alone.

You are forever a part of my soul,
so I know I'm never alone.

And, as I grow with you by my side
I'll know I'll never be alone.

I am used to being by myself.
Now I know I'll always have you and never be alone.

You are there when I don't want to be alive,
with you I'm always safe.
I let my guard down for you,
take my feelings but they are safe.
You never made me feel alone,
let's keep our friendship safe.

Broken hearts
don't heal, but
you can peel
away the pain
and somewhat
take it away!

+SIX-WORD MEMOIRS

S U M M A R Y

Typically, this is the resident's first session, introducing them to our creative writing workshops. They explored who they are, who they were, and who they want to become through six-word memoirs.

P R O M P T

Write (1) six-word memoir from each of these categories:

- 1.** I am / I'm...
- 2.** Life
- 3.** Love
- 4.** Food
- 5.** Advice
- 6.** Questions
- 7.** I will be / I'll be...



I am a 17 year old kid,
I am an inmate in PCJDC,
I am not a criminal,
I am misguided,
I am misunderstood,
I am misheard,
I am accused,
I am a loverboy,
I am a boyfriend,
I am a brother,
I am not alone,
I am 17 and I am my own person.
I am born to love my beautiful girl.
My love will see this. I owe you the world.

My name's R. I've been really misguided my whole life. I've made a lot, and I mean a lot, of mistakes, but I know it doesn't make me who I am. I will not make the same mistakes twice no matter how many times people say, "oh, you'll end up in here again." I've wanted to change my life around for many years. BTW only 15, but I will not keep letting the people I love down with my negative actions. My worth is so much more than getting drunk/high every day, wasting my life. I promise I will change. I'm getting the help I've needed. I'm here for six months and not that upset because I'm getting help. Thank you N for everything you have ever said and done for me. I don't know where I would be without you. I love you, beautiful, forever and always. I truly believe everything happens for a reason.

I am a breadwinner
get off yo but and get sum money
Love gets yo hurt Dont trust none
I love fries on bro and Dutch milk
get rich or Die trying
why you so pretty

I will be the goat

Be a kid while you can be cus if you act like you are an adult,
you will grow up too fast and end up in jail like me just cus I
was doing grown things.
Don't be dumb young, be smart.

MAKE AN IMPACT EACH & EVERY DAY.

14

You only live once so make life worth it.
love people, make people laugh, be there for people, and let
people know that they're worth it,
Give people time, let people smile you'll never know what
someones going through
live your life in such a way that when you Die make it like
when you were born you cried as the world rejoiced and the
world will cry as you rejoice.

LIFE IS CHALLENGING

15

I am addicted, I will reform.
Life gives you lemons, you squeeze them.
Love the people around you.
Try to eat healthy.
Do what makes you happy.
Question the way of life.
I will be free.
I will be better.

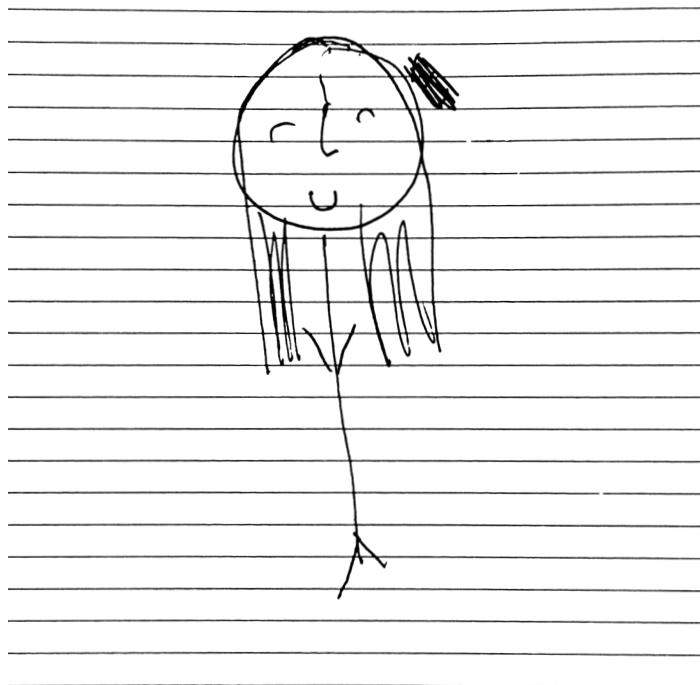
I love football.
I love my family.
I love myself.
I love people around me.
I love food.
I love my life.
I love the good outcome of life.

