

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

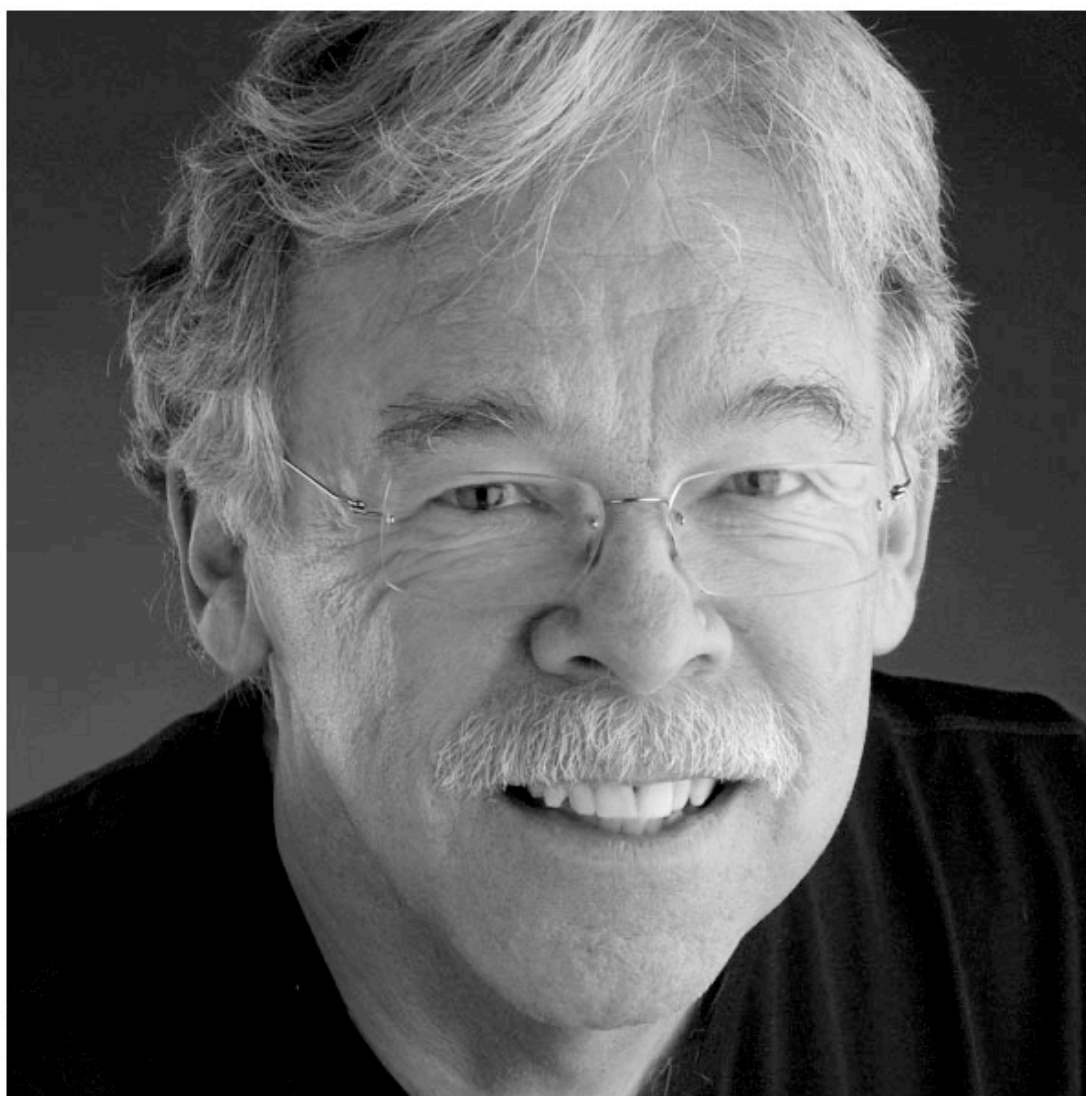


WRITERS  
GUILD  
INITIATIVE



## Spring Newsletter 2024

A Letter From Richard Dresser



**Greetings,**

During this critical historical moment that we're all living through, what each of us does matters more than ever. The actions that we take now will determine much of what happens for the next generation and beyond.

These are troubled times indeed. But what we know is that in times of chaos, things do not stay the same. Profound positive change is more possible now than ever, because everything's in flux. The biggest danger we face is our own feelings of helplessness. We're sleep-walking through a living nightmare, and the constant refrain is: *But what can we do?*

Here's what we're doing at WGI: more writing workshops than ever before, because frankly more are needed. Our mission has never been so urgent.

