

MLK DAY 2020



**THE MONOLOGUE PROJECT:
VOICES OF COLOR**

**Presented By: Newton Youth Services, Newton Public Schools,
and Newton Theater Company**

MLK Day 2020 – The Monologue Project: Voices of Color

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Imani Fonfield
Edmund Pettus Bridge

I admire you, Edmund Pettus Bridge, for standing
 so tall.

Trust me, the imagery of your cracks and scars don't show your age at all!
 I had the pleasure of visiting you a few years ago before the Fall—
 and you have taught me so much.
 Unfortunately, that includes this country's foundation of racism and lethal
 prejudice.

See, you taught me that
 Liberty for Us is locked up behind cold Prison Bars
 evolving from traditional Slavery;

And that
 Justice takes cover under the judge's gavel
 striking everything *but* Bravery!

And that
 we still waitin' for Our reparations,
 callin' for Our solutions, wanting a clear conclusion...
 but instead the one calling back is the sound of a crooked System:
 Between the flimsy promises in the Constitution is
 such diction always used to twist 'em!

You *taught* me...
 How people who look like me get the
 representation from nobody!
They got their century-old whips slashing the
 Afrocentric pride that we embody—
 and how society barely says a thing.
 Can't even call the police half the time because
 that's always the cue to make their big Bullets sing—
 and the pale-skinned Shooter quickly becomes the king—
 while the sprawled innocent figure of Tragedy leaves a painful
 Sting We know so well...

Edmund

You taught me that
 Department of Corrections
 Really means *shackles* for corrections;
 the Criminal Justice System is simply notorious for deception!

The protectin' and servin' for Us is oppression and revertin'
 to slavery.
 It's all just a new episode of the same show!

Same station just a new radio—
 blarin' the sounds of slave chains;
 the pain of black skin restrained
 How some of Us are living
 the 13th—
 just like Kalief—
 With no escape since the bailiff is the enemy!

Pettus

With all that you taught me,
 How could you have possibly done nothin'
 When the big Blue sea of brutality hurt
 Ms. Amelia Boynton Robinson?

How could you have just slid off
 The blood, the tears, the sweat and the souls
 Of the activists who are the face of this country in my eyes?
 If I were you, I would have *never* been a bystander to that;
 But I guess you are just not as wise—
 And I mistook *you* for the Mountain Top.

Bridge

Yes, this country thrives on its many injustices— one being its prejudice.
 But like Dr. King once said to Us,
 “The arc of the moral universe is long...”
 “but” like the curve in your back, Edmund Pettus Bridge,
 “... it bends towards justice”

And we will march—
 And we will march—
 We will continue to march—
Shackles on!
 We will march—

Lawful lynchmen pointing their guns at our empty hands!
 We will march—
And every law written against us or absent to suppress us!
 We will march—
 The March Continues:

Today's living, breathing activists will not stand back like you do—
 And you will not stop us from reaching the *real* Mountain Top.

What are You? – Javier Bonilla

What are you? I'm not white and I'm not black, I'm not Asian nor am I European

so, what am I? For most of my life I never realized I was different, I never thought I wasn't seen or treated the same, I actually believed I got lucky in being able to enjoy a good tan all year round even in the winter, and I certainly didn't expect any of that to change. However, I want to share the story of when I first felt pressured because of how I look, and the few times it has happened since.

The first time, I was just a kid, and when an adult asked me, "What are you?" I

was surprised. First, I thought, well, I'm a human being, right? Or, I am from this earth just like everyone else. But then I realized the correct answer was that I am from Peru and Puerto Rico, but I was born in America. So that's how I replied. The next time I was asked this question I was ready, and quickly answered with my set response. I am from Peru and Puerto Rico but I was born in America.

Every time I was asked this question I had my answer, but I began to realize that I didn't like this question not because of its difficulty to answer or because of how confusing it was at times but because of the direct attack that I felt from being demeaned. What are you? I was asked as if I am something they have never seen before or as if I was different from them and I should know that.

"What are you?", they said, over and over again, each time hurting more than the last.

What are you?

Many people are asked this question at a young age simply because of people's ignorance in their surroundings and their inability to see how multicultural America has become. Boys and girls grow up wondering if they are the same as everyone else, feeling different, because instead of having a box to check for their race in a survey they have to go to the bottom and pick "**other**", instead of playing with dolls that look like them, they play with a white doll because that's all there is, and instead of being asked, "Where are you from?", they are being asked, "**What are you ?**"

I know that the people who have asked me this question mean no disrespect and are just curious about my heritage. I am sure that they don't want to hurt me or make me feel bad, but I also know that I am not the only person who has been asked this question here. This small and short question has hurt many people starting at a young age because of all its implications.

People ask, "What are you?" expecting some answer that is not from here because to them America is still white and if you are not white you are probably not from here. People ask, "What are you?" not realizing what they are also saying is "you are not from here" and "You don't belong". People ask, "What are you?" and they change a kid's life for the worst.

