



# *Bleach*

By Brittany Fisher

Sitelines BLM  
Cadence Theatre Company  
Richmond, VA

Dramaturgical Packet Created by Liv Wilson  
In Collaboration with Omiyemi (Artisia) Green  
July 2021

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Summary:

At the height of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, we see three young people in a poetry collective play a game that opens the door for conversation about how to stay safe during a time where racial tension is once again on the rise in the former capital of the Confederacy.

## About the Playwright, Brittany Fisher

Fisher was born and raised in Virginia's capital city. As a young girl, she began writing poetry and fiction. This sparked a passion for storytelling early on that has been rapidly growing ever since.

Fisher is a graduate of James Madison University where she received a BA in Journalism with a creative writing minor. Brittany is now based in New York, having recently graduated from the Juilliard's Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program.

Her play *How to Bruise Gracefully* won the 2021 Kennedy Center Lorraine Hansberry Award, Rosa Parks Award (2nd place) and Paula Vogel Award (2nd place). Her play *Your Regularly Scheduled Programming* was a 2022 O'Neill NPC selection and recognized by the Kennedy Center Mark Twain Award. She was a 2018-20 Pipeline New Works Playwriting Fellow, and her work has been featured at and developed with the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, National Black Theatre, Great Plains Theatre Conference, the Alliance Theatre's Keneda Graduate Playwriting Competition, Cadence Theatre Company and Virginia Repertory Theatre. Her poetry has been published in Gardy Loo Literary Magazine as well as the first and second edition of *Kinfolks: a journal of black expression*. In 2017, Fisher was named one of Virginia's Best Emerging Poets by Z Publishing House and was published in their anthology. Brittany enjoys photography, spoken word poetry, traveling, reading as many books as she can.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Priston, Jessica. "Biography." *Brittany Fisher*, [www.brittanyfisher.com/](http://www.brittanyfisher.com/).

## Kehinde Wiley

Visual artist and LA native Kehinde Wiley studied at San Francisco Art Institute as well as Yale University, receiving both his BFA and MFA.<sup>2</sup> Wiley learned his craft by painting Baroque nobles and observing the style of Old Master paintings, featuring (you guessed it) white people in positions of power. In response, Wiley now paints everyday people in the distinct poses and styles of the elite of the Old World. By positioning modern era Black bodies within classical European structures of status and power, his work highlights a racial consciousness with our country.<sup>3</sup> Wiley is most famously known for painting the official portrait of President Obama.<sup>4</sup> Previously, Wiley's work in the early 2000s was a



reaction to conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. *Rumors of War* addresses violence in America's streets as well as the absence of Black individuals within our cultural history as a nation.<sup>5</sup> (Photo by Micaiah Carter for TIME)

## "Rumors of War"

Commissioned by the VMFA, Wiley's statue "Rumors of War" was installed in December 2019 on the grounds of the museum. The statue depicts a heroic African American "everyman" on a horse in Nike high-tops, jeans, and a hoodie.<sup>6</sup> In "Rumors of War", Wiley responded to the role of monuments in perpetuating incomplete histories, specifically the presence of Confederate statues of Monument Avenue. Wiley notes that art

<sup>2</sup> "Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic." *Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, VMFA*.

<sup>3</sup> Stamberg, Susan. "'Rumors Of War' In Richmond Marks A Monumentally Unequal America." *NPR*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> "Sculpture Created by Kehinde Wiley for VMFA." *VMFA*.

<sup>6</sup> Stamberg, Susan. "'Rumors Of War' In Richmond Marks A Monumentally Unequal America." *NPR*.



