

What's your story? Find your voice. Tell it.

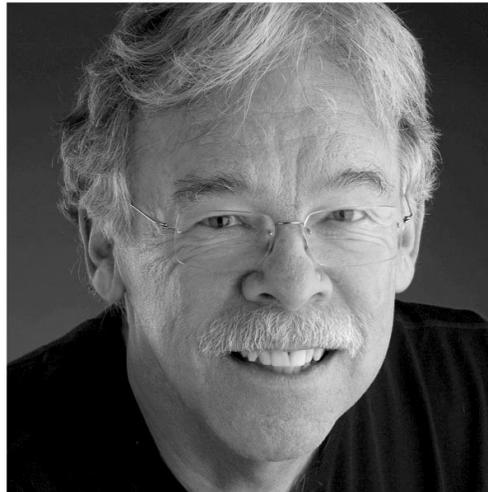


WRITERS
GUILD
INITIATIVE



Spring Newsletter 2025

A Letter From Richard Dresser



Greetings,

We started the Writers Guild Initiative 18 years ago, and as a small non-profit, we've faced our share of challenges along the way.

Today, we are stronger, healthier, feistier, and angrier than ever. In the past year, we've expanded our writing workshops, serving nearly 300 participants. We're able to do that through the generosity of our 150 mentors, a diverse group which is enabling us to conduct more workshops in Spanish.

But we are facing extraordinary challenges. The populations we work with have been demonized by the government and are under fire as never before. Funding just got tougher.

One example of how we are meeting this moment: In our work with the ARK, for LGBT asylum seekers, we are helping the participants write the affidavits for their application for asylum.

For several years we've worked with #MEAction Network, for those living with Long Covid. The government recently closed the Office for Long Covid Research and Practice, which means five years of progress fighting this disease is gone. These workshops are more important than ever.

One participant said, "The workshop saved a part of me the illness had taken away."

Our mission from the beginning has been to give a voice to populations not being heard. That mission has never been as urgent as it is today. We stand with these marginalized communities. They are the lifeblood of our democracy.

If we are to awaken from this nightmare, it's up to every one of us to do something positive and productive every single day. That's what we are attempting to do at WGI. Small changes lead to big changes. Do something that's meaningful to you — spread the word about the vital work we're doing at WGI, read a banned book, stay informed, stay inspired, and make your voice heard.

The country we live in is our responsibility.

For your continued support and standing with us during these perilous days, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Onward!

Richard Dresser
President, WGI

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WGI PROGRAM UPDATES

The Helen Deutsch Writing Workshops



United We Dream[®]

We are happy to once again hold sessions with one of our longest partners, [United We Dream!](#) Our mentors led four groups of these writers through exercises and developing their stories, including a Spanish writing group. We are working to expand our roster of Spanish-speaking mentors to further support our participants.

“A pesar de haber llegado tarde a la primera sesión, los mentores y el resto del elenco me recibieron con gusto. Inmediatamente me incluyeron en el ejercicio de escritura y retroalimentación. {Despite arriving late to the first session, the mentors and the rest of the group welcomed me warmly. They immediately included me in the writing and feedback exercise.}”

— UWD Writer

ALA American
Library
Association

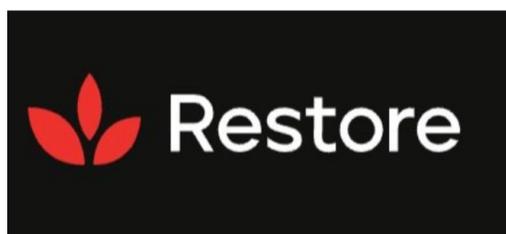
We are thrilled to partner with the [American Library Association](#) for the first time! Over the course of four Saturdays, we worked with 30 librarians combating book bans all across the country.

“Honestly, this was moving in a way that I truly didn't expect. I had so much catharsis during our writing sessions from hearing the writing of the other participants in our group. It was such a deeply connecting experience that I truly feel like I was able to access a deeper part of myself. I doubted I would ever hear from other librarians who had the same lived experience as well. To be able to connect with them in this way was a blessing.”

