Writers in Residence

Fall 2021
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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We teach creative writing to youth who are incarcerated.

We empower our residents' voices.

We assist in their re-entry.
**OUR 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.
“One writes out of one thing only.”

— James A. Baldwin
We strive to reduce the recidivism rates of our residents, and participate in the transformation of the juvenile justice system.

one’s own experience.”
1. Capital University
2. College of Wooster
3. Heidelberg University
4. Hiram College
5. John Carroll University
6. Marietta College
7. Oberlin College
8. University of Dayton
9. Cleveland State University
10. Case Western Reserve Univ.
Circleville JCF
Montgomery County CAS
Seneca County YC
Portage Ceauga County JDC
Cuyahoga Hills JCF
Washington County JC
Medina County JDC
Cuyahoga County JDC
Lorain County JDH
Indian River JCF
Franklin County JDC
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 valuates volunteer time at $27.20/hour; we multiplied this dollar amount by the total number of service hours for every student volunteer.

This information was last updated on 11/29/21 before our creative writing workshops concluded for the fall season.

Read more about our outputs, outcomes, and impact at www.writersnresidence.org/impact
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FALL FY21 AVERAGE

- 27 residents
- 5 student volunteers
- 48.3 hours
- $1,378 fiscal valuation
- 29 artifacts
- 50 chapter books

FALL FY21 TOTAL

- 192 residents
- 20 student volunteers
- 227 hours
- $6,892 fiscal valuation
- 116 artifacts
- 50 chapter books

FALL FY20 AVERAGE

- 27 residents
- 9 student volunteers
- 74 hours
- $1,890 fiscal valuation
- 39 artifacts
- 30 chapter books

FALL FY20 TOTAL

- 109 residents
- 18 student volunteers
- 223 hours
- $5,671 fiscal valuation
- 39 artifacts
- 90 chapter books
Free me
Free me
Free me
Free me
Free me
FREE me
FREE me
FREE me
reconstruction
of the soul
Dear reader,

This chapbook marks our second program season in a single year engaging the residents of the Montgomery County Center for Adolescent Services. Unit by unit, we are facilitating a 90-minute, weekly environment for the youth to creatively express themselves as well as critically reflect on their life's journey – the past, present, and future.

We feel honored and humbled to witness each resident change and grow from the first week with six-word memoirs to the very last week with affirmations. We built connections with the youth and wrote alongside them during every session, which always included moments of laughter, learning, and longing for more time together. We are grateful for the residents allowing us to work with them to empower their voice and feel heard by their peers.

We hope that you read our residents' creative writing with an open mind because they put forth a lot of time and energy into their poetry and prose even when they didn't recognize themselves as storytellers. Hence the title of this chapbook, "Reconstruction of the Soul," each youth wrote to repair something either visible or invisible for you to also heal with them.

University of Dayton Cohort
1. I am tax free. I like fast cars
2. Choose the best route for yourself
3. I love the treasures, police don’t
4. I will be great without a doubt
5. It’s a high speed sports mode, go!!
6. I keep my circle small 100%
7. Six words six hellcats six million with me
8. Blender action blow the motor tax!
9. Dang 223’s really do go through houses
10. Brickfair tax long lived ex bro.
1. I am a cool white dude
2. I am a 14-year-old
3. I was about 13 last year
4. I was a quiet person then
5. I need to work in school
6. I used to not play chess
7. This has to be six words
8. Words six be to has this
9. I need to get out now
10. I liked to eat food today
Dooda
VJ

1. I am small but very strong
2. I am lazy but finish things
3. I am short but I got nice hops
4. I was bad but very good
5. I did fail but never quit
6. I did hoop but I stopped
1. I am a lowkey person
2. I am always hungry when I'm full
3. I am capable of anything
4. I have different vibes in situations
5. I enjoy listening to music
6. I like to workout
Six-word Memoir