So, the next time you want to ask me where I am from, get to know me first and make sure you ask it right. And if you hear anyone being asked this same question I hope you can stand up and proudly, correct this question, tell them what they are saying is wrong and make sure they can hear you, because people have to understand that I am not white, I am not black, I am not European, I am not Asian, I am Peruvian, I am Puerto Rican, I am American, and I am so much more.

Immigration and The Detainment Between Me – Ricardo Gomez

What is TPS? Temporary Protection Status. It's a protection program allowing immigrants from foreign countries to have the right to work and build a better future for themselves here in America. If you've never heard of it, that's okay, it makes sense. The media has been able to speak about politics, climate crisis, immigration, but only around the border. Though immigration is seen as a problem, El Salvadorians are not pursued by the media at the moment, until you have people like Óscar Alberto Ramírez and his nearly two-year-old daughter Valeria, found dead on Rio Grande just to come to the states for a better life... that's when the media gets interested, through death. But Ramirez's tragedy is an exception. TPS is a tragedy that affects more El Salvadorians on a daily basis, including my family.

Now, what about the invisible immigrants with TPS who still have to fear in the U.S? My mom and my sister have been under TPS for nearly two decades since they've arrived in the states.

Now, wow many of you have ever struggled to be successful? Many of us know that feeling, right? Ok, now keep your hand up. How many of you have ever struggled to be successful, but because you didn't know if your family would be here tomorrow. So, maybe some of you, mostly none of you.

When my mom came to these United States, it was all for a brighter future, similar to my mother, my sister followed in 2002. For the past 18 years, my mom and sister have been under TPS, and recently that protection has been at risk of being stripped away from them. It's hard to look back to September of 2017, when my family's life was jeopardy because of the President of the United States. When President Trump was inaugurated into office, it felt like

hope was lost, and faith was a fantasy. Imagine coming into school every day, not sure if it's your last. Imagine every time the phone rings it might be your mom telling you, "it's time to go". Like your world is being torn apart, piece by piece. That's what happened to mine, and September 2nd of 2019 was our deadline, then to January 2nd of 2020, a bag and many boxes would have been packed. A one-way trip to Illinois and two tickets back to El Salvador, but out of a miracle someone in the hierarchy had a heart, showed remorse, and my family got lucky.

TPS has helped my family by allowing them to have a future here in the United States, but, obviously, obstacles had to be surpassed and conquered. It is unclear on what will happen in the 2020 elections, if the president will get elected once again, or, if in November, my family and I can feel relieved for once. Though my own family has been through a lot, I don't know your stories. I don't know your family, or their way of living here in the United States. But I feel as if, somehow, we all migrated here. Your parents or our ancestors probably migrated here for a better chance at life, or maybe your family was first generation from America.

Despite how or when we came here, we all migrated here. We all have an equal claim to the United States. We are all immigrants here in some way, and together we made the United States of America a UNITED nation, with people from MANY places, who brought THEIR cultures, and lived within others to become one. As President Abraham Lincoln said; "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it." My family and yours made the American dream what it is; a nation with true care for anyone who will come in and out of these United States.

Color Blindness - Ashlynn Saint-Preux

“I don't even see color when someone walks into a room, I just see a person, nothing else.” Just a simple sentence, right? Nothing too harmful. Wrong. Being a person of color, you begin to think about what people see when they see you enter a room. Do they see your hair, your ripped jeans, your skin, or **just another person stripped of any sense of identity?** Color Blindness. Not the one where you confuse the color green from the color red but when instead you claim to not see skin color. *The color blindness racial microaggressions are statements that indicate that a white person does not want to acknowledge race. The messages that come from these microaggressions are denying the individual as a racial and cultural being, by stripping them of a piece of their identity. It is also taking away the person of color's racial experiences.* Skin color blindness is much worse because it is a **choice people make out of fear of being called a racist.** There is a simple solution, to just acknowledge it. This is a story I have experienced multiple times with my friends. I know they probably didn't mean it in a harmful way, but little did they know that a comment like this could have so much power. In the movie “The Hate U Give”, the main character Starr witnesses two of friends get shot and killed. While fighting with her boyfriend, he says that he doesn't see skin color. Following his statement, she says a quote that sums up the consequences of color blindness. *“If you don't see my blackness, then you don't see me.”* When someone says that they don't see color it is as if you are denying them of part of their identity. For me personally, I feel that if I walk into a room and you claim to see just another person that is taking away from who I am, because me being black sets me apart from so many people walking through these same halls. ***Sometimes being black in a place where there aren't a lot of people that have that in common with you, could make a packed hallway feel empty.*** For most of us black students, it is a part of ourselves that we are

proud to carry in a place like Newton. People have become so scared to talk about skin color because they're afraid of being perceived as racist, when skin color is one of the great things that makes us all different. In a way, not acknowledging skin color is lying to oneself because no matter what you think we are wired to see it. I have been in experiences where I'm having a conversation with someone and race would come up and they were **afraid to simply say the word black as if it would scorch their tongue as soon as it came out of their mouth.** This happened to me personally while I was having a conversation during a debate club meeting with another student. After race had come up in our conversation, it was as if I could see him mentally tip toeing around the word black. After questioning him on it, he said he "didn't want to offend me". After he said this, I was confused because how could acknowledging a piece of myself offend me? My call to action is for us to stop saying that we don't see color or stop saying we don't see anything that sets us apart from one another, so these experiences don't happen to other people like me. The big difference between literal color blindness and racial colorblindness is that you just need to open your eyes and allow yourself to see that ***we are all people, we are all different, and we are all beautiful.***

