

Alliance Theatre

Education

FIRST PASS PROCEDURES MANUAL
A Roadmap for Elevating the Voices of Teens

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Foreword

by PEARL CLEAGE



Hello and welcome! Let me begin with one small confession. When I was invited to join the Palefsky Collision Project as Playwright in the summer of 2013, I was a little reluctant to take it on. It seemed like an improvisational journey that was not my style. Raised on Lorraine Hansberry and Tennessee Williams, Marsha Norman and August Wilson, I need structure. I love structure. But my questions about what exactly I would be getting into kept producing answers that were more grounded in vision than in practice.

Finally, I sat down with Rodney Lamar Williams, who worked with the Project for most of its first decade (and remains a key member of its leadership team to this day). “Think of it like jazz,” he said. “We all get in a room together and improvise.” I probably rolled my eyes at whatever that meant, but the Project was due to start in two weeks, so I resigned myself to muddling through as best I could. I was glad I had only agreed to do it once and vowed to tough it out and never look back.

I could not have been more wrong. This Project is a gift that never failed to exhaust and exhilarate me and all of us who have been blessed to guide and serve our young participants by meeting them where they are and making sure they leave us stronger, more confident and more joyful.

This First Pass Procedures Manual is a guide for how to empower 20 teens to discover the power and beauty of their own unique voices. It is a roadmap for replicating a program that deserves a life beyond our campus in Atlanta, GA, and I say first pass because we invite you to bend it, shake it, shape it and quake it anyway you think will ignite an artistic fire in your community.



Consider this first pass your invitation to collide with us! Use it. Adapt it. Pass it on.

About

For three weeks each summer, the Alliance Theatre assembles a diverse group of teenagers to collide with a Source Text and devise a wholly original piece of theater for and about themselves.

Under the guidance of a professional Creative Team supported by Emerging Leaders, the Ensemble spends the first two weeks unpacking the source material, engaging in workshops with Guest Artists, meeting with subject matter experts and notable public figures, and experiencing site visits. Each day concludes with a creative writing exercise, and those written reflections are ultimately woven together into a script. The third and final week of the program includes a rigorous rehearsal process that culminates with two public performances.

In 2026, the Alliance Theatre celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Palefsky Collision Project – a milestone that notably overlaps with the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In 25 years, nearly 500 teens have engaged in the Project, emerging as more collaborative, creative, and confident young artists -- but more importantly, as more empathetic and hopeful young adults who are committed and equipped to change the world.

Glossary

Term	Definition
<i>Collide</i> (verb)	To connect with something (e.g. a text, person, or community) in a manner that is immersive, significant, and often unexpected
<i>Devise</i> (verb)	To collaboratively experiment and create new work (as in Devised Theater, in which the Ensemble builds an original piece from scratch rather than starting with an existing script)
<i>Creative Team</i> (noun)	The core group of artists and/or educators leading the Project, to include a Director, Playwright, and Producer, plus additional roles (e.g. Music Director, Technical Director, Choreographer) as needed and as resources allow
<i>Emerging Leaders</i> (noun, plural)	Early career artists and/or educators supporting the Project, building a pipeline for meaningful alumni engagement, professional development, and program sustainability (e.g. Assistant Director, Stage Manager, Peer Mentor)
<i>Ensemble</i> (noun)	The diverse group of 20 teenagers engaged in the Project Note: while the Ensemble is comprised of rising 11th grade, 12th grade, and post-secondary students, we avoid using “students,” as this Project is the first paid artistic job for most and its environment is more like work than school
<i>Guest Artists</i> (noun, plural)	Visiting artists and/or educators who drop in to lead single, 2-hour workshops designed to expose the Ensemble to a wide variety of artistic approaches and genres (e.g. African Dance, Dramaturgy, Hip-Hop)
<i>Source Text</i> (noun)	The grounding material (e.g. speech, poem, novel, play, album, work of art) that initiates the devising process and inspires thematic connections and ideas

History

25 years AT-A-GLANCE

YEAR	SOURCE TEXT	PRODUCTION
<i>The First Era: Rosemary Newcott, Director with Playwrights in Rotation and Rodney Lamar Williams, Stage Manager</i>		
2001	Pilot	
2002	<i>Our Town</i> by Thornton Wilder	<i>Promise</i> Michael Rhod, Playwright
2003	<i>Antigone</i> by Sophocles	<i>We Are Antigone</i> Tammy Ryan, Playwright
2004	<i>Romeo & Juliet</i> by William Shakespeare	<i>Defy You, Stars</i> Lauren Gunderson, Playwright
2005	<i>King Lear</i> by William Shakespeare	<i>The True Chronicle History of Hip Hop Lear (or the King of Blingland and his three daughters)</i> OyamO, Playwright
2006	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> by Arthur Miller	<i>17</i> Chay Yew, Playwright
2007	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> by Tennessee Williams	<i>Memorabilia</i> Ken Weitzman, Playwright
2008	" <i>I Have a Dream</i> " by Martin Luther King, Jr.	<i>Children of the Dream</i> Rajendra Ramon Maharaj, Playwright
2009	<i>Around the World in Eighty Days</i> by Jules Verne	<i>Around Atlanta on Eighty Dollars</i> Mark Valdez, Playwright
2010	<i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i> by Edmond Rostand	<i>The Short Story of Michael Fish</i> Janece Shaffer, Playwright
2011	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	<i>Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: an inside/outside improvisational collaboration</i> Pearl Cleage, Playwright
<i>The Second Era: Patrick McColery, Director with Pearl Cleage, Playwright Rodney Lamar Williams, Stage Manager & Sound Designer and David Koté, Music Director</i>		
2012	<i>It's a Wonderful Life</i> Directed & Produced by Frank Capra	<i>Wish You Were Here</i>
2013	<i>The Gettysburg Address</i> by Abraham Lincoln	<i>Long Time Coming</i>
2014	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> by John Steinbeck	<i>Tom Joad's Blues: An American Odyssey</i>
2015	<i>Inherit the Wind</i> by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee	<i>Troubling Our House</i>
2016	<i>Leaves of Grass</i> by Walt Whitman	<i>A Celebration in Search of Assumption: The Artist's Role in Wartime</i>
2017	<i>MARCH</i> by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin	<i>Our Day's Gonna Come: An American Freedom Song</i>
2018	<i>Our Town</i> by Thornton Wilder	<i>From Grover's Corners to the ATL: A Journey of the Heart</i>
2019	<i>1984</i> by George Orwell	<i>We Are the Future</i>
2020	<i>White Rose</i> by Kip Wilson	<i>Dangerous Talk: A Back Then Journey to the Right Now</i>
2021	<i>What's Going On</i> by Marvin Gaye	" <i>What Makes You Think I'm Alone?</i> " A Meditation on Marvin
2022	<i>Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings</i> by Joy Harjo	<i>Everybody Has a Heartache: What We Don't Know</i>
2023	<i>Something Moving: A Meditation on Maynard</i> by Pearl Cleage	<i>Praying with Out Feet: For the People Who Can Light Up the City</i>
<i>The Third Era: Sam Provenzano, Director with Maya Lawrence, Playwright Rodney Lamar Williams, Director of Artistic Mentorship and David Koté, Music Director</i>		
2024	<i>The Hill We Climb</i> by Amanda Gorman	<i>Dreams Born of Chaos</i>
2025	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> by Octavia E. Butler	<i>Blaze</i>
2026	<i>Common Sense</i> by Thomas Paine	<i>Production to be announced</i>

How-to

Set the VISION

Foundational Pillars

At its heart, Collision is a space that empowers the voices of young people. That conviction is where this Project started, and its energy has firmly anchored the Project for 25 years through a shared, long-term commitment to the following ideals:

- Safety** In this space, participants are safe to explore new ideas they may never have encountered before. Centered on confidence in the ability of the process and grounded by the shared humanity blooming at the heart of each Source Text, this space builds engaged, trusting, and vibrant Ensembles.
- Rigor** In this space, participants “step outside of their comfort zones” as artists, fully delivering themselves into the creative arms of the process and their fellow participants, emerging not only as better artists, but as stronger collaborators and more engaged citizens.
- Diversity** In this space, participants encounter new ideas and people whose world views might not match their own, and they learn how to engage in conversations across the lines of race, religion, gender, and politics.
- Light** The real work of this Project has always been about unlocking the potential of the teenagers in the Ensemble. In this space, we focus on the formative process of self-discovery and self-realization. In doing so, we consistently look for the light – the joy, the love, and the hope for our future.

Reflections FROM FOUNDING LEADERS



Pictured: ROSEMARY NEWCOTT

Rosemary NEWCOTT:

“It is thrilling to give this kind of voice to an age group truly ready to think and speak about mature ideas, sometimes for the very first time. A powerful Source Text will provide both a jumping off point and a safety net to return to.”

Rodney Lamar WILLIAMS:
“Every aspect of the script must come from the young participants. This may challenge the Creative Team, but trust and give in to the process, encouraging teens to write and talk about the themes of source materials in new and unexpected ways that will resonate deeply with everyone.”



Pictured: RODNEY LAMAR WILLIAMS

How-to

Establish PROCEDURES

The collective wisdom and advice of our Creative Team (past and present) is reflected here, and individuals are invited to iterate upon this Project model in response to the unique assets, resources, and opportunities of the communities they serve.

TOPIC	RECOMMENDATION & RATIONALE
<i>Presenting Organization</i>	The Project is primarily designed to occur in a theater or other community-based setting as a rigorous, pre-professional artistic experience for teens. Schools and camps may offer similar devising programs inspired by the Project, with the understanding that significant modifications and outcomes are to be expected within those settings.
<i>Participant Age</i>	During the recruitment window, look for rising 11th grade, rising 12th grade, and rising high school graduates (age range: 16-18 years). Participants within this range are generally able to handle the independence, discipline and overall intellectual and emotional rigor that the Project requires.
<i>Experience</i>	Theater experience is decidedly not required. The most important qualifications are curiosity, collaboration, and readiness to access the power of one's voice.
<i>Recruitment</i>	While recruitment is a team effort, the Producer is responsible for recruiting applicants via social media outreach, school and community partnerships, and alumni community engagement (word of mouth from former participants is invaluable).
<i>Time of Year</i>	Project planning occurs from December – June, with implementation in summer to avoid conflicts with school schedules.
<i>Program Duration</i>	The Project should be scheduled for 3 consecutive weeks. This gives you enough time to do everything you need to do, but not enough to waste a single moment.
<i>Length of Day</i>	The program meets for 8 hours a day (10 AM – 6 PM). A detailed daily schedule should be provided to the Ensemble at least 1 day in advance.
<i>Attendance Policy</i>	Participants must commit to all three weeks, including (2) performances, and there should be no excused absences (except in the case of true emergencies). This may seem rigid, but remember: developing discipline and responsibility is an important part of the program.
<i>Program Cost and Stipend</i>	The Project is free to participants, and every effort should be made to provide them with a stipend, which replaces potentially lost summer job earnings, underscores our belief that artists should be paid, and reinforces the notion that this is a paying job in the theater and should be respected as such.
<i>Tickets Cost</i>	Admission to performances should be free and open to the public. We collect advanced RSVPs to track the projected audience headcount.

How-to

Plan the PROJECT

Example Project Plan

MONTH	WORKSTREAM	TASK(S)	RESPONSIBLE
December	Foundational Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm and contract the Creative Team <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-reference schedules to set Project dates <input type="checkbox"/> Book Workshop space (Weeks 1 and 2) and Rehearsal & Performance venue (Week 3) 	Producer
January	Source Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lead the Source Text selection process 	Playwright
February	Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Set interview format/dates with Director & Playwright <input type="checkbox"/> Post the online Interview Sign Up form & Application <input type="checkbox"/> Manage an applicant database containing the interview schedule, applicant demographic data, and link to full application 	Producer
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews 	Playwright & Director
March	Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draft the first version (v1) Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm interest & availability for all events on the first version (v1) Schedule 	Producer
	Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue interviews 	Playwright & Director
April	Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draft the second version (v2) Schedule (fill in gaps) <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize plans for Day 1 Reading 	Creative Team
	Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm interest & availability for all events on the second version (v2) Schedule 	Producer
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conclude interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Assemble the Ensemble (identify 20 accepted candidates and 4 alternates) 	Playwright & Director
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send written notices to confirm application statuses 	Producer
May	Final Preparation (2 months out)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Contract Guest Artists, Guest Speakers, and Day 1 Reading Actors <input type="checkbox"/> Book tickets to site visits <input type="checkbox"/> Purchase materials (Source Text, notebooks, pencils, highlighters, poster paper and markers) <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate pre-program details to the Ensemble (e.g. information for Day 1, plus administrative information regarding Media Release Waiver, Emergency Contact, Dietary Restrictions, Medical Accommodations, New Vendor 	Producer
June	Final preparation (1 month out)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Convene to review Ensemble 	Creative Team
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rehearse Day 1 Reading 	Director
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare marketing assets for performances (e.g. social media image & copy, flyer, program, and ticket reservation system) 	Producer

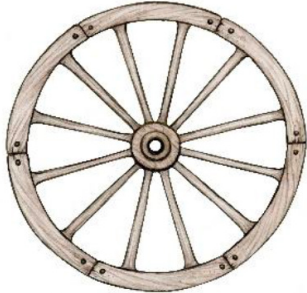
How-to

Approach the SOURCE TEXT

Selecting the Text


Choose an animating Source Text based on the specific interests and talents of your Creative Team with an eye toward stimulating new ideas and connections in your participants. Ideas can come when you least expect them and the Source Text may take a variety of forms (we have used scripts, films, speeches, historical documents, poems, novels, and musical selections).

