



Voices UnBroken

Annual Report

2015

A Message From Our Executive Director



Dear Friends,

At the end of our 15th year of engaging young people in the justice and foster care systems, we have so much to be proud of!

Our long history of working with young people during transitional moments in their lives has taught us invaluable lessons about navigating change. As stated in our guiding principles, we are a learning organization and we use our daily experiences to create a cycle of continuous improvement in our services and in everything we do.

In 2015, Voices UnBroken experienced our first executive transition when Founder, Victoria Sammartino, stepped out of her role as Executive Director. It has been a pleasure for me, as a founding board member, to have the opportunity to lead the organization as its Executive Director since that time.

One of my favorite stories from 2015 that highlights one of Voices UnBroken's greatest strengths is from a workshop at Horizon Juvenile Center that was facilitated by one of our experienced and talented Teaching Artist/Workshop Facilitators, Mimi Acosta. One young lady in her workshop was absolutely not interested in participating. But, because Mimi was facilitating the workshop in the living area, the entire group had to be there. In her first writing activity, the young lady hastily scribbled on her paper the most provocative statements she could, trying to dismiss Mimi and the workshop. However, Mimi was relentless! By the third session, Mimi had spent enough individual time with her, providing encouragement, feedback and continued opportunity, that the same young lady wrote a beautiful poem about life, nature and happiness. She was so proud of her piece that she presented her final copy written neatly in colored pencil to coincide with the theme of each stanza.

Our mission tasks us with supporting community growth and we believe that listening and providing audience to these precious stories is a major stepping stone to achieving this change.

Thank you for supporting Voices UnBroken for the last 15 years and creating opportunities for us to nurture young people's voices and stories.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie A. Britt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leslie A. Britt

Our Mission

VOICES UNBROKEN IS A BRONX-BASED NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION THAT IS DEDICATED TO PROVIDING UNDER-HEARD MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY-PRIMARILY YOUTH, AGES 12-24- WITH THE TOOLS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATIVE SELF-EXPRESSION. THROUGH HIGH QUALITY CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES, GROUP HOMES, RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITIES, JAILS, AND VARIOUS OTHER ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS, VOICES UNBROKEN NURTURES THE INHERENT NEED IN ALL PEOPLE TO TELL THEIR STORIES AND BE HEARD. IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT THIS TELLING OF STORIES AND SHARING OF DREAMS LEADS TO INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY GROWTH.

Our Programs

Voices Beyond Bars workshops take place in jails and juvenile justice facilities; meet for 90-minutes and can include anywhere from 8 to 18 weekly or bi-weekly sessions, depending on the needs of the individual site. All workshops culminate in a celebration that includes participants reading their own writing and distribution of certificates that can be used in court to represent participation in positive activities.



Rikers Island

Rose M. Singer Center, Female

Robert N. Davoren Complex, Male

Juvenile Justice Facilities

Horizon Juvenile Center, Female & Male

Crossroads Juvenile Center, Female & Male

Good Shepherd Services' Peter J. Sharp Non-Secure Detention, Female

Good Shepherd Services' Shirley Chisholm Non-Secure Placement, Female

Sheltering Arms' New Way Non-Secure Detention, Female

Sheltering Arms' New Bridge Non-Secure Detention, Male*

Sheltering Arms' New View Non-Secure Detention, Male*

Sheltering Arms' 162nd Street Non-Secure Placement, Female

Sheltering Arms' Marolla Non-Secure Placement, Male*

Belmont High School (serving youth in NSDs & NSPs), Female & Male*



Speaking Our Voices workshops take place in restrictive residential settings and in community-based settings. These workshops serve young people who are in the foster care system, in residential drug treatment, in alternative-to-detention programs or in other community-based programs. Speaking Our Voices workshops meet for 90-minutes, once a week for 10-weeks, and culminate with a final celebration and reading of participant writing.



