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# **A Devised Ethnodrama: *Conscious Voices***

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Liberal Studies*

*by*

*Sonia M. Pasqual*

*April 2021*

*Mentor: Dr. Marianne DiQuattro  
Reader: Dr. Jana Mathews*

*Rollins College  
Hamilton Holt School  
Master of Liberal Studies Program*

*Winter Park, Florida*

# **A Devised Ethnodrama: *Conscious Voices***

By  
Sonia M. Pasqual  
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**Project Approved:**

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**Mentor**

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## Abstract

Using techniques of storytelling, dance, poems, and monologues in the process of re-enacting life stories, the ensemble display issues that may be impeding society's growth—discrimination against body image, blackness, females, and LGBTQ individuals. In addition, engagement in storytelling and performance can help the audience increase their cognitive skills, empathy, and ability to live a communal life. This evidence-based practice can transform lives and society. It has the potential of continuing to other faculties and with other departments, such as film, musical, and additional narratives. This specific work could be extended out beyond art and education into populations of any communities in need of finding equitable inclusivity and further its maximum potential. This work seeks to help these people identify barriers for further growth by using theatre techniques such as sharing and scripting their life stories. Using real-life stories written by people who have suffered discrimination, a devised ethnodrama *Conscious Voices* seeks to identify the systematic challenges these people face on a daily basis, that in most cases, are the root-causes of their stress, depression, pain, or disconnection from their environment. Applying the concepts of community, social justice, and equality as a lens, this work will attempt to corroborate, as a universal postulate, that the process of sharing life stories can have transformative effects on the sharing individuals and that theatre techniques, such as conversational topics and scripting, can help identify our weaknesses to create an equitable, inclusive, diverse America. Essential to the transformative component of this work is the devising process of theatre as a mechanism of renewal and support. What social justice devised theatre may offer are the *tent posts* that uphold the tent of society's well-being, and henceforth humanity.

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## I. Introduction

This thesis aims to describe a devised ethnography (ethnodrama) on narratives of people who share voices; they have all experienced rejection, oppression, or a secret within our society. The purpose of devising this project is to inspire urgency for inclusion and include awareness for more representation in literary narratives—such as a new theatrical play. Awareness of inclusion, diversity, and equity, and belonging for many unheard and unknown Voices. The year 2020 motivated premises of demanding change seen in the media; our world stage heard voices call for equity and justice. People around the world protested for inclusion and equity for people of color and indigenous peoples. Equity-minded practices include diverse authors, inventors, linguists, art, writers, and overall representation for all. While the history of arts/sciences demonstrate that they have been populated by a great diversity of people, representation in literature and art has been predominantly of Eurocentric experiences. For example, 79 percent of Tony award-winning actresses with leading roles in a musical in the last fifty-seven years were white, with the most recent woman of color in winning 2016. 60 percent of Pulitzer-winning playwright's winners over 1962 to 2020 were white.

As a professional stage designer for the last twenty-years, I have worked on numerous productions with design teams in theme parks, live shows, dance, and corporate events. However, I have counted on one hand representation in live show and film venues for black, indigenous and person of color (BIPOC) communities. Interestingly, after undergrad in New York City, I worked with a black contemporary modern dance group with impassioned performances depicting the struggles of black people in society that still exists today, twenty years later.

The challenges of living in America while black have always existed. The year 2020 was the pinnacle for equity—the call to end violent racial discriminations catalyzed by the death of George Floyd. To this day, I am the only black female lighting designer that I know. I have never worked with another. I have worked in New York: Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan. I mention this because they offer different qualities of experience, but I have also worked in Washington, Oregon, California, and Florida. In 2016, I entered the Masters of Liberal Studies program seeking to learn more about the philosophy, art, and sciences as a life-long learner. The MLS introduced me to an unforgettable philosopher—Plato and his *allegory of the cave*. The MLS masterworks courses—Chekov, the Bloody Elizabethan England, and Lillian Hellman and Arthur Miller on Hysteria—broadened my design process of methods and conceptualizations. Nonetheless, these courses and the writers’ techniques—their background influences—showed how the media, politics, religion, injustices, and/or human conditions impact framing the play. Similarly, I chose to create a new play; I have designed and worked on several new plays over my profession. However, devise and experimental theatre allow raw material to manifest in a performance under the guidance of intent and a theme—a message with a particular focus. It took a year of research; however, the information collected proved the importance of revealing discriminated voices and the need for more representation of diverse narratives in writing.

The resolution to the devised ethnodrama dives into to a philosophical, spiritual, and/or metaphysical approach, introducing the spiritual conscious self of *the individuation process*. Carl Gustav Jung understood the essentials of *the individuation process* was to experience loneliness. It is the only way to the unconscious, and the intuitive voice to be heard. The intuition provides both knowledge and confusion to a mind that cannot fully comprehend the unconscious. However, the journey inward, the work, the process of individuation leads to apparent

unconsciousness into the conscious world of spiritual understanding. Therefore, solitude and turning off distractions and outside interference are vital for developing one's self; this allows time to reflect, dream, imagine, and commune with the unconscious mind, the spiritual bridge to awareness. The spiritual bridge that is *Conscious Voices* connects the world to consciousness within humanity. For example, according to Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, he implies souls of the departed are shadows, called synopados by the Greeks. Jung fosters this view of the soul as an objective reality; nonetheless, the soul is something independent, dangerous, and inquisitive—the source of life. Therefore, the “I” is part of an independent soul—ego consciousness, which stems from an unconscious person. His theory proposes that when the “I” no longer exists during sleep, our soul/psyche still exist beyond the physical. The relevancy of this gives light that we are souls—conscious entities experiencing the planet. Hence, when we can remove the “I” or biases that come with it, we remove the part that hinders progression. Then, we may witness the souls of others, and the life force of their consciousness exhibited. Part of the devised creates emergence of the soul essence of the performer, displaying unified beings of souls, a *Rainbow Coalition*. Further character development utilizes the entire Plato's cave philosophy: that people in the cave ascend to see the truth with their own eyes, impressions they form from the intelligible real things that create attitudes and ideas. Overall, the tone of this devised ethnodrama *Conscious Voices* resembles the European staged musical by Victor Hugo “Les Miserables” song lyrics, “Do You Hear the People Sing”:

Do you hear the people sing? Singing the song of angry men? It is the music of  
the people, who will not be slaves again! When the beating of your heart, echoes  
the beating of the drums. There is a life about to start, when tomorrow comes!  
Will you join in our crusade? Who will be strong and come stand with me?



Beyond the barricade. Is there a world you long to see? Then join in the fight that  
will give you the right to be free!

In the year 2020, protestors for Black Lives Matter and diverse and inclusive allies formed to support the purpose-driven global racial dissents. Some people have asked why white people are joining the cause for Black Lives now. While, some feel this may just be a temporary phase, others welcome the support knowing change cannot happen without white people's alliance. Some Black people appreciate finally having racism and violence against Black people acknowledged en masse.

## II. Literature Review

In this literature review, I reviewed different areas of scholarship that tell us about discrimination and its effects on the bodies and voices in this critical reflection and the devised ethnodrama to be performed in two months. The overarching principles for the devising process evolved through the form of philosophy, sociology and ethnography, and literature and arts.

Plato's *The Republic* book seven, (514a-516d), the *allegory of the cave* represents the unconscious mind existing in ignorance that is distressing to the psychological behaviors of human functioning overall. Plato implies that human perception cannot derive true knowledge, and instead, real knowledge can only come via philosophical reasoning. Prisoners live their entire lives in a cave, only able to see shadows. To them, these shadows are reality. Today, some people are prisoners to images—shadows of social media, news laden with hidden biases that promotes negative fast thinking to control their mindset. Some images or shadows are constantly playing in our homes, affecting our minds and, bodies, and producing unconscious negative

thought. Similarly, the prisoners in the *allegory of the cave* live their entire lives in a cave, only able to see shadows. To them, these shadows are reality.

Plato describes four stages of the cave, which I implemented in my devising process. Plato's cave is: one, imprisonment in a world of constant night and shadows—unconsciousness. Two, the release from chains—ownership they see the real images lit by the fire light. Three, they continue to ascend—explore out of the cave into the world lit by the sun—knowledge and witness the life force in wonder. Four, the return to the cave—enlightened by the exposure and freedom, they have shattered the disillusionments. The devised outline development utilized the four stages as inspiration for *Conscious Voices*. First, the imprisonment, darkness, and shadows on the wall, as the mental body is the cave and there is unconscious conditioning by social media, news, personal stories. Second, the release from chains, the physical body, and the exit from shackles: motion and self-discovery emerges, unconsciously exploring the cave. Third, ascendant out of the cave, the emotional body is the world: cognitive, sensitive, instinctive awareness—consciousness forms. Fourth, informed by freedom and intelligibility no longer oblivious or chained, the spiritual body whether the resolution or not, but consciously aware of self and spirit and sharing stories with others open-minded, traumatized, healed, or returning to the cave because of familiarity. *Descartes, Plato and the Cave* by Stephen Buckle:

The cave itself begins with its striking picture of human life as imprisoned in a world of darkness and shadows. Those who free themselves and turn around discover copies of real things, lit by a fire, to be the sources of their experience; upon making their way out of the cave they discover the real things themselves, lit by the sun. Finally, they become able to look upon the sun itself, and then come to discover it to be the source of life of all living things, and, indeed, the source of

intelligibility of everything that is. Thus enlightened, they then return to the cave, where their knowledge of reality frees them from illusions and makes them the fittest guides for human life.

The cave may symbolize an opportunity for freedom, hope and a new beginning, while for some it can reveal a prison they never knew existed.

Socrates defines justice as “the interest of the weaker party/part of society.” His definition of justice is the leading thread that weaves throughout this project committed to theatre for social justice and grounded in socially-based research. Plato uses the voice and dominance of Socrates’s philosophical inquisitiveness just as I use an ensemble to share social issues in cultural, historical, and political contexts or to revisit personal and social assumptions. *Conscious Voices* aims to provide a space for readers and viewers to imaginatively engage with multi-layered social issues. The actors struggle through complicated relationships and differing needs related to sexuality, race, gender, bullying, and discrimination, as well as joy and love. In this project, the purpose is to invoke awareness, empathy, and a willingness to listen, learn, and possibly positively respond to those suffering injustice. Removing one’s self from the unconscious ignorance stemming from a limited exclusive perspective of the world enables broadening mindsets that allow diversity, equity and justice for all. Each narrative represents a voice that has experienced racism or prejudice numerous times. Ignorance is the “root of all evil,” according to Plato, who defined its opposite, knowledge, a “justified true belief” which comes from Plato’s philosophical dictionary, the *Definitions*. For instance, ignorance is unconsciousness in the devised, which, logically, no one chooses unless they cannot handle or misalign the truth, thus rejecting knowledge. Injustice is propagated through enforced ignorance,

a function of the unconscious mind's *cognitive powers*, which we cannot conceptualize or relate to; nonetheless, each individual uses the mind's *cognitive powers* differently, and there is hope.

The final part of devising *Conscious Voices* combined Carl Jung's theory on the individuation process—the act of discovering our true self as part of humanity wholly realizing your part as a spiritual person. Part of devising the last section the narratives after it ascends from the cave, involved epiphanies discovered while operating unconsciously and consciously. These encounters force propels us along a journey of self-discovery—spiritual self, the psyche our intuitive sense.

While some people can grow and evolve from Jung's individuation process, other people such as metaphysicians or spiritualists and scientists imply that *The Law of Attraction: The Basics of the Teachings of Abraham* is a tool of manifestation.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, man, has but one Mind—divided along two lines, Passive effort influenced by vibrational impulses and Active effort that responds to new experiences to create thoughts and reactive motion. However, Active function because of its effort causes Passive function—to obey what is suggested, thought vibration. (Atkinson) Therefore, my interpretation of Plato's cave for the modern day have mind control operations by manipulators that choose to program people's minds with false images and words that dictate the movement, actions, and decisions people blindly make. Schemers present fatness, blackness, and gender transitioning as ugly, and the female voice as weak. While, on the other hand, the New Thought practitioner, similar to existentialists, implements parts of the *Law of Attraction* as a force of freedom to the truths of consciousness that society should not restrict

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<sup>1</sup> See Hicks, especially 30-37, some spiritualists or metaphysicians use the *law of attraction*. *The Law of Attraction: The Basics of the Teachings of Abraham*. Abraham—Hicks considers the Law of Attraction as responds to the thoughts that you hold at all times, therefore, you create your own reality simply by your constant thinking.

an individual's life or actions that develop a person's potential. Based on the basic principles of quantum physics, "scientific principles" allude to contention: you will attract to yourself whatever you put out—the law of attraction. As a result, if we continually focus on systems that condition the mind to believe fatness, blackness and gender changing as ugly and the female voice as weak, we continue the habitual cycle to believe the world is flat when it is indeed round.

The devise process began in a cave, precisely my own interpretation of *the allegory of the cave*. Plato's cave represents is the realm of shadows—unconscious mind, the ignorant mind's cause and effect of actions or lack of actions, thoughts and beliefs created by a chained mind lacking knowledge or awareness of the real world (hidden truths). The coming literature review covers details about Plato's cave. Ruth Zaporah's manual "Preparing to Devise," a resource used in Action Theater that helped to shape the thought process behind the devise, states, "...every moment of action is comprised of certain elements—the structure or shape, timing, relationship to space, dynamic, and the state of mind." Furthermore, in "Preparing to Devise," Zaporah states:

[Content] that fuels the action. The composite of these elements in any instant would be the frame. Just as a frame surrounds a picture on a wall, distinguishing it from anything else in the room, so an action frame contains and describes the content of the current improvisational moment... In her exercises, Zaporah distinguishes between three types of frames: 1) movement, 2) sound and movement, and 3) physical narrative. A physical narrative is a frame that contains words: Zaporah qualifies the narrative as "physical" to remind her students to pay attention to the form of the words (how the mouth is shaping them, pitch, and so on), rather than only the story described by the words. (126-127)

Frames are relevant in the devising process for *Conscious Voices*. The unconscious ignorance of

the mind framed the narratives, songs, and dances that are the reenacted life stories of *Conscious Voices*. In addition to the ensemble, the audience may increase their cognitive skills and the ability to live a communal life. *Conscious Voices*'s evidence-based praxis can transform lives and society. The devised acknowledges it is time to discover and uncover narratives speaking to the unconscious experiences of our past and present. It shares transformative moments from individuals' lives and poses a positive voice as theatre for social justice, in which narratives encourage and inspire action.

Other studies which supports the philosophical and practical work in the devised focus on discrimination and its affects both on bodies and voices, the work of psychologist, Daniel Kahnmen's "Thinking Fast and Slow," researched *cognitive biases*. It shows unconscious errors of reasoning that distort our judgment of the world. Typical of these is the *anchoring effect*: our tendency to be influenced by irrelevant numbers to which we happen to be exposed. For example, many people question the fatality rate of COVID-19 because the virus has not affected them compared to others. Kahneman's study on decision-making also states, "Fast thinking is unconscious, emotional, and instinctive. Fast thinking results in snap judgments and, sometimes, prejudice... Slow thinking is more work for our brain and consumes more resources. Fast thinking enables us to get through the day by handling routine decisions with minimum fuss." Slow thinking is more work for our brain; however, via this process, awareness becomes probable. Nevertheless, some people live in the world of images—ignorant to their perspectives and/or decisions. Both Kahneman and Plato influenced my perception on the complex mind we possess and the biases we form and decisions we make.

Related to the complex mind we possess and the biases we form is applied; the representation of whiteness within this devised is unintentionally stuck in ignorance—in Plato's

cave. Because, in the devising process the person remained paralyzed by the truth. Plato's ignorance as the opposite of knowledge has relevance on topics when comparisons are made in ignorance about movements for change—fairness and equality. The ignorance of comparing BLM to KKK could be applied similarly ignorantly to a comparison between the Suffragettes and the KKK claiming they are both hate groups. This is not true. In *the allegory of the cave*, the prisoner had to be forced to learn at times; for Plato, education in any form requires resistance, and with resistance comes force. Nonetheless, this education is personal and it is the transition from darkness to light, where light represents knowledge and truth. Furthermore, the devising process stretches to help each voice reach a form of enlightenment—knowledge or truth for the whole.

The devised integrates sociological topics that present evidence-based research on the effects of discrimination on bodies. In 2020, there were two distinct pandemics: COVID-19 and profound racism. The death of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor during lockdown devastated Black communities and other observers witnessing injustice. The pandemic was second most deadly issue after racial disparities. *LGBTQ Nation: Health and Wellness* by Juwan J. Holmes shows through new polls commissioned by the Trevor Project that LGBTQ youth face more stress from police brutality and COVID-19. “This year has been difficult for everyone,” Trevor Project CEO Amit Paley stated, “but it has been especially challenging for LGBTQ youth...” As the COVID-19 virus spread across the globe, the death toll rose shore to shore, as this disease had no bias on who it infects. However, two months into the pandemic, a brave young woman, Darnella Frazier, a high school senior, recorded the murder of George Floyd. This started a worldwide movement that ignited the fuel of a global Black Lives Matter movement for justice. Nonetheless, ongoing racism and prejudices existed from when Europeans

colonized circa 1492: “Despite the proclamation of a ‘postracial’ society, racism in the United States remains ‘alive and sick’ (S. P. Harrell, 2000), negatively impacting the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of Black Americans” (American Journal of Orthopsychiatry). The Reverend Jesse Jackson labeled the movement of 2020 a “Rainbow Coalition” because it was the first time; he witnessed such a diverse and inclusive group. An eclectic mix of lifestyles, faiths, body sizes, genders, and beliefs protested under one voice chanting “no justice, no peace,” an overall paradigm for global transformation. The year 2020 reached a pinnacle for a paradigm shift to manifest inclusivity, diversity and equity. Worldwide, diverse cultures witnessed injustice and protested. Through my research, spurred on by these movements, affluent voices readied to speak the truth and share stories about racism and prejudices trauma affecting their livelihoods. The communities relevant to this research are the under-represented groups and marginalized people whose voices had been shunned due to their differences--race, ethnicity, gender, body image, and sexuality—that society rejects or hassles in systemic ways.

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States was a decades-long campaign by Black Americans and their like-minded allies to end institutionalized racial discrimination, disenfranchisement and racial segregation in the United States. For many Black Americans, sixty years after the Civil Rights Movements (1954-1968) there is a major flaw. In 2020 and 2021, the same exact issues persist from sixty years ago. Nevertheless, some White Americans deny and/or do not want to think about systemic racism and discriminations black people face on a daily basis. For example, during a roundtable on public safety in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Trump denied that systemic racism exists in the US, saying, "I don't believe that" when asked for his stance by a reporter. Instead, former President Trump pushed “law and order,” in contrast to Senator Mitch



McConnell who said, “There is no question that there is residual racism in America.” However, even McConnell offered no policy proposals for policing following the death of George Floyd. Thus, members of the African diaspora need representation as racism-related stress has gone on for too long. Representation for people of color matters in narratives across education and in formats that educate; the purpose of the devised ethnodrama is to increase that representation.

In this devised ethnodrama, my research demonstrates and validates this core premise: that racism and prejudice is a constant in America. In addition, constant discriminatory exposure affects people through stress, mental health, fatigue, shame, and depression:

Public Policy Relevance Statement: Racism is a pernicious stressor with the potential to disrupt the psychological health and well-being of Black Americans.

Furthermore, racism-related stress operates in different ways, with different implications, at different times in development (childhood, adolescence, adulthood). To promote resilience in the face of and resistance to racism, it is critical to understand its various presentations, as well as culturally relevant ways to cope with and heal from racism-related stressors. (Jones, S. C. T., Anderson, R. E., Gaskin-Wasson, A. L., Sawyer, B. A., Applewhite, K., & Metzger, I. W.)

The bias or bigotry relevant to *Conscious Voices* manifests in the monologues, body movements, song, and poems because of explicit experiences. The Public Policy Relevance Statement in the article, “From ‘Crib to Coffin’: Navigating Coping from Racism-Related Stress Throughout the Lifespan of Black Americans” highlights researched studies of “racism-related stress” by expert psychologists, health behaviorist, and health educators. The significance of racism-related stress is pointed out data collected from a poll: “#LivingWhileBlack” where over “93%” of African diaspora persons indicate being targets of racial bias (National Public Radio, 2017). Bias creates

health issues, as witnessed by several types of discrimination mentioned in the devised ethnodrama. Bias creates stress on the body and the emotions. Hence, the physical performance of *Conscious Voices* will display and emote how racism and prejudices weave through our American culture, affecting the lives and livelihoods of many people. Each ensemble member has experienced some form of stress over years suffering discrimination. Discrimination has been associated with stress. Studies and research exhibited over three decades: Furthermore, the report “From Crib to Coffin” also demonstrates people who suffer stress or other stress induced states can implement certain coping mechanism to deal with stress; however, the negative health issues may still persist (Jones, S. C. T., Anderson, R. E., Gaskin-Wasson, A. L., Sawyer, B. A., Applewhite, K., & Metzger, I. W.).

In societies where slavery has existed in its past, colorism has significant racial impact. Colorism is the dislike of one’s own dark-skinned complexion. Colorism is an inner-race racial bias based solely on skin color. This racism plagues those of African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, Asian-Indian, and other ethnicities with varying hues of melanin. The demonization of black skin came with the European colonizers, rooted in the fear of an unknown race. Over the centuries, there has been a plague-like hate towards dark skin and the Negro race suffers discrimination. In addition, light-skinned and dark-skinned people of all ethnicities and races have adopted “colorism,” this hate within their own race, towards their own darkest people. Whiteness symbolizes purity, innocence, the best of all races—an ideological belief in a supreme race. *Racism-Related Stress*, RRS as defined in “From ‘Crib to Coffin’: Navigating Coping from Racism-Related Stress throughout the Lifespan of Black Americans,” applies to those who suffer colorism, due to the Blackness in their skin, their DNA as expressed by melanin. The Ku Klux Klan discriminates against them as they oppose the so-called “supreme race,” as termed.

