



**ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2022**

July 2021 - June 2022



# “SQUID SEASON” BY LEIGH ELLIS

## 2022 FOUNDERS PRIZE WINNER

I can't remember when I realized I was trans exactly,  
But it was probably sometime during squid season.  
Either July or August,  
I can't remember.  
They only come to the surface to feed at night,  
The squid.  
Summer nights always feel more infinite,  
A blackness you can disappear into  
A blackness you can lose your body in.  
The silken surface of the ocean  
Was a portal to another dimension,  
A dimension where things like squid existed.

### **Three things that could be found on the dock (any midnight during squid season):**

1. The briny t-shirts of whichever cousins were around that day, shed in the darkness to prove something (I don't know what).
2. The disemboweled squid, spoils from the other dimension.
3. My feet.


### **Five characteristics of a squid catcher:**

1. Never afraid of the all-encompassing darkness. I lost my *soul* in that squid-catching darkness. The boys never lost anything.
2. Rib cages like rungs of a ladder.
3. Jawlines that could cut (everything about a squid catcher could cut).
4. A special sweaty sheen rendering them glow-in-the-dark under the moonlight.
5. Must be able to become one with the squid.

### **Reflections:**

I never was much of a squid catcher. Instead, I was a squid watcher. I watched as blood spilled on reflective countertops and olive oil was heated past its boiling point and I thought about how my sweat didn't smell like the sweat of the squid catchers.

There are many boys who I would gladly gut, like one of their squid  
spoils, just to exist  
within their  
sun-soaked  
sweat-marinated  
moonlit  
skin.



**Leigh Ellis** is an eighteen year old from Raymond, Maine, and author of the young adult magical realism novel, *Bach in the Barn*. Leigh grew up writing at The Telling Room, and their work has been featured in Telling Room anthologies *See Beyond* and *Shadowboxing*. Though no longer a student, they hope to stay involved with The Telling Room and similar organizations in the future. Leigh is attending Columbia University with a major in creative writing and is passionate about queer representation and advocacy. Their goal is to continue sharing the stories they needed to hear growing up, as well as helping others to do the same. Leigh is also in the process of compiling a zine of queer writing called *Frisson*, based on the scientific term for “getting the chills.” When not writing, Leigh can often be found collaging, taking pictures of street art, and making Spotify playlists.

Leigh wrote “Squid Season” in the Fall 2021 semester of The Telling Room’s Second Story program. They created a mixed media collage to accompany the poem and shared both out to the audience at the December 2021 reading. This powerful poem was then selected as one of the student works to be made into a short film for Show & Tell, adapted by two Directing Fellows from the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. “Squid Season” has gone on to win the 2022 Maine Literary Award for Youth Competition in Poetry, and the short film is an official selection for the 2022 Seattle Queer Film Festival.

# FROM OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*“To reach the sky, I needed more than just the few balloons in my back pocket. I needed hundreds, possibly thousands of them.”*

— From “The Balloon Man” by Khalil Kilani  
Published in *Echoes from the Basement*

Dear Telling Room Community Member,

As Alumni Ambassador Khalil Kilani wrote, we know that it doesn’t just take one or even a few buoyant balloons to lift us up. It takes a community working together to realize The Telling Room’s mission and for our students to thrive. We are so grateful to each and everyone of you who have supported The Telling Room over the past few turbulent but successful years, and we look forward to forming new partnerships and welcoming new members to our community in the years to come.

The Telling Room has gone through many changes recently. We have completed a full year with a new executive director, who is now leading the charge as we embark on a strategic planning process to guide us into our next three years with intentionality. We have adapted our programming to accommodate remote and hybrid learning throughout the pandemic, and continue to spread our reach to children across Maine. Your ongoing engagement, partnership, and willingness to share your voices and perspectives is critical to building a bright future for both The Telling Room and Maine’s youth. Thank you to all of you who have shared your words and reflections with us regarding the impact of our work in the community and with the youth we serve; it is humbling to witness what an amazing, creative, and strong circle of support we have.

We are honored to share with you the results of our collaborations over the past year and look forward to more conversations and deepening our connections in the year ahead.

Thank you for all that you do.

Onward and Upward,



**Anya Endsley**  
Telling Room Board President



# FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*"I now understand that the environment around us can shape us, but we hold power to shape ourselves and what we can take away from our surroundings. We hold the most power when we let ourselves be our true authentic selves."*

— From "Finding Power" by Ana Burroughs  
Published in *Between My Ribs*

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on my first year as The Telling Room's Executive Director, I return to the words of authors like Ana Burroughs. Ana speaks to the fact that our communities, the spaces we are in, "shape us." Who we share space with and how we are present there are all a part of who we are becoming. Being ourselves and sharing our own authentic selves with other people is one of the most trusting, vulnerable, and powerful acts we can do.

And that is what I experienced this fall, seated cross-legged on the floors in The Telling Room's Portland studio, at desks in school classrooms across the State, in libraries around a table, and in Zoom rooms with our faces tiled across screens. I circled up with our teachers and teaching artists, with educators in schools, and — most importantly — with youth, who in every space bravely shared themselves with one another. We brought together young writers through our in-person programs and continued our SWARM! program, holding virtual space for a third year. Led by our Publishing Workshop, The Telling Room connected young writers across Maine in print, curating three anthologies featuring authors from Aroostook County to York County and ranging from youth ages 6 - 18.

With programs underway this fall, we are excited for the new year ahead. Driven by our mission, we are developing a new strategic plan that will guide our work for the next three years as we continue to lead with our values, informed by the experiences of COVID, and look ahead to The Telling Room's next chapter.

When we began the planning process this summer, I was driven by what I learned and heard from youth and the community this last year: that The Telling Room is vital and youth need the spaces we hold for them where they can be together and realize their power. Ana's words will continue to guide me: **"We hold the most power when we let ourselves be our true authentic selves."**

With Gratitude,



**Kristina Powell**

Telling Room Executive Director



# THE FINANCIAL STORY

---

**FISCAL YEAR: JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022**

Take a look at our books to learn more about how we brought our mission alive this fiscal year.