Alternative-to-Detention Programs

CASES Choices Harlem, Female & Male*

CASES Choices Bronx, Female & Male*

Center for Community Alternatives, Female & Male

Residential Drug Treatment

Odyssey House Lafayette, Female

Foster Care

Good Shepherd Services' Euphrasian Residence, Female

Sheltering Arms' McMurray Group Home, Male*

Community-Based

Children's Aid Society's Next Generation Center, Female & Male

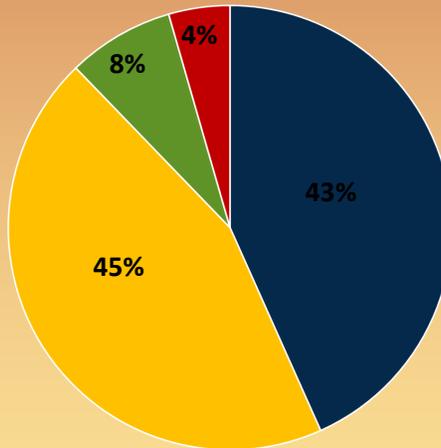
*Indicates new site in 2015

Participants



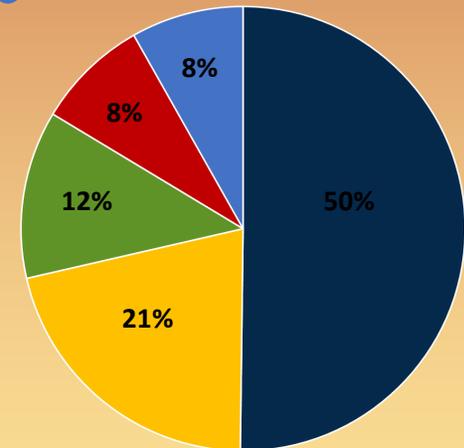
Age

- 11-15 years old
- 16-18 years old
- 19-24 years old
- 25+ years old



Population

- Juvenile Justice
- Alternative-to-Detention
- Adolescents on Rikers
- Residential Drug Treatment
- Foster Care

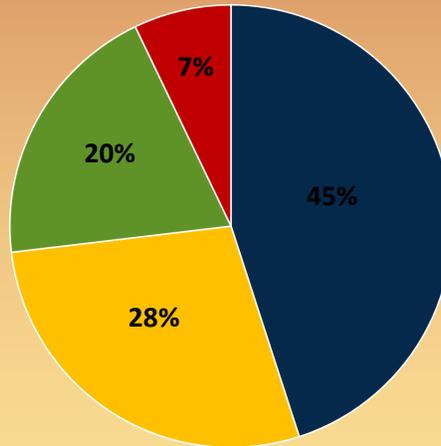


*Call me wise beyond the short years I lived,
on this small world
Call me young for the decisions I've made
and for what they were worth
And like the satin flower petals that stain my
nose with pollen
I seek freedom in the skies where no one can
find me...*

- Destiny, age 18, Odyssey House Lafayette

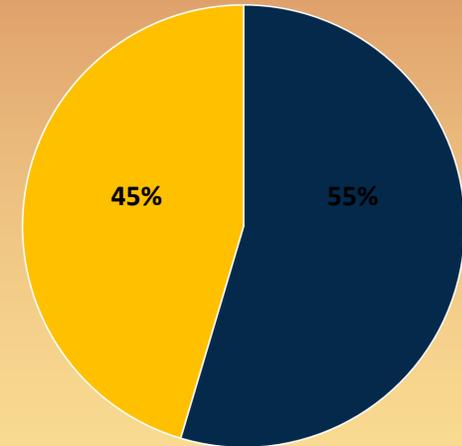
Racial Identity

- African-American
- Latino
- Multi-Racial
- Other



Gender

- Male
- Female



Participants Assert

After the workshop, participants report:

90%: I think what I learned in this workshop will be **useful to me in the future**

90%: I feel **successful** in this workshop

88%: I feel like **my ideas counted** in this workshop

85%: This workshop **helped me think about my goals** for the future

82%: I **received help from one of my peers** in this workshop

Perseverance

"I like that it made me never want to give up.

- Iesha, age 15, Sheltering Arms' 162nd Street NSP

"Don't stop because you don't know how to do it, try your best and you will do it." - John, age 15, Horizon Juvenile Center

I like "how we can talk with each other instead of arguing"

- Kayla, age 17, Horizon Juvenile Center

Positive Alternatives

I liked the "poetry and the lines we used to describe our insides."

- Byron, age 15, Sheltering Arms' New View NSD

I learned "when I'm angry to write poems."