MB

1. I am black, intelligent, and smart.
2. Sometimes I was failing to succeed.
3. Setbacks motivate me to go harder.
4. Greatness takes patience, practice makes perfect.
5. I play basketball on a daily basis.
6. Is tomato a fruit or vegetable?
7. I am a very smart person.
8. I’ll be winning in the future.
9. Destination doesn’t matter, journey does.
1. I like playing music and games.
2. I am confident in basketball.
3. I like driving on the highway.
4. I was playing football for the flames.
5. I like when girls act toxic.
6. I like going to my auntie’s house.
7. I like playing spades with my mom.
Two Truths and a Lie

MB

I wake up every day, brush my teeth, wash my face, eat breakfast, then call my best friend. We talk about what we get into for the day and what time they tryna link up. When we link up we go get some food, chill, and conversate for a little bit. (true)

Every day I drag race with my friends on side streets and run from the police when they try to stop us from drag racing. (lie)
Two Truths and a Lie

KR

I got tipp
The police can’t catch me
I’m gone stop cheating
Big Lung
KR

It’s big lung I’m a big boss yah ah
Big bum my clothes cost ah boss
I’m lowkey come in see sum
Untitled

VJ

Stop talking to me
You on some weird s**t
What you on
On my son
Put it on yo hood
No Bicker
MW

Outside, shots fired
If they make moves gotta talk to me
No bicker
Alone again everybody left,
So many people gone it’s nobody left
They try to talk to me but all I say
Is no bicker
Life Problems

JG

The knife cuts my throat
I lost my breathe cause the gash
I cause my own death
I can save my last breath
With a better past
Late Night, I Can’t Sleep
MB

Waking up outta dreams
Cops chasing me
Tryna focus because of my dreams
Road Runner
SB

I was on the run
Tryna make away for the green
Car hoppin can’t do it again
Again, Again

MW

As past blood sheds thin
The wind blows far from present time
We still wake again, again.
Steps to Success

MW

Set goals

Get money

Be the king, not the peasant

I will achieve my goals

I will be a CEO

Do what needs to be done

Be successful
Gotta be successful
Gotta get a job
I wish somebody told me to do right in school. Stay out of jail, follow your dreams, stay outta the way, get money the legal way, dress right. My goal is to get my own business, apartment, and when I turn 18 get my own car. I want a wife and a son that plays sports and gets good grades.
Unspoken Street Codes

VJ

Hey, you don’t have to rob to get what you want
You don’t have to kill to get a name
You don’t have to be a class clown to get some smiles
You can go to college instead of jail
You can sell clothes, not drugs
You don’t have to be black or white to get respect
You don’t have to be a savage to fit in
Keep doing your best and you are heading for success. Complete my education by maintaining motivation. Stay out the system and I ain’t tryna be the next victim. Ima do good, Ima do right. It ain’t over, I’m still in this fight.
Positive Vibes
JG

Get my master's degree
Engineering, full ride for free
I'm gonna catch a bfree
And I got the key for the Mercedes Benz
Your locks are nice one
of the real if I say I got you that’s
100. Plus, if I consider you my brother
I’ll never switch up, you don’ have to
be a crazy person. Love yourself, believe
in yourself more than what anybody
else thinks
unravelings from the soul
Dear reader,

As we became more comfortable with the program, we began to love the concept behind the program even more. When we think about this spring season, every moment with our residents was special because the residents would feel comfortable enough to share about their lives. We enjoyed watching the residents grow after each session, becoming leaders among their peers. One of the residents encouraged another youth near him to really open up by sharing his own creative writing and responding to the discussion questions. These were some of our favorite moments because we realized that this program helped the youth.

There are so many residents from very different walks of life that put effort into writing these pieces and it’s really beautiful to think about just how unique each piece really is. We ask that you please keep in mind how much courage it took for these youth to share their work and how personal some of the pieces are. It wasn’t easy for them to disclose personal aspects of their life, but we believe that this program helped them all grow and become more confident in their work.

