LITERATURE
FOR ALL OF US
OPENING WORLDS BY OPENING BOOKS

2018 Program Snapshot
Our Mission

Literature for All of Us uses books and writing to facilitate circles of connection, healing and growth in the face of social inequity. By inviting participants to explore the transformative power of their own voices, we help build resilience. *We open worlds by opening books.*

Our History

Since 1997, Literature for All of Us has grown from serving 15 low-income teenage moms to serving nearly 700 participants this year and over 9,000 participants to date. Starting with a single book group, Literature for All of Us now serves over 30 book groups in 14 schools and community organizations.
I am from fear released into a million angels.

I am faith working into existence.

I am courageous, I am unsure.

I am strong, I am weak.

I am many things, things of many.

I am the bearer of life, the milk and bread of the millennial masterpiece.

I am the wrinkle in time, able to teach many of my struggle to be here, to be present, to breathe to love and to lift the masses.

See! I am a woman, and I am not going anywhere but forward.
This year, our 706 book group members participated in 615 sessions that led to them writing 1,729 poems.

Book group member Bryan Casillas participating in a Literature for All of Us art reflection after visiting the Alphawood Gallery exhibit "And Then They Came For Me"
Literature for All of Us gave away 2,440 books, including 418 children's books, building in-home libraries across Chicago.

Book group member Jakeira Nelson with her son Anthony at Literature for All of Us’ Family Literacy Day at the Simpson Academy for Young Women.
2017-2018 Program Sites

- Chicago Women in Trades
- Curt’s Cafe
- Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School
- Innovations High School of Integrated Arts
- J. Sterling Morton Alternative High School
- Juvenile Temporary Detention Center
- Lurie Children’s Hospital Gender Clinic
- Second Chance Alternative High School
- Central States SER
- Roger C. Sullivan High School
- Sullivan House High School
- Theolene Simpson Academy for Young Women
- Upton Sinclair Alternative High School
- TransWorks
- YWCA Evanston North Shore
Our staff used 100 different titles while leading 30 weekly groups across 15 sites and published 12 poetry anthologies of participant-created work.
We are changing the way our participants experience school

66% say that book group contributes to them staying in school

79% agree that book group strengthened their relationships with peers and adults in school
And we are changing the way our participants see themselves

84% say that book group has boosted their self-confidence

81% report that they can share their thoughts and feelings in book group

I Carry...
by Janette Rojas

On my shoulders I carry
A marriage that didn’t work
In my ears I carry
the words of my father telling me
to be something in life,
and to help my mother and siblings.
On my tongue I carry
words of self-defense.
On my fingertips I carry
power to help me in life
and to move forward
On my hips I carry
self-confidence.
“Books saved me, and not in some detached, suspense-filled way...I realized that the stories that touched me most were the ones I related to. In essence, I fell in love with my own story.”

-Jerusalem Singleton, Poet, Literature for All of Us Alumna

Book Group Alumni
Najolie Wright (left) and Jerusalem Singleton perform at Literature for All of Us’ Club 21 Gala in February, 2018.