

YEAR 14, ISSUE 8

MARCH 15, 2017

# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## EXPLORING THE ARTS



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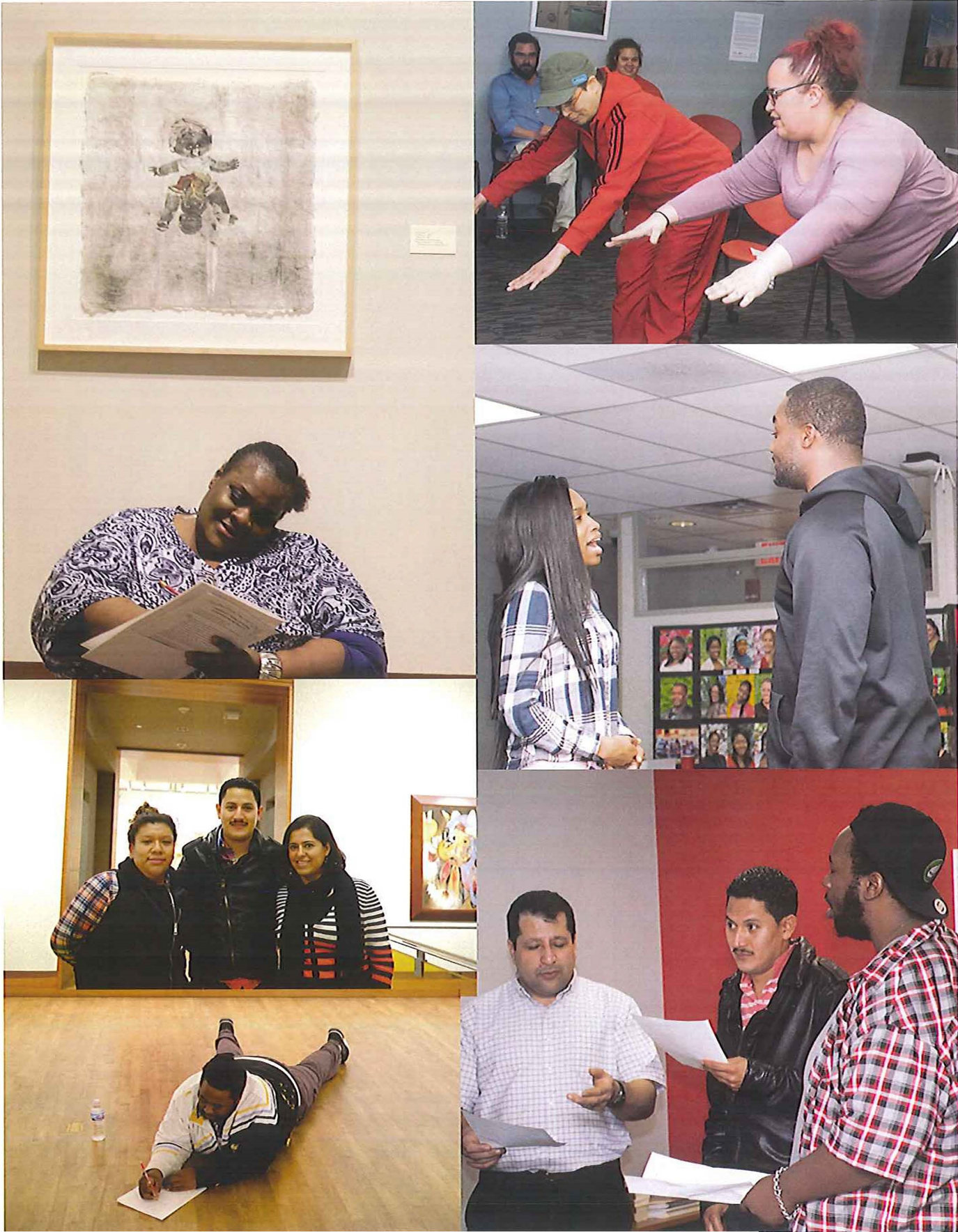
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# A TASTE OF THEATRE

On the outside it seemed like simple exercises such as stretching and vocal warm up, but looking past that I saw some character building. A lot of us who stay quiet behind the scenes found the voice and energy to be one of the group members and be seen. Honestly, I had not heard Kendra say more than two sentences, but there she was doing improv as a hysterical woman. I think Baron helped us melt away that ice of apprehension and embrace that fire most stage actors possess. My voice has always made me worry about speaking aloud, but reading Macbeth gave me this unbeatable energy as if every word lit my blood on fire.

**(Anthony Jefferson)**

When Baron came to work with us last week, he said something that still resonates with me. He commented on my powerful speaking voice, which was a huge compliment. I have been known to be reserved and not easily compete or speak publicly, which is a shame because deep down I've always wanted to perform in front of a crowd. Baron discerned that fact instantly. He made me feel comfortable expressing myself without the fear of ridicule. The activities he had us perform were completely ice breaking. I thoroughly enjoyed myself. **(Spencer Gamble)**

I personally liked when we did the breathing technique. It got me out of my shell. I now feel like I can speak in class and feel more confident. used to think that if I did something wrong that it would make everyone else feel uncomfortable. Feeling more confident means that even when I mess up, I learn how to laugh at myself because when learning something new you won't catch on right away. **(Simone Bell-Perdue)**



Dr. Baron Kelly is an amazing man. I really enjoyed the exercises he made us do in the beginning to help us relax; it was like preparing us to be ourselves. When we were acting, it was very easy for me, and I participated twice in the improvisation exercise. When I went home, it was hard for me to stop my mind because when I was acting I was able to be many different personalities, which I really enjoyed. It was like traveling in time or watching short videos.

**(Marisol Gonzalez)**

The breathing lesson was an eye-opening experience. I learned the simple concept that I have been breathing incorrectly this entire time. It was as if I learned the difference between facts and "alt-facts." My mind and body were open to a new way of being, and I am incredibly grateful for it. **(Nathaniel Lake)**

Baron Kelly is one man in my life I will never forget. I can say that he is a powerful person and it's easy for everybody to learn when he teaches. He made me feel powerful and not shy. I enjoyed acting in class when I saw the happy faces of everybody in the room. I am looking forward to seeing him again. **(Musab Naji)**



Last week with Baron Kelly we did a little acting. Before we started acting, we went through Baron's ritual of loosening up. The entire class participated and everyone had fun. We took turns reading scripts from different plays and even did a little improv. I realize now that acting is an art. Before this class, I believed anybody could do it. **(Johnnie Walton)**

For the first time in my life, I experienced acting. Many weeks passed as I sat in the same class with the same twenty-nine other students, participating in the lessons and going home. Last week's acting class gave me an idea of how everyone can be a separate act. For a moment, I was part of the great act, all because of just a few minutes with Baron Kelly. I never imagined I would love acting or even be part of a single act, but it felt good and we all had so much fun doing it. So far, it's my best Odyssey class not only because of Baron, who was amazing, but because I discovered a new interest, and it felt so good. I would like to act some more and discover how it would go for me. **(Sukai Yarbo)**

Baron taught us how to use our words with conviction. The way to present a story or words all can mean something different by how we present them. I truly enjoyed his teachings because I believe that the way you deliver and use your words is powerful. **(Alyanna Cooper)**

During last week's class, Dr. Kelly taught us how to loosen up in order to get ready to speak. His techniques, though odd and causing me to feel winded, actually worked. I used them when reciting *Macbeth* later on. My favorite part of the class was at the end when we did the spontaneous skit game. In the beginning, I honestly thought that I might not



participate, but after I saw everyone's eyes on me, I knew I had to. It's something I will never regret. It was much needed fun. **(Maria Dary)**

During last week in our class with Baron Kelly, we had a lot of fun laughing and watching people do their best at acting. First, it was with the *Macbeth* play. Everyone got a turn to say their lines and got some coaching advice from Baron on how to make your voice be powerful and unafraid. I was really scared and nervous because Shakespeare is hard for me. When I say hard, I mean the language is hard. I did not know how good I would be as an actress. Also, we had time for improv, and that was really fun. I even got up and did some improv. I was happy for myself because I felt comfortable enough with my classmates that if I made a fool of myself they would not criticize me. **(Susana Gomez)**

Baron Kelly's class is a class I will never forget. It was awesome. I wish he stayed with us longer. I learned that you should take pride in what you believe in. Your voice should be strong and be heard. We should not be afraid, but we should have fun and be creative. If we make mistakes, it is okay, just keep going. This is fun and everyone makes mistakes. When Baron Kelly was in class, we all experienced acting in front of class not worrying what the other person would say or think. We all showed sides that some did not know we had. It was fun and hilarious at times. I had not laughed that hard in months, just knowing that whatever I was going through was gone for a minute. What I got out of the session was that it is up to you to put your mind to it. You can accomplish anything you want. If you believe it, you can do anything. **(Ngina Ali)**



Last week during class, we had a guest named Baron Kelly. The activities we did were acting and speaking in groups. Baron shared his educational background. He split us into groups and we practiced an act in front of the class. **(Grisel Tapia Claudio)**

I had a wonderful night because I enjoyed watching my classmates participating in different scenes of acting. I discovered that some people are quiet but they hide a tremendous talent of acting. If we have another "drama workshop" I will break out of my phobia and jump into the drama stage. I would like to thank Dr. Kelly for taking his time to come and show us some tricks, good advice, and motivation for acting. **(José Mendoza)**

Last week was a fun night. Although I did not participate in the "acting" part, it was really nice to see everyone laugh. It is nice to see how we all get along and how comfortable we all are with each other. Personally, I have to start opening up more in class because there is nothing wrong with doing it, especially in this classroom. **(Belem Calixto)**

Last week we did some nice warm up exercises. Following the exercises we learned how to make our breath and words come from deep within us. It was like a new sense of control. We then got to do some improv work, which got our creativity going and got some of us out of our comfort zones. **(Jessica Tucker)**

Last week, we got to act around each other and be fun and crazy. It was a lot of fun seeing everyone act like their true selves. Unfortunately I was not feeling like myself that day and could not act like my normal goofy self because I was going through a lot of emotions. I was afraid that if I allowed myself to let go, I would break down and cry from anger. I did not want to be in the room because my head was somewhere else. It was cool to be in a line letting someone guide us to act out. It was cool to see everyone's acting skills and be wild and free. I learned to let go. I learned how to act in different ways in totally different situations and be adaptable. **(Maria Cardenas)**



# AT THE MOVIES

## *Fences*

**Reviewed by Felica Thomas**

Over the holiday vacation, I went to see “Fences” starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis. This is a movie that came from an August Wilson play starring James Earl Jones.