## INCOME

Total: \$926,508

---



- **PPP2: Paycheck Protection Program** \$90,000 (9.71%)
- **Book Sales & Earned Revenue:** \$21,901 (2.36%)
- **Corporate & Business Grants:** \$37,500 (4.05%)
- **Event Income:** \$92,248 (9.96%)
- **Federal & State Grants:** \$47,500 (5.13%)
- **Program Income:** \$128,027 (13.82%)
- **Foundation & Trust Grants:** \$186,000 (20.08%)
- **Individual Contributions:** \$323,332 (34.9%)

## EXPENSES

Total: \$888,360

---



- **Special Event Production:** \$33,519 (3.77%)
- **Book Production:** \$16,027 (1.8%)
- **Fundraising:** \$139,289 (15.68%)
- **Administrative:** \$136,671 (15.38%)
- **Teaching & Program Delivery:** \$562,854 (63.36%)

## AUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30, 2022

See our 2021 - 22 audited financial statements for more information at:

[www.tellingroom.org/annual-report](http://www.tellingroom.org/annual-report)

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents: \$1,001,111

**Total Assets: \$1,008,660**

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

#### Liabilities

**Total Liabilities: \$50,524**

#### Net Assets

Without donor restrictions: \$886,136

With donor restrictions: \$72,000

**Total Net Assets: \$958,136**

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets:**

**\$1,008,660**



We are so grateful for all the generous individual, corporate, and foundation donors who supported us this past year. See our full list of contributors at:  
[www.tellingroom.org/donor-list](http://www.tellingroom.org/donor-list)

### MAKE A GIFT

Our vibrant and generous community makes it possible for us to advance our mission to empower youth through writing and share their voices with the world. To make a secure gift, visit:

[www.tellingroom.org/donate](http://www.tellingroom.org/donate)



Or send a check to:

**The Telling Room**  
225 Commercial Street, Suite 201  
Portland, ME 04101



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

109

COMMUNITIES SERVED

ALFRED	CUMBERLAND FORESIDE	MARS HILL	SULLIVAN
ALNA	DAMARISCOTTA	MINOT	THOMASTON
ARUNDEL	DAYTON	MONMOUTH	TOPSHAM
AUBURN	DEDHAM	MONTICELLO	TRENTON
AUGUSTA	DURHAM	MONTVILLE	TROY
BANGOR	EDGECOMB	MORRILL	TURNER
BAR HARBOR	ELIOT	MOUNT DESERT	UNITY
BATH	ENFIELD	NEW GLOUCESTER	VASSALBORO
BELFAST	FALMOUTH	NEWCASTLE	WALES
BERWICK	FALMOUTH FORESIDE	NORTH YARMOUTH	WATERFORD
BIDDEFORD	FREEPORT	OAKFIELD	WATERVILLE
BOOTHBAY HARBOR	GEORGETOWN	OLD TOWN	WELLS
BOWDOIN	GORHAM	ORONO	WEST GARDINER
BOWDOINHAM	GOULDSBORO	PASSADUMKEAG	WESTPORT ISLAND
BREMEN	GRAY	PORTLAND	WESTBROOK
BRIDGTON	HALLOWELL	PRINCETON	WHITEFIELD
BRIGHTON	HARPSWELL	RICHMOND	WINDHAM
BRISTOL	HEBRON	ROCKLAND	WINTHROP
BROOKLIN	HOPE	SACO	WOOLWICH
BRUNSWICK	HOULTON	ST. GEORGE	YARMOUTH
CAMDEN	KENNEBUNKPORT	SANFORD	YORK
CAPE ELIZABETH	KITTERY	SCARBOROUGH	(TOTAL
CAPE NEDDICK	KITTERY POINT	SEARSMONT	COMMUNITIES
CHEBEAGUE ISLAND	LEWISTON	SEBAGO	SERVED INCLUDES
CHELSEA	LIMERICK	SORRENTO	SEVEN TOWNS /
CORINTH	LINCOLNVILLE	SOUTH PORTLAND	CITIES OUTSIDE OF
CUMBERLAND	LISBON	SPRINGVALE	MAINE)

"I BELIEVE I HAVE GAINED CONFIDENCE IN ALL PROGRAMS, STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE"





71

PROGRAMS



1,766

PROGRAM  
HOURS



2,125

STUDENTS  
SERVED



13

PUBLICATIONS



360

PUBLISHED  
AUTHORS



“BE A UNIQUE VOICE.”  
IN THIS FACTOR INCREASED BY 25% OR MORE.

# IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

## RESIDENCIES - BACK TO SCHOOL



We were excited to be back in classrooms around the state this fall, when we returned to pre-pandemic levels of in-school programs. It was soon evident to our team that Maine's students were affected by the upheaval caused by the pandemic.

These have been long and difficult years for so many young people, and the one-on-one support from our volunteers, mentors, and teaching artists was instrumental for all of the students we served. Given all that these students were facing, their commitment to writing, working through the creative process, and challenging themselves to revise, led to poems and stories each author could be deeply proud of.

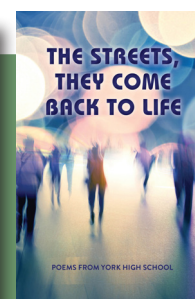
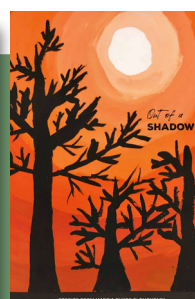
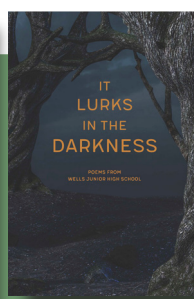
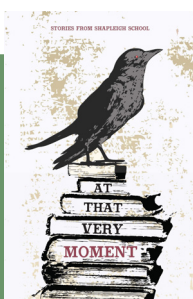
Our longtime partner, Shapleigh School, has taken the opportunity for students to write and grow with The Telling Room to the next level. Shapleigh School offers all of their students the chance to participate in a Telling Room residency during their time in fourth through eighth grade at the school. Some students jump right in early on during their time at the school, while others put pen to paper with us in eighth grade before moving on to high school. Whenever we are able to write with these authors, we are blown away by the might of their words, which can be found in this year's chapbook, *At That Very Moment*.