Joni Hersch's journal, "Skin Color, Physical Appearance, and Perceived Discriminatory Treatment," focuses on how attractiveness and skin tone, weight, and height exhibit discrimination within certain various contexts: "African Americans with lighter color...African Americans, with those with darker skin color rated as less attractive... (Hill 2002, Hersch 2006)." Cuban colorism will be highlighted in this device. However, this specific narrative identifies the issue of colorism more generally. Nevertheless, colorism is worse than racism; colorism is internal bias, while, racism is external discrimination. In *Conscious Voices*, the topic of colorism arises through the lens of an immigrant Cuban experience. Some Cubans discriminate against darker skinned Hispanic people with African roots.

In addition, racism-related stress includes medical racism. Record numbers of deaths and hospitalizations from COVID-19 in the final days of 2020 revealed how the pandemic devastated the U.S and exposed blatant racism in medical care. Nonetheless, prior to the Coronavirus, African Americans struggled to secure equitable medical attention, especially since a large part of this community works in essential fields with inconsistent access to health care. Sherita Hill Golden, M.D., M.H.S., from Johns Hopkins Medicine, states, "While much of the focus has been on African Americans disproportionately contracting and dying from COVID-19, other minority populations are also adversely affected, including Latinx/Hispanic and Native American communities." In another part of the country, a viral video recorded by black physician Dr. Susan Moore posted to her Facebook revealed racist medical treatment, lack of care, and her unanswered pleas for medicine despite being in intense pain. Days before she died of COVID-19 complications, she recorded a video stating her conditions and racist treatment. Her doctor stated, "You don't qualify for medicine...you should just go home right now...there is nothing wrong with you...I will send you home Saturday at 10pm in the dark." Dr. Moore stated, "I was

crushed, the doctor made me feel like I was a drug addict...I had to let people know how black people are treated in the hospitals.” In addition to a stat CT test, the report showed pulmonary infiltrates and lymphadenopathy throughout her neck, yet urgent care was denied. Two weeks later on December 20, 2020, Dr. Susan Moore died at 52 of COVID-19 complications, leaving behind her 19-year-old son to care for her two parents suffering from dementia. The President and CEO of Indiana Health reporting on the technical aspects of her treatment she received admitted they “may not have shown the level of compassion and respect we strive for in understanding what matters most to patients.” Dr. Moore’s video compares to George Floyd’s video begging for his life as Minneapolis police killed him. The relevance is that the Black race compared to any other race on the planet suffers more due to their ethnicity. In these videos, I observed the people of African diaspora (African American, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latinx) undergo daily stressors living while Black in America. The result—works to seek help for these identified impediments for further growth by using theatre techniques such as sharing and scripting their life stories.

In the American culture, body image also contribute significantly to the country’s discriminations. Fatness in American women results in discrimination due to the praise of thinness since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. For as long as people can recall, thin has been the approved physique in American culture, especially for the female body. I use the word “fat” intentionally to remove the pretense it is anything other than that by not using less sensitive terms such as overweight, heavy or obese. The lean body type dominates society, social media, and television screens despite the health concerns and dangers of being skinny. For example, shopping as a fat female is challenging, particularly finding clothing with style; sensual options or a proper fit just do not exist. The ideal women—shape, size, and color are not so curvy, thin, and fair-skinned or

white. Other bodies are subjected to hate, prejudice, and most of all, judgment. Women who are curvy, fat, or not light-skinned enough according to societal standards suffer discrimination and body shame. However, the fear of fatness of women bodies' stems from a system beginning with the African diaspora and our history's past. According to Sabrina Strings, from the University of California Irvine:

...fat phobia is not based on health concerns. What I found in my research is that in the West, it is actually rooted in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and Protestantism. In the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonists and race scientists suggested that black people were sensuous and thus prone to sexual and oral excesses. Protestantism encouraged temperance in all pleasures, including those of the palate. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the U.S., fatness was deemed evidence of immorality and racial inferiority.

While one-third of the world's population is fat, people are discriminated and body shamed in all aspects of daily life. The widespread discrimination of weight has been documented in key areas of living, including education, employment, and health care. A growing body of literature indicates that obese people face prejudice in several areas of life that affects their livelihoods: workplace, gatherings, school, and sometimes even with their physicians. In addition, negative attitudes towards fat individuals in society compared to other marginal groups are more accepted. Obese people often speak of public ridicule (e.g., strangers approaching them in stores and commenting on their food or clothing choices or judging them in restaurants for eating dessert) and teasing (e.g., being made fun of as children because of their weight). The devised covers a history of fat shaming that started from childhood towards her mother, an over-sized woman. Unfortunately, society promotes discriminated messages demonstrated on television programs

that consistently ridicule fat characters and portray them in stereotypical fashion as being underemployed, greedy, and lacking healthy relationships. In contrast, fat acceptance movements encourage positive body image and motivating comfort in a fatter body:

“Founded in 1969, the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) is a non-profit, all volunteer, fat-rights organization dedicated to protecting the rights and improving the quality of life for fat people. NAAFA works to eliminate discrimination based on body size and provide fat people with the tools for self-empowerment through advocacy, public education and support.” Currently, Michigan is the only state with a law that bans discrimination against obese people. Other cities have joined the fight, including “weight and height” and “physical appearance.”

Obesity is a global epidemic and especially an American problem, because obesity is a disease with serious public health and economic outcomes. Most of the bias experienced by overweight people are stereotypes, such as that people are fat because they are addicted to food, when some people may suffer health problems such as thyroid issues, PCOS, or other serious fat-burning issues. They are boxed in by obese stigmas. In addition, the US National Library of Medicine, National Institute of Health article on *Stigma of Obesity: A barrier to overcome* discusses:

It is more than simply a thermodynamic, genetic, or a metabolic problem of handling calories; it is a behavioral disorder and an inflammatory disease leading to dysregulation of metabolism and energy balance, and impairment of the neuro-hormonal systems, leading to accumulation of intra-abdominal fat leading to serious complications.

This can be seen on television shows like *Biggest Loser* or *My 600 Pound Life*, which, demonstrate that most obese people suffer from mental, emotional or physical traumas that

sometimes stem from childhood or underlying health issues. Fatness is another American issue that needs attention for immediate improvement—attitudes and beliefs versus discrimination.

While fat shaming has a dramatic prejudicial impact, the LGBTQ's also experience significant discrimination. Inside the LGBTQ community, "suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24. LBG youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual youth." This problem America has to fix, mainly because this group of individuals coping mechanisms are poorly in place reports from the *Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors* among students in grades 9-12 shows this data. Overall, it is a call for help when we have "suicide attempts by LGB youth and questioning youth are 4 to 6 times more likely to result in injury, poisoning, or overdose that requires treatment from a doctor or nurse, compared to their straight peers." Suicide carries a social and moral meaning in all societies; however, suicide also means a person feels disconnected from their society. Alone and non-belonging, therefore, rejection, implicit bias, discrimination and prejudice will cause suicide attempts to worsen when an individual does not have cultural recognition.

Furthermore, in my ethnography research, the amplified violent times of 2019-2020 were influential to suicide rates amongst other groups as well that were on the rise at the initial lockdown during the pandemic. Additionally, in my interview with Professor Aixia Mendez, who devised and wrote an ethnodrama influenced by her own studies with Moises Kaufman, the Venezuelan theater director, filmmaker, playwright, founder of Tectonic Theater Project based in New York City, and co-founder of Miami New Drama at the Colony Theatre. Mendez's interview helped refine the ethnographic section of my research and provided a lens on how to implement into the devised. The anthropological research process goes into ethnography—

people in their cultural setting, with the goal of producing a narrative account of that particular culture, against a practical (devised theatre) backdrop. In addition, ethnography shaped and framed the overall language and tone.

Ethnography requires the complete immersion of the anthropologist in the culture and everyday life of the people who are subjects of this study. Aixa Mendez's, research, process and ethnodrama approach to female prison inmates intrigued and influenced my technique the most. She worked in the prison under supervision with the female prisoners to share their narratives with society. In her thesis on the devising process of her ethnodrama, she stated:

Using real-life stories written by female offenders, "Planting seeds - Life Stories of Awakening Self-Awareness" seeks to identify the systematic challenges these females may have faced, that in most cases, are the root-causes of their derailment from the societal norms of conduct. Applying the concepts of community and social justice and equality as a lens, this work will attempt to corroborate, as a universal postulate, that the process of sharing life stories can have transformative effects on the individuals and that theatre techniques, such as theatre games and scripting can help identify those impediments to restoring lives. Key to the transformative component of this work is the exploration of theatre as a mechanism of support and restoration and that the contributions that theatre may offer, are the pillars that sustain the well-being of communities, and henceforth society.

Theatre for Social Justice produced this devised ethnodrama, *Conscious Voices*. The ethnography and devising process give representation of stories about "equality as a lens" representing the biblical female voice also the woman of color voice, the body-shamed fat



woman, navigating a day in a Black body, pushing past colorism, and non-binary identification. I have spent time with these cultural perspectives. However, my research reinforced that I should learn more about a non-binary identified person's daily battles with discrimination against their identity. Therefore, the non-binary identity is another valuable voice because it is a societal target of name-calling, harassment, and discrimination.

Although, Theatre for Social Justice can literally speak volumes for underrepresented prejudicial narratives, a social contract may work to create equity for American citizens. The non-binary voice within the devised completes the process and includes a narrative of those who have been close to the inner circles of discrimination of people I know. While there are many more narratives that could be added to this devised, I conclude with an individual who identifies as non-binary, or gender neutral. The LGBTQ community has fought for rights as much as the other chosen voices within *Conscious Voices*. It is relevant to this project as it speaks to a current issue in American society. In addition, many LGBTQ people stood side by side with BLM protests, the initial energy that started the creative project. Rousseau's *social contract* articulates how a government could exist in such a way to protect the equality of all its citizens. Rousseau is relevant here mainly to contribute to how people protest as a form of the state of nature—people may need to combine forces in order to survive. My former non-binary, gender fluid performer expressed he, they, she pronouns become an issue with society on personal identification:

As someone who is, gender fluid, non-binary. There's a difference between a one off mistake. And it's like the first time it's happened and you're like, oh no, actually I prefer—he, they or he, they, she. But if you continue to make the same mistake and you continue to use feminine pronouns, even after someone has told you once or twice that those are not their pronouns, that's when it becomes an issue and it becomes angry. We're

usually in a pretty good place and we're pretty chill about confusions. But when it's repeated and when no effort is being made to change your mindset, that's when it's a problem.

Rousseau's ideas about social contract resolve how people can join and still be free can be applied to modern day protests and bias implications towards those victims of discrimination. It is important that more structures and policies are in place for equality and justice, part of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which states, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." Therefore, non-binary identities are American citizens to be represented and protected under law.

Furthermore, the social contract would provide each individual with a solution, once he or she surrender themselves to the community as a whole. The patriarchal voice equally poised next to matriarchal voice sets in place equity and inclusion, the same for all and therefore all will want to make it possible for all. Finally, Rousseau has encouraged protests as a force of the state of nature that people may need to combine forces in order to survive. However, the non-binary narrative lends to the scope of equality and justice for all, while expanding possibilities for other diverse stories to be included. In the bigger picture, we all belong, we are all the Rainbow Coalition and the non-binary identity informs the devised reader and/or audience that allies come in many different shapes, forms and colors.

My ethnographic research for the devised piece will bring to the stage the voice of blackness because over the last century, the cycle of discrimination spread beyond racism towards African people and marginalized groups grew. Moreover, treatment from teachers and, classroom materials may create barriers for students outside the Eurocentrism model—the old biased model. A plethora of textbooks depict fewer images of women and people of color in

certain fields of study, for example, STEM fields (Brotman & Moore, 2008; King and Domin, 2007). In addition to the lack of female representation, there are linguistic biases in American society, higher education and academia—a melting pot of ethnicities. In the journal *Applied Research to Practice*, (ARP) Resources: *Literature Overview: Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Awareness for Classroom and Outreach Education*, supports the longevity of these biases in their research:

Additionally, differences emerge in how students are tracked or placed into particular classes. Teachers are more likely to refer White students to high-track classes (e.g., gifted and talented programs) and Black and Hispanic students to low-track classes (e.g., special education [Tenebaum & Ruck, 2007]), and some evidence shows that Black students are indeed less likely than White students to enroll into college preparatory courses (Southworth & Mickelson, 2007).

Communication barriers may also present a culture-related challenge between teachers and bilingual or bicultural students; thus, many school districts focus on tracking these students into “basic” skills courses (e.g., reading, writing, and mathematics) for English learners and choose to sacrifice high-level learning in other areas...(Amaral, Garrison, & Klentchsy, 2002).

Every year, racism grows worse in the West; thus, prejudicial discussions and awareness are ever more relevant. Negative effects of discrimination among victims affect the psyche, health, well-being, and demeanor—stress, physical illness, psychological distress. Through devising narratives, *Conscious Voices* begins the conversation, creates real stories about treatment, depression, and biased human conditions. The narratives highlight the unconscious—ignorant mind, conditioning and world triggered by various traumas resulting in conscious awareness of

the real world outside the cave: racism, prejudice, and hate, influence many people's actions, responses and decisions towards people who are different.

Exceptional work on discrimination research record historical accounts in America among the indigenous peoples and African Americans by European descents. Data collection, research, and studies on discrimination demonstrate unhealthy side effects including higher disadvantages and serious health issues:

Methods. Participants were 4154 older adults from the Chicago Health and Aging Project who underwent up to two interviews over 4.5 years. Perceived discrimination was measured at baseline, and vital status was obtained at each follow-up and verified through the National Death Index.

Results. During follow-up, 1166 deaths occurred. Participants reporting more perceived discrimination had a higher relative risk of death (hazard ratio [HR] = 1.05; 95% confidence interval [CI]=1.01, 1.09). This association was independent of differences in negative affect or chronic illness and appeared to be stronger among Whites than among Blacks.

...growing interest in the health effects of perceived discrimination. Although evidence has been mixed, several studies have demonstrated that discrimination is related to poor physical and mental health, including blood pressure, breast cancer, self-rated health, psychological distress, well-being and depressive symptoms. (Barnes, Lisa L et al.)

Black Americans are at higher risk for health concerns and have higher death rates. Although the devised covers stories on a feminine voice, fatness, colorism, and the non-binary identity, the narrative with the highest discriminatory risk factor is the Black person. In addition, there have

been countless articles and studies on racial disparities and the health risk. For example, other research has approached it by sharing insights about educated Black Americans. The graduating class from Yale University forty-six years ago recorded deaths of Black Americans, even those making good money. For example, “Clyde Murphy—a renowned civil-rights attorney—died of a blood clot in his lungs.” Shortly thereafter, his Black American classmates “Ron Norwood and Jeff Palmer each succumbed to cancer. In the article by Culture of Health Blog, “Why Discrimination Is a Health Issue” (2017), David Williams stated:

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States and middle-aged black males and females have death rates that are about twice as high as their white counter parts.

Elevated death rates are also evident for cancer, stroke, diabetes, kidney disease, maternal death—the list goes on. In fact, every 7 minutes, a black person dies prematurely. That more than 200 black people a day would not die if the health of blacks and whites were equal. And, as the Yale example shows, even higher levels of education—which can lead to higher incomes and the ability to live in healthier neighborhoods and to access high-quality health care—can’t protect African-Americans from the disparities leading to higher mortality rates.

In fact, more than 10 percent of African-Americans in the Yale class of 1970 had died—a mortality rate more than three times higher than that of their white classmates.” This may be a shocker to other people outside of the black community, except for those living in a middle-class society. The truth is Black Americans live sicker and die sooner than whites Americans do.

The ethnodrama contains a voice that represents the fat women who have experienced prejudice in society because of their shape and size. Historical bias towards fat women began within the framework of religion and race ideologies of a body type. Over a century later, the West continues to follow old principles biased to the new woman. The West still praises thinness, even in images such as Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Platonic Academy—members of a Florentine society—would view the Venus, the most beautiful earthly goddess of physical love. A heavenly goddess of intellectual love became the ideal woman for beauty. Plato would argue that Venus's physical beauty manipulates the mind to understand spiritual beauty. Therefore, looking at Venus, the most beautiful of goddesses, would raise a physical response in viewers, who lifted their minds towards the heavens. For this Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* suggests that 15th-century woman of beauty was not 'curvy' or 'colored' but lean and Caucasian, a body type to a certain Caucasian genotype characterized as suitable, true beauty—exclusive to Mediterraneans and Jews. Sabrina Strings examines other core issue of fatness:

Race was integral to the issue. What we had by the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a new racial discourse that suggested black people were also inherently voracious. Combine this with the displacement of poor Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (i.e., Irish, Southern Italians and Russian Jews), and white Americans were being advised to fear black people, as well as these “degraded” or supposedly “part-black” Europeans who were also purportedly identifiable by their weight and skin color... My response is that fat phobia affects everyone. Even if black women have historically formed the center of concern, the goal of race scientists, Protestant reformers and, later, doctors was to convince all Americans that being

fat was a woeful state of affairs that all should shun. In this way, regardless of racial or gender identity in America today, we are all encouraged to avoid becoming fat. The stakes are evident: Thinness is privileged, and fatness is stigmatized.

This demonized other women of history, due to their body shape, size, or color. The stigma of the heavy female body puts fat at odds with Western societal standards that resemble 15<sup>th</sup> century Venus.

In *Obesity, Occupational Attainment, and Earnings* (1997), research shows results from a precise tool called “multinomial logit specification tool,” which demonstrates “the occupational selection of obese individuals.” The author states, “...women pay a penalty for being obese, but overweight males, via occupational mobility, sort themselves into jobs to offset this penalty.” Therefore, discrimination based on gender, race, and weight blatantly shows America’s bigotry towards people who do not “fit in” to societal norms—white, lean, preferably male, and heterosexual are identities highly favored by an outdated and biased system. A second article, from the National Library of Medicine, *Impact of Obesity on Employee Wages on Young Adults: Observational Study with Panel* (2019) supports the journal from (1997) through a controlled study. In a “nationally representative dataset comprising of 2000 middle school students and 4000 high school seniors,” it was found that employers prefer “healthy employees with positive social demeanors (2.1 Data).” Obesity is a well-recognized risk factor for various illnesses, including cardiovascular diseases and cancer—an issue with most employers:

Being overweight or obese has negative implications in social aspects as well.

Several previous studies signify appearance-based discrimination on obese and overweight persons to result in an overall negative effect. For instance, slimness is

considered a beauty norm, which accordingly leads obesity to be looked down upon in most modern societies. In addition, for the reason that obesity is often controllable at the individual level, it results in the conception of having insufficient self-control and practicing unhealthy behaviors or having poor self-esteem and time management. Furthermore, one's overweight or obesity status is visible. (Hyeain Lee, Rosemary Ahn, Tae Hyun Kim & Euna Han)

The workforce discriminates more against fat women. The same patterns in occupational characteristics do not exist for obese men. Literature supports an unexplained wage gap between obese women and non-obese women particularly relevant since physically active workloads pay less on average (Hyeain Lee, Rosemary Ahn, Tae Hyun Kim & Euna Han). Moreover, the few obese women who work in public interaction occupations receive lower wages than non-obese women do, and their wage disadvantage counterbalances the general premium for working in a job emphasizing public interaction. Therefore, fat women require representation just as any other discriminated—against group in Western culture. Their voice needs inclusion, allowing it to take shape and form—expressed via a narrative, monologue, and song of truth. Body shaming leads to depression, sadness, and feeling a sense of disconnection from a societal norm. This voice does not promote being unhealthy. It merely represents the bodies of women that are larger, curvy, and colorful. Therefore, we represented the fat woman and her narrative with embracing the whole self—the female body no matter size. This devised ethnodrama performance represents and include the perspective of a fat, curvy, and voluptuous women.

While, the devised represent fatness, it also represents whiteness. Week three into virtual devising to develop—coming out of the *cave*—ignorance and unconscious digging into one's own background and self, whiteness withdraws completely. I received an email that they



overwhelmed by the project, life took a turn—an argument with her mother over her mother’s comparison of Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement to the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) as hate groups. There is clear distinction between BLM, which fight for equality and justice, and the KKK, which fight for white supremacy and inequality for anyone who does not fit their standards. Thus, the cave turned into a *womb*—the womb of mother—made her narrative painful and shocking. Whiteness is the voice she represented. However, the name Anonymous is used for that voice because her monologue expressed an internal conflict to the external world that suddenly changed perspectives, upsetting her world. This is the only narrative to remain stuck in *Conscious Voices*, stuck chained as a prisoner in Plato’s allegory of the cave—ignorance defeated this story. This was an unexpected turn of events; however, I chose to work with the voice where it stayed—not omit it but represent it as an anonymous member represented by an image and audible voice. In addition, it is relevant to current events; many people believe BLM and the KKK are both hate groups. For example, the former owner of a sandwich shop franchise, Mickey Mann, sent an email to employees comparing the “Black Lives Matter movement to the Ku Klux Klan.” Corporate officials called the comments “alarming and painful,” adding that the store will only open under new ownership. The ABC10 article provided further in-depth insights about implicit bias and diversity training, including the KKK’s newest targets for attack:

...The then newly-created but hardly-structured organization had one goal: strengthen white supremacy in America, which they believed was lost when Black people were no longer slaves. They targeted just-freed Black men, politically active Black men, and non-Black allies.