Here is a summary from Randall Colburn’s “Consequence of Sound” Review, December 22, 2016: “Denzel Washington directs and stars as patriarch Troy Mason, reprising his role from the play’s Tony-winning Broadway revival in 2010. Viola Davis, also of the 2010 revival, co-stars as Rose, his no-nonsense wife. A former Negro League baseball player, Troy now works as a garbage man in Pittsburgh. There, he cares for a teenage son, Cory (Jovan Adepo), entertains a grown one, Lyons (Russell Hornsby), and struggles with his brother Gabriel (Mykelti Williamson), a delusional and mentally disturbed veteran. Generally considered one of the great characters in theater, Troy is a vibrant, verbose man who’s also prone to violent strains of bitterness and rage. It should come as no surprise that the role fits Washington like a glove.”

This movie reminded me of “Allegory of the Cave” because as he tried to help his situation, Troy eventually kept sinking back into the same hole he attempted to come out of. This was shown when he tried stopping his son from playing college football and when he had an extramarital

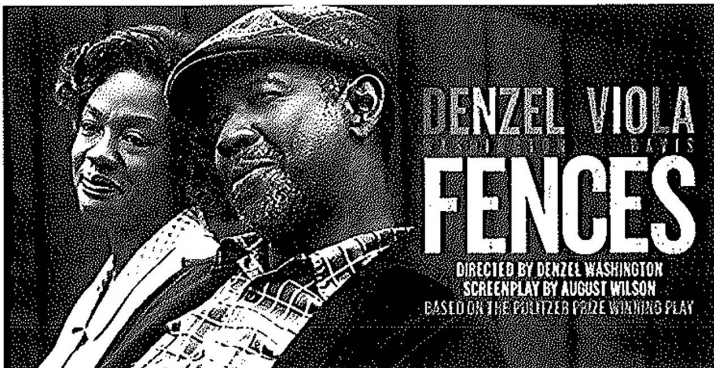
affair on his wife, Rose, which also created a baby. This was a very touching film, since the “fence” that he created was both emotional and literal. Troy speaks of seeing God and also death. As he speaks of this with his wife and friend, he is preparing to build a fence around his home. This resonated with me. I was touched because I feel that his reasoning for doing this was to protect his family and himself from everything that would hurt him. He made several mistakes along the way that he wasn’t equipped to fix, and he never had the chance to. Sometimes you do not get a second chance. Once something is done, it is just that: done.

I feel like he was responsible for others, and he didn’t know how to be responsible for himself. In this movie, I saw myself as I try to build a fence around my feelings, my emotions, and my children to protect them from all hurt, harm, and danger. I try to make sure they are okay.

## **A Comparative Narrative: *Mercenary* and *Fences*** **Reviewed by Spencer Gamble**

I had the pleasure of viewing two films over winter break. The first was *Mercenary*, starring Toki Pilioko, and the second was *Fences*, starring Denzel Washington. Both films explore the sometimes tumultuous relationships that can occur between fathers and sons.

In *Mercenary*, the father is surly, aggressive, and unrelenting. He invokes an all-or-nothing standard of discipline. He is hard on the main character, as well as his younger brother. The same could go for the father in *Fences*, although this movie’s father possesses a slightly more human demeanor than the other. He could benefit from sensitivity training. The sons in both films aspire to excel





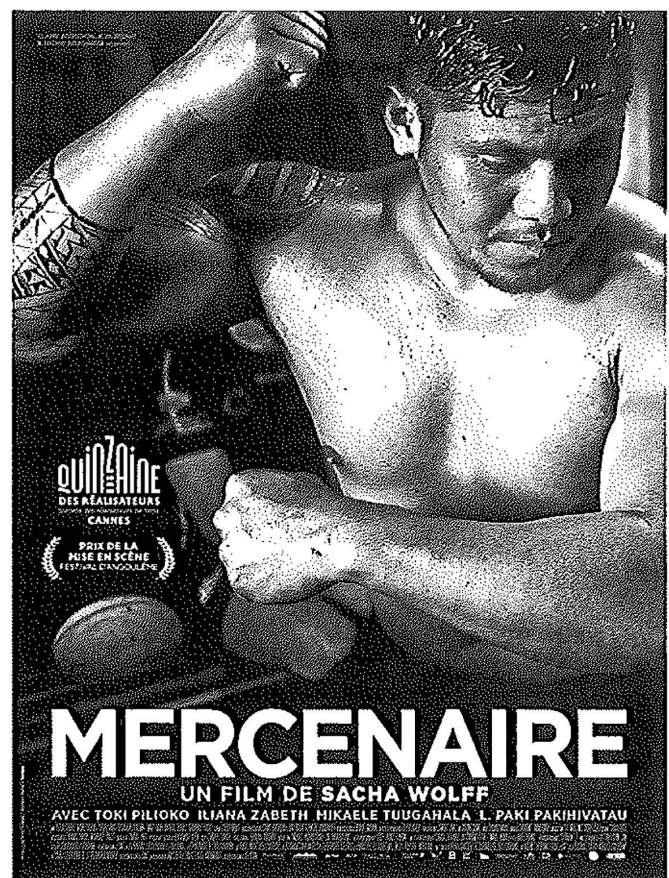
in their sport of choice: one played rugby, while the other played American football. Neither of the fathers approves nor supports such endeavors. Both films carefully demonstrate the struggles of pursuing one's dreams while at the same time insinuating the importance of maintaining mutual respect and loyalty. I chose this topic because it fits into my current mindset. I went to see *Fences* with my son, Jackson. I was disturbed by the similarities I saw in that father-son relationship as of late. That feeling then turned into despair. I, on the other hand, support my son in all he wants to do, but unfortunately, it happens to be the street life. I identified with, "Dad, don't you like me?" "I feed you, clothe you, and look after you. I don't have to like you." Both fathers went about retaining respect in their own ways, but both demanded it without fail. I thoroughly enjoyed both films, even though at the same time I was forced to look further into my own relationship with my son. The experience was surreal, uncomfortable, and tragic, yet pure, beautiful, and heartwarming.

I had no problem siding with the main character in *Mercenary*. He showed the utmost level of respect for his father, who didn't deserve it most of the time. He only wanted to go to France to play on a rugby team, allowing him to then take his younger brother away from the hostile environment at home. He ended up going to France anyway, against his father's wishes. He then gets cut from the team due to some foul politics, so he returns home. He apologizes, but his father still disowns him. There is no real closure for the two of them. He takes his younger brother and stands up to his father. The father tragically shoots himself.

In *Fences*, the main character was the father, whom I can identify with as well. His heart is in the right place for most of the film. He did, however, have some shortcomings. He wanted to become a baseball player but fails to do so due to an injury. So, of course he's going to be a bit envious of his

son. He wants him to be better than himself. He works hard to support his wife, a teenager, while getting good grades, working a part-time job, and making time to play football. The father feels he is off the mark and trying to do too much. He shouldn't waste his time with football. They get in an argument, and the father dies suddenly. No apologies can be made. Again, there is no closure between characters. It was almost unendurable at this point in the film. The fact that it was written as a play by August Wilson made it easier to adjust to the overdramatic dialogue.

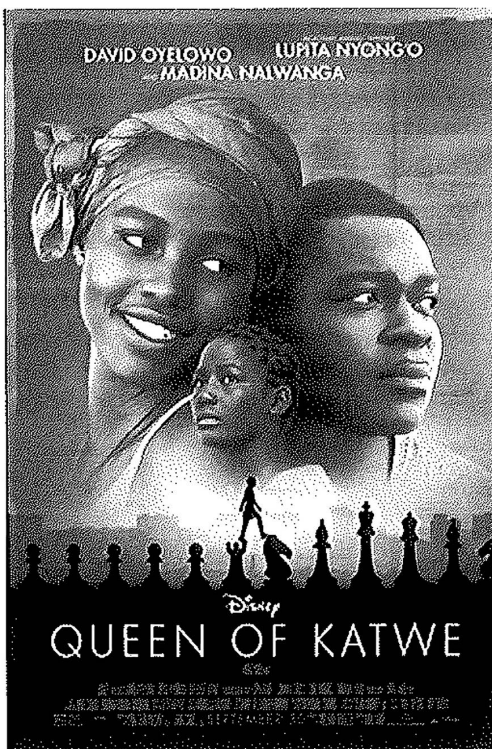
Though I was emotionally driven to view these films, I'm glad I did. I was entertained and left each film with a lesson learned. No matter what, I must love my son with all his faults, as he should me. I also need to let go of our petty differences and disagreements because we're not promised tomorrow and the ability to say, "I'm sorry."



***The Queen of Katwe*****Reviewed by Marisol Gonzalez**

"The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them." – Ellen Johnson

*The Queen of Katwe* is a real story of a girl named Phiona Mutesi. Her story was so powerful that it became a movie. Phiona was born in Katwe, Uganda, a place where many people die of hunger, are homeless, and are poor. Her father died when she was three years old. Her mother had to work very hard to provide for her five children. Phiona dropped out of school when she was nine years because her family could no longer afford to send her.



Mr. Katende, her mentor, noticed the great potential that Phiona and the other kids in the club had. He decided to try very hard to make them compete in a tournament with other schools. It was hard because, of course, they had to pay a fee they couldn't afford. They also weren't eligible because they weren't enrolled in school, but Mr. Katende didn't give up, and they went to compete. He convinced Phiona's mom to let her kids participate. At one

One day, Phiona decided to follow her younger brothers as they were skipping responsibilities. They had to work selling corn in the streets to help her poor mother. To her surprise, she found them in a chess club. She became interested in learning the game, too. Mr. Robert Katende was in charge of the after school program at the Christian and Sports Mission, an outreach institute. He was a very kind man and invited her to play. That day was the best thing that could have ever happened to Phiona in her entire life.

After that, she went back day after day to learn how to play chess. Soon she started to compete against the other kids in the club and became the very best. Unfortunately for her, her family was falling apart at the same time. Her older sister was making bad decisions and left her family to go live with her boyfriend, who was a drug dealer. Also, her mother got misplaced rumors about the chess club and no longer let her children participate in the club. The emotional and economic situation was very bad for Phiona and her family.

point in the movie, he told her that her kids were blessed to have a mother that never gave up on them. It was true! She was a very wonderful mother.

