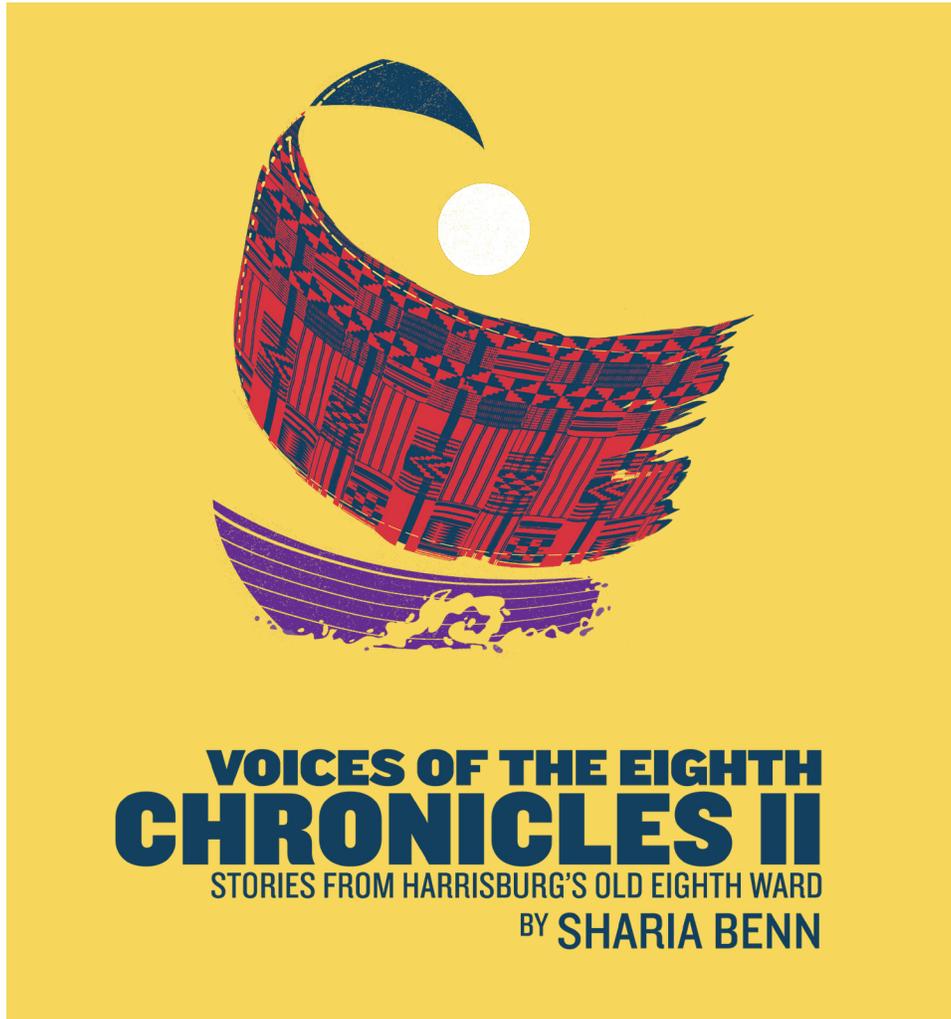




PRESENT



STUDY GUIDE BY KIM GREENAWALT

THIS SANKOFA AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATRE COMPANY AND GAMUT THEATRE PRODUCING PARTNERSHIP WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS:



Voices of the Eighth: Chronicles II Study Guide: Public Edition

By Kim Greenawalt

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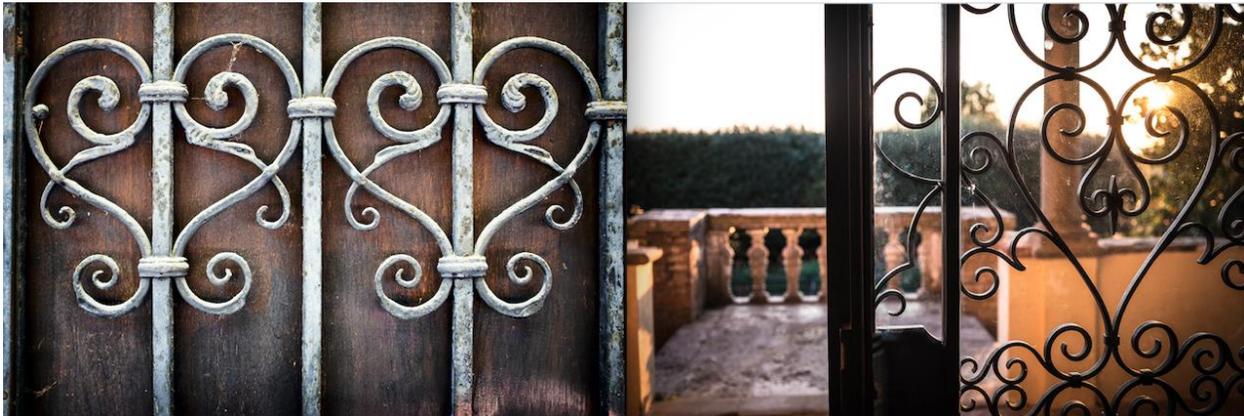
About the Sankofa Bird

As the Sankofa Bird puppet is a crucial character in this production, I'd like to take some time to discuss the meaning of "Sankofa," and how the Sankofa Bird represents this concept.