Supplementing the text

	<p>Spokes of the Wheel</p> <p>It can be useful to think of the animating Source Text as the center of a wheel. The spokes of that wheel are then generated by supplemental materials that illuminate or help contextualize the themes and ideas at the center. For example, <i>On Tyranny</i> by Timothy D. Snyder is a recurring supplemental text in our program</p>
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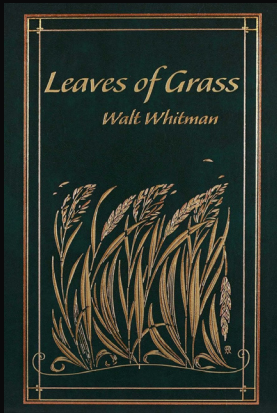
Example Wheel: Center & Spokes

In 2021, we used Marvin Gaye's masterpiece, *What's Going On?* as our animating Source Text. The songs on this album explore some of the most pressing issues of its time, including the war in Vietnam, poverty, inner city violence, and drug addiction. Since the album was Gaye's response to his brother serving in the Army in Vietnam, we wanted the Ensemble to understand what it would feel like to live in a country at war with the possibility of being drafted to fight.

<p>Guest Speakers Union of Concerned Scientists</p>	<p>Viewing <i>Dear America</i></p>	<p>Live Concert Presented by Alumni & Eugene H. Russell IV</p>
<p>Writing Prompt <i>Imagine writing a letter to a friend or relative fighting in Vietnam</i></p>		<p>Guest Speaker Zaron Burnett Conscientious Objector</p>
<p>Site Visit National Center for Civil and Human Rights</p>	<p>Reading Dr. Martin Luther King's Anti-War Speech at Riverside Church</p>	<p>Viewing <i>Hitsville: The Making of Motown</i></p>

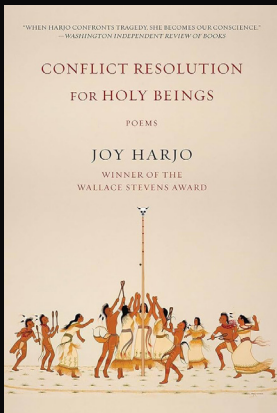
Reflections

on contextualizing the SOURCE TEXT



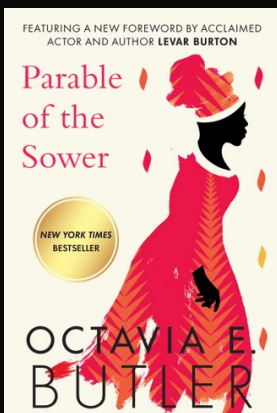
Patrick McColery:

“We hoped Whitman’s ecstatic love of nature would lead into discussions of climate change, but discovered that -- in the midst of that violent summer of 2016 -- participants’ focus was on their own vulnerability. They wrote about police killings of civilians, and about snipers on the roofs of downtown buildings looking to even the score. They needed to process images of nightclubs riddled with gunfire, and to understand how a young black man could be gunned down at a routine traffic stop. Their interest in Whitman was in his ability to celebrate himself even amidst the horrors of the American Civil War and its aftermath.”



Pearl Cleage:

“In 2022, before a matinee performance at our theater, I listened to the statement acknowledging that our building stands on land that was once home to thousands of people who were forcibly relocated in the terrible episode that is called The Trail of Tears. I suddenly realized how little I knew about this part of my American history and decided to address my own ignorance in the best way I knew how: I found a poet. That summer our animating Source Text was Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings by former United States Poet Laureate Joy Harjo. Participant responses to this piece were full of compassion and confusion – and a new understanding of how complex history can be.”



Rodney Lamar Williams:

“In choosing a Source Text, forecast ahead to the summer and consider what societal conversation will – or should be – taking place. Sitting on my couch in tears watching Los Angeles burn in the Palisades Fire reminded me of Octavia E. Butler’s prophetic novel Parable of the Sower. This frighteningly timely dystopian novel portrays the United States in collapse – it is set in 2024-2027 (precisely the same time as our 2025 Project) and depicts a young woman (15-18 years old) around the same age as our participants.”

How-to

Collect APPLICATIONS

Building the Form

Use an online form system to build and post a brief, accessible online application designed to take no more than 30 minutes to complete. Applications should be submitted at least 24 hours before each applicant's interview to allow ample time for the Creative Team to review.

APPLICANT – CONTACT INFORMATION	
First & Last Name (and preferred pronouns)	
Email	
Cell phone	
Date of birth	
School name & district (if applicable)	
Current Grade Level	
<input type="checkbox"/> 10th grade (rising 11th grade)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 11th grade (rising 12th grade)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 12th grade (rising graduate)	
RECRUITMENT INQUIRIES	
How did you hear about the Project?	
Have you interviewed for the Project before?	
1. Share three powerful words to describe yourself.	
2. Describe your artistic interests, skills, and talents.	
3. Explain what “collision” means to you.	
4. What issue or cause is important to you?	
5. Is there anything else you would like to share?	
PARENT/GUARDIAN/CAREGIVER - CONTACT INFORMATION	
First & Last Name (and preferred pronouns)	
Email	Cell Phone
APPLICANT – CONFIRM UNDERSTANDINGS	
Interview Sign Up	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have signed up for an interview	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have not signed up for an interview and need support (please contact me)	
Project Attendance	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am available all dates	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am not available all dates	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conflicts include:	
UPLOADS	
Current headshot or photo (a favorite selfie is okay!)	
Example of artistic work (optional)	

How-to

Conduct INTERVIEWS and select the ENSEMBLE

Setting the Tone

Interviews are informal and should feel like conversations rather than auditions. The Project works best with participants who are curious, open-minded, and collaborative. Each interview should last 15 minutes and may occur virtually or in-person. At the end of the conversation, the applicant may share a talent – this can be anything such as a monologue, song, poem, painting, or costume and set designs.

Looking for a Mature Mindset

It may sometimes happen that a talented applicant will demonstrate their artistic skill but is evidently not mature enough to handle the demands of the program. A young person who wants only to be a “star” is not ready for the kind of collaboration that will be required.

Reflections on Collaboration



Pearl Cleage:

“We once interviewed a young man who was charming and charismatic. At the end of the conversation, he shared a song and literally blew us away – but we decided that his focus on his own talents might not lend itself to our process and encouraged him to apply again the next summer. He was, we later learned, crushed at not being accepted, but he realized that he could grow as a more generous member of an Ensemble. In his second interview, he was much more aware of what it means to be one part of a vibrant whole. He was accepted. He had grown into that wonderful voice and become a generous collaborator.”

Shaping the Ensemble

The Creative Team will select the Ensemble with an eye toward assembling a diverse and eclectic group – as a reminder, participants do not need to have any theater training. They may be writers or designers or simply curious. Once the Creative Team has identified 20 accepted candidates and 4 alternates, the Ensemble begins to take shape.

It is helpful to create a visual “snapshot” of the final Ensemble (using the headshots of selfies from the applications) so the entire Creative Team can “meet” the incoming participants in advance of the program and more easily recognize and welcome them on Day 1.

How-to

Communicate PRE-PROGRAM DETAILS

Know Before You Go

Prior to the program, the Producer sends a warm welcome message containing specific details to help Ensemble members plan for their participation and a smooth start on Day 1.

This message should include:

- ❑ Source Text (Title and Author)
 - ◇ Note: pre-reading and pre-researching are not required
- ❑ Creative Team Introductions (Name and Role in alphabetical order)
- ❑ Program Dates and Times (with clear and accurate call times listed)
 - ◇ Note: include attendance policy
- ❑ Program Location (Venue, Address, Space – with wayfinding directions)
- ❑ Transportation and Parking Details (e.g. Public Transportation, Onsite Parking, Drop-Off)
 - ◇ Offer to address individual concerns about parking and/or transportation barriers
- ❑ Day 1 Arrival Plan
 - ◇ Station a team member in an easy-to-find location starting 30 minutes early
 - ◇ Contact the Stage Manager if you are running late or need support on the day-of
- ❑ What to Bring
 - ◇ Food and Beverage (e.g. snacks, lunch, and water)
 - ◇ Clothing (comfortable attire and footwear – bring layers!)
 - ◇ All other materials (texts, notebooks, pencils, pens, etc.) will be provided
- ❑ Stipend details

Example Attendance Policy

There are no excused absences for the Collision Project, and all participants are expected to be on time and present throughout the duration of the program. While there are no excused absences for personal reasons, anyone exhibiting symptoms of illness or other serious emergency should stay home. To report an absence due to illness or emergency, please call or text [Stage Manager] at [Phone Number].

Example Food and Beverage Guidance

Please be advised that (most days) lunch is not provided as part of this program. Participants will have a lunch break every day and are encouraged to pack a lunch that does not require refrigeration or a microwave. Additionally, we recommend packing a reusable water bottle, as well as a few snacks (no nuts). Participants are also welcome to purchase lunch at [explain options]; however, please note that adult supervision and/or chaperoning will not be provided to participants who elect to leave campus during the lunch break. We will be sure to notify you in advance on days that lunch will be provided as part of the program, so you can plan accordingly.

How-to

Launch the PROJECT

Day 1 (Morning): WELCOME

The first half of Day 1 is all about establishing the theater as the Ensemble's new artistic home: a place designed for everyone to enter and grow as their whole (sometimes brilliant, sometimes messy, but always authentic, beautiful, and true) selves, with the warm, demanding expectation that each person is responsible for maintaining a safe and sacred space by showing up and taking risks with utmost care for themselves and for each other.

We leave at least 30 minutes at the top of day for participants to arrive, wayfind, and settle in. Many are self-driving into the city and navigating a large professional arts campus for the first time on their own – they may feel anxious, and our first job is to calm those nerves: “Welcome! You’ve made it! You are in the right place at the right time.”

Once the group is met, we move into the Day 1 morning lineup:

- *Welcome and Introductions:* 30 minutes to introduce the Creative Team (name, role, pronouns) and the Ensemble (name, pronouns). Break the ice with a fun bonus question such as: What is your favorite food/beverage treat?
- *Allyship Training:* a 1-hour interactive program that asks participants to challenge assumptions, acknowledge biases, and establish a genuine culture of allyship and community.
- *Business Meeting:* 15 minutes to personally meet the finance team liaison responsible for processing new vendor paperwork (including form W-9) and payment via direct deposit or check.
- *Company Meeting:* 30 minutes for the entire theater company (all representatives from all departments) to circle up, share introductions, and welcome the Ensemble.

Day 1 (Afternoon): Meet the Source Text

The animating Source Text should be experienced by participants together on Day 1, followed by conversation, reaction and analysis. The text should be understood and respected as a product of its time and place, and proper context should be established by the Creative Team.

Regardless of its format (i.e. poem, novel, album, speech, film, play), the Source Text should be presented in a way that is digestible (e.g. staged reading, film screening, or musical performance) – we refer to this as the “Day 1 Reading.” Pre-reading and pre-researching are not required (and are, in fact, discouraged), as the most fruitful experience occurs when everyone hears and engages with the Day 1 Reading of the text as a shared moment and experience.

The Day 1 Reading often takes shape as a script – in which case, we invite former Collision participants to return as readers/performers. This allows them to share their experiences with the new group and keeps them connected to the ongoing work of the Project.

Unpacking the SOURCE TEXT

Following the reading, we guide response to the Source Text using these sequential tools:

Word Dump: The director instructs the Collisioners to jot down any words, phrases, or ideas that resonate with them as they hear the reading of the animating Source Text. Afterwards, they are asked to verbally share their responses with the group as emerging leaders transcribe them onto large posters (you will end up with six or more) displayed around the workspace.