depicts what people value and the monuments in Richmond pointed directly to white supremacy.<sup>7</sup> Wiley drew inspiration from the statue of J.E.B. Stuart, a Confederate Army General, created by Frederick Moynihan in 1907.<sup>8</sup> The monument features a man in a heroic pose on horseback and in Wiley's piece the man is a Black youth in streetwear.<sup>9</sup> Wiley hoped the statue would demonstrate a change in the city's values, using the language of memorialization to recognize people who are oppressed.<sup>10</sup> J.E.B. Stuart's monument was removed on July 7th 2020 by the city. "Rumors of War" remained untouched by the protests of the summer of 2020 and the statue became a place of meditation, healing, and gathering to pay respects. The name "Rumors of War" references a biblical passage from Matthew 24:6: "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."<sup>11</sup> This passage suggests that these "real and



rumored wars" are part of God's plan for the Earth; they must occur but do not signify the end of days.<sup>12</sup> In the context of Wiley's sculpture, these rumors of war may refer to the racial reckoning the country is coming to - necessary and do not indicate the end. (Kehinde Wiley, *Rumors of War*, 2019. © Kehinde Wiley. Presented by Times Square Arts in partnership with the Virginia Museum of Fine Art and Sean Kelly, New York. Photo by Travis Fullerton © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2019)

<sup>7</sup> Capps, Kriston, and Vinson Cunningham. "Kehinde Wiley's Anti-Confederate Memorial." *The New Yorker*.

<sup>8</sup> "Sculpture Created by Kehinde Wiley for VMFA." *VMFA*.

<sup>9</sup> Kehinde Wiley, *Rumors of War*, 2019. © Kehinde Wiley. Presented by Times Square Arts in partnership with the Virginia Museum of Fine Art and Sean Kelly, New York.

<sup>10</sup> Capps, Kriston, and Vinson Cunningham. "Kehinde Wiley's Anti-Confederate Memorial."

<sup>11</sup> Stamberg, Susan. "'Rumors Of War' In Richmond Marks A Monumentally Unequal America." *NPR*.

<sup>12</sup> "Matthew 24:6." *BibleRef.com*, BibleRef.com, 2021.

## Richmond Monuments

Since 1996, Monument Avenue has consisted of six statues, five of which honor men of the Confederacy and none of whom are women. They are listed below with their respective unveiling and removal dates.

- ❖ Robert E. Lee Monument (unveiled 1890, scheduled for removal by state)
- ❖ J.E.B Stuart Monument (unveiled 1907, removed by city in July 2020)
- ❖ Jefferson Davis Memorial (unveiled 1907, toppled during protests in June 2020)
- ❖ Stonewall Jackson Monument (unveiled 1919, removed by city in July 2020)
- ❖ Matthew Fontaine Maury Monument (unveiled 1929, removed by city in July 2020)
- ❖ Arthur Ashe Statue (unveiled 1996, still stands)<sup>13</sup>

The bronze statue of Arthur Ashe was caught in the crossfire of American discord in June of 2020. The monument depicts the tennis champion carrying books and a racquet, symbolizing his contribution to education and athletics. At the end of June, the base of the statue was spray painted “WLM” for “White Lives Matter” and soon “BLM” for “Black Lives Matter”. The statue was promptly cleaned of controversy.<sup>14</sup> (Photo by Steve Helber/AP)



<sup>13</sup> “Monument Avenue.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 22 June 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Stamberg, Susan. “‘Rumors Of War’ In Richmond Marks A Monumentally Unequal America.” *NPR*.

## Timeline of Black Lives Matter Demonstrations<sup>15</sup>:

### May 2020

May 25th - George Floyd is murdered by police in Minneapolis. This killing sparks protests that start in Richmond about three days later and continue into August, the pandemic illuminating existing injustices and allowing for much needed racial reckoning.

May 29th into the morning of the 30th - Protestors marched from Monroe Park down Franklin Street and through the Monroe Ward neighborhood. Richmond Police Department, VCU Police, and Virginia Division of Capitol Police. Two police cruisers were set on fire and destroyed during this exchange.

May 30th into the morning of the 31st - Hundreds of protestors met on VCU's campus and marched down Monument Avenue, passing five statues honoring Confederate generals. Several of the monuments were defaced with spray painted slogans including: "Black Lives Matter", "ACAB", and "Fuck Capitalism". The Memorial to the Women of the Confederacy was damaged and set on fire. The sign for the Virginia Museum of History and Culture soon read: "Virginia Museum of Bullshit and Cultists".

### June 2020

May 31st into the morning of June 1st - A city-wide curfew was put in place. Up to two hundred protestors were arrested. Several structures were set on fire, however there was less damage than previous nights, according to police reports.