But it wasn't until the second coming of the KKK in 1915 that the organization was at its peak, broadening their targeted attacks to "Jews, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ community and, until recently, Catholics," in order to increase membership to people in the northern and Midwestern states.

Some of the members of the KKK included lawyers, police officers, state and federal politicians and community members.

For example, in a report on the Yale University class of 1970, Black Americans' mortality rates blatantly prove higher incomes and having health insurance do not prohibit racial disparities. No matter the success, achievements, or accolades, racism towards black people is frequent and common.

The devised ethnodrama content incorporates monologues, song and dance. The word, the melody of a tune, and the beat of rhythm moves the voice in tune, expressing what is not normally—demonstrated. Alleyne Dance UK says, “Am I Who I am for Me or For You? I have an identical me but I am not you. I see me, you see me, and this is me. Struggling with the juxtaposition of being and identical twin with a strong yearning to establish their own individual identities...” In this devise, we present on stage the conflicts we all go through as discriminated individuals, when our journey births emotions and visions and we find our inner voice. However, if we as a society can ever reach a level of thought such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's on the social contract that it is relevant today in a world where divisions, discriminations and inequality thrives in politics and religions. Merely, the thought of a contract where everyone agrees and aligns with equality, physically, mentally and emotionally the world can be a better place. Then again, everyone is *not* on the same level of operation; therefore, there is opposition and oppression in the absence of a social contract. Rousseau believes that, “in place of individual

person each contracting party, this act of association produces a moral and collective body composed of as many members as their voices in the assembly...” Overall, the state of affairs of the United States during 2020 revisiting our Constitution’s 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the Bill of Rights (Amendments 1-10) reminds American citizens about our country’s rights for all people.

The timeliness of 2020 and 2021 events fueled the motivated monologues and impassioned many narratives to be open-minded about sharing their personal story. The best part about devising virtually is that two of our performers live out of state (actors from Louisiana and California). Virtual devising allowed the Louisiana female voice to speak about her developmental process as a spiritualist, Deacon in training and artist. She has read and studied about saints, especially *Mary Magdalene Revealed* by Meggan Watterson; however, the unconventional development of her narrative is through meditation, painting, and channeling what she feels is Magdalene speaking to her. This process was embraced because we practiced open-mindedness and diverse methods to the devising process.

A market for diverse narratives emerged over the last five years, forming inclusive, representative, informative documentaries, movies and plays: *13<sup>th</sup>* by Ava DuVernay 2016, *Moonlight* by Barry Jenkins 2016, Oprah Winfrey Presents: *When They See Us Now* 2019, and *American Skin* by Nate Parker 2021 add to a library of diverse stories. DuVernay’s *13<sup>th</sup>* educates the audience about the system conveniently created after the end of slavery—the prison system for incarcerating the young black man. Jenkins’s main character grapples with his identity and sexuality during the hardships of life—childhood to adulthood. Winfrey and DuVernay give us the true story about five male suspects who were falsely accused then prosecuted on charges related to the rape and assault of a woman in Central Park, New York City. They filed a suit against the city in 2003 for wrongful conviction and were awarded a settlement in 2014. In his

recent film, Parker shares his point of view about the murder of his young son, shot and killed during a traffic stop. Narratives similar to these expose the world to important topics affecting the lives of many people nationally. For far too long media has presented one-sided vantage points to support a dominant race—white and masculine as the only truths. Perspectives on systemic racism, the killing of black Americans, demonization of gender non-conformity, the feminine voice, and hiding fatness are out now on stage and screen.

Toni Morrison's *Paradise* portrays color as how the dark-skinned blacks compete to survive in society. Shut out by white people and light-skinned blacks after slavery was abolished in the American South, colorism weaves through African diaspora groups like poison courses through the blood. The Cuban culture is identified by this same disallowing—colorism against dark-skinned Cubans and, their own people, culture, and ethnicities. The dark-skinned blacks had to create a paradise of their own, however, they became brutal and uncompassionate because of constant discrimination. Some people will intentionally seek out white or lighter-skinned companions to have children, in order to lighten their complexion and hair texture. Blacks in Morrison's novel do not want to be reminded of the past—slavery, blackness, and the accompanying disadvantages similar to Cuban colorism: "You and me, Mama, among those skinny blue-black giants, neither they nor their wives staring at your long brown hair, your honey-speckled eyes...they needed you, used you to go into a store to get supplies or a can of milk while they parked around the corner..." (Morrison). Morrison implies the darkest "blue-black" people are cursed, as society rejects them even from buying food to feed their families.

Another text, Austin Channing Brown's *I'm Still Here*, centralizes her personal journey navigating the world in a *black body*, especially as a black woman. Exhausted living in a white society and living by the standards of whiteness, Brown expounds on the tiresomeness of white

people. In a black body you stand out, you are never invisible and most of the time considered suspicious—looking because of your black skin. I have found that in both *Paradise* and *I'm Still Here* the ignorance of the unaware white race has imposed exhaustive measures to suppress Black Americans in society. Thirty years apart, the literature speaks on the demonization of the black skin, while whiteness thrives. Privilege throughout history records accounts for light-skinned blacks or white-passing ethnicities who find it easier to live in Western society—unseen, acceptable, privileged. Thus, my research shows racism, colorism, and discrimination towards color, height, and especially gender continues in the world today. The agency of this devised is to give voice to the previously unvoiced—unseen, judged, shut up, discriminated, and unprivileged due to societal “norms” by storytelling, dance and song to represent their truths. In these truths, includes, representation of the black male identity conflicted by societal biases; whiteness resistance to systemic racism; Afro-Latinx—colorism from the Cuban spectrum; the female voice over male oppression; the fat woman who experiences lower pay wages and has fear of showing her body at the beach, and gender neutral identity comfortable in their skin ready to grab the world by its hands.

In MLS course, Religion and Western Culture, I recalled the brief topic on the suffragette women's movement. However, it was not until I saw the Netflix movie based on a true story, *Suffragette* (2015), about early 20<sup>th</sup> century women's suffragist movement “votes for women” to participate in public elections. However, it was memorable to read some about these women, mainly because it involved women, their efforts for voting rights and the suffering they endured for a greater cause. On the other hand, I realize these important social justice movements involved years of work to achieve the goal. In spite their progress, movements and fights for justice have become as common as wars and contagions. The sacrificial fight to create fairness

and justice in 2020 and 2021 resembles the 1920s suffragettes' movement. The suffragist radical stance for a better quality of life, better wages, and rights for their children. Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his essay on the *social contract* wrote, "Man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains" (Bk I Chapters 6-9 pages 25-29). Women protested to be freed from male oppression, the movement spread across the globe, eventually giving women the right to vote. In addition, women around the world are treated different; for example, in *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, (1992) by Farzaneh Miliani, Iranian women a little over a decade ago have gained the right to share their voice, talents, presence:

...until recently, women have contributed to writers, painters, musicians, architects, actors, potters, calligraphers. The achievements of those women who, against all odds, managed to nurture their creative talents have remained for the most part unrecognized, invisible. This invisibility extends beyond women as makers of art to women as objects of representations.

The Feminine voice weaves a thread connecting the fat woman and the black identity who struggles to be heard for medicine and medical attention. For centuries across the globe, authoritative patriarchal voices have silenced and oppressed women's rights—along with it their voices and contributions to the world as wives, mothers, sisters, aunts, workers, and more. Without woman, her womb, her body, her ability to nurture a child, the world would not be where it is at all. Yet, women throughout history, biblical, political, socially protested for women's rights. From a petition to a founding father, to the suffragists, to Title IX, to the first female political figures, women have forged a steady path towards equality in the United States.

The feminine voice of Mary Magdalene, a Jewish woman, first became known in Cairo in 1896. The book *Mary Magdalene: The Image of a Woman Through the Centuries* by Ingrid

Maisch broadens that perception:

...close inquiry reveals that every man and woman carries a different image of her: the prostitute whose business was so profitable that she could spend a fortune on costly oils; the friend, wife, or love of the prophet from Nazareth; the disciple who concealed her Easter vision out of fear; the ecstatic who brought the world (or women only?) a new God; the repentant sinner whose penitence was as measureless as her sin; the saint who was so highly revered by a medieval biographer that he would have like to write her name in letters of pure gold.

Thus, the Mary Magdalene narrative must be the central voice of a woman in *Conscious Voices* to make a point that her voice has not been forgotten, and symbolize how—women can be an image through the centuries—a trailblazer, icon, and radical presence. For without woman, her womb, her humanness, humanity would be obsolete. One of the most remarkable aspects of The Gospel of Mary Magdalene is that the more it shows us about the meaning of Christianity, the more the mystery deepens: “Like every true spiritual communication, it speaks to us...” on the physical and at the “deep unconscious levels at the same time” if we allow (Leloup). The meaning of Mary Magdalene’s narrative expression in this devised opens us up to discover the woman at the heart of Christianity and the possibility that there is more to the woman than just mother, wife, sister, aunt, grandmother, home-maker, business-woman or friend. The voice of the woman carries a tone unlike a man, child, or animal. It reverberates with a certain pulse of creative energy. The devised feminine voice evolved from a woman’s narrative of Mary Magdalene—biblically speaking that has the character of a prostitute; however, there is more to Magdalene in the devised. The lack of feminine voices in literature misrepresents the contribution and neglects a whole species of human beings that are essential and crucial to the

human race. However, this absent quantity of literature has created a gap by discriminating the feminine speech and proficiency. For example, twenty-first century women write to define their identities, to participate in enduring debates, and to evolve from the past and speculate about the future. They write to explore the world, to understand themselves and their local contexts, to develop questions and to propose answers. Furthermore, the main woman's voice taken for granted in the world currently is the Black Woman. Under mind by everyone—men, women, black or white—the voice of the Black Woman continuously struggles to be heard. For example, Black women's voices when they require medical attention lacks acknowledgement. Such as tennis extraordinaire, Serena Williams experience after giving birth to her daughter in 2018:

She walked out of the hospital room so her mother would not worry and told the nearest nurse, between gasps, that she needed a CT scan with contrast and IV heparin (a blood thinner) right away. The nurse thought her pain medicine might be making her confused. But Serena insisted, and soon enough a doctor was performing an ultrasound of her legs. "I was like, a Doppler? I told you, I need a CT scan and a heparin drip," she remembers telling the team. The ultrasound revealed nothing, so they sent her for the CT, and sure enough, several small blood clots had settled in her lungs. Minutes later, she was on the drip. "I was like, listen to Dr. Williams!"

In the devising process, we worked to frame a medium that represented the feminine context, including the female voice, sexuality, love, relationship, politics, economic realities and disparities, private or secret experience. Even though the Me Too Movement has opened doorways for female voices, it has not fully swung open for the Black woman's voice. As well as, the Me Too Movement was founded by a Black woman, Tarana Burke, but a white actress,



Alyssa Milano, took the phrase and it went viral.

Whiteness was the voice within the devising process that had the hardest time coming out of the cave. Unfortunately, events in the fall of 2020, including reading *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo and *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor* by Layla Saad triggered this participant to the point of madness, including hysteria and anger. Anonymous (the white voice) experienced hysteria symptoms: irritability, anxiety, insomnia, agitation, and even short breath, demonstrating her inability to continue. Her symptoms were caused by the research of whiteness within family, friends, and American society. Anonymous devised a narrative contemplating recent events and familial lineage. However, defeated by internal racist family members and a biased mother and father, Anonymous compared herself to Jekyll and Hyde, one-minute quiet and calm and the next using profane language and screams to express her frustration, including yelling, "Stop being fucking racist!" *White Fragility* by DiAngelo articulates the need for white people to understand and discuss racism by showing how all white Americans share responsibility for upholding racism as the foundation of US society. *LSE US Centre on American Politics and Policy*, a United Kingdom perspective book review, precisely explains the dispute among white people in America:

White fragility refers to the intense emotions, the defensive stance and the argumentation white people experience, take and utilise when confronted with the topic of racism. DiAngelo gives many examples of white fragility, from her own experiences to those that she has observed in her job as a consultant on racial and social justice issues. One common example of white fragility is a white man who insists that white people are being discriminated against because of affirmative action.

Another example is a woman of colour who claims a white woman is speaking over her; in response, the white woman says she speaks over everyone; therefore, it is not a race issue. Other examples illustrate white fragility at a national level, such as the Black Lives Matter movement being contorted into ‘All Lives Matter’ by white people who feel threatened. Or the anxiety white people develop at the thought of being the minority (which studies indicate will be the case in America by 2044).

White fragility, among other books and allies work encourages white people to take strides in their own lives to dismantle white supremacy, confront white privilege, and reject the racist structures that underpin society.

My analysis and experience in the MLS program prompted research on more inclusive, equitable, diverse literature, and arts representations. After experiencing a major traumatic trigger in the last core course, reading books with pejorative language against black people, I had had enough of the offensive literature society regarded as masterpieces. I was concerned to leave my residence as a black woman during a pandemic and reading literature from the 1920s was offensive and destructive to the spirit. Books such as *Absalom Absalom* by William Faulkner should have a disclaimer—the derogatory word “nigger” appears over a hundred times.

The intent of devising narratives that speak to diverse groups is to create awareness on numerous concentrations. Make America Healthy Again should be the slogan for the next century. Books such as *White Fragility* by DiAngelo, *How to Be An Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, and *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad sales should reduce tremendously because we would be over the hump towards paradise. Americans must acknowledge that all forms of discrimination—racial, body shaming, gender bashing, oppressing the feminine voice—make people sick.

Literature gaps omit diverse, all-encompassing, and illustrative narratives, whether intentional or unintentional. Gaps within collected works, implicitly or explicitly, suggest European history and values as “standard” and superior to others, thus helping to produce and justify Europe's leading place within the global capitalist world system. There is a blatant gap of representation in American texts, which supports ignorance-related racism, prejudice, and implied biases flourishing throughout Western society. These informative ideas and concepts reinforce the narratives of the devised ethnographic chronicles encompass themes on discrimination—negative effects and the gaps be circumvented.

### III. Narrative Process

There is something fundamentally poignant about Plato’s allegory. A person has to recognize everything up until this point in their life has been a lie or they have been lie to by society. When they begin to recognize the lie—society and the manipulation of the shadows, how do they react—violence, anger, sadness, hopefulness? A state of paralysis by the doom and gloom of lies can sabotage the self, the soul of man, to resort to remain in the state of complacency, paralyzed by fear of the unknown. The opening scene and the entire devised takes place within Plato’s allegorical cave setting and each character emerges from the cave with a voice of insights about their world.



Paintings of Plato's *Allegory of the cave* an excerpt from *The Republic* 514b & 515e.  
Image copyrighted ©



Paintings of the Plato's *Allegory of the cave* an excerpt from *The Republic* 514b and 515e.  
Image copyrighted. ©

The focus compares Plato's allegory of the cave to current—day people who sit and watch their screens, observing and being cognitively manipulate willingly by turning to their screens. The snake in the photo below is the deception of the messages shared with intent implicit and explicit biases to infer discrimination towards certain people, cultures or traditions within society.

The inclination to transcribe and devise on topics involving narratives of discrimination was

urgent for more illustrations: diverse, equitable, inclusive and represented faces, voices, and movements I know from the people I know and see in the world daily. After five years confined to reading literature mostly by dead white men, I yearned for more diversity in my milieu. The under-representation of people of color, women of color, in literature, art, texts, and conversations began to irritate me. While researching papers literature by John Crossan, Albert Camus, Carl Jung, Arthur Miller, James Joyce, William Faulkner, Joseph Conrad, and Ernest Hemingway, I recognized the masculinity and Eurocentrism in my collection of literature books. Nevertheless, it became my mission to create diverse content—not the oppressed versus the elite, but stories about the oppressed. I decided to do something about the misrepresentation of certain cultures and races and create a new work of art—a performance project. The first purpose of creating content was through devising new work that has an audience without belonging—discriminated blacks, the dark-skinned Negro, fat women, the female with a strong vernacular speech, the non-binary individual with pronouns due to the fact that they need a platform, too.

The art of storytelling had to evolve from the ensemble who would bring the themes and plot with real descriptions as we place it within the unconscious realm of ignorance. Therefore, real voices that could relate had to perform the roles. However, while characters tell stories that reflect the biases of the world—society, politics, economics, those characters had to remain poised to share it through monologue, song, dance to support the conflicts. The unconscious realm of ignorance is set in Plato's *Republic* with emphasis on the *allegory of the cave*, where prisoners bound by chains are unable to see beyond the projected manipulation of images shown before them. The main events of the devised move each character through traumatic scenarios, triggering the urge to move, be free of imprisonment, and discover the ignorance of their unconsciousness. The storytelling of each character reveals the layers of ignorance as defined by

past experiences of racism, prejudices, and biases within their family, friends, work environment, culture, society, and as a citizen of America. America is highlighted with a tone of hypocrisy as none of these characters, victims of discrimination, truly have experienced the “land of the free.” Each of the characters live within “...the home of the brave” because that is all they have ever known as an outsider that does not belong within the American standard of acceptance; therefore, they all are fighting for equality, justice, belonging, and most of all to live a healthy and peaceful life.

I conducted interviews with expert devised theatre creators for social justice to gain a wider perspective about the procedure. In an interview with Eddie DeHais, a non-binary director, writer, devised-theatre-maker, choreographer, and innovate storyteller, I had organized a shape to the devising process before gathering the ensemble. DeHais’s technique is thorough and planned out, similar to my style of preparation and work. DeHais recommended I have a main *theme* and place it at the *top of a tent* per se, and support that theme with *tent poles*, and to picture each of these *tent poles* presents a topic related directly back up to the theme and that drives the story out into the world and gives a message, your message. After this interview, I created my theme—discrimination, racism and prejudices—and each tent pole: blackness, colorism, fatness, the feminine voice, and non-binary/gender neutral identities; lastly, the tent instead was a cave. A second interview, Aixa Mendez, professor, director, writer, and devised ethnodrama creator, provided another lens into new work—ethnography anthropology and theatre anthropology, which studies the backstage of the actors and the process and then they write an ethnography. At the conclusion of this interview, I realized that my research documentation for the discriminative topics within the devise was called ethnography. Knowledge of ethnography and the ethnodrama component enriched the storytelling, as I asked

the ensemble to include, race, politics, religion, and to identify with colors for their voice. The color is a visual role and causes a reaction; it speaks about the character's method of communication—psychological and emotional. For example, the voice of colorism uses grey to symbolize that black and white is a grey area. On the other hand, Mary Magdalene's voice comes from her bleeding red heart, emoting her love for Jesus Christ and his blood. The non-binary identity was re-introduced during the spring term 2021. The original non-binary ensemble member had to withdraw due to a work conflict. However, both non-binary identities demonstrated similar thoughts on colors and using it to identify gender of people; pink for girls and blue for boys; a stigma established by the “1940s retailers and manufacturers decided on pink for girls and blue for boys.” In the end, the colors devised come together to form a rainbow, representing all the people, as one whole, and that represents hope.

The conscious mind is essential to the overall message of this devised. In order to arrive at the conscious, both direction and devising had to lead the ensemble to the spiritual world. I divided and framed the story into four parts—Part 1: *the mental mind* “the cave” unconsciousness within the cave where ignorance lives. Part 2: *the physical body*, the exit from the cave out into the unconscious world new territory to these prisoners' lives have been sheltered and pre-programmed with conditional images. Part 3: *the emotional body*, the world how it affects the senses, feelings, and innate reactions. Part 4: *the spiritual body* in the resolution or the conscious self, growing deeper in full awareness of the truths, biases, deceptions, manipulations and fully in control of one's self. Consciousness is the educated mind also connected to the spiritual self. Both the educated and spiritual selves finds a balance with thoughts, decisions, and ideologies along with self-nurturing the inner self with love, gratitude, acceptance and peace. The only voice who remained in the mental mind, the cave, trapped by the

unconsciousness around them was Anonymous—whiteness. As a result, the devised performance collaborators joined to share stories and express the desire for equality, inclusivity, and diversity, but most of all to have “belonging” within the culture and society that makes up America.

#### IV. Conclusion

In my final analysis, I have discovered devising is not for those on a fast track to producing a form of art. It takes an artistic quality and quantity to develop something original that contributes to literature—a performance narrative that may relate to too many. Under the umbrella of the American liberal rights and privileges are people who suffer from disallowing because they do not fit the American standard. A standard that remains hypocritical to the very fabric and melting pot of people that truly represent and define America—diverse and all one as human beings.

Plato’s goal was to form unity for all humanity, but he was only able to do so in writing; however, his philosophy thrives long into the present—day theoretical and practical beliefs. Jung views the soul as an objective reality; nonetheless, the soul is something independent, dangerous, and inquisitive—the source of life. Therefore, if humankind can come together and remove the “I” as a part of the whole, the independent soul—ego consciousness, which stems from an unconscious human being—can expand more consciously into a world works for us all. When the “I” no longer exists a utopia that does not cost lives, a utopia does not cost anything to just belong to a culture and/or society. A true utopia includes all races, ethnicities, cultures, colors, beliefs, and thoughts under one umbrella, one system that fits all. Right now, our utopia resembles the *Paradise* within Toni Morrison’s book, where in order to create a true utopia, it cost lives, livelihoods, strict rules, bias self-serving politics, money hungry churches, and leaders who celebrate fame and spread fake news in order to succeed in false pride. America was built on the backs of enslaved persons, removing the Indigenous far away from their own land, in



order to colonize and manifest a world true to only one voice—white. In this model, wars, contagions, protests, and failed systems continue to kill millions of citizens, taking lives because the patriarchal narrative fights to preserve his own traditions and culture—white supremacy. In 2020, the catalyst year for a paradigm shift allowed the world to see the hypocrisy within itself and change the dialogue, so much so that it became virtual. The virtual world forced humanity to see the injustices from another lens where some were not able to turn their heads away anymore, as the injustices repeated, again, and again, and again—just different faces, different names. Another facet of the entire cave philosophy is that even if the people in the cave were to come out and see the truth with their own eyes, they could also see the world with the imitations they formed from the likenesses or see that the likenesses are not the real things and change their thoughts. While Plato's *allegory of the cave* sets the tone and the stage, the goal to reach a utopia for all will reach completion upon a performance.