8  
PROGRAMS  
215  
STUDENTS



### PUBLISHED IN:

AT THAT VERY MOMENT  
IT LURKS IN THE DARKNESS  
OUT OF A SHADOW  
THE STAKES WERE HIGH  
THE STREETS, THEY COME BACK TO LIFE

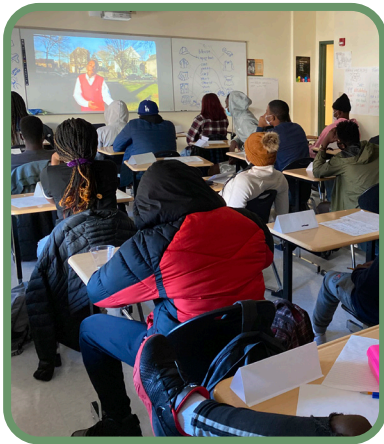


## WORKSHOPS - DEEPENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The Telling Room serves hundreds of students each year through our educational workshops, which take place in schools, at The Telling Room, or remotely. This year in particular, we deepened connections with our partner South Portland High School to meet the needs of over 80 students from asylum-seeking families who arrived after the school year had already begun and when capacity was limited in the classroom. Many of these students were Newcomers (students who were just beginning to learn English), and we were honored to support them as they grew more confident with the English language.

19  
PROGRAMS  
623  
STUDENTS

Together we watched excerpts from our Young Writers & Leaders film, "The Whole World Waiting," so that these students could hear youth sharing stories about journeys and experiences similar to their own. They became more familiar with speaking English through sessions on common vocabulary and phrases as a starting point to practice. Through tangible prompts, like object writing, they soon began to get more comfortable telling their own stories.



It was remarkable to see how many people came together to support these students — from school staff to our team of teaching artists and volunteers — and form a learning community. Several students were ready for more after the school year, and joined us at The Telling Room this summer for a week-long Young Writers & Leaders camp. We're excited to see the connections formed with these young writers continue to grow.

### SCHOOLS SERVED IN FISCAL YEAR 2021 - 2022

Biddeford Intermediate School  
Brunswick Junior High  
Dayton Consolidated School  
Durham Community School  
Edward Little High School  
Georgetown Central School  
Ironwood Maine, LLC  
Leavitt Area High School  
Marcia Buker Elementary School

Mast Landing School  
Mt. Ararat Middle School  
Oceanside Middle School  
Oceanside High School  
Shapleigh School  
South Portland High School  
Wells Junior High School  
York High School

"A COLLABORATION WITH THE TELLING ROOM, WITH TWO SUCH GIFTED TEACHERS, HAS BEEN A HIGHLIGHT OF MY YEAR ... I HAVE FOLLOWED THE COURSE THROUGH THE YEAR AND I COULD ONLY WISH THAT EVERY STUDENT HAD THE CHANCE."

—MICHELE LAFORGE,  
PRINCIPAL OF  
SOUTH PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL

"THE TELLING ROOM TOOK ME ON A PATH OF POETRY THAT I DIDN'T KNOW EXISTED. POETRY HAS ALWAYS BEEN LOCKED IN A BOX INSIDE THE DEEPEST PART OF MY CLOSET, CONSTRICTED BY THE BOUNDS OF RHYMES, STANZAS, AND SYLLABLES. THE TELLING ROOM TAUGHT ME THAT IS NOT THE ONLY WAY THAT POETRY IS WRITTEN, AND THAT I SHOULD EXPLORE NEW WAYS TO WRITE."

—SEAN WHELTON,  
STUDENT AT YORK HIGH SCHOOL



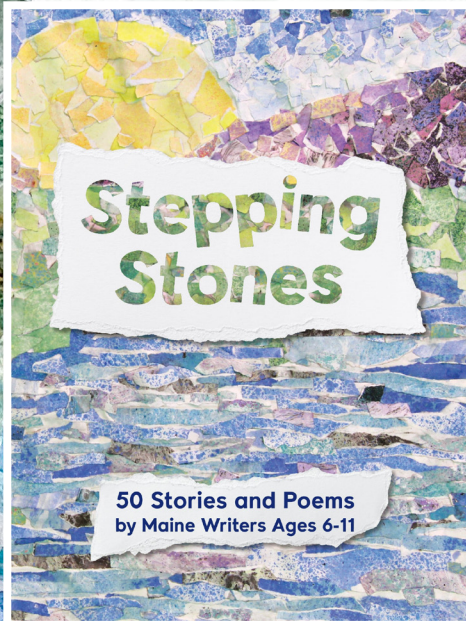
# A COLORFUL COLLABORATION

Fourth and fifth graders at Marcia Buker Elementary School in Richmond, Maine were invited to make a collaborative collage for the cover art of *Stepping Stones*, an anthology of writing by Maine authors ages 6 - 11 published by The Telling Room in June 2022. Excited students mixed different colors of chalk to create unique designs as they marbled paper, then ripped the paper into smaller pieces to build the collage.

As the collage was assembled, students made intentional design choices to create highlights and shadows within the landscape. They also learned about pointillism: an art style that uses small dots to create larger areas of color that together form a picture. Together, the individual efforts of each student form a beautiful work of art as varied and colorful as the State of Maine itself.

## Artists:

Emelia Alexander, Blake Armstrong, Marcus Ayer, Elise Boyd, Emma Brown, Brina Crocker, Carson Emmons, Sam Gay, Justin Giannelli Brooklyn Hooper, Stella Jean Knight, Taylor Johnsen, Abigail Johnson, Cyrus Lord, Andie Partridge, Brady Sidelinger, Stella Sutherland, Cash Watson, and Pacey Welner



# WRITERS BLOCK

A FUN AND SUPPORTIVE PLACE FOR RELUCTANT WRITERS AND PASSIONATE STORYTELLERS TO EXPLORE THEIR WRITING AMONG A GROUP OF PEERS.