We feel incredibly grateful to participate in this program and to engage with youth from different walks of life than us. This opportunity also really opened our eyes more by forcing us to confront some of our personal biases. We appreciated hearing stories from the youth’s perspective and know that this experience was helpful and fun to some of them. Life moves very fast, so it’s easy to forget about all the people around you who are different. Hence, the title of our chapbook, “Unravelings from the Soul” that suggests the different types of creative writing included in this chapbook because they’re all so different and created by so many different personalities.

Heidelberg University Cohort
My friend and I would always ride four-wheelers and have fun outside. We also would always work on our ATVs. Every time I was at his house, we would also go swimming.

Me and my best friend went to New York and there were lots of people. We went to stay at a place and have a party.
I went to this party and when I opened the door, I noticed her first out of everyone that was there, and all the fun/great memories came flushing back in like no time had passed

She and I went to France and saw the Eiffel tower and tried new foods and had a wonderful time Like no other
(Lie)
I like being around my little brother, he is always hungry

(Truth)
I wanted to be that kid that grew up with his mother and played at the playground
My best friend is good at talking to me, like no matter what I do she supports it and she never gives up on me

My best friend is never there for me. She says she hates me
Green Springs, Ohio

PP

I always like summer best
There’s fresh cut grass
Animals all over
Nice neighbors
The sound of rain
Neighbors playing music
Family cooking food
Walking barefoot outside in grass
Hometown

BL

I always liked summer best, spending time with friends and family
Feeling the warm air hug my body like a winter coat
Listening to the cars drive by
On the water flow down the river
Tasting the warm cheese from the pizza roll while sitting outside
of AJ's
I always like summer best because I like the warm weather
I am a mental mystery box.
PTSD settles in fast, then realization.
I was a happy person then.
My past does not define me.
We can have Halloween on Christmas.
Only you can make you happy.
I always liked summer
Best because of the
Frogs at dawn and the
Cicadas at night
It’s very peaceful and
Smells fresh you
Can hear the coyotes
At night and see the
Deer grazing during
The day you hear
The chickens clucking
And the dogs barking
You hear the trees in
The wind and smell
Fresh cut grass while you sit
Outside enjoying the
Sunlight on your skin
I am
tall
smart
funny
energetic.
I am strong, positive, friendly, brave, short, into sports, a good-listener, respectful.
I am positive every day I wake up 'cause if I'm negative, you won't get nowhere.
Brown is the Color of my Skin

AG

Put me in a pan and put the ingredients in the pan because I don’t remember what they are. I can smell it when it’s cooking but when I take it out of the oven I just want to hurry up and eat it. Once I put it in my mouth after it cools down, I get greedy and eat all of it, brownies.
You taste so good when you're juicy and crunchy.

You smell so good when you get served to me on a plate.

You taste so good when you have hot sauce and ranch on top of you when there's smoke coming out of you.

You taste good on Thanksgiving when you're smashed down with gravy on top.

You have an amazing texture in my mouth.
Fish

MM

The smell odor of the lime tasting,
Soft, warm flavored. Throw me in the
Oven like I was a fish in the water. And
Take me out and look at the masterpiece you’ve
Created: Perch Fish
Marbled Masterpiece
DZ

You fall apart in the mouths of younger kids, and you’re covered in rosemary and mushroom. You are top class and you cost a lot, more than your siblings. You have perfectly marbled skin; you give off a scent that brings everyone in a barbeque together. You are so delicate and it’s easier for older adults to eat you. You’re not too chewy and you have rosemary and mushroom glaze mix with your fat, and you glisten with that glaze pouring over you.
All Hail CHICKEN

JK

You are cooked in many different forms and styles. If fried long enough, your breading makes the most satisfying crunch when bitten into. If fried just right, you have the perfect amount of juiciness and crunchiness. You are astonishingly mouthwatering when cooked into enchiladas.

