

Editorial: I Can't Breathe

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I can't breathe.

This sentence has haunted me for all of my life.

As a young person, growing up in an idealized setting in Central Islip, a hamlet on Long Island, New York, widely known as the birthplace of post-war suburbia, tranquility and community subsumed my life. Most homes on our street, Myrtle Avenue, were different shades of the same three bedroom, split-level ranch. Next door at number 29 lived the Barbera family: mom (who shared a first name with my maternal grandmother, Doris), dad, elder son, and younger daughter, Lisa Marie. Understand, these are my earliest memories of the neighborhood and my life. The son would drive his Pontiac Firebird (black with light brown and gold namesake firebird appliqué on the hood)—naturally too fast and too loud, but appropriately seductive for the mid-1980s. When she got her license at 16, Lisa would drive her parents' newly purchased Dodge Aries. I'd watch from the window as they would come and go. If my siblings or I were out in the front yard,

Lisa would always give a wave with a warm, welcoming smile. This is what neighbors were to me—a picture-perfect painting of family and community.

Occasionally, I would go out alone in our backyard and climb along the fence that separated our yard from theirs. In summer, Lisa frequently sunbathed in a bikini on a folding lounge chair. Tanning, driving—this is what being a teenager appeared to be. But there was something more inviting—something that undoubtedly marked my life in more ways than I could possibly have imagined in those early years. Lisa had a singing voice like an angel. And so, it was no wonder that she was cast in the lead roles of her high school musicals: Dorothy Gayle in *The Wizard of Oz* in 1982 and Sandy Dumbrowski in *Grease* in 1983. This was 1980s American suburbia—and this was just what you did—what you *aspired* to do.



Figure 1: Lisa Barbera as Dorothy Gayle in the 1982 Central Islip Senior High School Production of *The Wizard of Oz*, directed by Matt Paduano.

Those performances were my first trips to the theatre. The auditorium at Central Islip Senior High School was cavernous—seating nearly a thousand audience members in the aqua blue upholstered chairs. It was a magical place then and it would continue to be later in my own teenage years. But as a child, sitting at the rear of the orchestra on house right, we watched as the girl next door was transported into the magical land of Oz—and I was hooked on theatre from that very moment.

And like the land of Oz, there was a dark underbelly to the idyllic suburban portrait—the human reality that nothing is ever so perfect as it seems. Lisa Barbera was afflicted with asthma. And so, just days after her 18th birthday in March of 1986, she found herself unable to breathe. As I recall, her mom found her—she'd collapsed at home. In the week that followed, she was hospitalized in a coma. I vividly remember my mom telling us that Lisa was improving—she could go to the bathroom on her own. At six years old, I'm not sure how I processed the physical properties of that—but I was told it was an improvement and that was the essential piece of information I needed to satiate my worry. There were a lot of prayers that week—and a lot of hope—but then came the tragic news.

At the time, I was in first grade at St. John of God School. Sister Eleanor was leading the morning prayers over the loudspeaker, as she did every day. Part of the morning ritual was to read off a list of intentions—folks for whom we should pray. The last on her list was a teenager who had passed away after a brief illness. My teacher, Mrs. Cone, asked if that was my neighbor, and I replied, “No, it can't be. My mom said she's doing better.” And so I went through the day with hope and optimism riding high.

But Lisa wasn't better. She had died. My mom took my older sisters to the wake at Maloney's Funeral Home in the days that followed. I was too young to go—my mom was concerned that an open casket might be too traumatizing for me and my brother—the youngest of the five children—so only my three older sisters were allowed to go. After, my sister Tanya told me that the casket was closed. The family decided to donate her organs—she was “cut up,” by Tanya's telling.