This popular program was in such high demand in the fall that we added an additional teaching artist to accommodate more participants. Inspiration in hand and in our hearts from our surroundings in the Old Port, we delved into technique: using our senses to convey details of setting, and our understanding of those around us to develop believable characters. Our sessions aligned with the call for submissions to our two anthologies showcasing writing by young authors, *Stepping Stones* and *Footprints*, and two participants were selected for publication in these books.

The spring semester was shortened to seven sessions rather than ten due to a rise in COVID cases, but that didn't stop our group from quickly diving into creative play. The caliber of the writing demonstrated individual writers' attention to story and craft, and together they developed an effective, thoughtful system for delivering constructive feedback to each other. By the last day each student shared a piece as well as their process. No two stories were drafted from the same prompt or activity — each piece came from a different source of inspiration, highlighting the importance of finding many ways into the writing process. Each student came away eager to explore more ways of writing and storytelling.

8  
PROGRAMS  
58  
STUDENTS



“I CAME TO THE  
TELLING ROOM TO GET  
BRAVE.”

– WRITERS BLOCK  
PARTICIPANT

# STUDENT WRITERS & READERS MEET!

6  
PROGRAMS  
45  
STUDENTS

A VIRTUAL NETWORK OF YOUTH WRITING GROUPS  
ACROSS THE STATE OF MAINE.

Hive 19 — the teen group of Fall 2021 — was a small but hardy group of writers. We explored personal narrative, fiction, and poetry, but no matter which genre we focused on, all students were drawn to poetic language. We played games to loosen up our writing and to quiet our inner critics, and shared many laughs throughout as we set our creativity free.

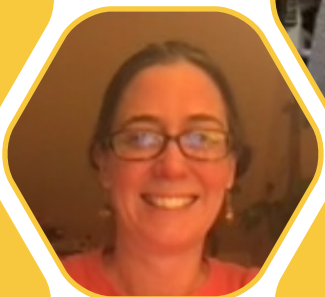
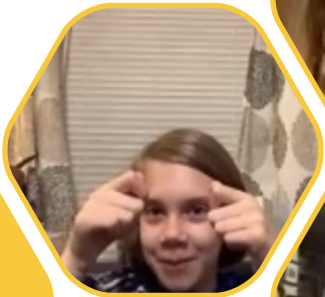
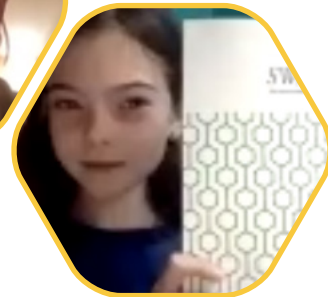
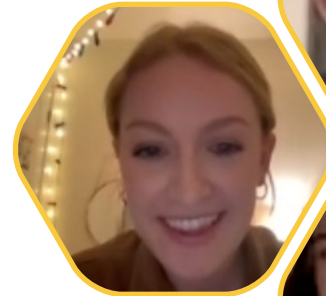
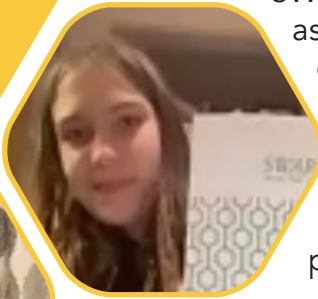
“TO HAVE THE  
TELLING ROOM’S  
RESOURCES  
AVAILABLE TO RURAL  
MAINE KIDS IS SUCH A  
BLESSING.”  
— CHRISTINE  
FINEMORE  
SWARM! PARENT

Our Spring 2022 session focused on poetry for the entire semester. Between two hives, we worked with 18 participants, ages 10 to 15. Students Zoomed in from places like Trenton, Unity, Camden, Boothbay Harbor, and Vassalboro — all locations that are an hour or more drive from our Portland headquarters. We also reached participants living in Portland, Cape Elizabeth, Brunswick, and Falmouth.

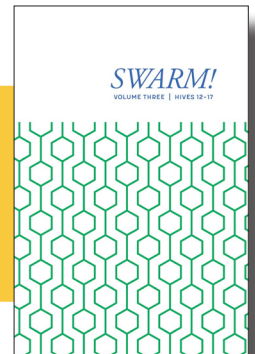
SWARM! is a program that, even as pandemic restrictions ease, continues to reach families with a range of needs, whether that’s due to travel times, work schedules, transportation, health-needs, or comfort levels with remote programs.

“...I LEARNED THAT  
THERE ARE A LOT  
OF GREAT WRITERS  
EVERYWHERE,  
EVEN AMONG  
KIDS.”

— LUCY  
SWARM! AUTHOR



PUBLISHED IN: SWARM! VOLUME III  
'21 - '22 AUTHOR READINGS & EVENTS:  
FALL 2021 SWARM! VOLUME III READING VIA ZOOM  
SPRING 2022 HIVE READING VIA ZOOM



# YOUNG EMERGING AUTHORS

A YEAR-LONG AFTERSCHOOL WRITING AND PUBLISHING PROGRAM WHERE FOUR MAINE AUTHORS WRITE, EDIT, AND PUBLISH THEIR OWN BOOKS.

1  
PROGRAM  
4  
STUDENTS

In October, the ninth cohort of Young Emerging Authors (YEA) embarked on a year-long journey of writing, revising, and publishing their own books. This year's cohort included three high school juniors and one student, notably, taking a gap year before attending Dartmouth College for creative writing. It was a joy to watch them quickly bond as a group and enjoy each other's company. This is the first year we've ever had a student drawn into the State of Maine in order to participate in the program, demonstrating what a unique opportunity this program is, even among other literary arts organizations.

As always, the mentorship element of this program was an essential part of the YEA experience for students, and mentor pairings this year were especially fruitful. Authors and agents Kathryn Miles, Deirdre Fulton McDonough, Iris Blasi, and Dawn Potter coached our authors along the way, and Richard Russo generously shared his expertise at our spring writers retreat.

This year's books include three novels and one collection of poetry, and each explores pressing social and political issues such as climate change, queer identity, and the consequences of socioeconomic privilege. Perhaps more than ever, all four authors seem to see their work not just as a springboard for their own creative futures and careers, but also as a platform to spark deeper thinking and engagement among readers.