## V. Transcripts and Monologues

The monologues were devised after seven weeks of two-hour virtual sessions with the ensemble. Precise topics on certain discriminations within American society over a period, including circulated news media reports during the spring to fall of 2020, added to the monologues. Each monologue focuses on the particulars of a form of discriminated experience. Plato's allegory of the cave is the location—unconscious or ignorance experiences within societal standards that have judged these voices, therefore influencing their narratives.

The transcripts document the notes and devising directions given to the ensemble, which began September 29, 2020 and ran for almost three months, concluded by December 15, 2020. There are total of seven voices, including the voice of the cave and what it represents overall to the theme and narrative of devised. Let me introduce you to the voices: voice one is the cave,

voice two is blackness, voice three is colorism, voice four is fatness, voice five is whiteness, voice six is feminine, and voice seven is non-binary. Lastly, each voice during the devising process chose a color that represents their literary tone. Throughout the devised there will be a color and colors for some, but, at the end, a rainbow of colors will represent the need for unity and oneness.

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## THE DEVISING PROCESS

The cave represents the house of unconsciousness and ignorance as reference to Plato's allegory of the cave, however, ignorance within the cave is the unconscious mind conditioned by the worldly prejudice and manipulative images containing hidden and cognitive biases.

The walls of the cave or tent poles support the ensemble's past of discrimination: racism, colorism, feminism, body image, sexism.

Part I: the cave, confined to restraints—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual  
Images on the wall portray past shadows—memories of discrimination towards who you are, what you are, how you think, how you feel and the world tells you who to be and who not to be.

Part 2: the exit from the cave.

There is still unconscious, ignorance, we hear, see, feel, and experience more racism: gender, race, feminism, body image, and perspectives that are painful, wounding, traumatizing, and terrorizing.

Embrace part 2: the exit as what some call the "shadow". There is pain in any form of racism, whether you are exhibiting it to another or experiencing from another. Again, we are focused on your voice/perspective in pain, trauma and the above. This part is not connected to

the cave because in the cave/womb, there no awareness of anything else, but now there is some awareness, awareness of the unconscious and it makes you feel bad, it traumatizes you, it makes you feel something you have not felt before.

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## A. Scripting

### **Part 1: MENTAL MIND: “the Cave” Unconsciousness**

- We all are beginning in “the Cave”. This cave again represents you being unconscious, oppressed, limited, right now.
- You will begin in “the Cave”, seeing the shadows on the wall (watching the TV news 2020).
- Chained to the topics of racism: gender, ethnicities, race, class, sexuality, and religion.
- That being said, you could do a monologue, interpretative movement, sing, dance, play an instrument, or spoken word, BUT, you are in “the Cave”.
- Your mind is still unconscious, unaware, stuck in a paralysis of the mind - MENTAL
- Each one of us should begin with an introduction “voice” in character.
- Who is your character?
- What are they representing?
- Where they coming from internally and what are is their internal dialogue?
- How will you relate to us YOU being in “the Cave”?
- We all begin in this cave.

### **Part 2: PHYSICAL: “the Exit”**

- Mental: “the Cave” unconscious, ignorance, racism: gender, feminism in the Bible, race, and other perspectives. The voice here shows/speaks and or displays all of the above.
- Physical: “the Exit” still unconscious, ignorance of this voice still exist but you are beginning wonder if there is more to the world than you knew. The voice here shows/speaks and or displays all of the above.

### **Part 3: EMOTIONAL: “the World”**

- Emotional: “the World” (the body) exploring consciousness finding out about yourself as this voice

### **Part 4: SPIRITUAL: “the Resolution” Consciousness**

- Spiritual: “the Resolution” consciously aware of the world as it is today, out in the world. Alternatively, do you choose to stay in the Cave, the unconscious?

**Each Voice of the Play with devisor and color representing a rainbow coalition of voices.**

**Voice One: The Cave—the World in the Cave**

Devise Creator: Sonia Pasqual

Color: violet –violet flame, oranges, blues of the fire in the cave

Represents: enlightenment, the voice of transformation, possibilities and hope

Monologue: (6-7 minutes)

I am the flame in fire in the cave. I am the violet flame, the symbol of light, the flicker of hope that shines bright. I am the only chance those bound have to be release from their mental enslavement and unlike Prometheus be unbound physically and freed. In the cave, I dwell in the violet flickers seen in the fire that illuminates the orange images on the wall.

The energy of the fire shines life, life force, dormant within the slaves oppressed by an unconscious mind, chained by the manipulators willpower. As a prisoner, they watch these images, and the movement of images by the flame and it sparks curiosity in some and none in others. But today, something is different, the DNA? The air fueling the flames? Their destiny?

They move, first their bodies, but feel the pull of restraints controlling the world in which they live and breathe. (Pause and do actions of breathing deeply)

They breathe, but want more and breathe in deeper, again, and again, they breathe.

Restrained physically to control the mind, bound to the images on the screen, the wall, they control the thought, the mind, the implant a false perception of unworthiness and creating disillusions, sadness, depression and fear. The flame today burns higher, brighter—it shines into the souls of the prisoners. A shackle breaks, and then another, and another, the thumping of their excited nervous hearts beat in rhythm to a buffalo drum. (Play buffalo drum and the flame builds to drum 30 secs). An urge to move, an urge to change what they have known all these years! (Play buffalo drum, 30 secs...)

The life force of possibly moves throughout the cave, the old paradigm shifts, as we say (all say together pre-recorded: (We are entering a fertile period, **do not resist the change, do not resist the change, do not resist the change. Let us go!**)

(End)

**Voice Two: Blackness—Who Am I?**

Performer: Hannibal Callens

Color: Purple

Type: Monologue

Transcript:

I feel like in my experience, often times people try to separate themselves from it because they think that being connected to it is in some way weakening, but then there you find it, it is still a part of you, no matter how much you try to separate yourself from it. Moreover, that was a major inspiration for my pieces. The challenge for me and writing these words that I have personally been. For most of my life very well educated about black history and known enough to know that even though the stereotypes of black people. Very nice. Those are not proper representation of black people actually are, so the challenge for me had to be in a way, reverse engineering my thought process and trying to develop a character who did not know the things that I already knew. And I found that to be challenged. And with that said, I have devised are divided that work process up into about four monologues, I had two of them that I merged together, but those monologues chronicles this character's growth through that process and how he is able to come out changed in the end. I have originally. My idea was to have different shirts representing different aspects of where the character is at any given point those shirts are currently around me. However, now I am thinking, I do not know how. To do that or if that is necessary. Um, but the in the color for the character. This is in case someone else into picking this up. And so they know where I am coming from blood purple is my favorite color and using it to symbolize this character's identity or who they think they are, you know, as like being a unique individual and blah, blah, blah. The differences in shirts and colors would help express how they go. So that being said, I have the monologues with me. Sorry, I did not just dive into them. I don't know if that explanation was important or necessary. But did you want me to just shoot through the different monologues and go through the paces of it, or would there be some of the process or flow to the process?

Sonia Notes:

I think you could go through each monologue or logically and just let us know when you're transitioning from one to the next. I want you to just spin around, turn your back to us and then turn back to the camera to start the next monologue. That's good enough. So you don't have to break character or thought!

Monologue Part I: (14 minutes)

Purple shirt and a name tag over the heart to signify at work.

Wakanda forever!

Wakanda forever!

I cannot be the only person who is sick of having people do the Wakanda forever. So, who sat

down and I loved Black Panther. It was a cool movie and rest in peace chat with Bozeman, but I just I always find it weird that when that movie came out suddenly everyone thought like they had to do the economy to salute at me. Can you guess why they felt like they had to do it to me because I am black? But I am not just black I always have had to deal with people trying to act a particular way or treat me different because of the color of my skin. I am not black. I am person, you are a person to we're all our own things. The fact that I am this color or that you're that color doesn't mean we have to add. A particular way. You don't have to change the way you speak, you don't have to change the way you act to make me feel cool. And this will kind of salute is the newest one in black specific handshake. I grew up with the fist bump and everyone will shake hands to everyone when they see me. Ha-ha! Like that supposed to mean more to me than it does for anyone else, you know. (Dab motion) I only recently figured out that's called dab. So, no one really knows where these things come from, or all of that. (Brief frustrating pause)

And it's just, it's frustrating always having people feel like they have to treat different. So when we got a new guy at my job. Things got really weird for me. His name is Osiris James, which to me sounds like a poet's name, and can you guess what he does for fun. He's a slam poet, he's got this energy is always expressive and he's nice to everyone, but as always trying to be extra cool to me because guess what he's black too. In fact, his first day. There he goes, whoa, whoa. Nice. Do we have another black guy in the career of all right, man? Hey, it's nice to not be the only brother home, man. Well, the Wakanda forever!

Now every day that I work and that he works to he's always trying to talk to me asking me a man. How's your family doing, how are you holding up how they treating you and it's gotten to the point where people keep asking me if he and I are cousins. Not because we're the only two black guys there, but because he acts like we're cousins. He's always checking up on me and all of that, which is fine. Except for the fact that I don't know him and he's trying to act like we're like this, like we're family and I have never met the dude. Then in fact—today the day when I went on my break. I don't know why. Maybe God hates me. But he was on break two. And the minute I walked in the womb. He sees me and he lights up like Kwanzaa candles and says, Hey, man. What kind of music do you like and I already know where this conversation goes, right as a black person. My response is supposed to be man, bro! You know what it is. So I love rap, rap music is my 'ish dog haha' yes sir no cap, dab. But guess what? I don't like rap music! Well what! Yeah I don't like it. It doesn't speak to me. The music's always repetitive and I cannot stand what people go on about. I just don't appreciate what it is they're selling. But can I tell them that? No! If I tell this other black guy that I have a black guy. Do not let rack means now I will be judged as less than authentic. I'll be considered like I'm not a real black person and the now I don't get to have an identity. Which makes me so mad. And I don't want to deal with it. So the answer I gave was an answer made to not actually answer the question, but change the focus. Nah man, I just like anything, like whatever dog. He said, yeah ok, I know what you mean, me too. Which means I nailed it. Then I'm hoping, so I'm sitting here eating my food, and he's talking to me about how important rap is to him and how he got into poetry. And I'm sitting here waiting for the time I clock back into work. Can you think about how bad that is who sits on their break and prays that it's time to go back to work? Finally, my watch go off. Cool, I gotta go back. And see there's a flyer sitting right by the time clock and it says there's going to be a cookout this weekend. I don't know why I asked him, right. But I asked Osiris, you want to cook out this weekend. His response was, who's cooking. Who's cooking? It's going to be a Beth's

house. So I'm guessing Beth will be doing the cooking. And I didn't understand it. But he said, oh, no, man. I'm good. I like raisins, but not when they're in potato salad. I didn't get that. But I do know one thing, if he's not going to that cookout. I am!

(Pause)

At the cookout.

Name tag off. Shirt off with different undershirt below.

Oh, those cookouts, the cookout, it's kind of lame. But to be honest man with the fun and the music. You can almost get over the food. But it's nice to see people from work, not at work and I don't really hang out with my co-workers too often, and I've never been the Beth's house before super nice house and I did not know she lived this close to me. I go for run through this neighborhood, like every morning and you know and I passed this house. I always thought I saw her car here, but I didn't know she's right down the road. And it's actually, kind of fun being here a little while this, you know, we're talking about regular stuff people are talking about sports. I'm not really in sports. They're talking about shows, they're watching and the only shows that I watch our enemy. I doubt that any of these people here are excited about attack on Titans next week. So I'm not even going to bring it up. And everything is all fun until people start to talk about. People start to talk about the news. We talked about the state of the world and people immediate shift to me and go. Hey, how do you feel about the rioting and looting? And what am I supposed to say, you know what, what do I say, do I tell them, Oh, I haven't really been paying enough attention. That I heard about what happened to George Floyd but and I know what happened to him wasn't right. But I've been so caught up in my own life in my own situations and in my own business that I haven't even learned the important details. That I've been more focused on the man killing virus ravaging the streets. No. I can't say that it makes me look, doesn't make me look how I want to look. Oh hey yeah the world's on fire. I dunno know why? So I can't say that. And what do I do I find a way to divert the focus all while not actually answering the question, like some sort of master of conversational jujitsu or a politician. Honestly, I've had a lot of people ask me how I feel about it. I'm a little more interested in how you see it.

Nailed it.

Then, Beth says, well, my husband is an officer and honestly, I don't think people will admit that these people have it coming right. George Floyd had drugs in his system and the autopsy showed that and this is what happens when you resist arrest.

(Pause) I honestly I'm not too well read on the details. But that statement hit me weird. Wait, he had drugs in this system, but man that officer put his knee on George Floyd's neck for eight minutes, for more than eight minutes. How was that, how is that not important. How does that not make a huge difference, but, I don't say that. But I do ask. Wait, resisting arrest. Okay, that makes, ahh, I can understand that. But what about for Philando Castile. He was sitting in his car when he and his family were pulled over, he told the officer he had a gun in the glove compartment and the officer still opened fire on them. A completely different person goes well, these officers, they can't take chances their lives are on the line. If they don't act fast enough, they have to do what it takes to avoid threatening circumstances. Threatening? (in disbelief)

Threatening? What's threatening about a person that's telling you they have a gun. If this guy is trying to get the jump on you. He's not gonna tell you that he has a gun. I wanted to say that so bad, but the words wouldn't leave my mouth. And before I could even try to say it. Another co-worker looks at me and says, right like that guy, Ahmaud Abernathy. Why would he be running through a neighborhood? He doesn't even live in. Hmm? What business does he have stopping in at empty unfinished houses? He was up to no good, and the people that hunted him down, the people that chased him they were doing their best to keep their neighborhood safe.

(Contemplative) And I, I couldn't really keep words in anymore. But I said, "wait". Who runs in a place they don't live, I do, I run through this neighborhood every morning that I get a chance to I run down the street. I run by this house, but I run here because your neighborhood is adjacent to mine. I don't live here but I run here and in fact wait a minute. Beth. You want my neighborhood. I see you stop through every week, when you go on your jobs. That cuts off and says, right. Well, people in that neighborhood know me and you, you don't act threatening.

I don't act threatening. But what about me would be less threatening to anyone else wanting to a neighborhood. I if, I decide not just keep it going. The conversation bills and bellows, but I just step back I've never felt like this. In a place like this and let alone with the people I work with, I don't feel, I don't feel safe anymore. I think I'm just going to take a play and go home. What the hell is in this potato salad?

Monologue Part 2: At work. (10 minutes) Change of the Black Perspective.

Shirt and name tag back on.

Threat!

Threatening!

But they really said that you know what. What makes me sick is why were they not able to point out the fact of where the officers misbehave. Why was there no criticism involved for how the officers acted. The people lose their lives if an officer acts too fast, but when they do we just say, oh, well, here's what they did wrong. We tear down people's character, rather than admit the circumstance. And when they said I don't act threatening. What I heard was, I don't act Black! I've never felt so unsafe. That means that the only reason I get to run through that neighborhood I run through is because, I act a way that they accept, I act the way that they appreciate and if I didn't and something bad happened, I would have it coming too. And who's to say that if I didn't act like that and something bad happened, they wouldn't say the exact same thing.

(Pause) I always thought this, just not acting black meant that I get to be not boxed in like that. But even if I don't fit that description, I still have to suffer from it. And I've never because I am not black. I don't fit in with black. I've never fit in to that, but I don't like the music. I've never liked them I don't play sports. Growing up, I always lived in a place where I was one of the only black family. And all the other black kids at the school always were mean to me and I felt alienated. So I just decided I was like, I'm not. I don't want to act the way that they do. I don't want to be that I'm not going to be Black. I'll be my own person. I like my own things. I like Sci-fi. I like anime. I'm not that. But to then have people outside of that, see me in a similar way, They don't see me as me. They see me as a person who is not that. And I don't act the way black people act. I don't know if I fit in anywhere. I've never fit in with the black people and I'm still the one or two behaviors away me an outsider from everyone else. And Lord knows I will be protected by anyone if something goes wrong. What do I do? Who I go to? I don't have any



family to discuss to talk about this with. I don't have any friends that I can talk about this with. I don't have any black people who would get this, all the people at my job clearly don't. I don't have anyone. I don't have any brothers. I don't have any sisters. I don't have any cousins. (Pause) Hey, Osiris, when you going on break man?

My perspective has gone through a huge shift. I ended up realizing I didn't know any black people. So I went to the one black person that I've always been running from. I spoke to Osiris while we were on break. When I walked up to him was like hey man, he asked me how the cookout go like he knew it's up, I told him. The things that they said they are made me realize and people don't really see me the exact same as them. They'd be quick to let me burn something if something went wrong. So I don't know, I feel like I don't fit in anywhere. And I don't fit the stereotype. I don't know what it takes to be black, but I don't fit in over there. I don't know what to do. He looked at me, he said. Look man, I'm not trying to I'm not trying to call you out. I'm not trying to be mean. But let me be real with you. I got a feeling you don't know black people. He's got a point. I mean I only know one but really what he meant was, I don't know what black people are like. I mean growing up I was the only black kid that I knew. And the other black kids that I didn't know were never nice to me, I was alienated, kicked out. So I never really got to know black people. I realized something. My perception of black people was based off, two filters seen through two lenses. It was built from the vision of what people told me black people are like, but those people they don't know what black people are like. And then hearing it from black people who only see black people a certain way. I have never gotten to know Black people on my own. I was like, what do I do. There's no black people to come shop here. There's no black people that come to our business. I don't. Where can I go to even get to know black people. When I said that Osiris lit up like Kwanza candles. And said, "Yo, you need to come out to the open mic, it's an African business, we sell African stuff and it is full of black people that know their shit. People that know history, culture, background and your love it, plus I perform there every week so you can see me doing my thing."

I wasn't going to go, but, hey I had the night off I went, man, it was way different than I expected. It was this big room full of black people, different shapes, sizes and colors. I mean all around the same color. But you get what I mean, but I was like, I didn't know black people were this diverse, you know, I got see Osiris on stage and he's not that bad. He got a little bit of some fire flow, he introduced me to people and told them. Oh, hey! He thinks he's not black. But after that perspective, I realized something that only people who don't know what black people are really I think we fit in a box. We don't have to be a certain way to be who we are understanding the legacy and background and history kind of add some color to the painting, not just who we are, but who I am. I didn't know about the fact that black people fought slavery the whole time it was going on. I didn't know that black people own businesses right after slavery and that they were success. I didn't know that successes of those people was destroyed torched and burned by people who were real mad. They had it together. Understanding all that makes me realize this being black thing is really freaking cool and all that adds to the tapestry of the history that comes in to who I get to be. I like Anime. I like Sci-fi. I like Kung Fu movies and all of that I get to do not in spite of my blackness but right there with. I might even want to get into some poetry too—life is like a lemon that has no juice. No! Okay. Not that!

(End)

**Voice Three: Colorism—Why do they hate my skin?**

Performer: Yesinede Ajete and understudy Nicole Ponce

Color: Grey

Type: Introduction and Interpretative Modern Dance

**Transcript Notes:**

An idea of what I'm going to do for my part of this project. I did want to do an interpretive dance but I wanted to incorporate a few things. What I mean is like a timeline. Tomorrow is the day slavery was abolished in Cuba. There is still colorism and racism until this day within the Cuban culture and it hits home with my family. Especially, my stepdad, he considers himself a "White" Cuban and my mom a "Mulatta" mixed white and black (brown). I honestly did not know what I wanted to do until yesterday. My stepdad was driving me and the twins to one of the boy's doctor's appointments and started making "black" jokes because he got cut off at a light. I had to yell in the car for him to stop because it became too much to handle and I realized how normalized it is in the Cuban culture to make fun of a darker skin tone as if they were the bottom of the totem pole.

To begin: In the Cave as a chained person (chained physically and emotionally to the ideas imbedded in my head growing up of what I should be because of my skin tone and how others around me should treat me vs how I feel about myself). Then as time goes on, I start to research my history, where I come from, my ancestors become people around me teaching me who I truly am. Time stops. Then I see flashes of events happening globally with race and I feel my voice trembling as I try to scream but nothing comes out. Once I build the strength back up, I start to stand and hear chanting in African dialects, Afro-Caribbean ancient folk music and surrounding me are my ancestors walking hand in hand with words of affirmation. This is a lot to take in but it will all come together once it is in dance, for now it is in my head.

**In the Cave:** Unconscious listening to people tell me who I am, what I should be... labeling me (As you see by the words on my body). I chose a Cuban Rhythmic beat for this because it's almost as if there is chatter in my head and conversations I am having with others.

**Transitions:** Running away from all of the thoughts, confusion, and disarray of emotions, not knowing what the truth is or who to trust. Song choice: was very upbeat and fast due to the feelings and emotions I am sorting through in my life and in my head.

**Transition towards resolution:** Finding out more about myself, my culture, who I want to be. Acknowledging that racism, colorism are one in the same and I don't have to accept them in my life and I can teach others I am stronger. No longer accepting outside influences to persuade my emotions and thoughts. Song choice: I found a version of a Cuban chant that descends from African tribal beliefs (Santeria, possibly the Yoruba tribe) as it is a form of protection coming over me and ancestors leading me down the path of acknowledgment but not accepting of the

words I've been labeled. I also chose a cover that someone did of the Lioness Hunt from Lion King because it is a perfect transitional peace to move to and it flows with happiness and joy.