When I order you in the form of boneless wings, at bdubs, you are the perfect golden brown, if mixed with parm-garlic sauce, you taste even more amazing. Thank God there’s rice with your flavor because the mixture is like heaven in my mouth. You make tacos even better which says a lot. You are all I order when I go out to eat. I can never go wrong with ordering you.
Life
DG

Life is boring, oh no, our table, it's broken
Ant Hype Up

AG

I’m athletic and smart and people already look up to me even though they have no idea what goes on in my life. I hype myself up when I listen to music or when I get too much energy. I am going to have a great future, but it might take some time. When people tell me I can’t do something, I do it anyways!!!
You are uniquely stunning, you are filled with potential. Don’t let anything stop you. You are capable of accomplish whatever you dream. Don’t let others drag you down. Get in your zone and block out anything trying to distract you from your goal. Have faith in yourself and believe you can. Optimism and hope go a long way. Stay true to yourself.
You Can Do It

MR

You can do it. No matter how many are doubting you or saying you can't do it, you can do it. You're smart and have potential. Today's going to be a good day, things will get better. Stop being an enemy to yourself, keep your head up and always remember you can do it.
Frame

MM

Stand in your frame, screw the crowd,
Meaning, be who you want to be, and do what you want to do.
Don’t be thinking about what others want or what you think other people would do. Stand in your own frame. Screw them.
“The first function of poetry is to tell the truth, to learn how to do that, to find out what you really think”

— June Jordan
the family is a bonfire
Dear reader,

Being able to meet with the residents in person this fall was extremely motivating, and always left us full of energy. Something the twelve of us will always remember is their eagerness to hear about our lives, engage in creative discussions, and of course, put words to paper. Even through face masks and a loud HVAC system, the residents managed to make connections and to find a piece of themselves in a room of strangers from a college they knew nothing about. To say the least, we believe that with them we found a piece of ourselves too — which goes to show just how much everyone can learn from those who maybe aren’t so different from them. Face to face interactions in the facility allowed for more personal connections and more inside jokes between everyone.

Throughout our time together, we had some really fun workshops. In week 2, we listened to each other’s plans for how we would achieve our dreams. For week 3, we tricked each other with two truths and a lie. During week 4, we shared some descriptive poetry about our hometowns. It was great to hear that everyone felt like home was somewhere special, usually influenced by loved ones. As a cohort, we’re proud to say that we felt at home talking with the residents — they made it worth the trip off-campus every week. From discussing how Kool-Aid pickles are made and laughing over food that is “bussin,” there are moments that certainly made our interactions homely.

Finally, we want to thank the residents for taking part in the workshops, even when they weren’t sure they wanted to. Writing, and especially sharing can be emotionally draining. However, many residents left their thoughts in the post-workshop survey, saying they enjoyed the environment of “passion,” and “respect.” The title of this chapbook, “The Family is a Bonfire,” comes from a resident’s metaphor of family — and something that the rest of us felt sounded just right.

Hiram College Cohort
I like how goofy and hyper my brothas are.
I like how confident they are.
I really hate how my brothas act.
My best friend is able to do whatever and always wanting to do new things. We are going around the United States and Canada. Me and my best friend have never gotten into a fight because we agree on everything.
Murky water to escape. I can't breathe
Eight legs. Venomous bites
When I was nine I got lost at Chuck E. Cheese and I was very scared. When I got caught up I was nervous and shook up. I didn’t like not knowing where my people was and I couldn’t find them. I looked and seen them outside my window.
People told me to drive under a haunted tunnel. When I did, my check engine light came on.

I heard my cat scratching at my door. But I realized my cat died two weeks ago.

Samuel L. Jackson creeps me out. He always says "I got my eye on you."

I got a text message. But I was in the country and there was no service.

