

Marlon Peterson

Transformative & Inspirational

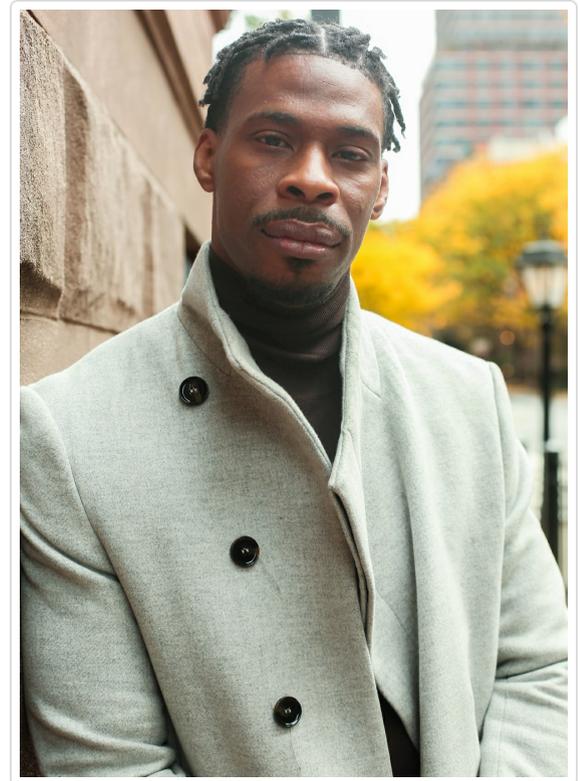
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Topics

- Emcee
- Moderator / Facilitator
- Overcoming Adversity
- Prison Reform
- Storytelling
- TED-Talks

About Marlon Peterson

Marlon is a writervist. Since his decade of incarceration, he has written, created programming, lectured, organized, and advocated alongside the formerly incarcerated, victims of gun violence, womxn, immigrants, and young people. Marlon is the author of *Bird Uncaged: An Abolitionist's Freedom Song*, host of the *DEcarcerated Podcast*, and owner of his own social impact endeavor, *The Precedential Group Social Enterprises* and its nonprofit arm, *Be Precedential, Inc.* His TED talk, "Am I not human? A call for criminal justice reform", has amassed over 1.2 million views.



During his incarceration, Marlon co-created *How Our Lives Link Altogether, H.O.L.L.A.*, a youth development organization that has provided programming, college trips, and mentorship for NYC public school students and justice-involved youth. As the Associate Director of a project of the Center for Court Innovation, Marlon created *Youth Organizing to Save Our Streets*, and served as a violence interrupter in his Crown Heights, Brooklyn neighborhood. Marlon also worked for the Fortune Society as the Director of Community Relations and was the Board Chair of *Families for Freedom*.

As a Soros Fellow, Senior Atlantic Fellow, and Aspen Civil Society Fellow, Marlon has used his activism and pen to advocate for safer communities, reduce the footprint of law enforcement, and to amplify the work of individuals and grassroots organizations across the globe. Marlon's writervism and *DEcarcerated Podcast* has allowed him to lecture and conduct workshops throughout the US, Trinidad & Tobago, South Africa, and Oxford, London.

Marlon sits on the Board of Directors of *New Yorkers Against Gun Violence*, the Advisory Board of the Center for Court Innovation, Board of the Criminal Justice Action Fund, and the Village Capital Justice Tech Advisory Board.

Marlon's bylines have appeared in *USA Today*, *The Nation*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Gawker*, *The Marshall Project*, *The Root*, *Cassius.com*, and *Mic.com*. His essays have also been published in *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others* by Kiese Laymon and *How We Fight White Supremacy* by Kenrya Rankin & Akiba Solomon., *Colin Kaepernick's Medium Series: Abolition for the People*.

In 2015, he was honored as one of the top 100 leaders in the Black community by *Ebony Magazine*.

Marlon is a soca and steelpan lover, and a Brooklyn representer.

