



Prison Writes office opening at Taino Towers, Decmeber 2019.

Front: Robin Bahr and Tim O'Mara. 2nd row: Justin Corney, Joanne Pugh, Jessica Hall, Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Tara Brown Arnell.

Back row: Rafael Carrera, Senator Brian Benjamin, Jen Fitzgerald

# Annual Report

## 2020



# Dedication

We dedicate this report to **Robin Bahr** (12/2/33 - 12/19/19) and **Jevone Boatwright** (9/14/78 - 11/21/18), whose letter writing relationship transcended the barriers of bars, walls, and time. Pictured here meeting for the first time after Javone's release from prison, their joy radiant and palpable. Their love for each other continues to inspire our work every day.





# What We Offer

**Our Social Work Model with a trauma-informed approach makes our writing programs uniquely suited to responding to our participants' needs.**

**Workshops are facilitated by a social worker, alongside our writing teachers, to ensure participants social and emotional needs are met.**

**Our strengths-based model employs mutual aid to facilitate a sense of community and support in our workshops.**





**PRISON WRITES BRINGS WRITING WORKSHOPS TO INCARCERATED, DETAINED, AND FORMERLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE FOR THERAPY, ADVOCACY, LITERACY, AND MORE.**

## **THERAPEUTIC WRITING**

Participants are guided in writing about traumatic events in their lives so they may improve their overall emotional state and functioning.

## **ADVOCACY**

Participants are guided in writing about their experience in the criminal justice system. This can later be used as supportive material for their case or to inform prison policy and reform.

## **CREATIVE WRITING**

Participants are supported in writing personal narratives in various genres to better understand their history and envision a resilient and positive future.



# Director's Desk

## Jessica Hall

We began 2020 with a reading in January at the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space. The event featured formerly incarcerated writers, including: our advisory board member Karen Thomas; Nadine West, a student in our writing group with women in re-entry at Taconic Correctional facility; and writing workshop participant, Justin Corney.

I made weekly visits, along with writing instructor Tim O'Mara, to our young friends at Rikers Island Jail. In January and February, we completed a therapeutic writing intensive for adult males at Rikers, through our partnership with John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity.

Writing instructors Charles Salzberg, Christina Chiu, and myself were looking forward to continuing our workshops with men at Otisville Correctional Facility, also through John Jay.

Our last day teaching in-person at Rikers Island Jail was March 12, 2020. Shortly thereafter, due to Covid-19 lockdown, our partners ceased all in-person programming. We immediately transitioned by sending weekly lesson plans to the jail. Workshops with John Jay were held on Zoom.

Scattered to various remote locales during the lockdown, we grew closer to our communities. We advocated for our incarcerated friends to have access to PPE, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer. And we advocated for releasing populations from prison and jails to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

Additional efforts on behalf of our incarcerated friends were directed at the city and state level with very little movement on either side. Our work for clemency, to release aging prisoners, and reduce the jail population continues. Unfortunately, as New York City rose in protest against police brutality, New York State rolled back bail reforms by playing to public fear of incarcerated people being released.

Prison Writes joined in-person actions at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, and at representatives' offices in Albany in support of the HALTsolitary campaign. In late June, along with hundreds of community-based organizations, Prison Writes submitted testimony for city council hearings on the NYC budget. We asked that the city reallocate at least one billion dollars from the six billion-dollar NYPD budget to support our communities in every borough.

Women in re-entry, isolated by quarantine at the Women's Prison Association, received *emotional care packages* from Prison Writes, consisting of journals, folders, and instructions for therapeutic journaling. We also included hand-sewn masks for PPE.

We donated hundreds of new books by young adult authors of color for youth in group homes under the care of the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

At the end of the summer, we collaborated in a special project under ACS to collect narrative writing from young women in foster care. Its goal to increase staff sensitivity and improve services. With thirteen young women, we created an anthology of their work, a power point presentation for staff, and a video. (Find them on our website.) All participants received stipends and android tablets for their contributions.

When a fire on December 5th at Middle Collegiate Church forced women in the WPA shelter next door to evacuate, Prison Writes coordinated with advisory board member, Karen Thomas, and staff-on-site to collect contributions of clothing, toiletries and feminine products for the displaced women.

We are pleased to announce that after five years under the fiscal sponsorship of New York Writers Workshop, Prison Writes recently applied for our own 501(c)(3) status. We will continue to partner with their amazing faculty.

Therapeutic writing is an evidence-based practice that reduces anger, improves sleep, and improves communication with others. Reading and writing are essential tools to achieve educational and career goals. We continue to expand our capacity to bring our model to more partners and participants in innovative and fun ways in 2021 to prevent recidivism, support individuals, and strengthen communities.