I was driving on the racetrack… then Dua Lipa said I was levitating… levitating away.
I Went for a Walk through the Graveyard, and Came Across My Own Gravestone

RC

You’re born with a tattoo of your death date. It was yesterday. You hear your dad call your name. He died four years ago.
I looked out the window, and the stars were gone, and when I looked out the window some more there was a weird sky outside. As I paid more attention, I saw the creatures moving outside by my back door. And they were the most hideous creatures I have ever seen. Think of a killer clown but with no eyes and eight spider legs carrying guns on its back and spitting venom out of its mouth. Then I got up through and ran into another situation!
TE’s Halloween Poem

Halloween, scary costumes, late night scary movies
Leaves flying around, scary decorations
You get so scared you run
Walking around with your
Family having fun and
Eating all the candy
And getting so full
You go to sleep
Because you’re so full
And exhausted
After the kids go
To sleep have a
Couple drinks and
Have fun. Halloween
There are so many costumes
That you can be anything
So scary that people
Scare you to
Death you
Pee your pants.
Untitled
BS

Trapped in cold brick walls
Confined in cold solitary
Waiting for open spaces/room

Old weathered pages
Knowledge is plentiful
Scarred in memory
Hills on Mill
RC

The time is now here
To make a haiku about nothing
Sorry it’s not something

No words; confusion
Different is no more here
Lips seal themselves shut

Snow covered houses
Brisk, clean smelling ice comes down now
There’s hills everywhere
Untitled
JH

Cold quiet jail cell,
My thoughts bouncing off the walls,
I am not alone.
I really like dogs
And also watching anime
I like working on bikes with my dad.
I like going on trips
With my family and
Young marines.
Sike Sike motor bike
Love Kool-Aid pickles
I’m not even gonna lie to you.
Can’t read, can’t write, Kent State?
I like Naruto
Sike, Sike motor bike
Sike Sike motor bike
Sike Sike motor bike on a kite
Sike, Sike motor bike
Haikus

JJ

I'm C.J dippa
And my raps are super slap
And your feet will tap.

My raps ain’t nothing
That is just the beginning
There is more to it

My feelings and love
That is all I rap about
It’s all that I know

Here is my new rap
This rap is called “Call Me King”
This sh** is bustin’

I will rap it, too
I will rap it tonight, man
My rap is good, too
Basketball means a lot to me. It helps me stay focused and have fun with my friends. I help my little brother get better than I was. My little brother means a lot to me. He likes to follow what I do, like playing games. He likes calling people b***hes on the game and it is funny when he ducks on his little hoop. He’s like his big brother.
Different Words for Mad

Free me out the box
I want to go home right now
Free me out the jam

Mad, irritated
I am frustrated right now
Mad, irritated
The family is a bonfire
You get the warmth for when it’s cold
Also, you gather around and watch
You also get light when it gets dark
The family is the best at what they do for me.
Like my siblings we got a very good bond.
The family is the people that I can
Go to when I have a problem.
The family is the people that
Will have my back through thick and
Thin. Even though I have my
Ups and downs I know my family
Still care for me, and at the
End of the day I know I can always
Go back to them and not be
Judged.
The family is everything
From birth to afterlife
To brothers and sisters
To aunts and uncles
Love and affection
To laughs and fun
To school and work
To report cards and
Paychecks
To dinner gatherings
To Easter egg hunts
Like I said
The family is everything
Don’t ever forget that.
The family is everything. They’re my strength. They help me out when I’m down. My family supports me if I’m right or wrong they support me – through anything. The love for my family is like the ham juice on my turkeys.
Untitled
RC

The family is where the heart is
When there's late night phone calls
Late night designated drivers

The family is when a bad day turns good
While coming home after being drunk

The family is carrying you out to your
Own car to drive you home.
1. My favorite color is bright red.
2. Used to be called little red
3. My favorite drink is pop
4. I will be 16 very soon
5. I will be tall very soon
1. My favorite color is royal blue.
2. My favorite drink is strawberry abewater.
3. I am a MLB in football.
4. I have two blue nose pitbulls.
5. I hate black cats with a passion.
6. I will be a Paleontologist someday.
7. I was a very loving kid.
8. I love my mother and brother.
9. I got stabbed when I was thirteen.
1. I am having trouble doing this
2. I can do math with fingers
3. I like cars more than life
4. I miss my girlfriend right now
5. I miss my daughter right now
6. I want my own bed now
7. I will be the best dad
8. I don’t like cornbread man
9. I want to go to work
Untitled