"GIVING A VOICE TO THE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE IS SOMETHING SO IMPORTANT DURING THIS TIME PERIOD AND THE TELLING ROOM IS FINDING AND EMPOWERING THIS NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG POETS AND AUTHORS. THE TELLING ROOM WANTS TO HEAR OUR STORIES RIGHT HERE AND RIGHT NOW. THEY WANT OUR STORIES TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW."

— LEELA MARIE HIDIER  
AUTHOR OF CHANGES IN THE WEATHER

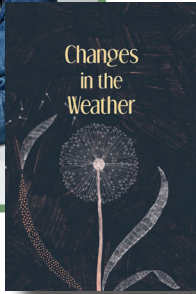






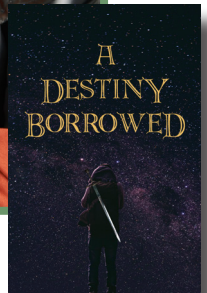
*"It was more than just a foundation with walls. More than just a home. It was a story. Our story. And now the hurricane's stolen that, too."*

**Excerpt from *Changes in the Weather*  
By Leela Marie Hidier**



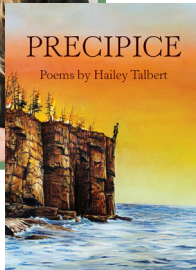
*"All they could do was watch wide-eyed as their magic moved on its own in a way it never had before."*

**Excerpt from *A Destiny Borrowed*  
By Noor Sager**



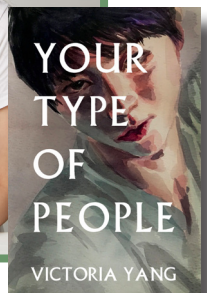
*"We take the world, / more hesitant than generations before, / jumping off the precipice to our future, / uncertain."*

**Excerpt from *Precipice*  
By Hailey Talbert**



*"I forget about your type of people; you guys always do this. Let me rephrase: How did they make their money?"*

**Excerpt from *Your Type of People*  
By Victoria Yang**



**'21 - '22 AUTHOR READINGS & EVENTS:**

VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE VIA ZOOM  
LITERARY LUNCHES WITH THE PORTLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY  
RESURGAM ● UNION CHURCH OF BIDDEFORD POOL'S 21ST  
ANNUAL SPEAKER SERIES ● BOOK LAUNCH AT SPACE GALLERY



# YOUNG WRITERS & LEADERS

A LITERARY ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM EXCLUSIVELY FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL BACKGROUNDS.

In October 2021 we began our nine-month Young Writers & Leaders (YWL) program by joyfully returning to in-person sessions while providing support for students if they needed to attend virtually. Students came from six high schools in the Greater Portland area, and identified with nineteen countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Brazil, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Japan, Iraq, Kenya, Kuwait, Mexico, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, and South Korea.

A vibrant fall visit from Portland's Poet Laureate Maya Williams kicked off our year of connecting to adult writers. We celebrated the students' work in December at SPACE Gallery for our fall poetry reading — our first in-person YWL event in two years.

When COVID cases rose in the winter months, we returned to our highly successful remote learning model developed in 2020, and held program sessions online for six weeks. Students navigated the ups and downs of the pandemic learning environment with good cheer and flexibility, and continued to show up online with their full selves to write and share.

As the group shifted from writing poetry to personal narrative, they were joined by Phuc Tran, Jaed Coffin, Shugri Said Salh, and Abdi Iftin, and then worked one-on-one with their writing coaches to revise their personal narrative pieces for publication and presentation. Remote coaching and the ability to incorporate mentors from out-of-state, including two Telling Room alums, is now a permanent shift made as a result of the pandemic. We see the opportunity to meet with published authors and coaches who share life experiences with our students as a vital form of mentorship and inspiration.

We were happily able to resume in-person sessions for our documentary studies module in the spring as students conducted vox pop street interviews in our working waterfront neighborhood. Students shared their writing to a packed house at the Portland Museum of Art as we returned to this familiar venue to honor the book launch of the 2022 Young Writers & Leaders chapbook, *Between My Ribs*.





*"No matter what, life goes on. And with that, America, as difficult as it can be, is home. My permanent identity is what I carve out of this new life. Here is where I want to be rooted."*

— Excerpt from "Together, We Went Far"  
By Jered the Great  
Published in *Between My Ribs*

**"I AM SO GRATEFUL FOR MY TIME HERE. THIS IS SUCH A HEALING ENVIRONMENT... THIS EXPERIENCE MEANT LEARNING ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE, THEIR STYLES, THEIR EXPERIENCES, THEIR POINTS OF VIEW, AND EXPANDING MY OWN THROUGH THEIRS. THIS PROGRAM HAS MEANT THE WORLD."**

—OLIVIA CHONG  
AUTHOR OF "ABOVE THE TREES"  
PUBLISHED IN **BETWEEN MY RIBS**



**PUBLISHED IN BETWEEN MY RIBS**  
**'21 - '22 AUTHOR READINGS & EVENTS:**  
FALL 2021 POETRY READING AT SPACE GALLERY  
SPRING 2022 BOOK LAUNCH & READING AT PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART  
SPRING AND SUMMER CAMP READINGS



# SECOND STORY

AN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM WHERE ALUMNI OF TELLING ROOM PROGRAMS DIG DEEPER INTO THE WRITING PROCESS, DEVELOP THEIR WRITING HABITS, AND SHARE THEIR WORDS WITH THE WORLD.

In the fall, Second Story welcomed juniors and seniors who wished to keep exploring their writer's voice with The Telling Room. We dove into personal voice, artistic voice, political voice, and how the three intersect. Visiting Artist Malaika Uwamahoro joined us with Sarah Coleman from Portland Ovations to get our writers and our words on our feet. Together they led students in a workshop inspired by *Cartography*, a play that explores themes of migration, displacement, and what it means to find a new home. At our final reading, the voices of these writers resonated throughout our studio as each took the mic to create a chorus of powerful words.