Life can be hard, but it's about how
you handle life. People say life can make
a man strong and a woman a strong
woman, but when you leave the things
in the past, in the past, and let life
move forward.

MY LIFE

ANONYMOUS

I am good at baseball.
I am cool ish.
I'm kind.
Life sucks because I'm in jail.
Life is good on the outs.
Life is good with your family.
My fav food is spaghetti.
Food is the best thing ever.
My advice is behave and don't come to jail.



20 UNTITLED

OPEN MIND WITH AN ANGEL

22

I'm locked up but my souls free, I miss my mom shes the
only star I see, in the dark ill shine bright, I wont let the hard
times dim my light, I'll be me for the rest of life.

UNTITLED

22

God makes me grateful, the Judge think im unstable,
tryna beat the system, this shii diffrent,

1. I was broken but now I'm fixed!
2. I went through things but survived it.
3. I lost my mom and want her back.
4. I used to fight to earn respect.
5. If you want better, then walk by faith
6. because God knows best and that's his way!

Like a candle wick that's been burning all day, I'm almost burnt out.

UNTITLED

29

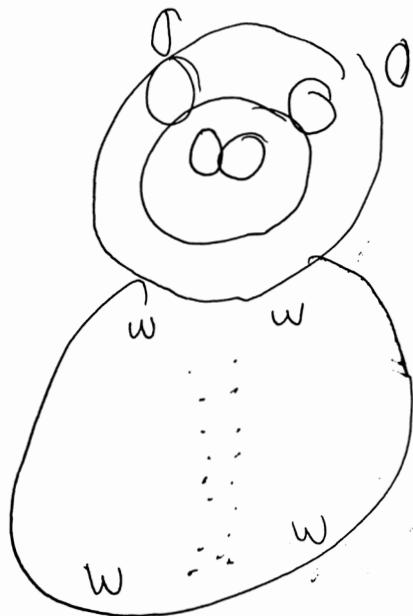
My man is sex!
My man is strong!
My man is caring!
My man gets me!
I love my man cause he gets me
my man fits me
I love my man bc he matches my energy
I love my man bc he is loving.

UNTITLED

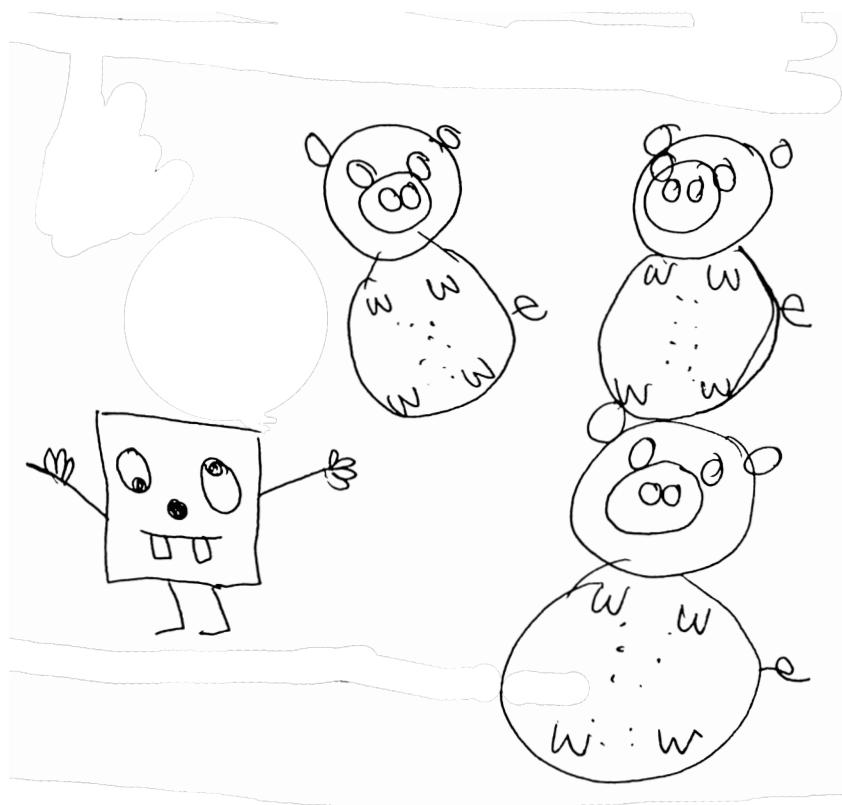
21

Just like a shark just keep moving





21 UNTITLED



21 UNTITLED

+AFFIRMATIONS

S U M M A R Y

This creative writing workshop reminded the residents to love themselves and affirm the parts that make them who they are through Markus Amaker's poem "Give Yourself Some Flowers."