Sankofa is an Akan (Ghana) word that means, "We must go back and reclaim our past so we can move forward," so that we understand why and how we came to be who we are today, thereby gaining wisdom, power, and hope to make positive progress through the sharing of this knowledge. The Sankofa Bird represents this concept with its feet facing forward while its head and neck reach backward toward the egg (or nuggets of knowledge from the past) on its back.



The Sankofa Bird, as well as another symbol indicative of Sankofa—a heart with some additional ornate details—are also adinkra symbols. Adinkra symbols were designed by the Akan people from Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana during the early 1800s. Many Adinkra symbols use radial or reflective symmetry and express deeply symbolic proverbs related to life, death, wisdom, and human behavior. These symbols were often painted or stamped as patterns onto fabrics (Adinkra cloth), pottery, and more. Research shows that these symbols made their way into the designs found on wrought iron fences created by enslaved people from West Africa who worked as blacksmiths in New Orleans and other cities throughout the United States.



Adrinka symbols in North American wrought iron fences, likely created by enslaved West African artisans

Discussion: what kinds of symbols are prevalent in your own community or culture? Do you know the history of those symbols and what they represent? Has their meaning changed over time?

The Griot

In *VOTE: Chronicles II*, there is a griot character who acts as our narrator. The Griot, pronounced (gree-oh) is a West African Storyteller. The Griot originated in the 13th century in the Mande Empire of Mali. Griots were not only accomplished storytellers, but also musicians, oral historians of their communities, preserved genealogies, and also had some skill in diplomacy. The job of Griot ran in the family. Traditionally, one would not become a Griot unless their parents were Griots as well and training took many, many years. Typical Griot instruments included the kora—a 21 string lute-like instrument made from gourd and animal skin with gut



or fishing line strings—and the balafon, pictured to the right—a type of wooden xylophone. A large part of bringing our Griots to life in this production was the incorporation of movement. The choreographer of this production utilized a style of contemporary African dance called **umfundalai** to create the intricate movement work performed by the Griots in *VOTE Chronicles II*. Umfundalai comprises its movement vocabulary from dance traditions throughout the Diaspora. The literal word, Umfundalai, means “essential” in Kiswahili. Kariamu Welsh, D. Arts, Umfundalai’s progenitor, has designed a stylized movement practice that seeks to articulate an essence of African – oriented movement or as she has described, “an approach to movement that is wholistic, body centric and organic.”

Discussion: While the Griot is native to West Africa, there have been storytellers and preservers of genealogy & history in all places and cultures around the world.

- Come up with a list of other types of storytellers, preservers of genealogy & history. Assign small groups to research storytellers, historians, and genealogists from other places around the world if your list seems small. Have each small group present their findings and discuss the similarities and differences.
- While Griots relied on the oral or spoken tradition of preserving knowledge, would you say that oral storytelling and preservation of history is still alive and well today with the prevalence of books? Do you think the popularity of podcasts have renewed an interest in the oral preservation of stories and history? Why or why not?
- Sharia, the playwright, decided it was important to name the Griots she created for this play: Yaa, Kuti, and Makeba. The names of these Griots were inspired by famous African women: Yaa Asantewaa, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, and Miriam Makeba. Do research on these figures and discuss why these names hold significance for this production.

Background of the Old 8th Ward

The Old Eighth Ward was a thriving, diverse community in historic Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The neighborhood, designated as the Eighth Ward for the city's administrative purposes, was located between the city capitol complex (to the west) and the Pennsylvania canal (to the east). The Pennsylvania railroad line, which ran from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, ran directly through the Old Eighth, including the train station directly to the southeast of the ward. This location meant that this was one of the first areas of the city travelers encountered. Additionally, the ward served as a central business location and cultural hub.

This ward served as home to activist, artists, writers, reformers, intellectuals, businesspeople, religious leaders, and other historic figures. With a population that was, in 1910, 37% African American and 63% white, with 20% of those individuals being European immigrants, the old Eighth Ward was the most diverse ward in the city of Harrisburg.

However, many individuals in other areas of Harrisburg identified this ward as a community marked by poverty and violence. In the 1900's, the Old Eighth Ward became known in some newspapers as "The Bloody Eighth"—a reputation existing in direct conflict with that of the Eighth Ward as a cultural hub.

In 1911, lawmakers launched a campaign that proposed the destruction of the ward so that Pennsylvania's capitol complex could be enlarged. From 1911 to 1917, the state used its powers to take property in the Old Eighth Ward. The state condemned and repossessed many properties and took the rest by eminent domain. In total, only 18 homeowners were compensated for their properties; numerous other homeowners experienced foreclosure. Between 1920 and 1925, the ward was demolished for the expansion of the capitol complex. In total, 541 buildings were destroyed, displacing 1885 individuals from their homes, businesses, gathering spots, and places of worship.