# Partners



Love Makes The Difference



## HOUR CHILDREN

Zoom writing workshops with women in re-entry provide a fun, safe space to share poetry and spoken word exploring diverse themes around family, values, and ideas.



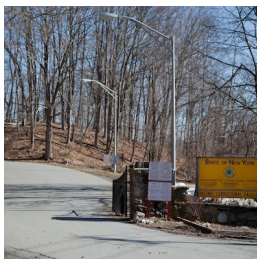
## ROBERT N. DAVOREN DETENTION CENTER

We offer writing lessons that are fun, reflective and educational, to provide a meaningful outlet of expression and entertainment for our young friends held at Rikers Island Jail.



## JOHN JAY COLLEGE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY

Workshops with college and potential college students at the Institute explore a variety of genres for self-expression.



## TACONIC CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

In these workshops with women preparing for re-entry, we help them build their confidence through expressive writing. We also provide assistance with resumes and cover letters.



## ROSE M. SINGER CENTER

Writing teachers are paired with writers in the facility who are survivors of intimate partner violence. Mentees receive individual instruction, support, and materials.



## BROOKLYN DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE OF RE-ENTRY

These fun, interactive workshops with youth in the Gender Responsive Re entry Assistance Support Program (G.R.A.S.P.) focus on themes such as body positivity, character development, and identifying healthy habits and behaviors to prevent recidivism and keep youth in our communities.



# Writing Teachers

The excellence of our writing teachers is a distinguishing characteristic of Prison Writes, illustrating our commitment to bringing the best to our participants.



Christina Chiu  
Award winning Author  
of the Novel *Beauty*



Ravi Shankar, PhD,  
Award winning Poet and Author  
of the Memoir *CORRECTIONAL*



Corey Rowe, PhD  
Professor at LaGuardia,  
Criminologist, Advocate



Charles Salzberg  
Co-founder of the New York  
Writers Workshop and Award  
Winning Author of the *Swann*  
Mystery Series



Felix Guzman  
Poet, Activist, Advocate  
and Peer Educator



Tim O'Mara  
Author, *Raymond Donne* mystery series  
NYC Public School Teacher



Jen Fitzgerald  
Award Winning Poet and  
Author of *The Art of Work*



Javier Cruz Winnick  
Author and Illustrator of  
Self-Published  
*A Reason to Smile* Series



Ibrahim Siddiq  
Spoken Word Artist  
and Founder of  
The Free Art project



Tim Tomlinson  
Co-founder of New York Writers  
Workshop, Poet, International  
Teacher, and Professor of Global  
Studies at NYU



Judith Hannan  
Author of *Motherhood Exaggerated*  
and *The Write Prescription:  
Telling Your Story to Live  
With and Beyond Illness.*



# Teacher Testimony

**"Out of my many teaching experiences, I find work with Prison Writes the most meaningful and rewarding.** The best kind of writing touches on our humanity. It moves us deeply, and if we are lucky, changes us. In the Prison Writes program, I have seen this first hand. I am constantly surprised by the depth and quality of the work, the trust the students have in me, and the willingness they have to look themselves in the mirror and write their truths. One of my students was new to writing. On his first day, confronting his memories and emotions for the first time in many years, he started to cry. His enthusiasm and engagement in the Prison Writes Program grew his confidence—not just in the writing, but in himself. I am thrilled and so proud to say, he is now attending college. "

-Christina Chiu

**"I didn't know quite what to expect when I visited the Otisville Correctional Facility.** The first surprise was the number of attendees. There were close to thirty men, all eager to hear what we had to say. Many of them were keeping journals. Others were writing poetry. Still others were working on screenplays. The most rewarding part of the afternoon was breaking into small groups, working with a half a dozen men, answering their questions about writing, having them describe what they were working on, and what they were interested in learning about. I wouldn't be surprised if I came away more inspired by them than they were by us."

-Charles Salzberg

# Writing Mentors for Women at the Rose M. Singer Center at Rikers Island Jail



Emma Goldman Sherman  
Poet, Playwright



Diana Burbano  
Playwright, Actor,  
Teaching Artist



Twinkle Burke  
Actor, Writer



Jen Fitzgerald  
Poet, Teacher

The Prison Writes program is incredibly meaningful for the women at Rosie's, many of whom have experienced intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and other forms of trauma. It provides participants with the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with their writing mentors, builds confidence in their knowledge, experiences, and creativity, and empowers them to work through their trauma. The care packages, books, and letters exchanged with their mentors provide a vital link to the community for many women who have no other form of support during their incarceration. During the time we have partnered with Prison Writes, I have noticed the many positive effects that a writing mentorship has had on my patients' mental and physical health -- this really speaks to the healing power of writing.