**Finale:** I chose a Haka Chant to express the feeling of a warrior ready for battle and celebrating a victorious moment when I am erasing some of the words off of my body. I left black (Negro) and White (Blanco) on my cheeks (facing the camera to symbolize what others labeled me as) because they are a part of me as well as immigrant on my belly. I kept USA & CUBA (facing me so I can read them because I decide my destiny and my path not others) on my forearms because they are cultures that I either came from or had to adapt to.

The poem is entitled **“A Ship called America”** because the way many Cuban immigrants came to this country was on a ship, African slaves were transported that way as well and Europeans took voyage to take over American land on a ship.

Poem: (90 seconds to 1 minute)

A ship without its crew would sink. A ship left adrift will soon be consumed by the tide. America was built on the backs of its black immigrant and indigenous people. But the history books do not coincide. Immigration to this country sounded like a dream, until I was met with a cold shoulder, scared that would hurt my self-esteem. I saw my family struggle cleaning on their hands and knees working for a better life only to be met with “try harder next time” and wages that decreased. At home I was safe or so I thought, free of new world where that thing called hate was taught. Where conversations with family they were one in the same, colorism they call it, but who’s to blame. The lack of pigment or too much of somehow started the problem that could not be solve. For now I will sleep to confide in myself, I wish to wake up in a world one day where colorism racism is acknowledged and not suppressed. And as that ship sails through that ocean free of chain, man, woman and child will walk hand and hand without aggression sustained.

Dance (8 minutes)

(End)

#### **Voice Four: Fatness—How do they think I look?**

Performer: Kimberlee Smith and understudy Noelle Forestal

Color: Yellow and understudy Red

Type: Monologue

Transcript Notes:

Kimberlee Smith and Noelle Forestal (understudy) voice of Fat Phobia being a fat woman in American society and dating. I worked with her outside of devising sessions to help her development the voice we eventually found long after the devising process. It took a lot of patience and late nights to discover a fear about putting herself out in the world. However, she found a purpose and a timeliness to get out of her comfort zone and speak up for the women who struggle in their body image at work or dating.

### Monologue:

I'm alone now. No one to see me struggle or cry or freak out or get laughed at. No one for me to have to be concerned or worried about whether or not THEY are ok or uncomfortable. Free from their judgement. Free from their possible embarrassment. Like that time when my not-my-boyfriend-lover-date-person left me at my best friend's wedding reception and felt better to sit in his car in the parking lot. He said he just couldn't handle being in there with me and everyone thinking we were possibly together, especially those industry people.

Alone now. A secret agent solo mission. No one will ever know I was here or what happened unless I tell them. No one to witness though either if I triumph. But I probably won't so who cares. Do I really wanna do this? Maybe I'm too old. Too big. Too un-Californian now. Only people who aren't from here would do this, ever. Break the social beach code, knowingly or unknowingly. I am not allowed on the beach am I? Not during the day, certainly not. Not where people can see me, see my 'ya know...fatness. My huge boobs. Cleavage as deep as Marianas Trench. I know I don't belong here. They told me I don't.

When I was 5, my mom dropped me off at my new school and these mean vicious savage boys would squawk terrible hurtful words at me about my mother. About her size and what they saw. About how I would be just like her when I grow up. But I came from my momma. She and my dad made me in unfathomably deep oceans of unconditional love for me. How could that ever be bad? I was confused and I began to believe them thinking they knew something I did not know. Hateful voices and curses that tore me up and ate me up for years to come, reinforced and repeated by the world, by women and men, complete strangers and lovers alike. It seemed no one had a compassionate filter for fatness, neither for my mom, nor for me. The message that I don't belong is always crystal clear even in silence.

Agh! Where should I park? I don't wanna get a ticket. Must abide the laws of society and feed coins to the parking meter machine. Ok 2 hours. 3 hours? That should be enough. How do you even work this thing? Maybe I should go. No, I got this. I'm sure skinny blonde chicks do this all the time. I can totally figure this out. Ahhhgh! Someone's coming. Be cool. Look busy with your phone. Maybe I can see how the regular people do it. A-ha! Ok. Breathe. Now all I have to do is change my clothes...in the car. How do I do this? So hot. I'm schvitzing over here! Ok relax. A little music, a little AC, so I can think. Oh hello wow he is really hot. Does he do this every day? Surfing and then just changing his clothes outside his car? Whoa ok wow half naked in the parking lot. There he goes. And pants are off ok. Men have it so easy. Especially that guy. So very Adonis-ey. Of COURSE he can just stand at the back of his car with the trunk open, shiny salty tan manly pecs glistening and brazenly throwing the light around. Yeah, I see you. We all do. I wonder if he has a girlfriend. He'd probably never date someone like me. What would THAT be like? Hmmm. I would eat him for lunch.

Ok stop man-gazing. Tic-toc. Pumpkin time is at 4:15. Better hurry up if you're gonna do this. Are you really gonna do this? HE probably thinks you shouldn't. Ok. So I can't change into my swim suit outside the car. Clearly. I could get arrested, or fined at the least. And people WON'T like it. Or what if someone sees me and takes a video and posts it online and it goes viral?! (Sigh.) OK. Hot damn its hot in here! Thank goodness the windows are tinted. Is the coast clear? Ok girls, try not to scare anyone. They've seen big boobs around here, but nothing like you so just, ...ya know. OK flip-flops on. Water, keys, phone, towel, snacks, sunglasses. Wish I had some vodka and cranberry, but you can't drink on the beach right? Or can you? Or does everyone just do it and hide it? I don't even know. How do I not know this? But what if I get caught? Oh well, too late now anyway. Here we go. I'm going.

Ok whoa. Steps and stairs. Careful, steady, don't fall. One step at time, breathe. Hooooooo. Bike path! Cool! Damn I miss riding a bike. Maybe I can do that again someday. Holy hot sand! Be careful of glass or sharp things. I wonder how germmy the sand is. Ugchk yeah don't think about that. Damn this is far. I need to work out more. Alright, almost there. I can do this, I can do this, I can do this.

Why are you on your phone, lady? Why do I have to hear your loud annoying phone conversation in the middle of my special beach time? Can't you just walk and enjoy this? YOU'RE allowed to come here every single day!! I'm not even supposed to be here. I don't see any lifeguards yet, though. That's a good sign. I can't believe I'm 40 and I've never been in a bikini at the beach until today. Hell I've never been on the beach in a swimsuit since I was like 11.

In my 20s, I was a successful trainer and bellydance instructor at a women's gym for 2 yrs, the healthiest and fittest I've ever been at 225, new boss said 'you're fired'. The singing job I didn't get - 'sorry, you're too voluptuous for our family-friendly amusement park'. The laughing B-cup mean girls in junior high gym class - 'Like, omg, are you pregnant?' Entire teams of hispanic adult male gardeners cat-calling me on my way to school every morning - 'heyyy (kiss, kiss) mamasita, come 'eer!' I was only 9! The online date that snuck out the back of the restaurant when I wasn't young enough, thin enough, and DIDN'T flash my chest to him at lunch enough. 'You're only like a 3 anyway, maybe a 4, 'cause of your tits.'

At 17, my poor mom was accused of breastfeeding me too much simply because I was a cheeky baby. When I was 12, even my sweet loving well-intentioned old world Hungarian great-great grandmother, who fed us all amazing food by the way - 'Honey, what happen? You puff up like a pee-low. Everything in moderation, Honey, moderation.' I loved her, but it still hurt.

But I AM! I am here! In this beautiful divine body that does amazing things I don't even know or understand. Yes, I am a lot like my mom. She LOVED the beach. Of course she cared what people said or thought but she didn't let that stop her from going to the beach any chance she got, until those were all gone.

Ok cover-up coming off. Breathing, breathing. Here we go. EEK! The water is so cold, but sooooo good. Ahhhh.... The cool Pacific. My home ocean. Oh my god I love the beach! This is amazing, why haven't I done this before? Oh yeah.. that's right. Well who cares? I'm here now. Man, that sun is bright! But also glorious! Wow! My body loves the sun! I never knew. Wha- Hey! What the hell? Those are MY cheezy crackers! I can't believe they took my crackers OUT of my bag. AND they crapped on my towel! Gross! Guacala! Seagulls are mean! And vicious! I can't believe how they tore up the bag! Savages, thieves, bastardos! Yuck! At least its just the corner. I can fold it over for now. (Sigh.) Other than the stupid birds, I'm feeling ok. No one has asked me to leave. Not yet. Oh my god, somewhere in my mind I really thought the beach police or lifeguards or someone was gonna come up and tell me I don't belong. How crazy is that?

Wait, what, who is that? Is she talking to me? Why is she talking to me? I don't know her. Why is she sitting down near me? Just be nice. Maybe she'll go away. Ok smile. Not too much. Why is she asking so many questions? Do I sound like that when I ask questions? I don't wanna tell her all my stuff. Wait, is she hitting on me? Maybe she's just being friendly? Its the boobs. Must be. Always is. Ugh so awkward. Ok stop. Maybe she's cool. Maybe she's just lonely, or had a bad day. Always be nice, you just never know what someone else is going through. What if she's suicidal or on the fence and you're the last person she talks to today? Don't be an asshole. Show compassion. Show compassion.

(End)

### **Voice Five: Whiteness—Why do I feel this way?**

Performer: Anonymous voiceover Dr. Marianne DiQuattro

Color: Black (void)

Type: Monologue

Transcript:

Whiteness shall be recognized as Anonymous voice in this devised. Whiteness an artist, mother, and talent identified her voice in this devise with hardships surrounding the identity of racist within one's own family. Anonymous dumbfounded that her mother compared Black Lives Matters to the Ku Klux Klan, referring both as hate groups. Realizing the mother she knew had an interesting perspective on black and white lives. Whiteness, a voice unable to complete the devise due to realism and pressures of moving out of the imaginary allegorical cave. Whiteness, the privileged race in Western culture, fears a reality al world changing around them to include diverse perspectives inclusive and equity to serve everyone's interest. Ingrained Eurocentrism ideologies has demonized other ethnicities and races, whiteness cannot escape the confines of his/her cave—womb, this birthright.

Monologue: (8-10 minutes) voiceover -DiQuattro

The first thing I noticed was my hands. I looked over and saw fingers moving connected in a web like pattern to a limb that grew from what I could only guess was me. I thought to wiggle and move. And they wiggled and moved. Her laugh. It shook the walls and made my heart race with excitement. When it's still I wonder what's happening out there in here I move kick punch anything to feel something. Sometimes I hear sad sounds and the made me still. I feel soft and fluid and light. I also feel afraid of the yelling and the loud noises like thunder. The hand that I move around in this fluid space seems to be reaching for something yet unknown. For now, I am in a ball tucked up inside myself. Tucked up inside her. And wondering what could it all mean?

Floating, floating, floating here I go and I know that I do not know. But I keep making myself known. I will float, float, and float 'til the light is shown...

It's cold and quiet. I do not feel anyone around me. When she comes, it's as if the sun has appeared. Mama. I am warm, I am home, and I am at peace. There are shadows here that I do not understand. People speak so fast and at times, I feel I cannot keep up. It makes me sad and so I cry. I cry, scream, and kick but it only makes them upset and makes me feel worse. So much injustice in the world. I remember where I came from. There it was warm, I was always fed, always loved, and time moved slowly. Slowly enough for me to keep up. I miss before. Where are you, before? Womb of my heart. I long to feel you around me. I want to be a miracle again instead of just a person.

Walking, walking, walking one foot in front of the other. Talk, talk, talk, I do not want to hear it; I just walk, walk, walk, and hope I do not fall. Ground please hold me up so I do not fall.

I don't want to write. My heart is tidy without the written word. And this passion is wreck less and weary for the wear of this world. Take it off. The voice of my ancestors calling me back to earth, back to soil and seed. Back to wailing for the dead among the living. They call for restoration of all that is great by loving the lascivious. Indeed, love the villain, hold him sacred among us and say thanks. Thanks for showing us through the shadow of our own ignorance—we might be illuminated. Through the trauma of senseless killing, we might be reborn through destruction of the self. We might build a new structure in which we all have stake in each other. Through the bondage of enslavement, we might learn what true salvation looks like and dear devil of a man we might take you with us into the light of eternity. Until then, I return to the cave, the womb, where I rest my mind, my thoughts and let the world unfold into oblivion.

(End)

### **Voice Six: Feminine—Will they listen to me?**

Performer: Kristen Wheeler

Color: Red—bleeding heart

Type: Short Story/Monologue

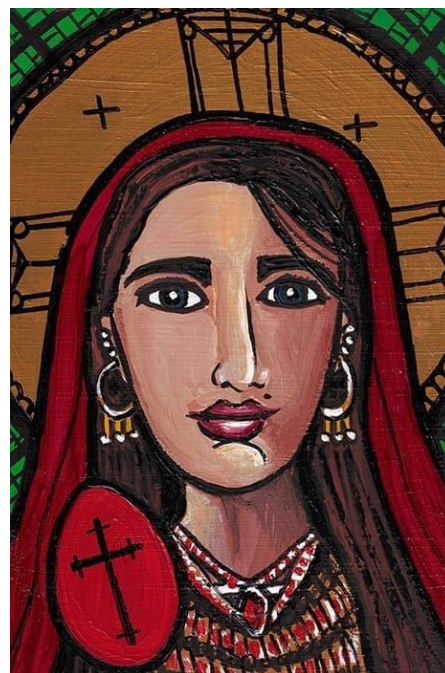
#### **Transcript:**

Kristin's art, writing, and practitioner of meditation got her into the heart and soul of the biblical Mary Magdalene's story and voice. Her own interpretation of Magdalene. In the cave of her own body where she was trapped emotionally, mentally and physically in a lot of pain. Unable to escape, Magdalene sought out Jesus choose to follow him and work with him and his ministry.

Short Story Development Virtual Transcript for Kristen Wheeler

She will paint in a time lapse recording a photo of Mary Magdalene as we listen to her monologue.

The icon graph photo to the left, painted by Kristen Wheeler, will inspire the new painting of Magdalene specifically for the devised ethnodrama: *Conscious Voices*.



#### **Monologue: (5 minutes)**

You know, women are not allowed to be seen in public with men, sometimes, depending on the culture. And if you look back at the times of the Bible that we're talking about with Mary Magdalene and Jesus. You know, it was pretty common that women had to follow behind men. Men couldn't be seen talking to women in public; this was not something that was common at all. But Jesus wasn't something common at all and I really feel like in Mary story she went back into the cave. When Jesus died and she was the first one to see him resurrected. So she went back to the cave. Three days after he was buried to anoint his body and he wasn't there. She ran back to the men of the group to Peter, who was kind of the head of the disciples. We all know who Peter is and he didn't believe her and the other men of the group didn't believe her either. So they had to go back to the cave and they see that his body is missing and they assume you know someone took him or, you know, did something with his body. They don't, they don't know what's going on and they left, and they left her in the cave and they left her there and she's just like, I don't know what to do. I don't know what's going on she runs out of the tomb and sees the gardener there or who she thought was the gardener and that turned out to be Jesus so she was the first person to see Jesus after he was resurrected and that's a really big deal, especially that she's a woman.

I really felt like in my meditation, she's telling me that she was the chosen to see him to be the first to witness that and as a woman who is in the process of becoming a deacon. The story is



really important for me. So through this meditation. I did a complete writing after all of that I kind of took all those. All those jumbles of words and her talking to me and I put it in story form as if we're seeing like a movie kind of play in front of us. With details that we might not be aware of and, you know, this is my interpretation. This doesn't mean this is what actually happened or what's true but it's what I believe to be true.

Monologue Part 2: (10 minutes)

A Perspective of the Biblical Mary Magdalene Represents the Feminine

In the caves corner .I inhaled, the sense of Myrrh flowing from the depths of the cave as I held up my torch to turn the corner. The sweet aroma that covered his route floated through the air masking and the stench of death and decay. My heart pounded louder and louder as a student, the corner where the breach in the caves walls open and I close my eyes. And then know what I was going to find the stone was moved when they came here to his tomb who moved it was someone tending to his body. On this day, that it was our turn. Did someone take him away, my God, what has happened here? I couldn't open my eyes. I was too afraid. Afraid of what I might see I stood there and complete stillness and silence with a flipbook of memories flashing in my mind. I remember the day he came to me. I was in so much pain. My body rejected every remedy I so desperately sought after in my own time of need. I could walk eat and drink. Normally, so everyone thought I was fine. No one could see the pain. So they assumed it didn't exist. But the pain resonated through my entire body, and I wasn't okay. Because of the violent words and actions against me. My mind hurt to I didn't want to live anymore I carry the weight of that pain and the feeling of not wanting to go on with such force that my mind slowly started to slip away. That's when I have the vision. I knew of Jesus and that he was healing people I knew if there was any chance for me it was through him. He came to me in a dream. He walked right up to me laid his hands on me and I was free. A few days passed after this vivid image I was at the well gathering a supply of water when my whole world changed. I lifted the pale to my shoulders and nearly cried out as my shoulder popped I close my eyes and hopes of some relief when I felt a soft touch and my waist. I knew it was him tears port for my face and onto the sand like a flowing waterfall filling a dry empty Valley. As if in slow motion. The tail fell from my painful grasp and the water poured out adding to the puddle forming at my feet. I fell to my knees and locked up and looked up with foggy eyes to the site and sounds of so many people laughing and gasping and my very public actions. He placed his right hand underneath my nodded knuckles and looks down at me. He lifted my chin with his left hand to meet his gaze. He said, you will never look down again, my friend, raise your eyes to me with the power of God, my own father I heal you of the burdens of your own mind body heart and spirit, my sweet child your pain has gone as I carry it for you. Now it will no longer burden, your soul. I closed my eyes once more, taking in the sounds and smells of the moment, knowing my life and everything before me would be different from that moment on, and I wanted to relish in it. My tears transformed from pain to gladness and relief. I took a deep breath, inhaling the cleanest breath of fresh air and filling my lungs completely something I never had the strength to do before.

As I exhaled my eyes met his they were so warm and golden. They seem to have their own light shining from within. He smiled that crooked corner smile, he always had assets that said so much without saying a word he took both of my hands and helped me rise. And I never looked down I

couldn't look away from his kind eyes as he slowly closed them and took a deep breath and exhaled. My pain died that day I had given it a soul, and he took that soul to heaven for me burying it deep within him as he did for everyone. He healed. I followed him closely. From that moment on, and I made sure that he never had to worry about the weight of his ministry. I opened my eyes at the capes corner again the silhouette of my torch playing tricks on me the flickering flame dancing across the stone surface like shadow puppets. Telling the story of how we all got here but can't leave chained to the walls I close my eyes once more the flipbook of memories kicking in and rushing me back to the week before which seemed like an eternity ago. The flame of the candles quivered in the evening air shaking about much like our erratic heartbeats at the anxious breath. We all carry it that night. The twelve of us gathered around the table hanging on to his words like we were gasping for air at the surface of the river. My heart was pounding, just as it just as hard as it is here in this case. We knew we had to die in order to live for all of us, but we just couldn't take hold of the idea that his body wouldn't be there in front of us anymore. His hand trembled. When he held the cup of wine and presented it to us as His blood, no one else noticed, but I did.

His hand trembled. When he held the cup of wine and presented it to us as His blood, no one else noticed, but I did. He knew he was going to die a horribly painful death, and he was scared to that's what people don't tell you he was human. Of course, he was scared. I don't care how brave. You are how called you are if you know you're going to die a piece of you breaks as your soul stands in waiting I eat the bread, and drink the wine tears filling my eyes as he turned to me in the moonlight peeking through the cracks in the window. He put his hand under my chin wants more pulling my face towards his and smiled. That crooked corner smile saying never looked down for you will lift. So many people up his mouth closed and my whole world felt silent fell silent.

I stared at a solid face but I continue to hear his voice speaking to me and only to me I surveyed the room to make sure I wasn't dreaming. Looking back at him. Eyes closed softly. I heard him say I'm speaking to you, Mary, you will be the first you'll be the first witness to my resurrection. You were always the first they won't believe you. You will have to show them and they still won't believe you even centuries from now, they still won't believe you. But you must know that it was always you it will always begin with you a woman, the only woman close to me, aside from my own mother you see in me something that the others don't. You see that I am feminine and masculine. You see the mother and the father. You see, God in a way that no one else will. And you will spend the rest of your life here in in heaven, encouraging others to see your vision, too. So, wipe your tears, not because I'm ashamed of them have them your tears are like gold and honey but wipe them to stay strong for those around you. I know its hard being a woman in this world, but I need you to take those tears and save them use them to base my body. When you visit me anoint my body in your tears.

He slowly opened his eyes, seeing the astonished look on my face and nodded and nodded back and wipe the tears that for my eyes and stream down. Then I woke to find the sweaty hands of his mother Mary next to me. We were at the cross and wept at his feet mail to the wood. So much happen and it was all a muddy blur of remembrances. How did we get here, wasn't it just yesterday. He smiled at me so softly reassuring me of my place in this ministry, now I'm at his

dirty feet covered in earth and salt and blood. I touched his ribs, as he came down his side. In the same spot. He touched me at the well seemingly so long ago I brushed across his ribs and felt each one so pronounced so bruised so battered and bloody from the stab wounds. Immediately we went to work, cleansing his body doing what needed to be done, we buried him in this cave wrapped in a clean white shroud the merge drift along the fabric and its sweet scent filling the cave solitary room. The light of our torches casting shadows on the wall. Shadows of the thousands of souls saved by his death.

