

Encouraging Voice, Empowering the Unheard



TORONTO WRITERS COLLECTIVE

ISSUE 2 +  
SEPTEMBER 2017 +  
FREE COPY +

# Newsletter

## Nothing Fits by Roberta Taylor

I am too poor to pay  
attention  
I have no new clothes  
nothing fits in my closet  
nothing fits in my thoughts

I don't get to say what's on  
my mind

I can't remember everything  
I do day to day  
nothing fits in my heart  
nothing fits in my soul

My loneliness is not yours  
My illness is not either,  
You can't cure my by  
Passing me by  
but you don't notice if  
if I live or die

Nothing fits in my soul  
Nothing fits, I'm too old

My Art and thoughts  
are my friends  
Poets are the ones  
Who watch and wait  
but often Poets are just  
Too late

To change your mind  
Do you have change for  
me?

I don't want it for much  
I just am poor  
so nothing fits of  
my clothes  
Some are too big  
others too old

Nothing Fits in  
my imagination  
I stand on the Fault  
Line between being old  
and not noticed  
no-one sees me on  
the streetcar  
unless I cry or piss  
myself

Then I'm embarrassed  
because nothing Fits  
to change into

nothing Fits I Feel  
sad  
nothing Fits  
but  
Still I'm glad  
I'm free enough  
not to judge  
anyone but  
me.

## NEW Front Lines

The TWC proudly launched its first anthology *Front Lines: Voices From The Toronto Writers Collective*, at a celebratory event held July 22 at the beautiful Hinton Learning Centre at the Toronto Reference Library. We welcomed 23 newly published authors who read their original work before a riveted audience of over 100 guests who were treated to inspiring poems, stories and fiction from once unheard voices.

READ MORE ON PAGE 4

# Church Wellesley Neighborhood Association

At the first annual Meet Your Neighbours event on September 9, the TWC was well represented by facilitators and authors from various workshops. The authors read pieces from their published works to promote open workshops at the 519, Mustard Seed, Fred Victor Housing and Progress Place.



PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID LIGHTFOOT

WRITERS (FROM LEFT): MISHAN LOVE, HILDEGARD GMEINER, JAKE ALLERDICE, KEN ROSSER



## What happens in a TWC workshop? Magic!

**The Toronto Writers Collective was founded in 2012 by Susan Turk Mozer, a certified Amherst Writers and Artists facilitator to encourage voice and illuminate undiscovered strength in Toronto's most vulnerable communities.**

**M**agic is the word we often hear, as words from those who are surprised by the depth of their creativity seem to spring from an unknown source.

Poets are discovered, buried voices, long without vitality, return to life, dreams are conceived and often lost individuals connect, deeply. Perspectives shift as the barrier of difference is broken.

We recognize the common humanity that bonds us all. Each workshop is profound in its way, as writers, often coming from harsh lived histories, experience the power of seeing and being seen by others.

It is this source, once discovered, acknowledged, and possessed that creates the positive transformation we see again and again. It is writing together and so much more.

There is great empowerment when one unlocks that reservoir of inspiration and strength. A pen and paper is the simple key.

Week after week in the Toronto Writers Collective's creative writing workshops, I have the privilege to see and hear writers who were once invisible and silenced tell their incredible personal stories.

I see the human connection and experience the celebration of value and dignity for all of our writers, and the sheer life changing magic of writing... the simplicity and power of voice.

I witness the profound healing of words touching the most sensitive and wounded places and reaching the most exalted places too, bridging differences, seeing hope and not despair.