Moving forward, these will serve as a visual guide and can be used to inspire and inform written material, including original haiku poetry and songs.

Haiku: A haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry consisting of three unrhymed lines with a 5, 7, 5 syllable structure. The brief, concentrated structure of a haiku poem is ideal for transitioning Word Dump ideas into original, participant-created content.

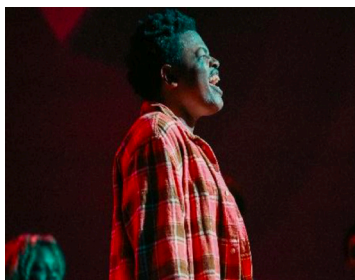
To do this, the director asks the Collisioners to spend about 10 minutes composing individual haiku, incorporating 5 words from the Word Dump, and focusing their poem on the themes from the text.

Then, randomly split the Ensemble into subgroups of 4 or 5, and have each individual devise movement for their own haiku, while also directing who speaks each word or line. Give them 30 minutes for the whole exercise, providing a quick opportunity to create text and devise movement, while also giving each participant a chance to lead and to follow.

Close with a sharing in which each subgroup performs their haiku (in their chosen order) for the larger collective, with immediate, positive feedback on volume, diction, staging, levels, and intention. Ask each subgroup to perform their piece again, this time incorporating that feedback, while also allowing the sound designer to experiment with different underscoring to explore mood and performance.

Be clear that while all generated material is valuable, the Playwright will ultimately decide what ends up in the final script, and the director may incorporate devised movement to support text differently than it was originally developed.

Reflections on the Word Dump



Pictured: ELIJAH MERRICKS, COLLISIONER

Patrick McColery:

“Ideas from the Word Dump are always available for inspiration. The summer that we encountered Joy Harjo’s poetry, one participant was deeply moved by a phrase from *Everybody Has a Heartache: A Blues*, which inspired a show-stopping original song titled *Minimum Wage Shoes* – his first attempt at songwriting.”

Creative SOUND DESIGN

Sound design can be used to elevate the richness of the Project, from rehearsal to performance. During the first two weeks, when the Ensemble breaks into small groups to share their haikus and create small performance pieces, the sound designer begins to identify music that will capture the heart of each group's presentation.

Reflections on Sound Design



Pictured: COLLISION PROJECT ENSEMBLE MEMBERS (2022)

Rodney Lamar Williams:

“Start building a list of musical possibilities on Day 1, underscoring warm-ups, writing time, and workshops to find music that connects with participants and communicates what they are saying beyond words. The collective voice of the Tribe – how they feel, what they say, and how honestly they can say it – must always be front and center, so be mindful to avoid drowning them out. Finding the right balance requires patience.”

Closing Circle: Be Encouraged!

Day 1 concludes with a closing circle in which:

- Each person shares 1 word to capture their day (as a hand-squeeze is passed)
- The Creative Team provides announcements and reminders for the next day
- Everyone turns to a neighbor or two to say, “Be encouraged!” (with a hug, if consented)

Coordinating the Talent Share

In the first closing circle, the Stage Manager should announce that there will be a Talent Share (not a show) on Day 5 (afternoon) to close out the first week. In the Talent Share, each individual must share a talent and original piece inspired by the Source Text (e.g. monologue, song, dance, spoken word piece, or work of visual art). While it is permissible to ask one or more of their peers to participate in their piece by playing instruments or performing back-up vocals, each individual must create and lead their own performance, as the Talent Share is meant to provide potential material to be considered for the final script.

By the end of Day 4, each Collisioner must provide the Stage Manager a list of anything they need (like a speaker or keyboard), as well as the title and nature of their piece. With that information, the Stage Manager curates the Talent Share in the most interesting order, and coordinates with emerging leaders on the team to act as emcees to help move the sharing along and help keep it light.

Afterwards, turn up some dance music and let the participants enjoy themselves! After a long week full of new people, new experiences and creative challenges, sharing individual talents and then relaxing and blowing off some steam is a great way to end the first week.

Fostering CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION


The honest exchange of ideas is crucial to the development of the Ensemble and to building a strong script. Participants should be encouraged to ground their work with the Project in the real world outside of the rehearsal hall. What is going on in their community, their city, their country? How will that impact their work as artists in collaboration?

From Day 1, the Project should always be a judgment free zone. All points of view should be respected and deemed equally worthy of expression. Since there will be a variety of points of view, the Project is best served when discussions are structured as a way for participants to express and share their own thoughts, not refute the ideas of others.

Political discourse can lead young people towards an aggressive way of confronting people who hold a point of view different from their own. To steer them towards constructive dialogue, we ask participants to begin their comments with “I think...” or “I feel...” rather than “Here’s why I disagree...” or “Here’s where you’re wrong...”

Later, when the final script is put together, the Playwright may find meaningful opportunities to juxtapose different points of view.

Reflections on Sound Design

	<p><i>Pearl Cleage:</i></p> <p>“One summer, we had a participant who early in the process, defended the Confederate flag as a legitimate symbol of ‘southern pride.’ Another participant wrote with a lighter touch, suggesting that there was already another symbol of southern pride that she preferred. ‘We’ve got sweet tea for that,’ she wrote, a line that always got a laugh. By the end of the summer, after conversation with a diverse group of her new friends, our defender of the flag had reconsidered her position and signed on for sweet tea, too!”</p>
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Free Speech vs. Hate Speech

While free speech is hugely important, hate speech that attacks, threatens, or degrades a group or individual based on attributes like race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability is easy to recognize and cannot be tolerated.

Participant Confidentiality vs. Safety

Throughout the program, Ensemble members may choose to disclose personal information with the group – this is always welcome but never required, and ensuring participant confidentiality outside of the rehearsal room is key to navigating topics that are sensitive or private. That said, if the Creative Team suspects or confirms that a participant is unsafe, it is the responsibility of the adults on the team to follow appropriate procedures (e.g. contacting a parent or caregiver) – ideally with the participant’s involvement – in support of their well-being.

How-to

Devise as an ENSEMBLE — WEEKS 1 & 2

Daily Schedule

After Day 1, each day during the first two weeks of the Project generally follows this routine:

TIME	DESCRIPTION
10 – 10:30 AM	Welcome & Warm Up
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Morning Workshop or Experience
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch (on your own)
1:30 – 2 PM	Refocus
2 – 4 PM	Afternoon Workshop or Experience
4 – 5 PM	Dramaturgy and/or Close-Reading of Source Text
5 – 5:30 PM	Creative Writing
5:30 – 6 PM	Closing Circle

Meeting in Pairs

In addition to whole group and rehearsal activities, the Director, Playwright, and other representatives from the Creative Team will meet with participants in pairs for 15-20 minutes each starting on Day 2. These conversations help participants share their reactions to the Project with the Creative Team and 1 peer, while allowing everyone an opportunity to connect in a smaller setting. These informal conversations take place at the start of the day (before rehearsal begins) and at the end of the day (after rehearsal ends). At 4 participants per day, these conversations should be scheduled over the course of 5 days (i.e. Days 2-6) to reach all 20 participants.

Selecting Guest Artists & Experiences

Each Guest Artist workshop and Guest Speaker event is about 2 hours in length. For the first two weeks of the program, the Ensemble has 2 guest and/or site experiences per day.

In choosing the guests and experiences that will support your process, look for...

- **A wide variety** of approaches, styles, and areas of expertise (include writing, music, performance, acting techniques, movement, choreography, voice and diction, etc.)
- **Clear investment** in the development of the cultural life of your city or town (find people who care about lifting young citizens up through education and engagement)
- **Exciting connections** to the Source Text to inspire content creation and physical devising
- **Role Models** who make at least part of their living from their craft – so participants can see that possibility exists
- **Experiences** that provide deeper context and understanding of the Source Text, such as:
 - ◇ Meeting with notable public figures (e.g. a Civic and Civil Rights Leader or a diverse cultural representative)
 - ◇ Participating in meaningful site experiences (in Atlanta, we have visited the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, the Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, and the High Museum of Art).

Sequencing GUEST ARTISTS and EXPERIENCES

Participants may naturally feel more comfortable in one workshop than another, but the experience of trying something new and encouraging each other in the process is an important part of the work they will do together.

In building your schedule, try to juxtapose something heady (like a workshop exploring the psychology of levels of consciousness) with something physical (like a workshop on contemporary movement with a dance artist). Or welcome a local civic leader (in the morning) and follow up with a workshop in African dance and Yoruba mythology (in the afternoon).

Example Schedule: Weeks 1 & 2 (2024)

Source Text: The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman

DAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON
WEEK 1		
Day 1: Monday	Welcome - Introductions - Allyship Training - Business Meeting - Company Meeting	Meet the Source Text - Day 1 Reading (5 alumni) - Word Dump - Haiku
Day 2: Tuesday	Living Authentically Method of Artistry (LAMOIA) with Jade Lambert Smith	African Dance & Yoruba Culture with Mama Yeye & Alex Cole Acosta (accompaniment)
Day 3: Wednesday	Site Visit: High Museum of Art with the High Museum's Teen Team	Politics & Identity with Kayla Ibarra and Tom Zhang
Day 4: Thursday	Acting Techniques with Keith Arthur Bolden	Breath, Voice, and Diction with Brad Raymond
Day 5: Friday	Movement with T. Lang	Talent Share facilitated by Stage Manager
WEEK 2		
Day 6: Monday	Songwriting (Music Director's Workshop) with David Koté and Olani Selamu	Viewpoints with Dru Sky Berrian
Day 7: Tuesday	Improv with Avery Sharpe-Steele	Viewing - AMEND: The Fight for America (Netflix)
Day 8: Wednesday	Site Visit: National Center for Civil and Human Rights	Movement as Metaphor with Rosemary Newcott
Day 9: Thursday	Songwriting with Christian Magby	Vocabulary Review (Director's Workshop) with Sam Provenzano
[FRIDAY OFF]		

Building a PHYSICAL VOCABULARY

Throughout the first two weeks, the director focuses on building a shared physical vocabulary with the Ensemble. To do this, the director may keep a device handy to document compelling movement created in the workshops as well as during transitions and breaks. Everyone is encouraged to share discoveries as they grow and explore within each experience and exercise, as those ideas may be developed as blocking in support of the final script and performance.

Hearing the Music

Music plays a big part in the Project, and the Music Director should have a dedicated workshop (or two) in which participants can share musical ideas – both instrumental and vocal. In this session, the Music Director identifies the first building blocks of the show’s musical component. Importantly, musical experience is not required – many participants write their first song or sing their first solo as part of this Project. Exploring is encouraged -- all genres (e.g. jazz, rap, country, rock, and reggaeton) can enrich and enliven the narrative, and musical material is generated in much the same way that the writing emerges: themes and ideas begin to coalesce and present themselves as possible subjects for further development.

Reflections on Songwriting



Pictured: DAVID KOTÉ

David Koté:

“I always begin by asking, ‘Who here is a songwriter?’ and I keep asking until every hand is raised. In this Project, the entire Ensemble contributes to writing the music. Building confidence and encouraging everyone to share ideas is essential.”

Step 1: Generate Possibilities Together

Sometimes everyone writes a four-bar melodic phrase; other times, the group breaks into smaller teams.

Step 2: Listen to Everything

Hear each idea in its entirety – you never know which part might be useful. If it isn’t heard, the idea is lost.

Step 3: Organize Ideas

Find a structure that best expresses the theme or story behind the work. Decide on an order, develop recurring motifs, and refine lyrics and harmonies. Collaboration is key and experimentation is encouraged. Sometimes an unexpected combination of ideas leads to the most compelling results.

Step 4: Rehearsal and Performance

Bring each complicated piece to life by exploring dynamics, tempo, and expression, ensuring that every part contributes to the overall mood and message of the production. Listen closely and make small adjustments to achieve balance and unity.”

How-to

Quilt a SCRIPT — THE WRITING WEEKEND

Organizing the Writing

The script is comprised solely of words written by the participants, to include responses to the daily writing prompts as well as other written pieces participants share. If other writers are used for context or comment in the body of the script, they should be clearly identified. The Playwright's job is not to write the script, but to organize and shape the writing into a coherent narrative that should begin with the essential question participants have been examining for the first two weeks of the Project. The script should allow the audience to see the young artists grapple with possible answers to that question and reflect their shared conclusions and experiences.

