

BY MARITZA COSANO
PHOTOS: ADDIEL PERERA

For Writer Flose LaPierre,

Writing Can Heal The Heart.

A few years ago, Flose LaPierre's observations and words began to unspool into expressive writing workshops, which is perhaps how she is most widely known today in our community. Her workshops, rich in detail and deep in sentiment, have been a light to women in particular. A source of contemplation and self-reflection. A beacon for those looking deep into their souls wanting to express their traumas or inner feelings. This brings me to the crux of her latest project, Write to Heal. LaPierre posits that writing is too critical to be explored only by the professional writers, journalists, and authors of the world. And while writing is not for everyone, she observes, we must try to lean into it to see what our heart says.

As LaPierre shared with me in conversation, when we open ourselves to the ritual of putting down our thoughts on paper, we not only take part in documenting our history but all that lies hidden deep inside of us. Her workshops demonstrate that everyone's writing can be healing, expressive, and distinctive. Writing also allows us to honor ourselves, she says. "That is such a challenge in our modern life with its pace, with its technology, with its emphasis on celebrity and status." Her workshops prompt you to sit quietly with

yourself and acknowledge, "I'm worthy. I have something to say."

What motivated you to write?

My poetry is motivated by my desire to want to live in a world that I feel is just, and to create a world where people would like to live meaningful lives. The kind of art I create is a reflection of that desire. To want to have a purpose for me and to want to create purpose for others. I came to writing from a place of trying to process childhood trauma. And so, it serves that purpose as well. Whenever I get overwhelmed or overstimulated, I go to my pen and my paper and that's where I kind of re-center.

Why pen and paper, the old fashion way of writing, which I love and endorse, by the way?

I always start with pen and paper. And that's why in my workshops, Write to Heal, I encourage pen-to-paper writing. There's a lot of research letting us know that there is a meditative practice—it's really effective for bringing emotion out of folks—so, always, pen and paper!

What's your favorite form of writing?

Personally, I write poetry. I started writing when I was eight years old. I still have journals from when I was in third grade. And

Flose LaPierre, Haiti-born writer, intuitive healer, and founder of Write to Heal, LLC, stands outside Alchemy Juice Co & Market downtown West Palm Beach.



it's actually one of the ways I learned to speak English. I was born in Haiti. My dad was a congressman in Haiti. We moved to the US for political asylum, when I was eight years old, which was a very stressful time for us as a family. To learn English, I started reading poets like Maya Angelou. One of my teachers encouraged me to start writing. Before I knew it, I was writing short poems every day, and even some short screenplays when I was in middle school. I'm not pursuing the screenplay thing, but I did have fun with it. I took a screenplay class last year because my husband Jesse [a voice actor] and I were living in L.A. It encouraged me to be brief in my writing because my long-form can be . . . long!

Where did you live when you left Haiti and how did that impact your writing?

We moved to Rockwell, New York about an hour north of New York City. I lived there almost my whole life. I went to Syracuse University and majored in public relations and sociology. I interned for an entertainment company in New York City. Though it was a worthwhile experience, I realized I really didn't want to be writing press releases for the rest of my life. I wanted something more meaningful. I turned to my dad and other people who inspired me politically. And from that, I realized that community organizing was a career that I had actually been doing since high school. I helped organize marches and meetings with the school board.

What brought you to South Florida?

I moved to Miami, where I was trained as a community organizer to work with churches, synagogues, and organizations on community issues that unite us.

So, what are you doing now?

Great question! Sometimes, I don't know. Other times it makes sense, but I guess that's life. I just finished a business program called 1909 Business Accelerator to help build "Write to Heal," which is my business. Here I teach expressive writing and breathing workshops, incorporated together to help people process stress and trauma.



***Flores LaPierre** is here at Chik Monk, a pop-up bar directly sourcing specialty coffee from the family farms of Balekola and Balupet Estates in the tranquil Western Ghat mountain range of Chikmagalur, India. LaPierre usually hosts her workshops at Chik Monk, located at 139 N County Rd #12, Palm Beach, FL 33480.*

How did the 1909 Accelerator Program help you get your business started?

1909 is a working space that offers a six-month program for free. You apply and if you get in, they take your idea from the idea phase to practice. So, when I got in six months ago, I had hosted all of my Write to Heal workshops on Zoom, and they did fairly well. I averaged about 16 people in every online workshop. They were all “Pay what you can,” and some people even sponsored spots so others could attend the workshop for free but I could still get paid for the work.

Who typically attends your workshops?

So far, it's predominantly women who want to process stress and trauma. I offer them via Zoom, and also at coffee houses, Mandel Library, Rohi's Readery, parks, and other places around town.

Do you believe that writing is for everyone?

We need it. Writing for yourself, writing in a journal. But, I don't know if I would make the claim that writing is for everyone, entirely. I would say that I encourage everyone to give it a shot. However, I think expressive writing is an excellent tool to help us connect to our emotions and reduce toxic stress. If writing isn't the form that's bringing out the heavy emotions in someone, I hope they seek out something else that may be a type of therapy. This may be art, dance, or whatever works for them.

The word “writing” gets tossed around a lot today: We write social media posts and emails. We write audio notes on our phones. What does writing truly mean to you?

I tend to think everybody is a writer in some way. Of course, there are professional writers, journalists, and authors like you. But, specifically, expressive writing is writing that evokes emotion, writing that processes emotions. So, when people come to the workshop, as long as they are participating in the writing prompts, and enjoying the freewriting, to me, they're writers.

What's the main reaction you've had from the workshops?

Many people have told me that the workshop has created a sense of safety

for them. I definitely think that comes from the intentionality of all the breathing, encouraging people not to try to fix each other during the workshop as they share. But, a lot of it also comes from being intuitive and being able to identify how people are feeling and being able to interact with them based on that.

Where is this sense of safety coming from?

From the moment you come into my workshop, I get you to breathe from your belly, which calms your nervous system. That mindfulness also brings you into the now. Nothing that we do in the workshop is a requirement. A lot of times we go through life feeling tugged and pulled every which way, and it can be disempowering. Everything I tell you to do in the workshop is a suggestion—things you can take, enhance, and make your own.

You conduct your workshops with breathing exercises and techniques on how to start writing. But what advice do you give for “the day after”?

Keep going! The thing with expressive writing is that you can give a prompt and the very first time you do it is kind of a surface layer. The second time, you're digging more into that emotion, that experience. The third time may bring up a story or connect you to the trauma that

you've experienced. And by the fourth time, now you're able to question that story, emotion, or memory. My advice is to keep writing. There's so much we have to discover about ourselves and our experiences, and the more that we can have a relationship with the pen and the paper... I'm big on pen-and-paper writing... the more we do that physical writing experience, the more we discover, the more we face our fear, and the more we heal.

Editor's note: Local libraries and bookstores pay Flose LaPierre for her workshops. They offer them for free to the community, which she loves because everybody should have access to classes like hers. But she also teaches at coffee houses, where she charges from \$30 to \$35 per person.

For more information about “Write to Heal” workshops, connect with Flose LaPierre via Instagram: [@letitflosetoet](https://www.instagram.com/letitflosetoet) or at letitflosetoet@gmail.com

“ Write to Heal Workshops is revolutionizing the old fashion pen-to-paper writing in well-traveled spots around Palm Beach County. ”