**-Rebecca Giusti, MD**

Associate Director of the Intimate Partner Violence Program  
at Rose M. Singer Center, Rikers Island

## Our Advisory Board

Our Advisory Board is comprised of experts in their fields, invited to join for what they each bring that is unique and necessary for our programming.

They are formerly incarcerated, former gang members, counselors, educators, and authors.

Members bring a specific skill-set to our programming, from youth counseling, to teaching and literacy development.

Their complete bios can be found at the end of the report.



Karen Thomas  
English Teacher, Advisor  
Fundraising and Outreach



Christian Claudio  
Advisor, Youth  
Engagement & Re-entry



Marion Valleders Smith  
Literacy Specialist



Khalil Koromantee  
Advisor, Education and  
Counseling



Charles Salzberg  
Writing Advisor



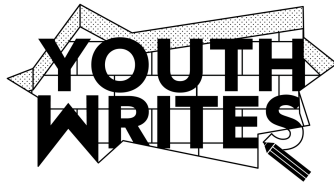
Tim O'Mara  
Writing Teacher

Jessica Hall was a breath of fresh air walking into the room. At Taconic NYS prison, I was required to do department-approved programs in the Re-Entry Unit during the last days of my sentence. Prison Writes workshop was the program that connected to us and valued our words. Jessica reached each participant on an equal ground. The usual hierarchical approach other program administrators took kept people inside at a distance. Not surprisingly, Prison Writes was the only program we looked forward to and actually took part in.

**-Jennifer Fecu**







Our writing projects with young people focus on self-exploration and expression through poetry, spoken word, and memoir. In these workshops, tailored to their interests and needs, young people build literacy skills and confidence in writing and communication with others.

## **NEW YORK CITY ADMINISTRATION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

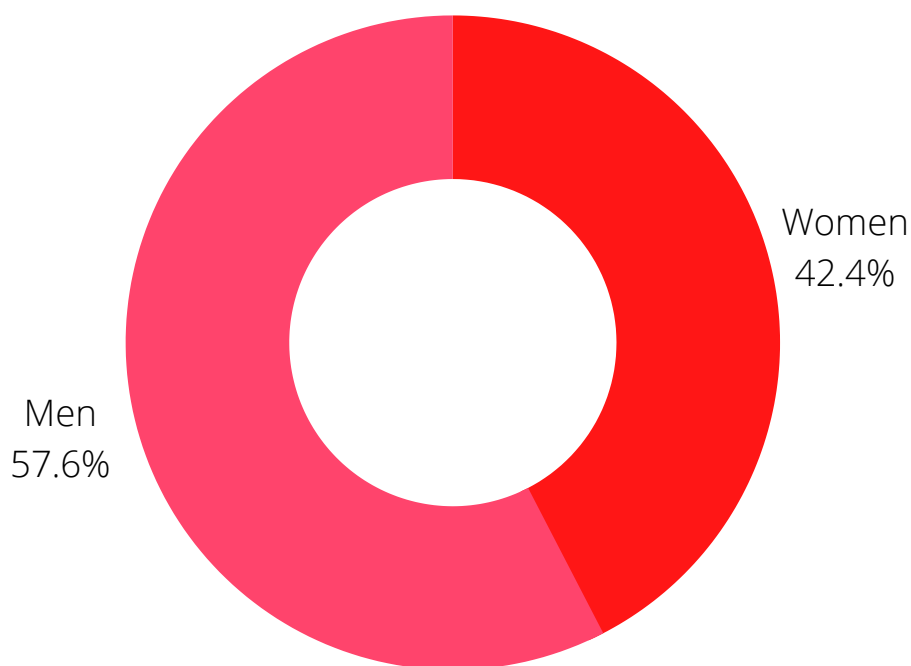
Youth Writes has been offering workshops to youth in group homes with ACS Close to Home since 2016 in every borough in New York City and The Children's Village at Dobbs Ferry. Our workshops engage our young participants in literacy through comics, word games, lyrics, spoken word and poetry relating to their interests and needs. Staff are invited to join in all activities to support communication and understanding.