Shaping the Script

The Playwright's job is to produce the script. The writing should be shaped in such a way that all points of view receive a fair hearing. No participant, no matter how great an actor, singer or writer, should dominate the performance. Participants will speak as themselves. Honest communication, not acting, is the intention here.

This is probably the most challenging part of the process for any Playwright. Being able to channel the voices of 20 young people and shaping a script that allows them to be in conversation with each other and with the audience calls for an open mind, an open heart and a willingness to make sure everybody has their say. When the first draft of the script is done, count the lines for each participant to ensure that everyone has equal time in the spotlight.

The script should be less like a melting pot and more like a quilt: every square is part of the question and every stitch is part of the answer. At the heart of the Collision process is a deep reverence for the power of the truth. Bryan Mercer's workshop exploring levels of consciousness often touches participants so deeply that they weep at how beautiful and worthy they suddenly see themselves to be. We want them to feel excited about what they have created together.

The Playwright should always remember and respect the youth and vulnerability of the Ensemble, not all of whom are performers, as the script takes shape. The rhythms of the participants' speech and personal interactions should also inform the script. This is why the Playwright should be present to observe the participants as often as possible. They are playing themselves in the final show, but the Playwright must define them as characters in the script, the more specifically the better.

As the script takes shape on paper, the Playwright should indicate where a particular song or movement pattern might be most effective to facilitate a conversation. By Sunday, the Playwright sends the script to the Creative Team and the Stage Manager prepares copies for distribution to the Ensemble on Monday morning of Week 3.


Crafting the **WRITING PROMPTS**

The Playwright gives participants a writing prompt at the end of each day, providing 20 minutes to respond. Writing with pen and paper rather than electronic devices allows the Playwright to collect the responses immediately, not to be seen again until the script is presented.

The Playwright should have an idea about what prompts might be helpful in building the script, but should always be open to responding to unexpected conversations and discoveries on any given day. The responses to the prompts should not be read aloud or shared among the participants. In this way, the Playwright becomes the one person who sees the conversations that are happening among participants before they themselves are even aware of what others are writing about.

The Playwright's task at the end of the first two weeks is to use these written responses, in whole or in part, to craft those conversations into a script that will allow participants to hear and respond to each other and invite the audience into that exchange.

Reflections on Responding

	<p><i>Pearl Cleage:</i></p> <p>“One summer, we were talking about gun violence and a participant shared that they had been doing drills for active shooters since kindergarten. The discussion that ensued was heartbreaking. Tossing out the prompt I had planned, I asked participants to write about how it felt to participate in these drills. The pieces they wrote were raw and honest. Many had never discussed these feelings.”</p>
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Keeping Participant Folders

The Playwright should maintain individual folders for participants to organize all writing beginning on Day 1. There will be a minimum of 180 responses, just from the daily prompts. Absorb participants' work daily to gain insight into the ideas and voices of the participants as they reveal themselves and illuminate the shape of the script as it comes together organically.

Planning as a Team

Throughout Weeks 1 and 2, the Creative Team should meet frequently to discuss individual focus areas and ideas for how to best bring forward the talents of each participant. Week 2 is intentionally four days long (Monday-Thursday, with Friday off) to allow the Playwright 3 full days to produce a script that is ready for a Table Read on Monday of Week 3.

After participants depart on Thursday of Week 2, the Creative Team convenes to discuss the vision of the show and address any questions or concerns that may have come up. In this meeting, the Music Director shares audio of the most promising musical materials and the director shares video of specific moments from the first two weeks, with an eye toward specific movements or approaches that illustrate a shared physical vocabulary.


How-to

Produce a SHOW — WEEK 3

Shifting into Rehearsal

The final week of the Project should take place in the performance space and focus primarily on rehearsal. Participants are now officially the Cast, and the director steps in to lead the rehearsal process that will bring the script to life.

Reflections on the Director’s Mindset in Week 3

 <p><i>Pictured:</i> PATRICK MCCOLERY</p>	<p><i>Patrick McColery:</i></p> <p>“Take a breath. Trust the process. There is enough time (and it’s called Collision for a reason). Review each video to have that physical vocabulary fresh in your mind. The Playwright has just made an arduous journey for 3 days quilting together the thoughts, hopes and dreams of 20 young artists into a cohesive whole. Give them space to finish!</p> <p>As long as you have the script in time for Monday morning’s rehearsal, you are golden. This means you may encounter the script for the first time along with the Cast – and you’re probably used to knowing the script inside and out before first rehearsal, but that is not the Collision process. Trust. Breathe. Take it one step at a time.”</p>
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Example rehearsal schedule: Week 3

DAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON
WEEK 3		
Day 10: Monday	Table Read	Blocking
Day 11: Tuesday	Blocking	Blocking
Day 12: Wednesday	Blocking	Blocking
Day 13: Thursday	Off-Book Rehearsal and/or Run-Through	Technical Design Run-Through [Lighting, Sound, Projection]
Day 14: Friday	Technical Rehearsal	Run-Through with Full Tech (ideally twice) Communal Dinner
PERFORMANCES		
Day 14: Friday (evening)		
Day 15: Saturday (matinee)		

Facilitating the **TABLE READ**

Before the Reading

Prepare the space to create 1 large table with enough space for everyone on the Creative Team and in the Cast to have a seat

- ❑ The Stage Manager will print and prepare copies of the scripts (we recommend printing single-sided with 3-hole punch in a binder)
- ❑ Every seat should have a:
 - ◇ Copy of the script
 - ◇ Pencil with eraser
 - ◇ Highlighter
 - ◇ Bottle of water (optional)
- ❑ Instruments should be on-hand to play (the Cast should perform songs fully during the read-through)
- ❑ Note: Week 3 Monday (morning) is a great opportunity for the Producer to provide extra hospitality (e.g. coffee, tea, breakfast), if resources allow

During the First Reading

- ❑ The director will ask the Playwright if they have any instructions or comments before the first read-through and allow space for those remarks, if applicable
- ❑ The director will gently remind the Cast that they have an audience on Friday night – so actors should sit up, feet flat on the floor, use a full voice, and make eye contact (as accessible)
- ❑ Even during this first, cold reading, the Cast should connect as much as possible to get a feel for the script they have created together

After the First Reading

- ❑ Open discussion for any comments, feedback, reactions, or questions
 - ◇ Keep in mind: this is the very first time participants have heard which pieces of writing (both of others, and their own) made it into the final script
- ❑ Allow room for participants to request changes of the Playwright (without judgment)
 - ◇ For example: a participant may feel uncomfortable sharing certain selections from their writing from the stage
 - ◇ Note: depending on the situation, participants may prefer to speak with the Playwright privately to express concerns
 - ◇ In response, the Playwright may change who says certain lines or eliminate them altogether – make it clear that the Playwright is ultimately responsible for all final changes or edits
- ❑ The Director should ask the Cast:
 - ◇ Where is the humor in the piece?
 - ◇ What are the different sections and natural transitions?

Engage in a Second Reading

- ❑ Read through the script a second time and ask for any final comments or observations
- ❑ At the end of the second read-through, the script is set

Blocking the SCRIPT

The Director has 3 ½ days to block the script. Start this process with sections that the Director feels most strongly about (for instance, a section that would pair perfectly with a certain devised physical movement). Then, piece things together and fill in transitions or sections that are not yet clear – it’s amazing how the unknown will suddenly become clear.

In the spirit of Collision, ask for the Cast’s feedback and suggestions to support the text to add buy-in. Remember: the show is truly, collaboratively, theirs. The Cast may suggest and try many different things – and from there, the Director gets the final say on all blocking and movement.

Rely on Emerging Leaders to identify and support Cast members struggling with their lines, volume, or diction during breaks. The Cast should be off-book by Thursday morning. The performance should run no more than 1 hour.

Reviewing Wardrobe

Early in Week 3, discuss the color palette for “costumes.” It may be clear that a neutral color palette would support the text, or perhaps more bold colors like greens, blues, and reds. As early as Tuesday, the Director should begin reviewing clothing ideas (this leaves time for adjustments).

Clothing Guidelines

- Clothing should be...
 - ◇ From participants’ existing closets (not newly purchased)
 - ◇ Comfortable (easy to move in)
 - ◇ Brand-Neutral (without visible logos or words)
 - ◇ Modest (dress for a multi-generational audience, from toddlers to grandparents) – avoid revealing clothing and/or shorts
- Shoes should be...
 - ◇ Comfortable – avoid high heels
 - ◇ Closed-Toe
 - ◇ Quiet (with soft soles to move freely onstage without noise)
- Make-up should be minimal
- Hair should be pulled back (so facial expressions can be seen)

Designing & Running the Technical Elements

Performances may include lighting, sound, and/or projection elements. Design moves quickly, so look for experienced designers who are ready to confidently build cues and rapidly layer in their respective elements.

Preparing for an Audience Talk-Back

Following each performance, the Director should facilitate a brief (15-20 minutes) audience talk-back. Participants should introduce themselves (e.g. name, grade, school) – and it can be helpful to ask the audience to hold for applause until all 20 have concluded. The Director will then invite a few questions from the audience, and 1-2 team members should be stationed in the audience with handheld microphones to ensure questions are heard.

Generating an AUDIENCE

<p><i>A Collision Project audience typically includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends and family of the Ensemble • Alumni • Guest Artists and Guest Speakers • Past Creative Team members • Presenting organization staff • School and community partners • Individual and corporate sponsors • Patrons who have attended other performances and events 	<p><i>Approaches to Outreach:</i></p> <p>Invite supporters into the process and encourage RSVP to performances by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sending targeted email messages to these groups throughout the Project <input type="checkbox"/> Posting weekly Project updates (e.g. Instagram takeovers) via social media <input type="checkbox"/> Inviting the Ensemble to support these efforts by forwarding and sharing these messages
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Example Social Media Content

<p><i>Square image:</i></p> 	<p><i>Suggested Copy:</i></p> <p>Friends and family: please save the date! The 24th Annual Palefsky Collision Project performances will take place on the @alliancetheatre Coca-Cola Stage on Friday, July 25 (7 PM) and Saturday, July 26 (2:30 PM). Register today at: [link] #CollisionProject2025</p>
<p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide the Ensemble with these marketing assets directly so they can effectively spread the word <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage participants to revise or add to this copy to reflect their individual voices and experiences 	

Executing the Run of Show

The Producer should ensure that the following logistics are planned for and delivered:

- Open advanced online RSVP to track projected audience headcount
- Design and print programs
- Disseminate a performance reminder with pre-show details for audience members
- Assign Front of House staff and/or volunteers to direct guests and support open seating
- Order and arrange a Communal Dinner for the Creative Team and Cast on Friday night
- Set up a Help Desk at the entrance to the venue, where the Producer is stationed to welcome patrons, address questions, and standby for the “all clear” to open doors
- Provide a curtain speech to thank Project supporters and the Creative Team
 - ◇ Recommendation: invite a Creative Team leader (e.g. Playwright) to succinctly explain the Project to orient the audience – for some, this is a first theater-going experience; and for many, this is certainly the first of its kind

How-to

Wrap the PROJECT – DAY 15

Beginning the Last Day

The second (and final) performance is a matinee. As always, the day begins with a warm up – this routine is necessary to mentally and physically prepare the Cast for the final performance. Then, the Director will address notes from the previous night's performance, with time to fine-tune any glitches that need to be fixed. From there: Costumes. Places. Performance & Audience Talk Back – one more time.

Closing the Last Day

Following the second performance, participants adjourn to the rehearsal space for a final closing circle. This is an emotional moment for participants as they collect what is often the first payment they have ever received as working artists and say their final goodbyes.

Reflections on the Final Circle



Rodney Lamar Williams:

“The final circle is precious. In this moment, the elders should speak light, love, and inspiration as they challenge the Ensemble to remember their charge: to change the world. At the end of each Collision Project, we rededicate ourselves to making positive change, with a fresh understanding of our roles as humans, as citizens, as artists. And we know in our bones that this experience has, in fact, bent the arc of the universe towards justice and peace.”

And just like that, it's over. At least until next summer...

How-to

Stay connected – MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY




Each Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the most recent Atlanta Ensemble reconvenes to reimagine their summer performance through the lens of Dr. King's legacy. After a short week of after-school and weekend rehearsals, we present 1-2 public performances on King Day itself (a day 'on' for our community). This tradition offers participants a meaningful opportunity to reconnect and recreate a few months following the anchor summertime experience. While this opportunity may present differently in other Project settings, we encourage communities to identify its distinct process for engaging participants as they transition from Cast to Alumni.