My heart ached for him. My soul felt simultaneously lifted, lifted to the heavens and ripped from my very rib cage all at once. The days in between that moment and where I'm standing right now or hazy. There was so much persecution and hateful words in the grisly death of him. So many boastful, he was gone yet so many honored. He existed as a human being, all those words and emotions are swirling around me. Now as I wait to turn this corner. Today is my day to cleanse. I have all forgotten the words he spoke to me the night we eat bread, and drink wine together for the last time. I'm speaking to you marry you will be the first. I can hear these words, echoing through the cave. But today is supposed to be my turn. My turn to spend time with his body alone. To talk to him after everything that's happened. We took the long dirt trail lit by the fraction of sunrises it broke the surface of the Earth.

To gather spices and more and more in the market this morning. Then we headed to the stone entrance where we last left him and discovered the large stone was moved. I ignored all logic and ran inside torch blazing I felt the walls of the cave, like the embodiment of his ribs. When he came on down off the cross.

My fingers dragged along the stone surface so hard that dust fell to the ground in place of the tears. He told me not to shed anymore. And now here I am stopped in my tracks at the corner of this desolate and dark room where I last saw his wounded body and I'm barely able to open my eyes. Lifting my torch around the corner and preparing for what I would find I expected to see the shadow of his body lying there in the Muslim trout. But only that sweet smell of Myrrh followed me. I turned the corner and gasp completely in shock. I felt my knees and tried not to cry out. Just like that day at the well because I knew my mind and all logic told me that. Someone must have broken in and taken his lifeless body away, never to be seen again. But my heart and soul told me otherwise.

I remember how I held him I held his hand when he healed me. I held it again when we laid his body. In that case, before we wrap them in the shroud. His eyes were kind and loving the wave of peace and serenity that he left in a room when calm and prayerful is something that sticks to you. It's palpable like a strong perfume that sits in the air with a thickness. You can taste sickly sweet. The lightness in my heart is floating me off my knees and through the air. Now I'm running, running as fast as I can, through this means back to the entrance, where my friends are waiting. We ran to Peter, I felt his knees like I felt to Jesus when He healed me. But Peter looks down at me and didn't believe the words coming out of my mouth. What do you mean his body isn't there? What happened, who did this. We all ran back to the cave. The tomb buried deep within its walls. I knew if they saw this vision with their own eyes. They would believe me, I would believe me. But they became angry that his body was desecrated and stolen fleeing back to town and leaving me there to weep at the place where his shroud lay limp on the soil for the

smell of murder ascending into my nostrils and reminding me of his suffering and death.

I ran out of the darkness and into the light, the blazing afternoon. It seems brighter than usual, the whole sky was like staring directly into the sun. I looked to my left and I saw the gardener standing there tending to the colorful wild flowers that said that had so swiftly grown outside of the cave on this third day. He started to speak to me and asked women. Why are you crying? My heart skipped a beat. At the sound of his voice seemingly so familiar. But my eyes are playing tricks on me still dancing around in the darkness frolicking with silhouettes of memories as I was blinded by the sunlight white dots like angels fluttering and my poor feel. The gardener steps closer to me. He closed his eyes and smile too familiar crooked smile without moving his lips. He said, I am here, Mary. Then he opened his eyes took my hands in his and said out loud. Remember I chose you. In the moment my whole world came swirling back around me. The light of heaven became so blinding I fell to my knees once more at the side of it. But I still couldn't walk away. I saw an angel flapping her wings fluttering there softly, gently light emanating from within. He has risen Rabbani I said teacher and all too familiar not followed.

(10 sec Pause)

Red is the bleeding heart. It's the blood that ran down his face from the crown of thorns. They pushed so far into his skin. Red is the wine in the cup. We all shared and drank from that night. It's the Nile River that Moses turned to blood in front of his own brother at the first plagues of Egypt, all those centuries ago. Red is the tears that Mother Mary shared as she as she prayed asking God why she had to suffer the torture of losing her son and watching him die such a tragic death. It's the color of our clothes. The color of my lips when they kissed his cheek. Red is the color that unites all of us for no matter what we look like on the outside. We are all of the same color on the inside. Red his love because Jesus is love his body covered in blood when he came off the cross dying for all our sins and carrying our pain with him to heaven when he resurrected.

(End)

**Voice Seven: Non-Binary Identity—How do they see me?**

Performer: Franky Saavedra

Color: Purple, Yellow, Black and White

Type: Introduction and Modern Dance

Non-Binary Monologue:

From the moment I came out of the womb,  
 I glowed like the radiant sun.  
 A ball of energy, of life, of warmth,  
 And my parents provided unconditional love.  
 Love for who the child was then,  
 Love for who the child is now,  
 Love for who the child will become.  
 Growing up, my parents never pushed anything on me,  
 But they tried their best to see what my interests were,  
 As any parent would.  
 I appreciated for the times I picked up the Polly Pocket,  
 And no judgement was cast,  
 As we all appreciated the times I picked up the LEGO's instead.  
 But society was the issue I had.  
 Everything was either this or that.  
 No in-betweens,  
 No exceptions,  
 You were either one thing or the other.  
 And of course, I can tell from a young age,  
 If you went against the system,  
 You were to be damned.  
 And when it came to gender,  
 The question remains:  
 "Is it a boy or a girl?"  
 Boys are blue.  
 Girls are pink.  
 But at 10 years old,  
 I just gave up on choosing one color  
 And decided to just go with the whole damn rainbow.  
 Over the years though,  
 I have fully embraced and intertwined  
 Both my masculine and feminine energies.  
 For are they both to be treated and nurtured  
 As if they are our internal yins and yang's.  
 When I re-discovered myself through my gender,  
 The colors came back strong.  
 Yellow: for all the times that blue and pink never worked out for me,

Or how I am reminded of The Sun that gives us life.

White: for all the times that a fresh start was a possibility.

Black: for all the times that there is power in the mystery of the unknown.

Purple: the color of royalty, for which I am,

The color of creativity,

The color of pride.

Pride for the skin that I am in.

Pride for the person who exists today.

Dance

(End)

The revised script of Conscious Voices was orchestrated during the summer of 2021 to create a cohesive weave of the characters/voices on page 68-92.

# *Conscious Voices*

A devised ethnodrama about diversity, discrimination and racism

By Sonia Pasqual

**A play in One-Act**

### **Characters List**

Female for unseen voice of consciousness, God/dess, the cave, using a buffalo drum along with voice and sound to encourage, motivate and guide the cave-dwellers ready to be unbound from manipulators.

Black male, mid-twenties to early thirties who does not clearly identify with blackness or the black community/societies.

Latina female, mid-twenties to early thirties, dancer who can identify with immigration or first-born generation, aware of family's struggles to make a life in America and of colorism within the immediate family.

Black southern female, early thirties to early forties who has dealt with weight issues and body image her entire life. Fat Phobia Voice One is a curvy woman who experienced sexualization as a child, black girl to woman.

Non-binary identity, dancer, young, confident due to a strong, supportive family dynamic.

White person of any sexual identity, privileged, but suffers from a paralysis by fear, clutches belongings and closed off towards anyone of color. Limits use of space. Does not like change, unwilling to deal with racial implications and discriminations expressed by people of color or mother identities.

Female, overweight/obese, early forties, Fat Phobia Voice Two, associates with the west coast mentality of body image, especially on the beach.

Female of color, religious and spiritual, middle-aged, feminine, voice of Mary Magdalene, identifies with not being heard, of being ignored by society and culture. Struggles to express her voice and to be taken seriously in the world today.



### **Playwright Notes—On the Color Manifesto**

The colors within this play symbolize essential details about each character's approach to self-identification in the world in which they emerge. Color complements the layers of each character as it shapes equity, diversity and inclusivity, as they become part of the rainbow coalition of belonging to this world. Characters should choose a color that signifies their overall representation on the stage. As they ascend out of Plato's cave, the colors are seen first. The color may change throughout the progression of the play: the voice of Blackness appears at the beginning, middle and end. The visual color for this character begins as the light tint of lilac, to lavender, to indigo the closer, this character reaches to his journey outside of the cave. Overall, colors signify belonging, unification, wholesomeness and the rainbow spectrum as all become white. At the tail end of the Covid-19 pandemic masks with colors worn by each character were worn in conjunction with costume shirt, dress, pants or some obvious clothing.

Lighting in the cave begins with violet and some orange. Blackness uses lilac and evolves throughout the play to wearing indigo. Fat Phobia 1 wears yellow, while Fat Phobia 2 identifies with red, same as the feminine voice of Mary Magdalene (bleeding heart of Christ). Whiteness identifies with the cave as a womb; yet, this womb is mother Gaia/earth colors green and browns. Colorism wears grey to associate with the thin line between black and white. In the end, the cave transitions to orange bluish flames fueled by more circulating air now as the cave dwellers move about and ascend.

Lighting plays a central role enhancing the stage with color as each character embraces self-identification, belonging and the rainbow spectrum as the show unfolds.

### **Playwright Notes—Accommodating the Script for Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity.**

In this script of *Conscious Voices*, I the creator of this original devised work give permission to change the gender for the voices of blackness only. I give permission to include other ethnicity stories such as Native Americans or Indigenous voices, and Asian American voices as a replacement for a Fat Phobia voice two only or as an addition. I feel these voices are crucial to core essence of *Conscious Voices* too, bridging a gap of narratives not told yet in the original production of 2021. I ask to remain true to each narrative told within the script. For each story provides an honesty and revelation only told by the language it expresses as it emerges out of confinement and out into the world. Otherwise, omit a voice or voices that cannot be properly appropriation aware and use a voice or voices that could represent itself diverse, inclusive and equity. Do not manipulate or change lines or words. Do not manipulate or change characters and/or their voices.

## **Animation and Projections**

Animation is an integral part of transitions and the voice of the feminine. Throughout the production, animation images transition each scene and supports the characters. The animations are projected onto a screen and visible to the audience. Animation may collaborate each with character to give the audience an introduction. Use it for the cave, the fire's voice of a God/Goddess heard, either pre-recorded or live off stage.

## **Creator, Devisors and Dramaturgs**

Sonia Pasqual, creator of devised ethnodrama *Conscious Voices* thanks director and animator Ghina Fawaz, dramaturgs Dr. Marianne DiQuattro and Margaret Stewart. As well as, the original devisors Hannibal Callens, voice of blackness, Yesined "Yesi" Ajete voice of colorism, Kristen Wheeler voice of the unheard feminine of color, Noelle Forestal, voice of fat phobia one, Franky Saavedra, voice of non-binary identity, Kimberlee Smith voice of the black fat phobia and the Anonymous voice of whiteness. *Conscious Voices* premiered at the Annie Russell Theater, hosted by the Department of Theatre and Dance, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, on June 4, 2021.

This is script version of *Conscious Voices* that first emerged as a set of short stories and monologues. It transformed during the summer research to represent stories woven together by characters interconnected as they emerge out of an internal cave into the world of realism: racism, sexism, colorism, discrimination, body phobia and gender identities in the American society.

[Scene 1]

**Open scene in a Plato's type cave with fire and images on the wall.**

*(The fire flickers bright and high this day. The fire speaks in the voice of God, a woman's voice. To the actors on stage a gentle, strong voice is heard)*

I am the flame in fire; I am the flame in the cave. I am the violet flame, the symbol of light, the flicker of hope that shines bright. I am the only chance those bound here have to be released from the mental enslavement and the chains that hold. For unlike, Prometheus to be unbound physically and freed. In the cave, I dwell in the violet flickers seen in the fire that illuminates the orange images on the wall.

*(To the audience)*

The energy of the fire shines life, life force, dormant within the slaves oppressed by an unconscious mind, chained by the manipulator's willpower. As a prisoner, they watch these images, and the movement of images by the flame and it sparks curiosity in some and none in others. But, today, something is different, maybe the DNA? The air fueling the flames?

*(A short pause)* Their destiny?

They move, first their bodies, but feel the pull of restraints controlling the world in which they live and breathe.

*(Pause and do actions of breathing deeply—3xs inhale and exhale)*

The prisoners breathe. They want more so they breathe in deeper, again, and again, they breathe. Restrained physically to control the mind, bound to the images on the screen, the wall, the manipulators control the thoughts, the mind, and they implant a false perception of unworthiness, creating disillusion, sadness, depression and fear. Nevertheless, today, the flame burns higher, brighter—it shines into the souls of the prisoners. Listen, do you hear? A shackle breaks and then another and another, and the thumping of their excited nervous hearts beat in rhythm to a buffalo drum.

*(Play buffalo drum and the flame builds to drum 30 secs)*

An urge to move, an urge to change what they have known all these years!

*(Play buffalo drum 30 secs as prisoners free themselves and move around the cave)*

The life force of possibility moves throughout the cave, the old paradigm shifts, as we say.

*(To the actors)*

We are entering a fertile period, do not resist the change, do not resist the change, do not resist the change. Let us go!

*(Transition animation of the violet fire, lights out)*

[Scene 2]

*(Animations for Blackness that represent African traditional mask or texture/patterns. Lights up after animation ends. Actor walks out on stage and speaks to the audience breaking the fourth wall)*

## Black Male enters stage

Wakanda forever!

Wakanda forever!

I cannot be the only person who is sick of having people do—Wakanda forever. I loved Black Panther. It was a cool movie and rest in peace Chadwick Boseman, but I just I always find it weird that when that movie came out suddenly everyone thought as if they had to salute at me. Can you guess why they felt like they had to do it to me? Because I am black! But, I am not just black I always have had to deal with people trying to act a particular way or treat me different because of the color of my skin. I am not black. I am a person, you are a person too, and we are all our own thing. The fact that I am this color or that you are that color does not mean we have to act a particular way. You do not have to change the way you speak, you do not have to change the way you act to make me feel cool. And, this salute is the newest one in black specific handshake. I grew up with the fist bump or everyone will shake hands to everyone. However, when they see me. Ha-ha! Like that supposed to mean more to me than it does for anyone else, you know.

*(Dab motion)* I only recently figured out that's called a dab. So, no one really knows where these things come from at all.

*(Brief frustrating pause)* And it is just; it is frustrating always having people feel like they have to treat me different. Anyhow, for instance, when we got a new guy at my job Osiris James. Things got really weird for me. Osiris, which to me sounds like a poet's name, but can you guess what he does for fun. He's a slam poet, he's got this energy that is always expressive and he's nice to everyone, but as always trying to be extra cool to me because guess what—he's black too. In fact, his first day he was happy to see another black guy on the job.

*(He speaks to invisible Osiris next to him)*

He said, "Hey, it's nice to not be the only brother here man. Well, the Wakanda forever!"

*(Turns back to audience and paces within a small space downstage suddenly to expresses some frustration)*

Now every day that I work and that he works too he's always trying to talk to me asking me questions. How's your family doing, how are you holding up, how they treating you and it's gotten to the point where people keep asking me if he and I are cousins. Not because we're the only two black guys there, but because he acts like we're cousins. He's always checking up on me and all of that, which is fine. Except for the fact that I don't know him and he's trying to act like we're like family. I don't know the dude like that! In fact—today when I went on my break. I don't know why. Maybe God hates me. But, he was on break, too. And the minute I walked in the room, he sees me and he lights up like Kwanzaa candles and says, Hey, man. What kind of music do you like and I already know where this conversation goes. Right, a black person. My response is supposed to be—Bro, you know what it is, I love rap, rap music is my shit dog...Haha, yes sir no doubt.

*(Dabs and pauses staring at the audience as though he cannot get free from his chains, but slowly moves downstage as the lighting changes. Talks to the audience)*

But guess what? I don't like rap music! I don't like it. It doesn't speak to me. The music's always repetitive and I cannot stand what people go on about. I just don't appreciate what it is they're selling.

*(Gestures to the invisible Osiris to the side of him)*

But, can I tell them that? No! If I tell this black guy to black guy. I will be judged as less than authentic. I'll be considered like I'm not a real black person and the now I don't get to have an identity. Which makes me so mad. And I don't want to deal with it.

*(Speaks to the audience)*

So, the answer I gave was an answer made to not actually answer the question, but change the focus.

*(Back to Osiris)*

Nah man, I just like anything, like whatever dog. He said, yeah ok, I know what you mean, me too. Which means I nailed it. Now, I'm hoping, I am free as I sit here eating my food. But, he's still talking to me about how important rap is to him and how he got into poetry. And, I'm sitting here waiting for the time I clock back into work. Can you think about how bad that is who sits on their break and prays that it's time to go back to work? Finally, my watch go off. Cool, I gotta go back to work.

*(Moves away from Osiris and gestures to the an invisible time clock)* See there's a flyer sitting right by the time clock and it says there's going to be a cookout this weekend.

*(To the audience)*

I don't know why I asked him, but I did.

*(To the invisible Osiris)*

Osiris, you want to go to the cook out this weekend. His response was, "Who's cooking? Who's cooking?" It's going to be a Beth's house. So I'm guessing Beth will be doing the cooking. And I didn't understand it.

*(To the audience)*

But he said, "Oh, no, man. I'm good. I like raisins, but not when they're in potato salad." I didn't get that. But I do know one thing, if he's not going to that cookout. I am!

*Black Male exits stage.*

*(Lights out)*

[Scene 3]

*(Animations for a curvy, voluptuous woman in her bedroom for fat phobia one. A mirror is position on stage for her to watch her body. Lights up)*

**Fat Phobia Voice 1 enters stage**

*(Pre-recorded, we hear a constant barrage of voices loud and fast talking as Fat Phobia Voice One a full figured woman watches her body in the mirror)*

*Pre-record: "You've gained weight" "Why you got your stomach hanging over your pants like that" "Are you hungry/Have you eaten?" "Eat something" "That's all you gon' eat?" "You better finish that food" "I made some quiche" "You have really nice lips, I'm soooooooooooooo jealous of your lips" "OMG you finally got some little titties" "OMG look at ya'll growing up, that one gonna be tall and thin, but This One right here. Oohhh she gonna have some hips on her." "Don't sit on his lap! It doesn't matter who he is, girls don't sit on boys laps!"*

*(She speaks to herself in the mirror and glances at the audience periodically to see if they are watching her, watching her body)*

I was never a little girl,

but, always a woman forming.

I was always aware of my body,

how it looked and how it was supposed to look.

Small frame, light skin, lonnnnnnnngg hair, white smile, like my mama.

I don't exactly remember when I deviated from the plan, but I do remember people telling me that I'd gotten fat *(pause glances to the audience)* excuse me, gained weight.

My breast grew overnight from little Hershey's kisses to juicy oranges and well

E-V-E-R-Y-O-N-E noticed and I did too.

*(Pauses 3 count and takes a long deep breath as she contemplates her body image in the mirror)*

I was never a little girl,

but, always a woman forming.

*(Voices and images animation as fat phobia becomes frustrated as though chained and cannot move)*

*Pre-recorded: "Don't sit on his lap! It doesn't matter who he is, girls don't sit on boys laps!"*

*Why you got your stomach hanging over your pants like that" I'm sooooooooooooo jealous of your lips" "Gyrating bodies." "big JLo booty." "I want to wear thongs with my lowriders and a low cut shirt."*

*"Let them see your body. But never your stomach, belly, gut, it's much too fat"*

*"But you have a nice bubble butt." "Let him touch it. Who cares, its just a touch, its just a grab."*

*"Does it mean I don't respect myself if I let a guy touch my boobs?"*

*(To the audience)*

You're really not that fat you know?

You just have to exercise.

Exorcise that fat demon out of you.

Let the real you show,

can you pray away fat? *(pause watching the audience, then turns to mirror)*

I was never a little girl,

but, always a woman forming.

*(Lights change)*

*(Black Male enters stage and admires Fat Phobia on stage from a distance)*

*(Pre-recorded: Fox whistle. "Oh that's not fat, you just thick girl." "Let me touch those thighs, lemme grab that ass, come 'ere, sit on my lap." "Lemme touch, lemme kiss....oh thats just a little tongue girl, you may not be a woman yet but you built like one." "GahhhhhhhhDAMN look at that ass and those titties.")*

I am not a little girl, but a woman forming.

I am not a little girl, but a woman forming.

I am not a little girl, but a woman forming.

Just go ahead and fuck him already. Do it while it's still your choice and you're not just some other drunken teenage stereotype.

*(Black male exits)*

*(Lights change. The voices are the same as before. But quieter and not spoken as quickly as before, and Fat Phobia is no longer in bounded as though chained to one place. She moves around the stage/room caressing her body and let's her hair out)*

*(Pre-recorded: "Oh that's not fat, you just thick girl." "Let me touch those thighs, lemme grab that ass, come 'ere, sit on my lap." "Lemme touch, lemme kiss....oh thats just a little tongue girl, you may not be a woman yet but you built like one""GahhhhhhhhDAMN look at the ass and titties on that one" "Gyrating bodies." "big JLo booty." "I want to wear thongs with my lowriders and a low cut shirt." "Let them see your body. But never your stomach, belly, gut, it's much too fat" "But you have a nice bubble butt." "Let him touch it. Who cares, its just a touch, its just a grab." "Does it mean I don't respect myself if I let a guy touch my boobs?" "You've gained weight" "Why you got your stomach hanging over your pants like that" "Are you hungry/Have you eaten?" "Eat something" "That's all you gon' eat?" "You better finish that food \*said sternly\*" "I made some quiche" "You have really nice lips, I'm soooooooooooooo jealous of your lips" "OMG you finally got some little titties" "OMG look at ya'll growing up, that one gonna be tall and thin, but This One right here. Oohhh she gonna have some hips on her.\*" "Don't sit on his lap! It doesn't matter who he is, girls don't sit on boys laps!")*  
*(Lights change. Animation changes, Fat Phobia speaks to herself in the mirror)*

I am a woman now!

Full grown and fully developed beautiful lips, beautiful soft skin, beautiful breasts, and a beautiful butt.

*(Abrupt light change as fat phobia exits the internal cave, attitude shifts)*

You ain't no dime! Not with that gut!