The next morning was the funeral service. We arrived to the church just as they were about to bring in the casket. As you can imagine, a popular senior in high school attracts a crowd, so my family had to stand through the service due to our late arrival and the short

supply of pews in the small parish church at St. John of God. Joseph, Lisa's dad, had his arm wrapped around Doris as they walked up the center aisle to their seats; she appeared tiny and child-like. Doris' face was so deeply red—a portrait of grief that has never managed to escape from my memory. We sang "On Eagle's Wings" at the close of the service, ever a staple in our church repertoire—forever tied to Lisa's funeral in my memory—long before Joe Biden would quote from the hymn during his victory speech when he was projected the winner of the 2020 United States' presidential election—a comforting tribute to the families of those who had lost a loved one to COVID-19.

*You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord
Who abide in his shadow for life
Say to the Lord, "My refuge—my rock in whom I trust"*

*And He will raise you up on eagle's wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His hands.*

On the breath of dawn. We processed from the church down Wheeler Road that morning, passing the high school where those musical performances had embedded such joy into my soul. Along the one mile route to Queen of All Saints Cemetery, Lisa's peers paraded on the sidewalk for the entire journey. There was a final blessing in the small chapel, but it was much too small for the mourners to gather inside—so my family were out in the grass among the stricken classmates on that misty day. We waited in line and made our way inside—and there before her flower-covered silver casket, my mom whispered to us, "Say a prayer and say goodbye."

About two days later, Joseph came by our house to bring us some food. The outpouring of support from friends and neighbors had been overwhelming and there was just too much food for the three of them. My younger brother Jason didn't understand at all what had happened or why. We stood at the railing at the top of the stairs as Joseph relayed to my parents that they were holding it together as best they could. Jason piped in, "But where did Lisa go?" And Joe responded, "Well, she's gone over the rainbow."

Doris was never the same after that week so far as I could tell.

She never smiled. She rarely came by. She was ashen and red-faced, often silent and always sad. What else could she be? She never really recovered, and ten years later, she too died young. She was entombed in the mausoleum at Queen of All Saints where Lisa's body lay—mother and daughter together into eternity. Her daughter couldn't breathe and nothing could ever be the same.

HAUNTED

A few months later, my sister Nikki was hospitalized—she was 11 years old at the time. She shared the middle name 'Marie' with Lisa, and she too had asthma. One day, she told my mom that she couldn't breathe so they went to the doctor and he told them he had to admit her. While Nikki was in the hospital, my mom took us to the hospital parking lot—we were too young to go in as visitors, but she knew we needed to see her, even if only from the window. Because of Lisa. Having an asthma attack and going to the hospital meant only one thing in our young lives: she can't breathe and she's going to die. And so that viewing from the hospital window was for proof of life—to help us process that this time, things could be different. And thankfully, they were—but each day of Nikki's two week stay was no less terrifying for her or any of the rest of us.

My sister Tanya had asthma too, but it wasn't asthma that sent her to the hospital. Seven years after Lisa's untimely passing, Tanya and Nikki had taken a day off from school. My parents had been fighting much of the night, so they didn't want to leave my mom alone with my dad—but as my father passed out from drinking, my sisters decided to go see Nikki's boyfriend in the late morning. Much had changed in those seven years. Sun tanning was still a habitual part of summertime teenage existence, but driving wasn't an automatic privilege—at least not in our house, so they were walking. And as they crossed a busy intersection, Nikki was hit by a car. She was taken by ambulance to the hospital and a neighbor came to get my mom and take her there, leaving my father asleep in the house. He awoke when another neighbor came by to alert him of the accident and take him to the hospital as well. When my mom returned home with Tanya, Nikki, and my dad in the early afternoon, the fighting resumed. And as was the case in those days, my dad would get close to hitting my mom—and so Tanya stepped in between them. He hit her in the chest. She told him,

"Don't you ever put your hands on me again," and ran from the house.

A few minutes later, Tanya's friend Melanie came running into the house to tell my mother, "Tanya can't breathe."

And so my mom called 911. Police and an ambulance were there in no time. My brother Jason arrived home from school to this devastating scene. My mom told the police that she couldn't leave my drunken father home with Jason while she went to the hospital with Tanya—so the police told her that they would arrest my father and take him into custody if Tanya approved.