How-to

Sustain the PROJECT

Project Leadership

Three distinct artistic leadership teams have spearheaded the Collision Project at the Alliance Theatre, each leaving their own unique stamp on the model while upholding its lasting mission. Our ability to sustain the Project is deeply rooted in both long-term commitments and the faith, trust, and courage required to boldly pass the torch. In sharing this manual, we invite new leaders, eras, and iterations to collide. We can't wait to learn what you will discover and create.

 <p><i>Pictured:</i> ROSEMARY NEWCOTT IN COLLISION PROJECT REHEARSAL</p>	<p><i>The First Era (2001 - 2011)</i></p> <p>In 2001, Susan V. Booth, Artistic Director and Rosemary Newcott, Artistic Director of Youth and Family Theatre piloted the first “collision” method to authentically engage Atlanta teenagers with classic texts. Rodney Lamar Williams joined the Project as Stage Manager the following year, supporting the development of the model to include: 20 teens for 3 weeks in summer, 1 Director in Residence, and 1 Playwright in Rotation.</p>
 <p><i>Pictured:</i> DAVID KOTÉ, PEARL CLEAGE, PATRICK MCCOLERY, AND RODNEY LAMAR WILLIAMS</p>	<p><i>The Second Era (2012 - 2023)</i></p> <p>Patrick McColery joined the Project as Director and Pearl Cleage remained on as Playwright, shifting the role to an in-residence format. Williams remained Stage Manager and Sound Designer and David Koté joined as Music Director. During this period, McColery and Cleage refined the model to include a robust series of Guest Artists, Guest Speakers, and Site Visits.</p>
 <p><i>Pictured:</i> MAYA LAWRENCE AND SAM PROVENZANO</p>	<p><i>The Third Era (2024 - present)</i></p> <p>Sam Provenzano joined the Project as Director and Maya Lawrence stepped into the role of Playwright. Williams serves as Director of Artistic Mentorship and Koté remains Music Director. This team is leading our celebration of the Project's 25th anniversary and shaping the Project's culture, impact, and connection to our community into the future.</p>

Afterword

by **MAYA LAWRENCE AND SAM PROVENZANO**

from Atlanta, with Legacy and Love



Pictured: MAYA LAWRENCE

The Palefsky Collision Project is the kind of program that we experienced as teens who hoped to one day grow up to change the world – inside each of us, there lives an inner-teen who believes that changing the world is possible, and that art is the essential vehicle to do so. The times we live in now have proven this true: artists who believe in a better world, and who commit themselves to creating that world, are often the ones who make it real.

The community that Collision creates shows our young world-savers that they are not alone in this work – and that, in fact, they need each other to make it happen. Whether they go on to become professional artists (as some do) or not, they become citizens, world-builders, protectors of humanity – brave, truth-telling human beings who believe a better world is something they are capable of creating together.



Pictured: SAM PROVENZANO

We empower these burgeoning adults to believe that their thoughts, actions, behaviors, and habits have an effect on the trajectory of our world because of the impact they feel in the container of those 3 weeks. Their worlds have been forever changed; how could they not believe they have the power to do the same for the world around them? They've seen what world-changing looks like in practice: in the intimate encouragement they receive in moments when they don't yet know what they're capable of; in the history excavated from the caption on a museum wall; in the lyric an ensemble member writes that will linger in their minds for years after the project – a quiet anthem calling them to stay committed to making that new world real.

They know now that world-changing happens in the daily choices for which they've been given a blueprint to repeat. And you now know this as well, having this manual in your hands. We encourage you to lead with this belief: the “naive” people who truly believe they can change the world are the ones that do.

Just as the participants may doubt themselves, you, as the carrier of this eternal torch, may doubt yourself too. Continue to model what you're asking them to do: trust the process, trust yourself, and trust your community. Allow the process to reveal the questions that your youth are the answers to. Then do all you can to help them realize the answer that they already are.

When 20 brave young voices, guided by caring, creative adults, are unleashed, we are reminded of a future worth believing in – and of the one we've now inherited the fight for.



Pictured: CORETTA SCOTT KING WITH HER CHILDREN IN 1964

“Struggle is a never-ending process. Freedom is never really won. You earn it and win it in every generation.”
– *Coretta Scott King*

Index: Resource (2013)

Post-Mortem excerpts by PEARL CLEAGE

After my first summer with the Project, I participated in a Collision “Post-Mortem” organized by Bari Newport, Producer. Included here are excerpts from a few parting thoughts of my own.

Re: Collision Post-Mortem

From: Pearl Cleage

Date: August 8, 2011

The most challenging thing about the Collision Project is finding a way to describe it that gives the interested outsider a glimpse of how unique and amazing and necessary and useful this project is on every level. It taps directly into the deep well of truth and curiosity and honesty and vulnerability and fierce determination to be heard that is found in young people around the world.

[It] is my firm belief that all writers are worriers. Especially playwrights. It is the natural outcome of spending long hours arguing all sides of every question in your own head in order to give each of the characters you’re creating a fair shake at winning the discussion, proving the premise and earning the love of audiences everywhere. The love of the audiences is important since there are usually actors involved and how old were these kids anyway?

Turns out, I didn’t need to worry. Rodney was right. It was one long, passionate improvisation [...] that I can honestly say gave me great hope for the next generation. The young people I had the great pleasure to encounter in Collision [...] had opinions, strong opinions, about almost everything, but they also had amazing compassion towards each other. They listened deeply to vastly different points of view without ever shutting off discussion or masking their real emotional responses. They were world class huggers.

They challenged my listening skills, especially at first when I wanted to correct them when their ideas didn’t reflect my own. When I wanted to assert my seniority, my status, my power and tell them how they should think about every little thing.

They made me laugh and they made me remember. They made me want to know what they had to say and want to listen harder to what they didn’t say. They allowed me to see them so clearly that I could put together a piece that sounded like them because it was their words, their thoughts, their emotions and confusions and yearnings that they had put on paper and handed to me [...] and then hoped I would make them look good. I think we did better than that. We made them look like themselves.

[Through] a rigorous three weeks of exercises, activities and discussions, [Collision] encourage[s] participants to have faith in themselves and in each other. [Participants] emerge energized, empowered and hopeful, as do those of us who are privileged to be their guides.

Index: Resource (2021)

"Why this Piece" – an Invitation to the Source Text by PEARL CLEAGE

The Palefsky Collision Project at 20: What's Going On?

Twenty years ago, Susan Booth wanted to create a summer program for metro-Atlanta teens that would use a classic theatre text as a catalyst for the creation of brand-new work, devised by the participants in collaboration with founding director, Rosemary Newcott, stage manager/sound designer, Rodney Williams, and a revolving roster of playwrights. In anticipation of the unexpected things that happen when artists and ideas collide, she named it The Collision Project.

Ten years later, Chris Moses invited me to become one of those playwrights. [...Suffice] it to say, I reluctantly agreed. I had no experience working with high school students. Plus, I couldn't get a satisfactory answer from anybody about what the Collision process was, exactly. As a playwright, I wanted parameters, guidelines, rules of the road, but none of those things seemed to be forthcoming from my soon to be collaborators who smiled and reassured me everything would be fine.

In desperation, with my first Collision only a few weeks away, I went back to Rodney in desperation. "Well, it's kind of like jazz," he said. "We all get in a room together and improvise."

Although at the time that only added to my terror, he was right. What was supposed to be a one-time gig so moved me, so reassured and revitalized and energized me that as soon as our final performance was over, I immediately began trying to figure out how to ask Chris Moses if I could do it just one more time. I am so grateful that he said yes. Patrick McColery, our new director, had shared that first Collision summer with me and he was hooked, too. From that day to this, Patrick and I have walked every step of our Collision journey together, and every summer, we join Rodney and David Koté, our musical director, in putting a small tribe together and seeing where the spirit leads us. In the last ten years, we've explored plays, novels, films, speeches and our country's founding documents. In the process, we've had the blessing of listening to the dreams and visions of the next generation of theatre makers; world changing young citizen artists, who amaze and exhaust and transform us every single time.

We can hardly believe that this is our 20th anniversary. Sustained by a generous endowment from Vicki and Howard Palefsky, Susan Booth's dreams of a program that would challenge and change Atlanta teens has now "graduated" over 400 young people who have seen their power manifested and magnified by their Collision experiences in a way that they usually can't describe any better than we can, even after all these years. But we keep trying.

For our 20th Anniversary summer, we have chosen our first all musical text, Marvin Gaye's 1971 masterpiece, "What's Going On?" On the occasion of its 50th anniversary this year, Rolling Stone Magazine named it the best album of all time.

Wherever you would rank it among your personal favorites, the album has undeniable culture and artistic significance and it lends itself to a better understanding of context, one of the hallmarks of the Collision method. One of the things we do every summer is offer our participants an approach to thinking. We don't tell them what to think. We show them a way of thinking that hopefully enlarges their understanding of context and gives them a greater appreciation of the interconnectedness of ideas in the process of creative expression.

1971 was a year of great upheaval and confusion in America. There are so many ways to consider that American moment through the lens of Marvin's music. I picture the music and the lyrics of the "What's Going On?" album as the shining center of a wagon wheel (like the ones on country singer/songwriter Porter Wagoner's best costumes!) The spokes of that wheel would radiate out as we explore some of the ideas that Marvin is singing about by providing relevant context.

So, in celebration of our 20th year, we would like to invite you to take this creative journey of ideas with us, from these early February moments of discovery, through the Spring interview process where we will find our new tribe, to the three weeks in July when they become an ensemble, culminating in two performances of a wholly original work. I invite you to be a part of the magic that happens every summer when we surrender to the process and improvise as if our lives depended on it. Because they do!

Here are the main spokes I'm exploring to get ready for this summer. And don't worry! There will not be a pop quiz at the end of the process for you or for our participants! Everybody is free to roam around at will! I guarantee that anywhere you land you will find something interesting.

Motown: A Cultural Force

1. "What's Going On?" The 1971 album by Marvin Gaye will be our basic text. Even the most cursory listen will reveal the artistry and political passion of this masterwork.
2. "Hitsville: The Making of Motown." A Showtime documentary with an amazing sequence of Martin Gaye actually producing each track of the title song. We also learn how reluctant Motown founder Berry Gordy was to release such political music and why.
3. *Where Did Our Love Go?* by Nelson George. The book offers a cultural history of Motown by music critic Nelson George and more information about Martin Gaye and other Motown artists as well as the times in which they lived. It's a perfect companion piece to "Hitsville."

The Vietnam War

1. "Dear America: Letters from Vietnam." A heartbreaking documentary from HBO with a companion volume of actual letters home from soldiers on the front lines in Vietnam. The average age of the soldiers is 19, not much older than our Collisioners. Marvin Gaye's brother's experiences in Vietnam prompted him to write "What's Going On?" The letters in this documentary could have been his letters home.
2. *Bloods*, a wonderful oral history by Wallace Terry that views the Vietnam War through the eyes of the black soldiers who called themselves "Bloods." Marvin must have heard stories like these from his brother.
3. "Vietnam: A Film" by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, produced for PBS. For those who want to dig deeper, this multi-part documentary fully explores the history, the war and the aftermath.

4. "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf," by Ntozake Shange. This groundbreaking choreopoem introduces the character of Beau Willie, a Vietnam veteran who returns home brutalized by war and consumed by rage. When he turns that rage on his wife and children, there are tragic consequences. In "Save the Children," Marvin Gaye sings of the plight of black children.

Racial Injustice/Inner City America

1. "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," written and performed by Gil Scott-Heron who turned an unblinking eye on racial injustice and the way it manifests in urban America. Those same concerns resulted in Marvin's "Inner City Blues."
2. "The Last Poets," an album written and performed by The Last Poets. This jazz influenced spoken word classic explores the same urban landscape that Marvin was writing and singing about.
3. "The Bottle," written and performed by Gil Scott-Heron, this song like Marvin's "Flyin' High," looks at the problem of drug and alcohol abuse in urban America.

Environment/Climate Change

1. "An Inconvenient Truth, Parts One and Two." Al Gore's groundbreaking documentaries are a crucial introduction to the crisis of climate change. An awareness of our threatened environment led Marvin to write "Mercy, Mercy Me (The Ecology)."
2. Silent Spring, by Rachel Carson was published in 1962 and warned of the danger presented by the use of pesticides.
3. "I Am Greta," a documentary about activist Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future movement brings the environmental crisis right into the present day.
4. "The Hill We Climb," 2021 Inaugural poem by Amanda Gorman shows the continuing influence of politically conscious young artists on American culture.

That is just some of what we will be exploring this summer through the lens of Marvin Gaye's musical masterpiece. As you can see, we take our improvising seriously!