During the spring, we had four students, including two returning from previous sessions, as there are no limits to how many times a student can join this program. Returning seniors awaiting news on college applications were feeling quite vulnerable, and opened up to the small intimate group. They chose to share poems around the topic of identity, diving deep into personal reflections and hard truths. They were open and honest in their writing, and shared their work at a reading to a supportive Telling Room audience.

2  
PROGRAMS  
8  
STUDENTS

**"MY EXPERIENCE PARTICIPATING IN TELLING ROOM PROGRAMS HAS BEEN ONE I WILL ALWAYS VALUE. THEY HAVE CREATED SUCH AN OPEN AND CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT, AND IT'S A SPACE I ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO WRITING IN. I DON'T THINK I WOULD BE THE WRITER (OR PERSON) I AM TODAY WITHOUT IT."**

– LEIGH ELLIS  
SECOND STORY PARTICIPANT  
AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF "SQUID SEASON"

'21 - '22 AUTHOR READINGS & EVENTS:  
FALL CULMINATION READING  
SPRING CULMINATION READING



# PUBLISHING WORKSHOP

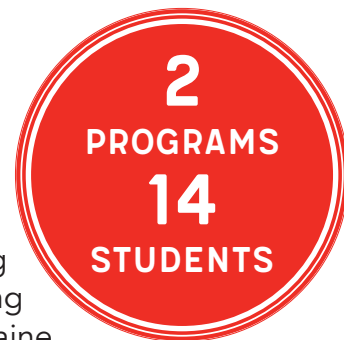
A SEMESTER-BASED PROGRAM WHERE PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE A WORKING TUTORIAL ON THE BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY IN AN APPRENTICESHIP ENVIRONMENT.

Publishing Workshop participants came together in the fall to launch a new publishing initiative for Maine's youngest writers, ages 6 - 11. We began to create a book featuring peer writing for elementary school-aged students by opening submissions to young authors all over the state. We partnered with the Maine Department of Education, the Maine Humanities Council, and the Maine Librarians Association to get the word out and received a massive pool of writing — hundreds of pieces by students from eighty-two towns across Maine!

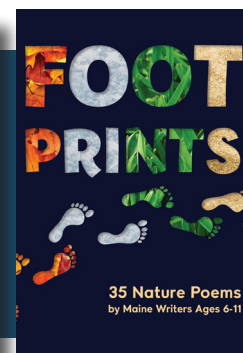
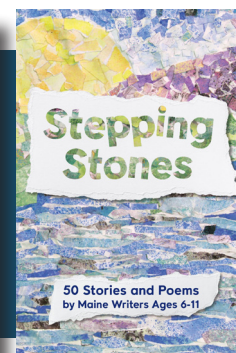
In the spring, Publishing Workshop sorted the writing by category and theme, and we soon realized we had in fact created two wonderful books: *Stepping Stones*, a mixed genre anthology of stories and poems, and *Footprints*, a collection of nature poems.

For our annual anthology, *Echoes from the Basement*, which explored the theme of "mystery" this year, Publishing Workshop students served as first readers, consulted on title, design, and ordering of the pieces alongside our guest editor, Rose Heithoff.

All together we engaged over 300 youth in the process of making these three books of 124 individual poems, stories, and essays. The writers in these books range in ages from 6 - 18 and they come from fifty-three different Maine towns and cities. This was the most ambitious Publishing Workshop year to date — never before has The Telling Room published as many authors in books from so many regions around the state.



**PUBLISHED THREE ANTHOLOGIES:**  
ECHOES FROM THE BASEMENT, STEPPING STONES, AND  
FOOTPRINTS  
**'21 - '22 AUTHOR READINGS & EVENTS:**  
SHADOWBOXING INSTAGRAM LIVE READING ● ROUTE 1 READS  
#READTOME CHALLENGE ● BIG NIGHT





# BIG NIGHT

100  
AUTHORS  
300  
ATTENDEES



Our annual celebration of young writers took place in June at Deering Oaks Park in Portland, and included a book fair with sales and signings, author readings, a scavenger hunt, and award announcements. We honored all the students who had been published with The Telling Room this year while launching three new anthologies: *Echoes from the Basement*, *Stepping Stones*, and *Footprints*. Authors came together who had written and published with The Telling Room in our afterschool programs, in-school residencies across Maine, and many that were new to our organization and who had answered our calls for submissions throughout the year.



A beaming crowd circled around the stage made up of families, friends, teachers, and community members; pulling up picnic blankets or camp chairs to listen to authors from each anthology share their words at the microphone and take home stacks of freshly printed books. Some families drove up to five hours, traveling from towns like Mars Hill (Aroostook County), Lincoln (Penobscot County), Hope (Knox County), and Princeton (Washington County) to join the festivities.



Authors and their guests were welcomed by Publishing Workshop editors, proud and eager to meet the writers whose work they had spent weeks reading and putting into published form. As Publishing Workshop student sixth grader Ayra Abeza told a newly minted author who came from Minot, "Once an author, always an author! Now, can I have your autograph?"

**"I JUST WANT TO WRITE MORE...IT'S MY PASSION AND IT'S WHAT TRULY MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I CAN SPREAD MY WINGS AND EXPRESS MYSELF, NOT ONLY AS A PERSON BUT AS AN AUTHOR. "**

**— SILVER SMITH, AUTHOR OF "SHIMMER WATER" PUBLISHED IN STEPPING STONES**





# CAMPS

16  
CAMPS  
196  
STUDENTS

Our summer camps in 2021 opened up wide possibilities for writing and showed us that the power of words is as limitless as the view from a mountaintop in Maine. We increased in-person programming after writing together virtually during the academic year, and campers enjoyed writing both at The Telling Room and in new spaces as we expanded partnerships throughout the summer. Having the studio bustling with stories and young writers once more was a highlight for our team, as was drawing inspiration from flowers, goats, and forests at Scatter Good Farm. The reach of our summer programs went even further through the Writers Expedition to Newry. In collaboration with the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School (HIOBS), this adventure pushed our writing to new heights, as Teaching Artist Jenny O'Connell shares here:



**“[THIS] EXPERIENCE WAS A STRONG DEMONSTRATION OF THE WAYS OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EMPOWERS AND INSPIRES YOUTH, AND THE RICH TERRITORY FOR WRITING THAT COMES FROM SPENDING TIME CHALLENGING OUR COMFORT ZONES OUT IN THE FRESH AIR! BY BEING BRAVE WITH OUR BODIES, WE WERE ABLE TO ACCESS INTERNAL BRAVERY AS WELL. IT WAS A POWERFUL AND HOLISTIC BODY AND MIND EXPERIENCE – AND A WHOLE LOT OF FUN.”**

As we began the summer of 2022, we launched several pilot initiatives to increase access to Telling Room camps. Local restaurants and businesses came together to provide meals for campers throughout their time with us and we were able to award the highest number of scholarships yet, made possible in part through a collaboration with Portland Public Schools. We also continued to expand the geographic range of our camps, hosting programs in Belfast at Waterfall Arts for the first time. We're looking forward to building on this foundation for next year as we increase opportunities for all youth to engage with our summer programming.