— ALA Writer



In February, we sent a team of mentors back to Indiana for another installment of workshops with [Pendleton Correctional Facility](#). We are committed to four trips this year to guide nearly 50 men at this facility to complete a project of their own. We went there again in April, and have 2 more sessions this summer and fall.



Later in February, we had another round of sessions with our longstanding dual partners: [Restore NYC](#) & [Empower Survivors Now](#). These workshops are very important for these writers to have an outlet for their experiences, and have a safe space. We are happy to also offer Spanish-speaking groups for this cohort.



**WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT®**

In April, we had another round of workshops with our longstanding partner [Wounded Warrior Project](#). At their Share Space, several writers came to read their work to each other and actively listen to the powerful presentations. Building community through writing is always one of our goals.

“This gave me the opportunity to love words again. I can either write about my trauma or not, but I don't have to relive it. I can write about the things I love, the worlds I've created in my mind, without fear of ripping open wounds that are meant to heal. Words are healing and I hope to be able to heal another person with my words.”

— WWP Writer



Finally, we just completed our fourth installment with [#MEAction Network!](#) These dedicated writers are meeting over three weeks this month and have an opportunity to read at their dedicated Share Space. There were more participants than ever who signed up, so we added another mentor group!

“I have felt seen, heard, understood. It has been nurturing and nourishing. We had an amazing group, all very talented and lovely people. Also, very nice to see that this cohort was very international. I feel so lucky to have been able to listen to other people's amazing writing, really connect to it and them and learn so much just by listening. It has been very emotionally impactful and above all, very healing to be able to do this in community.”

— #MEAction Network Writer

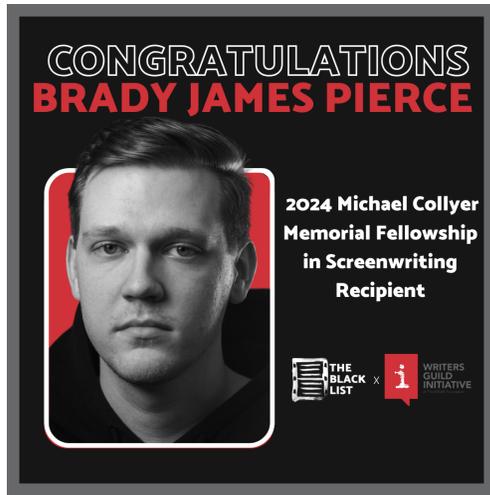
2025 WGI GALA: CRUNCH TIME



Thank you to all who attended and supported our recent Gala: CRUNCH TIME. Congratulations to all our exceptional writers! We could not do what we do without our amazing writers, mentors, staff, Board, and of course, our supporters!

[View Gala highlights](#)

The Michael Collyer Memorial Fellowship in Screenwriting



We would like to congratulate our 2024 and 2025 Collyer Fellows, [Brady James Pierce](#) and [Josh Leong](#)! They are both talented screenwriters and we are excited to see what they do next! [Read more about the program here.](#)

The Collyer Fellowship is a one-year fellowship that is awarded to an emerging screenwriter who intends to pursue a career in screenwriting. The winner receives a \$10,000 stipend to write an original screenplay (not the script used to opt into the fellowship) and is mentored during the fellowship year by a prominent screenwriter.

This program is a partnership between the [Writers Guild Initiative](#) and [The Black List](#). Next year will be the tenth year of the Michael Collyer Fellowship in Screenwriting. Thank you to our friends at The Black List!

SUMMER INVITE TO WRITE CHALLENGE



We are getting ready to launch our annual Invite to Write Challenge, where we ask participants to spend the summer writing on a prompt. Look out for the theme and submission details in June! You can also look for these pieces on our blog and socials in the fall. Read previous submissions below!

[Read the work from our participants!](#)



Writers Guild Initiative programs are made possible by your generous contributions. [Your donation](#) enables us to provide transformative writing workshops to underserved populations with powerful stories to tell.

Thank you for your support!

NYC[®] Cultural Affairs

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Writers Guild Initiative | writersguildinitiative.org

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