Phiona won! And that was just the beginning of many more triumphs. One day, Mr. Katende told her she could be the best in all of Uganda. Phiona then asked how that could be possible, which Mr. Katende replied to by saying, "Sometimes the place you are is not the place you belong. You belong to the place you think you belong." He was always encouraging them. He taught them that chess helps you solve problems using your mind to always be safe. The most important lesson he teaches is that when you play and lose, you can just reset the pieces and play again.

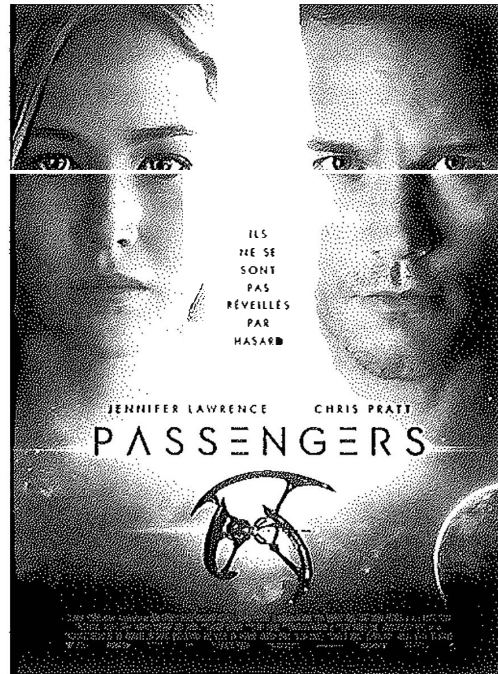
Chess allowed Phiona to change her life. She has a house and is no longer homeless. She also went back to school and has had the satisfaction of making her dreams come true by exceeding her capacity to achieve them.



***Passengers*****Reviewed by Ahmad Nahas**

The movie that I am reviewing is titled "Passengers," which stars Chris Pratt and Jennifer Lawrence. I went to see this movie in the theaters at the end of December. The basic premise of the movie is that in a future society, Earth has become so overpopulated that people are now traveling to new galaxies and other planets to live their lives out there. However, during the journey, two passengers on one of the spaceships that are taking people to a new planet wake up much earlier than they were supposed to.

The movie begins with the spaceship Avalon flying through space towards an unknown destination. The ship begins to fly through an asteroid field, which shouldn't be a problem since the ship has a protective force field. However, it appears that one of the large asteroids that the ship struck caused some sort of damage, and an alarm is triggered. This damage awakens one of the passengers, Jim, who was in a frozen state of sleep. At first, Jim is groggy and just going through the awakening process until he realizes that he is the only passenger, of a thousand, to be awake. Jim becomes frightened and starts to search the ship for information. However, he finds out that all staff members are still asleep, and the ship still has ninety more years to travel until they reach their destination, a planet called Homestead II. Suddenly, Jim thinks he spots another human that is awake, but it turns out to be a robotic bartender. Jim befriends the robot since it is his only source of socialization. At this point, Jim begins to accept his fate that he cannot put himself back to frozen sleep and that by the time the ship gets to Homestead II, he will likely have died.



At first when Jim comes to accept his fate, he is very mad. He attempts to break into the secured staff sleeping quarters to get help, but he is unsuccessful. He comes to realize that there is literally nothing he can do, so he begins to enjoy the benefits of being the only awake passenger on a luxury spaceship. He breaks into a fancier passenger cabin to sleep, steals nice clothes, and consumes lots of fancy food and drinks. One day, he discovers a passenger activity that allows him to put on a

spacesuit and float in space alongside the ship as it travels. As he is returning from his new experience, he walks past a sleeping woman passenger, Aurora, who catches his eye. Being so lonely, Jim debates for months on whether or not he should awaken her for some personal company, even though this would also be sentencing her to death. Months later, Jim decides to awaken Aurora, but he runs away while she is waking up. They happen upon each other a few hours later, and Jim lets Aurora believe that her awakening was a ship system error.

Aurora and Jim basically spend all of their time together, since there is no one else awake on the ship. They eventually fall in love while enjoying the various amenities of the luxury ship. Then, one day while Aurora is conversing with the robot bartender, the robot lets it slip that Jim was the person that woke her up and that it was not a system error. Aurora becomes furious because not only did Jim lie to her, but he also killed her by waking her up with no way to put her back to sleep. . . Watch the movie to see how it turns out.

### ***Hidden Figures***

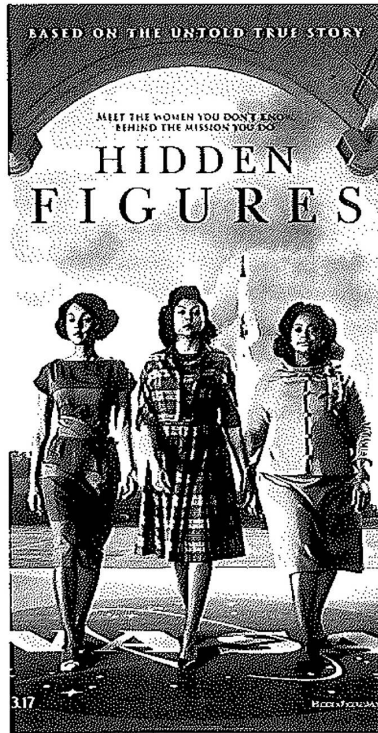
**Reviewed by Kendra Atkinson**

*Hidden Figures* is one of the most incredible, inspirational, heartwarming movies I have seen in a long time. It's amazing how three beautiful and clever women, Katherine Johnson (Taraji P. Henson), Dorothy Vaughan (Octavia Spencer), and Mary Jackson (Janelle Monae) were highly underestimated because of their skin color. They were the first ladies to help John Glenn get into orbit! Being told they couldn't do something was never an option; they did whatever they had to do to be able to achieve their goals and move on up in their ranks.

I am also amazed by how much their talent outweighed all their doubts about women and African Americans. It was amazing to see that no matter who you are or where you come from, if you have the ambition and talent, you can accomplish anything and everything in this world. I give this movie 10/10; it is a must see movie.

### ***Hidden Colors* and Other Documentaries on Race** **Reviewed by Avé Thorpe**

Throughout Odyssey's winter break, I came across a video clip on Instagram of a well-known rap artist speaking about the Black race. In viewing this clip, I became intrigued. I not only took an interest in this particular artist and going back further into his posts, but I also began viewing YouTube videos of Frances Cress Welsing, Sista Soulja, Dr. Umar Johnson, Cornell West, Marcus Garvey, Fred Hampton and Angela Davis, just to name a few. In addition, I watched some of the popular movies and television series like *Roots*, *Underground*, *Hidden Colors*, and *Selma* that depict a vivid picture of racism/slavery in America



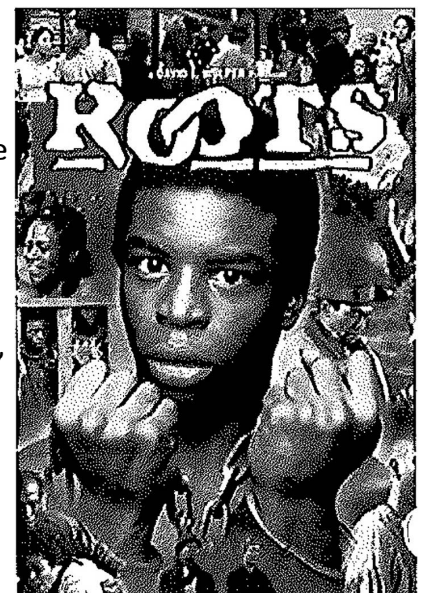
throughout different institutions.

I actually wrote my paper on the 27th of December, but I held onto it for a few weeks, adding lines here and there as I edited. I did this because this topic is so touchy and I didn't want to be viewed as ungrateful for my opportunity to be in the Odyssey Program. Prior to viewing these videos, shows, and movies, I feel as if I had a distorted view of how very present racism and slavery are and how much they still exist in various forms.

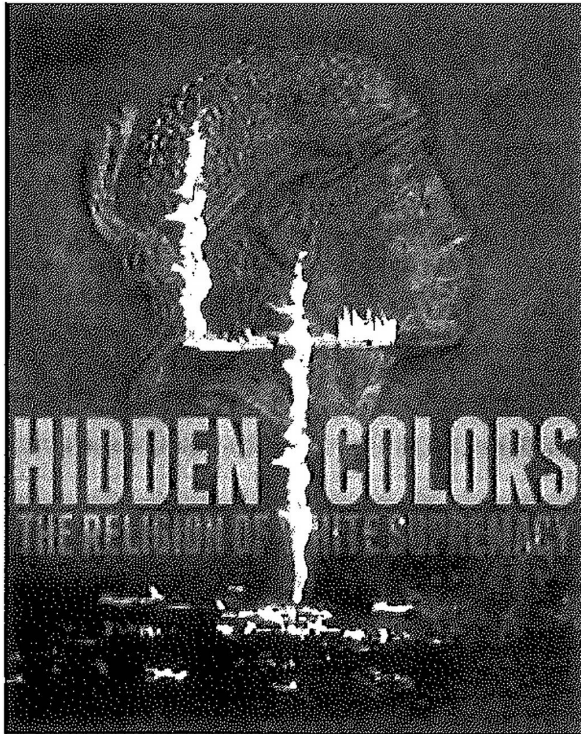
Now, I will say that in some situations I don't believe that certain people understand their offensiveness towards black people and probably just can't

empathize because they haven't had to live oppressed. However, there are situations that occur where the racism and slavery are quite intentional and several examples of this were given in the *Hidden Colors* documentaries; this is why I chose to give a review on them.

First, I will start by saying that in these videos there were several different entities where racism and slavery still exist in America. The way it's explained is that racism is a system that is composed of several different institutions. The three particular institutions the documentary touched on that I chose to focus on were the educational, prison, and family institutions, which all intertwine and affect one another.







*Hidden Colors* describes how in school systems across America, black students are victims of a school to prison pipeline system. Within this system it shows that if a black student does not perform as well as a white student, whether it's academic or behavioral, there are harsher consequences for the black student than the white. It is also more than likely that the black students will be referred for either mental health evaluations or juvenile detention, which delays their educational accomplishments. These referrals are red flags on their records, and if it is determined that these declines are due to a lack of family stability, often times the school social worker will file a motion to have the child removed from their home. At this time the child is either placed in juvenile detention (jail), a group home, or foster care where the majority of the staff or foster parents are white.

