

*Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong it
learned to walk with out having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,
it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete
when no one else ever cared.*

-Tupac Shakur, "The Rose That Grew From Concrete"

JASMINE GAMES

Portfolio

*You thought no flowers grew
at the kind of place you knew,
but you are a gift to the ground,
petal's phenomenon, a big bouquet,
a perennial person too bud to pluck.*

-Jasmine Games, "Hydrangeas In Bloom"

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Good Dirt

Introduction to Me

- 4 About Me
- 5 BA Program of Study
- 6 MFA Program of Study
- 7 Statement of Purpose

Chapter III: Community Garden

Creative Work

- 17 Girl, Be Well!
- 19 Courageous Cadence
- 21 Jinkies! Or the Dog Play

Epilogue: Poetic Recipe

- 27 End of the Garden

Chapter II: Garden Tools

Scholarship

- 10 Thesis Abstract
- 11 Poem Excerpts
- 12 Sample Annotation
- 13 Key Terms
- 15 Conferences

Chapter IV: Sharing the Harvest

Teaching

- 23 Teaching Philosophy
- 24 Intro to Improv
- 25 Fundamentals of Acting
- 26 Unlearning Circle



Chapter

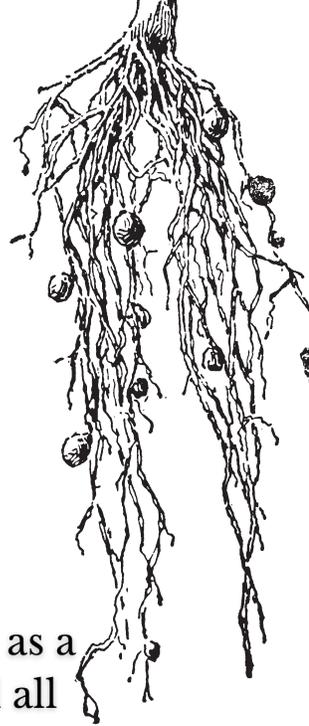
1

Good Dirt

Introduction to Me

I am a black woman / tall as a
cypress / strong / beyond all
definition still / defying place
and time / and circumstance
assailed / impervious /
indestructible / Look / on me
and be / renewed

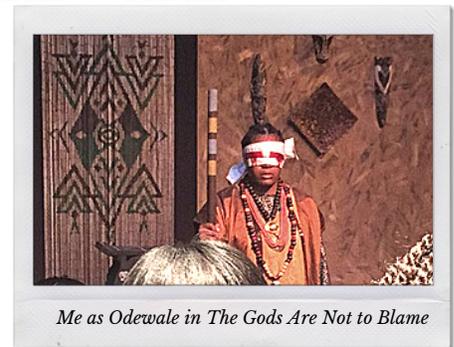
-Mari Evans,
"I Am A Black Woman"



Slamming at The University of Dallas on behalf of Mic Check Poetry



My middle school theatre teacher came to see me as Tituba in The Crucible



Me as Odewale in The Gods Are Not to Blame



About Me

I. Information

Name: Jasmine Games

Pronouns: she/her

Current Address: Available upon informed request

Permanent Address: Available upon informed request

Phone: 832-941-6861

Email: jasmine.i.games@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.jasmineigames.com/>

Country of Citizenship: United States of America



II. Education

Undergraduate Institution and Location: Texas A&M University- College Station, TX

Degree received: Bachelor of Arts

Double Major: English and Performance Studies

Graduate Institution and location: The University of Texas at Austin

Degree received: Master of Fine Arts in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities

III. Bio

Jasmine Games is a spoken word poet and theatre practitioner. As a teaching artist, she uses drama-based pedagogy as a mode for self-introspection and positionality interrogation, partnering with schools and museums in Houston, Bryan, and Austin, Texas, as well as Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Recently, she directed and co-facilitated an eight week spoken word action-residency for high school youth, Courageous Cadence, which was celebrated with a final performance of shared poetry on race and gender (in)justice. She also partnered with GirlForward and The Blanton Museum of Art to co-produce, perform, and facilitate in Girl, Be Well!, a zoom interactive-play. She holds a BA in English and Performance Studies. She has an MFA in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities at The University of Texas at Austin. Wielding her words, Jasmine is fiercely committed to complete and total justice for marginalized peoples in our society, especially youth of color.

IV. References

Contact information for references:

- Dr. Megan Alrutz: Interim Department Chair and Full Professor in DTYC at The University of Texas at Austin
 - (480)993-9783
- Katie Dawson: Co-head of Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities/UTeach Theatre and Associate Professor in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities (DTYC) at The University of Texas at Austin
 - kathryndawson@austin.utexas.edu
- Lara Dossett: Assistant Professor of Instruction in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities (DTYC) at The University of Texas at Austin
 - laradossett@utexas.edu
- Florence Davies: Assistant Director at TAMU Writing Center and Thesis Committee member
 - fsdavies09@tamu.edu



BA Program of Study

Fall 2015

Elements of Creative Writing
APP English Studies: Work World Lit
Intro Performance Studies
State & Local Government
Social Problems

Spring 2016

Writing About Literature
Intro to African American Lit
Math for All Practical Methods
Criminology
American Theatre

Fall 2016

Intro to Biological Anthropology
American Ethnic Literature
Creative Nonfiction
Performing Literature
Collaborative Theatre Performance
Internship: WCT I

Spring 2017

American Realism and Naturalism
Studies in Genre: Fairytales
Religious and Ethnic Foods
Oceanography
Global Performance
Internship: WCT II

Fall 2017

History of Rhetoric
American Poetry
Insects in Human Society
Environmental Change
Performance in World Cultures
Internship: WCT III

Spring 2018

How to Judge a Book by Its Cover
Performance in Practice
Popular Music in the African Diaspora
Senior Project
Acting I Fundamentals

Summer 2018

Women Writers
Theatre History II
Intro to World Theatre

Credit by Examinaton:

Composition & Rhetoric
History of the US I
History of the US II
Functions TRG & LNR STM
Beginning Spanish I
Beginning Spanish II
Intro Western Theatre Drama



MFA Program of Study

Fall 2019

Research Methods and Practice*
Creative Drama I*
Writing for Black Performance
Advanced Projects in Performance*

Spring 2020

Drama Based Pedagogy and Practice*
Applied Drama and Theatre*+
Drama and Theatre in Museums+
Advanced Projects in Performance*

Fall 2020

Supervised Teaching in Theatre and Dance*
Studio I Design*
Foundations of Arts Management+
Advanced Projects in Performance*

Spring 2021

Pre-Thesis: Research and Practice*
Theatre for Young Audiences Seminar*
Digital Storytelling
Independent Study: Courageous Cadence Development
Advanced Projects in Performance*

Fall 2021

Thesis: Applied Theatre Project*
Directing Fundamentals
Theatre for Young Audiences Lit*
Advanced Projects in Performance*

Spring 2022

Thesis: Writing*
Community Engagement and Outreach*+
Independent Study: Black Performance

