



Meet Some of the Playwrights Featured in Write to Dream

The majority of students that YPT serves come from low-income families and attend under-resourced schools, where opportunity for advancement is limited. However, inspired by their YPT experience, many of the young playwrights featured in Write to Dream, went on to pursue their dreams of attending prestigious academic institutions and following noteworthy career paths. Some have landed in writing or entertainment careers while others have devoted themselves to public or community service or opportunities where they can inspire others. Still others have pursued studies and careers in science and technology, and cite YPT as key to their development as critical and creative thinkers.

As a result of their participation in the YPT program, most of these playwrights acknowledge that they developed a newfound confidence in their ability to express powerful messages or deeply held personal beliefs through the written word.

Here's a quick snapshot of some of the playwrights featured, as well as an update on where they are now:

Amber Faith Walton wrote her play "*Changing Tides: Judge Me Gently*" in 2010 when she was a junior at Bell Multicultural High School. She was inspired to write her play by a gay friend who had gone through many social hardships. As a biracial female, Walton had experienced social exclusion first-hand. Amber was awarded the \$10,000 prize by the Federal Communications Bureau Association towards her tuition at Smith College for an essay that she wrote about her experience with YPT. She started Smith in the fall of 2012 and plans to major in biology with the goal of one day becoming an epidemiologist. She hopes that her play will inspire others on a path to social justice, "When I created my characters, I decided to leave the fear of judgment behind, believing that my work could change habits of hatred. I had been passive; but I now know, that being an advocate for justice is the path to a better future."

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Kenrry Alvarado wrote his play “*Daft Desire*” in 2010 when he was a junior at Bell Multicultural High School. Kenrry is now a sophomore at Middlebury College in Vermont majoring in neuroscience. He says, “YPT provided me such an amazing opportunity... The fact that they were able to bring my thoughts and ideas to life through this program brought me sheer joy and inspiration.”

Ann Gill wrote her play “*The Day After Bob Said Yeah Right*” in 2010 when she was in 6th grade at Maya Angelou Public Charter School Campus. She now attends Benjamin Banneker High School and says to readers of this book, “I would like them to be inspired and use their imaginations. Do your best during everything because you might just write a play that that got turned into a staged play. Express yourself as well as take the risk.”

Mariana Pavón Sánchez wrote her play “*Mariana’s Wish*” in 2009 when she was a junior at Wakefield High School. When YPT received the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award in 2010 (one of only 15 winners selected for this honor, from a national pool of more than 400 nominations), Mariana was selected to receive the award on behalf of YPT from First Lady Michelle Obama at a special White House ceremony. Mariana spoke at the ceremony about her own journey and the impact YPT had on her life. World-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who serves on the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, also attended the ceremony and told Mariana after she accepted the award how he, too, found his voice through artistic expression.

Cameron Byrd wrote his play “*Peasant Revolt: The Play*” in 2001 when he was in 7th grade at Hardy Middle School. He graduated from Howard University in 2010 with a B.A. in English and a minor in African American studies. He’s now a professional freelance writer. He said, “I discovered that intricately charted plays are not always the best approach. Imagination and immersion are just as important. Sometimes you have to be the actor as much as the storyteller.”

Sheila Walcott wrote her play “*Color Lines*” in 1998 when she was a senior at Benjamin Banneker Academic Senior High School. Now Director of Development at HBO Films in Los Angeles, CA, Walcott says that having her play selected for professional production by YPT was one of the main reasons she embarked on a career in entertainment because it validated her skills as a writer.

Laila Parada-Worby wrote her play “*Chicas y Gringas*” in 2004 when she was a freshman at School Without Walls Senior High School. She graduated in May 2012 from Harvard University and is currently working with the Leadership

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Institute of Rio (ILRIO) in São Paulo on a post-graduate fellowship through Princeton in Latin America.

Antawan Taylor wrote his play “*Tornado Boy*” in 2009 when he was in 5th grade at Plummer Elementary school. Now a freshman at Eastern High School, Taylor says, “YPT pushed me more. I was already into drawing, but it pushed me to take more arts classes, and push myself more to get into it...My imagination changed. Instead of writing something and doing it for a regular grade, I try and do it the best as I can.”

Zainep Mahmoud wrote her play, “*Unforgettable*” in 2002 when she was a sophomore at Benjamin Banneker Academic High School. She’s currently pursuing an MBA at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania and had this to say about her YPT experience, “The Young Playwrights’ Theater exposed my high school classmates and me to the incredible world of playwriting – from the idea conception phase all the way through seeing the play performed. What is most striking is seeing the creative and truly thought-provoking plots high school students compose.”

Pete Hall wrote his play “*Keepin’ Outta’ Trouble*” in 2007 when he was a junior at Bell Multicultural High School. Now a student at California State University, he is working as part of the Northridge/Talent Crew at Pacific Theaters. Hall says if he had never taken the chance to be part of YPT, “I wouldn’t have discovered my passion for writing. I’m on my journey trying to live my dream and be happy doing so. If the journey ever gets difficult for you and makes you want to give up – don’t.”

In memory of **Edwin Ventura**.

Write To Dream also features a very special play “*Moving Out*” by the late playwright, **Edwin Ventura** who was tragically killed in 2007 at the age of 18. Ventura had felt trapped by the violence of his neighborhood, and dreamed of moving to a safe place with his family. His touching play tells the tale of a family hurt by violence when the father is shot by a masked gunman during a robbery. Only hours before he was killed, Edwin and his family had visited the home that they hoped to buy in the Maryland suburbs. YPT honored Edwin’s passion and talent with a public reading of *Moving Out* in May 2007. The evening brought together friends, family members, local elected officials and activists and inspired a lively dialogue about ending neighborhood violence.

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