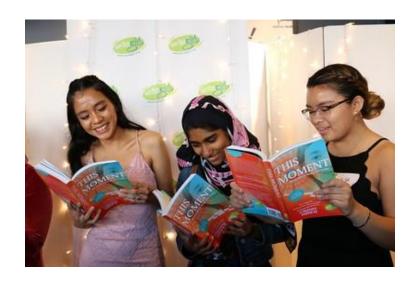


# WriteGirl Overview for Partner Programs



"WriteGirl is heroic. We're all here to write, to bring confidence to each other, and to empower each other. And I've never felt that before."

- a WriteGirl teen



### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Introduction** 

Who We Are

About WriteGirl / Bold Ink Writers

WriteGirl Mission & Vision

WriteGirl Objectives

Why Teens Need WriteGirl

Why Writing?

WriteGirl History

**Publications** 

<u>The WriteGirl Approach – Curriculum Design and Principles</u>

**Outcomes** 

WriteGirl Alum Highlights

**Awards for WriteGirl** 

Media Coverage

**School-based Programs** 

**Expanded Local & International Partner Programming** 

**Professional Development** 

WriteGirl / Bold Ink Writers Teaching Artists

Partnering with WriteGirl

WriteGirl Office Information



#### Introduction

From WriteGirl Founder and Executive Director Keren Taylor



We are excited to introduce you to the creative writing and mentoring programs of WriteGirl. Since 2001, WriteGirl has helped thousands of teens develop their creativity and confidence.

We proudly watched Harvard graduate and WriteGirl alum Amanda Gorman's meteoric rise as she became the youngest U.S. Inaugural Poet. Amanda worked hard to find her voice and is part of the next generation of poets using their words to speak up about social justice and activist causes. She told *Vogue* magazine recently: "I learned poetry through WriteGirl... It was absolutely electrifying for me when I was in high school to have that opportunity."

When I started WriteGirl in 2001, I gathered 13 writers and shared with them a vision of what WriteGirl could become. With their help, and support from a wide range of partners and supporters, we've grown into a thriving community, where teens feel free to explore their voice, their ideas and their ambitions. We call it, "The WriteGirl Magic" but it's grounded in healing-informed approaches that help teens thrive, academically, personally and professionally.

While our organization is based in Los Angeles, we have expanded programming to help teens throughout the USA, and also in other countries. We are passionate about helping teens find their own unique voice, tell their stories, and develop powerful communication skills for a lifetime of expanded opportunities. Our teaching artists are professional writers with diverse backgrounds, and have tremendous experience in inspiring teens to write.

We would like to introduce you to our program and approach, and we hope to customize a partnership with you to support your teens. We look forward to our future impact as WriteGirl continues to help girls and young women write their way to brilliant futures!

- Keren Taylor, Executive Director



#### Who We Are





#### About WriteGirl / Bold Ink Writers

WriteGirl (<a href="www.writegirl.org">www.writegirl.org</a>) is a nationally-recognized writing and mentoring organization that helps teens, ages 13 to 18, discover and express their creative voices. Founded in 2001, the WriteGirl organization serves more than 600 youth annually, predominantly in the Los Angeles area as well as national and international youth. Through workshops, mentoring, and publishing opportunities, WriteGirl helps teens develop creative writing and communication skills as well as confidence. More than 400 well-trained, committed professional writer volunteers mentor teens as they explore poetry, fiction, songwriting, journalism, screenwriting, and more.

In our intensive one-on-one mentoring program, WriteGirl has a 21-year, 100% success rate of guiding its seniors to graduate from high school and enroll in college, many with scholarships and as the first in their families to enter college.

WriteGirl has published 38 award-winning anthologies of youth writing and recently launched its first online literary journal, *Lines & Breaks* (<a href="https://linesandbreaks.org/">https://linesandbreaks.org/</a>).

When we work with girls/gender-expansive youth, we use the name WriteGirl, and when we work with boys and co-ed groups, we use the name "Bold Ink Writers."

In March 2020, in response to COVID-19, WriteGirl pivoted to present all programming online through a variety of online platforms. Online programming has allowed WriteGirl to expand its reach beyond Los Angeles, and in 2020 WriteGirl began matching teen girls from all over the globe with their own online weekly writing mentor, including girls from Kenya, Poland, Thailand, Nigeria and Uruguay.