Key

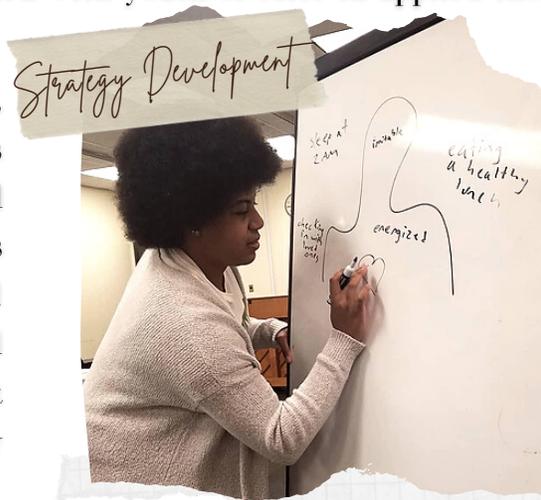
*Required
Coursework for MFA
in Drama and
Theatre for Youth
and Communities

+Concentrated
Coursework in Arts
and Cultural
Management and
Entrepreneurship

Statement of Purpose

I have always loved theatre. In the theatre classroom, I learned how to embrace my emotions, speak my truth, and cultivate relationships with my peers. My high school theatre director introduced me to spoken word poetry, encouraging me to audition for a slam poetry team she coached. On this team, I learned the power of words and physical embodiment. In the twelfth grade I wrote, "My hair lacks luster, but it is illustrious. / Thick to deflect the subjectivity people put me under. / Black and brown as the richest soil in a garden," and suddenly, I knew what it meant to love myself despite society telling me I am not worthy of love. I knew then that I wanted to do the same for youth of color. My experiences as a young person in the arts of theatre and slam poetry are the seeds of my academic and professional career. A mature garden takes years to cultivate, and I embrace every season, knowing that I am privileged to work with youth of color in applied theatre projects.

The tools of my garden are justice work, teaching artistry, spoken word poetry, arts administration, performance studies, applied theatre, and theatre for young audiences. In this broad field, I use drama-based pedagogy to aid youth participants in writing, devising, and performing spoken word poetry in a way that reimagines how current spoken word poetry practices can enrich social emotional learning and justice work. I hold youth poet-actors in these creative spaces as they experience catharsis, transformation, and reciprocity. Oftentimes, my work invites youth to interrogate their individual identities and perception of self and society as it relates to learned race and gender related mores, especially tying into internalized white supremacist ideals. My strength is in empowering students to call it as they see it and to enact the way it should be.



I am most proud of three of my recent accomplishments: 1) directing and co-facilitating a spoken word poetry action-residency for youth, Courageous Cadence; 2) developing my scholarship in spoken word poetry programming as justice-driven applied theatre, for female-identifying refugee teens; and 3) co-developing and facilitating an Unlearning Circle series on white supremacy, anti-Black bias, and anti-trans bias for my graduate program. Courageous Cadence inspires youth to name social injustices, imagine change, and perform justice. My scholarship looks deeply into youth's criticality and devising spoken word



Girl, Be Well!

poetry. The Unlearning Circle Series invited faculty, staff, and students to educate themselves on the experiences of Black and transgender youth, interrogate their implicit biases, and imagine ways we can better serve our youth. These three experiences challenge the field to reimagine the creative opportunities we give youth and how our personal identity, knowledge, and values affect the youth we work with, as well as making space for youth to speak about social issues. As educators, we must tend to the garden we inhabit, pulling weeds out of the ideals that no longer serve our community. As I navigate the field of theatre with youth, my driving force is to continuously look at who I am, who I am surrounded by, and who the youth I work with are. In each instance, I ask myself how we can be better for ourselves and for each other.

The ground I stand on is the ground I use to grow meaningful things. Similarly, Winifred Ward planted seeds with her beliefs that have been the foundation of creative drama as a field. I also would like to be a woman of firsts, as I aspire to found spoken word poetry as an academic and more equitable professional field. So many poets, actors, and teaching artists do not receive flowers for their work in spoken word poetry. I want youth to feel secure in their long-term aspirations as poet-actors. Ward believed that youth could understand themselves and the society they inhabit. I fervently echo this belief, yet youth are still not respected as valuable members of society with the competency to speak of change, especially when they are youth of color. Too often, youth are asked to keep quiet and stay disciplined. Creative drama invites youth to use their imagination, commit to the act of play, and trust their intuitive reasoning, which are values I hold dearly in my teaching artistry.

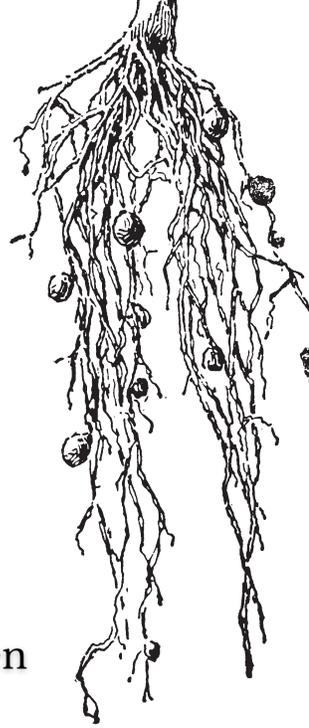
My impact on the field of theatre with youth is—and should be—for the benefit of youth of color. My work with youth has exemplified a commitment to seeking and providing invaluable educational opportunities, resources, support, and advocacy for youth of color in low-income communities in pursuit of drama and theatre. This is the work that feeds my substance. I hope that the small garden I have cared for will one day produce a harvest that feeds a field of youth and practitioners everywhere.



Chapter

2

Garden Tools Scholarship



Living life as Black women requires wisdom because knowledge about the dynamics of intersecting oppressions has been essential to U.S. Black women's survival.

-Patricia Hill Collins,
Black Feminist Thought



Reading at Black Box Speaks



*Presenting with Florence Davies at the
Big LAAH Reading Series*



Reading at Black Box Speaks



Thesis Abstract

Facilitators in applied theatre and spoken word programming can be more intentional in crafting critically engaged instruction to better serve youth of color, especially Black youth. The aim of this study is to examine how practices from Black literary societies can change applied theatre and spoken word programming to better engage youth of color. This document details my personal aims in crafting a spoken word poetry applied theatre program for youth of color, examines critical consciousness in applied theatre, and historicizes the work of Black literary societies. Gholdy Muhammad's Historically Responsive Literacy (HRL) Framework is utilized as a lens to explore the ways Courageous Cadence, a youth spoken word action-residency, critically engages youth participants in identity development and criticality. By examining the youth's writing and dialogic responses, as well as my own experience as a facilitator of Courageous Candance, I identify the ways youth perceive themselves, see the world, and desire change. I conclude that identity development was much more prevalent in the youths' writing and dialogue than criticality.

Questions:

- How can practices from nineteenth century Black literary societies change applied theatre and spoken word practices in order to engage youth of color?
- In what ways does Courageous Cadence engage youth participants in identity development and criticality, a pillar of focus from Black literary societies, as modeled in Gholdy Muhammad's Historically Responsive Literacy (HRL) Framework?

