

Welcome to **What the World Needs Now: Wellness & Healing through Literary Arts**, a panel featuring three literary-arts based nonprofits who place communal and individual healing at the center of their work, their work being what some might consider “therapeutic,” their populations ranging from youth to marginalized peoples to the medically and socially vulnerable.

The 3 Nonprofits are Kitchen Table (Sheree Greer), Inside Out (Justin Rogers), and Revisionary Arts (me, Rosemarie Dombrowski).

Given that all of our organizations take a literary arts approach – and oftentimes a poetry-centric approach – to wellness, agency-building, and healing, I wanted to start by briefly addressing the question *why would anyone employ the literary arts as a therapeutic modality?*

- First, any form of writing is a means of articulating our experiences... reshaping them into a subjective narrative that we can take ownership over—inarguably an agency building aspect of writing
- Accordingly, writing can loosen our subconscious resistance to traumatic or painful events, often providing insight.
- Writing is means of sharing our suffering—so it’s an act of vulnerability, release, even self-healing.

- But poetry in particular -- because of how it forces us to be concise -- requires us to narrow our focus to what's essential

There are numerous clinical studies that support the efficacy of poetry in reducing pain, lessening symptoms of depression, and even increasing resilience and hope.

But we're here today to talk about our lived experiences, our applications of poetry as medicine in our communities, and I think that our stories might be more compelling than the data.

So with that, I'd like to begin the introductions and discussion...

### **Topics for Discussion** (we'll all speak to the following questions)

- Q1: So first, let's briefly identify who we are, who we serve, and how we use the literary arts to address the needs of our communities? (Sheree, Justin, RD)
- Q2: Can you speak to how your literary-arts-based approach actually builds community?
  - Is the community-building what facilitates the healing?  
Or is it an array of things working in tandem?
- **If time permits:** Would anyone like to speak briefly about how individual and communal needs have changed over the past two years or how your ability to serve those needs has changed due to the pandemic?

- Q4/Closing remarks:
  - what's your vision for the future—what would you like to see in terms of the role that poetry plays in communal well-being and healing?
  - how can people support your organization or maybe even collaborate with it?

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### **Event Description:**

(500 characters with spaces)

The literary arts are experiencing more relevance than they have in decades, being more widely regarded as a conduit for healing, a therapeutic modality that benefits mental and physical wellbeing, augments the social and emotional learning of individuals and communities. This panel will feature the work of three nonprofits that employ poetry in therapeutic ways across diverse demographics—from youth in both public schools and nontraditional spaces, to the medically and socially vulnerable.

### **Statement of Value:**

(500 characters with spaces)

By showcasing programs that have had measurable success within intersectional populations across diverse regions of the country, our

panel has the potential to inspire attendees and other nonprofits to create literary arts programming that sees students and people of all ages, whether medically or socially vulnerable, as individuals with agency and voice. Additionally, given the poetry-centric nature of our NPs, we'll be highlighting the well-documented, regenerative properties of poetry.

### **Event Agenda:**

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After briefly overviewing the ethos of the panel, each literary arts organization will introduce themselves/their mission, their region(s)/population, and their unique approach to creating healing spaces—specifically, how they've used literary arts programming to discover and communicate the needs of a population, foster community solidarity, and most importantly, facilitate healing. Each NP will address pandemic impact and community outcomes. Moderated/audience Q & A to follow.