June 1st - Hundreds of protestors gathered around the Central Office District. Forty minutes before the curfew was to start, Richmond police tear gassed 500-600 protestors who were gathered peacefully, kneeling near the Stuart and Lee monuments. This premeditated response was justified by the Richmond Police as an attempt to protect the monuments from protestors.

Youtube clip of peaceful protestors at the Robert E. Lee Monument:

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<sup>15</sup> "George Floyd Protests in Richmond, Virginia." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 6 May 2021.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LG\\_HMghyQZc&lc=z22vxhfhsvkgtaic04t1aokggisen05gafeumh0cababk0h00410.1591126473741911](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LG_HMghyQZc&lc=z22vxhfhsvkgtaic04t1aokggisen05gafeumh0cababk0h00410.1591126473741911)

June 2nd - Mayor Stoney of Richmond addressed and apologized for the actions of the RPD the previous day. Amidst calls to fire the police officers and resign, Stoney joined the BLM protestors on June 2nd.

June 3rd - The Lee monument plaza becomes an open, cultural hub. Mayor Stoney announces his plan to remove the Confederate statues on Monument Avenue.

June 4th - Governor Ralph Northam states he will remove the Lee Monument.

June 6th - Protestors topple the statue of William Carter Wickham (Confederate General) in Monroe Park.

June 7th - A vigil was held at Maymont Park for Breonna Taylor, in celebration of what would have been her 27th birthday.

June 9th - The Christopher Columbus statue is set on fire, toppled, and thrown into Fountain Lake in Byrd Park.

June 10th - Protestors tear down the Jefferson Davis statue on Monument Avenue.



(Parker Michels-Boyce/AFP via Getty Images)

June 13th - "5,000 Man March" on Monument Avenue.

June 15th - Protestors gathered outside the Richmond Police Headquarters. Police shot non-lethal bullets and tear gas at the nonviolent group of citizens.

June 16th - Chief of Richmond Police, William Smith, resigns at the request of Mayor Stoney.

June 17th - The Confederate Howitzer Statue celebrating an artillery unit was toppled by protestors on VCU's Monroe Park campus.

June 19th - Juneteenth is celebrated. The Lee Monument is now proclaimed "Marcus-David Peters Circle".

June 22nd - A protest outside Richmond City Hall demands abolition of the RPD, creation of a Citizens Review Board, and a "Marcus Alert System", sending social workers to mental health crises, instead of the cops.

Evening of the 22nd - A protest outside the RPD against police brutality is met with rubber bullets, tear gas, and pepper spray.

### July 2020

July 1st - The Stonewall Jackson Statue is removed by the city.

July 7th - The city removes the J.E.B. Stuart Statue.

July 25th - A Solidarity with Portland protest occurs in south Richmond in which a dump truck is set on fire. It is declared an unlawful assembly as white supremacists were acting as agents provocateurs under the banner of BLM, "an attempt to undermine an otherwise overwhelmingly peaceful movement".<sup>16</sup>

### August 2020

August 7th - RPD disperses and disassembles the camping area around Lee's monument in response to complaints from residents nearby.

August 11th - RPD continues its efforts to stop overnight camping in the circle.

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<sup>16</sup> Editor, Managing. "Police disperse protesters with chemical agents, explosives after dump truck fire". *The Commonwealth Times*. Retrieved July 27, 2020.

August 13th - BLM joins with student activists to demand the defunding or abolition of the VCU Police Department.

August 16th - "Marcus-David Peters Circle" sign is removed. RPD denies responsibility.

## Say Their Names

### Names Mentioned in *Bleach*

Mike Brown - 18 years old, 2014, Ferguson, Missouri, while walking with a friend Brown was confronted by police, a scuffle began and the officer shot and killed Brown.

Freddie Gray - 25 years old, 2015, Baltimore, Maryland, Gray was arrested and placed in a police van, his hands and feet were shackled and he was without a seatbelt, he was defenselessly tossed around the vehicle. Forty five minutes later, he was dead with his spinal cord nearly severed.<sup>17</sup>

Sandra Bland - 28 years old, 2015, Waller County, Texas, after being pulled over for failure to use a turn signal, she was brutalized by police in the field, arrested and taken to jail where she was found dead three days later.