Literature Map

Devising Critically Engaged Theatre with Youth: The Performing Justice Project by Megan Alrutz and Lynn Hoare

Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy by Gholdy Muhammad

Applied Theatre: Bewilderment and Beyond by James Thompson

Killing Poetry: Blackness and the Making of Slam and Spoken Word Communities by Javon Johnson

Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom by bell hooks

Drama-based Pedagogy: Activating Learning Across the Curriculum by Kathryn Dawson and Bridget Kiger Lee

The Reflexive Teaching Artist: Collected Wisdom from the Drama/Theatre Field by Daniel A. Kelin, II and Kathryn Dawson

Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds by Adrienne Maree Brown

Poem Excerpts

Three Conclusion Excerpts from

The Rhyme in Resistance: Youth Identity Development and Criticality in Courageous Cadence

If you are to do this work, / be the work / show others that the work looks like you / what does your work look like? / Have you talked to yourself lately? / Have you searched for what you didn't know? / Did you, yourself, / think about how you think about people? / You have to do the work to enter the room / You have to do the work to really work with youth / You have to look at yourself and be like / I can work on this some more / Don't show up like construction workers cut corners when you were made / and have youth talk to a house that will implode into its own grave / What are you trying to do here? / Build it right the first time / and it stands tall forever / make your practice a home / call the people in it a family / work to provide for the kids / share responsibility / leave the door unlocked / but don't let anyone that comes for your family in / leave the door unlocked / soon will follow kin.

It don't sit right with me / the way we enter and exit as we please / the way we don't follow up / the way we feel good like we really just did something / the way we give them tools and expect them to build a house / the way we lead youth to the water / and say all this is yours / only for it to dry up soon after / and what's left is dirt / and will they build a house? / or take their ass home / to what they know / and which one will we claim as ours? / we live in homes we do not build / we look at the brick houses / and not the fallen straws / we call it a community / but do not acknowledge the bodies we build on

What I'm not finna do / is exploit / is to give a child a ten / for naming the deepness within / what I'm not finna do / is say that poem won't win / is say do the other one / is say that poem is important but this is slam / is act like your writing is for anybody but you // what I'm not finna do / is act like I have all the answers / like I can fix it / I call it catharsis / but really is it? / how do I know everything to say was said / and how do I hold this / without feeling pain myself? // I will say / I hope there is healing / I will say I hope some part of you is healed / I will say I can hold it for this long / I will say do you have any other thoughts / I will say what are you not saying / I will say you don't have to say anything you don't want to / you don't have to do anything you don't want to / even if you agreed to it before // nobody can make you do nothing / and what we not finna do is practice otherwise in this space // I will say this is what I am doing to be better / I will say how can I be better for you / I will say forgive me, I am still finding this out for myself / But what I'm not finna do is act like I have all the answers / What I'm not finna do is act like my knowing is greater than yours / No. / I'm not finna do that. // Ima be a better me / and maybe you'll be a better you / and we can show each other all the things / that is what we finsto do.

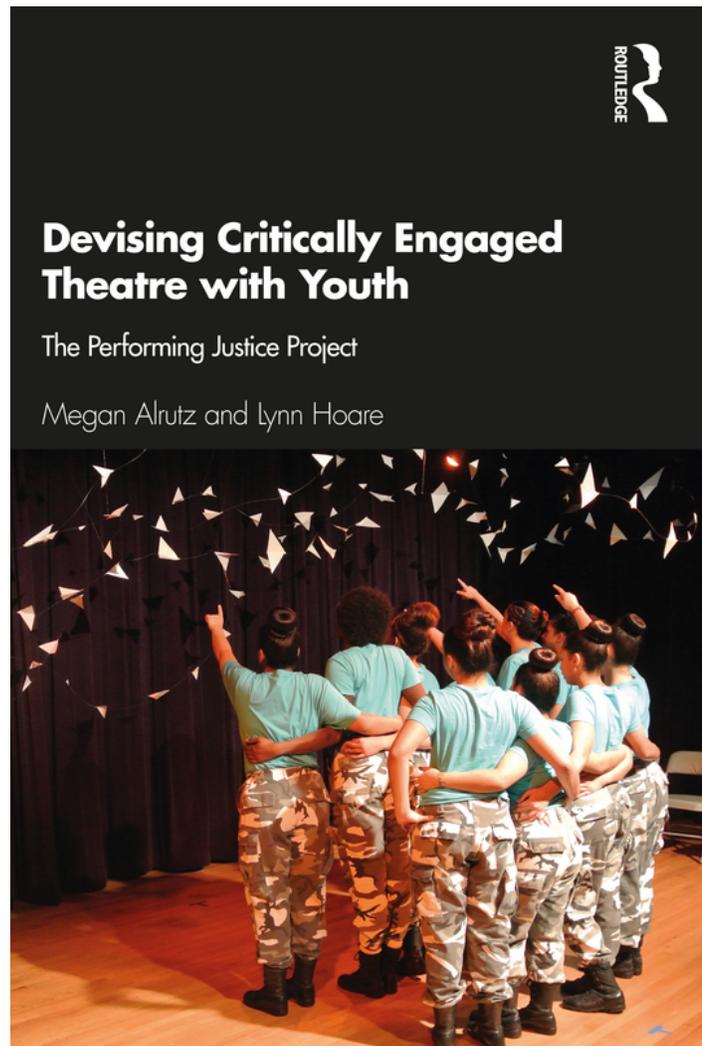
Sample Annotation

Alrutz, Megan, and Lynn Hoare. *Devising Critically Engaged Theatre with Youth: The Performing Justice Project*. Routledge, 2020.

In *Devising Critically Engaged Theatre with Youth: The Performing Justice Project*, Megan Alrutz and Lynn Hoare provide a theoretical and practical approach to applied theatre with youth through the framework of The Performing Justice Project, an applied theatre performance residency for youth. Future facilitators are prompted “to intentionally think through the use of theatre and performance to address issues of gender and racial justice with young people” through critical synthesis and strategies (Alrutz and Hoare 1). They provide strategies for the application of this work called “performance actions,” which “introduce embodied approaches to building ensemble, performing and staging small bits of performance, analyzing systemic

oppression, and applying theatre” with the intention for youth to explore their individual identities, acts of injustice, and the performance of justice (Alrutz and Hoare 3). Alrutz and Hoare assert that youth are impacted by systems of our society, and it is necessary to educate and empower youth in the identification of their experiences of marginalization and oppression based on their identity (2).

This book aids in my research by offering a model and approach for how I will shape my research in practice, a spoken word poetry adaption of The Performing Justice Project called Courageous Cadence. The performance actions will serve as a prioritized source in the development of my lesson plans. My research aligns with the idea that youth experience injustice in their lives due to their race and gender identities. As a facilitator, I can apply introspection that allows me to be cognizant of my own identity as I move through race and gender theory and applications with youth participants. Alrutz and Hoare enables me to examine the ways race and gender impact youth in our society and how that impact can be communicated by youth through modes of embodiment and dialogue.



Key Term

On Criticality

Criticality is a term coined by Dr. Gholdy Muhammad. In the book *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*, Gholdy Muhammad offers a Historically Responsive Literacy Framework (HRL) framework for educators divided by four parts “1) identity development; 2) skill development; 3) intellectual development; and 4) criticality” (12). The HRL framework was created with the consideration of Black students, aiming to make education more equitable and culturally responsive. It is important to note that the HRL framework is not aimed to target literature teachers, but teachers across multiple disciplines with the desire to make space for agency and self-confidence. Teachings from “19th-century Black literary societies” inform this framework, which interrupts the status-quo of historically white intellectuality as the foundation of approaches to education (Muhammad, *Cultivating Genius* 17). The HRL Framework’s four parts scaffolds to reach the final learning goal—criticality.