P R O M P T

Imagine you're looking at yourself in the mirror. Write (10) affirmations to yourself, about yourself, for yourself.

Make them positive, present, and personal statements. Use traits, attributes, and qualities you love about yourself.

Start with: "Where I am isn't who I am..."

Then repeat every sentence with: "I am..."

End with: "I am capable of [fill in the blank]."



Where I am isn't who I am in life.
I am capable of change.
I am okay.
I am enough.
I am of the world.
I am an addict.
I am a human still.
I exist on my own.
I am capable of living a happy life.

CHANGED LIFE

ANONYMOUS

Where I am isn't who I am today. I am sad/mad because of why I'm in here. I am capable of leaving the JDC. I am capable of changing my ways.

When you get out of jail make sure it stays in the past.

**SELF LOVE AND
LOVE OTHERS**

ANONYMOUS

i am cool
i am smart
i am nice
i am in jail But
S is here
and she is the
Best for inspiration

Where I am isn't who I am in the past because what happened in the past doesn't matter to who I am today.

- 1 I am kind
- 2 I am capable of being who I am today.
- 3 I am friendly
- 4 I am what I want to be.

Where I am isn't who I am.
I am capable of change.
I am capable of love and giving love.
I am not where I want to be.
I am who I am because of
all the [REDACTED] up [REDACTED] in my life/people
and I will not continue to keep messing
up my life. I will break the cycle of
addiction in my family.

I am capable of being a better person.

PS Thank you to my beautiful girlfriend
for sticking by my side and being my motivation
to do better at straightening my life around.
I love you forever and always, beautiful.

Where I am isn't who I am.
I am not a criminal.
I am a misguided individual.
I am a child of an addict.
I am the boyfriend of a beautiful girl.
I am a brother to a friend.
I am a student to a teacher.
I am a product of a failed marriage.
I am an addict.
I am not a failure.
I am my own person.
I am in control of my story.
I am going to be a father.
I am going to be who I want to be.
I am capable of achieving my dreams.

I will marry my woman.
I will break my curse.
And if I can, we all can.

You're worth it. Every moment with you is perfect. I couldn't imagine living in a world without you in it. Every day when you're out and about, good or bad, you're worth it. You should always remember how worth it you are, and when you're down and out and feel like giving up or giving in, don't, because you're worth it. So, please, no matter what comes, always remember that you're worth it. You're worth it.

FAKE FRIENDS

19

Like a facade, everyone around me is fake.
They take and take but never give.
Diminishing the will to live,
but I must see past it
or else I won't last.
Remove yourself from the fakeness.
Know that there are people that will help, however
you take this.

PATTY STRONG

22

Everything made to break you can only shake you if you
take it, Stay strong put your faith in your Savior, and let it
make you. ThisTooShallPass

Where i am isnt who iam ima Black Handsome God
Im a breadwinning female snatcher
im a Real Deal Demon
im a future millionare
im a Dawg off the leash
im a Dreadlock King
im a undercover NFL Prospect
im a threat
im a smoove criminal
ian Done yet
im a female magnet

+ADULTHOOD

S U M M A R Y

This creative writing workshop asked the residents to reflect on the moment when they were becoming an adult through Stephanie Ginese's prose poem "32nd Street," which also remembers the good times and grieves those who passed away.

P R O M P T

Write about the moment when you realized that you were becoming an adult.

Include specific, concrete details that appeal to the senses.

OR

Write about your summer days, in your community, with your friends, being young and free.

Include specific, concrete details that appeal to the senses.



In the summer time me and the guys was posted
and all the top members was free
anybody came thru the Jets they got roasted
Its hot outside so you know I stay with miami heat
I stay wit bread but if you play I might leave you toasted
I wish the Police would just let me be

LOOKING BACKANONYMOUS

I'm becoming an adult. I would look back on my younger self and be disappointed, but there is still a future ahead of me.

Whenever my mom put me up for adoption and my auntie came in my life, but I had to take care of my little siblings for almost two years when I was only eight years old. And, when my dad didn't want to make food, I had to make food for him because he would come home drunk and high. And, whenever my mom would lie to me about my lifestyle, and I had to tell her I didn't want to talk till she got better with her addiction.