Since 2001, it has been our mission to support and spotlight the voices of underrepresented and/or vulnerable youth, including Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, nonbinary,

LGBTQIA+, anyone with disabilities, and many others who are part of the community we serve. Our membership, events, training, and curriculum reflect our commitment to multiculturalism, equity, diversity, inclusion, access, anti-bias, antidiscrimination, and antiracism.

WriteGirl envisions a world where all teens live, write, and speak boldly as they become inspiring, transformative leaders, driven to effect positive change in their communities.



#### WriteGirl Mission & Vision

#### **Mission Statement:**

Within a community of women writers, WriteGirl promotes creativity and self-expression to empower teen girls/gender-expansive youth.

#### Statement on Gender Expression and Gender Identity:

WriteGirl members are anyone who identifies as woman, girl, gender-expansive, nonbinary or femme – no matter where you are on your journey and exploration of personal identity, all are welcome here.

Throughout this document and at our events and meetings, we refer to our mentees as girls, teens and youth. Our aim is to be inclusive and celebrate the diversity of identities within the WriteGirl community.

### WriteGirl Objectives

- Teach a robust set of writing and critical analysis skills.
- Introduce youth to a wide range of professional women/gender-expansive writers and a wide variety of writing careers.
- Encourage teens to explore and develop their creative skills, both written and verbal.
- Equip youth with communication skills to confidently navigate the challenges they face.
- Nurture teens and promote healthy behaviors through positive mentoring relationships.
- Help teens enter college and offer ongoing guidance to help them graduate successfully.
- Inspire underrepresented youth to become leaders.
- Introduce teens to careers in the creative economy and guide them in their professional pursuits.



# Why Teens Need WriteGirl

During the best of times, teens face daily pressures related to self-esteem, depression and other mental health issues, cyberbullying, violence, unstable family environments, and limited resources. The upheaval of the past three years greatly magnifies these issues as our girls deal with stress, isolation, and uncertainty.

- The US Surgeon General recently issued a 53-page report declaring a mental health crisis among young people.
- Across the USA, student absences are a significant issue. In some districts, absences doubled from the 2019-20 to 2020-21 school years.
- With 130 million girls globally not in school, we know the need for education and mentorship is great.

WriteGirl offers a rare opportunity for girls to express their feelings, connect with a supportive community, and make lifelong relationships.

### Why Writing?

WriteGirl is first and foremost a creative writing organization. We use mentoring as the vehicle for teens to develop their creative writing skills. We know the therapeutic value of writing, but our focus is on developing creative writing skills above all else. Through the process of writing, teens organically develop confidence, self-esteem and clarity about themselves and their future.

At WriteGirl, teens use writing as a transformative tool to discover and raise their voices. Through writing, a girl learns that her ideas matter, in her family, in the community, and in the world.

WriteGirl workshops are designed to be "literacy in disguise." We strive to help our teens become focused, motivated, and confident enough to share their voices with an audience. Teens gain writing and communication skills that help them thrive in any career path.



We guide our teens and mentors to write by hand, if they are able (versus on a laptop or keyboard) for a few reasons...

- Inclusivity: We want everyone to be able to participate without the need for costly equipment (and we will mail a journal to any teen who needs one).
- Handwriting employs more senses than typing on a keyboard, which makes it

#### more memorable

- Research has shown that when children write by hand their brains light up with adult-level activation. However, when they type, there is very minimal activation.
- Anecdotally, handwriting boosts creativity, as it allows writers to work in new shapes without the constraints of a word processing program.
- Writing engages both hemispheres of the brain!

"WriteGirl empowered me in a time when I thought I had no power, and that has allowed me to succeed in ways I never would have thought imaginable."

— A WriteGirl Alum



# WriteGirl History

- WriteGirl was launched in Los Angeles in December 2001.
- The first workshop brought together 30 professional writer volunteers and 30 teen girls. WriteGirl has grown exponentially every year in terms of membership and support. To date, thousands of teens have participated in WriteGirl.
- Currently, more than 400 women writers and other professionals actively volunteer.



