





QCF Student meets LaGuardia Students (LIB 200)

Following his release from prison, Marvin Wade spoke to an LIB 200 class about mass incarceration and his lived experience of imprisonment. The two hour session included questions, encouragement, and tears. It was a learning experience for all. Fall, 2019

Peace Dear Friend,

OCT, 23, 2019

- My NAME is MARVIN WADE. I'm currently a prisoner at Queensboro Correctional. On November 14, 2019 I will be given My Physical Freedom after 25 years incarcerated. To say those words after so many years of doubt is truly a Blessing.

I write to you as part of Dr. Schwartz's Creative writing course. Ms. Schwartz suggested this writing exercise and I immediately jumped at the opportunity to connect with someone through writing as part of my own way of continuing the health and healing path that I'm currently on. So I appreciate your assistance, time and hopefully freedom of expression. You can be assured of my free spirit through the words I express.

I told you my name is Marvin Wade, but who I truly am is a supernatural being. A spiritual activist. A spiritual warrior. You're saying to yourself, 'what does that mean?' Well, in short I help people connect to their true self, their spiritual self, giving them the tools to help in fighting against that negative energy and forces that want to take us off our path to freedom. We are all supernatural beings. With unbelievable powers. We have to first believe. Believe in ourselves. Well anyway, that's my belief, what do you believe? What drives you? Who are you? No, really, who are you?

Hey, this is my short intro into who I am. Obviously there's more to me than what I've just expressed. Hopefully through our further interaction we can get to know one another and help in each other's growth and development.

Peace, Power, and Control

BIO

Marvin Wade - Released on November 20, 2019

Mr. Wade is a prolific short story writer with over 28 stories in his collection. A member of the QCF writing group, he now is home with his family after 25 years of imprisonment. He is attending the Restoration Plaza Writing Group in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn on Tuesday evenings. He practices meditation and hopes to teach others how to find peace and self-focus as he returns to society.

Letter to my Daughter
Benjamin Shepard

I am writing this this letter to you my little queen. First of all, I want you to know that I am very sorry for putting you through what I have been putting you through. Because I did not know that *we both* would be doing time, baby girl. But I want you to know that Daddy loves you so very much. I am sorry for the hurt and pain that I brought to your life. I hope that I can show you in some kind of way that I have changed from the person that I used to be to the man that I am working on today. I know that I have a lot of work to do on myself to get to where I want to be as a human being. So, I know that you have a lot of questions that you want to ask me, and you can. And I can see the change that I have made, I just hope over time that you can see them too, okay baby girl? I just want to see my baby girl doing what she is doing out there and show the support that I know you need as your father. And I know that I have to start somewhere, right? I am working very hard on me, because I have to, not because I want to. It is a must to get me right so that I can see much more of you. So, to end the letter to you:

I AM SORRY BABY GIRL.

About this Writing Project

By Dr. Joni Schwartz

For nearly three years LaGuardia Community College and Queensboro Correctional Facility (QCF), located directly across the street from one another, have had a partnership. University professors, under the direction and development of Professor John R. Chaney – Program Director of LaGCC's Criminal Justice Program; volunteer to teach college classes.

This Queensboro Correctional Facility is a minimum security prison with the primary purpose of acting as a re-entry center for male inmates. The current capacity of Queensboro Correctional Facility is 416 inmates.

One class is Creative Writing which student prisoners self-select to attend twice a week for three hours. Students this Fall, 2019 read Stephen King's *On Writing: A memoir of the Craft* as well as excerpts from Plato's *Republic* and the poetry of Langston Hughes. Students wrote poetry, letters, short stories, essays, reflections, and prayers. Some students came with hundreds of pages of writing including screen plays and novels they wrote during their years in prison. All participants shared their writing with the group for feedback.

LaGuardia Community College Students in a LIB 200 wrote to this class and several of the QCF students exchanged letters. A sample is on display here. Also on display is just a sampling of hundreds and hundreds of pages of writing generated by prisoners, often in the class but also through their years of incarceration. In some instances, bios, photos and press releases are included.

This project is in part supported by NEH – mass incarceration project.

LaGuardia Community College – City University of New York
Queensboro Correctional Facility

COURSE SYLLABUS **Writing Course - Fall 1 - 2019**

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Joni Schwartz
Office: C-745 F LaGuardia Community College CUNY
E-mail: JSchwartz@lagcc.cuny.edu

COURSE INFORMATION:

This course focuses on the technical and stylistic elements of crafting fiction or non-fiction with the goal of creating fully revised, original essays, plays, poetry, prose-poetry, reflective pieces, short stories, prayers, screenplays, book reviews, letters, etc. The course utilizes draft sessions addressing the critical elements of the revision process. Group sharing of writing and feedback are the essence of the course. The text for the course explores the writing process inviting each student to examine their own process. Each student will publish one piece of writing for *Transformative Thoughts* by the end of the semester.

Class Meeting Days & Times:

Fall 1 Semester: October – December 2019
Tuesdays, 8:30 am – 10:30 am
Thursdays, 8:30 am – 9:30 am

Location

Queensboro Correctional Facility Class

Required Textbooks:

By Stephen King On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft
By QCF Students - QCF Transformative Thoughts
Additional Readings may be distributed in class.

- Students are expected to complete all readings. Readings will be utilized in classroom activities, homework, and tests.

Schedule of Classes

Oct. 1 - First Day of Class/Syllabus/Introductory Activities/*Transformative Thoughts*
Oct. 3 - Goal setting for *Transformative Thoughts* Journal (TJ)
Oct. 8 - *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* – pages 1- 56
Oct. 10 - First draft due (TJ)
Oct. 15 - *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* pages 57-113
Oct. 17 - Letter Writing
Oct. 22 - *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* pages 114-169
Oct. 24 - Second draft due TJ

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ROSA – DREAM

SYLVESTER LAWRENCE JACKSON II

Radiant Beautiful Black woman, filled with
quality and grace,
she had a style all her own,
she knew when to stay
silent
and chose when to speak her mind.

One person chosen out of three to send
a message that was very loud,
simply
by remaining seated,
her actions showed how she stood proud.

So many voices speaking against hatred,
civil unrest and violence,
yet history will show that
we marched together
in love
so that we could give peace a chance.

Another Rosa Parks there may never be,
living during the 60's wasn't easy for her or me,
and yet and still
we may not be free,
but I can at least dream the dream
Of Dr. Martin Luther King.

BIO

Sylvester Lawrence Jackson II "Sonny" – Released on November 29, 2019

A prolific poet and writer, Sonny battled with cancer while in prison but uses writing as a therapeutic tool. Upon release he attends the Restoration Writing Group in Bedford Stuyvesant designed for people returning from the prison experience.