

**iOW** InsideOUT  
WRITERS

# FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

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# Executive Address from IOW Executive Director Jimmy Wu

Nearly another full year has passed us by. As I reflect on this past year and prepare for the new one to come, I wanted to share some thoughts, as the Executive Director of our beloved organization, InsideOUT Writers (IOW).

On May 21, 2012, my own personal journey with IOW transitioned from once being an original student and alum of both our Writing and Alumni Programs, to becoming an employee of IOW's as the Case Manager. It was a life-changing experience for me, one of the purest joys I've ever experienced in my entire life. I was given an opportunity finally begin using what were once solely negative experiences of having once been incarcerated to now apply them in positive ways. I was given an opportunity to begin removing burdens I once carried to place as stepping stones for both myself and those who were coming behind me, those who were just like me having once been incarcerated and now doing their best to move forward with their lives. It has been an incredible journey for me the past 10 years working at IOW, a journey filled with many peaks and valleys. What a ride it has been.



I wanted to begin by sharing this because I know it has been difficult for nearly all of us the past few years, with a pandemic blindsiding all of us, forcing us to leave the only life we ever knew when this abrupt change was forced upon us. We needed to wait patiently for any indication we would be able to resume our lives as we knew prior to this pandemic, while remaining isolated from everyone including those closest to us. We were then slowly asked to emerge from what we had to live through during self-quarantine and self-isolation into a new world, and a new way of life, that had some resemblances of the life we remembered but now came with many changes as well.

I have said to many people this year that we no longer need to look far to understand why IOW's work is important. We, instead, can now all just look at what we have experienced throughout this pandemic to better understand and appreciate the incarceration and re-entry journeys tens-of-thousands of people whom IOW has serviced have undergone. Silver linings for all experiences, whether good or bad, or whether for us as individuals or that we share collectively, are there. Sometimes, we just need to take a step back and look for them.

So much as happened in 2022 at IOW. You will be reading in pages to come many highlights IOW has accomplished this year. They have been written by our current extraordinary team:

- Monica Vega, IOW's Alumni Program Case Manager
- Aeron "Pluto" Brown, IOW's Alumni Program Coordinator
- April Chavez, IOW's Diversion Program Senior Case Manager



However, before reading their reports, I'd like to offer some insights on our key highlights, as Executive Director of IOW, the following:

- (1) IOW is still here, as it has been since we were first formed in the mid-1990s as just an innovative writing class before obtaining our 501(c)(3) status as an official nonprofit organization. With changes in our funding along with the pandemic in more recent years, for IOW to still be here is monumental and deserving of the first highlight. This has been made possible in large part by continued support and contributions by the Orokawa Foundation and the Weingart Foundation, just to name a couple of our closest and steadfast supporters.
- (2) IOW, as has previously been shared, has not only overcome or survived the challenges it has faced, but has, in fact, been able to find a way to thrive under the most discouraging of circumstances. The following points will further explain how, and why.
- (3) IOW, despite having lost its primary source of funding for its Writing Program several years ago, secured new funding through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture and has been actively returning to provide its Writing Program to youth inside many Housing Units inside Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall since the beginning of 2022. Just months ago, IOW has also returned to a few Housing Units inside Central Juvenile Hall with more hopeful classes reinstated at Central Juvenile Hall to come.
- (4) IOW's Alumni Program is alive and well. Though there has been a drop in receiving new individuals to welcome into our Alumni Program, largely in part because of the pandemic and restrictions that have come with the pandemic, IOW has both retained and secured additional funding support that includes supporters such as the California Community Reinvestment Grants Program, as managed by the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, The California Endowment, and others.



- (5) In addition, this year, IOW began fully settling into its new office located at 3339 W. Temple St. 2nd Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90026. Through a collaborative effort with the UCLA Visual and Performing Arts Education Program and Homeboy Art Academy, a 4-month long project occurred earlier this year resulting in a mural gifted to IOW by this mural project participants. A video link to view this is provided in this newsletter so you may witness the heart, and hard work, that went into this extraordinary experience for all who were involved.
- (6) Lastly, IOW has been hopeful for quite some that alternatives to incarceration would become available for the youth and young adults IOW has always been here to service since its inception dating back close to 3 decades ago. The time has now finally come. IOW secured a hard-won contract with the Department of Youth Development in Los Angeles County to begin providing our services and programs, as an alternative to incarceration, through our new Diversion Program that was just launched months ago. Youth who are encountering Law Enforcement Officials for low-level offenses in our geographic service area have begun receiving our services and programs in lieu of previous historic practices of just arresting and incarcerating these youth.