Above: View to the State Street Bridge before and after the Old 8th Ward's Demolition

Biographies of Featured Characters and Authors

Agnes Kemp (1832-May 20, 1908)



- **Connection to Dauphin County:** Worked with 8th Ward leaders to promote abolitionism and voting rights for women
- **Education:** Philadelphia's Women's Medical College (1879) and spoke French and German
- **Occupation:** Physician and Doctor, Activist, Writer, Orator
- **Church Membership:** Market Street Presbyterian
- **Activism:** An abolitionist, Agnes also championed the Temperance movement and women's suffrage; spoke at the passage of the 15th Amendment in Harrisburg; gave Wildwood Park to the city of Harrisburg; selected as delegate to the Women's National Council in Washington DC in 1899.
- **Contribution:** Agnes was an educated and articulate physician who spoke up for the freedom of African Americans in Harrisburg and the political and social rights of

women. She broke ground as the first woman accepted into the Medical Society of Dauphin County and gained a reputation as a respected physician. She was an active community organizer and a Sunday school teacher who started the local chapter to the Women's Christian Temperance Union and worked for the underprivileged in society.

- **Legacy:** Agnes provides an example of someone who's will to seve affected great change. Her role in working for change for the the Temperance Union aligned with her work as a suffragist and other benevolent causes. She worked alongside and lectured with many famous abolitionists including Sojourner Truth, Frances Harper, Julia Howe, and William Lloyd Garrison.
- **About Agnes:** "At a time in the history of this century, when to be recognized as an anti-slavery man or woman was to subject one's self to persecution and often to physical danger, and then to declare one's self in sympathy with equal political and civil rights for women, was to become socially anathematized, it required no small amount of moral courate in the young matron upon her return home, to prove her 'faith by her works.' But she was equal to the demands of the hour. Firing a few souls with her own lofty zeal, and laughing at all her obstacles, she brought successively to Harrisburg these sturdy pioneers of our latter-day glory, and helped them to sow the seed of a higher patriotism in the conservative capital of Pennsylvania." *Harrisburg Daily Independent*, December 5, 1895.

Alice Dunbar-Nelson (July 19, 1875—September 18, 1935)



- **Connection to Dauphin County:** Frequently lectured at Wesley Union A.M.E. Zion Church; husband, Robert, was activist within the Eighth Ward; diary discusses time in Harrisburg; scrapbook of suffragist work includes articles and artifacts relating to speaking engagements and work throughout Pennsylvania, including Harrisburg.
- **Education:** Straight College (now Dillard University); Columbia University; Cornell University; Pennsylvania School of Industrial Art; and University of Pennsylvania.
- **Occupations:** Teacher. Poet. Playwright. Journalist. Newspaper editor.
- **Church Membership:** Episcopal
- **Activism:** Reconstruction and Readjustment Conference (Howard University); Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense;

Delaware Republican Convention (delegate); American Interracial Peace Committee (executive secretary); Pennsylvania State Federation of Negro Women’s Clubs; and Delaware Crusaders for the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill.

Contribution: She advocated for women’s suffrage, war aid efforts, and positive interracial relations in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and communities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Her major edited work, *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence*, published in Harrisburg in 1914, features fifty-one of the best and most famous speeches of Black men and men of America, Africa, and Europe from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She was the poet who wrote “I Sit and Sew”, one of the works of poetry in *VOTE: Chronicles II*.

Legacy: She used her talents for writing and speaking and served as an advocate for women’s suffrage, war aid, and anti-lynching efforts. She is considered a Harlem Renaissance poet, and her plays, poetry, short stories, and journalism make her an iconic African American writer.

About Dunbar-Nelson: “I recall, as a kid in Harrisburg, PA, the sweeping grace with which she swept into the large parlor of the Justin Carters before she took the vow which tied her into marital fetters to her present husband, Athletic Commissioner Robert J. Nelson. A Lady-in-Waiting, fresh from the pompous corridors of some 18th-Century French drawing room, was the impression.” — Orrin C. Evans, “On a Personal Note,” *Afro-American*, April 29, 1933.

“Mrs. Alice Dunbar Wilson, one of the most widely-known colored lecturers and writers in the country today has been secured to speak before the Forum in Wesley Church, Forster street, to-morrow afternoon. Mrs. Wilson is widely-known as a lecturer of note.... The subject of her talk to-morrow ‘His Country’ is one of interest to all.” — *Harrisburg Telegraph*, February 23, 1918.

Amanda Gorman (March 7, 1998—present)

- **Connection to Dauphin County:** While not from Pennsylvania, Amanda’s work, and the work of other young folks of color, is the legacy of Black authors and activists from Harrisburg and beyond.
- **Education:** Harvard University
- **Occupation:** writer, first National Youth Poet Laureate
- **Activism/Accomplishments:** the youngest inaugural poet in US history, guest speaker at national events, writer for Nike’s Black History Month campaign



Above: Ms. Gorman at the Inauguration
Photo Credit: Ms. Gorman’s social media

Amanda Gorman is the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history, as well as an award-winning writer and *cum laude* graduate of Harvard University, where she studied Sociology. She has written for the *New York Times* and has three books forthcoming with Penguin Random House.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, she began writing at only a few years of age. Now her words have won her invitations to the Obama White House and to perform for Lin-Manuel Miranda, Al Gore, Secretary Hillary Clinton, Malala Yousafzai, and others. Amanda has performed multiple commissioned poems for CBS This Morning and she has spoken at events and venues across the country, including the Library of Congress and Lincoln Center. She has received a Genius Grant from OZY Media, as well as recognition from Scholastic Inc., YoungArts, the *Glamour* Magazine College Women of the Year Awards, and the Webby Awards. She has written for the *New York Times* newsletter *The Edit* and penned the manifesto for Nike's 2020 Black History Month campaign. In 2017, Amanda Gorman was appointed the first-ever National Youth Poet Laureate by Urban Word – a program that supports Youth Poets Laureate in more than 60 cities, regions and states nationally. She is the recipient of the Poets & Writers Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award, and is the youngest board member of 826 National, the largest youth writing network in the United States.