If faced with prison time, blacks are also more likely to be given harsher sentences, which further delay their productivity in the community. Once released from prison, blacks often lack skills/ experience that can help them to gain stability or

higher than middle wage employment. Depending on the charges, some blacks aren't even granted financial aid in order to further their education and obtain a higher paying job.

At this point there's really no other option than to obtain public assistance or government housing, and for men it's harder; they usually end up shacking up with a female with assistance out of desperation. Often times this scenario leads to children, and because the male isn't able to adequately provide for them, the cycle continues.

This is just one example from the documentaries of the three institutions intertwining. From my own experiences and observations within the communities I have inhabited, I find this depiction to be accurate. Within all of these institutions there's little to no way for the black family to escape poverty. In all three institutions it is made to seem as if the only way these families can survive is by depending on help from white people.

In a classroom, jail, and family receiving government assistance, it is more than likely that a white person is the dictator and decides the fate of all of the blacks. This dictatorship psychologically weighs on the subconscious minds of the blacks, and they begin to feel and act inferior to the whites, as well as fighting amongst each other without any real concept of where their frustration lies.

I thought that *Hidden Colors* was an eye opener and gave insight to the topics that black aspiring leaders and activists need to focus on and fight against. As a result, I am planning to re-watch the documentaries several times and dig deeper into these problematic biases. I would encourage everyone who has the opportunity to watch, learn, and make changes accordingly. This is an amazing documentary to which I would give two thumbs up. (Avé Thorpe)

***Beauty and the Beast*****Reviewed by Sukai Yarbo**

School was out for the holidays. I cooked, cleaned, and played with my son, and then he finally fell asleep. I went on Netflix to look for a new show to watch; after an episode of *Beauty and the Beast* I could not stop. This show kept me entertained night after night and became a great distraction from the cold winter nights.

A young New York doctor enlisted in the army after losing two of his brothers in the towers on 9/11. He hoped he would do better in the military and fight against terror. On top of this, he volunteered for an experiment that would turn him into a super soldier with supernatural powers.

The experiment went wrong after the super soldier experiment team became uncontrollable. The secret government organization that turned him into a mechanically charged beast decided to kill all the soldiers that took part in the experiment because they believed their humanity was gone.

Vincent Keller didn't die and ended up living in the tunnels and slums of New York City.

Catherine Chandler, a beautiful detective working with the NYPD, stumbles upon trails of Vincent's DNA during most of her cases. Vincent is a mysterious ex-soldier who was thought to be dead.

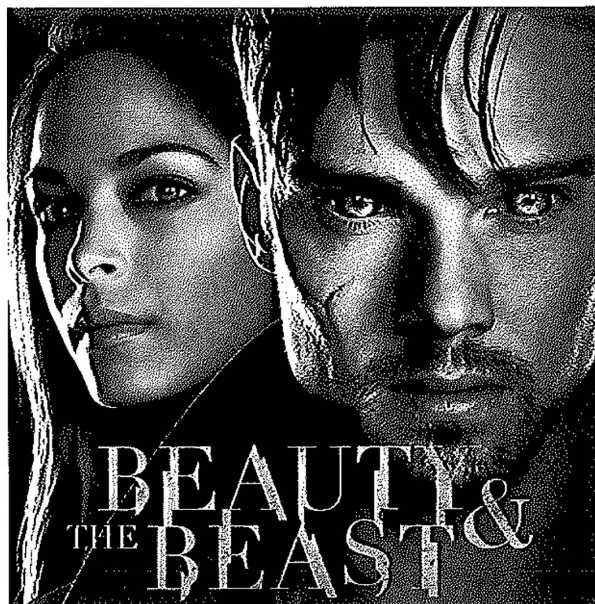
As the two get to know each other, Catherine discovers that Vincent knows about her mother's death and saved her life when she was 16 years old.

Catherine must help Vincent avoid capture by the dangerous company that was responsible for his supernatural transformation. Though his appearance is different, he has the heart of a man.

Catherine and Vincent fall in love as they get to know each other. Catherine longs for more, but Vincent is from a different world and they don't stand a chance of living a normal life. They usually meet on rooftops and below the city in forgotten tunnels. He and Catherine share a bond that is stronger than friendship or love. Somehow, they want to make their love work. Neither one of them knows how, but they are determined and refuse to give up. After all, love is stronger than anything else.

For Vincent, Catherine's world of the wealthy and the powerful is a world apart from his, but she captured his heart with her beauty, warmth and her courage. He knew now that she would change his life forever. He comes from a secret place, far below the city streets, hiding his face from strangers while safe from hate and harm. However, her compassion opened his heart to a world where goodness

and truth were stronger than hate and fear. Then Vincent Keller swore to fight those who would kill or harm or destroy in hopes that one day he would find what all men seek: his destiny.





## Flash Reaction to *Birth of a Nation*

By Anthony Jefferson

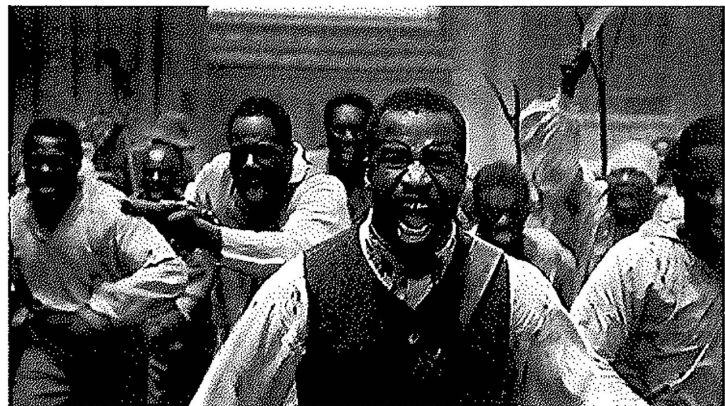
When I finished BoaN ("Birth of a Nation"), my blood boiled for several reasons: the harshness of the times in regards to slave life, the savage retaliation against Nat Turner for his actions, and, lastly, how Turner and his drove handled their insurrection. I felt a sort of cautious pride along with a guilt hesitation at what I had just taken in. Was this extreme really the only one worth going towards? Will I ever have to face a choice so dire and impactful on more lives than my own? The fact that this is history makes it all the more difficult to comprehend.

From my readings in Odyssey and other places, I'm no stranger to the oppression that slaves underwent. It doesn't, however, make a new depiction any softer on the senses. The physical brutality gave my stomach its share of knots, but the mental sabotage really shocked me. So often it seems like the whip was the absolute, but seeing how slave owners used family, the threat of isolation, and even rape as tools of torment opened my eyes to a deeper suffering. The bones could always mend to a degree, but the broken spirit isn't quite so quick to fix. Leave a man or woman with nothing but the fear of an early death, and you've got clay in your hands, something slave masters knew well.

Murder as a solution never seems proper or humane to me, no matter the transgression. As much as I felt some kind of revenge was warranted or deserved, Turner simply went too far in his attempted coup of plantation owners. With that said, the stone cold response by the government and lynch mobs may have been more unnecessary. Many innocent slaves

were themselves killed en masse regardless of affiliation with the rebellion. More than a few white murderers were hanged for their crimes before and after that blood-soaked revolt, but Nat Turner was flayed, beheaded, and quartered. Even in death they found ways to belittle his station and message, washing away the hope and strength of so many. The aftermath and seemingly futile goal make me wonder if any of it was necessary, and if so, what went wrong with the direction? Could Turner have been a predecessor to an MLK or Gandhi if he hadn't been pushed? We will never know, but a sad part of me wishes there had been a possibility. Sure, those who followed felt the fervor of freedom and resistance, but many who sought a quiet day without punishment faced harsher treatment or even death as a result. Would they wish for the same outcome?

All in all, I'm left wondering and worrying about history repeating itself. The presidential debate coupled with the rash of police shootings point to an atmosphere where someone feels the gun is the stronger weapon than the voice. The nobility of it all is lost in the backlash among enemies and peers. The pursuit of freedom brings out the fear in those opposed, forcing another's hand. It might be paranoia or it might be that feeling, like a change is on the wind. Time will tell if it's actually for the better.



# 

*Odyssey students past and present have been invited to share their writings on loss as part of services at the First Unitarian Society in March. Collections from two March weekends at FUS will benefit the UW Odyssey Project. The first four readings have been selected for FUS services. Following that are additional poems from the Class of 2017 speaking powerfully on loss.*



## 

**By Jelissa Edwards '16**

I am at home, yet for the first time in a long time this house does not feel like a home,  
But more like a cold place with no heat.

Prejudices and racial disparities have become the driving force within my house's living room.

False generalizations and forced policies have caused the foundation of my house to weaken and split directly down the middle.

Distant friends who once felt safe and sought refuge within the protection of these walls are targeted and stripped of their safe havens, jobs, stability, families, and all.

In this house, those that speak of democracy confuse us with so many dialects of hypocrisy.

Poverty, suicide, opioid abuse, murder, unemployment, and the dwindling economy are the reasons for the tears in my eyes.

For so many, hope is lost, lives are lost, and freedom is lost.

I am paralyzed within this house, suffering from broken-spirited inferiority and misguided direction.

How could this house crumble after one election?



## 

**By Marisol Gonzalez '17**

When I was in my country, I remember running on the dusty streets.

I remember getting on the bus, metro, car, or taxi  
with my friends or family all around the big city.

I remember going places with just a little money and feeling the world was mine.

I lost my freedom when I took the first step on US land.

I lost my voice, they told me to be quiet.

I lost my country, they told me to not look back.

I lost my body, they told me to become invisible for *la migra*.

I lost my family, I can't go back to visit them.

I lost my language, they told me to only speak English.

I lost my friends, they don't have the technology to stay in contact.

I lost my culture, they tell me to act North American.

I lost my identity because in this country they don't accept you if you are different.

I gained some dollars but I lost my freedom.