- Each year, WriteGirl partners with hundreds of local writers, artists, musicians and performers to help maximize the impact of our work.
- In 2013, WriteGirl received the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, presented by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House. WriteGirl continued the relationship by partnering with the Obama Foundation to produce workshops for young community leaders throughout the country in 2018.
- In 2020, WriteGirl and Executive Director Keren Taylor received the Los Angeles Times
  Innovator's Award, "recognizing WriteGirl's contributions to the community in promoting
  literacy, creativity and self-expression to empower girls."
- WriteGirl partners with leading civic, cultural and arts organizations to host creative
  writing workshops, including The Huntington, the Natural History Museum of Los
  Angeles County, The Autry, LACMA, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences,
  Walt Disney Concert Hall, Otis College of Art & Design, the Japanese American National
  Museum and MOCA.
- In 2020, WriteGirl published its 38th anthology of youth writing and received its 96th book award, including seven for *This Moment: Bold Voices from WriteGirl*.
- In 202, WriteGirl launched its first online literary journal <u>Lines & Breaks</u>, featuring the creative writing of WriteGirl mentees and alums.
- WriteGirl receives funding from individuals, corporations, government sources and foundations, and continues to raise funds year-round through grants, campaigns and special events. Dozens of companies donate in-kind goods and services such as journals and gifts.



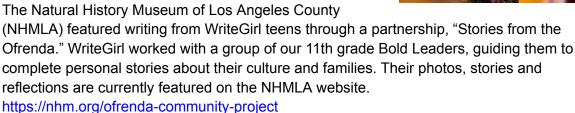
#### **Publications**

Teens gain confidence and self-esteem from seeing their work published.

Since 2001, WriteGirl Publications has produced over 38 multi-award-winning anthologies that showcase the bold voices and imaginative insights of WriteGirl teens. Unique in both design and content, WriteGirl anthologies present a wide range of personal stories, poetry, essays, scenes, and lyrics.

WriteGirl books have won 96 awards, and are available for purchase on the WriteGirl website:

https://www.writegirl.org/publications



NHMLA also featured writing from WriteGirl teens on a wall outside of the museum in celebration of their new Becoming Jane exhibit. WriteGirl teens wrote on the theme of "Becoming." Sixteen WriteGirl teens were featured on the wall and 42 were featured on the NHMLA website: <a href="https://nhm.org/reflection-becoming">https://nhm.org/reflection-becoming</a>

In another partnership, WriteGirl and the editors of *Exposition Review* hosted the "Share Your Voice! How to Submit Your Work" publishing workshop for WriteGirl alums and high school juniors and seniors. Topics included how to write a cover letter, deal with rejection, promote their work, and prepare submissions. Participants were invited to submit their short-form work to *Exposition Review* and two submissions were chosen for publication.

In the last year, WriteGirl published more than 180 pieces of teen writing in a digital anthology and our new online publication, Lines & Breaks: A Literary Journal from WriteGirl (https://linesandbreaks.org/).





# The WriteGirl Approach – Curriculum Design and Principles

WriteGirl curriculum is developed by a team of accredited teachers, established authors and performers, dedicated volunteers and staff members, drawing from the most cutting-edge studies in pedagogy techniques, organizational behavior and brain behavior research for youth. Curriculum is aligned with national high school standards in language arts but is unlike most creative writing workshops or afterschool programs. WriteGirl creates new curriculum, prompts, and activities for all of our workshops, ensuring



that each teen participant will have a completely fresh experience at every workshop throughout their 4-5 year participation in the program. We carefully curate and share work from a diverse group of guests (including artists and writers based in the LGBTQIA+ community), including selections that deal with complex subjects such as racial and gender inequities and social justice.

We strive to deliver each facet of our program with a "wow" factor that leaves a teen feeling elevated and inspired. We focus on achieving specific outcomes, such as increased empowerment, confidence, self-expression, writing skills and critical thinking ability, as well as longer-range goals such as high school graduation and college enrollment. Workshops are interactive and challenging, often incorporating music, audio-visual elements, posters, photos, browsing tables with objects from nature and even scents, giving teens an engaging, multi-disciplinary environment to develop their ideas, voice, critical thinking skills and confidence.

WriteGirl workshops are non-competitive and all voices are celebrated in a totally supportive atmosphere. We shine a light on the best aspects of each piece of writing, rather than criticizing or discouraging any form of expression. As youth develop confidence in their storytelling ability they become excited to share their creative work.

WriteGirl workshops and curriculum are designed to promote understanding by encouraging youth to share their personal challenges and successes, helping them empathize and connect with each other through the power of creative self-expression.

#### **Outcomes**

Since 2001, WriteGirl has continued to maintain its 100% college success rate and WriteGirl alums continue to share the lasting impact of our programming as they complete college and enter the workforce with careers in education, healthcare, law, social services, media and the arts.