Source: <http://www.theamandagorman.com>

Joseph Cassey Bustill (1822—August 19, 1895)



Left: Tanner's Alley, the street on which Bustill lived and worked as an Underground Railroad operative. Photo credit: explorepahistory.com

- **Connection to Dauphin County:** Resident on Tanner's Alley; led Underground Railroad operations with William Jones; founded Capital Presbyterian.
- **Education:** Educated in the "best schools" of Philadelphia (*The Journal of Negro History* 10.4 (1925), 641).
- **Occupations:** Teacher. Wigmaker.
- **Church Membership:** Capital Presbyterian Church
- **Activism:** Harrisburg Fugitive Aid Society (co-founder)

Contributions: Along with co-founding Harrisburg's Fugitive Aid Society, Bustill was one of the youngest and most significant conductors of the Underground Railroad. Bustill was one of the first African Americans to instruct school in Harrisburg from 1850-1862, and he worked with Judge Mordecai McKenny to found Sunday school for a collective of churches. Additionally, Bustill founded Harrisburg's Capital Presbyterian Church.

Legacy: Bustill assisted freedom seekers in Harrisburg by supporting the work of the Underground Railroad, and his contribution is memorialized with a marker at the site of the former Tanner's Alley in the Eighth Ward. He served as an ambassador for Black education and activism in Pennsylvania and beyond. Capital Presbyterian Church, which he founded, still stands today.

About Bustill: "He was always a polished writer and convincing speaker. He unstintingly gave his time and talent to every good cause. He was the youngest member of the remarkable Underground Railroad, being only seventeen.... Like Paul, he was 'a citizen of no mean city' —a Philadelphian of the Philadelphians—and was able to add to its honor and glory." — Anna Bustill Smith, "The Bustill Family," *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 10, no. 4. Chicago University Press, October 1925.

Marian Cannon Dornell (October 10, 1939—July 19, 2019)



While not an Old 8th Ward Resident, Marian Cannon Dornell’s great grandmother, Hannah Braxton Jones, was. A Harrisburg native, Marian wrote two of the pieces of poetry utilized in VOTE: *Chronicles II*—the “WPA Slave Narrative” (which she reconstructed), and “She Weaves”. Marian was an RN, specializing in psychiatric or mental health and hospice care, who took up writing poetry after retirement. Her most notable publication was the chapbook, *Unicorn in Captivity*. *Unicorn* was published in 2015 and featured poetic works around the topics of racial and social justice.

Discussion: Oral History

According to the Oral History Association: “Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events. Oral history is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using 21st-century digital technologies.” Oral historians rely on interview like the one performed in *Chronicles II* in order to preserve the past. There are organizations and social media accounts today, like Story Corps or Humans of New York, that catalogue quotes and interviews from individuals to preserve stories about life in America and around the world.

Find a relative, and conduct an interview with that person and record what this individual has to say. Below are the questions from the interview in *Chronicles II* that you can use as a guide for your own interview questions.

1. Where do your people come from?
2. What kind of work do you do?
3. What do you do for pleasure?
4. How do you see your future?

Below is a link to a Story Corps list of sample interview questions:

<https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/>

If there’s additional time, try creating a script by transcribing the interview you took and performing it as if you were the interviewee.

Maude B Coleman (1879—February 25, 1953)



Left: Image of Coleman from the Harrisburg Telegraph on Friday, 15 Sep 1939.

- **Connection to Dauphin County:** Resident at 129 Short Street; advocated for residents of the Eighth Ward threatened by the second Capitol Complex Extension Project; petitioned Governor Duff in 1950 to protect the established African-American neighborhood near Forster Street.
- **Education:** Graduate of University of Washington, Oberlin College, and Pennsylvania School of Social Work.
- **Occupations:** Special Inter-Racial Consultant for the State Welfare Department for 30 years. Founding member of the Phyllis Wheatley Colored Harrisburg Branch of the YWCA in 1920. First African American tax collector in the country, according to a Pittsburgh Courier article in 1926. Sole “female delinquent tax collector” in Pennsylvania (Chicago Defender, 1935).
- **Church Membership:** Married at First Baptist Church in Harrisburg; honored with “Maude B. Coleman Day” at Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1926; husband John Coleman was member of Capital Presbyterian Church; buried at William Howard Day Cemetery alongside husband.
- **Activism:** Dauphin County Republican Women’s Organization (executive board); Dauphin County Organizer of Colored Women; member of Republican City Committee, American Red Cross, and the Rebecca Aldridge Civic Club of Harrisburg; president of the Auxiliary to Harrisburg’s branch of the NAACP; state organizer of Colored Women by the State Committee of Pennsylvania (Republican appointee); among many other organizations/affiliations.