Not with all that, sweat dripping down, under, and over every crevice and sack of skin, flesh, fat!

*(Black Male moves a little bit closer into her light and she watches him)*

You are beautiful. I love how soft your skin is against mine he says.

While tracing love letters on my back with his fingertips,

take your shirt off, I want to see you, he says, always stripping me bare,

down to the nothing and in between kisses and sweat drips, he'll look me in the eyes and say

God—you are so beautiful, but can you really believe someone when you're making them cum?

*(Black male sadly exists and Fat Phobia turns to audience as the lighting change)*

I don't love this body, but clearly it's good for something.

I can build the body that I will love and that will be loved.

*(Lights change. These voices replace all the old voices as Fat Phobia becomes emotionally aware of the damage other peoples voices has caused in her mind. She is no longer bound, but free to roam the cave as we hear "God—you are so beautiful" "I like my girls BBW" "She's Thick, with two c's" "Girl you thickah, than a Snickers" "Thick thighs save lives" "Just wear the outfit! Who cares what people say? What they gonna say, damn that's a fat ass?" "Damn, that's a fat ass.")*

*(Transition to pre-recorded voice of the Cave is heard drumming and saying the following as an image of the cave shows the fire has transformed to violet blue and orange flames)*

Your body is your temple.

Your body is your temple.

Your body is your temple.

*(Fat phobia hears the voice of the Cave as though an intuitive voice. Fat Phobia grows more confident in herself. To the audience she speaks, ignoring the mirror)*

I want to learn to love my body. I want to embrace its dimples and its stripes.

I want to be supple, soft and desired. Is it wrong to want to be skinny?

Maybe, if I could just get rid of my belly, I don't even care that I don't have a thigh gap.

Maybe, I do care deeply. Maybe if I could just have like an inch, of three quarters, ok a half inch.

Fine, will take an eight of inch thigh gap and then I could be happy.

*(Deep sigh or some guttural exclamation of frustration)*

Why, why, why can't I be full figured like Ashley Graham or Barbie Ferreira.

They're full figured women, well proportioned, no big gut just hanging out.

That's the key. Get rid of the gut. And you can be sexy and desirable and deserving.

*(Pause in contemplation about what she just said being true or not and now speaks to herself in the mirror)*

The truth is I never learned to love this body. I only learned how to display this body. Dress it up. Pimp it out. Beat it down. Hate it. Indulge it.

But never to love it. I can't accept love, until I love myself.

I need to pour into myself like a vessel. *(Turns to the audience)* To all those big beautiful bodies and even those tiny tight bodies *pour* into yourselves. Open yourself up to goodness of your own self-love.

*(The spiritual side emerges like having an epiphany as fat phobia fully embodies who she is wholesomely. To herself in the mirror)*

Can I learn to love this body? This body that has grown with me from the beginning and will grow with me until the end. This body that has held me up. This body that has been daughter, sister, friend and sometimes lover.

I am in awe of this body. Because it is full of enjoyment, good food, good laughs and good love.

It may not be perfect, but it is mine.

*(Lights dims. The voice of the Cave chants and drums as the image of the fire is projected. Light intensify.)*

Your body is a temple.

Your body is a temple.

Your body is a temple.

*(Fat Phobia continues walking around her room and moves the mirror downstage as to talk to both herself and the audience)*

I see now that it is not so much about the body as it is about the confidence I have to own my body however it is. This body will carry me to the desires of my heart. Therefore, I cannot be mother or lover without this body. I am daughter, sister and friend with this body. *(Pause)*

Look at all the happy people enjoying their bodies because they are not ashamed.

*(Chimes. Fat Phobia chants, your body is a temple until she makes a physical notable shift. Lights change with the chanting)*

Your body is a temple.

Your body is a temple.

Your body is a temple.

Your body is a temple.

Your body is a temple.



Your body is a temple.

*(The sound of a light breeze and wind chimes play and fades out slowly. To the audience)*

You can show your body.

You can cover it.

You can feed it.

You can exercise it.

You can touch it.

*(There are wind chimes and sounds of water. Lights change. As Fat Phobia leans her head back and immerses herself into a trance like sway)*

I have always liked the feeling of water against my skin. I like to watch the water run down my back, my hips, my chest. It cleanses me. As it rinses over every part of me, this body of mine, I learn to love all of it. Losing weight isn't a dirty word and eating isn't either. It is okay to love my imperfect self.

*(Stops swaying. Pause for a 3 count. Animation of a baptism or a waterfall projected to represent spiritual purification. Fat Phobia has a renewed confidence)*

Self-love is not the end. It is a journey in itself.

It's not about how I look it's about how I feel about how I look. And it's okay to change if that's what I want to do. It's okay not to either and it's okay to love this body. It's okay to love my body. It ain't perfect, but everything's beautiful here *(Repeated/sung almost as if a chant. We see words on the screen "It ain't perfect, but everything's beautiful here. As Fat Phobia admires her body in the mirror one last time.)* It ain't perfect, but everything's beautiful here. It ain't perfect, but everything's beautiful here.

*(Chimes playing and fades out. Lights fade to black. Remove mirror from stage)*

[Scene 4]

*(Animation of non-binary flag colors as the transition to non-binary identity)*

*(Lights change)*

### **Non-binary enters the stage and lays on the floor in the fetal position**

*(Animation plays. Lights up on non-binary on stage)*

Dancer begins onstage in a fetal position on their right side on the floor. Slowly expand the body to a stretch out legs *(on an 8 count)*, stretch out arms *(on an 8 count)*. Roll on your back *(4 count)*, stretch legs up to a 90 degree from the floor *(4 count)*. Stretch arms to meet legs *(4 count)*. Release both arms and legs flat to the floor *(4 count)*. Roll to your left side *(on 4 count)*, then stomach arms and legs stretched out and *(on a 4 count)* get on all fours. Stretch out right leg, keep toes pointed to the floor *(4 count)* quickly resume right leg to core. Stretch out left leg, keep toes pointed to the floor *(4 count)* quickly resume left leg to core. Sit up on knees, feet below butt *(8 count)*, then lean head back to the sky *(4 count)* and caress your body with left arm starting from the wrist to the shoulder *(4 count)*. Leave on right shoulder. Then caress your body with right arm starting from the wrist to shoulder *(on 4 count)*. Leave on the left shoulder. Slowly move both hands to the heart *(4 count)* then slide both hands down to groin *(4 count)*. Get up, stretch *(on a 4 count and pause for 3. Music starts and begin to dance for 3 minutes expressing your freedom, escape from the chains for the cave)*. End dance by sitting on the floor,

pull knees to chest, breathe, breathe, breath then look at the audience in the balcony (*on a 4 count in a proud confident stance. Pause. Watches up over the audience after being freed from the womb/cave as the voice of the Cave plays the drum*)

*(Non-binary Identity to the audience as though looking up to a balcony of viewers)*

From the moment I came out of the womb,  
 I glowed like the radiant sun.  
 A ball of energy, of life, of warmth,  
 And my parents provided unconditional love.  
 Love for who the child was then,  
 Love for who the child is now,  
 Love for who the child will become.  
 Growing up, my parents never pushed anything on me,  
 But they tried their best to see what my interests were,  
 As any parent would.  
 I appreciated for the times I picked up the Polly Pocket,  
 And no judgement was cast,  
 As we all appreciated the times I picked up the LEGO's instead.

*(Lights change)*

But society was the issue I had.  
 Everything was either this or that.  
 No in-betweens,  
 No exceptions,  
 You were either one thing or the other.  
 And of course, I can tell from a young age,  
 If you went against the system,  
 You were to be damned.

*(Lights change)*

And when it came to gender,  
 The question remains:  
 "Is it a boy or a girl?"  
 Boys are blue.  
 Girls are pink.  
 But at 10 years old,  
 I just gave up on choosing one color  
 And decided to just go with the whole damn rainbow.

*(Lights change to a rainbow effect)*

Over the years though,  
 I have fully embraced and intertwined  
 Both my masculine and feminine energies.  
 For are they both to be treated and nurtured  
 As if they are our internal yins and yangs.  
 When I re-discovered myself through my gender,  
 The colors came back strong.  
 Yellow: for all the times that blue and pink never worked out for me,

Or how I am reminded of The Sun that gives us life.

*(Lights change)*

White: for all the times that a fresh start was a possibility.

Black: for all the times that there is power in the mystery of the unknown.

Purple: the color of royalty, for which I am,

The color of creativity,

The color of pride.

Pride for the skin that I am in.

Pride for the person who exists today.

*(Lights fade out)*

*Non-binary exists the stage.*

[Scene 5]

*(Animation to beautiful day outside in the neighborhood as Blackness continues his monologue at the outside cookout. Lights up. Blackness enters with a different color shirt with a purple tint, nametag off and mask below his chin.)*

Black Male onstage. *(To the audience)*

The cookout is kind of lame, but to be honest, man, the fun and the music makes you almost get over the food. But it's nice to see people from work not at work and I don't really hang out with my co-workers too often. And I've never been to Beth's house before—super nice house and I did not know she lived this close to me. I go for run through this neighborhood, every morning and you know and I passed this house. I always thought I saw her car here, but I didn't know she's right down the road. And it's actually, kind of fun being here for a little while, you know, we're talking about regular stuff, people are talking about sports. I'm not really into sports.

They're talking about shows, they're watching and the only shows that I watch are anime. I doubt that any of these people here are excited about attack on Titans next week. So I'm not even going to bring it up. And everything is all fun, until people start to talk about current events. People start to talk about the news. We talked about the state of the world and people immediately shifted to me.

*(Light change. Black male obviously uncomfortable)*

“Hey, how do you feel about the rioting and looting?” And what am I supposed to say, you know what, what do I say, how do I tell them, oh, I haven't really been paying enough attention. That I heard about what happened to George Floyd, but I know what happened to him wasn't right. But I've been so caught up in my own life in my own situations and in my own business that I haven't even learned the important details. And, that honestly I've been more focused on the man killing virus ravaging the streets.

*(Pause. Lights change)*

No. I can't say that, it makes me look exactly how I don't want to look. Oh hey there, the world's on fire. I don't know why. But, I can't say that. And what do. How do I find a way to divert the focus all while not actually answering the question—like some sort of master of conversational jujitsu or a politician. Honestly, I've had a lot of people ask me how I feel about it George Floyd, but I am more interested in how white people see it.

*(Pause)*

Nailed it.

*(Pause. Lights change)*

Then, Beth says, “well, my husband is an officer and honestly, I don't think people will admit that these people have it coming right. George Floyd had drugs in his system and the autopsy showed that and this is what happens when you resist an arrest.”

*(Pause. In shock and trying to keep his composure. Speaking to the audience)*

I wasn't well versed on the details. But that statement hit me weird. Wait, he had drugs in his system. Derek Chauvin, a police officer put his knee on George Floyd's neck for eight minutes, for more than eight minutes. Why was this not more important? How does that not make a huge difference, but, I don't say that. But I do say. Wait, resisting arrest. Okay, that makes some sense *(rolls eyes in disgust)* I can understand that. How about Philando Castile, he was sitting in his car when he and his family were pulled over, he told the officer he had a gun in the glove compartment and the officer still opened fire on them.

*(Turns to another invisible person on stage)* A completely different person goes, “Well, these officers, they can't take chances their lives are on the line. If they don't act fast enough, they have to do what it takes to avoid threatening circumstances.” Threatening? *(Questioning and in disbelief)* Threatening? What's threatening about a person that's telling you they have a gun. If this guy is trying to get the jump on you. He's not gonna tell you that he has a gun. I wanted to say that so bad, but the words wouldn't leave my mouth. *(Lights change. Intense mood on stage. Chained in the cave and struggling to keep his composure to the audience)* And before I could even try to say it. *(Turns to another invisible person on the stage)* Another co-worker looks at me and says, “Right like that guy, Ahmaud Abernathy. Why would he be running through a neighborhood he doesn't live in. What business does he have stopping at an empty unfinished houses. He was up to no good and the people that hunted him down, the people that chased him they were doing their best to keep their neighborhood safe.”

*(Contemplative. Replacing words in his head. Calms down. Talks to the audience)* I couldn't really keep words in anymore. Wait! Who runs in a place they don't live. I do. I run through this neighborhood every morning that I get a chance. I run by this house, but I run here because your neighborhood is adjacent to mine Beth. I don't live, here but I run here and in fact wait a minute. Beth. You run through my neighborhood. I see you stop through every week, when you go on your jobs. *(Light intensifies and the Cave drums is heard in the background)*

She cuts me off and says, “Yes that's right people in that neighborhood know me and you, you don't act threatening.” *(Dumbfounded by her response)*

I don't act threatening. What about me would be less threatening than anyone else running in the neighborhood. I decided to shut my mouth. The conversation builds and bellows, but I just step back because I've never felt like this. In a place like this and let alone with the people I work with, I don't feel safe, I don't feel safe anymore. I think I'm just going to take a plate and go home. *(Pause)* What the hell is in this potato salad?

*(Lights fade to black)*

*(Animation of Black Lives Matter projected on screen. Then fades to All Lives Matter)*

[Scene 6]

*(Transition. A lush vibrant forest animation for the voice of Whiteness who remains complex and stuck in the cave. A voice of a woman is heard, she is shaky, disconnected and trying to*

*understand the world around her. Whiteness feels uncomfortable, moody, and disappointed. Her world is not the pretty image she imagined it to be therefore she remains stuck in the cave/womb. Ensemble enters upstage)*

### **Whiteness enters the stage**

*(The forest animation changes to a projected womb, her cave. Whiteness is clearly paralyzed by fear, clutching her clothes, belongings and uses limited space on the stage as though she is afraid to move too far left, right, back or forth. To the actors onstage)*

In my mother's womb, I am safe. I am love. I am me. I can hear my mother's heartbeat, her laughter makes me jiggle, and when she sings I fall asleep to her words, the rhythm. As I grow, nothing holds me down. I stretch, I kick, I live safe in a world that sees me as pure.

*(Lights change)*

As I grow, nothing holds me down. The first thing I noticed is my hands, fingers moving connected in a web like pattern to a limb that grew from what I could only guess was me. I thought to wiggle and move. And they wiggled and moved. Her laugh. It shook the walls and made my heart race with excitement. However, when momma is still I wonder what's happening out there, for in here I move anything to feel something. I am comforted. I am welcomed here. It is safe. Sometimes I hear sad sounds and they make me sad. I feel joy at the sound of rock n' roll and she too as she jumps around in fevered heat and in exaltation. But there are sounds, sudden movements she makes that surprises me and I react with kicks as I try to scream but no one hears me. The hand that I move around in this fluid space seems to be reaching for something, but I am afraid. It is dark, it is unknown, it looks different to me. I feel an urge to move, but I am afraid. I hear her singing to me, but she cries in pain. For now, I am in a ball tucked up inside myself. Tucked up inside her. I don't want to change this world I live in, I love it just the way it is, just the way it has been made for me to survive and thrive.

She cries in pain. Then she goes quiet. I can feel her moving, walking, and the sun makes her shine so bright, kick and I stretch and she laughs every time. I am warm, I am home, and I am at peace. There are shadows here that I do not understand. People speak so fast, but it all sounds muddy, only her voice is the one I love. She cries in pain. It makes me sad and so I cry. I cry, scream, and kick but it only makes her upset and makes me feel worse. I miss before. Before the painful screams, before when she would sing to me. Where are you, before? I long to feel you around me. I want to stay here for it is too scary in a world that is meant to be shared with others. Momma is mine and only mine right now in her womb.

*(Lights change as the mood grows sad and death and sorrow grows)*

The voice of the ancestors calls me back to the realm of the whispers. Back home before I was in this cave-like womb, among those who convinced me that this experience would be enlightening. But, her pain, her cries, these shadows and wailing makes me weak. I do not like change. I do not accept change. I would rather take you with me and together we stay in this cave momma.

*(Mother dies in labor and the child remains in the womb. Lights change. To the fire within the Cave is seen more bluish and violet flames)*

Thanks for showing us through the shadow of our own ignorance—we might be illuminated. Through the trauma of senseless killing, we might be reborn through destruction of the self. We

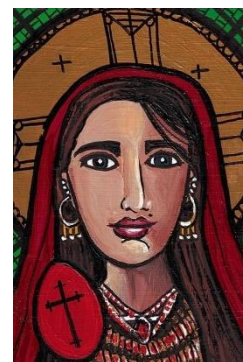
might build a new structure in which we all have stake in each other. Through the bondage of enslavement, we might learn what true salvation looks like, and dear devil of a man we might take you with us into the light of eternity. Until then, I return to the depths of the cave, where I rest my mind, my thoughts and let the world unfold into oblivion.

*(Lights fade to black)*

[Scene 7]

*(Animation of a cave or tomb for Christ, animation transition to words saying, "I am a woman who followed my own voice")*

*(Lights fill the stage with textures at low brightness. We hear and watch the Mary Magdalene painting on the screen, while we listen to the pre-recorded monologue of Mary speak to the audience)*



In the cave's corner I inhaled the scent of myrrh flowing from the depths of the cave as I held up my torch to turn the corner. The sweet aroma that floated through the air masking the stench of death and decay. My heart pounded louder and louder as the breach in the cave opened, and I closed my eyes. What was I going to find? The stone was moved. Who moved it? Was someone tending to his body? On this day, it was our turn. Did someone take him away? My God, what has happened here? I couldn't open my eyes. I was too afraid. Afraid of what I might see.

*(Lights change brightness by 20% and add in blues)*

I stood there and complete stillness and silence with a *flipbook of memories* flashed in my mind. I remember the day he came to me. I was in so much pain. My body rejected every remedy I so desperately sought in my time of need. I could walk, eat, and drink, so everyone thought I was fine. No one could see the pain. Therefore, they assumed it did not exist. However, the pain resonated through my entire body. And I was not okay, because of the violent words and actions against me. My mind hurt, too. I did not want to live anymore. I carried the weight of that pain and the feeling of not wanting to go on with such force that my mind slowly started to slip away. That is when I had the vision. *(Subtle lighting change)* I knew of Jesus and that he was healing people. *(Pause)* I knew if there was any chance for me it was through him. He came to me in a dream. He walked right up to me, laid his hands on me and I was free. A few days passed after this vivid image. I was at the well gathering a supply of water when my whole world changed. I lifted the pail to my shoulders and nearly cried out as my shoulder popped. I closed my eyes in hope of some relief when I felt a soft touch at my waist. I knew it was he. Tears poured down my face and onto the sand like a flowing waterfall filling a dry empty valley. As if in slow motion, the pail fell from my painful grasp and the water poured out, a puddle forming at my feet. I fell to my knees and looked up with foggy eyes to the sight and sounds of so many people laughing and gasping at my very public actions. He placed his right hand underneath my hand and looked down at me. He lifted my chin with his left hand to meet his gaze. He said, "You will never look down again, my friend. Raise your eyes to me. With the power of God, my own father, I heal you of the burdens of your own mind, body, heart, and spirit. My sweet child your pain has gone. I carry it for you. Now it will no longer burden your soul." I closed my eyes once more, taking in the sounds and smells of the moment, knowing my life and everything before me would be

different, and I wanted to revel in it. My tears transformed from pain to gladness and relief. I took a deep breath, inhaling the cleanest breath of fresh air and filled my lungs completely—something I never had the strength to do before.

*(Lighting change)*

As I exhaled my eyes met his, and they were so warm and golden. They seem to have their own light shining from within. He smiled that crooked corner smile. He always had heavenly insights that said so much. Without saying a word, he took both of my hands and helped me rise. And I never looked down. I could not look away from his kind eyes as he slowly closed them and took a deep breath and exhaled. My pain died that day. I had given it a soul, and he took that soul to heaven for me burying it deep within him as he did for everyone. I followed him closely. From that moment on, and I made sure that he never had to worry about the weight of his ministry.

*(Light changes with subtle movement on the stage floor and walls around the audience. The voice is back in the cave talking to the actors)*

I opened my eyes at the cave's corner again, the silhouette of my torch played tricks on me. The flickering flame danced across the stone surface like shadow puppets. I want to tell the story of how we all got here but I cannot leave. Chained to the walls I closed my eyes once more, the *flipbook of memories* rushing me back to the week before, which seemed like an eternity ago. The flame quivered in the evening air shaking about much like our erratic heartbeats and anxious breath. *(Subtle light change at night)* We all carried it that night. The twelve of us gathered around the table hanging on to his words as we were gasping for air at the surface. My heart was pounding then, just as hard as it is here in this cave. We knew we had to die in order to live, but we just could not take hold of the idea that his body would not be there in front of us anymore. When he held the cup of wine and presented it to us as His blood, His hand trembled. No one else noticed, but I did.