Last Spring when we were first considering using "What's Going On?" as our text, I stepped out on the front porch with my husband one rainy night and as we stood there enjoying the sound of the rain and an occasional low rumble of thunder, we heard music coming through my neighbor's open windows. It was that unmistakable horn at the opening of the title song of the album and it was so perfectly beautiful and beautifully perfect that I turned to my husband and said, "That's what we're using for Collision this summer." And he just nodded because, like me, he knows a sign when he hears one. Especially on a rainy Atlanta evening when there's music in the air.

Pearl Cleage, Distinguished Artist in Residence
February 1, 2021

Index: Resource (2021)

Schedule

Daily Routines

Unless otherwise noted, each daily schedule includes:

9:30 AM Interviews (small, informal meetings with participants in pairs)

10 AM Warmups

1 PM Lunch

2 PM Refocus Warmups

5:30 PM Writing with Pearl

6 PM End of day, Interviews (continued)

WEEK 1

Day 1: Monday, 7/12

10 AM Meet and Greet, Rodney housekeeping

11 AM Watch HITSVILLE: THE MAKING OF MOTOWN (1h 52m) | Working Lunch

1 PM Allyship Training with Jessenia Ingram and Maya Lawrence

2 PM WHAT'S GOIN' ON presentation of musical selections

3 PM Discussion, Word Dump, Haiku

4:30 PM Coalition building with Patrick

Tuesday, 7/13

10:30 AM Levels of Consciousness Workshop with Bryan Mercer

2:30 PM African Dance and Yoruba Culture Workshop with Mama Yeye and Baba Tony

Wednesday, 7/14

10:30 AM Chekhov Workshop with Anne Towns

2:30 PM Movement Workshop with Lauri Stallings and gloATL

Thursday, 7/15

11 AM Site visit to National Center for Civil and Human Rights (travel via MARTA)

2:30 PM Songwriting Workshop with Eugene H. Russell IV

Friday, 7/16

11 AM Site visit to High Museum of Art

1 PM Pizza Lunch (provided) with High Museum of Art Teen Team

2:30 PM Talent Share

4:30 PM Writing with Pearl

5 PM Dance Party

WEEK 2

Monday, 7/19

10:30 AM Movement as Metaphor Workshop with Rosemary Newcott

2:30 PM Guest Artist/Speaker: Zaron W. Burnett Jr. (Conscientious Objector)

4 PM Songwriting with David Koté and Eugene H. Russell IV

Tuesday, 7/20

10:30 AM Breath, Voice, and Diction Workshop with Je Nie Fleming

2:30 PM Guest Speakers: Jeremy Richardson and Rachel Licker, Union of Concerned Scientists

Wednesday, 7/21

10:30 AM Viewpoints Workshop with Margaret Baldwin

2:30 PM Improv Workshop with Avery Sharpe

Thursday, 7/22

10:30 AM Songwriting with David Koté and Eugene H. Russell IV

2:30 PM Choreography with Anthony Campbell (Don Soup)

3:30 PM Review Physical Vocabulary with Patrick

Friday, 7/23

Ensemble OFF

Pearl builds script

WEEK 3

Monday, 7/26 - Saturday, 7/31

Production week

Monday-Thursday: 10 AM – 6 PM call

Friday: 10 AM – 9 PM call (Performance 1)

Saturday: 12 PM – 5 PM call (Performance 2)

Index: Resource (2021)

Word Dump (sample)

- Grace
- Organic
- Soul
- Beguiled
- Ambiguity
- Where you come from / where you're going
- Evolves with time
- Validity
- Beautiful and loving but vicious
- Context
- Coerciveness
- Needed
- Destined to die
- Encouraging and inspiring
- Poignant
- Life is the name of the journey
- first 10 seconds
- To make a dream a reality
- Music has no color
- If the sky is the limit, how can you be a star?
- The sky is not the limit it is just the first stop
- "That sound"
- Sunshine on a cloudy day
- Who knows?
- Be the loudest bell that you hear ringing – Stevie Wonder
- Do what you want – Dr. Dre
- Insensitivity vs. sensitivity
- The journey is the destination
- You're nobody until someone loves you
- Vulnerability
- Invaluable & negligible
- Amalgamation
- Stress
- Pernicious
- Recognize the good in others and make it great
- Empathy
- What unites us is stronger than what divides us
- coalesce
- Coalition
- Support system
- Take charge of your career
- emotional integration
- Go in circles until you reach the end result
- Save the children
- Encumbered
- Children today really suffer tomorrow
- Children today build tomorrow
- Collaboration
- Chosen family

Index: Resource (2021)

Line Count (sample)

Note: Count everybody's lines so they get equal talking time

14. Manil Nguyen III III
15. Solari Keeder III III
16. Brendan White III III
17. Ja'Piah Young III III

Index: Resource (2021)

Program

Alliance Theatre

THE PALESKY COLLISION PROJECT

EVERYBODY HAS A HEARTACHE: WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

By the 21st Palesky Collision Project

In collaboration with PEARL CLEAGE, Distinguished Artist in Residence

SATURDAY, JULY 9 7:00 PM

SUNDAY, JULY 10 2:30 PM

Directed by **PATRICK MCCOLERY**

MEMORIAL ARTS BUILDING (1ST FLOOR), THE WOODRUFF ARTS CENTER

THE WITNESSES

Mo'Nique Davis
 Nnamdi Asiedu & Davoon
 Tyia Feathers DuArnaud
 Alana Drew
 Jace Grogan
 Ansel Deseche-Cruz & Lewis
 Ronnie McCoy
 Simon Macina-Tiango
 Philip Kaker Mordis
 Imani Mya Milligan
 Samuel Iren Moses
 Kasei Nagata
 Umbra Person
 Aiden Lucas Rey
 Fifi & Anthony Smith
 Ima-Wekhar
 Brooklyn Meshari Williams

THE GUIDES

**ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
 & SOUND DESIGN**
 RODNEY LAMAR WILLIAMS
ASSISTANT STAFF MANAGER
 BARBARA KINCID
MUSIC DIRECTOR
 DAVID KOTÉ
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
 MATTHEW COLEBROWN
KNOWSAY STAFF UNIVERSITY TRAINEE
 ANCE AVERY BROWN

THE HOME TEAM

JENNINGS HERTZ ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
 SUSAN V. SMITH
DAN REARSON DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
 CHR. STYLER MOSES
PRODUCER
 LIZ DAY S.
 Head of Secondary
 Culture and Partnerships
**EDUCATION PRODUCTION
 MANAGER & COVID
 COORDINATOR**
 HAYLEE SCOTT

SPIRIT GUIDES

Moses Gools
 Jeanita Ingram
 Bryan Mercer
 Rosemary Newcott
 Michelle Popejoy
 Brad Raymond
 Eugene H. Russell IV
 Avery Sharpe
 Lauri Stallings & gloATL
 Anne Towns
 Aedes K. Woodard
 Mama Yeys & Baba Tony

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Eleanora J. McDaniell, Author of *Atlanta, My Home*
 Tracie Poles, Citizen of the Woodruff Creek Holiness Youth League,
 Director of Advocacy for The Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve in Macon
 High Museum of Art Team Team

SITE VISITS

High Museum of Art
 National Center for Civil and Human Rights

GUEST ALUMNI

Kiera Barot
 Anthea
 Rachael Simpson
 Jessa Rolfs
 Anne Zheng

Special thanks to Howard and Vicki Palesky for enabling this program
 so that it will always live in the heart of our theatre.

INDIGENOUS LANDS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the sincerest efforts to gain further understanding of the history that has brought us to reside on this land and to accept the knowledge that colonialism is a current and ongoing process, under which we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation, we hereby acknowledge this native land of the Muscogee Creek Nation.

To acknowledge this nation, who were forcefully removed from this land under the Indian Removal Act of 1830, is to understand who we are in the context of our past, present and future, we carry the knowledge of this ancestry with us through this process and in all we do.

This land acknowledgement is merely a first step.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Before a recent meeting at our theater, I listened to the statement we make before every show acknowledging that this bulging stomachs on land that was once home to thousands of people who were fearfully relocated by the government in the terrible episode of American history that is called The Trail of Tears. Suddenly, I realized how ignorant I was about this history. All I had to go on were a lot of Hollywood movies that were deeply problematic in the ways they presented any interaction between European settlers and Indigenous people. I was surprised by how little I knew and set out to address my own ignorance in the way I always do: I found a poet. This summer our text is *Cerulean Revolution* by Joy Harjo, a member of the Muscogee/Creek Nation and the 23rd Poet Laureate of the United States. These poems are beautiful, written, honest and fully present. They speak of history, of spirit, of human beings in relation to each other and to nature. They are filled with dreams and visions and a great love for land, for home, for freedom and for the possibility of peace. They have challenged and inspired us in ways we could not have anticipated. We invite you to join us on our journey of discovery. All the words you will hear were written by our participants or by Joy Harjo.

— PEARL CLEAGE

DISTINGUISHED ARTIST IN RESIDENCE, ALL AMERICAN THEATRE

This experience is free to all participants through generous support from:

HOWARD AND VICTORIA PALEFSKY

With additional support generously provided by:



MEET THE COLLISION ENSEMBLE



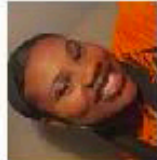
MCARTHUR DAVIS
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Project of Family Subsidy System



REMIAH ALEXANDER
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



TYLIK LEONTEV
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



ALANA DEEN
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



JANA GEORGE
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



ANAHI MICHELLE-GRACIE DAVIS
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



RONKIL MCCOY
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



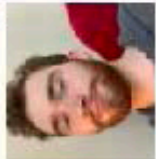
DEVON MEDINA-RIVERA
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



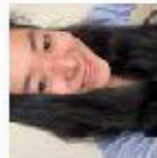
ELTON JOSEPH BERBERICH
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



IMANI MYAM LEGARE
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



SAMUEL MURR MORRIS
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



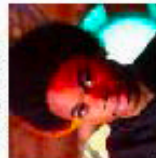
KANA NAGATA
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



UMBERA PERSSON
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



ADEN LUCAS RAY
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



EFTIHA ANTHONY SMITH
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



IMANI WELL-HER
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System



ROSKOLYN IMANI WILLIAMS
2023-2024
Assistant Artistic Director
Douglas County Subsidy System

Index: Resource (2021)

Script: “What Makes You Think I’m Alone?” A Meditation on Marvin

“WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I’M ALONE?” A MEDITATION ON MARVIN 2021
*By The 20th Anniversary Palefsky Collision Project “What’s Going On?”
Time Traveling Band*

Oliva Gracie Brown	Chloe Lomax
DaQuan Cooney	Alex Lopez
Xavier Doyle	Sophie Lyman
Destiny Jennings	Taloria Merricks
Ariana Jones	Joshua Morgan
Varun Kashyap	Daniel Nguyen
LaNiyah Kelly	Solari Reeder
Abigail C. Kirk	Brendan White
Ja’Siah Young	

Artistic Team:

Patrick McColery	Director
Pearl Cleage	Playwright, Distinguished
Artist in Residence, Alliance Theatre	
Rodney Lamar Williams	Associate Director/Sound Design/Stage Manager
David Kote	Musical Director
Issa Solís	Assistant Director/KSU Intern (Collision, 2017)
Christopher Moses	Executive Producer/Director of Education/Associate Artistic Director, The Alliance Theatre
Liz Davis	Co-Producer
Jessenia Ingram	Co-Producer
Mya Burns	KSU Intern

Guest Artists: Bryan Mercer, Mama YeYe and Baba Tony, Anne Towns, Lauri Stallings & glo, Zaron W. Burnett, Jr., Eugene Russell, Anthony Campbell (Collision 2016), Avery Sharpe, Margaret Baldwin, Rosemary Newcott, High Museum Teen Team.
Guest Scientists: Jeremy Richardson and Rachel Licker, Union of Concerned Scientists

Special thanks to Howard and Vicki Palefsky for their ongoing support.

Thanks also to Susan V. Booth, Artistic Director of The Alliance Theatre, for conceiving of this project 20 years ago and turning to Rosemary Newcott to shape it into something special.

Playwright's Note: Fifty years ago, Motown artist Marvin Gaye released "What's Going On?" an album that spoke to the times and his own political awakening in a suite of passionate songs about poverty, war, drug abuse, the ecology, faith and family. The album was so musically innovative and lyrically fearless that Rolling Stone magazine put it at the top of their greatest albums list and Smokey Robinson declared it his favorite album of all time. When we chose this musical masterpiece as our 2021 text, it was not so we could attempt to perform it but so that we could introduce it to our participants as we would any American cultural classic, with respect and reverence. The last three weeks have been a dynamic process of exploration and illumination as our tribe of 17 contemporary teenagers reached back to 1971 to see if Marvin Gaye could help us answer the question he was already asking: What's going on? All music and dialogue is the original work of our participants. Lines are not always spoken or sung by the person who wrote them.

