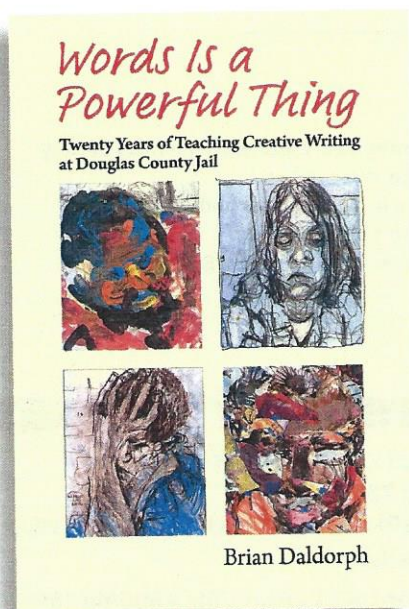


Words Is a Powerful Thing

Twenty Years of Teaching Creative Writing at Douglas County Jail

Brian Daldorph

Brian Daldorph first entered the Douglas County Jail classroom in Lawrence, Kansas, to teach a writing class on Christmas Eve 2001. His last class at the jail for the foreseeable future was mid-March 2020, right before the COVID-19 lockdown; the virus is taking a heavy toll in confined communities like nursing homes and prisons. *Words Is a Powerful Thing* is Daldorph's record of teaching at the jail for the two decades between 2001 and 2020, showing how the lives of everyone involved in the class—but especially the inmates who came to class week after week—benefited from what happened every Thursday afternoon in that jail classroom, where for two hours inmates and instructor became a circle of ink and blood, writing together, reciting their poems, telling stories, and having a few good laughs.



Words Is a Powerful Thing brings into the light the works of fifty talented inmate writers whose work deserves attention. Their poetry speaks of “what really matters” to all of us and gives the reader sustained insight into the role that creativity plays in aiding survival and bringing positive change for inmates, and, in turn, for all of us. Daldorph’s account of his teaching experience not only takes the reader inside the daily life at a county jail but also sets the work done in the writing class within the larger context of inmate education is the US corrections system, where education is often one of the few lifelines available to inmates. *Words Is a Powerful Thing* provides a teaching guide for instructors working with incarcerated writers, offering an extensive examination of both the challenges and benefits.

When Brian Daldorph decided the story of his classroom experiences and the great writing produced by the inmates deserved to be told to wider audiences, he struggled with how to bring it all together. Not long after, an inmate wrote a poem titled “Words Is a Powerful Thing,” offering Daldorph a title, concept, and purpose: to show that the poetry of inmates speaks not just to other inmates but to all of us.

Brian Daldorph is a creative writing instructor, Douglas County Jail, Lawrence, Kansas, and a senior lecturer, English Department, University of Kansas. He is the author of six books of poetry including *Kansas Poems* and *Blue Notes*, and the editor of the literary journal *Coal City Review*.

“I get a lot of prisoner anthologies from all over the world and at times they seem to blend in together—some are okay, others worthy of serious reflection, a few reach higher to demand reading and studious thoughtfulness. And then there are those few warrior-spirit poets and fiction writers that cancel my boredom and fatigue and awaken my senses to a higher attention as the pages seem to leap up and grasp me by my shirt collar. . . . This is one of those anthologies.”

JIMMY SANTIAGO BACA, AUTHOR OF *A PLACE TO STAND AND LAUGHING IN THE LIGHT*

“Brian Daldorph and his fellow writers have given us a gift.”

CHRISTOPHER P. DUM, COFOUNDER OF THE ID-13 PRISON LITERACY PROJECT AND AUTHOR OF *EXILED IN AMERICA: LIFE ON THE MARGINS IN A RESIDENTIAL MOTEL*

MAY
248 pages, 6 x 9
Cloth ISBN 978-0-7006-3215-2, \$50.00(s)
Paper ISBN 978-0-7006-3216-9, \$19.95(t)
Ebook ISBN 978-0-7006-3217-6, \$19.95

Words Is a Powerful Thing

Twenty Years of Teaching Creative Writing at Douglas County Jail

Brian Daldorph

Qty.	Title	Price
	Words Is a Powerful Thing at \$50.00 each (cloth)	
	Words Is a Powerful Thing at \$19.95 each (paper)	
		Postage and handling* \$
		Subtotal \$
* Postage & Handling \$6.00 for first book, \$1.25 for each additional book For orders outside the U.S. add \$9.50 for the first book and \$4.00 for each additional book.		Kansas residents add sales tax \$
		Total \$

Please type or print clearly

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Daytime telephone _____ Email _____

Method of Payment

Check/money order enclosed MasterCard VISA American Express Discover

Account # _____ - _____ - _____ - _____ Expiration date ____/____

Signature _____

Put my name on the following mailing lists:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Political Thought | <input type="checkbox"/> Landmark Law Cases and American Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Presidency Series | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern War Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Presidential Elections | <input type="checkbox"/> Studies in Government and Public Policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Constitutional Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern First Ladies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CultureAmerica | <input type="checkbox"/> Books on Kansas and the Region |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and Society | |



University Press of Kansas

2502 Westbrooke Circle · Lawrence KS 66045-4444
 Telephone 785-864-4154 · Orders 785-864-4155
 Fax 785-864-4586 · E-mail upress@ku.edu · Orders upkorders@ku.edu

Visit www.kansaspress.ku.edu

Follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/kansaspress