*(Light change)*

He knew he was going to die a horribly painful death, and he was scared. People do not tell you he was human. Of course, he was scared. I do not care how brave he was if you know you're going to die a piece of you breaks as your soul stands in waiting. I ate the bread, and drank the wine as tears filled my eyes as he turned to me in the moonlight peeking through the room, he put his hand under my chin once more pulling my face towards his, and he smiled. That crooked corner smile saying, "Never look down for you I will lift up." In this moment, people's mouth would be sealed shut, all while my whole internal self fell silent. *(Pause)*

I stared at a solid face, but I continued to hear his voice speaking to me and only to me, I surveyed the room to make sure I was not dreaming. Looking back at him, his eyes closed softly, I heard him say I am speaking to you, Mary, you will be the first you will be the first to witness my resurrection. You were always the first. They will not believe you. You will have to show them and they still will not believe you. Even centuries from now, they still will not believe you. But you must know that it was always you, it will always begin with you, a woman, the only woman close to me, aside from my own mother. For you see in me something that the others do not. You see that I am feminine and masculine. The mother and the father. God in a way that no one else will see. And you will spend the rest of your life here in heaven, encouraging others to see your vision, too. So, wipe your tears, not because I am ashamed of them, but wipe them to stay strong for those around you. I know it's hard being a woman in this world, but I need you to take those tears and save them. Use them to bathe my body. When you visit my tomb, anoint my body in your tears. *(Pause)*

*(Light change)*

He slowly opened his eyes, and seeing the astonished look on my face he nodded. And I nodded back and wiped the tears that streamed down. *(Light change)* A few hours later, as the sun rises, I woke to find the sweaty hands of his mother, Mary, next to me. We were at the cross and wept at his feet nailed to the wood. So much happened, and it is all a muddy blur of remembrances. How did we get here? It was just yesterday that he smiled at me so softly reassuring me of my place in this ministry. Now I am at his dirty feet, covered in earth and salt and blood. I touched his ribs; in the same spot, he had touched me at the well so long ago. I brushed across his ribs and felt each one so pronounced, so bruised, so battered and bloody from the stab wounds. Immediately we went to work, cleansing his body, doing what needed to be done. We buried him in this cave wrapped in a clean white shroud. The myrrh drifted along the fabric and its sweet scent filled the cave's solitary room. *(Pause)*

*(Light change)*

The light of our torches cast shadows on the wall. Shadows of the thousands of souls saved by his death. My heart ached for him. My soul felt simultaneously lifted, lifted to the heavens and ripped from my very rib cage all at once. The days are hazy in between that moment and where I'm standing right now. There was so much persecution and hateful words in his grisly death. So many were boastful that he was gone, yet so many others honored Jesus, the Christ. He existed as a human being. All those words and emotions are swirling around me. Now I wait to turn this corner. Today is my day to cleanse. I have forgotten the words he spoke to me the night we ate bread and drank wine for the last time. "I am speaking to you Mary you will be the first." I can hear these words, echoing through the cave. But today is supposed to be my turn. My turn to spend time with his body alone. To talk to him after everything that has happened. We took the long dirt trail lit by the fraction of sunrise as it broke the surface of the Earth. *(Pause)*

*(Light change)*

We gathered spices and more in the market this morning. Then we headed to the stone entrance where we last left him and discovered the large stone was moved. I ignored all logic and ran inside, torch blazing. I felt the walls of the cave, like the embodiment of his ribs when he came on down off the cross.

*(Pause)*

My fingers dragged along the stone surface so hard that dust fell to the ground in place of my tears. He had told me not to shed anymore. Now here I was, stopped in my tracks at the corner of this desolate and dark room where I last saw his wounded body, and I am barely able to open my eyes. Lifting my torch around the corner and preparing for what I would find I expected to see the shadow of his body lying there in the muslin shroud. Only the sweet smell of myrrh greeted me. I turned the corner and gasped completely in shock. I fell to my knees and tried not to cry out, just like that day at the well. I knew in my mind and all logic told me that surely someone must have broken in and taken his lifeless body away, never to be seen again. However, my heart and soul told me otherwise. *(Pause)*

*(Reminiscing mood. Light changes slowly)*

I remembered how I held him. I held his hand when he healed me. I held it again when we laid out his body before we wrapped him in the shroud. His eyes had been kind and loving. The wave of peace and serenity that he left in a room when calm and prayerful is something that stuck to you. It was palpable, like a strong perfume that sits in the air with a thickness. You can taste the sickly sweet. The lightness in my heart was floating me off my knees and through the air. Now I



was running, running as fast as I could, back to the entrance where my friends were waiting. We ran to Peter. I fell at his knees as I fell before Jesus when He healed me. But Peter looked down at me and didn't believe the words coming out of my mouth. What do you mean his body isn't there? What happened, who did this? We all ran back to the cave. To the tomb buried deep within its walls. I knew if they saw this vision with their own eyes, they would believe me. I would believe me. But they became angry that his body was desecrated, stolen. They fled back to town and left me there to weep at the place where his shroud lay limp on the soil. The smell of murder ascended into my nostrils and reminded me of his suffering and death. *(Pause)*

*(Ascends from the cave. Lights change)*

I ran out of the darkness and into the light, the blazing afternoon. It seemed brighter than usual; the whole sky was like staring directly into the sun. I looked to my left and I saw the gardener standing there tending to the colorful wild flowers. They had grown so swiftly outside of the cave on this third day. He started to speak to me and asked Woman, why are you crying? My heart skipped a beat at the sound of his voice, seemingly so familiar. But my eyes were playing tricks on me, still dancing around in the darkness frolicking with silhouettes of memories. I was blinded by the sunlight. White dots like angels fluttering. The gardener stepped closer to me. He closed his eyes and smiled the too familiar crooked smile without moving his lips. He said, I am here, Mary. Then he opened his eyes took my hands in his and said out loud. Remember I chose you. In the moment, my whole world came swirling back around me. The light of heaven became so blinding I fell to my knees once more at the sight of it. But, I still could not walk away. I saw an angel flapping her wings fluttering there in the soft gentle light emanating from within. He has risen. Rabbani, I said. Teacher. Teacher. Teacher. *(Pause)*

*(Lights change)*

Red is the bleeding heart. The blood ran down his face from the crown of thorns. They pushed so far into his skin. Red is the wine in the cup we all shared and drank from that night. Moses turned to blood in front of his own brother at the first plagues of Egypt, all those centuries ago the Nile River. Red is the tears that Mother Mary shared as she as she prayed asking God why she had to suffer the torture of losing her son and watching him die such a tragic death. It is the color of our clothes. The color of my lips when they kissed his cheek. Red is the color that unites all of us for no matter what we look like on the outside. We are all of the same color on the inside. Red is his love because Jesus's love is his body covered in blood when he came off the cross dying for all our sins and carrying our pain with him to heaven when he resurrected.

*(Lights fade to black)*

[Scene 8]

*(Animation of a ship at sea for the voice of Colorism. Lights up)*

**Colorism enters the stage.**

*Colorism enters looking around as a foreigner in a new land. To the audience and turns to Whiteness, Blackness, Non-binary and Fat Phobia 1. In a hopeful, yet, pessimistic and discouraged attitude colorism tells the story about arriving to America)*

A ship without its crew would sink.

A ship left adrift will soon be consumed by the tide.  
 America was built on the backs of its black immigrant and indigenous people.  
 But the history books do not coincide.  
 Immigration to this country sounded like a dream,  
 until I was met with a cold shoulder,  
 scared that would hurt my self-esteem.  
 I saw my family struggle cleaning on their hands and knees working for a better life,  
 only to be met with “try harder next time” and wages that decreased.  
 At home, I was safe or so I thought,  
 free of new world where that thing called hate was taught.  
 Where conversations with family they were one in the same,  
 colorism they call it, but who’s to blame.  
 The lack of pigment or too much of—somehow started the problem that could not be solve.  
 For now, I will sleep to confide in myself,  
 I wish to wake up in a world one day  
 where colorism racism is acknowledged and not suppressed.  
 And as that ship sails through that ocean free of chain, man, woman and child will walk hand and  
 hand without aggression sustained.  
*(Pause. Music starts. Lights change. Dance)*  
*(Lights fade to black)*

[Scene 9]

**Black male enters the stage.**

*(Animation with air quotes “Who am I?” “Who am I?” for the Blackness piece. Black male is back at work. Different same shirt as first. He speaks to the audience)*

They really said those things at the cookout. *(Distraught)* What makes me sick is why were they not able to point out the fact of officer’s misbehavior. Why was there no criticism involved for how the officers reacted and responded to citizens. People lost their lives and if an officer acts too fast, some people say oh well, here’s why... We tear down people’s character, rather than admit the circumstances. But what hurts me the most is when they said I don’t act threatening. What I heard was, I don’t act Black! I’ve never felt so unsafe. That means that the only reason I get to run through Beth’s neighborhood is because, I act a way that they accept, I act the way that they appreciate and if I didn’t and something bad happened, I would have it coming too. And who’s to say that if I didn’t act like that and something bad happened, they wouldn’t say the exact same thing.

*(Pause)* I always thought this, just not acting black meant that I get to be not boxed in like that. But even if I don’t fit that description, I still have to suffer from it. I don’t fit in with Blacks. I’ve never fit in to that, because I don’t like the music. I don’t play sports. Growing up Black, I always lived in a place where I was one of the only black family. And all the other black kids at the school always were mean to me and I felt alienated. I don’t want to act the way that they do. I don’t want to not act Black. I’ll be my own person. I like my own things. I like Sci-fi. I like Anime. But to outsiders, to you *(speaking directly to the audience)* people see me in a similar way. They don’t see me as me. They see me as a person who is not that Black, not a thug, he

doesn't act Black. And I don't act the way black people act. I don't know if I fit in anywhere. I've never fit in with the black people and I'm still one or two behaviors away from being an outsider to everyone else. And Lord knows if I will be protected by anyone if something goes wrong. What do I do? Who do I go to? I don't have any family to talk about this with. I don't have any friends that I can talk about this with. I don't have any black people who would get this, all the people at my job clearly don't. I don't have any brothers. I don't have any sisters. I don't have any cousins. *(Pause)* Hey, Osiris, when you going on break man?

Black male exits.

*(Lights fade to black)*

[Scene 10]

*(Animation to a bright sunny day at the beach)*

**Fat Phobia Voice Two enters.**

*Fat Phobia voice two has her beach bag, sunglasses, dressed for the beach. We can hear the ocean waves and seagulls in the distance)*

I am alone now. No one to see me struggle, cry, freak out, or be laughed at. No one for me to have to be concerned or worried about whether or not people are ok or uncomfortable. Free from their judgement. Free from their possible embarrassment. Like that, time when my not-my-boyfriend-lover-date-person left me at my best friend's wedding reception and felt better to sit in his car in the parking lot. He said he just could not handle being in there with me and everyone thinking we were possibly together, especially those LA industry people.

*(Pause. Gathers thoughts)*

Alone now. A secret agent solo mission. No one will ever know I was here or what happened unless I tell them. No one to witness though either if I triumph. But I probably won't so who cares. Do I really wanna do this? Maybe I am too old. Too big. Too un-Californian now. Only people who aren't from here would do this, ever. Break the social beach code, knowingly or unknowingly. I am not allowed on the beach am I? Not during the day, certainly not. Not where people can see me, see my, 'ya know, fatness. My huge boobs. Cleavage as deep as Marianas Trench. I know I do not belong here. People told me I do not.

*(Reminiscing)*

When I was five, my mom dropped me off at my new school and these mean vicious savage boys would squawk terrible hurtful words at me about my mother. About her size and what they saw. About how I would be just like her when I grow up. I came from my momma. She and my dad made me in unfathomably deep oceans of unconditional love for me. How could that ever be bad? I was confused and I began to believe those vicious thoughts, thinking they knew something I did not know. Hateful voices and curses that tore me up and ate me up for years to come reinforced and repeated by the world, by women and men, complete strangers and lovers alike. It seemed no one had a compassionate filter for fatness, neither for my mom, nor for me. The message that I do not belong is always crystal-clear even in silence.

*(Digs in her beach bag looking for coins)*

Must abide the laws of society and feed coins to the parking meter machine. Ok 2 hours. 3 hours? That should be enough. How do you even work this thing? *(Contemplative and almost*

*ready to give up*) Maybe I should go. No, I got this. I am sure skinny blonde chicks do this all the time. I can totally figure this out. Agh! Someone is coming. Be cool. Look busy with your phone. Maybe I can see how the regular people do it. A-ha! Ok. Breathe. *(Pause)* Now all I have to do is change my clothes. How do I do this? *(Fans herself with hands)* So hot. I am schvitzing over here! Ok relax. *(Sits on a chair that mimics a car seat)* A little music, a little AC, so I can think. Oh, hello wow he is hot. Does he do this every day? Surfing and then just changing his clothes outside his car? Whoa, ok wow half-naked in the parking lot. There he goes. And pants are off ok. Men have it so easy. Especially that guy. So very Adonis(y). Of course he can just stand at the back of his car with the trunk open, shiny salty tan manly pecs glistening and brazenly throwing the light around. Yeah, I see you. We all do. I wonder if he has a girlfriend. He would probably never date someone like me. What would that be like? Hmmm. I would eat him for lunch.

*(Pause)*

Ok stop man gazing. Tic-toc. Pumpkin time is at 4:15. Better, hurry up if you are going to do this. Are you really going to do this? He probably thinks you should not. Ok. So I can't change into my swim suit outside the car. Clearly. I could be arrested or fined at the least. And people won't like it. Or what if someone sees me and takes a video and posts it online and it goes viral?! *(Sighs)* OK. Hot damn its hot in here! Thank goodness, the windows are tinted. Is the coast clear? Ok girls try not to scare anyone. *(Changes into her red bikini)* They've seen big boobs around here, but nothing like you so just, 'ya know. *(Out and up)* OK flip-flops on. Water, keys, phone, towel, snacks, sunglasses. Wish I had some vodka and cranberry, but you cannot drink on the beach right? Or can you? Or does everyone just do it and hide it? I don't even know. How do I not know this? But what if I get caught? Oh well, too late now anyway. Here we go. I am going.

*(Lights change. We see the ocean projected on the screen, the sound of seagulls are louder)*

Ok whoa. Steps and stairs. Careful, steady, do not fall. One-step at time breathe. *(Breathes heavily)* Bike path! Cool! Damn I miss riding a bike. Maybe I can do that again someday. Holy hot sand! Be careful of glass or sharp things. I wonder how germy the sand is. Ugh yeah don't think about that. Damn this is far. *(Out of breath)* I need to work out more. All right, almost there. I can do this, I can do this, I can do this.

Why are you on your phone woman? *(To an invisible person off stage)* Why do I have to hear your loud annoying phone conversation in the middle of my special beach time? Can't you just walk and enjoy this? You're allowed to come here every single day, I'm not even supposed to be here. *(Pause. Continues walking)* I don't see any lifeguards yet, though. That's a good sign. I cannot believe I'm 40 and I've never been in a bikini at the beach until today. Hell I have never been on the beach in a swimsuit since I was like 11.

*(Reminiscing. To the audience)*

In my 20s, I was a successful trainer and belly dance instructor at a women's gym for 2 years, the healthiest and fittest I have ever been at 225, new boss said you are fired. The singing job I did not get—sorry you are too voluptuous for our family-friendly amusement park. The laughing B-cup mean girls in junior high gym class—like omg are you pregnant. Entire teams of Hispanic adult male gardeners cat-calling me on my way to school every morning—Hey *(Kisses heard)* Mamasita, come 'eer' I was only 9. The online date that snuck out the back of the restaurant when I wasn't young enough, thin enough, and didn't flash my chest to him at lunch enough. You're only like a 3 anyway, maybe a 4, cause of your tits.

*(Continues reminiscing)*

At 17, my poor mom was accused of breastfeeding me too much simply because I was a cheeky baby. When I was 12, even my sweet loving well-intentioned old world Hungarian great-great grandmother, who fed us all amazing food by the way would say, honey, what happen? You puff up like a pee-low. Everything in moderation, honey, moderation. I loved her, but it still hurt.

*(Pause. Fat Phobia Voice Two focuses on the beach and the beautiful sunny day. To herself)*

Even worse, I told myself an entire lifetime of horrible things: do not sit there, you won't fit, you might break the chair, you will never lose the weight, you should diet, your M—cup breasts are too big, you should get a reduction like everyone voluntary suggest. *(Pause. To the audience)*

You take up too much space, no one wants to sit next to you on a plane, you are an embarrassment to your family and friends, you're just the hot girl's fat best friend. No one will ever cast you, you aren't thin enough, you will never get a record deal, you're not sexy enough!

*(Sulking. Talks to herself, looking at her hands and legs)*

You are too sexy. And some men only want secret sex with girls like you or they have a fat fetish, men want real relationships with skinny girls, no one will ever love you like this. *(Pause)*

You will end up in an early grave, just like your mother, except you will die alone without a man, children. Just cats! You might as well die now what is the point? *(Contemplating thoughts of death, life and then her body image)* You cannot, you are not, you would not, you will never...you are not!

*(Long Pause. Builds up confidence. To the audience)*

But I AM! I am here! In this beautiful divine body that does amazing things, I don't even know or understand. Yes, I am a lot like my mom. She loved the beach. Of course, she cared what people said or thought but she didn't let that stop her from going to the beach any chance she got, until those were all gone. *(Putting down her things, takes off cover-up)*

Breathe, breathe. Here we go! Eek! The water is so cold, but sooooo good. Ahhhh. The cool Pacific. My home ocean. Oh my god I love the beach! This is amazing, why haven't I done this before? Oh yeah, that's right.

*(Light intensifies)*

Well who cares? I'm here now. Man, that sun is bright! But also glorious! Wow! My body loves the sun! I never knew.

*(Sound of seagulls intensifies)*

Wha- Hey! What the hell? Those are my cheezy crackers! I can't believe they took my crackers out of my bag. And they crapped on my towel! Gross! Guacala! Seagulls are mean! And vicious! I can't believe how they tore up the bag! Savages, thieves, bastardos! Yuck! At least its just the corner. I can fold it over for now. *(Sigh)* Other than the stupid birds, I'm feeling ok.

*(Fat Phobia voice one enters with a beach towel and sunglasses in a yellow bathing suit)*

No one has asked me to leave. Not yet. Oh my god, somewhere in my mind I really thought the beach police or lifeguards or someone was going to come up and tell me I don't belong. How crazy is that?

*(Pause. Lights change)*

Wait, what, who is that? Is she talking to me? Why is she talking to me? I don't know her. Why is she sitting down near me? Just be nice. Maybe she'll go away. Ok smile. Not too much.

Why is she asking so many questions? Do I sound like that when I ask questions? I don't wanna tell her all my stuff. Wait, is she hitting on me? Maybe she's just being friendly? It's the boobs. Must be. Always is. Ugh so awkward. Ok stop. Maybe she's cool. Maybe she's just

lonely, or had a bad day. (*Moves closer to Fat Phobia voice one, reciting some of her earlier monologue chants...My body is a temple, my body is a temple, my body is a temple.*)

Always be nice, you just never know what someone else is going through. What if she's suicidal or on the fence and you're the last person she talks to today? Don't be an asshole. Show compassion. Show compassion.

(*Lights fade. The sound of the ocean and seagulls are heard. Seagulls sound fade out and only the ocean sound remains for 4 seconds longer*)

[Scene 11]

**Black male enters the stage.**

(*Lights change. Transition to Blackness back at work in the lunchroom speaking to Osiris*)

My perspective has gone through a huge shift. I ended up realizing I didn't know any black people. So I went to the one black person that I've always been running from. I spoke to Osiris while we were on break. When I walked up to him he was like, "Hey man, how did the cookout go?" Like he knew what was up. I told him the things they said made me realize people don't really see me. They'd be quick to let me burn if something went wrong. So I don't know, I feel like I don't fit in anywhere. And I don't fit the stereotype. I don't know what it takes to be Black, but I don't fit in over there either. I don't know what to do man. (*Pause*) He looked at me, he said, "Look man, I'm not trying to call you out or am I trying to be mean, but let me be real with you. I got a feeling you don't know black people." (*Dumbfounded at first but realizes the it is a true fact*)

He's got a point. I mean I only know one but really what he meant was, I don't know what black people are like. I mean growing up I was the only black kid that I knew. My perception of black people was based off, two filters seen through two lenses. It was built from the vision of what people told me black people are like, but those people they don't know what black people are like. And the second filter hearing it from black people who only see black people a certain way. I have never gotten to know Black people on my own. I was like, what do I do. There's no black people to come shop here. There's no black people that come to our business. Where can I go to even get to know black people. When I said that Osiris lit up like Kwanza candles. And said, "Yo, you need to come out to the open mic, it's an African business, we sell African stuff and it is full of black people that know their shit. People that know history, culture, background and you will love it, plus I perform there every week so you can see me doing my thing."

(*Lights change to be more happy and hopeful. The drums of the Cave is heard like an African beat of freedom and spirit*)

I wasn't going to go, but, hey I had the night off so I went. Oh man, it was way different than I expected. It was this big room full of black people, different shapes, sizes and colors. I mean all around the same color. But you get what I mean, but I was like, I didn't know black people were this diverse, you know, I got see Osiris on stage and he's not that bad. He got a little bit of some fire flow in him. He introduced me to some people and told them... Oh, hey! He thinks he's not black. But after that perspective, I realized something only people who don't know what black people. Outsider will think we all fit in a box. We don't. We don't have to be a certain way to be who we are. To understand the legacy and history adds color to the mosaic painting of African-

Americans. Not just who we are, but who I am as a Black man in a black body. I didn't know about the fact that black people fought against slavery the whole time it was going on. I didn't know that black people own businesses right after slavery and that they were successful. I didn't know that those successes were destroyed, torched and burned by people who were real mad and jealous to see Black people thriving. Black people had it together. Understanding all of this makes me realize being black is really freaking amazing and all that adds to the tapestry of the history that comes in to who I get to be. Take me as I am. I am a Black man. I like Anime. I like Sci-fi. I like Kung Fu movies and all of that I get to do not in spite of my blackness but right there with. I might even want to get into some poetry too someday. *(Pause)* Life is like a lemon that has no juice. No! Okay. Not that! Ha!

*(Lights fade to black)*

[Scene 12]

*(The drums of the cave plays loud)*

*(The fire of the Cave burns bright with colors of oranges as now it has more air to fuel the flame)*

Cave voice says "Emancipate yourself from mental slavery none but ourselves can free our minds."

*(Overlapping we hear the beginning of Bob Marley song Redemption Song plays for 1:25 to hear Emancipate Yourself from mental slavery none but ourselves can free our minds, fades out slowly at 15 count)*

(End)

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