# AMBASSADORS

THE TELLING ROOM'S AMBASSADORS ARE ALUMNI WHO WORK AS PART-TIME EMPLOYEES TO EXTEND OUR WRITERS' IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY. IN ADDITION TO SPEAKING AT EVENTS OF ALL TYPES AS ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES, THIS GROUP ADVISES ON TELLING ROOM STRATEGY AND PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN PROGRAMMING, PUBLICATIONS, AND DEVELOPMENT.

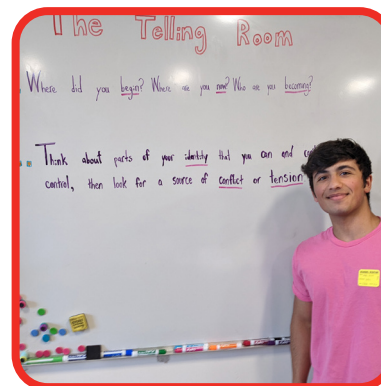
Our Ambassadors brought their experiences and knowledge to many community events throughout Maine, lifting up the literary arts and youth voices in classrooms, on film, on Instagram, and beyond. Ambassadors traveled from York, the southernmost county of Maine, all the way up to the Acadia region to speak at events and foster partnerships.

Our alumni shone brightly online in the virtual space as well as at the microphone, whether they were exploring educational pedagogy in a classroom in Mount Desert Island or sharing fiction writing tips on Instagram for National Novel Writing Month. Thank you to this year's Ambassadors, Yousi Alshuwaili, Amanda Dettmann, Cam Jury, Khalil Kilani, and Nina Powers, for sharing their voices and expertise through the following partnerships:



**EMCEEING BIG NIGHT**

**HOSTING AUTHOR  
READINGS ON  
INSTAGRAM LIVE**



**LEADING EDUCATOR  
WORKSHOPS ON MOUNT  
DESERT ISLAND**



**HOSTING  
SHOW & TELL 2022**





# SHOW & TELL

OUR ANNUAL LITERARY SPECTACULAR – A CELEBRATION OF STORYTELLING FEATURING AUTHORS AND MUSICIANS FROM MAINE AND BEYOND, SHARING THEIR STORIES ALONGSIDE THE TELLING ROOM'S DIVERSE GROUP OF YOUNG WRITERS.

---

Where can you find a Broadway star, a late night comedian, a critically acclaimed short story author, one of Maine's musical powerhouses, and Telling Room alumni sharing the same bill? Only at Show & Tell, of course! This year's production was our first-ever hybrid event, featuring an in-person screening at the Portland Museum of Art, while also giving viewers the option to tune in from cozy nooks at home.

Director Sean Mewshaw collaborated with fearless filmmakers from around the country to capture on-screen storytelling by Mandy Gonzalez, Hari Kondabolu, and Morgan Talty, while Pandora LaCasse's light forms set the State Theatre aglow as Telling Room alum Genevieve Stokes took the stage to debut a fresh new song at the piano. Poems by Telling Room alumni Zoe Blackman and Leigh Ellis were imaginatively adapted for film and moved audiences watching from across the country and internationally. It was a joy to share in this celebration of stories and music with our community for an evening that was nothing short of spectacular.

Selections from Show & Tell have gone on to be featured by film festivals and film across the country, including: The Seattle Queer Film Festival ("Squid Season").





# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

THE TELLING ROOM BELONGS TO A VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS AND ARTS NONPROFITS. WE ENCOURAGE WIDE SUPPORT OF MAINE'S MANY NONPROFITS THAT UPLIFT YOUTH AND THE ARTS SO OUR WHOLE COMMUNITY CAN BE STRONGER TOGETHER.

---

Change does not happen alone, and we are so grateful for the partnership of schools, libraries, businesses, media partners, and nonprofits throughout Maine that make it possible for us to fulfill our mission.

Thank you to each of these community partners for their creativity and collaboration:

Androscoggin Valley Educational Cooperative's  
Young Writers Group  
Bath Book Bash  
Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival  
Brooklyn Music School  
Cambodian Community Association of Maine  
Catherine Cutler Institute  
Center for Grieving Children  
Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine  
Cross Cultural Community Services  
EqualityMaine  
Dean's Sweets  
Dski Design  
Forging Opportunities for Refugees in America  
Furniture Friends  
Growing to Give  
Gulf of Maine Books  
Hurricane Island Outward Bound School  
Hurricane Island Center for Science and  
Leadership  
Indigo Arts Alliance  
Jalopy Theatre  
LearningWorks  
Longfellow Books  
Maine Academy of Modern Music  
Maine Boys to Men

Maine Climate Action Now!  
Maine Department of Education  
Maine Humanities Council  
Maine Public Radio  
Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance  
Make It Happen  
NAMI Maine  
National Novel Writing Month  
New Brackett Church  
New England Youth Identity Summit  
New York Film Academy  
Patten Free Library  
Portland Community Squash  
Portland ConnectED  
Portland Food Co-op  
Portland Museum of Art  
Portland Ovations  
Portland Public Library  
Portland Public Schools Summer Learning  
Print: A Bookstore  
ProsperityME: The Center for Financial Education  
Scatter Good Farm  
Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast  
Maine  
Sherman's Books and Stationery  
Side x Side

