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.
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.
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. Baldwin Wallace University
10. Bowling Green State Univ.
11. Case Western Reserve Univ.
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
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!
Dear reader,

When we think about the creative writing workshop this spring, our minds flood with many memories! We always looked forward to spending time with the residents and the other student volunteers every week.

For example, we started sharing our highs and lows of the week at the beginning, which strengthened our relationship with each other, and one of the residents said her low was being denied a release from the juvenile correction center. Instantly, this news, this reality check made our stomachs stop. Everything felt so real because we realized that at a young age, these girls deal with countless adult-like challenges and continue to do so. You should know that these girls didn’t have stereotypical childhoods; they had scary experiences that forced them to grow up faster than most.

At first, none of us knew what to expect at our first session but the residents were eventually willing to open up and be real about their lives. It made sense because we were outsiders, but they made us feel welcome. No matter what they were going through though, the residents used their time either writing from their authentic self or telling us stories from their life. They gave their all to this experience. This vulnerability allowed us to see the world from a different point of view and create a community of different backgrounds.

We are very grateful for this opportunity and are proud of who the residents are. There are different walks of life in this world, but we have learned that we all have more in common than we think.

University of Dayton Cohort

P.S. Want to also thank Ms. B because she was so much more than a staff person but more so a friend to these girls. They looked out for her just as much as she looked out for them.
I am not proud
I feel I let my mother down
I never met my father
People never really knew me
They felt “why bother?” I know my smiles lit up the room
I know my jokes were funny to you
But at the end of the day none
Of it matters.
I tried
I tried to make myself beautiful
I wanted to be peaceful at my last moment
I hope I spent it with you
But hope never got me far

Those times I wish I could
Have opened my eyes and
Realized that all she wanted
was the best for me. She always
Told me to never put my thoughts
To rest, and never be the one
To be treated less. Now my
Time is almost up and I am
The one who gets
Treated the worst. Now it's
Time to say goodbye to what I had
Left behind. Mom I'm
So sorry for you to see me like
This. This my last trip I have in
Mind.

If you fall pack your bags and never come back
If you fall you feel how it feels to feel hopeless
If you fall get back up and feel your success
If you think you might try your best and forget the rest.
Untitled
ML
My heart can't beat no more beats
I been stranded in a world with great regrets
I wish I could have handled my fate
But I am the devil's bait
I know I'm gonna be free but me remembering the rapes and the drugs
And I'll never forget all the hugs
And possibilities that came before me
But tonight you will see that I'm just as perfect as can be

Peer Pressure
ML
Peer pressure is okay
I mean they only want to play
But sometimes they end up being your bae
Or not and they take advantage of you
Then boom I learn that I am more than a piece of a**
But more like a piece of class and my body is a temple
Never nothing less

Peer pressure is classy as can be but listen to yourself
They only want you for your body
Nothing more nothing less
Then you realize you're more than just somebody lil hoe or something less
You're a temple and your mind is tiny flashes of success

Goodbye
JM
I'm sorry I'm leaving now
I wish I could of accomplished me being a legend
I'm sorry I'm leaving so soon
Please don't cry it's a full moon
But my time has come
But my time has come
But at least I left you with my words.
Leave me never forgotten
Don't keep me hidden in a staken

Untitled
EM
5: I miss my grandma
7: She is my home, heart, and soul
5: I love her, very much
If you hurt me I’ll hurt you back
I remember the first time I felt rejection, it was something so painful
that it gave me motivation, it gave me motivation to hurt you, even
though I knew it was wrong. I made you cry, I made you feel pain and
after learning better I felt worse for ever releasing agony no matter
how bad I hurt.

Goodbye
KH

Never in my life would I think that I would say sorry
But I’m sorry mama I’m sorry for all the nights you had to stay up
wondering about me
But it had to take me to leave that house of chaos to grow up and see me
for me
Talents I never knew about. The pain and the blame I let out.
I forgive those two men for hurting me but I don’t think I can forget
I’m gonna lay in my casket knowing I let go all my struggles and regrets

My hands were told to be like Muhammad Ali’s because of my size and the
way I looked. I was taught to be more of a lover and not a fighter. I was
told to wear my clothes more tight because of the way my body looked.
I just wanted to fit in to what society wants me to be and look like but I
cannot seem to be what everyone wants me to be because I am me!

I do not owe you what society wants me to be. I do not owe you an
explanation of why my body looked the way it looks.
But today, this is the part I love the most… my beautiful chocolate
skin. Every curve on my body. My heat damaged natural hair. Those
are the parts I love the most.

My anger is like a burning tree with TNT underneath. It is ready to blow
life ain’t worth the anger, always remember to have faith and hope.
My cries were told to be withheld.
  Getting my head pushed to the dashboard while he drove.
  Wasn't taught to say no and let my tears go.
  I sucked them in and never let them go.
  My emotions were between a brick wall, I wasn't bold enough to say no.
  I thought he loved me, or that's what I was told?
  My whole damn life I never let love show, because I was taught to never let emotions show. But I did and grew big.
  Came over the fight and left a pig.
  No man shall never beat me till I'm blue, I'm allowed to cry rather it's in front of you, you, or you.
  Letting my screams out, just a big a** shout. Learning new things as I chase old dreams. That wasn't taught to me.