Our recent workshops include [FOOTSTEPS](#), for people transitioning out of ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities, [RESTORE](#), for survivors of human trafficking in New York, and [SAVE THE BRAVE](#), which combats suicide among veterans. We're still working with long-time partners like [Wounded Warriors](#), [Witness to Innocence](#), which serves exonerated death row prisoners, nurses on the front lines of Covid, LGBT asylum seekers, and many more. I'm just back from an extraordinary and inspiring two-day workshop at [Pendleton Correctional](#), a maximum-security prison in Indiana.

What do these workshops do? They give a voice to people who are not being heard. And when people find their voice, they use it. They articulate what the world is like for them, and that's a powerful first step in changing the world. We know this is true because we are in the rooms with people who are finding their voice for the first time and are on fire with what they have to say. Writing is an act of faith that words matter, voices matter, and change is truly possible.

As one participant said: **This workshop has opened my eyes and has shown me how writing can change the situation for the better.**

Besides the ever-expanding slate of workshops that we've been doing for 16 years, we're also standing up to the 3,000 book bans in the USA last year.

Following our successful fall Instagram campaign in partnership with PenAmerica that featured our actor friends talking about the banned books that changed their lives, we're planning an October event at Wesleyan University. It will include a panel of authors of banned books, performances of scenes from banned plays, and a College Bowl-type game show in which high school students compete about their knowledge of banned books for scholarship money.

As an organization, we are more active than we've ever been, fighting against the banning of books and helping people from marginalized populations find their voice so they can stand up, join the conversation, and be a part of whatever happens next.

We could not do what we do without your generous support, for which we are deeply grateful.

I wish you all the best for the days ahead.

**Richard Dresser**  
President, WGI



We returned to the Edison Ballroom in New York City on April 16th for our Annual Spring Gala! As always, we featured the work of our talented writers presented by some of New York's finest actors. You can find [interviews with Gala writers](#) and photos of the Gala on [our website](#)!

DONATE

Make the art of storytelling accessible to all.

## WGI PROGRAM UPDATES

### The Helen Deutsch Writing Workshops



We kicked off 2024 at WGI with a new partnership: **Outreach**, an LGBTQ Catholic resource. Our mentors spent two weeks on Zoom diving deep with these writers, providing an outlet to tell their stories as LGBTQ Catholics.

*"I am happy this workshop has given me the opportunity to connect with the outside world, with people I never expected to know in life." —  
Workshop Participant*



In January, we finally had the opportunity to host an in-person workshop with our recurring partners, **Restore NYC** and **Empower Survivors Now!** Four of our mentors helped guide these survivors through writing exercises in both English and Spanish.

*“It's the first time telling my own history to another person, and writing about it.” — Workshop Participant*

In February we worked with **Footsteps**, forging yet another new partnership. This organization provides an outlet for those stepping away from ultra-Orthodox Judaism. Many of the writers in our workshop asked for more sessions!



*“Incredible. I WISH for more. It gave me confidence and reminded me how much I love to write.” — Workshop Participant*



Spring began with another workshop alongside inmates at **Pendleton Correctional Facility**, our long-standing partner in Indiana. Over the course of two days, more than 40 writers joined with our mentors, finally having an outlet to express their complex experiences.

*“Our guys went to their cells and dorms today with huge smiles on their faces and feeling like they had a weekend full of accomplishment and forward momentum. It was outstanding and amazing...”*

*— Partner, Pendleton Correctional Facility*

## **The Michael Collyer Memorial Fellowship in Screenwriting**

This program, now in its 16th year, is a partnership between the [Writers Guild Initiative](#) and the King Family Foundation. We are in our eighth year of being hosted on [The Black List](#)

A record number of submissions were received this year. The winner will be announced later this spring, thank you to all who submitted!

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.

# WHAT NOW!?



## The Michael Collyer Fellowship in Screenwriting



### SUMMER INVITE TO WRITE CHALLENGE

Every year we give our participants a theme or prompt and encourage them to submit a brand new piece written over the summer. Then, we feature the submissions we receive throughout the fall.

WGI WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT  
WRITING PROMPT CHALLENGE

# Invite to Write





Writers, keep your eyes open in the next few weeks for our annual summer **Invite To Write** challenge!

Get ready, because the challenge begins **June 14**. Prompt and guidelines will be posted on our site and socials when submissions open. [Check out the previous submissions](#). We look forward to seeing your work.



**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!



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