

WRITING THROUGH MEMOIR

A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TOOL

VOICES

Vol. 2, Fall 2009



**Memoirs from Herstory Inside
Suffolk County Correctional Facilities**

“If I let you into my life, will you not judge? If I let you into my life, will you not look at me with those forgiving eyes? Please just listen. Do not have sympathy for me, for your sympathy I do not need. Just know the words on this page [is] my life. It’s neither good nor bad. It’s my life.

Words from Herstory Inside

This event is paid for by your student activity fees.

The Criminal Justice Club/Department of Suffolk County Community College invites students, faculty and community members to join the formerly incarcerated writers of the Herstory Inside project for an hour of readings, questions and answers and audience interaction.

TUESDAY, APRIL 5TH

AT 11 AM

**MONTAUK ROOM/BABYLON STUDENT CENTER/
SELDEN CAMPUS**

This presentation describes how incarcerated women and girls use guided memoir writing to connect with their pasts and begin to dream of beginning new chapters in their lives, as they dare audiences in prison and out to care about what has happened to them.

Meet Herstory facilitators who have worked with nearly a thousand imprisoned women and girls over a seven-year period, and listen to readings by women whose lives have been transformed by the writing process they engaged in while serving time.

Meet the corrections officers who found such a change inside themselves that they asked if VOICES, Herstory Writers Workshop’s publication of prison writings could be included in the mandatory training of all future Suffolk County corrections officers as part of their requirement to graduate from the academy.

See documentary footage by Black Media Foundation taking you into workshop meetings in the Riverhead Correctional Facility and then into lives in the Herstory community beyond.

Founded in 1996, Herstory Writers Workshop provides opportunities through guided memoir writing that empower women from all walks of life (regardless of age, race, religion, financial status or sexual orientation, whether incarcerated or free) to turn their intimate stories into works of art crafted so that others can hear. Herstory is committed to providing an environment of intensive instruction which, in addition to creating literary works, upholds our values of empathy, inclusiveness, self-guided healing, safety and the search for social change in the expression of voices that historically have been most profoundly silenced. **To contact Herstory call 631-676-7395 or go to www.herstorywriters.org**

Erika Duncan is the author of the novels *A Wreath of Pale White Roses* (Magic Circle Press) and *Those Giants: Let Them Rise* (Schocken Books). Her portraits of writers, written when she was a contributing editor for *Book Forum*, were collected in a volume entitled *Unless Soul Clap Its Hands: Portraits and Passages*, also published by Schocken Books. Her front page



“Encounters” for the *New York Times Long Island Weekly* ran monthly from 1993 to 1997, expanding her portrait form to include not only writers, but artists, musicians, scientists and activists. She has received numerous grants for her pilot projects in the teaching of writing in university and grassroots settings, including a Ford-funded project with connections to mathematical thinking. She is completing her own memoir, *Dreamer in the Play Yard: The Therapist’s Daughter*. Herstory Writers Workshop is her creation.

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“Short of air, water and food, I can't think of anything that's more important than being able to tell our stories, to be heard, and to hear the stories of people around us. In some original cultures, a person who is ill is told, ‘You've lost your song’ or ‘You've lost your story.’ Your project is helping women and girls toward health and community.”

From Gloria Steinem to Herstory Writers Workshop