



Greater Washington Area Chapter

*A Legacy of Service. A Promise of Justice.*

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## **GWAC SUPPORTS FREE MINDS BOOK CLUB & WRITING WORKSHOP**



*Pictured: GWAC Members and Free Minds Poet Ambassador, Robert.*

Washington, DC – (November 18, 2014) The Greater Washington Area Chapter, Women Lawyers Division, National Bar Association (GWAC), held its November General Body Meeting on November 17, 2014, at DC Superior Court (500 Indiana Ave, NW). The meeting featured a very special presentation by Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop (“Free Minds”).

*GWAC is the Greater Washington Area Chapter of the National Bar Association Women Lawyers Division.*



Free Minds uses books, creative writing, and peer support to awaken DC youth incarcerated as adults to their own potential. Through creative expression, job readiness training, and violence prevention outreach, these young poets achieve their education and career goals, and become powerful voices for change in the community. Free Minds is the only organization of its kind to work with incarcerated youth from the start of their incarceration throughout their reentry. During the meeting, Executive Director Tara Libert and a Free Minds member home from prison spoke about the transformative power of creative expression and shared personal stories of change.



Free Minds has served over 850 youth with its unique program model based on three successive phases: Book Club, a twice-weekly meeting with 16- and 17-year-olds incarcerated as adults at the DC Jail designed to engage youth in books and writing; Continuing Support, in which Free Minds provides books, letters, newsletters, poetry feedback, and more to youth who are over 18 and incarcerated at the DC Jail or federal prisons across the country; and Reentry Support, a program designed to provide job training, part-time employment, connections to support services, and opportunities to give back to their community.



Reentry Support members known as Poet Ambassadors regularly speak at events including Write Night, in which volunteers gather to read poetry and write feedback to the incarcerated poets, and On the Same Page, an arts-based violence prevention initiative in which Poet Ambassadors share poetry and life experiences with diverse groups of students and other community members to raise awareness about youth incarceration and brainstorm solutions.



The meeting was widely attended by GWAC members and friends. GWAC would like to acknowledge the following persons for their attendance and participation: Melanie Bates (President), Brandes Ash (President-Elect), LaKeeshia Austin Fox (Treasurer), Christina Butler (Recording Secretary), Victoria Clark (Program Planning), Angela Clark (Community Service), Trish Harris, Nicole Watson, Charisma Howell, Lynn Holliday, Shanice McClelland, Janea Raines, and Kahlida Lloyd, among others.



GWAC would like to give a very special thank you to Tara and Robert of Free Minds for their phenomenal presentation.

For more information on Free Minds and ways you can get involved, visit [www.freemindsbookclub.org](http://www.freemindsbookclub.org) or [www.facebook.com/freemindsbookclub](https://www.facebook.com/freemindsbookclub) for up-to-date information on events and activities. Write Night is held on the fourth Tuesday of every month at George Washington University ([www.freemindsbookclub.org/get-involved/attend-write-night](http://www.freemindsbookclub.org/get-involved/attend-write-night)). We also encourage you to visit the Free Minds poetry blog ([www.freemindsbookclub.org/poetry-blog](http://www.freemindsbookclub.org/poetry-blog)) to read poems by incarcerated youth and write comments to be shared with the poets.

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*GWAC is a network of African-American women attorneys dedicated to the professional development of its members. We are committed to improving the quality of life in the Greater Washington Area through a variety of activities, including educational programs and community service projects.*

*For additional information about GWAC, please visit [www.gwacbar.org](http://www.gwacbar.org).*