EXECUTIVE ADDRESS FROM DIRECTOR JIMMY WU

PROFILE IN PHILANTHROPY:
INSIDEOUT WRITERS CO-FOUNDER SISTER JANET HARRIS

WRITING PROGRAM: INDEPTH LITERARY JOURNAL UPDATE
ALUMNI PROGRAM: FEATURED WRITING CIRCLES

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:
- SUPER BOWL RECOGNIZES IOW
- IOW FEATURED AT UCLA
Before anything else, thank you so much for joining us for this quarter’s InsideOUT Writers Newsletter. Though we are still just in the opening months of the new year, 2022 is already proving to be monumental for our team here at InsideOUT Writers. As you already know, we have been honored as one of Los Angeles County’s “Unsung Heroes” during Super Bowl LVI and will always be grateful to the NFL and its affiliates now that Super Bowl LVI has come and gone. In addition, InsideOUT Writers has secured highly competitive public grants from local county and state public agencies, as well as new or renewed funding from private foundations including the Roy and Patricia Disney Foundation, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, and the California Endowment.

I am personally excited to announce that the most recently secured funding we have received at InsideOUT Writers is propelling our organization forward. Notably, InsideOUT Writers is expanding its service population to include at-risk youth, foster youth, and youth involved with various systems within Los Angeles County. In lieu of arrest and incarceration, depending on why law enforcement was initially engaged, these youth will be referred to us so we can do our part to help redirect and divert our youth from further involvement with law enforcement agencies and the juvenile justice system. We believe that extending pen, paper, and nonjudgmental support to these new service populations will allow InsideOUT Writers to continue strengthening our communities by better taking care of Los Angeles County’s youth, our youth. Our staff is energized to take on this transition, and we are grateful to our financial supporters who have helped InsideOUT Writers take this meaningful and monumental new step.
In other InsideOUT Writers news, our team has relocated to a new office intersecting East Hollywood, Rampart, and Silver Lake. It is our hope that this new location will give us better access to the many youth and young adults who look to us for support, especially as we expand our service population. A vision that was created decades ago, is now an exciting reality for us, as you will read more about in the following pages of our newsletter. Lastly, I encourage you to check out the Written Off podcast that was released in 2021, where several InsideOUT Writers Alumni were recently featured. The podcast is available through Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and wherever else podcasts are streamed.

Thank you for your time, and I hope you enjoy the rest of the newsletter. On behalf of the entire InsideOUT Writers Team, many thanks to all of you for your ongoing support of our efforts to reduce recidivism by providing services to young people navigating juvenile detention and life after incarceration.

Deeply grateful and in solidarity,
Jimmy Wu
Profile in Philanthropy:
InsideOUT Writers Co-Founder
Sister Janet Harris

When gang members vandalized the schoolyard where Sister Janet Harris taught, she offered them access to the school’s athletic fields on the weekends in exchange for their promise to stop the graffiti. It was during this period that she first connected with young members of Los Angeles gangs including the 18th Street gang and Temple Street gang, even producing a film on the subject while receiving her MA in Communications from Loyola University. Later in the 1970s, Sister Janet worked as a gang counselor in the Los Angeles County probation department before transitioning to a role as the Head of Detention Ministries for the Diocese of San Bernardino. She then became Catholic Chaplain at LA’s Central Juvenile Hall, during which she helped found InsideOUT Writers in 1996.
Alongside Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Duane Noriyuki and several other creative writing professionals, Sister Janet launched InsideOUT Writers as a coalition of dedicated volunteers teaching creative writing to youth incarcerated in Los Angeles County's Central Juvenile Hall. Early on, she arranged for an incarcerated juvenile named Mario Rocha to participate in the program. Mario had been convicted of murder and had already spend two years behind bars. After reading the work Mario wrote during his InsideOUT Writers classes, Sister Janet Harris conducted her own research into his case and became absolutely convinced of his innocence. Accordingly, she led the charge to gather the resources and legal firepower needed to overturn his conviction. Along the way, filmmaker Susan Koch encountered Mario and Sister Janet’s story and decided to document his journey through the California appeals process in a now-award-winning film entitled Mario’s Story. After eight arduous years of legal battles, Mario's conviction was vacated in 2006. Following in Sister Janet's footsteps, he has committed himself to a career of juvenile justice advocacy.