**My Lost Innocence**  
**By Char Braxton '06**

The heat of the sun transparent and hot through the patio glass  
 Smells of strong, rich, well-bodied coffee swirled in the air  
 Conversation was alluring and exciting for a girl trapped in the past  
 Numbness and speechlessness consumed her innocent caramel virgin skin  
 Frightened, shocked, invisible, and hurt with frozen tears  
 My step-dad

The cries for help went unheard and faded into the cracks of the gray, moist basement walls

Life is not what it appears to be  
 The percolating of coffee and disbursement of cream  
 Her loss of innocence shattered her dreams  
 But she looked to GOD for guidance, wisdom, and forgiveness  
 Tackling dignity, shame, and survival  
 Shouting: take these chains off me!  
 Now she's consuming a priceless cup of coffee  
 Living guilt-free



**Fatherless Fifteen: A Sonnet**  
**By Mai Neng Thao '16**

In a neglected house he has been crowned  
 Fifteen decayed heartbeats descending down  
 And not one's invited to his embrace  
 His love is cheap and a shameful disgrace

Across the sea he ships his finest love

Leaving fifteen souls sadly empty of . . .  
 Softly they wait and yearn to rid the burn  
 For one they know has long shifted and turned

The caress of his voice is high prestige  
 Fifteen pairs of bleak eyes will never see  
 Fifteen lonely minds stare wondering why  
 They can't get close enough to feel the tie  
 Of a bond so powerful from their sire  
 Who deprives them of the love they most desire



## MORE POEMS OF LOSS FROM THE CLASS OF 2017



### If I Would Have Known

By Felica Thomas

*The loss that I experienced was that of my beloved son, Zaire Corvell, on March 7, 2016. This loss was that of a disheartening one. Zaire was my last child, and he was my heart. He closed the seal on the container of life that I thought I was going to peacefully live out. Life, loss, and love have their own way of making you what you are.*

If I would have known that I was on borrowed time  
 From day one I would have begged to make you permanently mine  
 I birthed you from my womb never to understand the grief that I consume  
 From headaches to heartache, it's so much harder to catch a break  
 I laugh in honor of you and I cry in memory of you  
 I often struggle to breathe; there isn't enough air to fill my lungs  
 You were sinless and my love my dear child will be endless.  
 Until you're wrapped in my arms again; I don't know what I am to do.  
 All I know is day in and day out I struggle at the thought of losing you.

My love, my heart, and my handsome, when will it all end?  
 I struggle to live, I struggle to breathe, I struggle to move and I struggle to cry.  
 I just want to sit and wallow until all my days left just pass me by.  
 My Zai Zai, my Corvell, you've twisted my heart if you can't tell.  
 I must live a life of heart ache and pain all the while I know I will never be the same.  
 My love for you runs deep within.  
 Know that I carry you and think of you every second of my day.  
 My love, why'd you have to go? I wish you could tell me so.



### Loss

By Kyisha Williams

The loss of a loved one causes so much pain.  
 The loss of a loved one will have you going insane.  
 The loss of a loved one is not a game.  
 The loss of a loved one will have you mentally drained.  
 The loss of a loved one will have you yelling and screaming wondering if you're  
 dreaming.

Feeling empty and lost wanting them back no matter the cost.  
 Once your loved one is gone you can no longer pick up the phone.  
 Once your loved one is gone this place no longer feels like home.  
 It's like you don't want to be left alone.  
 Now I'm down on my knees begging God please to bring my loved one back to me.



## Loss

By Ngina Ali

Loss is a word with so many different meanings

Loss is not being able to find my feelings for my best friend, my child, my deserved wages, and my sense of well being

Loss means getting through life without losing my mind, my courage, my resilience

Loss is having to accept that my dreams for my son have changed as he was caught up in stuff that was not in his control

My grandmother who raised me is gone and this was a loss to me, but I hear her voice and I feel her when I need to. Though her death makes me sad when I can't hug her, my hurt in my heart can be filled with her love for me

My love of my life, my best friend, failed in a certain way in our relationship, he caused injury, but I won't consider it a loss. I won't be defeated, because we still need each other

Loss to some is squandering time, money, and life

Loss is not a word I use when I think of my life or my future.

Loss can mean something or someone is absent but loss is not defeat.

Loss is part of change and change happens all the time and we must learn to find the meaning of why things change.

We must think of loss as change in our life that we must adjust to and not accept what our loss appears to people on the outside.

We must turn our loss around to benefit ourselves, our family, and our friends. We must turn misfortune into a good situation.



## Lost in Thought

By Nathaniel Lake

It starts off simple enough  
with a field of sunny daisies  
it's been just a moment  
But already I feel it waning

The simplest notion

thoughts are far from self- containing

Like a drop of water

Shifting

I already feel displacement

It's not that I haven't been here before

It's just odd to me

an Odyssey

An oxymoron

Is what it ought to be

Lost at sea

I thought I'd be

Took a breath and found clarity

Lost with me

An epiphany and Rapture

Without a wink of sleep

abstract as empty sea

Lost is where I found me

Lost in thought 🤔

She Resonates Within  
By Spencer Gamble

*Preface: My Great-Aunt Evelyn was an integral part of my life. She watched me when I was a baby, taught me about God and the Bible, and shared stories of her upbringing in Chicago. I had the privilege of living with her during her last two years on this Earth. We had long talks, watched television together, and I prepared meals for her. What I gained from knowing her outweighs the loss by far....*



**ARRAY OF LIFE EXPERIENCES**

**Stories of Old Chicago**

**Faith transcending**

**Bestowed greatness**

**Intoxicating laughter**

**Undeniable wit**

**Old wives tales**

**Bittersweet memories**

She effortlessly provided me...

**She often relayed her devotion; in words**

**Gain: the strength he gave Sampson**

*Develop: the patience he gave Job*

**Acquire: the wisdom he gave Solomon**

**Retain: the meekness he gave Moses**

Ask...and he will answer

Live for today...'cause we sure ain't promised tomorrow

**TAKE YOUR BURDENS TO THE LORD...AND LEAVE 'EM THERE**

*Don't let the right hand know what the left hand is doing*

**Unforgettable**

Light that never goes out

**May the Lord watch between you and thee while we are absent**

**one from the other...**

*Opened my eyes*

**Gone home**

**Resting with the angels**

**Bless her heart**

**Loved me deeply**

***Within me she resonates.. She resonates within***

Dedicated to the loving memory of  
Evelyn Ruth Crump  
(1932-2015)



# ON STAGE

## *Jersey Boys*

By Cherri Sorrells

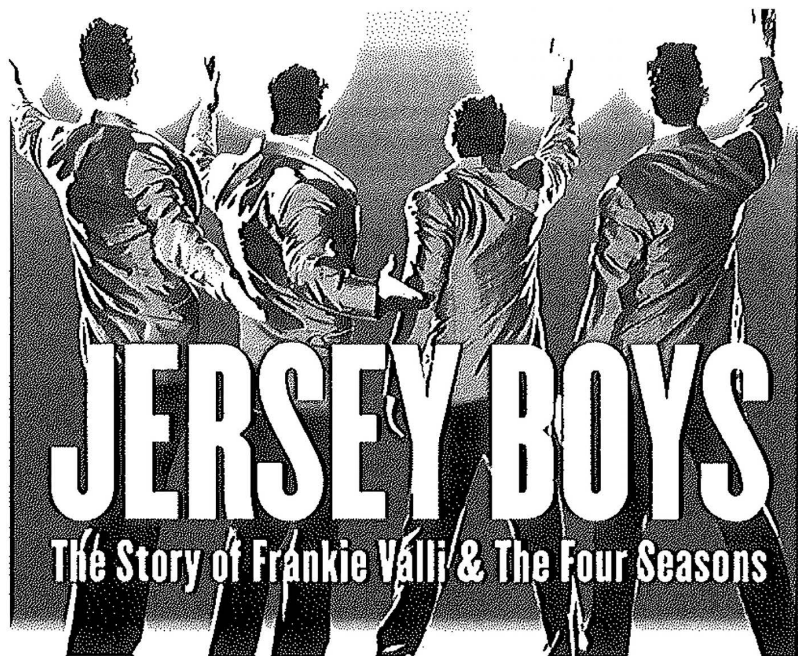
Who says that big girls don't cry? The award-winning musical titled *Jersey Boys* made me do just that. This musical is based off Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons' rise to fame and subsequent fall. A lively performance with more set and costume changes than I could count reeled me in and didn't let go until the stage lights went down.

The play begins with dialogue from a group member's (Tommy DeVito) point of view. Our story

begins in the early 1950s in New Jersey at a time when criminal records were almost like a fashion accessory. Several members of the group, especially Tommy, were jailed throughout the storyline at one point or another. Bassist Nick Massi left the group several times due to incarceration. The group, originally known as "The Four Lovers" among a variety of other names, released several songs that received virtually no sales or airplay. Due to lack of success and funds, the group members continued to work day jobs to earn money. Teenage Frankie worked by day in a barbershop while joining the group to perform in clubs and lounges throughout New Jersey by night. Soon the co-writer of the summer hit "Short Shorts," Bob Gaudio, was introduced by a young Joe Pesci (yes, that Joe Pesci) and attempted to revamp the group's writing and singing style.

After many failed and rejected label auditions, the group set out to audition at yet another cocktail lounge. After being turned away, the dejected group saw a lit bowling alley sign titled "The Four Seasons." and thus the group's name was born. This proved to be a turning point for the group. Eventually the Four Seasons were signed as artists to a label managed by Bob Crewe. Frustrated with strictly singing backup for several years, the Four Seasons finally recorded and released their own single. The single did not chart. In the early 1960s, while preparing for a recording session, Gaudio churned out the hit single "Sherry."

I was amazed at how the actor who played Franki Valli could sing the falsetto notes with ease. He was also very short and squeaky, which I imagined a young Frankie to be. Not only was this the first single to chart, it also became the group's first number one song. Over the next few years the group would release back-to-back number one singles. Record sales were off the charts with the Beach Boys being the only band to come close to matching sales. In 1962, the

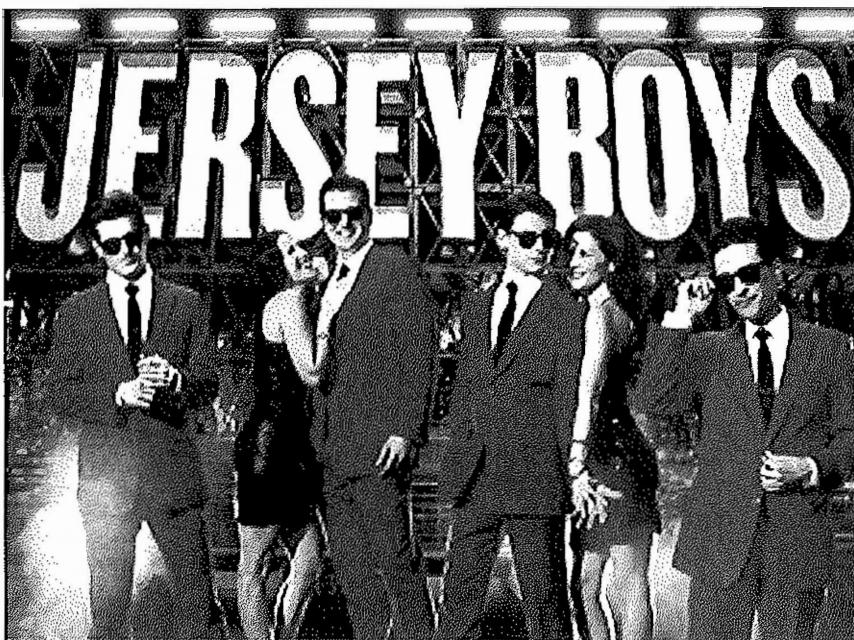


band performed their hit “Big Girls Don’t Cry” on the television show *American Bandstand*. An authentic 1960s camera recorded the actors performing on the show, which showed on a screen behind the stage. I really loved the authenticity of that scene along with the bright beaming television set bulbs.