1. I miss my life
2. I miss my girlfriend and my family
3. I love my family, stay strong
Things I Learned from my Life

RP

1. Once a friend, now a brother
2. Broke my heart again and again
3. Miss my dog, I love her
4. Sorrow always is a painful beginning
5. Learn and live but always forgive
6. Don’t ever give up on yourself
7. Keep pushing through, pain never lasts
8. I love you mom stay strong
9. Never let yourself give up easily
Cleveland, Ohio
BS

I always like summer best
Going to the beach on a hot day
Listening to the birds chirp
The sounds of the waves crashing
The busy traffic up the hill
Walking the busy streets
The soaring buildings
The great water display
The colorful lights
The crowded streets busy with festivities
Assorted cultures about
And it’s all home
Home to me and many.
I always like winter coats
You can eat Taco Bell
Listen to rap music
You see kids with shovels
Feel of soft snow
Talk to the peoples
Drink some good drank.
I like Halloween because of my birthday. Pizza shop is dark at night, McDonalds is different colors. Taco Bell is a good food place and it’s on a main road. Yuca is a fun place to go to. My friends are fun to hang out with and do stuff with. My family is loving and on my birthday, they gave me a lot of stuff. I always see school busses all of the time. Akron is not a good place, well not the best place but I like it because it’s my hometown. I always hear a bus. On Halloween I like doing pumpkins and having fun with my family.
Nothing to see
It’s not fun
Leave while you can
My road floods
All the time
The cows go poo
The horses clack
I always like winter best because I enjoy the cold air and calm days. Christmas reminds me of a cheerful time, and I enjoy the smell of peppermint. I enjoy Christmas plays and lights and times spent with the ones I love.
I always like fall best because of the change of the leaves that tell me my birthday is coming up. My birthday is October 20th, and my birthday is right next to Halloween, and I love candy, especially KitKats.
I always like summer best in Cleveland because I feel connected to it but also it is sunny most of the time. I like to go outside and chill with my friends. Not only do I go outside, but I also like to go up to the high school and watch football. I always go downtown and the only way to get there is by the bus, but I hate to always have to pay.
My dad had a big box of marshmallows and it was cool to see on a picture.
Chinese Food

CK

Kool Aid pickles they taste sweet and sour.
They look nice when they shine off the Kool Aid.
Heard about them from my Granny.
Pizza stuff crust
Peperone and
Cheese with
Black olives
That is my
Favorite pizza
Sushi
JJ

Sushi is so great
But people want to hate. At first fish
Are slimy, so handle
Them so kindly.
The sensation of
The rice, it
Feels, just, so nice.
The sushi is
A little sticky.
But don’t be
So picky.
The sizzle
On the
Fryer.
Oh, we
Got a
Cryer.
Untitled

TE

Taco Bell it tastes so good
Taco Bell the smell is a good smell
Taco Bell the sound of it from the wrapper
Taco Bell when you look at it when you open it
The memories when you get full
And when it's so good
Every time I get Taco Bell is with my brother
Taco Bell craving; we have the tacos
Hamburgers

CH

The meaty smell you give off
That sizzle and pop of the grease
That juicy meat as it turns brown
When I pull you off the skillet
You fill me with joy
When I bite into you
You send me back to a hot summer
day in the backyard on a day
So perfect for a backyard barbecue.
I go crazy like a monkey.
My siblings are monkeys.
When I get high in football,
I feel like I'm flying like a harpy eagle.
When I fight I feel mighty like a tiger.
When I was in Florida for vacation we had a beach day. As I was playing in the waves, I felt a sharp burning sting sensation. I started crying, turned, and saw I had been stung by a jellyfish. This had made me very afraid to go back into the water; just because something bad or scary happens to you, shouldn't mean you have to quit having fun or living your life.
Raccoon Attack