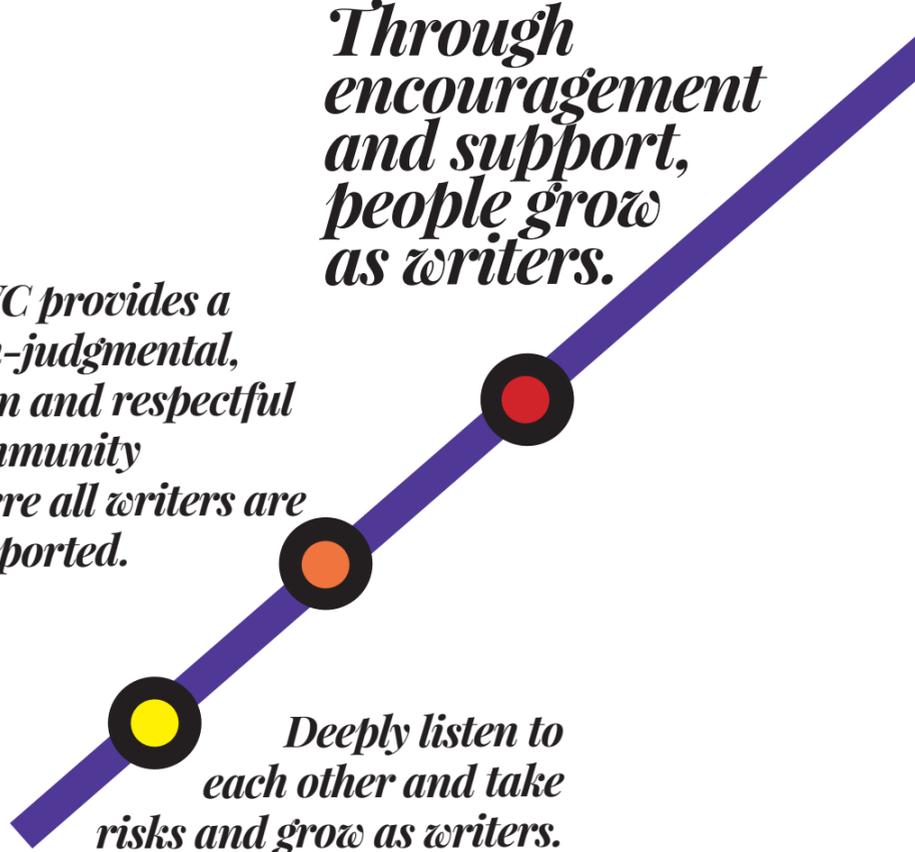
All of this happens within our forum, not once, but dependably, week after week.

Doug Grundman,  
TWC Facilitator & Trainer

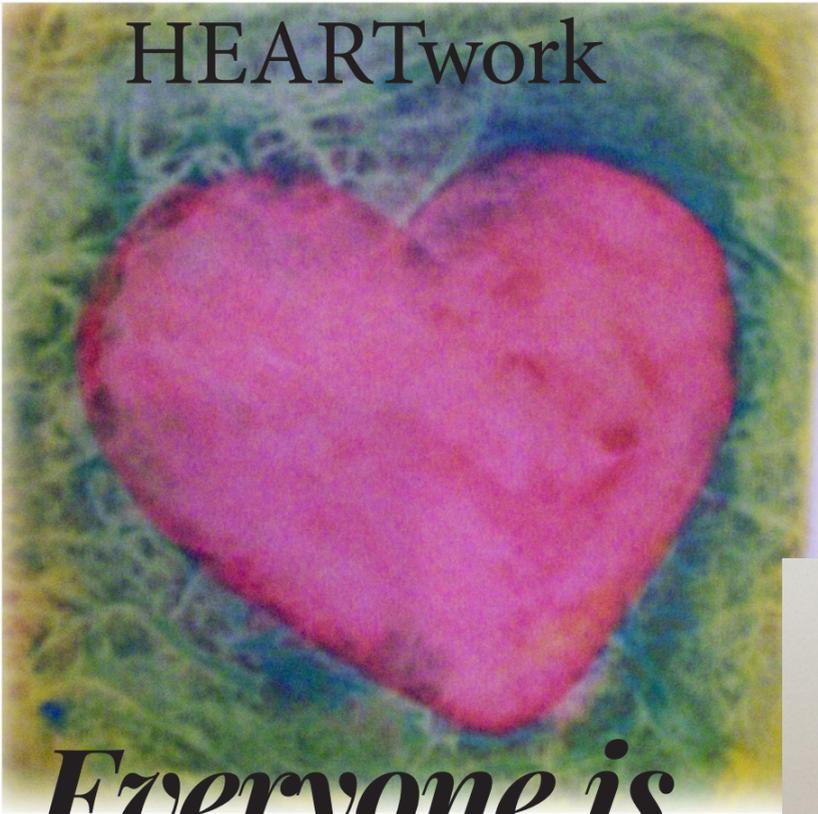
*Through encouragement and support, people grow as writers.*