## **BRONXCONNECT**

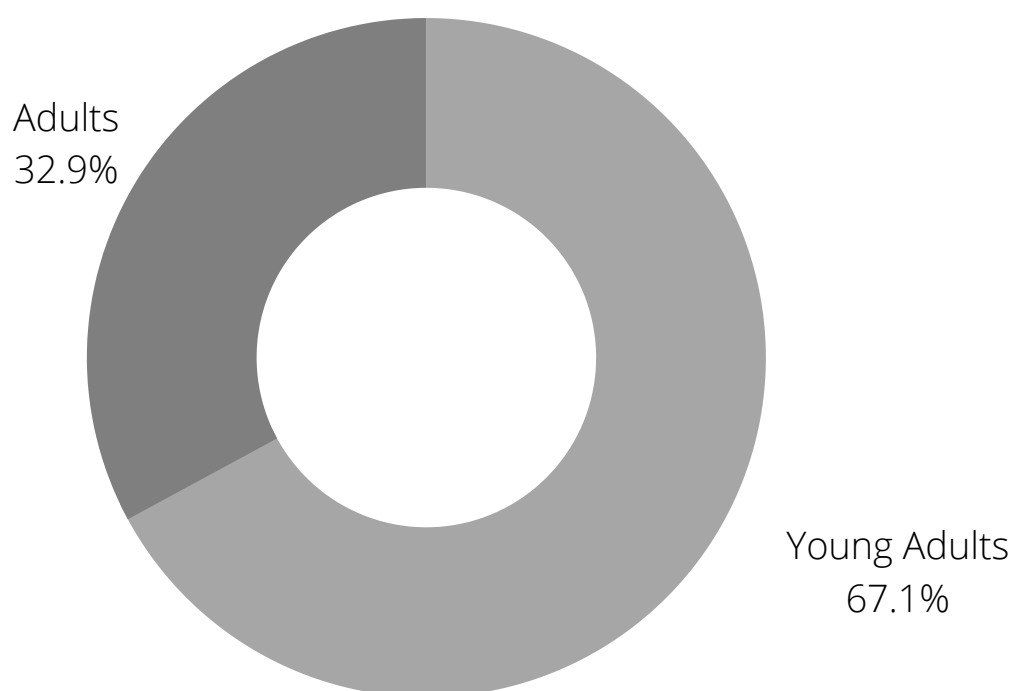
Since 2016, these lively workshops with youth in an Alternative to Incarceration program provide them with an expressive outlet. Workshops culminate in the publication of participants' work and a reading celebration hosted by Bronxconnect. Photo below features our facilitators and participants. A video featuring this program made by The Guardian can be viewed on the homepage of our website.