In the article “A Plea for Identity and Criticality: Reframing Literacy Learning Standards Through a Four-Layered Equity Model,” Gholnecsar E. Muhammad offers a further refinement of criticality when she states, “the goal of criticality is the capacity to read, write, and think in ways of understanding power, privilege, social justice, and oppression, particularly for populations who have been historically marginalized in the world” (138). Advancing criticality makes it possible for youth to nurture the skills needed to dismantle and abolish injustices in society, defend themselves from harm, and “transform the world for the better” (Muhammad, “A Plea for Identity” 139). For these reasons, teachers must begin to apply criticality in their curriculum.

Criticality supports identifying and interrogating the world to make sense of injustice, working towards social transformation (Muhammad, *Cultivating Genius* 12). In the web article “Author Interview With Dr. Gholdy Muhammad: ‘Cultivating Genius,’” Larry Ferlazzo, a high school teacher recounts an interview with Muhammad. Muhammad discusses how youth can experience an intellectual change due to criticality. “Helping youths to be ‘woke’ socio-politically,” teachers can use criticality to make connections between standardized curricula topics and the happenings of the society they inhabit (Ferlazzo). Teachers should interrogate the ways their curriculum and facilitation help their classroom understand oppression, injustice, and equity, which “means helping students understand content from marginalized perspectives (Ferlazzo). However, many teachers are not equipped to teach topics on race and gender related oppression, since they are not taught social issues formally. De-centering a single expert, criticality calls on the teacher to take agency in their understanding of “inequities in education” in order to “develop a critical lens on the world and their teaching,” similarly to how criticality can empower youth (Muhammad, *Cultivating Genius* 117). Incidentally, both teacher and student can benefit from criticality. Criticality has the potential to change the educational system from the inside out.

Ultimately, criticality supports the understanding of power, privilege, and oppression through textual analysis, both print and contextualization of society (Muhammad, *Cultivating Genius* 12). Jennifer Gonzalez, an education professor, summarizes her interview with Gholdy Muhammad in the web article “Historically Responsive Literacy: A More Complete Education for All Students.” They discuss how students should be exploring different narratives, especially from marginalized groups. Reading between the lines, students using criticality read “for what’s not being said and for what’s not there” (Gonzalez). Muhammad states, “criticality begins to give students the tools to respond to injustice in and around schools” (*Cultivating Genius* 119). In the web article “Teaching Toward Genius: An Equity Model For Pedagogy In Action,” Ivelisse Ramos-Brannon, a teacher, and Gholdy Muhammad discuss Ramos-Brannon’s application of the HRL framework in the classroom. They find that youth are “living in a time when inequities created by racial injustice are impacting marginalized communities in ways that cannot and should not be covered or avoided” (Ramos-Brannon & Muhammad). The implementation of criticality means that students of color can imagine and demand possibilities for a more just way of life.

Works Cited

- Ferlazzo, Larry. “Author Interview With Dr. Gholdy Muhammad: ‘Cultivating Genius.’” Education Week, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-author-interview-with-dr-gholdy-muhammad-cultivating-genius/2020/01>. Accessed 23 March 2021.
- Gonzalez, Jennifer. “Historically Responsive Literacy: A More Complete Education for All Students.” Cult of Pedagogy, <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/historically-responsive-literacy/#:~:text=It's%20a%20framework%20that%20deals,it%20was%20developed%20by%20Dr.&text=This%20curriculum%20evolved%20within%20the%20Black%20literary%20societies%20of%20the%2019th%20century>. Accessed 23 March 2021.
- Muhammad, Gholdy. *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*, Scholastic Teaching Resources, 2020.
- . “A Plea for Identity and Criticality: Reframing Literacy Learning Standards Through a Four-Layered Equity Model.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 62, no. 2, September/October 2018, pp. 137-142. International Literacy Association, doi: 10.1002/jaal.869. Accessed 23 March 2021.
- Ramos-Brannon, Ivelisse & Gholdy Muhammad. “Teaching Toward Genius: An Equity Model For Pedagogy In Action.” The American Consortium for Equity in Education, <https://ace-ed.org/teaching-toward-genius-an-equity-model-for-pedagogy-in-action/>. Accessed 23 March 2021.

Key Term

On Identity Development

Understanding the self helps one to better understand the function of society within the world. The self is made up of many markers of identity, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, gender identity, ability, religious beliefs, etc. Historically, Black literaries produced an understanding of their intersectional identities, noting their plight and privilege in the world. According to Muhammad, identity to the Black community holds a very high importance because it was “stripped from enslaved Africans” (Muhammad, *Cultivating Genius* 64). Many Black people today do not know their lineage prior to slavery, if they even are able to have knowledge that far back into the past. I believe that as Black people in America pursue and gain skill in literacy, they can discover and reclaim parts of their identity.

Youth of color in learning spaces should be learning about the complex identities of themselves and others. Muhammad states, “Identity is composed of notions of who we are, who others say we are (in both positive and negative ways), and who we desire to be” (*Cultivating Genius*, 67). Inhabiting a world with a diverse group of people requires the ability to be compassionate for and to see people who may be unlike you in many ways. We, as people, seek ourselves in the media we consume. The impact of not seeing yourself in fictional stories and learning examples in school is the loss of ability to imagine yourself living in different ways in the future. Youth of color are taught many things about themselves through storytelling in society that teaches them that they are inferior to the majority white society and perpetrators of crime, wrongdoing, and civil unrest. For this reason, positive identity development is crucial to the social and emotional learning of youth of color.

Muhammad suggests an educator can engage students in identity development by including self-interrogating strategies in their lesson plans (*Cultivating Genius* 71). One way this is accomplished is by simply questioning students’ visions of themselves. In response, educators should affirm their visions; educators should “listen and trust them [youth]” (Muhammad, *Cultivating Genius* 71). Educators may also show youth media and texts related to who they are that radically differ from discriminatory depictions of who youth are. Youth should also be able to write and converse about who they are and who other diversely identified people are. This practice “will help youth to know that they have a powerful voice...and that their perspectives are being valued” (Muhammad, *Cultivating Genius* 72). When youth encounter a society that attempts to tell them about themselves, they should feel empowered to stick up for themselves and others with confidence and certainty in what they know.

Muhammad stresses that educators cannot teach youth about their identities if they do not even know who they, themselves, are. Educators must simultaneously have the “intention of teaching young children to know and celebrate their lives,” while also “push[ing] towards action” for the benefit of a better learning environment and life of the youth the service (Muhammad, *Cultivating Genius* 78). In short, educators must radicalize their own mind, words, and actions before they seek to radicalize youth. For Muhammad, and I agree, identity development is a personal and collaborative learning pursuit of a lifetime.

Works Cited

Muhammad, Gholdy. *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*, Scholastic Teaching Resources, 2020.