At this moment, my school bus turned the corner onto Myrtle Avenue. I'd been at school all day—I knew nothing of all that had transpired. But as we came up the road, there were the swirling lights of the ambulance and police cars—a sharp contrast to the suburban paradise of my youth. The younger kids on the bus said, "What's going on?" I looked from the window just as we were at number 29 and saw the police leading my father out of the house in handcuffs. My mom was talking with another group of police and trying to calm young Jason. After years of the drinking and abuse, I exclaimed, "Yes! They're finally taking him away."

When I got off the bus, I went to my mother. "Nikki's been in an accident," she told me. "I'm going to the hospital. Take care of your brother." And she climbed into the ambulance and they took off. And the police left. And when I went inside, there was Nikki, bruised and bandaged, crying on the couch. I was completely confused—wasn't *she* in the ambulance? Melanie sat with me. "It was Tanya in the ambulance," she said. "Your dad hit her in the chest and she couldn't breathe."

DISTRESSED

In September of 2011, I was visiting my family. My sister Danette was pregnant with her second son when she started to feel the familiar disquiet of early labor. As a teenager, I'd had a somewhat similar experience with my sister Nikki when she was pregnant with her first son, Zachary. I sat up with her all night as her contractions grew stronger and more close together. Between the pain, we talked about her hopes for her son and her anxieties about giving birth—up until we decided it was time to alert my mom that she needed to take her to the

hospital. But with Danette, this was a different situation—because it was much too early. At only seven months along, she drank some water and waited to see if the contractions would subside—but they never did. So I took her to the hospital.

There was a flurry of activity in the room over a period of hours—steroids to develop the baby’s lungs (“just in case”) and injections to stop the contractions—but little Steve came just the same. I have 3 nieces and 9 nephews now, but this was the only time I was in the room when one of them was born. Of the twelve, Steve was eighth in line, so my family had seen a lot of babies over a seventeen year period leading up to that time. And with each pregnancy, there was a steady flow of information—and those steroid shots to help the lungs develop were always spoken about, but never so necessary as they were then.

Danette was also born two months early, so this was not entirely unthinkable, but in the intervening decades between her birth and Steve’s, hospital care had changed significantly. As such, it came as quite a shock that Steve would have to stay in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for a month. So many wires and monitors, learning appropriate handwashing long before the pandemic made it customary, the smallest little cannula to deliver a steady flow of oxygen—these are the images that have stayed with me—and, of course, that he was the tiniest little baby I had ever seen.

His older brother Ian chose the baby’s name. “Not Steven?” Danette asked. “No. His name is Steve,” Ian replied. I was still there in the hospital later in the day when Ian arrived. Understand, the NICU is a quiet place. If anyone speaks, it is only in hushed tones as no one wants to disturb or distress the tiny newborns. The atmosphere was foreboding and I could sense Ian’s apprehension as we approached. I helped him wash his hands and we followed his mother into the small corner of the NICU where Steve’s incubator was set up. Ian had seen three of his cousins come home from the hospital—so he had a clear vision of what young Steve was meant to look like. And to his seven year old eyes, his expectations were unmet. He gave a small and quiet wave to his baby brother—a welcoming (Figure 2), of sorts. Ian didn’t have a Lisa next door when he was six, so this experience was less alarming to him than it would have been for me at his age. “What are those tubes for,” he asked. “Those are there to help him breathe,” I told him. “Oh,” he said. And I thought, *just keep breathing, little guy. Just*

keep breathing.



Figure 2: Ian waves hello to his little brother, Steve.