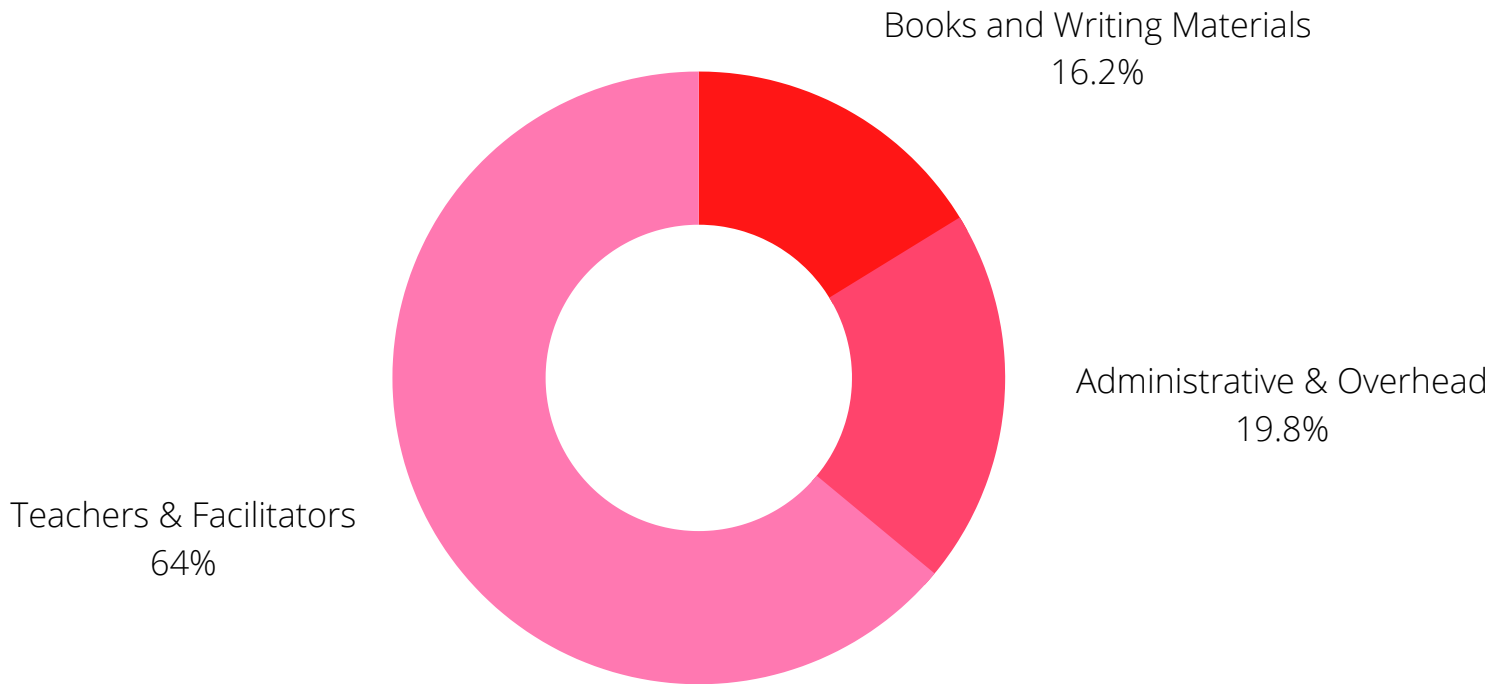




# 307 Participants Served



# Financials



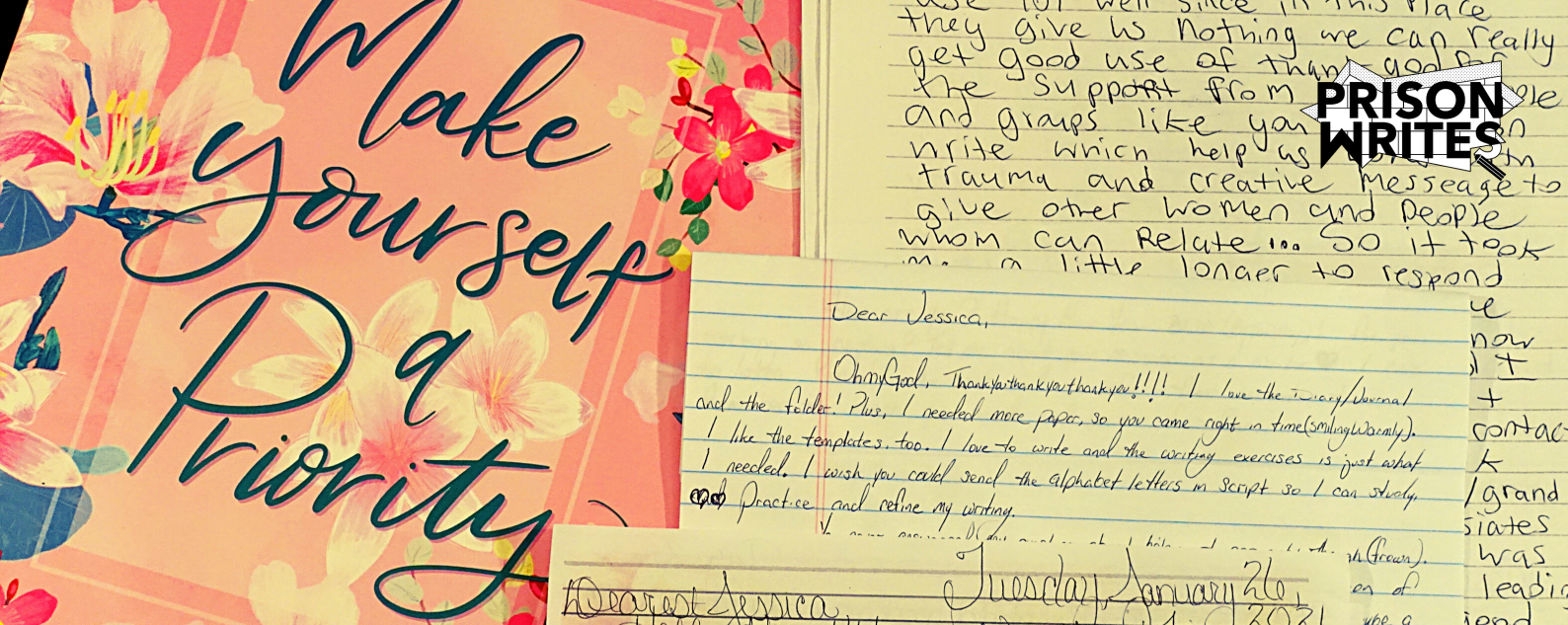
**Total Budget: \$43,000**

## **We have a small budget and big ambitions!**

We were able to continue to provide programming to our established partners during Covid-19, while developing new initiatives to reach out to our friends inside and in re-entry.



*Imagine what we could do with some real money!*



# Emotional Support Packages

"I spent 34-and-a-half years in prison, and I can say unequivocally that emotional support is the single most important thing to have. There's nothing more precious than knowing that someone in the outside world cares about you, has thought about you. Hearing your name called for mail or seeing your name on the package list brings such joy; it's the high point of an otherwise bland and boring day filled with routine dullness and isolation. A package doesn't have to contain expensive items. It's not what's inside the package that matters as much as the feeling of love and care that comes with it. An emotional care package always contains the touch of human kindness we all need." -- Karen Thomas

Emotional care packages contain a blank journal and informational folder on therapeutic journaling, affirmations, and writing prompts.