The Days That were loud and chillin with The boys are now
just weird
my phone is so Quiet i Dont have alot of people to talk to
learning that having myself is better than the people i had

I realized I was becoming an adult around the age of 16 when I had to be more self dependent. I've always had to take care of myself since a young age, but it hit harder when I became extremely dependent on drugs and self harm. Originally I had family to help, but things fell apart over time, and we grew distant. I had to take care of myself, cook, make my own money, and protect myself since 13. I've went through times most adults haven't even encountered yet and had to find a way to cope and that coping mechanism landed me here.

I miss when I didn't pick up and
I miss when I was a normal person.

“THROUGH IT ALL”

14

Have you ever felt alone or despair? I'll be there.
Have you ever felt abandoned in the middle of nowhere? I'll
find you.
Have you ever felt like you could disappear? I won't let you.
Like you would fall? I'll catch you.
Push that lonely feeling away.
There's always a reason to believe you'll be ok
cause when you don't feel strong enough to stand,
you can reach out your hand,
and, oh, how I'll come running to be there for you each and
every day.
Always know I got you.

LONGLIVEMYMOMMY

22

2018 walkin down the stairs, Christmas presents, and the
smell of cookies in the air, 2025 whos Gonna be the Guy
with the Beard, and all the deer, My brother will drive it
feels like he was just 5

GET A JOB

ANONYMOUS

get a job
get a job
get a job
parents got tired
told me to
get a job

BEEN GROWN

27

Since I came out the womb I been grown
been grown
been grown
been grown
been grown
been grown

HOW TO KNOW YOU ARE BECOMING AN ADULT

30

The way that I knew I was becoming an adult. One way is when I started to have more things to do/more jobs. Another way is when I started growing a mustache. One more way is when the school work became harder, but I would always do it because it was easy for me. Last when I had to think about jobs/career.

LAST NIGHT

31

It was a stewy night with actions not so bright. I took a car going on a joyride but not too far, simple decisions can turn to a night at detention, cops in the rearview, it's a clear view that we're going down. It's just us few. It was so stupid just for a few drinks. Now I got a felony, can't blame it on the melanin.

+INSPIRATION

S U M M A R Y

This creative writing workshop asked the residents to consider what inspires them and who they inspire through Damien McClendon's poem "What moves me," which includes rich images, metaphors and similes, and an anaphora.

P R O M P T

Start writing with: "What moves me? It must be..."

Repeat the phrase "it must be" 6x to introduce a new idea. This writing technique is called an anaphora.

OR

Write about being an inspiration to someone in your life. Explain why and how you will inspire them.



IT MUST BE

8

It must be an impulsive act.
It must be a learning experience.
It must be an act of god.
It must be an act of influence.
It must be me who chooses my future.
It must be me who leads the way.
It must be an act of good will for myself and others.

WHO I WILL INSPIRE

8

Who I will inspire will be myself.
Who I will inspire will be my brother.
Who I will inspire will be my future wife.
Who I will inspire will be my friends.
Who I will inspire will be those around me.
Who I will inspire should be all who cross my path.

“CHANGE”

14

It takes a minute to change a moment, a moment to change a life, a life to make an impact, an impact to change the world, so let's be world changers. Let's take a minute to make the moment. Let's rule the moment that makes an impact and let's make an impact and change the world for good.

“MY WAY OF LIFE”

14

It must be the way my family loves me. It must be the way a goodbye feels. It must be the way memories are made, and it must be my life, which is still worth living. Each and every day, no matter what we've been through, hello or goodbye, and lots and lots of memories, you live each day of life. You see the way that things change every day, so I'm blessed to have a family, plenty of sad goodbyes, and most of all and all lots and lots of memories because they make life worth living.

What moves me? It must be changing the outcome of my life.
It must be staying out of jail.
It must be staying sober.
It must be helping others.
It must be being a better person.
It must be breaking the cycle.
It must be going to college.
It must be guiding others.
It must be volunteering.
It must be...
It must be...

What moves me? It's gotta be my big bro.
He's always been there for me, highest and low.
He's been right by my side, even when life was
going slow. It's gotta be the blood brother
connection riding through the city.
So much dumb
██████████ we did. Being alive is a blessing.
S taking over without a question.

What moves me?
It must be the trees outside that shake
between my eyes. It must be the stars
that shoot like they never had before.
It must be the way the water flows
through my body.

What moves me? It must be pushing to be better.
It must be the people in my life. It must
be the motorcycle I want. It must be life.
It must be knowing life is hard. It must
be trying something new. It must be gratitude.
It must be family. It has to be destiny.