*From the playwright:* The inclusion of these particular names in *Bleach* was a matter of recognizability and emotional impact. The three individuals' cases were covered by the press and became rally cries for the BLM movement. Each name also had an emotional tie for Brittany. In the death of Michael Brown, his dead body lay out in the street for so long. Fisher felt it was very symbolic in showing how out of touch people are. The news sources show the deaths of Black youth so freely that everyone has become so numb to trauma, violence, death, and brutality. Sandra Bland's death also struck a particular nerve. Nobody heard her cries for help, even when she was dealing with a tremendous amount of trauma. Bland's covered up death in prison added another layer of ignorance and lack of empathy.

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<sup>17</sup> Chughtai, Alia. "Know Their Names: Black People Killed by the Police in the US." *Al Jazeera Interactives*, Al Jazeera, 18 Apr. 2021.

### Know Their Names

Daunte Wright - 20 years old, 2021, Minneapolis, Minnesota, after stopping Wright for a traffic violation, police attempted to detain him for an outstanding warrant, while he was getting back into his car, an officer shot him.

Breonna Taylor - 26 years old, 2020, Louisville, Kentucky, Taylor was asleep beside her boyfriend when three non uniformed officers arrived to execute a search warrant for drugs. Believing it was a break in, her boyfriend called 911 and fired a firearm. Taylor was shot by police eight times.

Tamir Rice - 12 years old, 2014, Cleveland, Ohio, Rice was playing with a toy gun in a park when the police fatally shot him.

Eric Garner - 43 years old, 2014, Staten Island, New York, an officer put Garner in a chokehold for allegedly selling loose cigarettes, the hold was not released despite Garner saying "I can't breathe" eleven times.

Rayshard Brooks - 27 years old, 2020, Atlanta, Georgia, Brooks fell asleep in his car in a drive through lane outside a fast food restaurant, officers spoke with him for more than forty minutes before telling him he had too much to drink to drive, they attempted to restrain him and Brooks fled, he was shot twice in the back.

Botham Jean - 26 years old, 2018, Dallas, Texas, Jean was shot in his own apartment when an off duty police officer thought she was entering her own apartment and that he was an intruder.<sup>18</sup>

For more information on Black citizens killed by police:

<https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/know-their-names/index.html>

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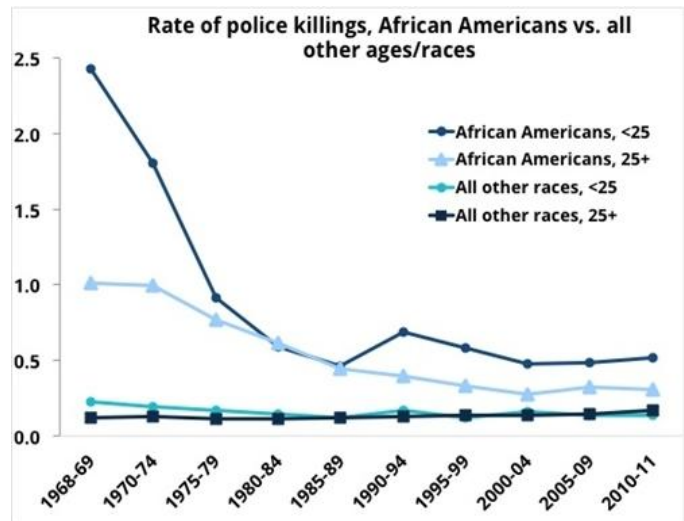
<sup>18</sup> Chughtai, Alia. "Know Their Names: Black People Killed by the Police in the US." *Al Jazeera Interactives*, Al Jazeera, 18 Apr. 2021.



