



What are people saying about the Freedom Writer Speakers?

"Both Tony and Sharaud are excellent story tellers. The pacing, the surprises, and the humor were marks of PROFESSIONAL speaking ability. My students listened and participated to a degree that I had not seen before."

-Mike Stone, Teacher, Stanton Academy in Yakima, WA

"I LOVED IT!!!!!! [Maria] is amazing- does she ever take a breath? I've had a chance to speak to a variety of girls and parents, and everyone loved Maria's presentation."

-Kristi Heicke, Executive Director, Girlfriends Inc. in Long Beach, CA

"Both Tony and Tanya seemed to touch the hearts of all who had a chance to hear them speak. The kids at the centre were truly inspired. One of our kids, who is so timid and never expressed his feeling before, said 'I am really inspired'. There was a lot of emotion, and a lot of laughter and fun. They truly connected with Tanya and Tony. It was a day that will live in the hearts of many."

-Lori Kuffner, Producer, Cooper Rock Pictures in Saskatchewan, Canada

"Maria was a huge hit. She has a wonderful ability of making it real, without making it too raw (important for our conservative neck of the woods!), and that's not an easy thing to do, but she pulled it off. Her authenticity and 'street cred' weren't discounted by the kids who related to her story, even though she kept her language clean, and her message anti-gang. That was impressive. She did an amazing job telling about how her early teachers alienated her, how she hated white people and Erin Gruwell, and how her parents didn't give her skills beyond surviving in her narrow world. Then, she turned it around and took responsibility - took power- for the metamorphosis she undertook in Erin's class. I got so many rave reviews from the staff. 'Powerful' was the phrase most often used. She did an excellent job. Our principal wants her to come back and present again."

-Carrie Thorburn, Teacher, Vallivue Middle School in Caldwell, ID

"I am so glad I had an opportunity to see your speaker [Tony] in action! The speech was just perfect and I know it hit just the right cord with our young adults."

-Madonna Witte, Instructor, UEI College in San Diego, CA

"Maria and Tony were AWESOME! Even the hand full of 'knuckle draggers' in the class came up to me afterwards and said it was the single best presentation in the program. That is saying a lot since we have heard from a Navy pilot who was a POW in Vietnam, a holocaust survivor and even one of the original Little Rock Nine."

-Sergeant Cynthia Hanna, San Diego Police Department in San Diego, CA

"Thank you so much for asking Darrius to read at Kids' Faire --- he was wonderful and inspirational. He is really an exceptional speaker and able to connect so well to youth."

Denise Dalhausen, Development Director, For the Child in Long Beach, CA

"The presentations were GREAT and in an atmosphere usually negative, the teachers raved about Tony and Maria all day! The kids of course were in seventh heaven. Everyone said the same thing, never have the kids been so well behaved for an assembly. Of course!!! How could they not when the presenters are so dynamic and speaking directly to them!"

-Lynn Frazier, Teacher, Windham High School in Willimantic, CT

"It was wonderful! The students, Maria and Sharaud had a wonderful time together, and so did I! They were spectacular speakers, and our students from all the 6-8th grade were extremely interested, intent and responsive to the message."

-Ashley Moritz, Teacher, Great Oaks Academy in Warren, MI

"Sharaud and Tony were fabulous!! I have heard so much great feedback from the attendees. I was personally inspired by them both. They were also a lot of fun! I would definitely recommend both Sharaud and Tony to anyone looking for exciting and inspiring speakers."

-Sharon Clapman, Coastal Chapter President, California Regional Occupational Coastal Programs in Santa Cruz, CA

"Tony truly captivated the people in attendance and surely compelled the youth. After his presentation, many people were in awe and enjoyed the opportunity to be exposed to this story. It incites change and the limitless possibilities of people whose odds are entirely not in their favor."

-Kareem Gongora, Director, Some Things Gotta Change in Fontana, CA

"After reviewing the evaluations of the summit, Maria got an overwhelming response as being 'true, real, powerful, an eye opener, and fantastic.'"

-Sergeant Brenda Trobaugh, Fresno Police Department and the Mayor's Gang Prevention Initiative in Fresno, CA

"WOW! [Maria] was absolutely fantastic and well worth the wait. She was incredibly captivating, powerful, inspirational and motivational. Many staff attended and most of those had to fight to hold back tears. I lost my fight early on and tears streamed down my face almost constantly. We also saw some kids dabbing their eyes too. There was one kid who recently testified against his own gang and Maria spent some alone time with him. It could not have been better."

-Marchita Masters, Senior Clinical Psychologist, East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility in East Mesa, CA

"The Freedom Writers Foundation and Maria made our events ones to remember for a long time. Many folks said Maria was the best speaker we ever had."

-Bob Troidl, Mesa Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Committee in Mesa, AZ

"I want to thank [Tony] for coming up on Thursday. These kids rarely have anyone come in and understand them. Teachers and staff are always encouraging and praising them, but it makes a difference when it is someone that is a stranger to them and is able to connect with their thoughts and feelings because he has been there."

-Ann Unger, Executive Director, Santa Clarita Valley Education Foundation

**If you would like to request direct contact with any of these previous event hosts,
please notify Lisa Smith at Lisa@freedomwritersfoundation.org,
or 562-433-5388 x106**

For more information visit www.freedomwritersfoundation.org/outreach