In 2021-22, WriteGirl teens continued to show significant improvements in writing skills and confidence as demonstrated in pre- and post-season surveys with our teens as well as interviews, periodic focus groups and meetings with mentors and WriteGirl parents/families.



We conclude each WriteGirl event, meeting and workshop by asking participants to share something they liked, learned or loved. Recent responses include:

"I'd never shared any of my poetry before today, but hearing the encouragement from my mentor was really special!" – Jace C., Mentee, Poetry Workshop

"I loved the collaboration and energy between everyone here. Such a beautiful atmosphere." – Sofia F., Mentee, Songwriting Workshop

"Seeing panelists that look like me today is very powerful!!" – Amelia P., Mentee, Journalism Workshop

"I learned to create my own power statement I can use to the world." – Sidny R., Mentee, Creative Nonfiction Workshop



Throughout the year, WriteGirl mentors and staff helped youth prepare their writing for publication in various outlets and presentations at online and in-person partner events, book festivals and civic events.

WriteGirl mentees are being recognized for their work. Awards include the 2022 National Youth Poet Laureate Runner-Up, the 2022 Los Angeles Youth Poet Laureate Runner-Up and seven finalists, the 2021 Los Angeles Youth Poet Laureate and 12 finalists, and 17 recipients of a regional 2022 Scholastic Art & Writing Award.

# WriteGirl Alum Highlights

Harvard graduate and **WriteGirl alum Amanda Gorman became the youngest US Inaugural Poet in 2021.** She was interviewed for *TIME* magazine by former First Lady Michelle Obama and named Global Changemaker for The Estée Lauder Companies WRITING CHANGE initiative. In 2022, WriteGirl Alum Arielle Davis was featured in Amanda's course on MasterClass. With Arielle as her student, Amanda shared her insights and wisdom on writing powerful poetry that can change the world.



"My hands clammed up as I took the stage, my purple flower headband wrapped around my teeny weeny afro. The first time I read my writing at a WriteGirl workshop was also the first time I'd ever read my work in front of a large audience. Ever. And per usual, my fourteen-year-old self was nervous to recite my poetry due to my speech impediment. My words could look elegant on a page but seemed to lose their eloquence in my mouth. Nevertheless I grabbed the mic, heartened by the unconditional, supportive applause you'll always find at WriteGirl ... After that I was officially hooked on performing my poetry aloud as much as I was drawn to seeing it in print." – Amanda Gorman in WriteGirl's 2017 anthology Sound Generation

#### **Additional Alum Highlights**

- Lovely Umayam is a nuclear non-proliferation expert and the founder of the Bombshelltoe Policy x Arts Collective, a creative incubator linking artists, community organizers, and nuclear experts together to present nuclear policy in a compelling and impactful way to the greater public.
- Fahiya Rashid graduated from UC Irvine and received a Master's in International Relations at the University of Heidelberg. Fahiya was awarded a Rotary Fellowship to study Peace and Conflict at Uppsala University in Sweden.
- Jeanine Daniels is a writer and producer who most recently staffed on FX's Snowfall, HBO Max's Young Love, Apple's Truth Be Told, and Starz's P-Valley. She co-founded Black&SexyTV, a digital content studio and distribution network that focuses on content starring people of color.
- Kai Adia and Lauren Davila teamed up to produce two Latin/Latinx anthologies through Bee Infinite Publishing, an independent publishing company co-founded by Kai.

#### Awards for WriteGirl

WriteGirl has won more than 90 awards for its 22 years of empowering teen girls. WriteGirl and Executive Director Keren Taylor were awarded the 2020 Los Angeles Times Innovator Award and in 2014 Keren Taylor was named a CNN Hero. In 2013, WriteGirl was honored by First Lady Michelle Obama with the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award – an initiative of the President's Committee on the Arts & the Humanities and the highest national honor awarded to exemplary out-of-school time programs.



### **Media Coverage**

WriteGirl has appeared in media outlets that include CNN, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, *USA Today*, *US Weekly*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Street Insider*, *The Wall Street Journal*, ABC News, *Black Enterprise*, *Los Angeles Daily News*, *Teen Vogue*, *LAist*, and the *Vancouver Sun*. In 2022, WriteGirl was featured on *The Kelly Clarkson Show* alongside WriteGirl supporter and volunteer Lauren Graham (*Gilmore Girls*). WriteGirl alum Khaila Amazan and her mentor DaVida Smith were also featured in a sponsored content article in the *New York Times*. Amanda Gorman also mentions WriteGirl's impact on her work in various outlets, including in a *Vogue* magazine interview.

