



**What's Your Story?  
Find Your Voice.  
Tell it.**

**Fall 2023 Newsletter**

# A Letter from Richard Dresser



Friends,

During these dizzying, chaotic times with breaking news interrupting breaking news, WGI is on a roll.

We're just coming off a hugely successful project to combat book banning. Spearheaded by board member Fred Graver, we joined forces with PEN America and Unite Against Book Bans for an online event on Instagram featuring Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick, BD Wong, Mandy Patinkin, Kathryn Grody, Edie Falco, Neil Gaiman, Lewis Black, Andrea Martin, Wendie Malick, and John Doman. It was viewed 2.6 million times with 14K likes, and 500 plus people shared their own "Books That Changed My Life."

In the coming days, we'll be putting together a writers' room to devise ways to challenge the narrative that book banning is about "parental rights."

We're also in the midst of an ambitious slate of writing workshops with new and existing partners, including: Brooklyn Public Library, Save the Brave (military veterans), Wounded Warrior Project, Pendleton Correctional, Restore NYC/Empower Survivors Now (survivors of human trafficking), #ME Action (people living with long term covid and chronic fatigue), and The Ark at CBST (LGBT asylum seekers).

We've just welcomed three new board members and expanded our bi-lingual roster of extraordinary mentors, writers from all over the country who donate their time and talent to our mission. Our small, ferociously dedicated staff somehow makes it all work.

During the pandemic, we made a swift pivot to conducting our writing workshops on Zoom. While this enabled us to reach isolated populations in need, there is simply no substitute for the in-person workshops that are the beating heart of what we have been doing for fifteen years. Our work involves trust, intimacy, and nuance, all of which is less effective on a screen. As the worst of the pandemic is behind us, we are transitioning back to in-person workshops. It is a heavier lift financially, but the results more than justify it. We appreciate anything you can donate to support our in-person workshops.

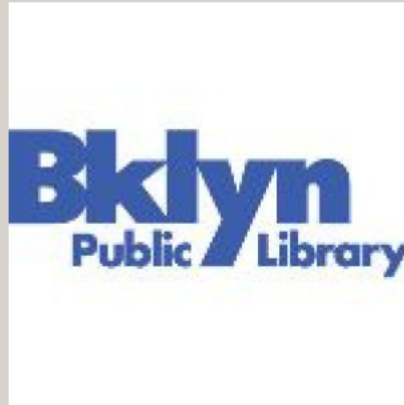
During these perilous times, the need for our writing workshops is greater than ever. We are approached by more and more groups who would benefit from our work. We thank you for your ongoing support which is allowing us to expand our roster of workshops and reach more marginalized populations. We truly could not do it without you.

We wish you all the best for the holidays,

Richard Dresser  
President

# **WGI PROGRAM UPDATES**

## **The Helen Deutsch Writing Workshops**



In July, we began a new partnership with Brooklyn Public Library! Over two weeks on Zoom, our mentors worked with young writers to hone their skills and explore different styles. We also hosted a Share Space with this cohort, where several participants read their work for the entire group! One participant said: "It made me realize I am a good writer and taught me how to be even better."



Later on, in September, we hosted a workshop in Bend, Oregon, with another new partner: Save the Brave! STB is a nonprofit committed to promoting the wellness of veterans. This partnership was brought to us by one of our past participants, Javier Romo, who has dedicated his life to preventing suicide among veterans.

During the week, participants engaged in outdoor activities such as white water rafting during the day and wrote during our workshops in the evening. You can listen to our mentors talk about their experience on the "Rogue Cell" podcast [on Spotify!](#)



In October, we continued our partnership with The Ark at CBST for LGBTQ + Asylum seekers. While this was our third cohort with The Ark, it was our first in-person workshop in some time. The Ark hosted us at their magnificent space in midtown, and we had both English and Spanish groups. We are looking forward to deepening and continuing this partnership this Spring.



## WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT®

In November, we had a fall cohort with our longstanding partner, Wounded Warrior Project! On two Wednesday evenings, participants guided by our mentors guided participants into techniques for telling their unique stories. A veteran participant said: "This was the best writing experience I have had! I have done many workshops, but this is the first time I have been able to create and share!"



Finishing up the fall, we began a new partnership with the #MEAction Network, an organization working to uplift and create awareness for those with myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome, as well as those suffering from long COVID-19. Over one hundred people from all over the world expressed interest in our workshops.

For three weeks on Zoom, we had five mentor groups work closely with this cohort to tap into their passion for writing. We had participants from as far away as Canada, Germany, Ireland, and Norway. With such a robust response from this community, we are working to deepen and expand this partnership

# WGI SPRING GALA 2024

## TWIST OF FATE

**DATE: Tuesday, April 16, 2024**

**LOCATION: The Edison Ballroom, NYC**

On April 16th, 2023, we will again host our annual spring gala!

As always, we will feature the work of our talented writers presented by some of New York's finest actors. You can find interviews and photos with past Gala writers on our blog! Stay tuned for tickets and more information



In October, we teamed up with PEN America and Unite Against Book Bans to bring attention to the urgent crisis around book banning in the United States. Board Member Fred Graver led our team, in partnership with Pen America and UABB, in an online event featuring Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgewick, Mandy Patinkin, Neil Gaiman, Edie Falco, Andrea Martin, and others for Banned Books Day of Action. [Check out the video here!](#)

After seeing Andrea Martin's video, [rock star Pink gave away over 2,000 banned books at four Florida concerts!](#)

# MICHAEL COLLYER FELLOWSHIP IN SCREENWRITING



## Submissions Open - Michael Collyer Memorial Fellowship

The Michael Collyer Memorial Fellowship in Screenwriting 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, now in its 16th year, is a partnership between the Writers Guild Initiative and the King Family Foundation, and this is its eighth year being hosted on [bcklst.com](http://bcklst.com).

This provides an opportunity for an emerging screenwriter to develop an original screenplay and assist in transitioning into the professional world of screenwriting. The Writers Guild Initiative (WGI) is looking for diverse and unique voices and for projects that are character-driven and personal in nature, exclusively seeking feature films; no shorts, plays, or TV pilots at this time.

Note that this fellowship is for screenwriters between the ages of 18-25 who will be no older than 25 as of December 31, 2023. For more information or to apply, please visit the [bcklst.com](http://bcklst.com).



Writers Guild Initiative programs are made possible by your generous contribution. Your donation enables us to provide transformative writing workshops to underserved populations with powerful stories to tell. Thank you for your support!

## Donate Here



Be sure to check out our blog and social media. Read interviews with our participants and follow our writing prompt challenge.



This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.