Sister Janet’s courage and lifetime of service to others has garnered her international acclaim, including a variety of awards relating to juvenile justice and advocacy. At InsideOUT Writers, we are eternally grateful to Sister Janet for taking the initiative to found our organization so that thousands of juveniles now have a structured outlet for creative expression while incarcerated and access to resources and support upon exiting detention. It is an honor to tell her story and recognize the major contributions she has made while advocating for a safer and more empathetic Los Angeles County juvenile detention system.
I vividly remember meeting a kind and gentle nun nearly a year after being inside Central Juvenile Hall. Back then, as a 17-year-old, I was unable to fully appreciate why she wanted to talk to me and get to know me but now, as a grown adult, I get it. Sister Janet Harris is the reason why an innovative creative writing program, the first of its kind, was given life from a vision that she, and a few volunteer creative writing teachers, always generously provided while consistently and constantly holding in mind, heart and spirit, the importance of investing in our youth and young adults that has now blossomed into a well-recognized and respected non-profit organization in InsideOUT Writers.

Prior to being the Catholic Chaplain at Central Juvenile Hall, Sister Janet Harris walked the walk and talked the talk by being closely within proximity of those she felt always deserved more, and better. She could be seen in the streets of Los Angeles speaking and working directly with gang-involved youth who had resorted to finding a sense of love and support in their gang families since what they desired and longed for could not be found in their own homes. She always believed that young people could be re-directed and would be able to tap into their own hidden potentials if given the proper outlet to truly discover who they really were through honest and open communication, while also being properly guided and mentored by responsible and attentive adults around them. A gentle nun would boldly walk into neighborhoods and communities with open arms when most people would turn and run in the opposite direction.
That is what Sister Janet will always be known for: A crusader, a pioneer, a trailblazer, a person who dared to go against the grain and to always put her entire heart on full display with the hope that in so doing, those she interacted with would receive her in their own hearts and know that they were loved, and that they were important. They would know that their experiences mattered, that their stories were important and needed to be shared as widely as possible, that their voices needed to be amplified and not silenced. Sister Janet wanted them to know that they could be our teachers, and that all of us could be their students and learn from them.
When Sister Janet Harris approached me after I had spent 1.5 years in Central Juvenile Hall, I had no idea who she was and what she wanted from me. Within just minutes of my very first conversation with her, I knew she was different and unlike most of the other adults who were tasked with the responsibility of caring for me while I was under their supervision. Sister Janet simply wanted to know who I truly was, what I had undergone that led to my incarceration, and figure out how to best support me and love me under those circumstances. In the same way she showed up for me during a time I needed to be loved and cared about the most, she did the same for so many other youth throughout her time working inside Central Juvenile Hall, and in the streets of Los Angeles. Nothing mattered more to Sister Janet than making sure I knew she was there for me, that she was there for us.

As the Executive Director of InsideOUT Writers now, I can't help but think about how different my life would be had I never crossed paths with Sister Janet. I can say with absolute certainty that I would not be here. I would certainly not be employed by InsideOUT Writers and privileged to lead the organization, and I would likely not be alive at all. What Sister Janet and InsideOUT Writers have offered me has truly saved my life. This is not a dramatic statement, but a truthful statement to emphasize that what Sister Janet has done throughout her lifetime, has saved so many other lives along the way, including my own.
On January 30th, 2022, our beloved Sister Janet Harris turned 92 years young. The work we continue to do at InsideOUT Writers will forever remain in honor of her and we will continue to love on, and care for, our youth and young adults in the very ways she would want us to: unconditionally, honestly, and unapologetically. We will speak up and use our own voices for the voiceless, we will be courageous and take on battles and wars even if the odds are against us, and we will do our very best to continue impacting positive changes in the lives of everyone we encounter. That is what Sister Janet Harris lived for, and it is our duty to honor her work and her life in everything that we do at InsideOUT Writers.

We love you, Sister Janet, and we are eternally grateful to be doing our part to continue upholding your vision for a better world, and being the carriers of light and hope in the lives of so many young people who find themselves living in darkness and despair. Without you, there would be no us. Thank you for creating a place for us.

Happy Belated Birthday!

Thank you!
We invite you to read the Winter 2022 issue of InDepth Magazine, the quarterly literary magazine published by InsideOUT Writers to showcase the written work of youth and young adults participating in our Writing & Alumni Programs. A blend of both prose and poetry, this issue of InDepth Magazine is a retrospective to celebrate our students and their original writings.

Core to the mission of InsideOUT Writers (IOW) is our writing education through both the Writing Program and the Alumni Program. The Writing Program encourages incarcerated youth to write with clarity and authenticity about their past, current, and future. IOW continues the emphasis on writing as a valuable creative outlet during our Writing Circles within the Alumni Program. Through writing, IOW students are encouraged to channel their feelings of hopelessness, anger, fear, and frustration into writing, rather than into anti-social and criminal behaviors.