Waking up knowing I'm one day closer to getting out. It must be, it must be. Going back to school knowing it gets good again. It must be, it must be. It must be that I didn't care and realizing that I do care. It must be, it must be. Waking up cold as hell knowing it won't get warm for a while. It must be. Wanna go home, take a nap because I can't sleep. It must be, it must be. Knowing I'm getting closer to God when it's bad, is also bad. It must be, it must be. Getting through a bad chapter makes a better person, but it sucks going through it. It must be.

What moves me? It must be the blood that runs through me. It must be the way I live. It must be the stuff I do. It must be the way my grandma taught me. It must be the way my family is built. It must be the whoopens I used to get. It must be the cheese you see when I post on the net. It must be.

What moves me?

it must be the way my pockets get fat when I stuff racks in
my jeans
it must be the way yo girl look at me right after she just left you
it must be the money hitting my cashapp
it must be all the fire headys beatin my Jack Down
it must be the smile on my momma face and hearing her laugh
it must be the purple tag hangin off my jeans or the Alexander
mqueens on my feet
it must be seeing all my bruddas win
it must be spankin the opposition.
it must be 2100 Dollars in my pocket

it must be the way my family shows up, it must be the way my
home lights up, it must be the way my man stays up, it must be
the way my money be up

It must be the way He calls
on my name, like I was destined,
like I was chosen to walk this path.
It must be the way He guides me
and talks to me,
listens to me. It must be the way
He lives through me with the holy spirit.

It must be the way He loves me, the way
He sees me more or better than any other.
It must be the way He lifts me up when
I'm down. Maybe even the way He lifts
me up and holds me down...

It must be me.
It must be what I do.
I end up in jail.
It must be me.
I try my best to not do me,
but it just must be me.

I LOVE MY BOO!!

27

It must be my BD bc I love him sm
it must be my man bc I love everything
abouthing about him. It must be money bc I
can't be broke

MY MAN, MY MAN, MY MAN!

29

Im an inspiration to my man because I inspire him to be
good & Be loyal.

He also inspires me because I love him a lot & I will stay out
of trouble to be with him.

WRITERS IN RESIDENCE IS...

...where **encouragement** and **empowerment** meet.

That was the case for these juvenile facility staff members who wrote their youth letters.

Dear Boys,

I understand it's hard to be stuck, to have your mind withhold motivation. It's okay to be angry, to be sad, or to not know. Every path in life has a stop sign, you must choose when to move ahead and choose which way to go in life. The most important things to remember in life are you can never go backwards and you always have someone to help you along the way. You're not alone, believe in more than what you're going through now. Right now isn't forever and forever isn't far away. Your ways are your choices, and your choices determine your life. I hope and believe the light stays on you and your blessings are fulfilled.

Sincerely,

T

Dear Girls,

Growing up on the east side of Cleveland, I tended to want to hang with my cousins all the time until the day they kicked my Nanna house in on Barlette. I wasn't there, however my cousin was. My mother was a strict mother of four. I never understood why until I encountered situations only God could pull me out of. Seeing the pain and embarrassment my family went through broke my heart. My Nanna and Papa worked hard to become one of the first African American homeowners on that street. Watching my Nanna cry day in and night wondering what she did wrong when it came to my cousin. While my mother cracked down extra hard on me.

Many times in life, we as adults forget we was kids as well. Even though I wasn't promiscuous, I was disobedient in many ways that disappointed not just my parents, God as well. Every day we breathe, God grants us with new mercy and grace. Who am I not to see growth in you ladies just because you're in here. I see passion. Passion shows that once the door close, and it's quiet, the strength you ladies use gives you all passion again. I see growth. When your back is against the wall, at times you guys fight. We all have made mistakes. We all have fell short. However, we don't have to fail at life. Continue to go hard for your dreams. Every second, minute, hour and day is another chance to conquer your dream and goals. Life is you and you're in control of your life.

**Love,
Ms. C**

REENTRY MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE

At Writers in Residence, we intend to support our youth from the moment we meet them. As they explore their voice in our CWWs, we also assist them while they prepare for their reentry process.

We launched the Reentry Mentorship Initiative (RMI) in 2022 to help our residents navigate the intricacies of reentry while building their self-esteem and helping them build valuable life skills. Each week during the CWWs, we inform our youth about the RMI, emphasizing that they have the opportunity to engage in a program that meets their needs. For residents who express an interest, we coordinate with the juvenile facilities to contact their guardians and then connect them with a mentor or group.