How My Color Helped Me

Which me will survive?
I'm gay not Bi
I'm a woman
And I'm of color
Which me will survive.

I was raised to not
Ask for help
I won't let it break
Me down I want to melt
Seeing my mama pour
Down tears before she
Ask for help
She missed out on
A couple bills she
Looked me in my eyes
And told me she be
In the ground before
She call grandma and
Them. No being loyal put
Me in bad situations
Next time i'm going to
Turn the other way no
Hesitation
I do not owe you an apology for my dark melanin skin, 
The shape of my body are the places I been
I love the skin that I'm in
The Fro that I wear
But today I love this part the most
I SEE me
I'm not hidden like a ghost
My skin is the biggest approach

I do not owe you an apology for my dark melanin skin,
The shape of my body
Are the places I been
I love the skin that I'm in
The Fro that I wear
But today I love this part the most
I SEE me
I'm not hidden like a ghost
My skin is the biggest approach
But today I love this part the most

I'm in love with music. I fell in love with music at 13. I watch my favorite artists do their shows for hours. I hang posters on my walls in every house I live in. I get every update on music every chance I can get.

I'm so passionate about music, I listen to type beats just to get an idea of what I want to write later. I read the dictionary to learn new meanings. I go to the thesaurus to find sentences of the word.

I can't wait to see my fans cry to see me. I can't wait to jump off stages into the crowd. I can't wait for people that have never met me in person, love my spirit.

I'm so passionate about music that I carry it with me everywhere.

I want people to feel everything I been through in one verse. I want people to know I'll always be there when they pick up their phone.
I do not owe you perfection
I know I am beautiful
Am I perfect is a great question

I try my best
I don't want no test

Because I do not owe you perfection

My passion is fixing things that are broken. It could be cars, children or teens, anything that falls between those lines. I would like to fix cars and find cars that nobody uses and fix them up. I would like to foster children any age because I was 5 ½ years old when the system took me from my parents. I would like to show them love and affection that no one has ever showed them before. I know how it feels to be misunderstood. And feel unwanted. I know the pain and the struggle that these kids been through maybe even more. Everyone needs somebody. Nobody should be alone no matter what circumstance.

Hey, I thought maybe you could teach me how to recognize the fake ones from the real ones or maybe how to say no when I'm being mislead from someone, damn I thought it would be easy to think about the things anglea didn't teach me. Oh but you taught me how to get or find a substance when s**t ain't easy. Don't forget the big one rule. Never cry. If you're hurting inside go take a ride or go to Five Guys. I want to thank you for not showing me the things you should have showed me. I can teach myself and my unborn kids what is right but that's what I just taught myself
I am from where kids running around trying to get out the place they call home like me, I am from where families only come together and have fun when someone dies. The smell of charcoal, barbeque, and ribs in the air people shooting dice on the side of the house. I am from where my brother calling on a recorded collect call phone from the pen. I am from a mother who risked her life for her kids until she died. I am from a place where people houses get shot up and Black kids killing other Black kids I am from...

I thought you can teach me not to get into the streets and to make my own choices, that I really don’t have to do other people’s plans. I wanna make my own choices. I wanna do what makes me happy, I wanna live my kid life. I don’t want to be grown yet, I just wanna life life to succeed. I thought you can teach me money don’t bring me happiness, that just cause you get treated like s**t don’t mean I have to treat people like s**t. I wanna teach myself how to love and how to be me. How to choose your own life, loyalty over everything for me. I don’t want to be the old me I wanna be a bigger me.

Hey, I thought maybe you could teach me how to rap without being off drugs, I thought maybe you could teach me hoe to be a Nascar driver, I thought maybe you could teach me how to be happy. Hey, I thought maybe you could teach me how to stop running from all my problems, how to stop running to drugs, how to walk away. And if you already taught me how to see the world for what it is, how to not forget what happened as a kid, and to forgive, then you can teach me all the other things on my list.
I am from a place where you hear Beyoncé in the car, and kids dancing to music happily,
I am from a place where you taste Kool-Aid bags and pickles every day,
I am from a place where you see a kid on the floor watching the same cartoons over and over again,
I'm from a place where you see everyone from the hood in one house,
I'm from a place where you smell breakfast every morning on Sundays, Bar-B-Q grills every 4th of July,
I'm from a place where you have to have your mothers touch every day,
A place where you play tag in the middle of the night

I am passionate about starting my group home because I been in the system for almost 3 years and nobody ever listened to me about anything I said and I want the kids to know I'm listening and I'm here for you and I won’t leave you stranded like they left me. I want kids that have PTSD, trauma, or anything that they have I want to help them with everything and my group home will provide everything like therapy

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.