EG

I was attacked by a raccoon on a dark night. I was headed out the door after taking the trash out and then it leaped for me screeching and then I kicked it like a football and ran for the door.
The Time I Went to Sea World

KM

One memorable moment/interaction I had with an animal is when I went to Sea World with my family. My family and I, except for my mom, went to go see the killer whales. My dad was holding me up because I was only four years old. One of the Killer whales sneezed on me, there was snot and boogers all over my arm and my dad had to wipe it off.
Snakes slither with the river
Dear Larry,

Don’t go to jail. Don’t screw up. Make sure you swing on the swing more. Hangout with mom more and get more sleep (shut your phone off earlier). Enjoy yourself more. Get better friends and don’t let them down. Stop smoking. Be more careful with your glasses.
Letter to my Child

GR

Don’t go to jail, try to be good and stay out of trouble. When you feel like giving up the most, try your hardest because it will always get better. When you lose motivation try to find anything that will keep motivating you because when you’re not motivated you will get locked up and have to leave the people you love, which will hurt you and make you hate yourself, so stay motivated and do good always. Be on your best behavior, make money the legal way, stay away from people that will bring you down and keep the people that care around you always.
Letter to JaVeon, 10 Years Ago

JS

Dear JaVeon,

When you get older don’t be around people that are doing bad, walk the other way and stay in school and don’t go to jail. Listen to your parents and stay in sports and do better for you. Just stay out of trouble and be a good person, you really are. Enjoy your freedom while you’re young.
Letter to Kaleb

KM

Dear Kaleb,

Make sure to watch anime but take some time off. Be sure to be more brave and make sure to follow your dreams. Try to learn martial arts and train to use a sword/katana.
Letter to my Child

Hey, I just wanted to tell you not to get caught up in other people or small things that happen to you or other people. Do not overreact when something big happens either.
“Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done”

— Bryan Stevenson
band of brothers
Dear reader,

In a matter of six short weeks, we really can’t stop thinking about how quickly we connected with the residents because of their humor that brought our group to life, creating immediate friendships. When the residents genuinely engaged themselves in the activities with us, these were some of our favorite moments, along with everyone’s ability to balance serious and silly moments.

We will always be grateful for the opportunity to engage with such a unique community of residents. We feel blessed with being able to hear the innermost thoughts and reflections they presented in their work as well as the similarities we have found in each other throughout this experience.

Please consider how much hard work, time, and dedication the youth put into their creative writing while you read this chapbook. You should also know that our residents are leaders and writers in each of their own ways, which inspired this collection’s title. The residents exhibited such great camaraderie and support in all of our sessions both in the ways in which they seriously contemplated each other’s works and made lighthearted jokes throughout our workshop.

Mixed Cohort at the Indian River JCF
Six-word Memoirs

RM

1. I was heartbroken, now I have found true love
2. Money is not hard to make
3. Remember hard times don’t last forever
4. School is a way of finding success
5. You can always overcome obstacles.
I Always Like Winter Best
When it Snows

RM

And the wind always blows. My girlfriend likes to cuddle
We watch movies under the covers while we snuggle.
The white girl’s store don’t ever stay busy
All you hear is gun sounds
But it is safe in my city.
Funny, athletic, tall, chill, articulate, handsome
I can’t breathe! I can’t breathe!
Life is what you make it
Six-word Memoirs

DB

Confident, athletic, handsome, articulate, strong, funny
I always like summer
Because I smell fresh food
And the flowers bloom
I always like summer
Because I go to the park
And that’s when the run starts
I Always Like Spring
ZC

It's a season that brings my friends out more, then the summer comes around the corner. My birthday is here and central is open so now let’s get the dirt bikes going.