SCARRED AND HAUNTED

Over the last twenty years, I've lost four family members and one family friend to chronic obstructed pulmonary disease (COPD). First, it was my grandfather, Edwin L. Cole, in 2007. Just before his 80th birthday in 2002, he found himself unable to breathe. He was hospitalized for a short while and diagnosed. We had a large surprise gathering for the momentous birthday and I remember him coming into the fire-hall dragging an oxygen tank behind him. His hair was thinner than I remembered, as was he—though I'd only just seen him at Christmas a few months before. His voice was raspy, barely audible. He was slow and deliberate, a shadow of the man I had known for all of my life. And while he was grateful to have us there—his five daughters, twelve grandchildren, and the first handful of great-grandchildren—he struggled for every breath.

Just a few years prior, my mother, Donna Cole Jones, found herself in a similar situation. 27 years younger than her father, she too became ill and unable to breathe. She was hospitalized then for a short while and diagnosed. She'd smoked religiously since she was a

teenager, as had her parents before her, and we watched over a twenty-year period as her ability to breathe grew more challenging as each year passed. She continued working and shopping—going about her regular life—yet each time she came into the house, she would be gasping for air. “I have to catch my breath,” I heard her say dozens—if not hundreds—of times. She’d never stopped smoking though she’d tried to quit again and again. But, in a large and ever-growing family, there were a lot of difficult patches—and as her stress would rise, her need to smoke followed apace.

For the last two years of her life, she was home-bound. Simply walking from her bedroom to the kitchen winded her. Just last year, I was washing dishes on Christmas eve; she was looking at Facebook on the computer when I heard a loud and distressing gasp come from across the room. She’d just lost consciousness for a few minutes, but I didn’t know that at the time. “Call the ambulance,” I shouted to my sister, Danette. I knelt there cradling my mom in my arms and looked into her lost eyes and whispered, “Just keep breathing, mom. Just keep breathing.” The paramedics arrived shortly thereafter and by that time, she’d regained consciousness and had resumed flipping through pictures on Facebook. They said it was not unusual for someone in late-stage COPD to faint, but they saw no immediate evidence of stroke or heart attack. They recommended she go to the hospital to get checked out, but she refused. It was Christmas and she’d spent too many holidays in the hospital. She was staying home.

We came to her until COVID-19 kept us apart. And in her isolation, she smoked only more, asking at our daily calls, “When will things get back to normal?” I’m not one to sugarcoat difficult truths, so I responded, “I’m not sure they ever will.” And as the pandemic raged on, so too did her COPD, until it snuffed away her last breath.

In the intervening years, my cousins’ grandmother, Geraldine Cutrie, was also diagnosed. Tethered to her oxygen compressor, we visited her routinely. She did successfully quit smoking—but COPD is a progressive killer. Though her decline was less noticeable—at least to me—she too succumbed to her inability to breathe. Her son, my Uncle Douglas, followed suit, the day after my mom passed away. And just this fall, her granddaughter and his daughter, my cousin Tara’s best friend, Jackie Lynn Steele Haas, succumbed to the illness as well. And in each case, the mantra was omnipresent: I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe.

HUNTED

I only had one experience where I couldn't breathe. Around the age of ten or eleven, I walked alone to the 7-eleven convenience store which was around the corner from our house. My mom was volunteering for bingo night at St. John of God, my dad was at work, and my siblings were engaging in their latch-key mischief at home. I collected my coins and made my first adventure away from our house alone to buy a Slurpee and sunflower seeds.

I wasn't supposed to go out alone—no one even knew where I was—but this was a first moment of independence. I had enough money and I was emboldened by my budding-adolescence—and so I walked. While on the walk back—supplies successfully procured—three neighborhood boys approached my path. Mike and Simon Clark lived across the street from us. Simon was just a year older than me. They'd moved onto Myrtle Avenue a few years prior, sometime after Lisa Barbera's death and her family's subsequent moving away (the house bearing too many memories of their beloved Lisa)—though the Clark's too lived in one of the other cookie-cutter split-level ranch style houses. We were fast friends for a few years—but there were other influences in the neighborhood who were less kind. And as time went on, the Clark boys became better friends with Pedro Aragonese who lived on the next street. It was years in the making, but the unraveling of our friendship was complete by the time I'd made that journey.