# Media Highlights:

The Kelly Clarkson Show: WriteGirl Empowers
Young Women To Find Their Voice Through
Professional Writing Mentorships

CNN: "Finding magic in mentorship: How one CNN Hero inspired thousands of young women to write their own success stories"

USA Today: "Amanda Gorman's debut poetry collection 'Call Us What We Carry' inspires fellow WriteGirls"



### **School-based Programs**

WriteGirl has presented hundreds of workshops at schools and community centers through fee-for-service partnerships that allow us to reach some of the community's most critically at-risk youth. The youth that we serve often start out unenthusiastic—and more often fearful—of writing. Our volunteer teams develop lesson plans that can light up even the most reluctant writers, engaging them in writing topics that speak to their interests, experiences, and ambitions. After a year of programming, mentors, teachers, administrators, and parents all acknowledge dramatic improvements in teens' ability to write, think critically, set goals and speak up.

In 2004, the Los Angeles County Office of Education invited the WriteGirl In-Schools Program to provide weekly creative writing programming for critically at-risk pregnant, parenting and incarcerated teen girls at sites that have included **Destiny Girls Academy, Azusa County Community School, and the Road to Success Academy at Camp Scott and Camp Scudder.** 

WriteGirl has presented workshops at schools throughout LA County, including Marc and Eva Stern Math and Science School, Sepulveda and Vista Middle Schools, New Village Girls Leadership Academy, Rose City High School, and Ramona Opportunity High School in Boyle Heights, serving critically at-risk and pregnant/parenting teen girls.

#### **Arts for Healing and Justice Network**

WriteGirl is a founding member of the Arts for Healing and Justice Network, which connects Los Angeles area organizations providing arts programming to incarcerated and systems-impacted youth. In the summer of 2015, we recruited and trained men writers for the first time to be mentors in what we call the Bold Ink Writers program. WriteGirl is committed to partnering with AHJN to transform the juvenile justice system via trauma- and healing-informed educational approaches and strategic arts programming. Since 2020, we have provided multiple one-hour to 90-minute weekly creative writing workshops for incarcerated youth at Central Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles, Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall in Sylmar, and Dorothy Kirby Center, a probation camp in Commerce. We also provided weekly workshops for re-entry and community youth as part of a diversion program with New Earth and also for youth at San Angelo Park Community Center.



# **Expanded Local & International Partner Programming**

Since 2020, WriteGirl has partnered with schools and community groups to present online workshops for teens, as well as for teachers and youth leaders, locally and internationally, including:

- Online creative writing workshops for a girls' school in Kampala, Uganda.
- Guiding and mentoring a group of young women attending an international school in Singapore, helping them establish a new creative writing organization to provide writing workshops to teen girls in Tajikistan and across Central Asia.



- A series of hybrid in-person/online workshops for underserved high school girls in North Las Vegas through a partnership with Meow Wolf's Omega Mart and T.U.L.I.P.S., a Las Vegas nonprofit serving teen girls.
- A series of 90-minute online creative writing workshops for co-ed youth who are members of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Bayfield, Wisconsin.
- A letter-writing project in which WriteGirl teens/alums have written to high-school aged girls in Afghanistan to help uplift them during this time when Afghan teen girls cannot attend school.
- A 12-week workshop series for underserved teen girls in South Los Angeles, in partnership with M.E.N.T.O.R.S., Inc.
- Ongoing twice monthly in-person workshops with a group of trans boys, nonbinary youth and girls in Altadena, CA, guiding them in telling their personal stories and developing their creative writing skills.

# **Professional Development**

WriteGirl offers professional development workshops for teachers, youth leaders, and others working in the youth development sphere to share our philosophy, activities, and approaches to creative writing education. These train-the-trainer workshops help give teachers and youth leaders fresh creative writing activities and ways to adapt them for various age groups.