All that I've mentioned, again, are just highlights to share what IOW has been working on throughout the year 2022. There are other events you will read about in the coming pages that include an Open House event, our first Open Mic/Halloween Party Event in our new office, and our first field trip in several years. There will also be many more events to come so please stay tuned. Please also reach out to us directly if you'd like to learn more about the highlights that have been mentioned and for more information on upcoming events.

Thank you all, so much, from my heart. Without you, all of you, there would truly be no us. Onward and upward, and always in solidarity.

With my love and deepest gratitude,

**Jimmy Wu**  
**Executive Director**  
**InsideOUT Writers**



# New IOW Mural

In the Summer of 2022, IOW began a three-month journey to bring something special to the new IOW office; a brand new mural! Our Executive Director, Jimmy Wu, brought together the UCLA Visual and Performing Arts Education (VPAE) students, Homeboy Art Academy, IOW alumni members, and staff together to brainstorm, in community, the theme, message, and design of the mural. It was not an easy project but it was one of the most rewarding projects of 2022. Seasoned alumni would meet once, sometimes twice, a week on either brainstorming, selecting pictures, or painting the wall. It brought together the IOW family and it was an experience to remember.

Catch our new promo video which captured this project from beginning to end.

Here is the link: <https://www.insideoutwriters.org/videos>  
Or use the QR code



# Writing Program

## Fall2022 InDepth Literary Journal



We invite you to read the Fall 2022 issue of InDepth Literary Journal Magazine, our quarterly magazine published by IOW to showcase the written work of youth and young adults participating in our Writing Program. A blend of both prose and poetry, the issue explores community, loss, and redemption, and transformation.

There are some pieces that reflect on childhood experiences around the development of friends, Halloween, and one features a student's account growing up in Watts and learning to adapt despite all odds. In one piece, a youth expresses his need to "grow up" and to be there for his mother. One youth talks about selfishness being the culprit of his self-described "limitations" and with this knowledge wanting to grow past it. Taken as a whole, this edition of InDepth explores themes of growth, self-accountability, and transformation.

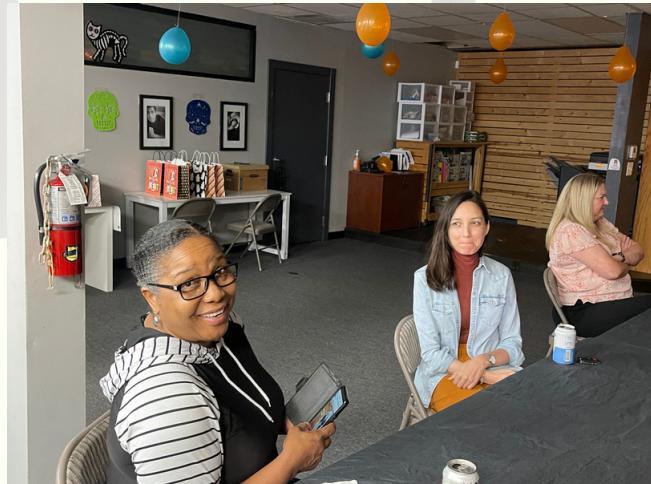
We hope you enjoy these writings as much as we enjoyed reading them and putting them in this edition.

# IOW Staff Updates

## Case Manager, Alumni Program Update

In the summer of 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom issued IOW the California Community Reinvestments Grant to fund our work in providing case management, resources, and mentorship to system-impacted youth and young adults across LA county. Through this grant, I joined IOW's team and, over the past year, I have been working towards providing job placement, professional development, system navigation services, and linkages to medical, mental health, and housing services for our IOW alumni. As our community is aware, there are numerous barriers to reentry that hinder our alumni in creating stable, successful lives upon returning to the community. At IOW, we not only work towards counteracting those barriers but doing so by utilizing whole person approach and trauma-informed care to empower our youth as they build towards creating their ideal life.

During my time here, I have been grateful to uphold these IOW traditions and provide direct case management to youth weekly. Part of my success in this work includes conducting community outreach with organizations across LA county. It is through the strength of our community partners that I am able to provide services to youth in any neighborhood or city in LA. I



In addition to my work on the outside, I also act as a teaching artist for our writing program inside Barry J Nidorf and Central Juvenile halls. These classes allow me to become a mentor and build my relationship with youth prior to their reentry into our community. At IOW, mentorship is key. This summer, two previously incarcerated youth joined the IOW team as interns and, as their supervisor, I provided mentorship and professional development to assist them in figuring out their career goals and building their resumes. At the completion of the IOW internship, both interns received employment through other organizations. This is just one example of many alumni success stories.