Contributions: Coleman was an activist and politician who devoted her life to securing democracy for all people. She was a founding member of the Phyllis Wheatley Colored Branch of the YWCA in November of 1919, before its formal organization in 1920. Appointed as Pennsylvania’s first Interracial Consultant by Governor Pinchot, Coleman worked with many labor industries throughout Pennsylvania to ensure the employment and safe working environment for African Americans. Her successful intervention in racial clashes in Pennsylvania led to similar work in Detroit and Lansing, Michigan. In 1947, she wrote *The History of the Negro in Pennsylvania*, published by the Department of Welfare.

Legacy: Coleman advocated for the rights of women of color and committed her life to the activist work of interracial reconciliation that still continues today. She was honored by the Francis Harper Club in Harrisburg in 1926. Several organizations named their groups after Coleman, including the Maude Coleman council, the Maude B. Coleman Republican Women of Montgomery County Council, and a community center in Easton, Pennsylvania.

About Coleman: “Maude Coleman is a woman thoroughly equipped along political lines, having engaged in political, social service, and Y.W.C.A. work...” — *Harrisburg Telegraph*, 1920.

William Howard Day (October 19, 1825—December 3, 1900)



- **Connection to Dauphin County:** elected school director in Harrisburg, PA in 1878.
- **Education:** Oberlin College and Livingstone College
- **Occupation:** Abolitionist, Editor, Teacher, Minister
- **Church Membership:** Day's mother was a founding member of the first AME Zion Church in New York City. Ordained minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and preached at a large congregational church in Lincolnshire, England while he lived abroad. Worked with the Young Men's Christian Association while there.
- **Activism:** Day was a well-known abolitionist and traveled internationally, forming the African Aid society while in England. Secretary of the National Negro Convention held in Cleveland, Ohio in 1848. Generated "Address to the Colored People of America," along with committee member Frederick Douglass. Elected president of the National Board of Commissioners of the Colored People in 1858.

Above: William Howard Day. Photo Credit: WITF/Wikipedia

Contribution: After the Civil War, Day returned to the United States and worked for the Freedmen's Bureau and as a school inspector in Maryland and Delaware. In 1878, Day was elected school director in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He was the first colored school board member and president. He won reelection in 1881, retaining his position on the board until 1884. Though he did not seek reelection in 1884, the public appealed for his return in 1887, and he was easily elected to another three years as Harrisburg School Board president. In 1879, during his tenure, Day also helped open Livingstone College with J.C. Price, William H. Goler, and Solomon Porter Hood. Established in Salisbury, NC, for colored students, this institution remains a predominantly Black college.

Legacy: William Howard Day Cemetery was established in nearby Steelton in the 1900s as a burial place for all people, including people of color who were denied burial at the nearby Baldwin Cemetery. It remains a popular burial site for local African American families.

About Day: Dr. William Wells Brown praised Day's professional conduct in *The Rising Sun* in the following terms: "As a speaker, Mr. Day may be regarded as one of the most effective of the present time; has great self- possession and gaiety of imagination; is rich in the selection of his illustrations, well versed in history, literature, science and philosophy, and can draw on his finely-stored memory at will."

Timeline of Historical Events

1518: The Middle Passage, the mass transportation of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas, begins.

Note that this date is approximate and the practice of transporting enslaved individuals across the Atlantic was already happening in the 1480's.

1808: Transatlantic Slave Trade is banned in America

This law is not strictly enforced until the US Civil War, over 50 years later.

1822: Joseph Bustill Born

1825: William Howard Day Born

1832: Agnes Kemp Born

1838: African Americans lose the vote in Pennsylvania

At the 1838 Pennsylvania constitutional convention, lawmakers add a clause to the constitution that permits only "white freemen" to vote in Pennsylvania. Numerous African Americans, led by Philadelphian Robert Purvis, file a rejected appeal to the decision.

1861-1865: The Civil War

Known by many individuals in Harrisburg as the War of the Rebellion, Pennsylvania contributes the most African Americans—40,000—to the Union forces. In Harrisburg, Anne Amos and Jane Chester will later work together on a monument to the African Americans who served in the war.

1870: Passing of the 15th Amendment

Passed in 1870, this Constitutional Amendment gave African Americans the right to vote. In Harrisburg, John Quincy Adams serves as Grand Marshall in a parade celebrating the right to vote. Women, however, still do not have the right to vote.

1875: Alice Dunbar Nelson Born

1879: Maude Coleman Born

1895: Joseph Bustill Died

1900: William Howard Day Died

1908: Agnes Kemp Died

1910: The final census in the Old 8th Ward

All across the country, the census is taken, as mandated by the Constitution. The Enumerators take the census for what will be the final time in Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward, recording the information of individuals that we still access today.

1920: Passing of the 19th Amendment

In 1920, the tireless work of suffragists finally produces a legislative outcome: the 19th Amendment. The fight for the women’s vote has been fervent in Harrisburg, thanks to numerous organizations and individuals, including Frances Harper, Anne Amos, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson.

1925: The destruction of the Old 8th Ward

Destruction of the Old Eighth Ward for the Capitol Extension Project finishes in 1925.