Conferences

AATE 2021 Landmarks and Monuments Conference

Session Title: Examining Race & Gender (In)justice Courageous Cadence: A Performing Justice Project

Session Description: Courageous Cadence is a Performing Justice Project (PJP). The Performing Justice Project was founded by Megan Alrutz and Lynn Hoare and is directed by PJP resident teaching artists. Developed by Jasmine Games and Quinn Wozniak, Courageous Cadence is a spoken word poetry action residency for youth, especially those of color. Centering the utilization of spoken word poetry as a tool for social justice, youth poet-actors participated in a series of drama-based pedagogy strategies and performance actions in order to develop their performative writing. This session will outline the process of the youth poet-actors, while showing a bit of the final performance. Participants will also experience the Courageous Cadence and PJP process through creative writing, performance-based skills, and personal storytelling. The aim of this session is to examine and name connections between individuals' experiences and systemic (in)justice, much like the Courageous Cadence cast did. Join us as we find the rhyme in resistance and make a stand!

-Submitted by Jasmine Games & Quinn Wozniak

CUNY SPS MA in Applied Theatre Racial Justice Conference 2020

Session Title: The Performing Justice Project: Embodying Justice in Action with Youth

Session Description: In this participatory session, attendees will explore how The Performing Justice (PJP) engages theatre, storytelling, creative writing, movement, and technology as tools for imagining and performing gender and racial justice. PJP is a performance making program that engages the arts to reflect on and dismantle systems of oppression with youth. The PJP model is formulated around three core questions:

- Who am I?
- What is (in)justice and how does it show up in my life?
- How do I perform Justice?

Using performance actions young people are engaged in embodied and performative dialogues around the relationship(s) between identity and justice. This project has been documented in a new book published with Routledge/Focus Press (2020), "Devising Critically Engaged Theatre with Youth: The Performing Justice Project." This session will offer an overview of the PJP theory and invite participants to create short virtual performances that explore justice.

Excerpt from Session Outline

Performance Action: Who Am I? — Mapping Geographies (15 min) JASMINE/QUINN (5 minutes) Using a blank sheet of paper and writing/coloring utensils, ask participants to mark their place according to these prompts:

- BORN: Locate the place where you were born
- JOY: Locate a place on the map where you felt joy
- DEFEND: Locate a place on the map where you had to defend yourself.
- RACE: Locate the first time you were made aware of your race
- GENDER: Locate a place where your understanding of gender shifted/changed
- EMPOWERED: Locate a place where you felt empowered in your identity

Participants pick two locations to reflect on through writing. Invite folx to think through grounding sensations, create word bank for both locations:

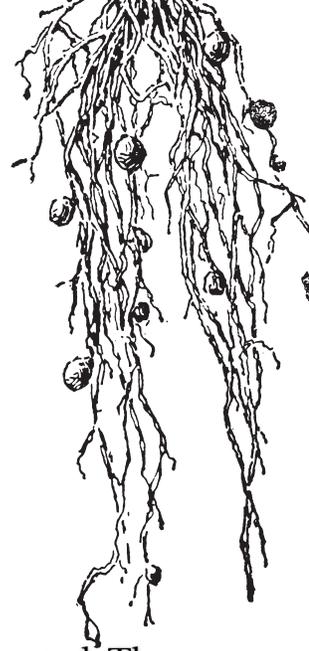
- List 3 emotions you felt at this location
- If you could touch this feeling, list 2 words of what it would feel like.
- List 1 sensation of what it could taste or smell like.

TECH: Share audio and play music while folx write. (JASMINE)

Using your lists as a word bank, write a line of poetry for each location to describe your experience. You should have two lines of poetry, one for each location. Prompt participants that they will be choosing one location and line of poetry to share in small groups.

-Submitted by Laura Epperson, Faith Hillis, Jasmine Games, & Quinn Wozniak
-Adapted from Drama-Based Instruction Network & Megan Alrutz

Chapter



3

Community Garden Creative Work

E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G—is connected. The soil needs rain, organic matter, air, worms and life in order to do what it needs to do to give and receive life. Each element is an essential component....Nature teaches us that our work has to be nuanced and steadfast. And more than anything, that we need each other—at our highest natural glory—in order to get free.

-Adrienne Maree Brown, *Emergent Strategy*



Co-Hosting Courageous Cadence



Gathering with Texas A&M University's Poetry Club.



Slamming at Houston Youth Semi-Finals



girl. Be Well!

Project and Play Synopsis

Girl, Be Well! endeavored to cultivate practices on wellness through the use of drama and theatre. Mequitta Ahuja's painting, *Parade*, served as the main inspiration/example for stepping into one's body. Wellness here considered body, mind, and spirit as elements to be cared for and nourished. This project featured a mix of live facilitation and pre-recorded performances. Girl Forward participants and mentors joined a Zoom call of about 90 minutes. In that time, they were introduced to a cast of college girls working on a school project via Zoom sleepover. There were 3 major scenes, each focused on an element of body, mind, and spirit respectively. Each scene broke to include live facilitated participation with the girls and their mentors. The performance sections encouraged laughter and joy, as audience members interacted with each other and found moments of self-introspection through navigating wellness in their everyday lives. The target audience of this project were members and mentors of GirlForward. With moving this project to an online format, we also anticipated other online visitors from the museum adventuring through our materials.

girl. Be Well!
a short play by
Yasmin Zacaria
Mikhael

with Drama-Based
Pedagogy adapted
by Jasmine Games

in collaboration
with co-dramaturg
Celia Shaheen and
Xinran Liu

in partnership with
Drama/Theatre in
Museum Settings,
Girl Forward, and
the Blanton
Museum



"I'm just -- group projects, school work -- and just -- I can't. It's not the same and I'm tired. I miss y'all. I miss my friends. I want to /be/ with you. I never thought I'd actually miss school. Like, dang. It was the first space that felt like mine."

From *girl. Be Well!*
by Yasmin Zacaria
Mikhael

Key Discoveries



Director

Blocking on zoom showed how much care and co-construction in rehearsals mattered.

DBP Specialist

Embodiment and dialogue must be crafted with an intention to accommodate participants working under surveillance.

Actor-Facilitator

How does my tone inform the morale of the participants as they participate?

Project Items

From the
Girl, Be Well!
GirlForward
Resource Packet



Jasmine Games

MFA in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities

A note by Director Jasmine Games (she/her):

The state of our world has made it necessary to consider how theatre can exist and sustain in virtual capacities. *Girl, Be Well!* quickly went from a live action play and facilitation to an online performative educational experience. As a group, we reimagined how our live and physical performance could translate to an online system. My task was to direct multiple scenes to be filmed, but also discover ways to include drama-based pedagogy strategies for a live facilitation. Ironically, the topic of wellness, which was chosen before the quarantine procedures, would become a practice for us as students, actors, and makers. The world of our film is not much different then the one we inhabit now. As actors, it was the emotional and physical need for wellness in our own lives that drives the characters' motivations in the scenes we filmed. It is our intention that the characters are relatable to the happenings our teen audience may be experiencing now. Leaving our performance and facilitation, our audience should walk away with ways to practice wellness in their own lives, especially in a time where it is so important to take care of themselves.

