

Underground Writing - Newsletter

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*booklet for the LTAYI initiative*

## Letters to a Young Inmate

September 2023

Greetings, Friends. We hope this finds you in good health.

Next month we're launching the *Letters to a Young Inmate* initiative, a writing curriculum that takes shape as a series of letters. The twenty-six letters—written by older people experiencing incarceration to youth in juvenile detention—offer wisdom, advice, empathy, and hope. They take form in a unique binding-free booklet that is designed to invite different uses: 1) To be read as a series of letters to an individual youth; 2) A self-guided writing workshop (prompts are included with each letter); 3) An included invitation to write a *Thank You* note to the authors of the letters; 4) Juvenile detention / program staff can use the booklet to facilitate workshops, as well as accessing further curriculum ideas online.

The idea for *Letters to a Young Inmate* originated in a workshop we conducted at a local college back in the autumn of 2017 ([our](#)



[newsletter featuring the story](#)). In 2019, we were grateful to host a visit by Zoe Mullery of Brothers in Pen (writing program), and we proposed the idea of her students writing letters to our youth. In the subsequent months, the initiative began to take shape ([our podcast episode highlighting, among other things, Zoe's visit](#)). We were honored to also include writers from Truth Be Told (writing program). And then the world went on pause. Delayed through the Covid-19 era, we're looking forward to the initiative now making its way out into the world.

In May 2021 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) released an article / review assessing “Arts-Based Programs and Arts Therapies for At-Risk, Justice-Involved, and Traumatized Youths.” The review found that, “arts-based programs and arts therapies provide a unique way to help youths in times of transition and development... provid[ing] a nonthreatening, engaging way for children and adolescents to express their feelings, manage emotional and behavioral problems, express cultural awareness, cope with trauma and victimization, develop artistic talents and skills, and improve strengths and assets they already possess.”

We agree! As we tell our students--writing is an art form, and it's also a tool for life. It is our hope that the *Letters to a Young Inmate* initiative will be both generative and instructive, and will inspire both hope and creativity, within the lives of our local students in juvenile detention, as well as youth in juvenile detention facilities beyond the borders of our community.

Thanks to ArtsWA, Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts for believing in—and supporting—the work we're doing!

**Thanks to our collaboration partners / letter writers:** [Brothers in Pen \(California\)](#) and [Truth Be Told \(Texas\)](#), as well as **individual letter writers in Oregon, Washington, and Pennsylvania.**

Thanks and shout outs: Nathan McGehee (Roosevelvet Design) for designing the booklet, Jennifer Bradbury and Laurie Parker for help developing the prompt-based curriculum, ADI Printing for helping the booklet take form, and Lindy Boustedt (First Sight Productions) for the initiative's promo trailer.

We will launch *Letters to a Young Inmate* next month—October, ***National Youth Justice Action Month***.

To start the process off, we will be sending our e-newsletter group a sample letter each Monday in October. We hope and trust that you will be moved and inspired by the letters.



Order our [anthologies of student writing](#).



**DONATE**

**You make a difference.  
Your donation changes lives.**



For more information about getting involved, and to view the initiative's brief promo film trailer, please visit our website here:

[www.letterstoayounginmate.org](http://www.letterstoayounginmate.org)

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## News & Updates



### **Thanks for the grant!**

We're very grateful to announce that we've been awarded a General Operating Support Sustaining Grant for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. General Support offers two-year funding for general operating costs to arts organizations. This funding supports arts organizations in their work of providing creative, communal, and cultural experiences with and for the people of Washington State. Thanks to [ArtsWA](#) for your belief in, and support of, our ongoing work.

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## **re/vision program volunteer day**

If you live locally and would like to take part in our monthly re/vision volunteer day, we'd love to have you join us. Our volunteer day is 3 hours long, and includes various administrative tasks + writing personal / congratulatory letters to the writers we'll be publishing via the ONE PAGE publishing opportunity. Snacks and coffee are provided. [Click here to learn more about our re/vision program.](#)

Next re/vision volunteer day:

**Thursday, October 19, 2023**

**> 9 a.m. - 12 noon**

Burlington Public Library

820 E Washington Ave

Burlington, WA 98233



*August 2023 Workshop*

## **Reboot | YMCA Sedro-Woolley Rec. Center**

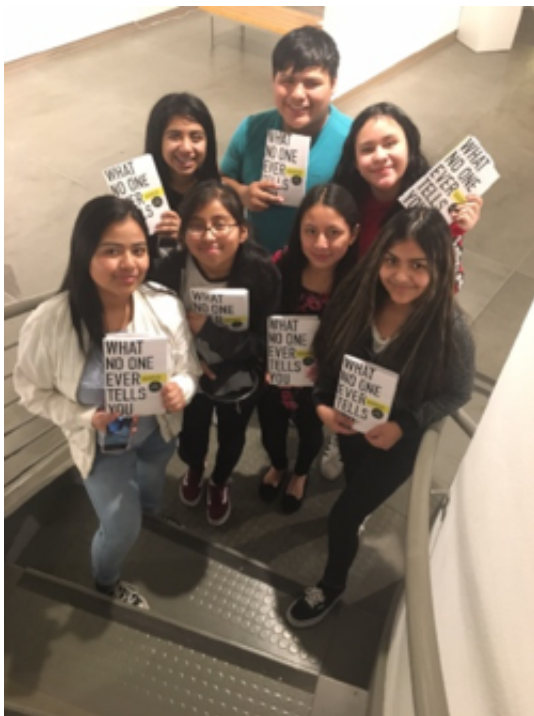
In the last year or so, the YMCA's Oasis location made the transition from a youth homeless shelter + Daylight center for daytime programming to a full-time homeless shelter for youth.

We're grateful both for our many years of workshops at Oasis, as well as the invitation to relocate. As of a few months ago, our workshop site has moved to the new [YMCA Sedro-Woolley Rec Center](#). We're grateful to be able to reboot this site, and are looking forward to continuing to read and write with the youth at this location.

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## "POST" - COVID-19 ERA UPDATE

We're prioritizing student safety by adhering to our workshop sites' required Covid-19 precautions. Currently, we're facilitating in-person workshops at some of our sites, and continuing to create e-deliverable workshops for sites not meeting in person. In addition to our three core programs, we are publishing students on social media—student writing highlights from our workshops, as well as writings submitted to the [One Page](#) publication opportunity for **re/vision** inquirers.



[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 Washington.

\* We focus on making an impact inside our local community, and inspiring outside it.

**Our sites:**

**Skagit Co. Juvenile Detention**

Youth | Weekly workshop site

**Mount Vernon Migrant Leaders Club**

*Mount Vernon School District*

Youth | Collaborative projects site

**Skagit Valley Recovery Community**

Adults | Monthly workshop site

**YMCA Sedro-Woolley Rec. Center**

Youth | Monthly workshop site

**Skagit County Community Justice Center**

Adults | Weekly workshop site

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Your donation changes lives.**

**DONATE**