All materials are brand new, attractive, and brightly colored. Our goal is to distribute hundreds more packages this year to alleviate the isolation and suffering of incarceration; especially as we continue to be prohibited from working in person due to Covid-19.





Thank you for your  
support!



# Teacher Bios

## Christina Chiu

Christina Chiu is the winner of the James Alan McPherson Award for her novel *Beauty*, which was also selected as a Kirkus Best Books of 2020. She is also author of *Troublemaker and Other Saints*, a nominee for the Stephen Crane First Fiction Award and winner of the Asian American Literary Award.

Chiu has published in *Tin House*, *The New Guard*, *Washington Square*, *The MacGuffin*, *Charlie Chan is Dead 2*, *Not the Only One*, *Washington Square*; she has won literary prizes from *Playboy*, *New Stone Circle*, *El Dorado Writers' Guild*, and others.

Chiu hosts the virtual Let's Talk Books Author Series and curates and co-hosts the Pen Parentis Literary Salon in New York City. She is a founding member of the Asian American Writers' Workshop. She received her MFA in creative writing from Columbia University.

## Jen Fitzgerald

Jen Fitzgerald is a poet, essayist, photographer, and a native New Yorker who received her MFA in Poetry at Lesley University and her BA in Writing at The College of Staten Island (CUNY). Jen's essays, poetry, and photography has been featured widely, over the past decade, in venues such as *PBS Newshour*, *Tin House*, *Boston Review*, *NER*, *Colorado Review*, among others.

Her first collection of poetry, *The Art of Work* was published by Noemi Press in September of 2016.

## Felix Guzman

Felix is a an activist, poet, and organizer living in Crown Heights. An alum of the Rikers Island jail, Felix has been published in *Voices of Fortune* and has two poems featured in the *4Tune Society Success Stories* album from/by Fortune Society.

Brooklyn born and raised he is soon to self-publish his first collection of poetry titled *You Hold Space, You Have Value, You are Loved!*. Touching on universal themes of redemption, transformation, restoration, and self-love.



## Felix Guzman (con't)

Felix has been appointed to the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene Consumer Advisory Board, and New York City Council's Commission on Community Reinvestment and the Closure of Rikers Island.

He has performed poetry at venues, press conference/rallies, open mics and award ceremonies on the steps of City Hall, at Carnegie Hall, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Staten Island Fatherhood Awards, and more. His writing has appeared in the *NY Daily News* as an Opinion-Editorial on the issues of homelessness, and in *City Voices* Newspaper on the issue of removing law enforcement from encounters with those in emotional crisis.

## Judith Hannan

Judith is the author of the memoir *Motherhood Exaggerated* (CavanKerry Press) and *The Write Prescription: Telling Your Story to Live with and Beyond Illness*. Her writing has appeared in *Lilith Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *Narratively*, *Opera News*, among others. Through her work at the Children's Museum of Manhattan, Prison Writes, and the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, she is a writing mentor for those affected by illness, trauma, and social neglect.

## Tim O'Mara

Tim lives in Manhattan, where he teaches writing workshops. He writes full-time, having retired in 2017 from a 30-year career as a New York City public middle school special education teacher. Tim's debut novel, the Raymond Donne mystery *Sacrifice Fly* (2012), was nominated for the 2013 "Best First Novel" Barry Award. Subsequent books *Crooked Numbers* (2013), *Dead Red* (2015), and *Nasty Cutter* (2016) — received similar critical acclaim. Tim is editor of *Down to the River*, a crime anthology of short stories set on or near American rivers. He is a member of Mystery Writers of America, PEN America, Irish American Writers & Artists, and International Thriller Writers.

## Corey Rowe

Cory Rowe is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at LaGuardia Community College and Director of the College Way at Rikers Island. Her research focuses on higher education in prison and the reintegration of formerly incarcerated people. Cory has spent over twenty years working with adults in prisons and youth in detention centers. She holds a BA in African American Studies from the University of Wisconsin, Madison; an MA in Criminal Justice, specializing in Juvenile Justice, from John Jay College; and a PhD in Criminal Justice from the CUNY Graduate Center.

## Charles Salzberg

Charles Salzberg is novelist and writing instructor. He is the author of the Shamus Award Nominated *Swann's Last Song*, and the two sequels, *Swann Dives In* and *Swann's Lake of Despair*, which was a Finalist for the Beverly Hills Book Award and the Indie Excellence Award. His *Devil in the Hole* was named by *Suspense* magazine as one of the Best Crime Novels of 2013. He has written for such periodicals as *Esquire*, *New York Magazine*, *Redbook*, *Elle*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The New York Times Arts and Leisure Section*. He was a Visiting Professor of Magazine at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, and he has also taught writing at Sarah Lawrence, Hunter College, the Writer's Voice, and the New York Writers Workshop, where he is a Founding Member.