- Bethany, age 16, Sheltering Arms' New Way NSD



Participants Deserve

A Judgement-Free Zone

Be Real

My Voice is the future upon your life

I will use my voice to push the clouds and show the light into your eyes

and tell you

you are not by yourself

Hear me when I say life is not a game

You can always earn fame,

when you be real

and show you're the deal

- Xavier, Age 15, Center for Community Alternatives

*"I like "that there was no wrong answer and we got to express things." -
Nadia, age 16, Good Shepherd Services' Euphrasian Residence*

*"I learned to be less shy, it's ok to be myself."
-Deena, Age 18, Odyssey House Lafayette*

Positive Relationships

*I liked most "the respect Mr. Luke gave us/me."
Ysrael, age 13, Sheltering Arms' Marolla NSP*

*I liked that the "facilitator was very patient when I didn't understand something and helped me."
-Kelsey, age 15, Good Shepherd Services' Peter J. Sharp NSD*

*I liked that we "get to write poetry and read out loud in front of each other."
-Jonah, age 16, Sheltering Arms' Marolla NSP*



Our Publications

*If you really knew me, you would know that...
I'm not an easy person to deal with
Most consider me a handful
It feels like I got the world on my back
And I got a temper like a damn bull
I'm just misunderstood
Most people would understand
But only if they would
I mean who cares about a nigga from the hood?
The world runs 24/7 and really maybe
1 out of the day would have the decency to say
"Ray are you okay?"*

Rachel, age 16, Horizon Juvenile Center
(his 3rd workshop cycle with Voices UnBroken)

Voices Ink is the publishing arm of Voices UnBroken. In 2015, we published our 12th anthology of participant writing and 11th issue of Voices Ink, a full-color magazine that is distributed to individuals and organizations throughout the country.

It's Taking A Long Time To Get Back

Our 2015 anthology of poetry created in Voices UnBroken workshops held in the Bronx and also includes writing by participants at other sites who call the Bronx home.

Issue 11 of Voices Ink

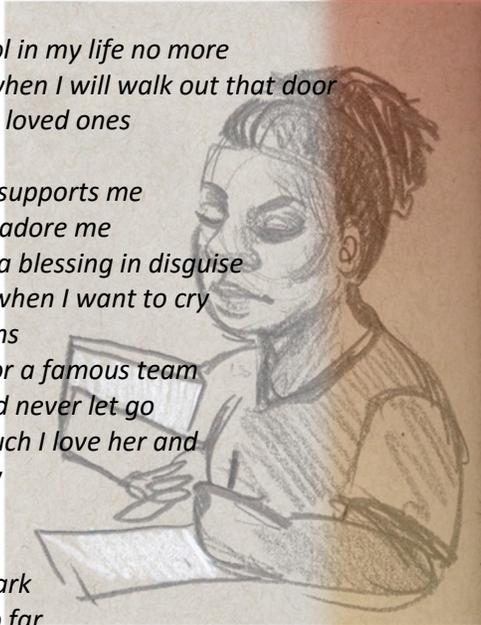
The 2015 issue of Voices Ink celebrates Voices UnBroken's 15 year history of facilitating creative writing workshops in New York City. Printed locally by *Bronx Design Group*.



Participant Story

Declarations

*I hate that I have no control in my life no more
I hate that I have no idea when I will walk out that door
I hate being away from my loved ones
I hate not having fun
I love having a family who supports me
I love meeting people who adore me
I love being able to realize a blessing in disguise
I love having a smile even when I want to cry
I want to live out my dreams
I want to play basketball for a famous team
I want to hold my mom and never let go
I want to show her how much I love her and
that she'll know
I believe in me
I believe I can see...
I believe that even in the dark
I believe the light is not too far*



Rachel's journey through Voices UnBroken workshops was one of emotional growth coupled with some resistance. Over the course of three years, she met 10 of our Teaching Artists, including our Founder, Victoria Sammartino, and Director of Arts & Youth Development, Karla Robinson, with whom she noted making a connection in a post-survey. Rachel hails from the borough of the Bronx and there were multiple instances in our records of Rachel either identifying as male or preferring the "he" pronoun. The following observations of Rachel's journey will reflect those requests.

Rachel started off with an eagerness to write during his first Voices UnBroken sessions at Horizon Juvenile Center. His poems make up a thick packet within the files from those early sessions. During the second year at Horizon he primarily filled out the pre-survey and contributed a few lines to a group poem. When Voices UnBroken met Rachel again at Rikers Island, he reverts back to his initial enthusiasm with full participation and a readiness to write. He is generally the first one to sign in for each session and writes poetry and monologues with a new openness about his experiences. His work includes a glimpse into his past, his hopes for his younger sister and an uncompromising love for his mother who, as we learn through his pieces, struggles with drug addiction. It's clear that he has grown to understand the value in expressing himself through writing.