[The stage is empty. The Ensemble enters and begins milling on the grid. They are walking and speaking to each other with a sense of urgency.]

ALL: What's going on? What's going on? What's going on? [Repeat]

[The Ensemble moves to the front of the stage and delivers their last line to the audience.]

ALL: What's going on?

Varun: 2020 was a difficult year, surrounded by loneliness, boredom, fear and anxiety. I was a lot sadder.

Solari: We all were.

Destiny: We wrote some poetry.

Brendan: We wrote some music.

Ja'Siah: We ate too much.

Daniel: Slept too much.

Chloe: Worried too much.

Alex: Asked a lot of questions we couldn't answer.

Ariana: The main thing we wanted to know was ...

ALL: What's going on?

Josh: 2020 was the year of being stagnant. I entered the year already lost and I left stripped of my skin.

Alex: Nothing bad was happening, but neither was anything good.

Da' Quan: During 2020, I had high hopes for what was to come. It wasn't until Friday the 13th of February that I knew my life was shifting right before my eyes.

Ja'Siah: I'm in the middle of the sea, a brick tied to my ankle, and I'm drowning; alone. There are no other boats, no men at sea, and even if there were, I'm sure they wouldn't see me.

Ariana: I know it was the result of a pandemic, but I couldn't help reveling in the silence that quickly took over our lives. Finally, I thought, I can be alone. I fell into myself.

Chloe: The first couple of months of quarantine I felt fine because it hadn't completely sunk in that this would be a long term thing. When it did finally sink in, I felt completely lost.

Solari: All of the things I looked forward to were gradually disintegrating into a ghost of what they should have been.

Sophie: I questioned and tested my friendships and I exposed hard truths about who I was and how different I was than the person I wanted to be.

Abigail: Some believe you need at least four hugs a day to survive and during COVID, I spent a whole year without even one.

LaNiyah: We are people. We need and crave loving and being loved by those around us.

Gracie: I lost a lot of friends, but gained my freedom.

Xavier: The things that people did when COVID started didn't surprise me. I was just disappointed. I always knew that people were messed up.

Taloria: I was always angry. I was always crying.

Brendan: On April 1, 2020, my grandmother passed away due to complications with COVID-19. We couldn't visit her in the hospital or be by her side during her final days. My only solace was in the fact that on our last encounter, we told each other that we loved each other.

LaNiyah: Everything is harder when you're alone.

Gracie: What makes you think I'm alone?

Destiny: Tough year, but even in isolation with my family the only ... let me repeat ONLY ... people was seeing in person, one of the best years of my life.

Daniel: Joy, especially in isolation, is really what you make of it.

["GROWING PAINS," Taloria and the Ensemble]

Sophie: Our generation is armed with a desire for change and a dedication to the cause of revolution, but that does not mean we are tireless. We didn't choose to be born at history's crossroads. Sometimes it feels like I never got a chance to be a kid.

Chloe: My entire life I've been scared of riding roller coasters, but this summer when it was okay to go out again, I didn't just ride one roller coaster. I rode 15 of them!

Xavier: My friends tell me that I'm under experienced, naive and innocent for my age. But that's how I like it.

Brendan: We're filling our water with drinks and cans, and our government leaders won't think of plans. They're chopping down all of our trees and plants, not giving our ecology a chance.

Alex: Some people don't think it's real. Some people don't care if we heal.

Da'Quan: We need some social climate change.

Sophie: When I was young, I was taught that the Native Americans taught the colonists about the 3 sisters, beans, squash and corn. Then we didn't talk about them anymore.

Chloe: I don't know why I never asked where they went. What happened?
What changed between the first Thanksgiving and the Trail of Tears?

Destiny: I tried everything to become an activist against police brutality and injustice. I thought, marched, spread awareness, but it kept happening. I found myself lost. What can I really do, still a high school student, only 17? What difference can I make?

Ariana: I was afraid to speak my mind.

Solari: It was scary to stand up for myself.

LaNiyah: One day we were talking, and my dad said, "I am who I am (a man), and you are who you are (a girl) so in conversation, you have to come to me. There is no middle ground." I was upset but not surprised. "All due respect," I said, "and I know you probably didn't mean it this way, but do you understand the sexist undertones of that statement?"

Daniel: I think it's important to stand up for what you believe by any means necessary.

Ja'Siah: I'm exhausted.

AMERICA, HOME OF THE NOT SO FREE," Gracie with Destiny, Sophie, Xavier, Abigail & the Ensemble.]

Gracie: I live in the states. It's really really nice, can't complain. But one thing we need to address is the amount of unlawful arrests.

Destiny: I live in the states, the land of the free, home of the brave, but how freeing can it really be, when the color of your skin determines how you're treated by the police?

ALL: We live in the states, maybe it's not as nice as we think.

Gracie: At least the land is green and pretty. But at this rate it'll all be dead by 2050.

Sophie: I live in the states where half the population doesn't believe in climate change.

Xavier: Can't you just walk outside? It's literally scorching hot! Open your eyes, people!

Abigail: I live in the states. The country's in need of change.

Destiny: The people are fighting for basic human rights.

Xavier: The turtles are dying.

Abigail: And the trees are burning left and right!

Gracie: Wait! Maybe everything's not so great. We live in a country full of hate. Where the climate is declining at a rapid rate. I live in the states.

Sophie: It's falling apart. I can't escape.

ALL: Can somebody please save me?

["WE HOLD THE KEY," Xavier]

Xavier: Why can't you see a future of peace? Whole world hear me! We hold the key!

Da'Quan: To see my people suffer... it takes the life out of me. To know that I'm a walking threat, a target ... makes me have violent thoughts.

Brendan: I refuse to tolerate disrespect of any kind.

Varun: Make me wanna holler...

Varun, Da'Quan, Brendan: Throw up both my hands.

Daniel: The way to stop the holler is to tend to the pain in question.

Gracie: I crave the innocence of my youth. The ignorance.

Xavier: Trayvon Martin shot at at seventeen was a literal child in the eyes of society. So I can't help but ask myself, what if that boy up there was me?

Varun: It's hard to be a child at heart, knowing you could be gunned down like a grown man.

[“ANOTHER NAME ON THE WALL,” Taloria and the Ensemble.]

Daniel: There is change, but yet there is stillness.

Abigail: When our parents and grandparents were faced with difficulty, they took a stand. What did we do when our world was faced with hardship? Sat on our butts! For a year and a half! Because we were told to. When did we get so worried about rules?

Ariana: We began to realize that...

ALL: History repeats itself!

Ariana: But we already had a blueprint for how to be an artists...

Destiny: When everything seems too crazy.

Chloe: Too hard.

LaNiyah: We didn't have to start from scratch because we had Marvin Gaye.

Varun: And he had been asking the same question we were asking for 50 years.

Josh: Before we were born.

Xavier: Way before we were born!

Josh: He wanted to know the same thing we wanted to know. What's going on?

Brendan: For Marvin, it started with the War in Vietnam.

Taloria: He had a brother over there.

Chloe: Dear Frankie, Things are getting worse while you're away. No matter how much we protest to end the war in Vietnam, nothing seems to work. LBJ doesn't listen to a word we say. Day after day, he keeps sending troops without thinking about the consequences of his actions. It's hard enough being a black man in America. Now they have found another way to kill us with this war. Thinking about you there worries me. Not only for you, but for the next generation. How will we create a better world for them? A world that isn't full of unnecessary violence and blatant racism. The more I write the more I think...

Da'Quan: Poems turn into songs and those songs turn into an album. I've been working on it for awhile now, but it hasn't got a release date yet. I can thank Barry for that. He's been giving me a lot of push back but I feel like I need to release it. I can't leave this earth without people knowing what I stand for. And in this day and age, living to see another day is not promised. Nothing lasts forever and this war is no exception. So remember that and let it help you get through. Don't forget to write me. Love, Marvin.

Ja'Siah: We wondered how it felt to have friends and family at war.

Alex: Dear Friend, I know the war just started and we don't know what will come out of it yet but I miss you already. It's silly, I know, but I thought after high school, we'd get to enjoy doing to Kent State together. You know, you actually might have made the smart choice. The anti-war and civil rights movements are really fired up here, so we're actually both trying not to get killed! Stay safe! Sincerely...

LaNiyah: Dear Mel, I have a lot to tell you. Bad news, unfortunately, but I knew you would want to know...

Solari: Things are really crazy over here. Riots are breaking out left and right. It seems that nobody agrees to this war except the politicians.

LaNiyah: You remember Mrs. Angie's twins from around the way? They're both getting shipped off next week.

Solari: Maybe you'll see them over there. If you do, please try to take care of them. Blessings...

Brendan: Thank you for writing me. Your words really brought me joy. So many things over here seem to be designed to rid us of that joy, so thank you. How are Mama and Daddy? Please make sure they know I'm alright. I'm not in Saigon or anything and my squad is the toughest to ever hold a gun. I'm scared, but I'll be back. Something in my body is telling me that I haven't spent my last moments with you. Love...

Varun: Dear John, our family has not been the same since you left. Mother barely eats. Father works all the time. I'm sure you have made friends. You always do. Hopefully this package will reach you. I've sent some of your favorite foods. We miss you...

Abigail: Dear Mary, I apologize for the distance between my letters. On Monday, Rich Helter died. He was the youngest in our troop. Everybody loved him. It came so quickly. He took one wrong step. I'm scared, Mary. So scared...

Ariana: Dear Mom, The VC attacked Saigon. When we got there, there were already so many dead or wounded to the point where they would be dead in the next few minutes. Ash swept over destroyed buildings and men fought to protect an already ruined city. It was hell, mom. If I've gotten anything from this at all it's that there is no good in war and there is no good in me anymore. Love, your only son...

Xavier: Dear Isabelle, there is a moment of stillness in the middle of gunfire. Your whole world freezes and you begin to reflect on your life. You wonder if you will be remembered by loved ones. But you don't die. When I get back, if I get back, we'll get married and I'll never leave your side.

Gracie: We realized our country was still at war.

Sophie: Since before we were born.

Solari: Way before we were born.

Ja'Siah: There were still letters to write.

Gracie: Sometimes our war isn't as far away as Vietnam was.

Chloe: Separate times but equal feeling.

Destiny: I'm mad at you. Why did you sell the weed? We were supposed to graduate together! This Justice System is so messed up. 10 years! And they put you in the same jail as people who murdered people. You had so much promise, man. You got into college! I know you needed money, but you could have come to me. I just miss you so much. I'll try to write more often. Hang in there. Love you...

Da'Quan: Dear Father, I know you've been through this before. You didn't choose this life. This life chose you.

Daniel: I'm sure it's pretty tough to be in there. Just you and your mind, trying to make it to the next day over and over again. It's been rough out here without you, but I know it's worse in there. I think it's messed up that a little marijuana can get you as much time as assault! They took you from everyone for so little. Anyway, please write me back when you get a chance. Don't let prison wear you down.

Taloria: My brother, my best friend, I pray for you every day. I believed you when you said that you had nothing to do with it, and that you didn't know what was going on. But

it doesn't matter what I believe or what you say, this system is against us. I'm fighting for you, brother, until I can freely wrap my arms around you again. Love, your sister...

Ja'Siah: Sometimes it seems like nothing has gotten better. They try to make it seem as though things have gotten better, but they absolutely haven't!

Ariana: Pollution has gotten worse. Global warming is awful and when you look up into the night sky, you can't see a single star.

Abigail: We are tired.

Alex: Sometimes we forget that history repeats itself.

Solari: The summer was long and brutal.

Destiny: Hear the beats. Listen to the streets in the summer heat.

Sophie: I am left with a feeling of hopelessness and hope. We are simultaneously becoming closer together and further apart at every second. There's a constant sense that 'something's gotta give.'

Gracie: There is a sense of unease in the city streets. A sense of a constant division between the left and the right. A sense of fear creeping up through the sidewalks.

Da'Quan: So you mean to tell me that it never gets any better? Not even one bit?

Varun: Hey, guys! Let's go for a walk. How about we have a talk. Let me give you some tips on how to survive. Some tips that I follow, day and night. If you're ever stopped, you're never right. Oh, hey, officer! I don't want to fight, cause I'm not in the mood to die tonight. My secret is, it's all about persisting.