## Ravi Shankar

Pushcart prize-winning poet, translator, professor and PhD, Ravi Shankar has published and edited over 15 books, including the Muse India award-winning translations of 9th century Tamil poet/saint, Andal, *The Autobiography of a Goddess* (Zubaan/University of Chicago); *The Golden Shovel: New Poems Honoring Gwendolyn Brooks* (University of Arkansas) and *The Many Uses of Mint: New and Selected Poems 1997-2017* (Recent Works Press). Along with Tina Chang and Nathalie Handal, he co-edited W.W. Norton's *Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia & Beyond* called "a beautiful achievement for world literature" by Nobel Laureate, Nadine Gordimer. He is founder of *Drunken Boat*, one of the world's oldest electronic journals of the arts. He has taught and performed around the world and appeared in print, radio and TV in such venues as The New York Times, NPR, BBC and the PBS Newshour. He has won awards to the Corporation of Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, and most recently, his collaborative chapbook, *A Field Guide to Southern China* written with T.S. Eliot Prize winner George Szirtes, was published in the UK by Eyewear Publishing. He currently holds an international research fellowship from the University of Sydney and his memoir *Correctional* is forthcoming in 2021 with University of Wisconsin Press.

## Ibrahim Siddiq

Spoken Word Artist, Activist and Philosopher. Ibrahim Asad Siddiq (aka P.O.E.T) is rooted in poetry. P.O.E.T is an acronym for Putting Out Eternal Thoughts. In addition to performing, he is the artistic director of a grassroots arts program known as The FREE ART Project, through which he facilitates workshops and hosts open mics and showcases throughout NYC and Westchester.

## Tim Tomlinson

Tim Tomlinson is co-founder of New York Writers Workshop and co-author of its popular text *The Portable MFA in Creative Writing*. His published books include *This Is Not Happening to You* (short fiction); *Yolanda: An Oral History in Verse* (oral history/poetry); and *Requiem for the Tree Fort I Set on Fire* (poetry). His work has been collected in **Brooklyn Poets Anthology, We Contain Multitudes: Twelve Years of Softblow, Long Island Noir, Pa'lante a la Luz**, and elsewhere. He has been published in Australia, China, Singapore, the Philippines, and in numerous venues in the US, including *Lime Hawk*, *Missouri Review*, *Sin Fronteras*, and the *Tule Review*. He's on the Advisory Board of Asia Pacific Writers & Translators. He teaches in New York University's Global Liberal Studies program.

## Javier Cruz Winnik

Javier is the author and illustrator of his own series *A Reason to Smile!* It's about a little Puerto Rican girl from NYC who is a walking silver lining, and it's self-published and funded by Kickstarter.com. Javier has gone on to fund 2 more books, selling over 3,000 copies. He created stories for the *Puerto Rico Strong* and *Ricanstruction* anthologies, helping to raise money for Puerto Rico. He is cover artist of the independent comic book *The Adventures of Saladeen, Keeper of the Flame*.

# Mentor Bios

## Diana Burbano

Diana Burbano, a Colombian immigrant, is a playwright, an Equity actor, and a teaching artist at South Coast Repertory and Breath of Fire Latina Theatre Ensemble.

Diana's play *Ghosts of Bogota* won the Nu Voices festival at Actors Theatre of Charlotte in 2019. *Ghosts* was commissioned and debuted at Alter Theater in the Bay Area in Feb 2020. *Sapience*, was a Playground-SF 2020 Winner and was featured at Latinx Theatre Festival, San Diego Rep 2020. *Fabulous Monsters*, a Kilroys selection was to premiere at Playwrights Arena in 2020 (postponed).

She was a cohort in Center Theatre Group's 2018-19 Writers Workshop, and is in the Geffen's Writers Lab in 20-21. She has worked on projects with South Coast Repertory, Artists Repertory Theatre, Center Theatre Group, and Livermore Shakespeare Festival.

Diana recently played Amalia in Jose Cruz Gonzales' *American Mariachi* at South Coast Repertory and Arizona Theatre Company, and Marisela in *La Ruta* at Artists Repertory. You can also see her as Viv the Punk in the cult musical *Isle of Lesbos*.

She is the current Dramatists Guild Rep for Southern California.

## Twinkle Burke

Twinkle Burke is an Actor / Writer from New York City. She is a member of The Actors Studio Playwrights and Directors Workshop. Her work has recently been performed during the Shelter in Place through Dorset Theatre Festival, the TMI Project, and the Fantasy Theatre Factory in Florida. As an actor she has been seen on *Bull*, *For Life*, *Gotham*, and an upcoming episode of *Succession*. She is also in the upcoming Jim Gaffigan film, *Linoleum*. She is a member of The Dramatists Guild, SAG-AFTRA, and AEA. She resides in the Hudson Valley with her Family.