## Police Brutality

While data from the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice suggests that the rate of police killings of Black Americans has decreased by seventy percent since the 1960s, they are still at much higher risk (rates are 4.5X higher) than their white, Latinx, and Asian counterparts. As the graph indicates, African Americans under 25 are at the greatest risk of being killed at the hands of law enforcement.<sup>19</sup>

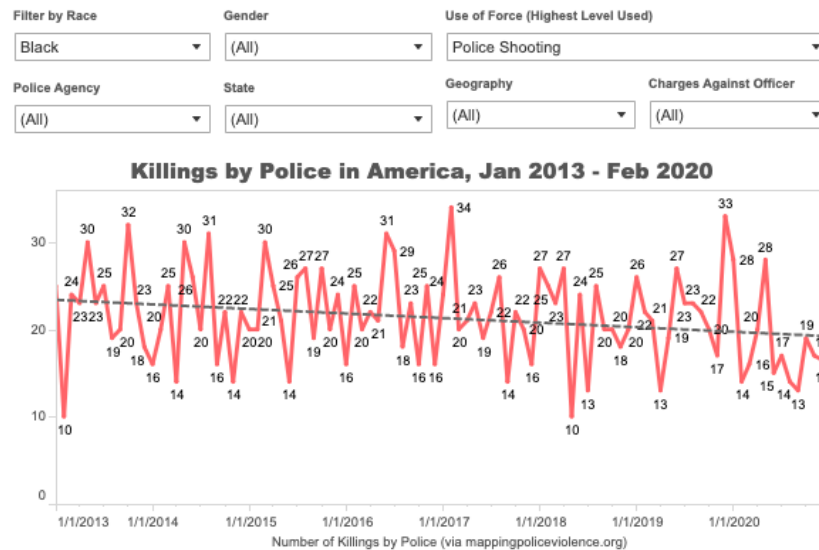
In 2020, the police killed 1,127 people, around 27% of victims were Black and 35% were Black and unarmed. There were only 18 days in the entire year when the police did not kill someone. The graph below shows the Killings by Police in America between January of 2013 and February of 2020 (thus excluding the murder of George Floyd, Breonna



Taylor, and others that sparked a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the summer of 2020). The graph indicates the number of Black killings across America, specifically as a result of a police shooting.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Mike Males Published: August 26, 2014. “Who Are Police Killing? - Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice.” *Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice*.

<sup>20</sup> *Mapping Police Violence*, Mapping Police Violence, 2020, [mappingpoliceviolence.org/](http://mappingpoliceviolence.org/).



## African Burial Ground at Shockoe Bottom

Shockoe Bottom was the center of slave trade in Richmond, VA. Between 1830 and 1865, Richmond's interstate slave trade industry was second only to that of New Orleans. The area of Shockoe Bottom included auction houses, offices, slave jails, and prominent residents of wealthy slave traders.<sup>21</sup> Located within the neighborhood is an African Burial Ground. On a map of Richmond dating back to 1809, the area is labeled "Burial Ground for Negroes". The burial ground was active from 1799 to 1816, the first municipal cemetery designated for those of African ancestry, both free and enslaved. The site was on an odd shaped plot of poor quality land that the city had purchased near the powder magazine. It was also the place where many of the slave revolters of 1800 were hanged, including "General Gabriel", principal organizer of the revolt.<sup>22</sup> Conditions were vigorously protested by free Black residents, who eventually purchased a new burial ground further north in 1815, known as Barton Heights cemeteries. In 1816, the city of Richmond opened a burial site on Shockoe Hill, containing one acre for free people of

<sup>21</sup> "Shockoe Bottom: National Trust for Historic Preservation." *Shockoe Bottom* | National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> "Richmond's African Burial Ground." *Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project*, 2020.

color and one for those enslaved. This site basically closed Shockoe Bottom's burial ground to further interments.<sup>23</sup>

Now, Shockoe Bottom looks a lot like the rest of Richmond, paved over and easily ignored by passersby. Regardless, the land remains sacred as a site of suffering, injustice, and resistance to slavery.<sup>24</sup> In the 1990s, activists and government departments came together to recognize the land as historic property and place appropriate signage to acknowledge the "African Burial Ground".<sup>25</sup> Various projects to build a baseball stadium, hotel, and grocery store have each successfully been stopped to preserve the land. In 2018, Mayor Stoney announced plans to develop a center dedicated to the remembrance of the devastation caused by Shockoe Bottom.<sup>26</sup>

Additional resources can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/0B7R6niR8W-yfNDJiM2I2Y2UtZDQzZC00M2ZmLTikYWQtNWZmNTM4OTEzZWVj?resourcekey=0-KjlbqOXgYzp604FBcvgK7Mg>

## Character Summaries

Destiny - Black female, 19/20, Calm and collected leader. She is aware of and frequently draws upon moments of the past/repeating histories. Destiny is a deep thinker, advocate, and instigator. She garners Myles into their poetry collective, encouraging the group to reflect upon their experience as young Black individuals in the U.S.