The group continued to see commercial success even after “Beatlemania” took over the United States. The special effects, costumes, and backdrop changes really sold the time period changes throughout the decades. Countless singles were released throughout the 1960s. Frankie even recorded solo songs on the side, which led to the side partnership between Valli and Gaudio. Frankie agreed to evenly split earnings from solo music records in exchange for an even split of money made from any music Bob wrote for other groups. This caused a huge rift between the remaining two members of the Four Seasons, but shockingly did not cause the group to split. The group saw a decline in the 1970s until the hit single “December, 1963 (Oh, what a Night)” became the group’s fifth number one single, just as disco music took over the music scene.

While the group was basking in their revived success, Tommy DeVito was busy going into heavy debt with the Italian Mob. He accrued enormous gambling debts in addition to a huge tax bill that went unpaid. The group is visited backstage by members of the mob and loan sharks threatening Tommy’s life if the debt is not repaid. Frankie makes the noble decision that the group will assume and repay all of Tommy’s debt in exchange for buying Tommy out of the group. Soon after, Frankie lost his youngest daughter, Francine, due to a drug overdose. The lead character somberly croons the solo hit “My Eyes Adored You” as the actress fades from the stage for the remainder of the show.

As the play wrapped up with a final showbiz style sing along with the audience of the single “December 1963,” the audience roared with a standing ovation, which included myself. I



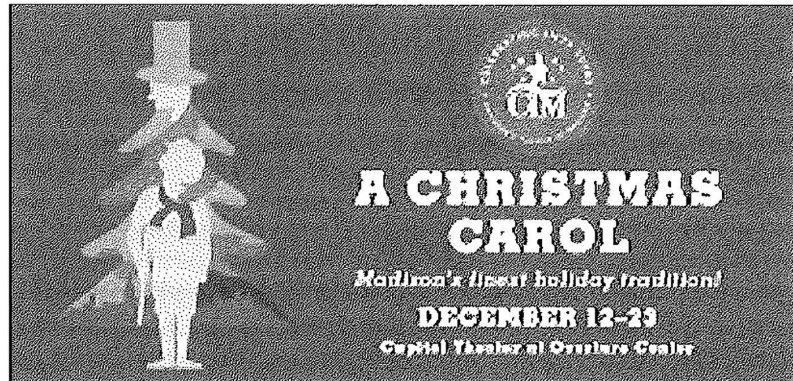
laughed at the witty Jersey banter between the characters, cried at the many losses experienced, and enjoyed learning bits and pieces of backstory about the group members and their families. Although I have seen the film adaption, it doesn’t come close to the excitement the stage performers offer. If this play ever returns to Broadway in the future, I would absolutely see it again.

## A Christmas Carol

By Carissa Love

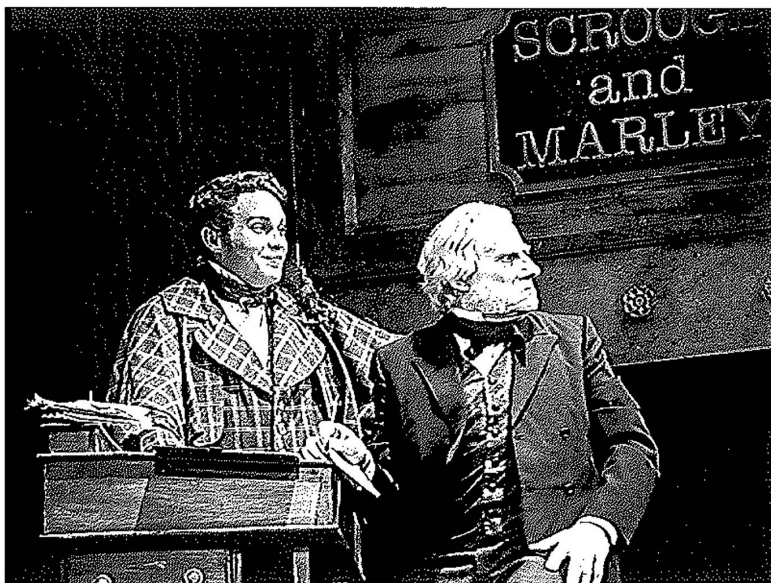
On December 16, 2016 at 7:00 pm, my best friend and I attended the play *A Christmas Carol* at the Overture Center. The weeks prior to the show, I was at work checking my email and found a promotion code to get

discounts on tickets to the show. On the spur of the moment, I bought two tickets for balcony seats. I told my best friend I booked us seats. We were so happy and excited to go. At the same time, we were reading Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in class. This was just too ironic—I had to go to the play.



On the night of the play there was a snowstorm; snow was falling quick and fast and the roads were not good. We plowed and trampled through the snow. We arrived quite early, so we explored the art gallery and the Overture Center itself. We went in the waiting area, made Christmas cards, took an old-fashioned photo with Mr. Christmas, and sat around and drank hot chocolate. We sat in huge purple velvet chairs and waited until we could be seated. Twenty minutes went by before they released the rope so we could climb a huge, beautiful ballroom staircase with double-sided stairs. As we approached the top, we had to figure out where and what side our seats were on. I asked an usher to help seat us. Our seats were in the first row on the balcony; they were great seats and you could see the whole stage.

I loved the play—it brought tears of joy and happiness. I had never been to a play. The show was put on by the Madison's Children's Theatre. It was just like the story and the parts of the book that we acted out in class. It was the exact same story live. The actors and actresses



played it so well; it was a play to remember. It lasted two hours with a 15-minute intermission. The show was sold out. The oldest actor was 75 years old and played Ebenezer Scrooge, while the youngest actor was 6 years old and played Tiny Tim. This was a must-see play and was a wonderful and great experience. I would love to see it again next year. It was a great way to start off the holiday spirit and get in the mood for Christmas.



# ALUMNI CORNER

## TOSUMBA WELCH '13 STARS IN "THE WHIPPING MAN" WITH MADISON THEATER GUILD

*(review from isthmus, by Gwendolyn Rice)*

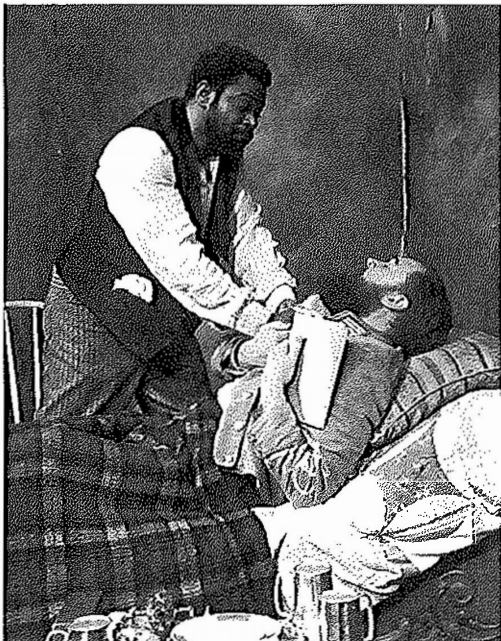
The Whipping Man never appears onstage, but the presence of the man — who dealt out brutal beatings to disobedient slaves — is felt keenly by each of the three characters in the Civil War-era drama of the same name.

The Madison Theatre Guild production, which runs at the Bartell Theatre through March 18, takes place on the DeLeon estate in 1865 in Richmond, Virginia. Though the play begins several days after the Confederate Army surrendered at Appomattox, the legacy of slavery cannot be thrown off as simply as changing into new clothes. But that is one way that the newly freed John (Jalen Thomas) marks his emancipation — by stealing clothing, whiskey, silver, books and anything that's not nailed down from the crumbling shells of once-grand homes.



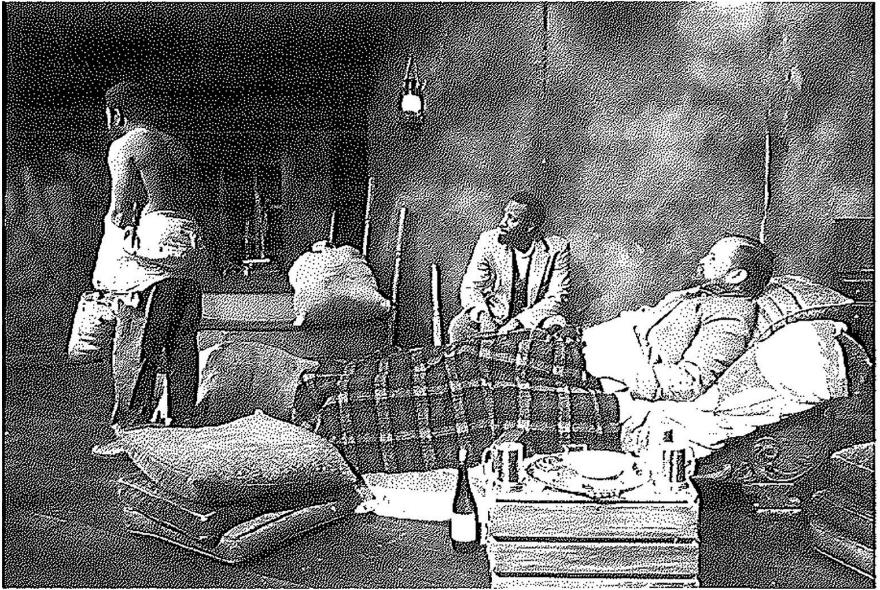
John and another former slave, the older and more practical Simon (Tosumba Welch), have been sent to the ruins of the family estate to wait for the return of Caleb (Whitney Derendinger), the son of their former master. Caleb served as a Confederate officer for the

past four years, most recently in the trenches at Petersburg. Caleb stumbles home with a bullet wound in his leg that is rapidly turning gangrenous, so Simon and John are charged with caring for and protecting him until the rest of the family returns.