Select Keynotes

- **See "Videos"**

Check out the "videos" tab for a few video recordings of past keynote speeches. Why tell you about them when i can show you!

Select Book Titles

- **2021:** *Bird Uncaged: An Abolitionist's Freedom Song*

Select Articles

- [MLK Week 2018 keynote speaker discusses human rights](#)

In celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy, the Ithaca College MLK Week 2018 kicked off with keynote speaker Marlon Peterson on Jan. 23 in Emerson Suites. Peterson, an African-American activist and leader, spoke about youth development, violence prevention, criminal justice and equality.

- [To Be Good Employees, the Formerly Incarcerated Must First Become Bosses, originally published by The Marshall Project, July 10, 2017](#)

For the incarcerated, personal agency is a deciding factor in success after release.

- [Dear 02A3172: Letters To and From a Caged Bird](#)

"In 1999, when I was 19 years old, I was arrested and charged with first degree murder, several counts of attempted murder, attempted robbery, and several counts of criminal use of a weapon. I was convicted of first degree assault and third degree weapons possession, and was sentenced to 12 years in prison in 2002."

- [Kalief Browder's Death Was a Homicide...and We Are All Guilty](#)

[OPINION] Activist Marlon Peterson says we've ignored the conditions that left an innocent teen in jail for 3 years without trial for far too long

Select Testimonials

All of us in attendance—teachers, advisors, tutors, and administrators—were incredibly moved by your narrative and your messages. Your story had an enormous emotional impact on us, but also a practical one. We were collectively stirred to think more deeply about what we can actually do (not just talk about) to serve our students as full human beings. This includes how we can ask the right questions, build the strongest and most embracing classroom/program communities, etc.—to help understand the complex individuals who come into our classrooms who want and deserve to be supported holistically, so that they can be successful at school and in life. Your thoughtful and honest answers during the Q&A portion of your visit with us were also really helpful. We especially thankful for the effort that you clearly put into learning about our program, our “mission,” and our students, as well as understanding your audience that day and our conference theme. Because of this, many teachers and advisors were able to make particularly powerful connections between the ideas you imparted and the remainder of the day’s activities...and the connections keep coming! A testament to the power of your words is how many staff members came over to me (and to others who helped plan and facilitate the day’s activities) to say how much they appreciated your speech, and how many continue to do this. Many staff members have asked me how they can reach out to you to thank you personally and/or to ask follow-up questions. I appreciate your willingness to allow me to share your e-mail address with them. Lastly, I want to say that I know that day was particularly rough for you, given your friend’s passing. I am thankful that you still came to speak, and I would bet that your friend was as touched by your goodness during his life,

— *CUNY Start*

Dear Marlon, People are still talking about Saturday’s Teacher-to-Teacher Conference, and especially your keynote address. It was a fantastic day, and we are incredibly grateful to you for your contribution. Your message about the power of writing—as a way into oneself, as a way to inspire others and help them advocate for themselves, as a change agent in a person’s own life and in the lives of others, as a means to leadership—is one that we know our teachers will carry into their classrooms. Our teachers work with some of the city’s most disadvantaged learners, and we know that your words were powerful, hopeful and inspiring to them. This was our first year offering two keynote addresses, and the ways that your and Kylene’s speeches connected were wonderful; in the morning, she spoke about the relationship between privilege and literacy, and in the afternoon you spoke about writing as a means to empower. You helped us not only reach our teachers in profound ways, but to re-shape the conference as it previously existed to be even stronger moving forward. As a community, we really appreciated, in addition to your words, the thoughtfulness of your suggested readings. We are grateful that we came to you through Kiese Laymon, and on Saturday, that our participants were able to come to him, through you. While we were unable to order advance copies of *Invisible Man*, *Got the Whole World Watching*, we have already added it to the reading list for participants in our summer programs. Mallory and Jane

— *Mallory McMahon, New York City Writing Project: Teacher-to-Teacher Conference*