1935: Alice Dunbar-Nelson Died

1939: Marian Cannon Dornell Born

1953: Maude Coleman Died

1965: Voting Rights Act of 1965 is passed by the Federal Government

A landmark piece of federal legislation in the United States that prohibits racial discrimination in voting was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson during the height of the civil rights movement on August 6, 1965. Designed to enforce the voting rights guaranteed by the 14th and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, the Act sought to secure the right to vote for racial minorities throughout the country, especially in the South.

1998: Amanda Gorman Born

2019: Marian Cannon Dornell Died

2020: Commonwealth Monument Project

On the grounds of the capitol complex, a group of activists plan the construction of a monument to commemorate the cultural agents of the Old Eighth Ward, the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment, and the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment. The picture to the right is the Central Pedestal to the Gathering at the Crossroads Monument.



Bibliography

Don't let the fancy word "bibliography" deter you—consider this a resource for additional ways to learn more about Harrisburg's rich history of abolitionists and activists. Below, you'll find the materials I utilized to create this dramaturgy packet and materials that may deepen your understanding of how Harrisburg's local history fits into the narrative of American history.

Digital Harrisburg: This website, developed by Messiah University and Harrisburg University of Science and Technology, is a one-stop shop for all things Old 8th Ward. <https://digitalharrisburg.com/>

The Library of Congress: the interview with the Freed Enslaved individual in this play was modeled off of interviews conducted by the Federal Writer's Project of the Works Progress Administration in the 1930's. While these programs were initially created by the government to employ artists and writers during the Great Depression, they became so much more important, as they ensured the preservation of history. If you wish to investigate these primary source documents, the library has them all archived online. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>

The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Slightly unexpected, this was a great introductory point for some background on Griots and their instruments. The museum also has an entire wing devoted to African artwork, should you care to browse their exhibits online.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/articles/2020/4/sahel-sunjata-stories-songs>

National Museum of African American History and Culture: provides digital access to exhibit items ranging from Pre-Revolutionary War to the present that document the experience of African Americans.

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/>

One Hundred Voices: this book, a result of the work conducted by Digital Harrisburg, contains biographies of 100 of Harrisburg's influential African-American residents alive between 1850-1920. Many of the character biographies included in this study guide are from this resource.

<https://digitalharrisburg.com/about/publications/>

Sankofa African American Theatre Company: Sankofa has a compilation of anti-racism resources on their website here that may be useful for future studies into African American History, from both a local and national perspective. <https://www.sankofatheatrehbg.com/anti-racism-resources>

Umfundalai.net: for more info on the style of dance showcased in VOTE: Chronicles II, check out this website. <https://www.umfundalai.net/>

Appendix: Texts & Songs Performed in *VOTE: Chronicles II*

"She Weaves" by Marian Cannon Dornell (2015)

Chalang-shooshBANG!" the loom sing-shouts
as Naomi conducts the chorus
of harness, pulleys, pedals, heddles,
sinking sheds, sley hook, cords, and reed.
"Chalang-shoohBANG!" accompanies her thoughts.
They call me slave
but I'm a artist woman, not afraid
of work: I sheared
master's flock before he sold them. I carded
their wool. I'll learn
how to grow
flax, if need be. I grow
the plants that fix the dyes. I boil
the wool. I pull
color from out the air,
color nobody seen. They need me here.
No need for me to run.
I'm sick of folks around here singing
their steal-away songs. Folks who run, they fools.
Master say I'd be the last he sells
because I mean so much to him. He say
I can stay,
even if business keep falling off.
When the money gets better again, he say
he'll start giving me cash for myself. "Soon
as the tavern starts turning a profit again," he say.
Chalang-shooshBANG!"
Slave catchers came
through again last week. Runaways try to steal
north by way of the Susquehanna. Don't them fools
know ain't no Promised Land on earth?
Ten, twenty years ago we worked forty-strong here:
coopers, carters, teamsters, and wheelwrights,
a miller, planters and harvesters in the fields and gardens,
workers in the stable and smokehouse,
the tavern, mill, hands to keep the springhouse full
of vegetables and fruits from the garden and orchard
and make Master's brandies from his still.
Now, we shriveled to twelve who run this place--
one run away, too many sold.
Master lined us up in the quarters. Gathered us, forced
us to stand outside our cabins. First
come the shuffle-jingle sound of shackled bare feet

coming down the path from the north.
Then you see the parade,
a rickety walking fence.
"Chalang-shooshBANG!"
Them chained together with iron collars
'round they necks. I never seen
the eyes, just they heads hung low, low
as them collars allow.
We thought Master pay them slave catchers
to come through to scare us. They don't have to worry
about me leaving. I free enough.
I free. Enough
CHALANG-SHOOSHBANG!

Joseph Bustill's Letter to William Still

Harrisburg,
March 24, 1856.

Friend Still:

I suppose ere this you have seen those five large and three small packages I sent by way of Reading, consisting of three men and women and children. They arrived here this morning at 8-1/2 o'clock and left twenty minutes past three. You will please send me any information likely to prove interesting in relation to them.

Lately we have formed a Society here, called the Fugitive Aid Society. This is our first case, and I hope it will prove entirely successful.

When you write, please inform me what signs or symbols you make use of in your despatches, and any other information in relation to operations of the Underground Railroad.