Devon - Black male, 19/20, Challenges and questions Destiny in the way friends do. He knows the power of the poetry collective in verbalizing marginalized experiences and sharing stories. Devon is socially aware of racial issues and their effect on himself and others.

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<sup>23</sup> "African Burial Ground." *Richmond Cemeteries*, 9 June 2020.

<sup>24</sup> "Shockoe Bottom: National Trust for Historic Preservation." *Shockoe Bottom | National Trust for Historic Preservation*, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> "African Burial Ground." *Richmond Cemeteries*, 9 June 2020.

<sup>26</sup> "Shockoe Bottom: National Trust for Historic Preservation." *Shockoe Bottom | National Trust for Historic Preservation*, 2021.

Myles - Black male, 19/20, New to the collective. He is curious about spoken word as an outlet for self expression and his experience as a Black man in America. Myles seems eager for community and through the piece, finds his voice through verse.

Taylor - White female, 19/20, performative ally to the BLM movement. She lacks awareness of her privilege and is ignorant of her surroundings. After attending a BLM protest with Destiny, Taylor is able to shut off her engagement with racial issues as she sunbathes oblivious to the slave burial ground on which she lays.

## Themes

### Erasure and the Whitewashing of History

The monument controversy often comes down to a question of collective memory and the historical narratives of our country we choose to emphasize, remember, and champion. It is clear that white individuals, often those associated with the Confederacy, are overrepresented in just about every category. They are taught in education systems (sometimes without recognition of the true meaning behind the Civil War being the question of slavery, not states rights). They are displayed publicly as heroic statues across the country. They are given a place, an acceptability within our nation. An acceptability that never should have been there in the first place.

As the former capital of the Confederacy, Richmond must toil with the question of legacy and fight for a reinvention of the city to move forward into the future with inclusivity and equity at its core. There is an acute distinction between recognizing oppressive periods of our history in order to not repeat these atrocities and continuing to champion the figures who oppressed others. Perhaps the answer lies in equal representation and a difference between educational tools and living works of art that exist as a part of our present society. The erasure is not of the history of these Confederate generals, there are so many systems in place that ensure these men are not forgotten. The erasure in question is rather that of all other marginalized groups not centered in conversations, education, and portrayals of our collective history. In *Bleach*, while explaining her sign, Destiny discusses

the Clorox symbol's double meaning, in relation to the pandemic as well as the bleaching of history. She states, "These cleaning solutions are scarce." The irony of there literally not being any bleach left in stores, people cannot erase these histories anymore, "the stains are resurfacing."<sup>27</sup>

### Poetry and Spoken Word as Healing

*Bleach* also touches on the power of poetry as a means of self expression and healing. The collective of three Black individuals in *Bleach* demonstrates the gathering of voices to share common experiences through spoken word. Destiny explains the "heads up" game to Myles, "The National Poetry Slam competition is virtual this year, and it's in two weeks. So we play this game to practice. Well, to practice, to grieve, to escape – Usually all of the above."<sup>28</sup> Destiny notions towards the idea of poetry serving as self-care, a form of therapy for social experiences.

*From the playwright:* Brittany Fisher began writing poetry in elementary school, before she even knew her rhyming was poetry. As a self-described rule follower, Brittany used poetry as a way of rebellion. No one could say it was wrong because it was a form of expression. Now, she has found countless ways to merge two modes of free expression: poetry and theatre, always going back to storytelling because no one can question it, it simply is.