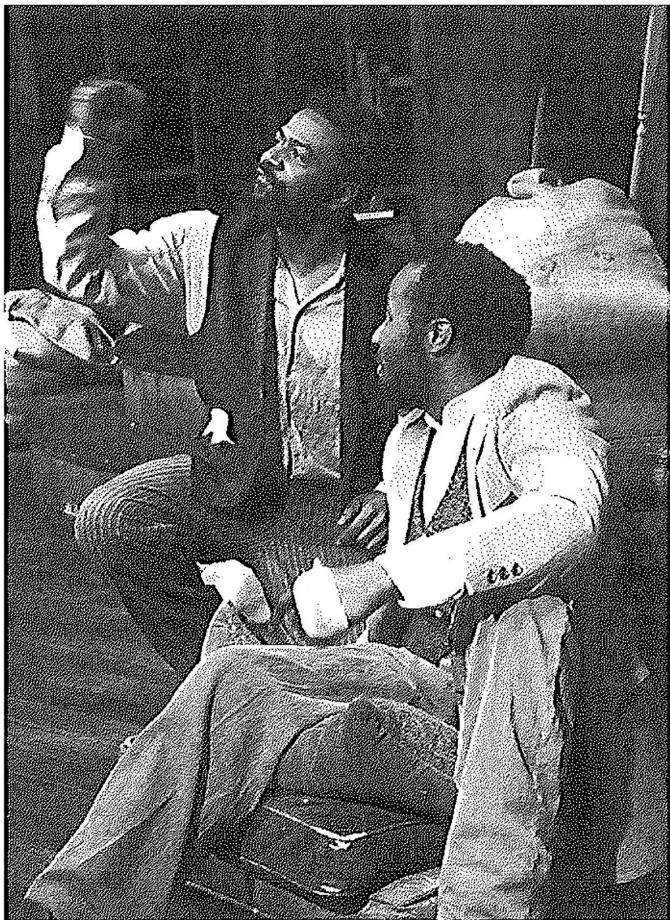
Matthew Lopez's play presents Caleb and his former slaves as Jews, reunited on the eve of Passover. (There were, in fact, roughly 10,000 Jewish soldiers on both sides of the conflict, and it was not unusual for slave owners to impose their religion on those they enslaved.) The holiday commemorates the deliverance of Jews from slavery in Egypt and their freedom as a nation under Moses. Dramatically, the parallels are irresistible.

As Caleb, Derendinger mines the emotional side of a wounded, heartbroken soldier who has seen too much suffering; his world weariness doesn't always square with his wide-eyed naiveté as he's forced to confront the brutality the slaves have suffered at the hands of his own family.



As John, Thomas captures a sense of rage that can no longer be contained. He lashes out in every direction, looking for revenge in large and small ways. But his rage has terrifying consequences.

However, the core of this play belongs to Welch as Simon. The actor exudes the humanity, faith and empathy that are the bedrock of this even-tempered, former house slave. His wise counsel to his young and reckless friend and his self-absorbed former owner is both practical



and demanding; he urges forgiveness and compassion while holding them to a higher standard. As he conducts the Passover service and sings the spiritual "Go Down Moses," Welch's warm, strong voice fills the theater, and the arresting power of his faith radiates through the audience. It is even more devastating, then, when Simon responds to a betrayal by his two companions, a scene Welch delivers with piercing disdain.

Director Dana Pellebon does a commendable job weaving these voices together as the three men face a new reality at the end of the Civil War. Although *The Whipping Man* sometimes leans heavily on philosophy, the struggles of these characters are palpable and relevant as this country continues to define the relationships of its people: white and black, powerful and disenfranchised, faithful and disillusioned, free and captive.

# BECOMING A METAPHOR

I am a caterpillar quiet as  
can be.

Ready to hide away so I  
can fly like a bee.

Once I come out of my  
cocoon I am me,

A wild butterfly  
beginning my odyssey.

**(D'onna Atkinson)**



and I say everything is going to be okay.

I am a tree that changes constantly,  
and adapts to whatever new chapter in  
life.

I am a tree that even in the adversity of  
life stays strong.

I may cry but I don't fall down.

I am a useful and beautiful tree that God

puts in the earth

to be used for good and to do the best  
to reach the happiness that all trees deserve.

**(Marisol Gonzalez)**



I am a butterfly

I go around touching  
people's hearts

I see all people as  
flowers

All my friends are as  
natural and beautiful  
as nature

I am a vibrant  
butterfly.

**(Ahmad Nahas)**

I am a tree whose roots grow deep in the hearts of  
my three children.

I grow when they grow, I smile and bark when I  
have to protect them.

I am a mother with a crown whose limbs are  
wrapped around my three leaves.

A trunk who tries to protect my leaves from the  
blowing darkness that tries

To grab my leaves from my limbs while I carry  
them in the wind.

**(Ngina Ali)**

I am a tree born from a mother, the mother earth  
that gives love, food, and life.

I am a tree born weak and fragile, but life and time  
make me big and strong.

I am a tree that gets nutrients from its mother and  
from the environment,

and one day will grow and  
give life to others.

I am a tree that hopes to  
grow to reach the sky,  
that hopes to grow to reach  
my goals.

I am a tree that makes  
space in the branches  
and deep inside the trunk  
for loved ones and friends.

I am a tree that offers shade  
and a trunk for others to  
rest,

I am hidden roots,

The roots of a great oak tree

Hidden in the dirt

Providing life and nutrients

To the towering beast hanging  
overhead.

Without me, the beast is slain.

Fallen over, rotting,

I am its roots, I hide

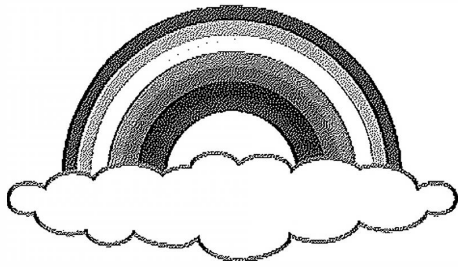
And provide so it may flourish.

All you see is the tree,

But without me

It's just a branch. **(Maria Dary)**



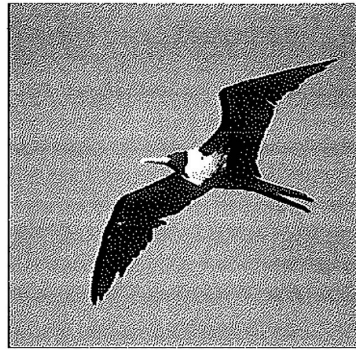


I am a rainbow vibrant with promise.  
I am a rose of sweet scent and painful thorns.  
I am love now and eternal.  
I am pain – honest with burning emotion.  
**(Alyanna Cooper)**

I am a rainbow.  
Rare to the eye to see.  
Full of color.  
Some may be brighter than others.  
But the colors make me -- me.  
The storm isn't easy.  
Some may be more devastating than others.  
But you may not know about storms.  
The beautiful sight is a relief.  
The more painful storms  
create beautiful rainbows.  
**(Jessica Tucker)**

I am solitary, the hermit  
hidden.  
This room is my haven,  
serene and judgement free.  
Objects scattered as if by a  
mighty gust of wind.  
Plain as a bagel, but definitely my flavor.  
These walls listen to my cry, a bodiless ear at the  
ready.  
This room is my vehicle, and in it my mind travels to  
space and back.**(Anthony Jefferson)**

I am a...rest in music, only quiet for a moment.  
I am as inquisitive as an otter, hungrier than a  
vulture.  
Like sugar sweet, but I will end you like diabetes.  
Given the right motivation, I am more annoying than  
a mosquito. **(Nathaniel Lake)**



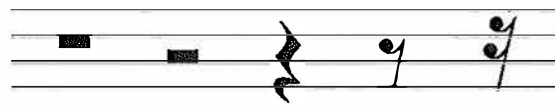
I am a bird.  
Who soars freely.  
I used to be a bird that had  
broken wings  
But now I am a bird whose  
wings soar  
as big as an eagle.  
**(Simone Bell-Perdue)**

I am a baby duck.  
I have always felt little  
but courageous.  
The urge to dive into  
the water fearless  
without my mother.  
My wings are small,  
but my heart is large.  
I feel the need to lead  
the pack with my small  
quack.  
Earning laughs by my  
bigger siblings that I  
can't hear.



Their taunts don't hold me back.  
I'm still yearning for the day I spread my  
wings  
and fly away without faltering.  
But until that day I'll need my mother  
duck .  
I am a baby duck. **(Maria Dary)**

I am a bull  
I trample my opposition  
I'm stubborn  
I hold a strong opinion  
I pierce through injustice  
to help make it right  
I can be still and content  
I can be wild if provoked.  
**(Spencer Gamble)**



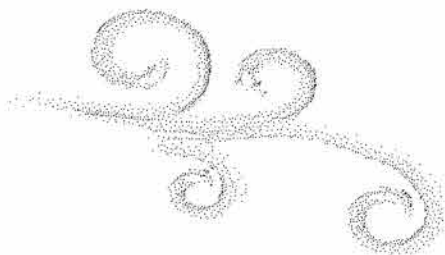




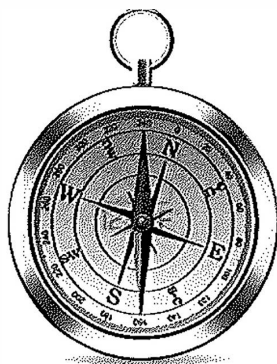
I am a who.  
I am who I am  
And who I am  
Is who I'll be.  
(Alyanna Cooper)

I am Spencer Lamar.  
I am the wind...  
I have a sweeping personality

that will blow you away,  
Though currently I lie listless evading all  
interaction.  
I'm a true survivor and I continuously remind  
myself that this shall pass...  
I came in like a wrecking ball, prepared to demolish  
any oppressing opposition.  
Much like a gladiator in the arena, ready to slay  
and cast out internal demons,  
Or a raging bull, ready to strike and trample  
obstacles in my way.  
(Spencer Gamble)



I am a compass because I teach my kids good  
values and morals.  
I give my advice to my kids to support their feelings  
and emotions.  
I teach my kids to help  
someone in need and be  
kind.  
I show my kids things that  
they would like to learn.  
I am a compass because I  
teach my kids  
the right direction for the  
future. (José Mendoza)



I am a tiger, fearless and free  
I gather myself but wander aimlessly  
Trying to find my way through the wild  
Wishing I could move upright and tight  
(Felica Thomas)