Sample Activity: Artifacts

Objectives: Students will engage in critical thinking. Students will practice close-looking.

1. The facilitator will present the image, *Parade* by Mequitta Ahuja. Ask students to take a moment to look at the image in its entirety. Do not add verbal input for a few moments. Then, add calm, slow input. Suggestions: How does the painting change for you if you look at it from right to left or left to right? Focus on one spot of the painting. Take in everything about that spot. If possible, find quiet, calm moments to zoom-in on the image, allowing students to look at the image closely. After a quiet moment of looking, invite students to request certain areas to zoom-in on, if possible.
2. Reflect: NOTE (one of the actors should gather and scribe these responses)
 - a. What do you notice about this painting? Or describe what you see in the chat.
 - b. What is happening in this image? What story is being told? Describe what you see in the chat.
3. As a facilitator, make connections between responses and encourage deepening of inferencing. For example, "What else could this mean?" "We noticed as a group that this painting is in two parts, why do you think this might be comparing and/or contrasting?"
4. [Prompt students to title the painting and type responses in chat]

-Activity written and adapted by Jasmine Games
-Adapted from [Drama-Based Instruction Network](#)

Courageous Cadence

Courageous Cadence is a Performing Justice Project (PJP.) PJP uses a performance-building process to devise original theatre that engages young people in imagining and enacting gender and racial justice in their own lives and communities. Through creative writing, performance-based skills, and personal storytelling, youth examine and name connections between their individual experiences and systemic (in)justice. Although it was founded by Megan Alrutz and Lynne Hoare, projects are now planned and facilitated by resident teaching artists, whom are mostly graduate students. This is how I began to help in this community garden. As a performance director and co-facilitator, I knew to plant and care for Courageous Cadence, a product of my fruition. The first residency and performance was in the fall of 2020, and a second residency was held in the summer of 2021.

"You ever seen black walls made of silk and every hole and gashed patched with obsidian satin? / With hair like a bush of coils and curls and so tight that butterflies get trapped in them. // You ever seen a black girl blush?"

From "Sacred Pride" by Mykah Scott, Courageous Cadence Poet-Actor



Key Discoveries

Performance Director

How can I intergrate youth talent, skills, and lived experience into the final show?

Co-Facilitator

Participant comfort takes time and earned trust.

Researcher

How can session activities and dialogued reflection be sites of data?

Project Items

Since we did not see youth poet-actors regularly, I had to get creative about sharing information between sessions. Every week, youth would get a newsletter with session topic information, reminders, and news.

SESSION 3 NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 25TH, 2020

Courageous Cadence

Reminders

The third Courageous Cadence Session is Wednesday, October 28th from 6:30-8:30PM.

Zoom link accessible [here](#). Meeting ID: 990 1986 4361 Passcode: 526388

Please bring writing and drawing utensils and paper.

- Upload Mapping Geographies, I Am, and Ode to Self Poems in the Performance Poets folder.
- Record a video of yourself performing your poem if you want.

The Community Google Folder can be found at this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1n81Uw25YhK7L_A5BmSdU7G13pzaa59K8?usp=sharing.



Race, Ethnicity, and You

This week we will be discussing race and ethnicity. Race is a social construction. It is not a biological identity. The meaning of race is not fixed; meaning it can and does change because of the way it is related to a social, historical, and geographic context. Through a variety of physical attributes, such as skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structure, an individual's race is decided. The construct of race historically uplifts those identified as white, oppressing those who are not considered white. Ethnicity refers to the idea that someone is a member of a particular group that may share

[cont'd p.2](#)

01

CC | SESSION 3



When it came to community agreements, Quinn and I wanted to keep it real with our youth. We wanted everyone to be sure their needs were being heard and met. Every session, we returned to our agreements (made week 1) to take what we needed for ourselves and others or add new needs.

Guiding Questions:

- What are some things we need to do our best work together?
- How do you need and want to be treated by others in the space in order to do brave work?
- What agreements do we need to participate in difficult dialogue?

Activity: "I Am" Spoken Word
Respond to these prompts to write a poem:

My name is...
My skin looks like...
My body feels like..
I am told...
But My name is...
I believe....
I belong...
Where I'm from, they say people like me...
But today I am...
And I know I will be...
Because I am...
I am...

-Adapted from *Devising Creatively Engaged Theatre with Youth* by Megan Alrutz & Lynne Hoare

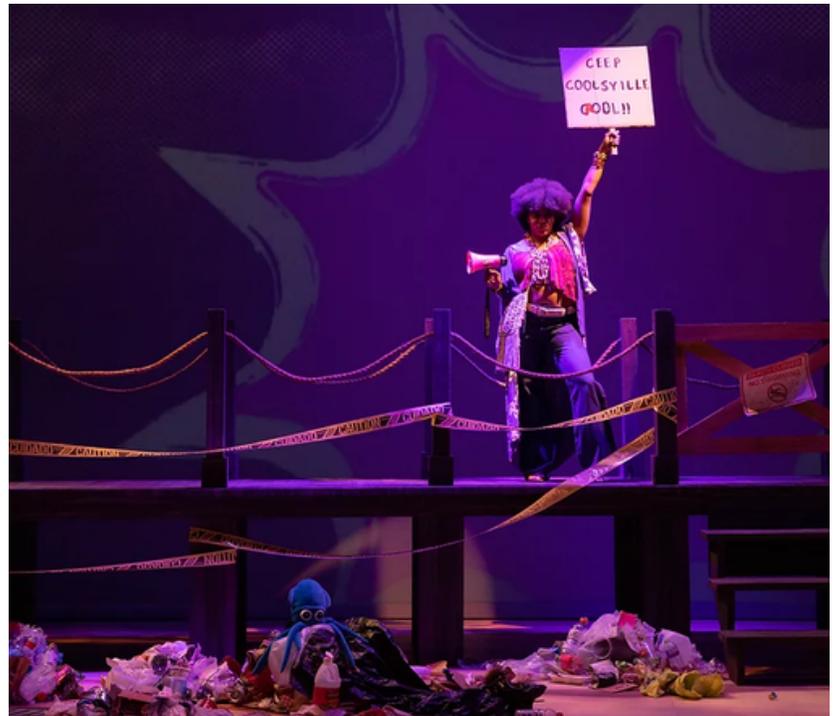
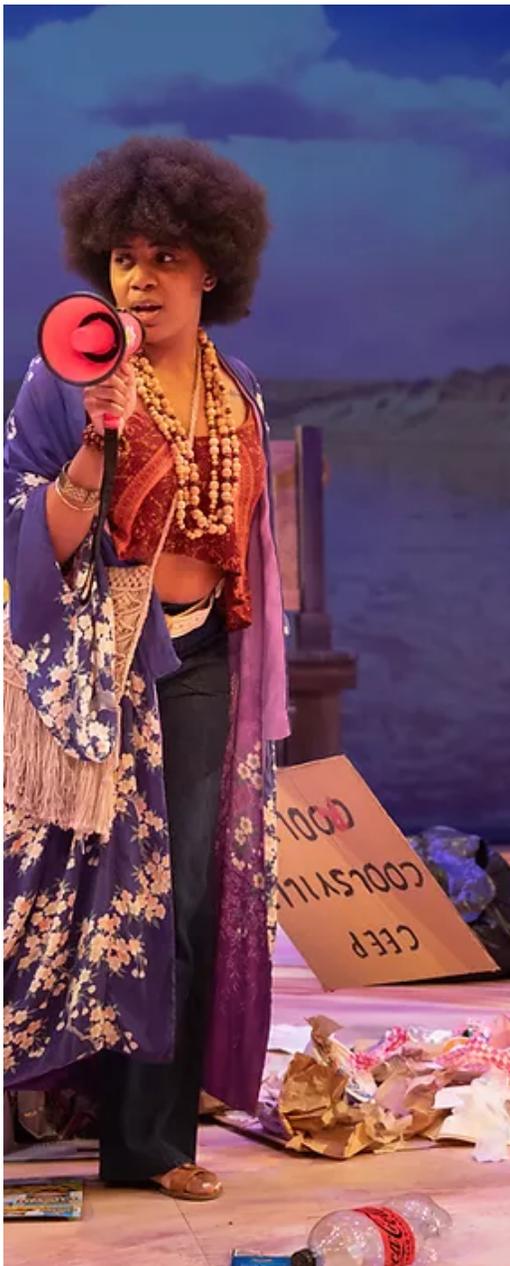
"I Am" by Nadia Boudreaux
"I believe I can be the help someone needs, after all people have helped me. I belong in the forest / singing with the trees, and playing with the wind. / I am from the darkness / I came out of a cave, people say nothing good can come out of the darkness. / But did you know crystals grow in caves? / Did you know pearls are at the bottom of the ocean in clams ready to see day? / But today I am happy for I get to spread my wings, and feel free. /"