Jen Fitzgerald *bio page 19*

## **Emma Goldman-Sherman**

Emma's plays have been produced on 4 continents and include 2 podcasts available for download for free: Abraham's Daughters ([TheParsnipShip.com](http://TheParsnipShip.com)) and "Counting in Sha'ab" ([Golden Thread, PlayingOnAir.org](http://GoldenThread.org)). New work includes a contribution to PERIOD PIECE; TLC, a full-length commission for Experimental Bitch Presents to be produced in 2022; and The Tank has been streaming WHORTICULTURE (finalist Unicorn, Cutting Ball, Campfire, Owl & Cat) on demand through 4/17/21. Emma earned an MFA from University of Iowa where she received a Norman Felton Award, the Richard Maibaum Award for Plays Addressing Social Justice and PERFECT WOMEN won the Jane Chambers Award. Other awards include finalist status with BAPF and Henley Rose. She earned residencies with Millay, Ragdale and twice at WordBridge where she also worked as a dramaturg. As Resident Dramaturg, she created the 29th Street Playwrights Collective, WriteNow Workshop and is currently running [www.BraveSpace.online](http://www.BraveSpace.online) and the Brave New Workshop. She has taught at U of Iowa, Great Plains Theatre Conference, New York Writers Workshop and many other places.

Member: The Dramatists Guild, LPTW, LMDA, AJT. Her poetry is published in Oberon, American Athenaeum and many other journals and anthologies. Her plays are available with Smith Scripts (UK) and at [newplayexchange.org](http://newplayexchange.org).



# Advisor Bios

## **Christian Claudio**

Christian Claudio was born in the George Washington Carver Housing Projects in Spanish Harlem, and is a former drug dealer, gang member and formerly incarcerated. During his incarceration Chris left the gang, and committed his life to educating fellow inmates. On September 1, 2005, after serving fifteen years of a thirty-seven year sentence, he was released on parole. Since his release Chris has dedicated his life to educating youth. He is a certified New York State Gang Specialist and founder of a not-for-profit organization, “Throggs Neck – La Famiglia” focusing on reaching out to troubled youth through anti-gang & anti-bullying intervention, prevention, and awareness.

## **Kahlil Koromantee**

Kahlil received his Masters degree in Applied Psychology and Counseling from New York University. He is a New York State certified English teacher using life-coaching techniques specifically geared for teens and young adults whose personal conflicts get in the way of their academic success and overall development. Kahlil taught at the Adolescent Reception and Detention Center at Riker’s Island and worked over a decade as a Counselor for at risk students at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Khalil works with youth who are in the criminal or family court system, aging out of foster care, attending male-based programs, transitioning from High School to College, or struggling with their sexual identity. He is adept at motivating hard to reach youths who’ve suffered trauma and disappointment.

Khalil is the author of several books of poetry; his book ‘Message to a Youngblood’ is part of the youth program Yo! Baltimore’s curriculum.

**Tim O'Mara** *bio page 20*

**Charles Salzberg** *bio page 21*

## **Marion Valladares Smith**

Marion received a BA in Sociology from the University of Bombay. After six years on the faculty of the Alliance Française de Bombay, she completed training as a Trilingual Translator in Paris. She earned her MA degree in the Teaching of Languages at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Marion was tenured as the teacher of Spanish at the Little Red Schoolhouse and the Elizabeth Irwin High School in New York City. She has taught speaking, reading, writing and comprehension in rural India for ten years, trained urban schoolteachers in Bombay and Goa and coached adults with disabilities in Tennessee. She has volunteered at Columbia's Outreach Program and currently at the Institute for Immigrant Concerns.

## **Karen Thomas**

Karen was born and raised in Rensselaer, New York. Graduating from Oneonta University in 1969, she taught high school English and writing in Rensselaer public schools until her arrest in 1982 for the murder of her abusive ex-husband.

During her almost 35 year incarceration she taught GED and ESL, was a college tutor, and assisted women with legal work and resume writing. Karen translated the REACH curriculum into Spanish, and provided training in transmittable disease prevention, and AIDS counseling and education.

Karen is a founding member of the Family Violence Program which is a national model for other correctional facilities. The program improved outcomes for women in the criminal justice system for acts of self-defense against their abusers, requiring juries to consider abuse as a mitigating circumstance, using Karen's experience as an example, as well as other women who testified at the first public domestic violence hearing held in a maximum-security facility.

Karen is fluent in Spanish and provided translation for women for medical appointments, parole, and TRC . While at Albion Karen took a legal research class, going on to work full time in the law library when she moved to Taconic. Karen currently works as supervisor in Women's Prison Association transitional housing.



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

@prisonwrites