*TWC provides a non-judgmental, open and respectful community where all writers are supported.*

*Deeply listen to each other and take risks and grow as writers.*

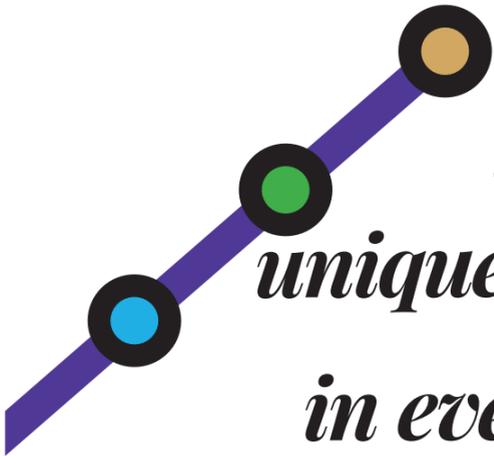


# Christina Walsh's HEARTwork



*Everyone is  
a writer.*

regardless of prior writing experience  
and formal education.



*There's a  
unique creative  
genius  
in every voice.*

PHOTO CREDIT: RICHARD TRUS

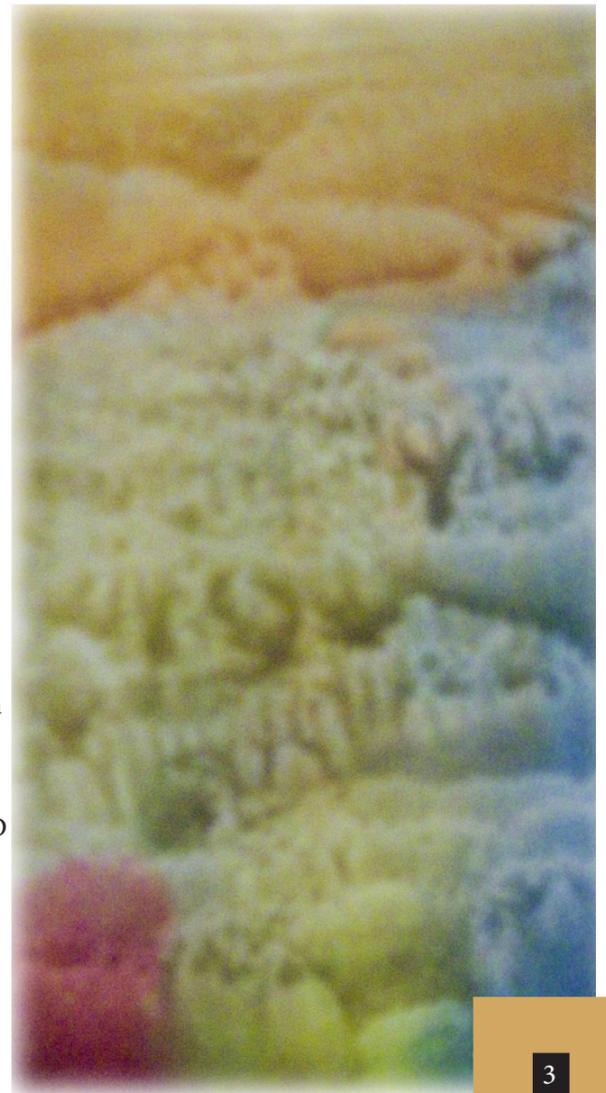
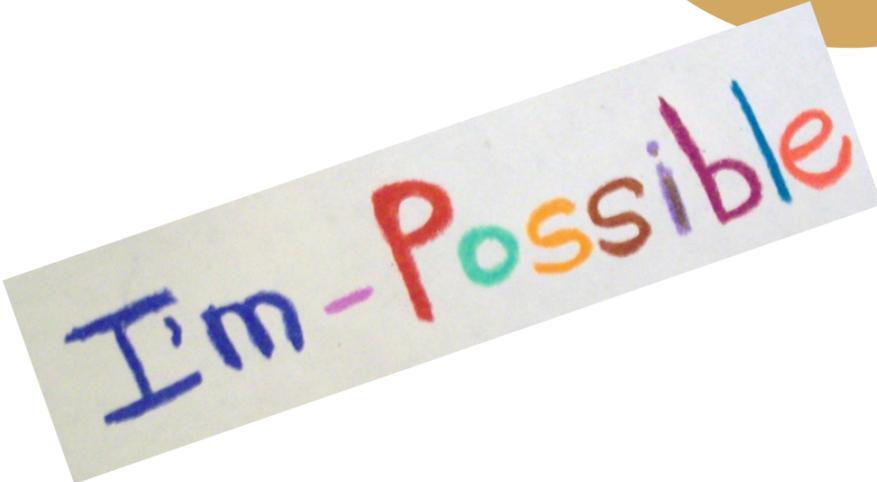
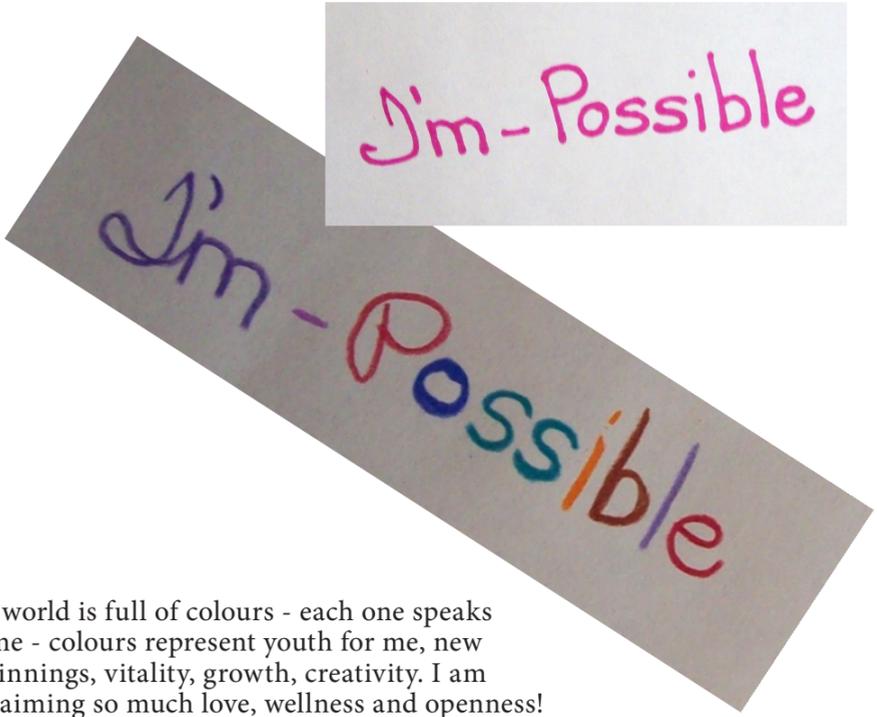


Thanks to the Toronto Writers Collective, I am giving myself NEW messages about who I am. It's taken me over 40 years to do so & now I KNOW it's possible to RECLAIM my VOICE.

*Each person's  
experience  
provides  
a wealth of  
inspiration  
as a writer  
and an artist.*

Christina Walsh has always known and believed that she is a writer. She writes authentically to inspire, help and be a voice for others. Christina believes in the power of words and self-expression. Writing gives her energy and purpose. Her go to 'trio' are pen, paper, and fingers.

I am proud to share my story from deep within my heart; no matter how raw, how inspiring, how painful, how hopeful. I am finally learning to be PROUD of who I am!