Pedro and Mike egged on Simon. "Go on. Hit him."

I hadn't been much of a fighter as a kid, but I knew enough to know that running away wasn't an option. So I put my Slurpee and sunflower seeds down on the sidewalk and prepared to fight—whatever that was going to look like. 'Sucker punch' is the best characterization for what followed. One hit, straight to the gut. It wasn't much and didn't leave a mark—but it did its requisite damage. With the wind knocked out of me, I couldn't breathe.

I clutched my chest in horror. Pedro and Mike continued with their side coaching; this time focused on me. "Go on. Hit him back," they cajoled. But I could just barely catch my breath.

And so, this couldn't continue. After what seemed like forever, my wind returned and I burst into tears. I bent down, gathered my loot, and walked back to my house in shame. The boys were calling after me, "That's right. Run home you little cry baby!"

I tuned them out and walked on with less dignity but sure-fire gratitude for the air in my lungs.

TRAUMATIZED

As a living being, there is nothing so vital as the need for breath. Whether the ever-disappearing Amazon rainforest—artfully described as the earth’s lungs—or the fish fleeing dead-zones in oxygen-depleted stretches of the ocean, the desperate need for breath is omnipresent in our modern world. And as a living, breathing being, the need for breath is well-known to me, but made all the more vivid by the afflictions and violence that stole the air from the lungs of those that I have loved. While Nikki, Tanya, and Steve overcame those early hospitalizations, so many more have been less lucky. And given these personal experiences, it is not at all surprising to me—though endlessly, hauntingly horrifying—to hear the cries for breath across this country and now around the world.

July 17, 2014—Eric Garner is put in a chokehold by police officers in New York City for selling loose cigarettes on the sidewalk. Unarmed and Black, his last words—his last pleas for mercy—are unsurprising and yet, horrifying. “I can’t breathe.”

August 24, 2019—Elijah McClain is put in a chokehold by police officers in Aurora, Colorado for wearing a ski mask and dancing in the street. Unarmed and Black, his pleas for mercy—are unsurprising and yet, horrifying. “I can’t breathe.”

May 25, 2020—in a Minneapolis street, a police officer places his knee on the neck of George Floyd for nine and a half minutes. Three other officers are on the scene and fail to intervene. Unarmed and Black, his pleas for mercy—are unsurprising and yet, horrifying. “I can’t breathe.”

In June of 2020, *The New York Times* documented 70 cases over the past decade where folks ranging in ages from 19 to 65—more than half Black—died at the hands of police after voicing, “I can’t breathe” (Baker, et. al.). Each time I read one of their stories—each time I hear one of their names, that haunted feeling surrounds me. I’ve seen what asthma and COPD can do—and each time this intentional suffocation

is brought upon someone—often unarmed and Black—I am traumatized. Read their stories. Say their names. Stand against this inhumanity. They are just trying to breathe.

BREATHE

In a cable news appearance in the days following George Floyd's murder, Maya Wiley, University Professor at the Milano School of Policy, Management, and Environment at The New School and now candidate for Mayor of New York City, described the moment in which we find ourselves as “a pandemic within a pandemic.” The pandemic of racism, racial injustice, and oppression has been a feature of American life for 400 years. And be it a lynching, a chokehold, or a knee on the neck, suffocation has served as a potent threat to maintain the subjugation of a people who face shorter life expectancy (Bond & Herman, 2016) and “higher prevalences of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and chronic kidney disease” (Price-Haywood, et. al., 2020). And within this pandemic of racial oppression and disproportionate health afflictions, enter the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, and the viral pneumonia of COVID-19. Predictable but still shocking—“In a large cohort in Louisiana, 76.9% of the patients who were hospitalized with COVID-19 and 70.6% of those who died were black, whereas blacks comprise only 31% of the Ochsner Health population” (Price-Haywood, et. al., 2020).

As of this writing, the United States has surpassed 250,000 deaths from COVID-19 (Murphy and Siemaszko, 2020). Each day, hundreds or even thousands are added to that number. Every one, a name. Every name, a story. Every story, a heartbreak. I. Can't. Breathe.