Jinkies!

Jinkies! or The Dog Play

In the spring of 2022, I played Orca Rivers in *Jinkies! or The Dog Play*, written by Josiah Thomas Turner and Directed by Braxton Rae. Performance dates were on March 5th, 9th and 11th, 2022 in the Oscar G. Brockett Theatre.

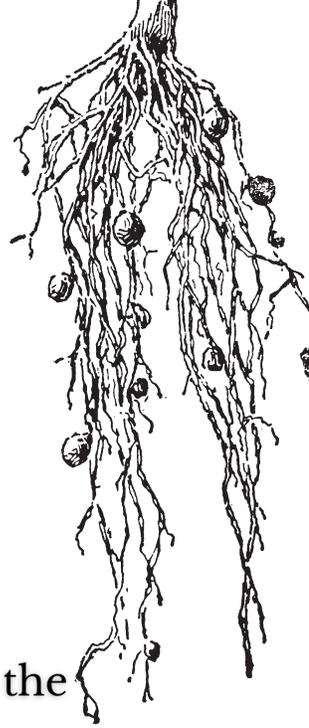
"Ten years ago, following a botched case, the members of our favorite Saturday-morning-cartoon teenage-mystery-solving team went their separate ways. Now as crisis descends on Coolsville and one of their own is swept into the spotlight, accused of a heinous crime, the gang must reunite to solve one last mystery - But the question remains; Where is The Dog?"



Chapter

4

Sharing the Harvest Teaching



The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy.
-bell hooks,
Teaching to Transgress



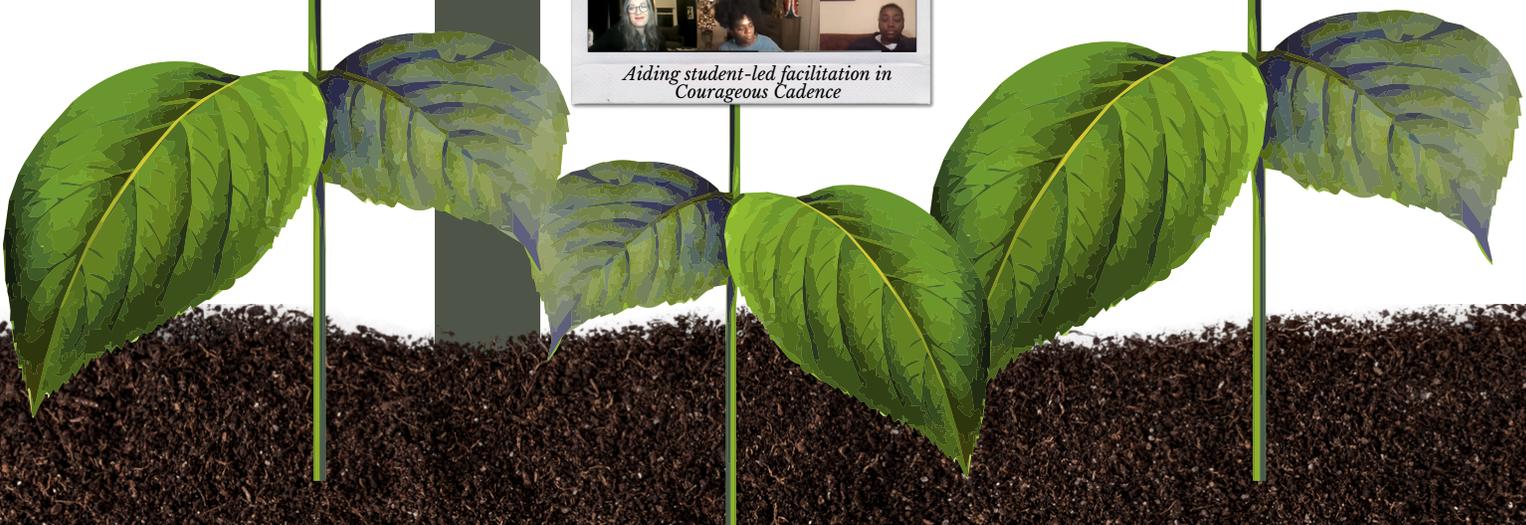
Celebrating the 100th day of school



*Aiding student-led facilitation in
Courageous Cadence*



*Reading to students at Brooke Elementary
School as a Literacy First Tutor*



Teaching Philosophy

As a child, I found relief through performance art. I began in competitive choir in elementary school and as grade levels passed, I went from acting to slamming, writing, directing, and administrating. It was euphoric to perform on stage and be a part of the magic of the show, but as I grew older, I realized my experience in the realm of theatre was miniscule in comparison to my counterparts who lived in communities that had more economic access. I find such inequity unacceptable, and I hope to be an advocate and change-maker for youth in low-income communities. I know that a huge part of this fight begins in the classroom.

Youth will be the driving force in enacting social change. Performance is a mirror of its society, and in many instances, it provides significant influence on the operation of culture. I implement strategies that create a more dialogic learning experience and honor diversity through pedagogical choices. For example, I used role work activities to guide students through character analysis of the protagonist, Justyce McAllister, in *Dear Martin*. Students used their role playing to inform why people can make various choices in a social dilemma. This activity also opened a conversation around race relations in the United States and how that can affect youth interpersonal relationships. In this way, students know they can speak their truth and delve into deep critical analysis on social issues. Students should be welcomed in the classroom, so they can feel comfort in having the agency to co-construct their learning.