You can read the Winter 2022 literary magazine [here](#) and explore our past issues [here](#).
On February 10th, 2022, InsideOUT Writers hosted a special Valentine’s Day-themed Writing Circle led by Daniel Johnson in exploring the different types of love. While Valentine’s Day typically is associated with eros (romantic love), pragma (enduring love), and ludus (playful love), or romantic types of love, we wanted to explore other types of love associated with love of family, friends, and self. Using a healing and self-care perspective, we wanted to explore with our alumni members the importance of having a variety of different types of love to be a healthy human being. Philautia, known as self-love or regard for one’s own happiness, was explored as a starting point in making sure that one really learns to appreciate and accept one’s self. “You cannot love someone else unless you first love yourself,” was reported by one alumni member in the session. An organic conversation about the words that come to mind when discussing love was soon had. And the following list was generated:

- Familial love
- Romantic Love
- Platonic Love
- Puppy Love
- Love of Money
- Love of languages
- Unrequited love
- Love/Hate relationship
- Food is love
After a lively discussion, it soon became apparent that the concept of “love” is a complicated one. Some alumni discussed their love of food, especially around the past holidays. Others discussed unrequited love and their difficulty in navigating a difficult situation with someone they care about but simply didn’t have the same feelings in return. Some talked about the love of their siblings, specifically along the lines of how they deeply know each other’s upbringings and most intimate details by virtue of growing up together. It was equated as a love/hate relationship but one of those loves that is hard to replicate due to the closeness factor. Despite a brother and sister’s bitter disagreements, and at times strong conflicts, there is still deep love. In short, as a group, love was described as being a beautiful, painful, diverse, and complicated human emotion to truly understand. But it is one that becomes easier to understand with age.

By the end of the Circle, a discussion emerged on the importance of friendship love or love of friendship. As a result, IOW will be hosting a follow-up on this topic of Different Types of Friendships with our new Alumni Program volunteer, Shane Jones, to lead this discussion on February 24, 2022. We are looking forward to the discussion and writings of this evening.

“You cannot love someone else unless you first love yourself.”
Black History Month is a celebration of Black joy, Black triumph, and Black excellence. It is also a reminder of the injustices our Black neighbors have faced, both now and in the past. According to The Sentencing Project, Black juveniles in America are four times as likely as their white peers to be committed or detained in juvenile facilities. Despite representing only 14% of the total youth population, Black youth represent 47.3% of juveniles transferred to adult courts, per the NACDL.

Our mission at InsideOUT Writers is to uplift the voices of those impacted by juvenile incarceration, a disproportionate number of whom are Black. We are committed to empowering our youth and young adults to successfully reintegrate into our communities and become powerful advocates for themselves. Through our Writing and Alumni Programs, InsideOUT Writers is fighting for a more equitable justice system and striving to spread empathy for those navigating life during and after juvenile detention.

Black people deserve our action in pursuit of true racial justice, not only during Black History Month, but during each month of each year. This February, we invite you to join InsideOUT Writers in driving positive change by uplifting the youth and young adults in our communities who have been affected by juvenile detention.

Sources:
- National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, "Race and Juvenile Justice"
  - [https://www.nacdl.org/Content/Race-and-Juvenile-Justice](https://www.nacdl.org/Content/Race-and-Juvenile-Justice)
- The Sentencing Project. "Black Disparities in Youth Incarceration" by Josh Rovner
  - [https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/black-disparities-youth-incarceration/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=74aae5d8-0db8-4adc-80a0-eb5a838cac63](https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/black-disparities-youth-incarceration/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=74aae5d8-0db8-4adc-80a0-eb5a838cac63)
InsideOUT Writers (IOW) is honored to have been recognized as one of Los Angeles' "unsung hero" community organizations by the Los Angeles Super Bowl Host Committee in collaboration with Super Bowl LVI Legacy Grant Program.

As one of the recognized organizations, IOW received a $10,000 grant to support our efforts to provide creative writing programming and compassionate reentry services to incarcerated youth and formerly-incarcerated young adults in Southern California. In addition, the Committee helped produce a new video highlighting the work IOW is doing, which you can view here.

This recognition is especially exciting given that the Los Angeles Rams not only competed in front of our home crowd here in Los Angeles during Super Bowl LVI, but also emerged victorious! We are humbled by this designation as one of 56 change-making organizations in Los Angeles County and grateful for your ongoing support. Last but not least, Go Rams!
InsideOUT Writers featured on Los Angeles The Wave. "Making A Difference: Writers group works with incarcerated youth". Read it here!
https://wavepublication.com/making-a-difference-writers-group-works-with-incarcerated-youth/

Executive Director Jimmy Wu featured at UCLA Arts
Read it here!
https://arts.ucla.edu/single/jimmy-wu-how-writing-in-prison-saved-my-life/
The mission of InsideOUT Writers is to reduce the juvenile recidivism rate by providing a range of services that evolves to meet the needs of currently and formerly incarcerated youth and young adults.

Using creative writing as a catalyst for personal transformation, these young people are empowered with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully re-integrate into our communities becoming advocates for their future.

PEN. PAPER. PERSEVERANCE.
I write from the inside out.

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