So what are we to do? At George Floyd's funeral, Rev. Al Sharpton delivered a eulogy that appropriately responded to our predicament: take your knee off our neck.

But God took an ordinary brother from the third ward, from the housing projects, that nobody thought much about but those that knew him and loved him. He took the rejected stone, the stone that the builder rejected. They rejected him for jobs. They rejected him for positions. They rejected him to play on certain teams. God

took the rejected stone and made him the cornerstone of a movement that's going to change the whole wide world. I'm glad he wasn't one of these polished, bourgeois brothers, because we'd have still thought we was of no value. But George was just George. And now you have to understand if you bother any one of us, it's a value to all of us. Oh, if you would have had any idea that all of us would react, you'd have took your knee off his neck. If you had any idea that everybody from those in the third ward to those in Hollywood would show up in Houston and Minneapolis, and in Fayetteville, North Carolina, you'd have took your knee off his neck. If you had any idea that preachers, white and Black, was going to line up in a pandemic, when we're told to stay inside and we come out and march in the streets at the risk of our health, you'd have took your knee off his neck, because you thought his neck didn't mean nothing. But God made his neck to connect his head to his body. And you have no right to put your knee on that neck. (Sharpton, 2020)

This is not uniquely an American story. As Martin Luther King, Jr. told us, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (1963), so we all have work to do in service of removing the knee from the neck of the oppressed everywhere. For some, asthma is genetic; for others, it can be caused by air pollution. For environmental justice, we will fight. For many, COPD is caused by a history of smoking. For education and awareness, we will fight. For victims of domestic violence, we will fight. For victims of preventable disease, we will fight. And in the face of systemic racism, the cycle of poverty, implicit and explicit bias, we will fight.

Just last year, I quoted from Emma Lazarus’ *The New Colossus*, speaking then for the dignity and justice for refugees and immigrants. If we ever needed evidence, let it be clear—there is only one narrative—

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!* (Lazarus, 1883)

Yearning to breathe free. On eagle’s wings. Lisa Barbera. Edwin L.

Cole. Donna Cole Jones. Geraldine Cutrie. Douglas Cutrie. Jackie Lynn Steele Haas. Eric Garner. Elijah McClain. George Floyd. And too many more.

Take a deep breath. Lift your lamp. Welcome them in. And let's get to work.

PREVIEW OF ISSUES 7a AND 7b

Faced with lockdowns and the requisite turn to distance learning, educators everywhere took to action. My colleague, friend, and member of our editorial board, Daphnie Sicre, immediately put out an international call for suggestions and advice on how to teach theatre online, crowd-sourcing a life-raft of suggestions for all manner of activities and content, [Teaching Theatre Online: A Shift in Pedagogy Amidst Coronavirus Outbreak](#). A month later, I realized that in light of new approaches being spearheaded across the field—whether for teaching theatre, directing and producing theatre, or using theatre to process trauma, isolation, and depression—the need to document this experience was vital, and so I put out a call for papers for Volume 7, Issue 2a—an issue that would be open to narratives of practice in order to draw in a cross section of practitioners from across the field, rather than prioritizing academic research to which we might normally adhere.

And then George Floyd was murdered. And my mom died two days later. And my uncle the day after that. And protests erupted across the United States and, indeed, around the world. And in spite of my grief, I saw very clearly the work ahead: “A pandemic within a pandemic,” Maya Wiley said. In many fields, a total reassessment was needed: where have we failed and what can we do? In educational theatre, we were not immune—we needed that reassessment too. But as reading lists were furiously posted on social media; as well-meaning but perhaps ill-advised statements of solidarity were added to email signatures; as an outpouring of unheard voices in the theatre community flooded our consciousness, I realized—*I know some folks who have been in this fight for a long time—and while a reassessment is necessary, there is good work out there that we need to center—to promote—to raise up.* And so I put out another call, this time for

Volume 7, Issue 2b. We are only scratching the surface in these companion publications, but I am grateful to our contributors who have elected to share their work with us in order to push the field forward.