Sincerely,

Monica Vega  
Case Manager, Alumni Program  
InsideOUT Writers



# IOW Staff Updates

## Update from Alumni Program Coordinator

Dear IOW Family,

This year has been a journey for all of us, and we are glad to see us all still holding up alright. As we all have grown through this year and its experiences, IOW has also grown and we'd like to Thank You all for being here with us. This year we've made new friends, new partners, and been blessed to have more of our Alumni return home. We've also moved into a new home, but our space is where ever WE are because our family is not a building, it's a community of memories, love, and shared experiences, that hold us together. We were able to move into this new space, and bring with us memories of our times together from before. We then wove our inspirations, motivations, and old photographs into an AMAZING mural for our new space. A HUGE Thank You to Homeboy Arts Academy U.C.L.A. VAPAE, and all of our Alums that showed up, spoke up, and put their brushstrokes in.

We've also had a few group activities & outings like our Open Mic Night/Halloween Party, we were able to Universal Studios, and a movie premiere while. We're glad to see all of us still coming together for each other being true to ourselves, and trusting our ourselves to do what's best for us especially while still navigating the quasi-post-covid world and growing together through these challenging times. We also want to remind you that while we all are growing individually and as IOW as an organization takes on new roles & works in new areas, we also want our Alumni to know that we are still going to be here for you; helping as much as we can however we can.

Pluto Brown  
Coordinator and Job Placement Specialist, Alumni Program  
InsideOUT Writers



# IOW Staff Updates

## Update from Youth Diversion Services

My name is April Chavez, I am Senior Case Manager to the new Diversion program at Inside Out Writers. I was fortunate enough to be onboarded onto the IOW team in July of 2022. Though I am the newest member of the team, I have witnessed already the great impact IOW has on our alumni, community, youth, and partners. I have grown to become a better social advocate through the diversion program and have been fortunate to participate in community events, such as: The opening of the Mural Project, Writing Circles, Open Mic., Halloween Horror Nights, and our most upcoming one, Giving Thanks. Each community event has brought us closer, not only as a team, but as a community of people. It has genuinely been such a pleasure to witness alumni, youth, and partners come together in collaboration and celebration of one another.

In addition, I have participated in a two-month long Youth Diversion Provider Summer training, which has strengthened my ability to better understand the purpose of diversion and the importance of law enforcement/community collaboration. Thus far, through IOW's diversion program, we have been able to successfully assist a youth from avoiding incarceration and effectively removed off house arrest. I am genuinely happy to see the works of diversion and it being a positive impact on the lives of young people. I am grateful to be here and look forward to working with our community and youth!

**April Chavez**

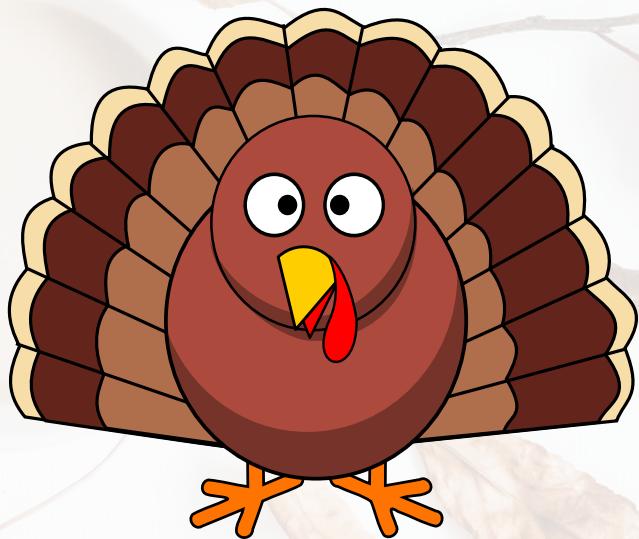
**Senior Case Manager, Youth Diversion Services**

**InsideOUT Writers**



# Calendar of Events

- **10/19/22 Halloween Horror Nights**
- **10/27/22 IOW Halloween Event**
- **11/17/22 Giving Thanks Event**
- **12/22/22 Holiday Party**





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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