### The Code

The discussion of The Code becomes a community activity of recognition, exchange, and healing. In *Bleach*, The Code, described as "the universal unwritten rulebook all black folks are just kinda programmed to know when it comes maneuvering through the world from day to day," connects these individuals through a shared background.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Fisher, Brittany. "Bleach." Richmond, VA, July 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid 6.

*From the playwright:* As a part of her inspiration for writing this piece, Brittany recalls the first time she was pulled over by the police, which happened to be during the height of the BLM movements in the summer of 2020. It was a very “textbook scary situation”. It was late at night and she was coming home from a friend’s house. She is pulled over by two white officers, a man and a woman, in a dark parking lot. There was no apparent reason for pulling her over, but she complied. There were questions regarding her license and registration validity, even though there was a six month DMV registration extension due to the pandemic that deemed her within the set parameters of renewal. The female cop comes back to the car and says that her partner claims he sees a “baggie” in her glove box. The police officer asks if it is drugs. Fisher has no idea what “baggie” she is referring to and finally finds a plastic bag of brown sugar she used to use for her oatmeal breakfast at work.

Fisher recalls her parents reiterating these warnings as a child: don’t wear hoodies, be careful where you are and who you are hanging out with, be aware of your surroundings at all times. They were embedded throughout her childhood, but at the time, Fisher experienced this advice as just something parents told their children because that’s the way the world works. Fisher remembers a specific situation of harassment that her father had experienced when he was a teenager. It was later when Brittany got older realized the true injustice of the situation, recognizing that these warnings are not just things parents tell their children, but in fact are rooted in their own experience of the unfairness of the world.

## Hip Hop Theatre and Spoken Word Theatre

In Daniel Bank’s piece “Hip Hop Theatre: The Voice of Now”, he deems Hip Hop Theatre an “outgrowth of African orature,” defining orature as the passing of information through generations, through narrative storytelling, songs, chants, call-and-response, as well as gestures or riddles. Orature is “dedicated to preserving the history and culture of

individual peoples through performance.”<sup>30</sup> This art form is a mixture of memory and improvisation, relying on audience participation and engagement. In Hip Hop Theatre, some sort of emcee character tells of the community: its struggles, values, and triumphs of the past. Hip Hop Theatre, emerged from Hip Hop culture, incorporates spoken word with song and dance. The form is marked by activism and resistance, intrinsically tied to the discussion and discovery of identity.<sup>31</sup> Bank notes that Hip Hop Theatre narrates the “experiences of historically marginalized people”, based on culture, ethnicity, or heritage.<sup>32</sup> Hip Hop Theatre can also be intertextual, drawing on traditions of self expression that came before. Telling old stories told with familiar melodies and rhythms, also allows for greater audience interaction as they see themselves, their history on stage. Hip Hop Theatre also draws on the cosmological worlds of the Bible, Yoruba, ancient Khemet, African and European traditions, incorporating various storytelling modes and methods.<sup>33</sup> In *Bleach*, spoken word is used within the narrative, acknowledging within the story that the characters are speaking in verse instead of prose. This integration of poetry is vital to the self expression of identity of the historically marginalized individuals. While it may not be improvised on the spot like some Hip Hop Theatre, the verses within *Bleach* speak to how humans try to know ourselves and each other better through the ritual of theatre.

### Questions for Audience Facilitation:

- What is your relationship to the Rumors of War statue? Have you visited it before? Did you know its history? What impact did it have on the piece for you? If you are from the Richmond area, how do you perceive this statue changing the landscape of historical representation in the city? Is adding just as powerful as removing?
- How do you feel *Bleach* illuminated aspects of the Black experience in the U.S.?
- How do you hope the events of the summer of 2020 (both the BLM movement and the pandemic) will positively impact the future?

<sup>30</sup> Bank, Daniel. ““HIP HOP THEATRE: THE VOICE OF NOW.”” *Hip Hop Theatre Initiative*.

<sup>31</sup> Bank, Daniel. *Say Word!*, University of Michigan Press, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Bank, Daniel. ““HIP HOP THEATRE: THE VOICE OF NOW.”” *Hip Hop Theatre Initiative*.



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Image links:

Photograph of Brittany Fisher, found on her website:

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