I am a trained animal,  
Eager to be free  
And not worry about who God is.  
(Johnnie Walton)

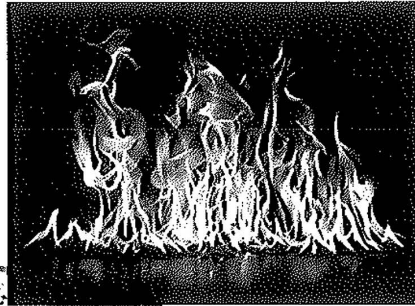
I am a bell.  
I ring loud and clear.  
I state my views proudly.  
I have nothing to fear.  
(Joy Bally)



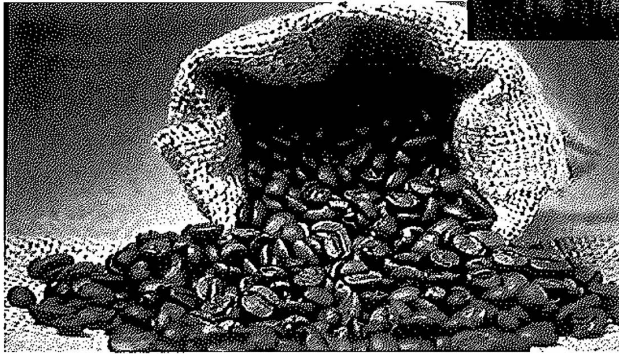
I used to be a dark alley in  
Chicago's most troubled  
neighborhood,  
But now I am that rose that grew from a crack.  
I am that brilliant smile that reaches ear to ear on a  
small child.  
I am hope for the hopeless.  
I'm the pot of gold that every  
rainbow holds.  
I'm the generation that will  
no longer wait around to be  
told no.  
I used to be a dark alley in  
Chicago's most troubled  
neighborhood,  
But now I am that rose that  
grew from a crack.  
(Shanon Holmes)



I am a fire hot and hard to put out.  
You can spray water but I will  
continue to brew.  
Fill me with your wind, and my  
rage grows stronger.  
(Felica Thomas)



I am both the mom and the dad too.  
I switch gears to fit the needs that  
arise.  
Sometimes I wonder how I do it  
But it gets done somehow.  
To my little boy I move mountains  
And every role he needs lies within  
my reach.

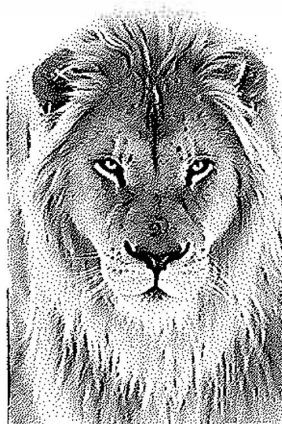


That belief somehow gets  
it all done. . . .  
(Sukai Yarbo)



I am the most expensive  
Drip coffee compacted  
Into the black experience  
Made from concentrate  
Be sure to dilute before  
Ingesting. (Nathaniel Lake)

I am a lion with my struggling.  
I am a lamb with my dreams.  
I am my mom's heart. (Ahmad  
Nahas)



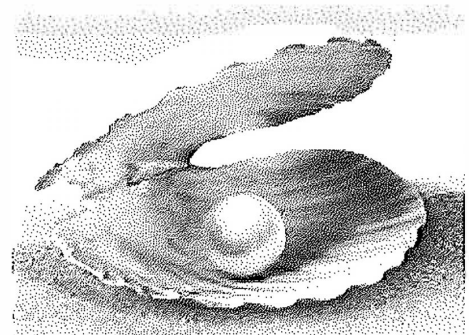
I am a saxophone  
Hard to play  
But nice and smooth  
Full of different notes  
That make a beautiful  
song (José Mendoza)



I am a  
dandelion,  
One who grows and always  
comes back.  
I will always show vigor,  
And I will remain solid  
from these constant attacks.  
(D'onna Atkinson)

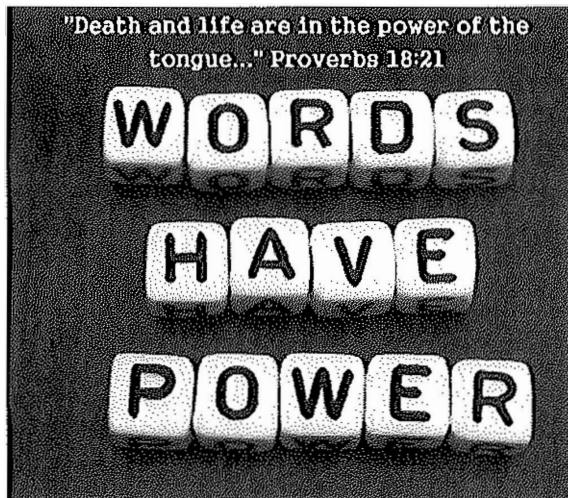
I am a unique and beautiful pearl.  
Pearls can be found hidden inside a shell.  
As any other human being, I have a treasure inside  
me.  
I am a person with a shell that has to be broken to  
find my feelings.  
A pearl is formed out of dirt and pressure over time.  
As we came from dirt, so dirt I will become at the  
end of my days. (Grisel Tapia Claudio)

I am an empty pitcher,  
My purpose clear, my contents a  
mystery.  
Once filled I'll know what I can  
handle.  
Until then I will hesitate to exceed  
my capacity. (Anthony Jefferson)



# PACKED WITH A PUNCH: MORE SEVEN-WORD POEMS

*"I wish the rent / were heaven sent" —Langston Hughes*



Spring, beautiful spring, I'm waiting for you. (José Mendoza)

When freedom rings, I'll praise and sing. (Cherri Sorrells)

Sometimes the skies tell lies before sunrise. (Avé Thorpe)

Life is like chasing an aimless car. (Ngina Ali)

Dear Chicago, let the kids be kids. (Shanon Holmes)

Having money is as sweet as honey. (Ahmad Nahas)

Quality time spent with family remains priceless. (Asha Green)

They flew towards a brighter blue sky. (Maria Dary)

If Heaven would have sent you from above. (Lawana Diagne)

If only I could see my future. (Kyisha Williams)

I love you but you hate me. (Simone Bell-Perdue)

Rent isn't free while completing a degree. (D'onna Atkinson)

Smile more: it keeps you looking young. (Kendra Atkinson)

I told you I have moved on. (Alyanna Cooper)

Never let a bad deed go unpunished. (Felica Thomas)

Chocolate's my addiction but also my salvation. (Susana Gomez)

My passion's to serve those in need. (Musab Naji)

Deeper and longer I held my breath. (Joy Bally)

I wish writing were just like cooking. (Sukai Yarbo)

I feel accomplished by making patients smile. (Belem Calixto)

Dying to outgrow my old habits. (Nathaniel Lake)

Ignore me today, you'll need me tomorrow. (Marisol Gonzalez)

It's dark; pajamas on means family joy. (Grisel Tapio Claudio)

Encouraged to pass my class with class. (Jessica Tucker)

Power, Peace, Stress, Success all in one. (Victoria Patterson)

Take a chance and you will see. (Spencer Gamble)

You have never heard these seven words. (Johnnie Walton)

# LOVING LANGSTON HUGHES

## *"Dreams"*

*Hold fast to dreams,  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly. . . .*

In the poem "Dreams," Langston Hughes speaks of the harm of a broken dream. He uses a bird to show how if injured or forgotten, dreams don't take off or come true. A barren field is used to show how boring and lifeless you can become without a dream. Dreams give us meaning. Like cars storming down a track, losing a dream is like realizing no one was timing the race or keeping track of the winner at the end.

For me, my dreams constantly change like the seasons. I feel like with age, your dreams should always change because your experience changes who you are and who you become. When I was younger, I dreamed of being a police officer. As I got older, I spent time in the kitchen and decided I wanted to be a chef. And then one day in my

senior year, I decided to take an art class, ceramics, and discovered my love of art. It changed me completely. It slowed me internally to achieve peace in a way I had never felt. Dreams change and morph into what we need at the time. (Maria Dary)

I really enjoyed the poem "Dreams." Dreaming is a good thing, and Langston Hughes doesn't want us to forget that. When we stop dreaming, we start to feel stuck in one place. When we don't follow our dreams, we never will know how our dream would have impacted our lives. Langston Hughes says if dreams die, life is like a broken-winged bird that cannot fly. He means we will never know what it's like to spread our wings and fly if we give up.

In my life, I can relate because I have a dream, and I won't know what my life is to become if I don't follow through with my dream. My dream may seem impossible to others, but it will never be impossible to me. (Simone Bell-Perdue)





*"The Negro Mother"*

*Children, I come back today  
To tell you a story of the long dark way  
That I had to climb, that I had to know  
In order that the race might live and grow . . .*

This poem is about the slaves' fight to make life better for their children. It is a mother trying to remind current and future African Americans that they were stolen from their land, brutalized by their owners, and now have a chance to move forward. The mother reminds their children they must work to be equals to the evil owners who beat and raped their relatives.

This poem is about staying positive. It is about looking up at the sun and stars. But we must not forget all those who mistreated us—the authorities who still hold our children down. We must push back against all those powerful white men who considered us their property—police, teachers, bosses. This is about me teaching my children to never forget where we came from but also make sure we educate our children to become the equals of the bosses. (Ngina Ali)

I believe this poem is speaking to the next generation, basically saying things will get better if you continue to fight for what's right. I like how Hughes uses each stage of a woman's life to show how deep black history really is.

I read this poem four times, and each time I got a different vibe. The one that stood out the most was that I feel like in a way my mom's alcoholism is a way of showing me no matter what life gives you, there is always a way to learn and grow from it. This poem makes me think about growing up in low-income housing and the struggle we face. I

believe if each generation keeps working hard for the next generation to come, the world could be a better place for all races. (Shanon Holmes)

*"My People"*

*The night is beautiful,  
So the faces of my people.*

*The stars are beautiful,  
So the eyes of my people.*

*Beautiful, also, is the sun,  
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.*

The poem that I chose to write about is "My People" by Langston Hughes. The way Langston uses the night, the stars, and the sun to describe the beauty of a person is what captured me from the beginning. I think this poem means that a person is always going to be just as beautiful as any object you might admire. Nothing is more valuable than a person.

The way I see people today is like they are me and that we are products of the universe. After reading this poem, I believe that we have an obligation to one another. The obligation we have is to see the beauty and value in each other. (Johnnie Walton)