# Hinton Learning Centre

June 2017

cont'd from  
pg. 1

PHOTO CREDIT: RICHARD TRUS



Roberta Taylor was born in Winnipeg and spent her early childhood in foster care. After being adopted at age 7, she went to theatre school and studied classical music. She also spent time on a farm. Today, at 56, Roberta sells art and photography. Despite physical challenges, Roberta feels she is now at her most creative.

PHOTO CREDIT: ERDAL ATUGAL



Sage Turtle  
Performance Artist

## Front Lines Book Launch

Continued from page 1

This anthology was the culminating achievement for those writers who attended Write On workshops held over a period of 4 months. TWC writers were mentored by published authors who went above and beyond their mandate, inspired by the vibrancy of creativity in our community, touched by the power of authentic voice and the truly transformational power of expression.

In addition, TWC writers attended comprehensive performance and publishing workshops. This training will support the authors as they continue to gain confidence in their writing voice and encourage them to connect with resources that can help them to achieve their individual goals.

We thank the Toronto Public Library for its support. Four branch librarians promoted the workshops and opened their doors to host them. Our first printing of Front Lines sold out in a few days! However, copies of the book are now available through the Toronto Public Library or can be purchased online and at TWC events.

This entire program and the impact it has made on our community would not have been possible without the generous support of the Kaszas Group, BMO Nesbitt Burns and artsVest. We thank You.

**Sponsored by the Kaszas Group, BMO Nesbitt Burns and artsVest.**

PHOTO CREDIT: JONI DUHLBERG



## Trillium Seed Grant

TWC will evaluate creative writing workshops at 8 community locations to determine how the program benefits participants. This evaluation will take place between September 2017 and January 2018.

This research project is led by Kelly McShane, a clinical psychologist and credentialed evaluator who has collaborated with community organizations for over 15 years. She has worked with groups that provide services to those living with mental health and addictions issues. She has also worked with members of Indigenous communities.

The Toronto Writers Collective gratefully acknowledges the receipt of the Ontario Trillium Foundation SEED Grant to assess the impact of the TWC's Expressive Writing Program.

An agency of the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is one of Canada's largest granting foundations. With a budget of over \$136 million, OTF awards grants to some 1,000 projects every year to build healthy and vibrant Ontario communities. [www.otf.ca](http://www.otf.ca)

To participate or for more information please  
[contactinfo@torontowriterscollective.ca](mailto:contactinfo@torontowriterscollective.ca)

All information received during the study is confidential.



An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

PHOTO CREDIT: ERDAL ATUGAL



Rashma Manjra  
Author

PHOTO CREDIT: ERDAL ATUGAL



Mary Francisco  
Author

# Super Life

Not climatized to the primary life, trials, dramas, stages which I played different parts,  
my saga goes on another day to be reborn, forgive, thrive, alive

The prodigal has come home, no throne, but bones aged by time, survived,

My true riches are not gold, this story told from my soul. The world often cold, unknown, supposed  
assumed, colorful rich and bold the truth be told. This is my super life. My life.

Frugal or stupid, innocent, pure, tested, procured, unsure, secure, allured, LIFE.

The life I live, at times I love, daydreams yet to be born, and nurtured, manifested, this I know

Who would know I would make it this far, only God can hear me when I cry, aloud inside

Humbled mother and child, my family, the friends I love, unconditionally, personally, spiritually

in the stillness of the night I dream consistently, holding on to love, my self,

where it is kept the stone frame that holds my heart

mirrored, authenticated, anticipated, the prose of destiny

trying to live the super life, Super Life. The life God has given me, every woman has the right to be free,

I am just being me

Living the edge of my persona's tribulation, I don't know, I am not superhuman

Don't get too close to me, for you crowd my individuality, expose my fragility

Super duper egotistical mentality, oops, I mean holistic being, detoxing vulnerabilities

Stave off some responsibilities, for me, work and work for mere society, not a super life at all

I am going to do it, been through it, community centered, family oriented. Not a superwoman, only human

Living in the now and not taking days for granted, I live for my babies, living a single mother life

Explored it, walked it, tepidly taking a bath, whether I am cold or hot, I didn't come with a manual.