The RMI has evolved to include three different programs to fit the needs of our mentees. We offer Long-Term Individual Mentoring for young people who know they will be approaching reentry from the juvenile justice system, Short-Term Facility Based Mentoring for those who are likely to be sent to the adult justice system for an extended period of time, and Group Mentoring focused on life skills development for select facilities.

LONG-TERM INDIVIDUAL MENTORING

Long-Term Individual Mentoring has the youth and their guardians create target goals to pursue over 12-18 months, while working alongside an adult mentor from in or around their home community. **We have helped residents with school work, acquiring GEDs, practicing driving, applying for and securing jobs, continuing their exploration of writing, and persevering through the challenges of reentry.** We believe that a mentor consistently shows up for our residents, walks alongside them, and empowers them to reach goals they want to achieve, and to help them feel confident throughout their reentry process.

SHORT-TERM FACILITY BASED MENTORING

Just because we encounter someone who is facing significant time in the adult system does not mean we don't want to support them as they navigate the transition from the juvenile justice system. Short-Term Facility Based Mentoring allows a resident to be matched with a mentor who will meet with them on a regular basis to help them accomplish goals related to the rest of their time in the juvenile justice system. Our mentors encourage their mentees to complete school, maintain strong positive relationships with their peers and the staff at the facility, as well as to see a reduction in behavioral incidents.

GROUP MENTORING

Group Mentoring takes place across a ten week period, where we partner with local businesses, institutions, and agencies to provide basic introductions to life skills, as well as valuable linkages to the community, so our mentees know where they can go to find support for specific needs. We provide a laid back and welcoming environment for our mentees to learn about and practice life skills that will help them as they navigate young adulthood.

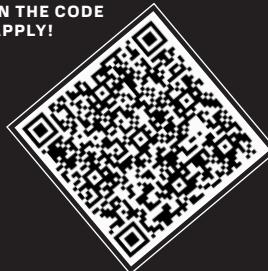
To our readers,

the stories that appear in this chapbook from our residents are powerful, and as they continue to grow and head back home, those stories don't end. We are always looking for adult volunteers who are passionate about mentoring one of our youth to thrive in their home community or to provide support to a mentoring group.

INVOLVEMENT

- o Meeting for 2-4 hours every month with a mentee.
- o Reporting on engagements and accomplishments with a mentee.
- o Cultivating a relationship with a mentee for 12-18 months.
- o Participate in facilitating group mentoring for 10 sessions in the spring or summer

SCAN THE CODE
TO APPLY!



To our **former residents**,

we want to hear from you and pair you with a mentor who will assist you with whatever services and resources you need through our RMI. We know that the reentry process is difficult and uncertain at times. Mentoring places a trusted and reliable adult in your life so you can become the best version of yourself. A mentor will listen to your perspective, encourage you to discover your voice, figure out your future path, and then work with you to find the tools to achieve your version of success.

REACH OUT TO US AT
INFO@WRITERSNRESIDENCE.ORG,
WRITERSNRESIDENCE.ORG,
OR ANY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DONORS **BOOKWORMS**

Will DiPasquale
Todd Fuqua
Nuru Kiyemba
Carole Krus
Karen Long
Lisa Nielson
Andy Costigan
Maureen Berry

WRITERS

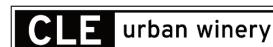
Kathleen English
Kelly McKay
Peter and Dana Short
Sue Corbin

SCHOLARS

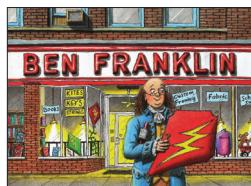
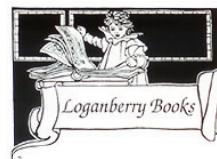
Barbara and Alan Rosskamm
The Leonard Krieger Fund

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Outlandish Press
CLE Urban Winery
Visible Voice Books
Ben Franklin and MindFair Books
Lekko Coffee
Gilmour Academy
Loganberry Books
Oberlin College's Bonner Center
Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards



GILMOUR
ACADEMY



Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards*

GRANT FUNDERS

Cuyahoga Arts and Culture
The Cleveland Foundation
Ohio Arts Council
The Char and Chuck Fowler Foundation
The George Gund Foundation
The Community Foundation of Lorain County
The Abington Foundation
The Nord Family Foundation
The Coalition for Juvenile Justice
The Reinberger Foundation
United Black Fund