I always liked the spring, it brings out the waves, hard times don’t last even though they treat us like slaves.
Six-Word Memoirs
ZC

Funny, smart, laid back, calm, athletic, handsome
Two Truths and a Lie
RM

Me and my best friend love watching movies
We always go out to eat together
When we’re together we always have fun
Two Truths and a Lie
TS

I pay attention to people closely
I have people whose entire soul and presence irritates me
I'm ok
Two Truths and a Lie
SM

My best friend came at six in the morning to pick me up hours away
My best friend is a piece of poop and doesn’t care about anyone but himself
Two Truths and a Lie

DB

I came back from a different state not having anything and my brother/best friend pulled up and gave me what I needed. I was at my lowest and my brother backstabbed me and took my money when I was out doing something.
Two Truths and a Lie

Me and my best friend were so close I would let him wear any of my clothes, I would have let him live with me. We used to go stay the night at our female's house. I shot my best friend and killed him because he snaked me.
Ode to Steak
SM

I’m sorry that we kill you to just
Kill you again. I like you better when
My A1’s around. They say you’re expensive but
To me you’re cheap because without you
There would be no me.
Thank you peanut butter and jelly for always being there
And being so good and peanutie as well as being
Able to be around for so long.
Untitled

ZC

I love you food, you taste so
Good to me with the brown sugar
And marshmallows and you
Have a pie and I can’t wait
To eat you again.
Ode to Cheesecake

DB

You are so good, every time I see you I just
Wanna eat you, you normally come in eight,
And only seen on holidays. If I had the opportunity
I would eat you every day. People like putting
Strawberries and chocolate on you but I like you just
The way you are, you obviously can’t talk
But I would imagine your voice to be
Delicate and sweet.
I Moved Out the Trenches
Like I Made it

RM

Jump on my wave you gone drown cause you hatin
I swim through my money like it’s a lake
When I say that I love you it won’t be fake
Untitled
SM

Ya I pray to God
So the devil tryna get even
Traumatized

DB

Traumatized, pain built deep inside, she swore she would
Ride time went on then she left my side, my heart
Went ice, it turned more cold when she said she
Gone, if you love me back then you shouldn’t have left
Cause I’ve been movin on
Affirmation Poem

RM

I am a great person
I am a very hard worker
I have a realistic future
I am a great athlete
Affirmation Poem

ZC

I want to be a great role model
I want to see a better me
Affirmation Poem

DB

This is a temporary time in life
Hard times don't last
You are a strong growing individual that has potential through the roof
If you had to pick someone for your daughter it would be you,
You could be a star one day,
I would put my trust into you any day.
I know you would never betray me,
You are a leader, not a follower.
I am a Loving Child and Father

SM

I am a real person
I am not scared and fear nothing around.

Chase your dreams

I am a good looking fellow

Keep it 100
I am talented
I am confident
I am self-motivated
I am a caring person
I am a lover boy
I am a hard worker
I am a caring person
I am helpful
I am positive
Experience is what we name our mistakes
Affirmations About Me

RM

I'm very smart
I'm very athletic
I'm very energetic
I am a hard worker
I am mindful
I am a visionary
Most of our days wasted are those in which we have not laughed
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- Community Partners and Juvenile Facilities
- Student Volunteers
- Cohort Advisors and Academic Institutions
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- Staff and Contractors
- Board of Directors
- Donors and Community Members

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- The Sisters of Charity Foundation – Ministry Leadership Program
- The Fowler Family Foundation
- The Ohio Arts Council
By donating to Writers in Residence, you allow us to...

Provide writing materials, technology, personal protective equipment (PPE), snacks, chapbooks, and teaching artists for our creative writing workshops.

Support our residents who are re-entering society with very little or zero access to social services and resources to prevent them from recidivating.

Educate our local communities and government officials about the juvenile justice system’s traumatic effect on our youth to enact reforms and alternatives.

To donate, please visit: writersnresidence.org/donate or scan the code below

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