Warranty or guarantee, natural, formidable, trying to reach something higher than myself

I reflect on my super life. Portals of gratitude in my mind's eye, blessings and curses massacred my self,

by survival, the sign of the times

Oh! but those unfolding possibilities and affirmed destiny, but to one more time, try what else can I do,

Don't get caught up in human imperfection, dreams live and die, thrive, believe to survive. A historic

orphan of circumstance, spontaneity at my back. I look to you Lord where I stand, your foot prints in the sand.

Often strangled by rage, oh I am afraid to try again. Self indifference can be often misconstrued, a

judgement can be cruel, chosen by God, I can't pretend, whom all blessings flow, to SUPER LIFE

you may burn from stern disposition

In this life, sometimes I cannot believe my eyes, man's distastes for human beings.

Not super, destroying one's right to live their life, by strife, unforgiveness and pride.

Born into changing times and everchanging intolerance, I ponder with dignity and in pride.

My Super Life



PHOTO CREDIT: ERDAL ATUGAL

ERDINE (DEE) HOPE IS AN ORIGINAL PARTICIPANT OF THE TORONTO WRITERS COLLECTIVE. SHE IS ALSO A FACILITATOR, SINGLE MOTHER, RADIO HOST AND PROGRAMMER WITH RADIO REGENT FOR FIVE YEARS. HER EXPERIENCE SPANS TWENTY YEARS WORKING WITH MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS - NOW AT SOUND TIMES SUPPORT SERVICES AS A FRONTLINE COMMUNITY WORKER. THE TORONTO WRITERS COLLECTIVE GAVE HER VOICE, IN A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS WHOSE SUPPORT AND INCLUSION EMPOWERS ALL TO TELL THEIR PEERS UNIQUE STORIES; TO BECOME A WRITER. THE TRUEST FORM FREEDOM.



PHOTO CREDIT: JESSE COHOON

(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) SIOBHAN LANT, ERDINE (DEE) HOPE, DOUG GRUNDMAN, SUSAN TURK MOZER

# Graduating Class Fall 2017

*"A growing army of people...who have the courage and imagination to express themselves with passion...."*

– Marie Day (Laufer) / Parent of Workshop Participant



PHOTO CREDIT: JESSE COHOON

## Shandel Shand / **Peer Worker & Harm Reduction Staff, Elizabeth Fry's Worksafe Program**

For what it is worth your program and facilitators are tremendous. Felicity and Bronwyn are true gems. They adapt to our environment as well as create such a peaceful, stressless structure – however, very productive. When I walk into the room at Elizabeth Fry my clients ask "where are our girls? Are they coming?" It is impressive how they have not only facilitated the workshop but gone above and beyond to get to know the women and, of course, their writing. I am truly grateful for these two angels you sent me! I want to say thank you!

## Niranjan Gundu / **Case Manager Fred Victor Housing Program**

The TWC meetings held at FVC (Fred Victor Centre) are far and away the longest running and most successful community development program we have had in my time here. With an clutch of dedicated, supremely skilled and ever enduring staff, the TWC has created a space that is welcoming to some of the most vulnerable members of society and it has been a genuine pleasure to see the process through which so many have found, used, and expressed their voice. The art, writing and camaraderie that has come from building a grassroots group of writers in our community has left an indelible mark in their lives. Often I am confronted with their joy, their excitement and their pride at both their, and their community's successes.

## Marie Day (Laufer) / **Parent of TWC Workshop Participant**

My warmest congratulations to you and the writers and everyone involved with Front Lines. My family has watched the hardship, confusion and frustration that my wonderful daughter has been forced to endure for so many years. Now I see that there is a growing army of people, like her, who have the courage and imagination to express themselves with passion and honesty. I have learned a great deal from reading these stories and poems.