Student agency is especially important when teaching performance. My knowledge of pedagogy surrounding education and youth drama and theatre, and active participation in youth performance practices have equipped me with the understanding of how youth performance evolves and succeeds, as well as how I can help facilitate these practices. In my unit plans, I devote several days to topics that students choose. I create these topics based on student responses through an activity on the first days of class. I ask students what they hope to learn from my class, and I implement these topics into classes. In this way, I can provide students not only with what I feel they should know, but what they feel they should know. Finally, I offer assessments that are both traditional and subversive to maximize student success in the classroom. Traditional assessments may come as an analytical essay and verbal presentation; however, my subversive assessments are through drama-based pedagogy activities, such as using image work and role work to synthesize and act out what we know about a given topic. I look to see if students are communicating their observations to their peers and their ability to illustrate or perform analysis. Together, we deepen our learning through shared knowledge and experience.

Theatre must do more than perform. As educators, we can impact our students so that they will be inspired to give back to their communities as they grow older. I want youth in low-income communities to have a fair shot at pursuing long-term art, rather than art that only offers escapism. I am interested in art that can transform an individual's course of life, as it did mine. I seek to provide quality educational opportunities, resources, support, and advocacy. Teachers have the potential to create meaningful relationships with students. They also can give students in low-income communities an education that is life-lasting and applicable to their daily lives. As an educator in theatre and performance, I want to ensure I am making space for students to cultivate and curate their learning and artistic practices, which in turn, allows them to imagine a future where they succeed in their artistic endeavors.



Intro to Improv



Intro To Improv Drama Assistant Instructor Spring 2021

This course is designed to equip students with the tools to explore the fundamentals of improvisation. This includes devising and spontaneous performance. Although we will work towards traditional theatre practices, we will also examine the ways improvisation is used in nontraditional theatre spaces and practices. Over the course of the semester, we will make meaning together in the development of storytelling and improvisational skills. We will also explore and examine the ways improvisation can be used as a tool to make social and political revelations. Improvisation cannot be accomplished without the support of an ensemble, and we will collaborate through image work, role work, and dialogic meaning making to lift each other up into this skill set. Everyone has something to offer to this course! The class will work as a supportive and brave space to take explore and discover individual performance styles. This course is open to anyone who has interest in performance, acting, and devising— no experience required!

In this course we will...

- Identify aspects of improvisation (i.e., performance and real-world applications).
- Examine and dissect theory and social commentary in works of improvisation.
- Develop skills to towards improvisational performance, such as spontaneity, presence, trust, giving and receiving offers, and character development.
- Devise and perform improvisation individually and collaboratively.

Click
here
for
video!

Society
and
Improv

Unit Development...>

Big Ideas + Assignments

- What agreements are needed for this work?
- What are the historical & social implications of the practice of improv?
- How is improv practiced in different cultures?
- Critical analysis essay on improv.

Society
and
Improv

Rules
of
Improv

Big Ideas + Assignments

- What are the fundamentals of improvisation?
- Closer look: 1) Yes! And, 2) Objects & Environments, 3) Characters & Relationships.
- Dialogic Assessment: Do we need the rules?

Society
and
Improv

Rules
of
Improv

Short
Form
Long Form

Big Ideas + Assignments

- What is short form and long form?
- Short Form Practice: Game Share.
- Closer Look: The Harold & La Ronde.
 - Pros & Cons
- Forming Groups: How do we prepare to perform improv?

Society
and
Improv

Rules
of
Improv

Short
Form
Long Form

Performing
Improv

Big Ideas + Assignments

- What agreements are needed for group work?
- How do we currate an improv set?
- How do we rehearse improv?
- Final Performance
- Real World Applications Discussion
- Course Reflection

Fund. of Acting

Society
and
Acting

Unit Development...>

Big Ideas + Assignments

- What agreements are needed for this work?
- What are the historical & social implications of the practice of acting?
- How is acting practiced in different cultures?
- Critical analysis essay on *Pipeline*.

Society
and
Acting

Fund.
of
Acting

Big Ideas + Assignments

- What are the fundamentals of acting?
- Closer look: 1) Given Circumstances 2) Objectives, Obstacles, Tactics, 3) Characters & Relationships.
- Mini Assesment: Open Scene Share

Society
and
Acting

Fund.
of
Acting

Monologue

Big Ideas + Assignments

- What is a monologue?
- Monologue Practice: Table Work
 - With or without beats
- Monologue Share: What have we learned from the process of preparing a monologue?

Society
and
Acting

Fund.
of
Acting

Monologue

Group
Acting

Big Ideas + Assignments

- What agreements are needed for group work?
- How do we devise a performance?
- Devised Share
- Scripted Scene Share
- Real World Applications Discussion
- Course Reflection

Agenda

- 1 ACCESS CHECK IN + THUMBS
- 2 GAME: 2X3XBRADFORD
- 3 READING DISCUSSION: WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
- 4 BREAK
- 5 GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES REVIEW + CLASS EXAMPLE
- 6 CHECKOUT

Fundamentals of Acting

Assistant Instructor

Fall 2021 & Spring 2022

This course is designed to equip students with the tools to explore the fundamentals of acting. This includes storytelling, character analysis, and devised performance. In this course, we will implement our given skills as we shape meaning around script analysis, monologue work, scene work, performance styles, and acting techniques. Students will be encouraged to use this course as an opportunity to cultivate their acting style towards opportunities they seek for their artistic and professional endeavors. In this course, we will read and analyze a selection of works that are race and gender diverse. We will also look at how acting can be used to perform different types of texts. Although acting is an individual talent, we will collaborate through image work, role work, and dialogic meaning making to lift each other up into this skill set. Everyone has something to offer to this course. This course is open to anyone who has interest in performance, acting, and devising — no experience required!

In this course we will...

- Examine and dissect theory and social commentary in works of acting.
- Explore the actor's tools of voice, body, and imagination.
- Build confidence speaking and performing in front of an audience.
- Analyze text towards a well thought out performance.
- Devise and perform individually and collaboratively.

EPILOGUE

End of The Garden

A relish for the end of the season

3 cucumbers, cut in 1-inch slices

1 childhood dream

2 carrots, peeled and cut evenly

4 bell peppers, cut in chunks

3 cups of race & gender justice

Spoken word, broken into florets

2 cups green beans, tender

As much youth as you can gather

Whatever vegetables left,

Perhaps zucchini

What do the youth want?

3 cups sugar,

Do not forget brown

Censored topics at school

3 cups love

2 teaspoons audacity

2 teaspoons mustard seed

A pinch of tenacity

1/2 cup of salt

Water measured by eye

Pickle crisp

Pepper for heat

Gather youth and their needs. Bring spoken word poetry. Combine vegetables. Place vegetables in salt water overnight. Do not forget the dream. Drain Vegetables. Combine vinegar, sugar, and spice—so much love—then boil. You better not had forgotten the brown sugar. Add vegetables. Return to a boil, then let simmer for 10-15 minutes. You'll know it's ready when you can see race & gender justice. When the things youth can't talk about at school rise to the top. Pepper to taste, be audacious. Pack into jars, leaving space at the top. Remove air bubbles. Follow instructions for pickle crisp or don't use it at all. What do the youth want? Seal tenaciously. Serve on a stage.

My Heart & Soul,
Jasmine Games