Rachel, age 18, Rikers Island RMSC
(in his 10th Voices UnBroken workshop cycle)



It is a lot of pressure being a teenager because most times we are misguided and taken advantage of...

-Rachel, age 18, Rikers Island RMSC (in his 8th Voices UnBroken workshop cycle)

Our Board in Action



Board Chair, Dalinez, welcoming guests at the Voices UnBroken Neighborhood Tour @ Harlem in July.



Debuting *A Voice UnBroken* at the Voices UnBroken Neighborhood Tour @ Clinton Hill

Board Chair—Dalinez Martinez, JP Morgan Chase

Board President—Leslie A. Britt, Voices UnBroken

Caridad “La Bruja” De La Luz, Poet & Performer

Molly Delano, CUNY Hostos

Carolyn Eanes, Future Leaders Institute

Lynne Echenberg, Good Shepherd Services

Alexis Henry, Citizens Committee for Children

Rukia Lumumba, Center for Alternatives in Sentencing & Employment (CASES)

Sharon Nuñez, Mood Fabrics

Oscar Saunders, Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP

Andrea Schaffer, CityMatters LLC



Our Staff



Executive Director Emeritus—Victoria Sammartino

Office Staff

Executive Director—Leslie A. Britt

Director of Arts & Youth Development—Karla Robinson

Program Coordinator—Ayanna Harris

Marketing & Evaluation Coordinator—Adriana Zazula

2015 Teaching Artists/Workshop Facilitators

Milagros Acosta

Najee Omar

Tanya Linn Albrightsen-Frable

Jess Poplowski

April Freely

Earl Skinner

Nefertiti Martin

Kiryra Traber

Caits Meissner

Kelsey Van Ert

Luke Nephew



2015 Highlights



Voices UnBroken Teaching Artist, Kirya Traber with Videographer, Denis Chibiryak during the filming of *A Voice UnBroken* at The Poet's Den in Harlem.



Board Member, Rukia Lumumba & Executive Director, Leslie Britt represented Voices UnBroken at the YWI Kickoff at City Hall.

Strong Voices & #GiveVoice

Voices UnBroken embarked on our first multi-faceted fundraising campaign to support the organization during our first leadership transition, Strong Voices 2015. In addition to support from the NoVo Foundation and the Pinkerton Foundation, our long-time individual donors showed continued support while the board and staff engaged dozens of new supporters. Additionally, in the last two months of the year, we participated in the global philanthropic movement, Giving Tuesday, with our own twist, #GiveVoice. We look forward to participating in this annual campaign in 2016 and beyond.

Voices UnBroken Fall Video Series

Thanks to the generous coordination of Board Member, Caridad De La Luz, Voices UnBroken was able to engage a professional videographer and the use of The Poet's Den to film De La Luz and Voices UnBroken Teaching Artists sharing stories and poetry of participants on video. *A Voice UnBroken*, was released to our network via email every week in October and remains on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/voicesunbroken.

Participation in NYC Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito's Young Women's Initiative

Voices UnBroken board and staff members sat on the Anti-Violence and Criminal Justice working group for the Young Women's Initiative that made proposals to the Speaker for programs, strategies, reforms and investments to reduce violence against young women in NYC and that would promote positive youth development in the justice system.



2015 Highlights



15th Anniversary Celebration

In April, the board and staff celebrated with our network of supporters to honor our Founder, Victoria Sammartino and the 15th Anniversary of Voices UnBroken. Some highlights were a group poem written and performed by our Teaching Artists celebrating Victoria; words and poetry by special guest, Sonia Sanchez and words of gratitude from former participants and Victoria's godson, Sincere.

Voices UnBroken board members, staff and former participants celebrate our 15 year anniversary with globally renowned poet & activist, Sonia Sanchez on April 2nd.

Professional photography was donated that evening by Dominique Sindayiganza.



Our Supporters

"Thanks for all you do for some of the youngest yet most resilient members of our community."