The State Theatre  
STRIVE  
Two Fat Cats Bakery  
Union Church of Biddeford Pool  
Unwritten Roads  
Walch Publishing, Inc.  
Waterville Opera House  
Waynflete  
WBFY  
WMPG  
Youth Leadership Advisory Team





# OUR 2021 - 2022 TEAM

## STAFF

Kristina M.J. Powell, Executive Director  
Peyton Black, Program & Volunteer Manager  
Rylan Hynes, Communications Manager  
James Kim, Teaching Artist  
Amy Kimball, Teaching Artist  
Clare LaVergne, Publications Manager  
Molly McGrath, Publications Director  
Jenny O'Connell, Teaching Artist  
Hipai Pamba, Young Writers & Leaders Co-Teacher  
Laura Poppick, Teaching Artist  
Rachele Ryan, Operations & Development Manager  
Sarah Schneider, Development Director  
Sonya Tomlinson, Young Writers & Leaders Lead Teacher  
Meghan Vigeant, Teaching Artist  
Nick Whiston, Programs Director  
Marjolaine Whittlesey, Lead Teacher  
Kathryn Williams, Lead Teacher

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ekhlas Ahmed  
Chelsea H. B. DeLorme, Board Vice President (July - May)  
Anya Endsley, Board President  
Rob Gould, Board Vice President (May - June)  
Tanuja Desai Hidier  
Ninette Irabaruta, Board Secretary  
Alisan Kavookjian  
Kate Malin  
Moises "Mo" Nuñez  
Catherine Richards Olney  
Laura Shen  
Donna Simonetti, Board Treasurer  
Peg Smith  
Bob Zager

## ADVISORY BOARD

Susan Conley  
Sara Corbett  
Gibson Fay-LeBlanc  
Anja Hanson  
Patty Howells  
Lily King  
Ari Meil  
Genevieve Morgan  
Michael Paterniti  
Tim Schneider

## COMMITTEES

### GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

*Anya Endsley, Chair, Board Member*  
Rob Gould, Board Member  
Chelsea H. B. DeLorme, Board Member  
Kristina M.J. Powell, Executive Director  
Catherine Richards, Board Member

### HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

*Rob Gould, Chair, Board Member*  
Chris Bicknell, Board Member  
Libby Lauze, Community Member  
Kristina M.J. Powell, Executive Director  
Catherine Richards, Board Member

### FINANCE COMMITTEE

*Donna Simonetti, Chair, Board Treasurer*  
Ruth Charron, Community Member  
Kristina M.J. Powell, Executive Director  
Rachele Ryan, Staff  
Sarah Schneider, Staff  
Bob Zager, Board Member

### MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

*Chelsea H. B. DeLorme, Chair, Board Vice President*  
Tanuja Desai Hidier, Board Member  
Rylan Hynes, Staff  
Kristina M.J. Powell, Executive Director  
Rachele Ryan, Staff  
Sarah Schneider, Staff  
Laura Shen, Board Member  
Heather Shields, Community Member  
Peg Smith, Board Member

### SHOW & TELL: A LITERARY SPECTACULAR

*Alisan Kavookjian, Co-Chair, Board Member*  
*Kate Malin, Co-Chair, Board Member*  
Peyton Black, Staff  
Amanda Dettmann, Telling Room Ambassador  
Rob Gould, Board Member  
Tanuja Desai Hidier, Board Member  
Rylan Hynes, Staff  
Sean Mewshaw, Director  
Sally Newhall, Community Member  
Kristina M.J. Powell, Executive Director  
Rachele Ryan, Staff  
Sarah Schneider, Staff  
Sonya Tomlinson, Staff

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Anya Endsley, Board President  
Chelsea H. B. DeLorme, Board Vice President (July - May)  
Rob Gould, Board Vice President (May - June)  
Ninette Irabaruta, Secretary  
Kristina M.J. Powell, Executive Director  
Tim Schneider, Community Member  
Donna Simonetti, Board Treasurer



# WRITE. SHARE. INSPIRE.



**MARS HILL** - AUTHOR SILVER SMITH TRAVELED 273 MILES TO PORTLAND TO CELEBRATE HER STORY AT BIG NIGHT

**HOULTON** - WRITERS JOINED OUR VIRTUAL AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM SWARM! FROM AS FAR AS AROOSTOOK COUNTY TO WRITE AND BE PUBLISHED

**PRINCETON** - SIX AUTHORS FROM PRINCETON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WERE PUBLISHED IN FOOTPRINTS

**NEWRY** - SUMMER CAMPERS WENT INTO THE WILDERNESS FOR THE WRITERS EXPEDITION IN COLLABORATION WITH THE HURRICANE ISLAND OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

**LEWISTON** - SEVENTH GRADER LILY DOUGLASS WROTE HER STATEWIDE WRITING CONTEST AWARD WINNING SHORT STORY DURING CREATIVE WRITING CLASS AT LEWISTON MIDDLE SCHOOL, THE YOUNGEST EVER WINNER OF THE CONTEST

**PORTLAND** - 173 STUDENTS SERVED IN FREE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING BASED OUT OF THE TELLING ROOM STUDIO

**KITTERY** - 33 STUDENTS FROM SHAPLEIGH SCHOOL WROTE STORIES INSPIRED BY "MYSTERY" WITH US THIS YEAR

**RICHMOND** - MARCIA BUKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WROTE THE CHAPBOOK OUT OF A SHADOW AND CREATED ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR THE COVER OF STEPPING STONES

**MOUNT DESERT ISLAND** - PROGRAM DIRECTOR NICK WHISTON AND ALUMNI AMBASSADOR KHALIL KILANI LED A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR EDUCATORS

**HURRICANE ISLAND** - STUDENTS FROM OCEANSIDE HIGH SCHOOL WROTE WITH TELLING ROOM TEACHING ARTIST MEGHAN VIGEANT ON HURRICANE ISLAND

**BELFAST** - FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, WE HELD OUR POPULAR FINDING FICTION CAMP AT WATERFALL ARTS

At The Telling Room, we empower youth through writing and share their voices with the world.