Issue 2a

In Issue 2a, the articles focus on educational theatre in the time of COVID-19 and cover the scope of classroom-based educational theatre practice in urban and rural K-12 settings, colleges and universities, and on implementing research-based theatre online. **Roxane E. Reynolds** describes her experience transitioning to remote instruction in a secondary school in Dallas, Texas. **Jessica Harris** illuminates the ways in which the digital divide (lack of access to high speed internet to rural areas and/or folks from low-socioeconomic backgrounds) in rural Fluvanna County, Virginia challenges theatre educators to re-think their approach to distanced learning.

On the college front, **Alexis Jemal, Brennan O'Rourke, Tabatha R. Lopez, and Jenny Hipscher** were tasked with devising a theatre in education (TIE) program for a course at CUNY School of Professional Studies in New York. Their liberation-based social work practice required a new approach as they transitioned online. **Cletus Moyo and Nkululeko Sibanda** document transitioning practical theatre courses to distance learning at Lupane State University in Zimbabwe, echoing the challenges related to equity and access that Harris experienced. **Chris Cook, Tetsuro Shigematsu, and George Belliveau** at the University of British Columbia in Canada query: What teaching practices endure in the online research-based theatre classroom, and what new ways practices were fostered through their emerging partnership with technology?

For the final article in this issue, **Saharra L. Dixon, Anna Gundersen, and Mary Holiman** take us out of the classroom and into the field with their reflection on creating and presenting *The #StayHome Project*, a devised ethnodrama. Their article explores theatre's ability to help communities process collective trauma, build resiliency, and facilitate dialogue around politics and what it means to return to a "new normal".

Issue 2b

In Issue 2b, the articles focus on social justice practices for educational

theatre. First are a series by theatre artists and practitioners who espouse theoretical frameworks for engaging in social justice theatre education and theatre making. **Durell Cooper** explores the connections between hip hop pedagogy and culturally responsive arts education in a 21st century arts education framework. **Rebecca Brown Adelman, Trent Norman, and Saira Yasmin Hamidi** propose ethical questions that artists and educators should consider when navigating social justice and anti-racist topics. **Lucy Jeffery** shares her conversation with award-winning playwright Natasha Gordon about her experience as a Caribbean-British actor and playwright whose debut play *Nine Night* (2018) made her the first black British female playwright to have a play staged in London's West End. The conversation evaluates the importance of Gordon's work and visibility on the National Theatre and West End stages. Finally, **Aylwyn Walsh, Alexandra Sutherland, Ashley Visagie, and Paul Routledge** present a glossary of arts education practice that they developed after analyzing the key social justice concerns faced by young people in Cape Flats, South Africa, setting them against the learning from their arts-based project, *ImaginingOtherwise*.

The second series includes articles that look at the possibilities for social justice in drama pedagogy. **Joshua Rashon Streeter** considers process drama as a liberatory practice to reposition theatre educators as critical pedagogues. **Catalina Villanueva and Carmel O'Sullivan** analyze the critical pedagogical potential of drama in education (DIE) for the practices of Chilean teachers. **Alexis Jemal, Tabatha R. Lopez, Jenny Hipscher, and Brennan O'Rourke** provide a critical reflection on their work and experience providing a forum for social work students to explore social and racial justice and innovative strategies for using drama to stimulate dialogue, interaction, and change. Lastly, **Amanda Brown** leaves us with a provocation for race and inclusion in theatre programs: For whom are we creating a welcoming space?