There Is No “Please Touch” Sign – Tiana Lugo

Look at my head. As you can see, there is no “please touch” sign up there. So, what makes you think that touching me without my consent is okay? Do not touch my hair without asking. Like a lot of other people, I like to be asked before being touched. People think they can just come up and grab onto it, play with it, feel it or pull out a curl. As we all know, straight hair isn’t the only type of hair humans have on their head. Just because some might have hair like mine, big and curly, doesn’t mean it is okay to touch it without asking. This isn't the 19th century, we aren’t going to repeat what happened to Sara Baartman, a black woman from South Africa who was taken from her homeland to Europe to be put on display due to her “different” features.

The white Europeans thought that just because her body was built differently, her face was shaped differently, and her hair curled differently, from theirs, she didn’t deserve the respect to be asked to be seen and touched like an exhibit. We should be past those times by now, we’ve already learned to show respect to our peers, we need to put our learning into action.

In this very Newton North High School, I have heard countless stories of students getting their hair touched by other teachers and students, randomly. Here are three examples. One, last year during the pep rally, a girl had her hair in a ponytail. The ponytail wasn't her real hair so that was forty dollars for the hair, ten dollars for the gel and an hour for styling it. A teacher decided to come up and yanked her ponytail.

You might be wondering, what was the adult thinking? Because I have never seen the white girls with straight hair get their ponytails yanked. Two, I was in class talking to a classmate and a girl comes up behind me and just grabs back section of my hair, which took an hour to wash, thirty minutes to style, another two hours to dry, and another ten minutes to style again that morning. Once she grabbed

my hair, she seemed fascinated and walked away content. Three, my friend got her hair straightened which took sixty dollars and one hour and thirty minutes to be done and it wasn't an easy task as everyone with curly hair knows. Four boys surrounded her, picking her hair out of place. She told them to stop and they got mad.

Variations of these three stories have happened repeatedly throughout North.

However, this doesn't end at North, there are parents teaching their kids how to say "Please do not touch my hair, I do not like it". The fact that kids are being taught to tell people not to touch them, is disappointing and shouldn't have to be on their young innocent minds. I personally, have had experiences where my parents would tell me after getting my hair done to not let anyone touch it because they would ruin it. It left me confused because I wondered why that would be a concern, if they asked and I said no then that shouldn't be a problem, but I later realized that wasn't the case.

People get mad when I say, "no you can't touch my hair", as if they think my answer must always be "yes". As if just because my hair is different from theirs, I have to give others the satisfaction to put their hands into something that took time and money.

So, do not touch my hair without asking. Coming from a group who gets their hair yanked, ruffled and rubbed on without having a say, I can tell you, it is so annoying and, more importantly, just plain disrespectful. At the very least, ask first. If you ask, you're showing me respect. You're showing my friends respect. You're showing every other person with hair like mine the respect they deserve.

Walking in Love – Joshua Tackie

Recently, love has been on my mind. And I've been trying to figure out how to express my love to a particular person. Before anyone gets ahead of themselves, I do not mean love as in romantic love, but love in a neighborly way. As for romantic love, I'll keep that to myself. And so, I've been trying to "Love my neighbor" as have many people for thousands of years.

In an effort to do so, I would like to pose the question, "What is love?" Is love giving flowers to someone or buying them a box of chocolates? It might seem so at first, but the source of these actions tends not to be true love. What we call love at it's very best is often selfish. Even the love a mother has for her child can in some way can become tainted. She may refuse to admonish them with a mindset that correcting them may make them want to leave. But there is a higher ideal of love recommended in the bible that does not fail.

Love is patient. Being patient is not just waiting at the door for your date but more so it is about being understanding and forgiving. Patience, in this sense, is being able to tolerate mistakes for the sake of love. The love that a father has for his son will allow him to tolerate when he errs at school. Likewise, the love that a wife has for her husband will allow her to forget past transgressions. This is the same way that we ought to love. If we claim to care for one another then we should also have the heart to forgive one another.

Love is not self-seeking. This means it's not all about you. It's true that everyone is entitled to certain rights but to what extent should we pursue them. Should I pursue my rights even when it hurts someone else? To do so is self-seeking and therefore not love.

So, when all is said and done, how do you know that you are walking in love? It's simple. Just ask yourself, "who was the last person that wronged you?" If you have an answer you're not walking in love. Because true love doesn't remember suffered wrongs. And I think if all of us were to walk in love just a little bit more, at the least, this world might be a much kinder place, and that counts for something.