



Facilitating Hope

Matt Malyon | Director, Teaching Writer

In late summer we were invited to restart in-person workshops at our Skagit County Juvenile Detention site. Before the Covid era, we'd rarely missed a weekly workshop in our five years of existence. By Summer 2021, as our students say, *it had been a minute*. A year and a half, to be precise. So much in the world had dramatically changed since the last time we gathered around tables in juvie to read and write together. What would it be like to return after such a long period of time? How would the youth respond?

The first month of workshops we facilitated alleviated any potential concerns. We wore masks, followed social distancing guidelines, and arrived with notebooks and photocopies of literature. As always, we sat together and read. And, as always, the students' intelligence, their love of reading and writing together, and their passion for expressing themselves immediately reemerged.

Early in September, I brought in "Cloudy Day," a poem by Jimmy Santiago Baca. Baca's life early on included stints in both juvenile detention and prison facilities. It was, in fact, while he was inside that he discovered a love for reading and writing. He began a correspondence with Denise Levertov, and thereafter pursued his life as a writer, poet, and teacher. His life's story inspires the youth. They often see themselves within it. True of Baca's "Cloudy Day" as well. After reading the poem, the students mentioned favorite lines:

*In the exercise yard
we sat huddled in our prison jackets . . .*

*I could see the main tower from where I sat,
and the wind in my face . . .*

*And here I am, I cannot believe it.
Sometimes it is such a dream, a dream,
where I stand up in the face of the wind.*

We discussed the highlighted lines, as well as the entire poem, and then the students turned to their own writing. I suggested they riff on Baca's poem, or—as another option—write about something the poem brought to mind. As so often happens, the writing opened pathways for the students to express their inner thoughts.

K. started a piece about dealing with perceptions and a person's ability to truly change: *It's a cloudy day. People think they know my pain, but ain't know a thing.*

H. wrote a piece about the loss of a sibling, starting with, *it's a sunny day today, cloudy day tomorrow, but I will always keep my head up.*

This last line—but *I will always keep my head up*—succinctly summarizes one of the things our workshops aim to do—facilitate the growth of hope amidst what is often a time of deep struggle for our students in juvenile detention.

As we head into autumn here in the Pacific Northwest, and as things continue to open up, we are ever grateful to be able to interact more with our students. And we remain truly grateful for you, readers and community members—for your goodwill toward us, your donations, and your ongoing notes of encouragement throughout these times. All of these items are vital for us to be able to continue our work. Thank you!



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News & Updates



[Juli | Photo: Marilyn Montufar]

In Fall 2020, we began a collaboration with our Migrant Leaders Club students and Seattle-based photographer, [Marilyn Montufar](#), regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The collaborative photographs and writing that we've done together have since been exhibited at the Jacob Lawrence Gallery (Seattle), The Clemente (New York City), Small Talk Collective (Portland, OR), and the Fowler-Kellogg Art Center (Chautauqua, New York). This last exhibit drew the attention of artist, Leslie Gomez-Gonzalez, [who wrote this review](#). Next month the collaborative work will be featured virtually by the Mexican American Consulate in Seattle. An artist talk for the show will take place on October 7, 2021 - [Details are on Eventbrite here](#).



The latest issue of KITE—our audio zine of student writing—was released a few weeks ago. Issue 9 features writings from our Skagit County Juvenile Detention site, read by Teaching Writer, Jen Bradbury. With directness, emotion, and humor, each piece provides insight into the lives of students at this site. The featured writings are also available in our first student anthology, [What No One Ever Tells You](#).

Listen to *KITE* via most podcast outlets, or [on our website](#).



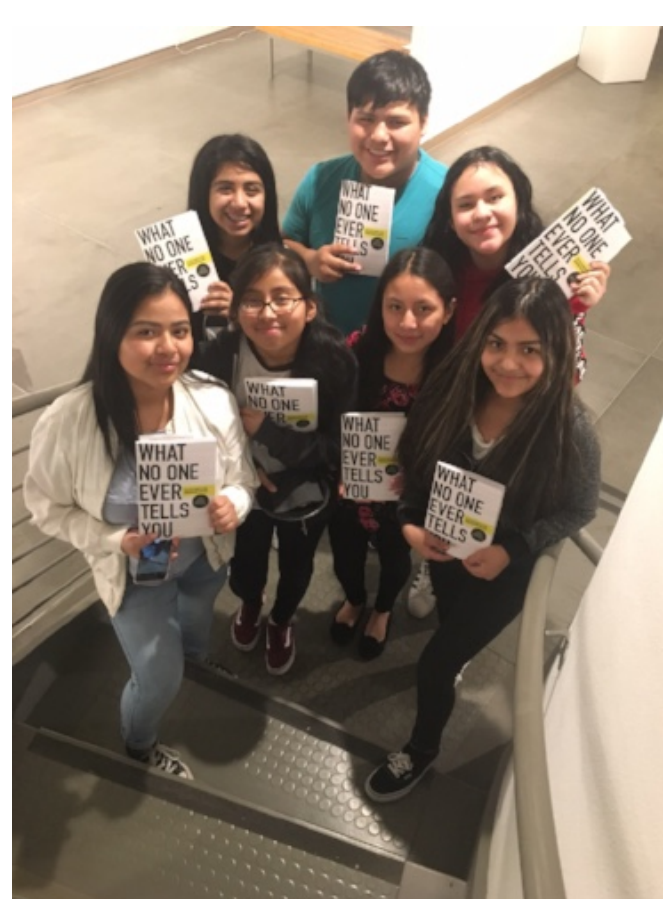
September 23, 2021 | We've received another batch of replies from our collaborating partners, Emancipated Stories. Students at our Skagit County Community Justice Center site sent poems and prose to Emancipated Stories and received personal letters back. [You can see the new \(and older\) student writings on Emancipated Stories' Instagram publishing platform here](#). Some of the pieces even got set to music! Wonderful project. Thanks, Quiana and the Emancipated Stories crew!

THE NORCLIFFE FOUNDATION

We were grateful to learn recently that we received a generous grant from The Norcliffe Foundation for our work in helping to amplify student voices via our communications work. Paul Pigott established The Norcliffe Foundation in 1952. After his death, his wife Theiline Pigott McCone led the foundation for decades. Succeeding generations of the family continue the legacy today. The Norcliffe Foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life for all people in our community. Thank you, Norcliffe Foundation, for believing in the work we're doing.

COVID-19 UPDATES

We continue to prioritize student safety by adhering to the state-required Covid-19 precautions. Although this means we are not facilitating many in-person workshops at this time, we continue to create e-deliverable workshops for all our sites. In addition to the projects mentioned above, we continue to publish student writing via social media and intermittent Covid-19 era episodes of The Underground Writing Podcast & *KITE*.



[Students | Migrant Leaders Club]

Unlocking creativity through writing workshops and voice amplification for at-need and underrepresented students, to assist in the restoration of communities, the imagination, and individual lives.

We serve migrant, incarcerated, recovery, and other at-need communities in Northern Washington.

Our sites:

- Skagit County Juvenile Detention (Youth)
- Mount Vernon Migrant Leaders Club (Youth - Mount Vernon School District)
- Skagit Valley Recovery Community (Adults)
- YMCA Oasis Daylight Center (Youth)
- Skagit County Community Justice Center (Adults)

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