Our reason for sending by the Reading Road, was to gain time; it is expected the owners will be in town this afternoon, and by this Road we gained five hours' time, which is a matter of much importance, and we may have occasion to use it sometimes in future. In great haste,

Yours with great respect,

Joseph C. Bustill

“A WPA Writer Interviews a Former Slave: after Miriam Goodman” by Marian Cannon Dornell (2015)

Where do your people come from?

Wish I knew. Wish I knew where my farthest-back African come from. When I was a little chap some old man, older than I am now, he say I'm Ashanti. He say he can tell where I'm from 'cause I walk like Ashanti and my head shaped like his people. Say he remember when he was brought over from Africa. Say the men in his tribe weaved cloth out of cotton. Some kind of cloth for the king. Then he say to me, “You and me, we Ashanti. We Ashanti people We proud people. Say it! Say Ashanti!” So I say Ashanti. I say that name every night since because don't nobody ever talk to me like that before or since. And I been around -on plantations in Delaware then got sold South 'cause I tried to escape once—but I always remember what that old man say. Always remember I come from somewhere else. Where there's kings. Did you like your job? What kind of work did you do?

Picked cotton. Hard work. Worked from can to can't. It was tough work. But that old man say our people grew cotton so it was like I was feeling something from my homeland every time I touched it.

What did you do for pleasure?

I liked making shapes in the dirt floor of the cabin. Little pictures just come to my head. Could never help it. I got beat lots of times 'cause the driver thought I was writing, and we wasn't allowed. Reading and writing was against the law. I tell him I ain't writing, I'm drawing pictures from my head. He made me quit, but the pictures stay in my head to this day. Still don't have no paper or pencil but every night making my supper, I shakes some cornmeal in the pan and make my shapes with my fingers. When I'm through with my shapes, I fix my cornbread.

How do you see your future?

Always wanted to be free. That's my future.

“I Sit and Sew” by Alice Dunbar Nelson (1918)

I sit and sew—a useless task it seems,
My hands grown tired, my head weighed down with dreams—
The panoply of war, the martial tread of men,
Grim-faced, stern-eyed, gazing beyond the ken
Of lesser souls, whose eyes have not seen Death,
Nor learned to hold their lives but as a breath—
But—I must sit and sew.

I sit and sew—my heart aches with desire—
That pageant terrible, that fiercely pouring fire
On wasted fields, and writhing grotesque things
Once men. My soul in pity flings
Appealing cries, yearning only to go
There in that holocaust of hell, those fields of woe—
But—I must sit and sew.

The little useless seam, the idle patch;
Why dream I here beneath my homely thatch,
When there they lie in sodden mud and rain,
Pitifully calling me, the quick ones and the slain?
You need me, Christ! It is no roseate dream
That beckons me—this pretty futile seam,
It stifles me—God, must I sit and sew?

Letter from Maude Coleman to PA Governor James Duff

February 20, 1950
641 Boas Street

Governor James Duff Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear Governor Duff:

I know you are interested in the "Average Guy", and I am one of them. I received a letter from the Capitol Park Extension stating that the entire row of houses where I live is being taken over by the State for the erection of an office building to house the Department of Labor and Industry. The houses in this row are among the best homes for Negroes in Harrisburg. The home owners who live in them have had great pride in keeping the properties up. They are all modern and are occupied by our only Negro druggist in Central Pennsylvania, a practicing physician, a mortician, the best tourist home for Negroes in the city, and State and city employees.

Just last year, after the passing of my husband, I had my home converted into apartments at a cost of \$4,500. As I expect to go on retirement at the close of your administration, I had hoped to have this additional income to give me enough to live on.

Our position, Governor Duff, is not like that of other groups. It is absolutely impossible for us to rent or buy property in Harrisburg in any decent neighborhood because of all kinds of restrictions. Certain districts are designated zones for Negroes, and there seems to be an unwritten law against them living anywhere else. If these properties were typical slum houses, I could understand why they should be torn down, but they are not, and the citizens and voters who live in them are among the best in the city. This action coming on the eve of our Republican Campaign is not conducive to the best interests of those of us who are actively engaged in the success of the Party.

I am appealing to you not only for myself but for all the other homeowners in the area to be taken. At least we should be allowed to retain our present homes until some provision is made to provide decent homes for Negroes in Harrisburg. After all, Government people work in offices, but they must live in homes.

Your loyal friend and supporter,

Mrs. Maude B. Coleman

“The Hill We Climb” by Amanda Gorman (2021)

When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry,
a sea we must wade
We've braved the belly of the beast
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace
And the norms and notions
of what just is
Isn't always just-ice
And yet the dawn is ours
before we knew it
Somehow we do it
Somehow we've weathered and witnessed
a nation that isn't broken
but simply unfinished
We the successors of a country and a time
Where a skinny Black girl
descended from slaves and raised by a single mother
can dream of becoming president
only to find herself reciting for one
And yes we are far from polished
far from pristine
but that doesn't mean we are
striving to form a union that is perfect
We are striving to forge a union with purpose
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and
conditions of man
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us
but what stands before us
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside
We lay down our arms
so we can reach out our arms
to one another
We seek harm to none and harmony for all
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:
That even as we grieved, we grew
That even as we hurt, we hoped
That even as we tired, we tried
That we'll forever be tied together, victorious
Not because we will never again know defeat
but because we will never again sow division
Scripture tells us to envision
that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree

And no one shall make them afraid
If we're to live up to our own time
Then victory won't lie in the blade
But in all the bridges we've made
That is the promise to glade
The hill we climb
If only we dare
It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit,
it's the past we step into
and how we repair it
We've seen a force that would shatter our nation
rather than share it
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy
And this effort very nearly succeeded
But while democracy can be periodically delayed
it can never be permanently defeated
In this truth
in this faith we trust
For while we have our eyes on the future
history has its eyes on us
This is the era of just redemption
We feared at its inception
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
of such a terrifying hour
but within it we found the power
to author a new chapter
To offer hope and laughter to ourselves
So while once we asked,
how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?
Now we assert
How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
We will not march back to what was
but move to what shall be
A country that is bruised but whole,
benevolent but bold,
fierce and free
We will not be turned around
or interrupted by intimidation
because we know our inaction and inertia
will be the inheritance of the next generation
Our blunders become their burdens
But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy

and change our children's birthright
 So let us leave behind a country
 better than the one we were left with
 Every breath from by bronze-pounded chest,
 we will raise this wounded world into a
 wondrous one
 We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west,
 we will rise from the windswept northeast
 where our forefathers first realized revolution
 We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states,
 we will rise from the sunbaked south
 We will rebuild, reconcile and recover
 and every known nook of our nation and
 every corner called our country,
 our people diverse and beautiful will emerge
 battered and beautiful
 When day comes we step out of the shade,
 aflame and unafraid
 The new dawn blooms as we free it
 For there is always light,
 if only we're brave enough to see it
 If only we're brave enough to be it

Transcript taken from CNN:

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/20/politics/amanda-gorman-inaugural-poem-transcript/index.html>

“Buked and Scorned”

Note: This is just one of many African American spirituals, a type of song developed by enslaved African Americans, fusing African musical traditions with religious beliefs. After the Civil War, spirituals were popularized and preserved by choirs like the Fisk Jubilee Singers. This genre of music has been instrumental in the development of popular American music today.

Verse 1

I've been 'buked and I've been
 scorned
 I've been 'buked and I've been
 scorned, children
 I've been 'buked and I've been
 scorned
 Talked about sure as you're
 born

Verse 2

They talk about me sure as you
 please
 They talk about me sure as you
 please, children
 They talk about me sure as you
 please
 Your talk will drive me onto my
 knees

Verse 3

I've been 'buked and I've been
 scorned
 I've been 'buked and I've been
 scorned, children
 I've been 'buked and I've been
 scorned
 Tryin' to make this journey
 alone

“Wade in the Water”

Note: Another African American spiritual.

Chorus

Wade in the water, we dey wade in the water, children wade in the water
God said he’s gonna trouble the water
Wade in the water, we dey wade in the water, children wade in the water
God’s gonna trouble the water

Verse 1

See those people dressed in white, they look like the children of the Israelites
Just like God told Pharoah, “Let my people go, go.”
See those people dressed in black, they come a long way and they ain’t turning back
Just like Got told Pharoah, “Let my people go, go.”

Chorus plus “Oh’s”

Verse 2

See those people dressed in blue, look like my people comin’ thru
Just like God told Pharoah, “Let my people go, go.”
We are a new generation
From the ones who have come before
He’s calling us into freedom—let my people go, go

Verse 3

See those people dressed in red, must be the children that Moses led
Just like God told Pharoah, “Let my people go, go.”
We are a new generation
From the ones who have come before
He’s calling us into freedom—let my people go, go

Chorus plus “Oh’s”

“I Open My Mouth”/“Amazing Grace”

I Open My Mouth

I open my mouth unto the Lord
And I won't turn back
I will go, I shall go
To see what the end's gonna be.

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

“Walk Together Children”

Verse 1

Walk together, children, don't you get
weary (x3)
There's a great camp meeting in the
promised land

Verse 2

Sing together, children, don't you get
weary (x3)
There's a great camp meeting in the
promised land

Verse 3

Work together, children, don't you get
weary (x3)
There's a great camp meeting in the
promised land

“John Brown's Body” and “Battle Hymn of the Republic”

Note: While the lyrics to “John Brown's Body” may be unfamiliar, listeners may recognize the tune as “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” The former song, referencing white abolitionist John Brown, historically predates the other, more familiar song.

“John Brown's Body”

Verse

Ye soldiers of freedom, then strike when strike ye
may,
The death blow of oppression in a better time
and way,
For the dawn of old John Brown has brightened
into day,
And his soul is marching on

“Battle Hymn of the Republic”

Verse

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of
the Lord.
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes
of wrath are stored.
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible,
swift sword.
His truth is marching on.

Chorus

Glory, glory, hallelujah! (x3)
His truth is marching on.

“This Little Light of Mine”

While some audience members may recognize this song from church, it was initially written as a Civil Rights protest song in the 1960's, with lyrics that speak to shining a light on inequities instead of ignoring them.

Verse 1

This little light o' mine, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Verse 2

Everywhere I go, I'm goin' let it shine (x2)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Verse 3

In my neighbor's home, I'm goin' let it shine (x2)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Verse 4

I've got my freedom, I'm goin' let it shine. (x2)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Verse 5

Hide it under a bushel, no, I'm goin' let it shine (x2)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.