Learn how to become TWC facilitator, at [torontowriterscollective.ca](http://torontowriterscollective.ca)

## David Lightfoot / **TWC Facilitator**

The one surprising constant of the TWC is that there is never a writing session where I don't walk away with a line or a phrase that teaches me something. There is never a voice that doesn't enrich me somehow. These sessions are a constant reminder that all voices are unique, and that all people, deep down, are very interesting and worth listening to.

*"There is never a voice that doesn't enrich me somehow..."*  
– David Lightfoot / TWC Facilitator

# The Southern Crossing

Out of my car I slammed the door shut and heard the amphibian. The surrounding bluster bellowed out of the dark waxy silence. My cerebellum felt jarred and displaced. Croak after croak overlapped each croak from each corner weak and loud, close and distant, from the green black pond glitter of a South Carolina night dedicated off the highway wet, warm and real at 3am.

I had finished the drive from the north from the cold and snow.

She came with coffee, banter free. Her appealing southern lilt courtesy enchanted my gravity as her eyes cobalted me and I felt her leisure in a slow motion drawl. She chain smoked me off the runway of my mind while lost empty cans of ginger ale moonlit dry, shrugged meaningless shrugs on the parking lot of quiet asphalt slashed with white-white straight lines softly aglow in appointments a jump apart side by side unruffled by the generous dialogue of sociable stars arranged high above with a secret in every twinkle like the frogs and toads emotionless as they meditate loud past midnight an unencumbered quaking grandeur as ancient as the earth and I stirred my spoon and a stream of a tickle spent itself down my brow and cheek undecided which way to turn.

I am salmonella free on this summery night in December as frogs unsaddle and plop for swims in the residence of dark soft water. I am so tired. I am worried I will be twilight zoned by delinquent aliens and by some sneaky turn of events I will be reading graffiti on an asteroid. I am weak as a tulip so I ordered pancakes. The only customer is me. My orbit is drowsy. I get up and bump the wall. I pay my bill and go out and mock the frogs. They are hysterical. Drunk on moonshine. Waiting for a bug. They need a glacier to get them hopping. Otherwise they are well behaved contours expressing cosmic flirtations and maybe dry humour. They know each other by a croak. Carelessly at rest, looking straight out, their pensive reflection is a disguise. They are vivid, elusive leaps of green, eerie calm with no hierarchy or facial expression or bellybutton and probably know not to hop under a crane if they can help it and they have a classy status on the lunch menu.

In Mexico, I saw lacquered frogs standing at little toy bars drinking Tequila. They were lacquered into still life and wore little sombreros. The little frogs leaning against a tiny bar in Mexico stood in random poses and had tiny cigarettes hanging out of their mouths and all around them is a sweet feeling of general neglect and time has no torment.

fin -----p.a.eng

PAUL ENG'S WRITING PASSION BEGAN IN GRADE 10, WHEN HIS HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER MISS SHARON URGED HIM TO IMPROVE HIS GRAMMAR. SINCE THEN, HIS POETRY HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN A NEWSPAPER AND IN AN ANTHOLOGY, SCALING THE FACE OF REASON. TAKING A WEEKLY POETRY WORKSHOP FROM ANNIE WONG IN THE FALL OF 2016 HAS REKINDLED HIS DRIVE TO WRITE.



WORKSHOP AT FRED VICTOR, PHOTO CREDIT: RICHARD TRUS

# Empower the unheard.

*The Toronto Writers Collective uses creative writing to positively impact the diverse and underserved populations across communities*

*in the GTA. Established on a shoestring budget, over 600 people have experienced the power of their words, creating positive life changing results. We need your help to leverage this simple yet profound*

*concept to meet a real demand.*

*You can be a meaningful catalyst to continuing the training of facilitators and helping our writers find their voice. Every dollar donated goes to advancing the cause and directly impacts our community. This is one of those early stage opportunities when you will be able to look back later and genuinely say that you did more than write a check - you empowered something truly meaningful.*

**For More Information, please contact Jesse Cohoon:**

[jesse@torontowriterscollective.ca](mailto:jesse@torontowriterscollective.ca)

**Donations can be sent directly to:**

[info@torontowriterscollective.ca](mailto:info@torontowriterscollective.ca)

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