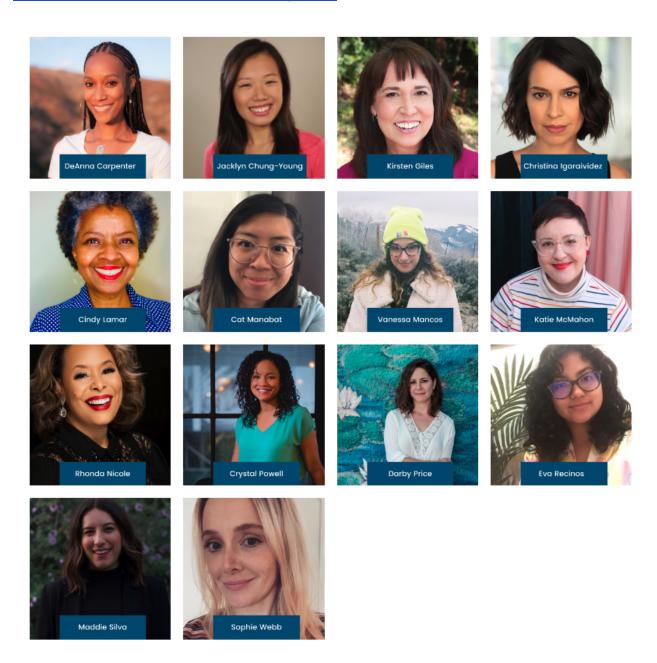
"I loved hearing about all the ways these activities could transfer from classroom to classroom." - A teacher from the Whittier City School District

# WriteGirl / Bold Ink Writers Teaching Artists

We're excited to introduce our team of Teaching Artists for WriteGirl and Bold Ink Writers. Our Teaching Artists are all accomplished writers with a passion for inspiring young people to discover their confidence and creativity. They lead creative writing workshops both online and in-person at community centers, schools, parks and libraries in partnership with a variety of organizations, across the Los Angeles region, throughout the U.S. and even internationally.

# **WriteGirl Teaching Artists**

Click here to learn more about our teaching artists



# Partnering with WriteGirl

In addition to the WriteGirl program of workshops and mentoring, WriteGirl offers workshops for schools, organizations and community centers both in-person and online. Workshops can be offered weekly or monthly for groups of 25 - 30 youth, ages 13 - 18. We offer workshops for girls and gender-expansive workshops, as well as co-ed workshops for all genders under the name, "Bold Ink Writers." Workshop series can be scheduled for anywhere from one workshop to a 24-week series.

Workshops explore poetry, fiction, screenwriting, songwriting, creative nonfiction and other genres.

- Sessions will be customized specifically for your students.
- Workshops are interactive and incorporate breakout groups, music, video segments, games, special guest writers and more. Just to give a few examples, we may play a movie soundtrack to inspire storytelling; we may include drawing or map-making as a device for developing fictional characters; we may offer a self-quiz that assesses leadership styles.
- In addition to creative writing skill development, the program will introduce participants to a variety of creative professionals, who will share their creative work as well as their experiences and career path.
- Workshops include self-care strategies and activities to engage the whole body.
- Additional elements could include one-on-one mentoring, college entrance guidance, performance coaching, leadership development activities, career skills development, publishing of youth work and/or public reading opportunities.

#### **Program Logistics:**

- Workshops will be led by two WriteGirl / Bold Ink Writers Teaching Artists, and may include additional staff and volunteer mentors.
- If presented virtually, WriteGirl / Bold Ink Writers will host the workshops securely through Zoom, and provide the link.
- For in-person workshops, WriteGirl / Bold Ink Writers will provide journals, pens and materials for all participants.

#### **Additional Opportunities:**

- For girls and gender-expansive youth, WriteGirl offers opportunities to participate in workshops, mentoring and special events year-round.
- WriteGirl offers professional development workshops for teachers and youth leaders on trauma and healing-informed approaches in arts education.

# WriteGirl Office Information

WriteGirl Office Address: 1330 Factory Place, Unit F-104 Los Angeles, CA 90013 (213) 253-2655

www.writegirl.org

#### **Contact:**

Keren Taylor, WriteGirl Executive Director keren@writegirl.org, 323-327-2555

#### Web Links:

WriteGirl website: <a href="www.writegirl.org">www.writegirl.org</a>
WriteGirl Online Literary Journal: <a href="https://linesandbreaks.org/">https://linesandbreaks.org/</a>
WriteGirl Publications:

https://www.writegirl.org/publications

Media Coverage: <a href="https://www.writegirl.org/media-coverage">https://www.writegirl.org/media-coverage</a>



#### WriteGirl Social Media links:



<u>Facebook.com/WriteGirlOrganization</u> Facebook.com/BoldInkWriters



@WriteGirlLA
@BoldInkWriters



@WriteGirlLA
@BoldInkWriters



https://www.linkedin.com/company/writegirl



https://www.youtube.com/user/WriteGirlChannel