

NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT: Teresa Huang
213-253-2655
pr@writegirl.org

**FIRST LADY RECOGNIZES WRITEGIRL AS
A TOP AFTER-SCHOOL ARTS AND HUMANITIES PROGRAM**
WriteGirl honored at the White House for empowering teen girls

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) WriteGirl will be honored by First Lady Michelle Obama in the East Room of the White House today as one of 12 organizations awarded the 2013 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards.

WriteGirl, a creative writing and mentoring organization for underserved girls in Los Angeles, received the highest honor such programs can receive in the United States. WriteGirl is the only awardee in the state of California.

Chosen from a pool of more than 350 nominations and 50 finalists, the 12 awardees were recognized for using engagement in the arts and the humanities to increase academic achievement, graduation rates, and college enrollment, as well as improve literacy and language abilities, communication and performance skills, and cultural awareness.

"Through these programs, young people are discovering their creative voices, developing a stronger sense of who they are as individuals, and gaining a deeper understanding of the world around them," wrote Mrs. Obama in the program for the award ceremony. "And, as young people navigate today's challenges, the programs we are honoring offer safe harbors that cultivate enthusiasm for learning, support academic achievement, and promote college readiness."

WriteGirl pairs professional women writers with teen girls for weekly one-on-one mentoring, writing workshops, public readings, and publishing opportunities. WriteGirl partners with arts and civic institutions each month for full-day creative writing workshops for hundreds of girls and women, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Autry Museum, the GRAMMY Museum, and Walt Disney Concert Hall. For 12 consecutive years, WriteGirl has maintained a 100 percent success rate in guiding high school seniors in their Core Mentoring Program to not only graduate from high school but enroll in college, a stark contrast to the 50 percent dropout rate at Los Angeles public high schools.

"WriteGirl is at the intersection of creativity and confidence," said WriteGirl Founder and Executive Director Keren Taylor. "We help girls raise their voices and see a clearer vision of their futures where they are the architects. This national recognition is an opportunity for our girls to feel that their voices are heard at the highest level of government in the country. That's powerful."

WriteGirl also brings workshops to schools in Los Angeles County serving critically at-risk teens, including incarcerated teens. WriteGirl was honored as the 2010-2011 California Nonprofit of the Year.

Executive Director Keren Taylor will be joined at the East Room ceremony by WriteGirl mentee Jacqueline Cables Uy, age 16, a junior at LACES High School in Los Angeles and a current teen participant in WriteGirl. Jacqueline aspires to become a journalist and has a compelling piece of writing - "My Own" - in the upcoming WriteGirl anthology, "You Are Here: The WriteGirl Journey."

WriteGirl publishes award-winning anthologies that showcase the bold voices and imaginative insights of teen girls and their mentors. These books, which have collectively won over 60 national and international book awards, present a diverse collection of personal stories, poetry, essays, scenes and lyrics, as well as innovative writing experiments for writers of all levels.

"From children battling cancer to at-risk teenage girls, students from these 12 programs offer living proof that engaging in the arts and humanities helps you do well in school, graduate high school, and go to college," said Rachel Goslins, executive director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. "Every year, we are humbled by the work these programs do and honored to support the life-changing impact they are having on the students they reach."

In addition to their recognition at the White House, each of the 12 community based programs will receive \$10,000 and a year of communications and capacity-building support from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. For more information about the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards, visit www.pcah.gov.

About WriteGirl

WriteGirl is a creative writing and mentoring organization in Los Angeles that helps teen girls discover and express their creative voices. WriteGirl has two main programs: the Core Mentoring Program, in which at-risk teen girls are matched with professional women writers for one-on-one mentoring, genre-specific workshops, public readings, publications and college and scholarship application assistance; and the In-Schools Program, where volunteer mentors lead weekly workshops to improve literacy and communication skills at schools in critically at-risk neighborhoods.

WriteGirl enrolls more than 350 underserved teen girls (13-18 yrs) from the metropolitan Los Angeles region. In a city where the dropout rate hovers around 50%, WriteGirl has maintained a 12-year record of guiding 100% of girls in their Core Mentoring Program to not only graduate from high school but also enroll in college. WriteGirl publications have collectively won over 60 national and international book awards. WriteGirl was honored as the 2010-2011 California Nonprofit of the Year.

About the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards

The National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award is the nation's highest honor for after-school arts and humanities programs. The awards recognize and support outstanding programs that lay new pathways to creativity, expression, and achievement outside of the regular school day. These programs excite and engage a range of students, cultivating imagination, collaboration, discipline and academic success, with demonstrable results. They also provide safe harbors after-school, weekends and evenings for children and youth in some of our country's most at-risk urban and rural settings.

About the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

Created in 1982 by Executive Order, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) is an advisory committee to the White House on cultural issues. The PCAH works directly with the Administration and the three primary cultural agencies—National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)—as well as other federal partners and the private sector, to address policy questions in the arts and humanities, to initiate and support key programs in those disciplines, and to recognize excellence in the field. Its core areas of focus are arts and humanities education, cultural exchange, and community revitalization. Mrs. Michelle Obama, like other first ladies before her, serves as honorary chairman of the committee, which is composed of both private and public members. For more information, visit: www.pcah.gov.



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