**Sampsonia Way Magazine**, the publishing arm of City of Asylum and a platform for persecuted writers and artists around the world since 2009, starts a new partnership with the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN). More than 100 writers and artists supported by this network based in Norway will have access to publish on sampsoniaway.org.

**Pittsburgh, PA, April 1, 2016**— **SampsoniaWay.org**, the publishing arm of City of Asylum (COA), announces its partnership with ICORN and its new services and sections as an international platform for persecuted writers and artists around the world.

“We aim to provide writers with the tools they may need once they are in exile. One step towards fulfilling this commitment is inviting more than one hundred writers and artists who have been supported by the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN)—based in Stavanger, Norway since 2005—to collaborate with us,” said Silvia Duarte, Assistant Director at City of Asylum in Pittsburgh. She and Caitlyn Christensen, the Associate Editor of **SampsoniaWay.org**, were in attendance at the ICORN General Assembly in Paris from March 30 to April 2, meeting with ICORN writers in order to work towards a platform that fits best for them.

Helge Lunde, director of ICORN, emphasizes that this is the beginning of a new exchange between COA and the organization he represents. “**SampsoniaWay.org** and the ICORN website will interact with each other. The goal of this exchange is to provide writers with a tool that helps them build a bigger audience. However, writers will decide how they will use this site.”
“Out of sight usually means out of mind, and this is the case for many writers who find themselves suddenly living in another country where their writings may not be well known. SampsoniaWay.org has proven to be invested in such writers and their writings and has become an important platform. As an ICORN ambassador, I am thrilled with the collaboration between SampsoniaWay.org and ICORN,” said Jude Dibia, ICORN’s writer representative.

Duarte adds that this new collaboration “aims to provide writers and artists with new audiences and readerships, as well as help them connect to the networks they lost due to their exiled status; offer them safety by publishing them anonymously or by bringing their cases to international attention (whichever they prefer); publish their work in their original language and translate their work into English.”

“This choice is a great fit for most of the writers and artists in exile: City of Asylum in Pittsburgh is one of the more than fifty ICORN cities members; SampsoniaWay.org, COA’s publishing arm, now with seven years of experience, has a staff and an advisory committee formed not only by writers and journalists but also by individuals in exile,” stated Henry Reese, President and Founder of City of Asylum, and a new board member of ICORN.

Among the services SampsoniaWay.org offers to endangered writers and artists are:

- **Comprehensive interviews and profiles.** Many of the author and artist interviews published by SampsoniaWay.org have been a reference for major publications such as The New York Times, The Paris Review, The Huffington Post and The Guardian.

- **Excerpts and samples.** of the contributors’ works are published in their original language and translated into English. SampsoniaWay.org has published excerpts and samples of any length, ranging from poetry, fiction and nonfiction to other artistic disciplines, including cartoons and music videos.
• **Monthly columns.** *SampsoniaWay.org* publishes columns on topics related to freedom of speech by writers in exile. Each column is a window to a reality that is generally ignored by the mainstream media. Some of the columnists have won awards in the United States and have been recognized by international publications.

• **Anthologies and compilations of banned work.** One of the goals of *SampsoniaWay.org* is to publish work that has been banned in other countries. For example, *SampsoniaWay.org*’s Cuban columnist Orlando Luis Pardo picked short stories by 16 writers living in Havana for an anthology of Cuban fiction. *SampsoniaWay.org* provided translators and then published each story in English and Spanish on *SampsoniaWay.org* and in a printed anthology.

• **Virtual performances.** *SampsoniaWay.org* broadcasts talks, readings, concerts, panels, and public interviews through technologies such as Google Hangouts, Skype, and Livestream.

• **Promotion and Networking through social media.** *SampsoniaWay.org*’s social media platforms have not only expanded the international audience of the affiliated writers and artists, but have also reconnected them to their original audience (followers from their home countries). For example, *SampsoniaWay.org* served as the only platform for an Ethiopian writer, garnering an Ethiopian following of 3,500.

*SampsoniaWay.org*

An online magazine sponsored by *City of Asylum/Pittsburgh* that celebrates freedom of expression through literature and supports persecuted writers worldwide. The magazine’s key staff includes exiled writers living on Sampsonia Way, a street in Pittsburgh that embodies a variety of cultures and languages through murals and texts
on the writers’ houses, designs which were conceived of and inspired by their own experience of exile and repression.

Just as the physical Sampsonia Way provides a home for exiled writers in a revitalized community, SampsoniaWay.org aims to be a virtual home that mobilizes a widely dispersed international public to protect writers and writing by engaging writers and non-writers in a virtual community and by becoming a source for research and dialogue.

SampsoniaWay.org seeks to advocate for and protect writers who may be endangered, to educate the public about threats to writers and literary expression, and to create a community in which endangered writers thrive and literary culture is a valued part of everyday life. By “community” SampsoniaWay.org includes the Pittsburgh community, international readers and writers, and those concerned with advancing free expression where it is endangered—whether they live in freedom or in countries that censor and persecute literary writers.

**City of Asylum (COA)**

Founded in 2004 and located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, COA is one of the fifty ICORN member cities. COA creates a thriving community for writers, readers, and neighbors. COA provides sanctuary to endangered literary writers, so that they can continue to write and their voices are not silenced. COA offers a broad range of literary programs in a variety of community settings to encourage cross-cultural exchange. COA anchors neighborhood economic development by transforming blighted properties into homes for these programs and energizing public spaces through public art with text-based components.

The centerpiece of COA’s programs is a long-term residency for literary writers who are in exile from their home countries and under threat of persecution because of their writing. The goal of a City of Asylum™ Exiled Writer Residency is to enable a writer to continue to write while transitioning to a stable, independent life in exile. This program
provides a stipend and health care for two years and housing for up to four years.

- **Huang Xiang** (2004-06)
- **Horacio Castellanos Moya** (2006-11)
- **Khet Mar** (2009-12)
- **Israel Centeno** (2010 – present)
- **Yaghoub Yadali** (2013 – 15)

**The International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN)**

ICORN is an independent organization of cities and regions offering shelter to writers and artists at risk, advancing freedom of expression, defending democratic values and promoting international solidarity.

ICORN member cities offer long term, but temporary, shelter to those at risk as a direct consequence of their creative activities. Their aim is to be able to host as many persecuted writers and artists as possible in ICORN cities and together with their sister networks and organizations, to form a dynamic and sustainable global network for freedom of expression.

Since 2006, more than 50 cities around the globe have joined the network, and no less than 140 writers and artists have found shelter in an ICORN member city. The commitment by these cities is both very concrete and deeply symbolic: the agent for change (the writer/artist) escapes from imminent threat and persecution; the host city offers sanctuary; and the values of hospitality, solidarity and freedom of expression become further enshrined in the ethos of that city.

ICORN protects and promotes an increasingly wide range of writers, artists and human rights defenders, including bloggers, novelists, playwrights, journalists, musicians, poets, non-fiction writers, visual artists, cartoonists, singer/songwriters, translators, screenwriters and publishers. ICORN enables them to continue to express themselves freely in a place where they are safe, but not silent. Through digital media, they can reach audiences to whom they were denied access before leaving. And through local
and ICORN networks, their voices can also be heard by new audiences in their host cities and beyond.