ALL: He's resisting!

Varun: What do you think that he did wrong? Don't worry the explanation isn't long.

Alex: Was he armed?

Varun: Nope.

Abigail: Was there someone he harmed?

Varun: Nope.

Daniel: Did he have weed, meth, crack?

Varun: Nope.

Brendan: He was black.

Chloe: In seventh grade, I made a sign that said Black Lives Matter and took it to school. Some girls at my middle school said I needed to change it to say, 'all lives' matter. My response was, are all people being brutally killed, or is it just black people? 5 years later, my little sister is in seventh grade and she's making the same sign I made back then.

Abigail: Oh, innocent child! Lost and afraid, so unsure of yourself, so easily swayed. Forced to grow up, forced to be strong, dead bodies on the floor. You don't know what to think anymore.

ALL: He's resisting!

[Loud clap as if a gunshot.]

Josh: Cognitive dissonance is the enemy of growth.

Brendan: It was such a strange year. I was doing any and everything to manufacture happiness and distract me from all that troubled me.

LaNiyah: Isolation leads to strange behaviors...

Solari: You want to know who was getting on her parent's nerves by throwing 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. dance parties? Yes, me. No regrets.

Daniel: I would stay up until the crack of dawn and sleep until night time. I started ripping out my hair sometimes. I was a wreck. I developed an addiction to walking around my neighborhood just randomly, even at night. 3 a.m. was prime walking time. Just me and the moon.

Taloria: Me? Sleeping during the pandemic? At a reasonable time? Absolutely not!

Alex: My sleep schedule took a full 180 and I was awake at night and asleep during the day. It was nice for a little while, but turns out that staying up late at night is easier than staying up during the day. I tried for two weeks and never made it to noon.

Gracie: In the past year, I've cut my hair countless times. My hair has been green (which my family didn't know about.) Hey mom! Pink (which my family didn't know about.) Hey dad! Purple (which my family was pissed about.) Hey grandma! By the first round of red, my family finally realized I am an unstoppable force!

Da'Quan: I was very argumentative during this time. With my friend group, they would know me to be the one who 'drags' people, which means to 'read' them, which is a way to

clap back and tell someone about themselves. This habit ultimately led to me falling out with some friends, but it was still funny.

Xavier: I started looking at memes a lot. I mean a lot! Honestly, sometimes it's fun to laugh at a dying world.

Ariana: Looking back, I realize how terrifying living with me during that time must have been. Waking up to see a mountain of blankets covered in an assortment of snacks only to find out its your snoring daughter must be a 'where did we go wrong?' moment. In a way, I'm glad I went through quarantine. I've expelled centuries of laziness in just a year!

LaNiyah: I've completely forgotten how to have legitimate conversations with other people.

Josh: Even though I know how to communicate better with people, I've lost my motivation and interest in doing so.

Varun: I discovered a lot of things during quarantine. I discovered that a man can go 4 days without leaving his room, surviving on Cheetos, sink water and food dropped outside his room by family. I discovered that it takes my dogs 4 days without seeing me to forget me completely. I discovered I can sleep for two days straight or go without sleep for 5 days. I discovered I can go a week without changing my clothes and still not stink.

Chloe: I started baking way too much. I would put on the waitress soundtrack and sing "What baking can do," while making chocolate chip cookies.

Abigail: I started making 'therapy cookies.' When I was mad at things happening in the world, the fact that I was locked inside my house, at my parents for suddenly acting like they knew or had to know everything about my life, I would bake cookies with those fancy dark chocolate chips.

Ja'Siah: I did a lot of cookie baking, too. I was eating a lot of chocolate and snacks like chips, pizza rolls and chicken nuggets.

Abigail: I would just turn that oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit for 20 minutes, take those cookies out and eat them.

Abigail & Chloe: And eat them.

Abigail & Chloe & Ja'Siah: And eat them!

Abigail: There are very few things in this world I love more than chocolate chip cookies.

Sophie: I believe the worst habit I picked up during COVID isolation was feeling sorry for

myself. Every trip canceled. Every hard truth was yet another reason for me to wallow in my sadness. Honestly, I think sometimes I just bitched and moaned because I had nothing better to do. I feel ashamed when I look back, knowing how lucky I was that my world kept turning.

LaNiyah: Everything's harder when you're alone.

Gracie: What makes you think I'm alone?

["SHARE THE LOVE," under; Alex and the Ensemble.]

Ja'Siah: Forgive. Love. And listen to the music, baby!

Brendan: Who knows? Maybe the love in the first ten seconds will outlive your death.

Solari: I haven't felt the stain of sin, but when it comes to you, it seems that I'll begin. I haven't seen the dark in light, but the way you make me feel makes me want to fight.

Destiny: It never fails to prick my skin, because the love that we have never seems to win. Though I might love with all my might, I can't see a happy ending for us in sight.

Taloria: Choose love! No matter what happens. No matter what you've been through. No matter what you do. Choose love. Choose to be loved. Choose to have love. Choose to spread love. It isn't as hard as you think.

Chloe: At the end of the day, the most important thing in life is to love and be loved.

LaNiyah: My love is psychosomatic. It percolates in the wind and manifests in the body. It's that mind to vessel transaction that allows me to love with little traction. Because my love is psychosomatic.

Abigail: You ask why I cry, yet don't hear me when I say, 'I did it for you.'

["TIMELESS," Ariana and the Ensemble.]

Alex: What if we could really change the world?

Josh: What would that look like?

Varun: Not like before.

Destiny: Maybe better.

Gracie: The new world.

Taloria: The beauty of what we might become.

Solari: It's important to acknowledge any and all progress, but homophobia is still alive and well. People would rather focus on who loves who versus ensuring that we all love each other.

Da'Quan: Straight or gay, killing 50 people is still mass shooting.

Abigail: We need to unite! Just because some white people hurt black people, doesn't mean we all do.

Destiny: And just because some black people hurt white people doesn't mean we all do.

Ariana: If we've learned anything, it's that all people are equal.

Ja'Siah: You're more powerful than you could ever imagine.

Brendan: It's all in you. All of the love. All of the strength. All of the courage. All of the wisdom. Everything you need.

Sophie: The window creaks open and there is a light, cool breeze. I feel the cleanliness of the air and notice the sounds from the street below. Doors and shops opening, neighbors chattering, birds singing until noon. There are no fences, only trees and bushes and greenery.

Varun: The beauty of what we might become.

Xavier: I woke up more rested than I had ever been. I stepped to the window of my apartment and the air smelled like hibiscus tea and cherry pastries.

Daniel: It's a new world we are living in. Going out is not feared anymore and we are allowed to see each other without the fear of a virus looming over us. Loneliness is at an all time low.

Ja'Siah: Waking up in this new world, I'm shocked, grateful and proud that we did it! There's justice in the courts! Can you believe that?

Josh: I'm relieved, happy, scared, angry.

Alex: You don't have to be angry anymore.

Brendan: It's all in you. All the love. All the strength. All the courage. All the wisdom. Everything you need.

Da'Quan: Look how far we've come.

Daniel: From the top of the Empire State Building, a person with binoculars could see streets filled with eco-friendly cars.

Xavier: Sidewalks filled with smiles and bright eyes.

Gracie: From the top of Rio de Janeiro's Statue of Christ, one can see the bright green foliage of the Amazon. The trees preserved and some of the forest restored.

Ariana: From the streets of Atlanta, somebody could see children playing games with one another that were meant for children.

Chloe: The world is better than it has ever been. In the past we were all divided by race, sexuality or political party. In this new world, we see past our differences. In fact, we celebrate them.

Sophie: If the new world could be described in one word, it would be free. We all feel free!

LaNiyah: In the new world, I can walk down the street and my mind is allowed to wander because I don't have to worry about my safety as a woman or an African American.

Ariana: People no longer feel or are treated as minorities. The color of our skin does not dictate our status or our worth. People love who they love without judgment.

Solari: There is a sense of unity in the air. Every single person I encounter is an ally on this journey.

Destiny: This new world ... this place ... feels more like home than home.

Josh: All I can do is cry and I don't know why.

Taloria: The beauty of what we might become.

[“CHANGE IS A'COMIN” Ja'Siah and the Ensemble.]

Alex: I think the perfect world looks like the people in this room.

Daniel: Nothing compares to this generation's fire. We will burn brighter with our voices. Just wait and see.

Sophie: Right now is the only time for change.

Alex: And if change isn't welcome in society, then change can't happen.

Gracie: We have been silent for too long.

Da'Quan: Before the younger generation leaves this earth, the world will be a better place.

Josh: Just wait and see.

Ariana: The suppressed feelings of many brown bodies move like a violent wave.

Varun: Racism will never truly end until we forget what racism even is.

Abigail: Every voice matters. Color, race, gender – those are just words. What matters is the person speaking with a heart and a mind and a soul.

Ariana: We still have to fight, but we don't have to fight alone.

Gracie: Because we're not alone.

Solari: Take my hand. Come to freedom.

[The Ensemble begins to move in some way relating to each other. If possible, they should touch hands.]

ALL: Take my hand. Come to freedom.

Take my hand. Come to freedom. (Repeat)

[The Ensemble freezes. LaNiyah, Brendan and the Ensemble "PULSE OF MY PEOPLE."]

The End

Acknowledgements

Project Contributors – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

To our Founding Leaders from PEARL CLEAGE, PLAYWRIGHT EMERITUS

Susan V. Booth, whose deep understanding of the eternal wellspring of knowledge that the classics hold if only they can be unlocked.

Rosemary Newcott, whose love of devising and recognition that teens, especially those on the cusp of adulthood, were the most underserved segment of Youth Theater.

These two essential elements have formed one dynamic whole that will exist as long as there is an Alliance Theatre.

For the First 10 Years from ROSEMARY NEWCOTT, DIRECTOR EMERITUS

Playwrights: Michael Rohd (2002), Tammy Ryan (2003), Lauren Gunderson (2004), OyamO (2005), Chay Yew (2006), Ken Weitzman (2007), Rajendra Ramon Maharaj (2008), Mark Valdez (2009), and Janece Shaffer (2010)

Dramaturgy: Freddie Ashley, Celise Kalke, and Megan Monaghan

Creative Team Members – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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Former Mayor of Atlanta Shirley Franklin

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Tayari Jones, Author

The Honorable John Lewis, Congressman 5th District of Georgia

Breanna McDaniel, Author

Tracie Revis, Citizen of the Muskogee Creek Nation, Yuchi Tribe & Director of Advocacy for the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative

Carlton Mackey, Melissa Katzin & the Teen Team, High Museum of Art

Rachel Licker & Jeremy Richardson, Union of Concerned Scientists

Acknowledgements

Continued

Spellman Leadership Fellows

Jayla Dyas Kerrington Griffin	SaRee Grimes	Jessenia Ingram Alexis K. Woodard
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Guest Artists

Alex Cole Acosta David & Matthew Adeboye Eliseo Arreola Baba Tony Romero Beverly Margaret Baldwin Tinashe Kajese-Bolden Keith Arthur Bolden Zaron W. Burnett, Jr. Mark Cabus Danye Evonne J'Nai Fleming	Bernard Gilbert Moses Goods Robert Hindsman Kayla Ibarra T. Lang Jon Ludwig Christian Magby Mama Yeye Maiesha McQueen Bryan Mercer Zuri Petteway Michelle Pokopac	Brad Raymond Doria Roberts Eugene H. Russell IV Julissa Sabino-Hobbs Avery Sharpe-Steele Umi Iman Siferllah-Griffin Sister Omelika Kuumba Jade Lambert Smith lauri stallings & gloATL Anne Towns Munir Zakee Tom Zhang
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Guest Artists (Alumni)

Aria Armstead Khatera Barati Moriah Baskett Dru Sky Berrian Tyler Bey Lance Avery Brown Matthew Caleb Brown Kamryn Charles Jamie Dylan Dardik Rahul Daswani	Alana Drew Laila Drew Maddison Gardner Austin Geter Ebony Golden Jada Gorgor Ari Isenberg Sage Lima-Jeffries Jemarcus Kilgore Joshua Lewis	Chloe Lomax Marshall Mabry IV Ronnie McCoy Kana Nagata Olani Selamu Rachel Simpson Keira Smith Issa Solís Imari Welcher Ja'Siah Young
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What's Going On Cover Band (2021)

Eugene H. Russell IV (horns & arrangements) Ali Barr (congas) Che Marshall (drums) S. Renee Clark (keyboard) Al Smith (keyboard) Khari Simmons (bass)
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Initial investment and major continued support
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