LOOKING AHEAD

Our next issue ([Volume 8, Issue 1](#)) will focus on articles under our general headings (drama in education, applied theatre, and theatre for young audiences/youth theatre) looking to engage members of the

educational theatre community in our ongoing discussions about theory and practice. In light of the breadth of contributions we received for these current issues, we will again include a call for narratives of practice in addition to traditional academic research. That issue will publish in mid-2021. Thereafter, look to the Program in Educational Theatre at NYU for information on the [Verbatim Performance Lab](#) and Volume 8, Issue 2 of *ArtsPraxis* which will again have a focus relating to current trends in the field—more specifics will be available when Volume 8, Issue 1 is launched. Until then, read, rest, recharge, and get to work.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

[Jonathan P. Jones](#), PhD is a graduate from the Program in Educational Theatre at New York University, where he earned both an M.A. and a Ph.D. He conducted his doctoral field research in fall 2013 and in spring of 2014 he completed his dissertation, *Drama Integration: Training Teachers to Use Process Drama in English Language Arts, Social Studies, and World Languages*. He received an additional M.A. in English at National University and his B.A. in Liberal Arts from the NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Jonathan is certified to teach English 6-12 in the state of California, where he taught Theatre and English for five years at North Hollywood High School and was honored with The Inspirational Educator Award by Universal Studios in 2006. Currently, Jonathan is an administrator, faculty member, coordinator of doctoral studies, and student-teaching supervisor at NYU Steinhardt.

Jonathan has conducted drama workshops in and around New York City, London, and Los Angeles in schools and prisons. As a performer, he has appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Town Hall, The Green Space, St. Patrick's Cathedral, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, The Southbank Centre in London UK, and the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. He co-produced a staged-reading of a new musical, *The Throwbacks*, at the New York Musical Theatre Festival in 2013.

Jonathan's directing credits include *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Caesar*, *Elsewhere in Elsinore*, *Dorothy Rides the Rainbow*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *The Laramie Project*, *Grease*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *West Side Story*. Assistant directing includes *Woyzeck* and *The Crucible*. As a performer, he has appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Town Hall, The Green Space, St. Patrick's Cathedral, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, The Southbank Centre in London UK, Bord Gáis Energy Theatre in Dublin, and the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Production credits include co-producing a staged-reading of a new musical, *The Throwbacks*, at the New York Musical Theatre Festival and serving as

assistant production manager and occasionally as stage director for the New York City Gay Men's Chorus since 2014, most recently directing *Quiet No More: A Celebration of Stonewall* at Carnegie Hall for World Pride, 2019.

At NYU, his courses have included Acting: Scene Study, American Musical Theatre: Background and Analysis, Assessment of Student Work in Drama, Development of Theatre and Drama I, Devising Educational Drama Programs and Curricula, Directing Youth Theatre, Drama across the Curriculum and Beyond, Drama in Education I, Drama in Education II, Dramatic Activities in the Secondary Drama Classroom, Methods of Conducting Creative Drama, Theory of Creative Drama, Seminar and Field Experience in Teaching Elementary Drama, Seminar and Field Experience in Teaching Secondary Drama, Shakespeare's Theatre, and World Drama. Early in his placement at NYU, Jonathan served as teaching assistant for American Musical Theatre: Background and Analysis, Seminar in Elementary Student Teaching, Theatre of Brecht and Beckett, and Theatre of Eugene O'Neill and worked as a course tutor and administrator for the study abroad program in London for three summers. He has supervised over 50 students in their student teaching placements in elementary and secondary schools in the New York City Area. Prior to becoming a teacher, Jonathan was an applicant services representative at NYU in the Graduate School of Arts and Science Enrollment Services Office for five years.

Recent publications include [Paradigms and Possibilities: A Festschrift in Honor of Philip Taylor](#) (2019) and Education at Roundabout: It's about Turning Classrooms into Theatres and the Theatre into a Classroom (with Jennifer DiBella and Mitch Matteson) in [Education and Theatres: Beyond the Four Walls](#) (edited by Michael Finneran and Michael Anderson; 2019).

In addition to his responsibilities at NYU, Jonathan teaches Fundamentals of Public Speaking, History of Theatre, and Introduction to Theatre at CUNY: Borough of Manhattan Community College.