- #GiveVoice Donor

Voices UnBroken is grateful for the support of the following individual donors 2015:

Jen Baca	Natalie Harrington	Peter Pilsner
Pete Barren	Nicole R. Harris-Hollingsworth	Celia Procope
Laurie Becker	Jennifer F. Havens, MD	Erika Quiles
Sara Bellia	Keith Hefner	Doris Quinones
Maya Bhat	Michael Held	Laura Ramirez
Kimberly Boyd	Anne Herrmann	Kate and Cristiana Recanati-Fitta
Jena Cangiano	Rita Hickey	Holly Reich
Casazza Construction	Bob Holman	Sydney Kopp Richardson
Michael Cuccaro	Sophie Hummer	Sonia Sanchez
Barbra and Roger Clayton	Lena Jayaram	Ariel Savransky
Page Delano	Hettie Jones	Betsy Schlesinger
Dana Dinsmore & Family	Rathini Kandavel	Cidra Sebastien
Eric Dryden	Suzanne Kratzok	Erin Solomon
Helena Durst	Victoria Lavington	Chuck Smith
Rachel Eanes	Lea Lanzo	Lauren Smith
Russ Eanes	Laura Lee	David Speck
Jacqueline Ebanks	Mike Loeb	Elizabeth Speck
Emily Egan	Jolyn Loessberg & Family	Palmer (Craig) Sullivan
Chanelle Figueroa	R. Manger	Liz Tripp
Meg Fidler	Jeremy and Sharon Matz	Suzana Urbina
Dianna Garcia-Smith	Carla Mauro	Yazmin Watkins
Lashonda Gardenhire	Kimberly Moffett & Family	Rev. Dr. Alfonso Wyatt
Hollie Garrido	Mark Munger	Eric Yoo
Armine Gluedjian	Tracy Nickelsburg	Sonora Yun
Rachel Goeler	Rabin Nickens	Sarah Zeller-Berkman
Lauren Goldberg	Ngozi Okaro	
David Guzzetta	Bill Owen	



Our Supporters

Voices UnBroken is grateful for the support of and partnership with the following private foundations and public agencies 2015:



Voices UnBroken is could not fulfill our mission without strategic and thoughtful partnership with the following private organizations and public agencies 2015:

Private Organizations

- Center for Community Alternatives (CCA)
- CASES
- Children's Aid Society
- Good Shepherd Services
- Odyssey House
- Sheltering Arms

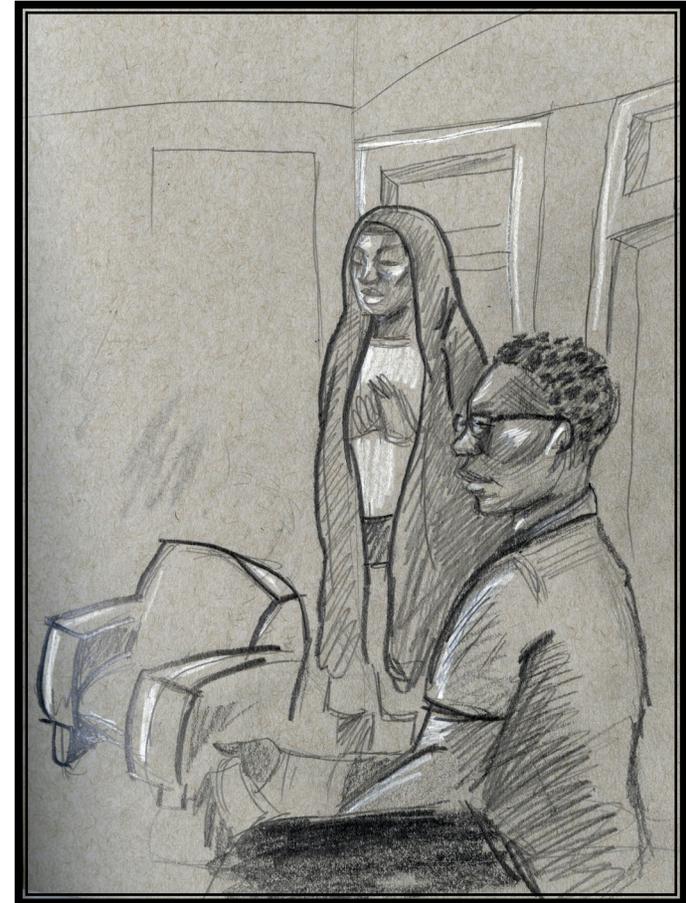
City Agencies

- Administration for Children's Services
- NYC Department of Education
- NYC Department of Corrections

"[I liked] watching kids show their talents in poetry, not knowing at first that they were poetically inclined."

*-K. Smith, Juvenile Counselor
at Horizon Juvenile Center*





All original artwork by inspired by Voices UnBroken workshops, participants and Teaching Artists, commissioned by Voices UnBroken and created by Teaching Artist, Tanya Linn Albrightsen-Frable.



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