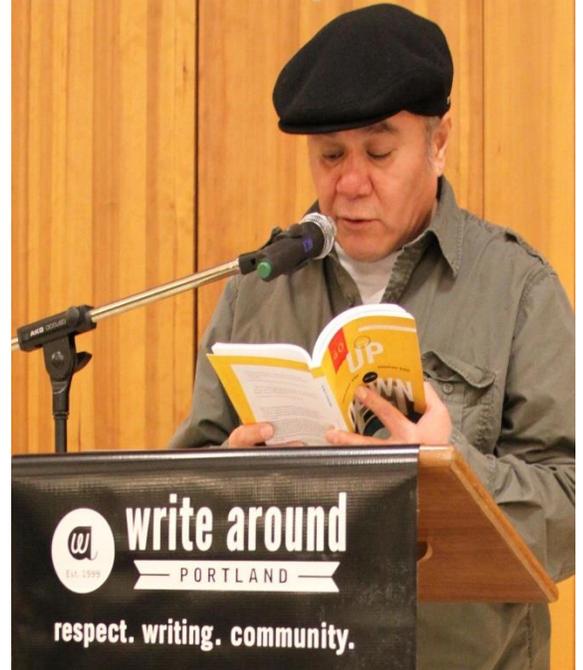


## Featured Writer Interview with Christopher Francisco by

**Bio:** Christopher Francisco, 51, grew up in Shiprock, New Mexico, which is located in Navajo Nation. After getting kicked out of school in the sixth grade, he became involved with gangs and didn't believe he would ever have a chance to graduate from college. This June, he is getting his degree in Liberal Arts. Christopher says he enjoyed his Write Around Portland workshop because he was able to connect with others and write without judgment.

### **How did you first hear about Write Around Portland and what drew you to joining your first writing workshop?**

I heard about Write Around Portland when I was in the Intro to College Writing class at Portland State University. They told us to visit the tutors at PSU, and one of the tutors told me about Write Around Portland. She was involved somehow, and she told me you can go to Write Around Portland and write. I am continually looking for ways to be inspired and motivated, so I called Write Around Portland.



### **You participated in two workshops. What were they like for you?**

In my first few weeks, I knew this was the practice that I needed. With Write Around Portland, you just write. I'd get a prompt, and whatever popped into my head, I just wrote it down without judging it and I just put it out on the table. And when I'd get feedback, it was like people would see what I wrote in a different way, and I'd think, "Wow, I never thought of that!" That's what I call feedback. You start thinking what you just wrote could become a story. It could grow, if you really wanted to continue on that story. The feedback, just having different perspectives from people, was very good for me.

I wanted to go every week. I looked forward to it. The setting was right for me, the environment was right, the people were right. It wasn't like homework, or a fear of having to stand in front of people and people reading my stuff. I really just wanted to write and brainstorm and Write Around Portland gave me that.

### **Can you talk a little more about the feedback in the workshop? How did it feel to give and receive feedback?**

It is easier to get feedback than to give it because I'm so familiar with my story and what's in my head. But sometimes the facilitator or someone else would see something that I wouldn't have seen, so you learn from each other through feedback. Sometimes, we would just say, "I like this." That was just all the feedback we could give.

### **Do you think that was helpful for the person receiving feedback?**

Yes, it helped me out. If it helped me out, then I know it helped others. It can help people overcome their fear, just like it helped me overcome my fear. If people like what

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I'm writing and people are listening, then I'm not as embarrassed or fearful. But [in the workshop] we got to know each other and that helped.

### **How did it feel to be published?**

It's still motivating and inspiring. When they published my stuff, it made me feel like I'm going the right way. It made me feel better and it empowered me to continue to write.

### **What was like to reading your piece at the book release party?**

I felt confident. After it was all over, it was like, "man, these people took time to come out here and listen to this piece." It made me feel good.

### **What specifically did you get out of the Write Around Portland workshop?**

I know my own writing now. There's room for learning. It motivated me and inspired me to continue writing, to keep learning.

### **What was your favorite part of the workshop?**

Just writing. Just sitting down and writing. Just sit down and write what's in your head.

### **Would you recommend this to others?**

Yes, I think everyone should do it. There are many people that could sit down and write. It's very empowering.

In the workshop, I felt safe. I was able to write without being judged or ridiculed. That's one of the biggest fears we all have. We all have that unique story and those unique experiences that become unique stories and [through the workshop] we're able to talk about them and share them with people. Then we can see if there are any other people out there that share the same common ground. Through Write Around Portland, I discovered different ways that people write. There's a rhythm, there's a tone, there's cultural background, there's something universal between us that I love and that I see at Write Around Portland.