

WHERE IS TOMORROW COMING FROM

By
Dale Davis

With
Gregory Barnard, Michael Bianchi, Avery Bryan, Michael Carothoey, Julio Cruz,
William Johnson, Frederick Douglass, David Gordon William Jeffers, Mildred Johnson,
Laurence, Marquis, Shamel Saunders, Dennis Ruth,
Austin Steward, Anthony Wiggins, Eric Williams

"I try to expose people to yesterday so they know where tomorrow is coming from."
Gil Scott-Heron, 2008

CAST

Fifteen Student / Inmates
Two Moderators
Austin Steward
Frederick Douglass
Mildred Johnson
DJ

BEATS

Created by students / inmates at Monroe County Jail

SETTING

The play takes place on Three North, Monroe County Jail.

PART ONE

The Student / Inmate cast is seated in the audience.

The Two Moderators sit separately from the audience on their left.

Austin Steward, Frederick Douglass, and Mildred Johnson sit separately from the audience on their right.

A DJ is behind the stage where the play is performed.

A beat slowly begins to play. After everyone is attentive to the beat, the First Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

First Student / Inmate

Student / Inmate walks to center of stage and speaks as if to himself.

I'm stressed out,
trying to go home.
I don't know what's going on.
I've been here for six months, and I'm still waiting for a court date.
I'm tired of it all.
I just found out I have a baby girl.
I'm happy about the news, but angry that I'm in here and I can't see her.
I want to get out and be a father.
I want to honor my responsibilities.
I need to get a job to support my daughter and myself.

Please, I just want my day in court to come
so I can find out what's going to happen to me.
Will I go home soon?
Do I need to go upstate?
Not knowing my fate is the worst part of all of this.

First Student / Inmate returns to his seat.

Second Student / Inmate walks to center of stage and speaks directly to the audience.

Second Student / Inmate

Student / Inmate walks to center of stage and speaks directly to the audience.

[Beat interweaves between stanzas]

I am a young Black man, born and raised in Rochester, who is locked up
for things I did in my past,
for things I am not happy about.
I know I can do better than this.
I belong home with my family.
My baby's mother is five months pregnant
and is going crazy
because of the things I am doing to hurt myself
and the people around me.

I want to have a second chance at life
to be all of the things I always dreamed about being in life,
but now I sit in Monroe County Jail
and think about what could have been,
think about where do I belong.

[Beat]

They say I am nothing but a Black boy
who deserves to be locked up for something he did.
They took me away from my family
and everything I have to live for.
Where do I belong?

[Beat]

I know a young man who had a dream,
but his dreams never came true.
Now he sits up at night
and cries and asks God
why his dreams never come true.
He was always told
that if he told anyone what he wished for
it would never come true.
So night after night
he asks the Man above
when will his dreams come true.
To this day
his dreams never came true.
This

young
man
is
me.

Second Student / Inmate returns to his seat.

Moderator One walks to the front and center of the group.

Moderator One

Born and raised in Rochester, the Roc, son of the Roc,
son of a dream that began on the banks of the Genesee in 1803.

The Roc started as a one hundred acre swamp on the Genesee River
purchased in 1803 by three Maryland investors
who recognized the potential of the fourteen-foot falls,
Colonel Nathaniel Rochester, Colonel William Fitzhugh, and Major Charles Carroll.
It took them four years to pay \$1,750.00 for the land.
The last payment was made on June 7, 1808.
They received the deed on November 18, 1811,
and Colonel Rochester laid out a small village
where quarter acre lots were offered at prices ranging from \$30.00 up to \$100.00.
The first permanent settler was Hamlet Scrantom
who moved into a log cabin where the Powers Building is today.

Rochester offered potential,
a dream on the banks of the Genesee River.

In 1817
other landowners, just north of the One Hundred Acre Tract,
joined their lands with the One Hundred Acre Tract
and the 655 acres, Village of Rochesterville, was formed with 700 residents.

The Roc began as a dream of potential, a city on the banks of the Genesee River

on the very same land where the Monroe County Jail now sits,
on the land where we are right now.

Moderator One returns to his seat.

Third Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Third Student / Inmate

[Beat interweaves between stanzas]

Student / Inmate walks to front and center of the group and speaks directly to the audience.

Today I had court. I copped out to five years. I was scared.

I have
never been
upstate.

The judge told me I should be happy that he was only giving me five years, and that he wanted to give me fifteen. This hit me so hard. Being away from home, what will my kids do?

So many things
are going through my head.

I just can't believe that my record from when I was young was used against me.

[Beat]

Me, I've been through many things that most people don't go through. How would anyone feel finding out the real way his mom died, finding out that she was raped and then got AIDS, and she died.

Pops got life in jail.

Was life supposed to happen to me?

When you turn to the streets, it's hard to turn back. They say I am a danger.
They say
I should stay caged
like an animal.

They don't know what I have been through.

[Beat]

I am seventeen years old, and I was born and raised on the streets of the Roc. I have been here all my life,

Here.

Am I that dream on the banks of the Genesee!

I was not a part of it in 1803.
Am I part of any dream in 2008?

Third Student / Inmate returns to his seat in the audience.

Moderator Two walks to the front and center of the group.

Moderator Two

The Monroe County Jail is located on 130 Plymouth Avenue, South, Rochester New York. It is on the land that was part of the original One Hundred Acre Tract purchased by Colonel Nathaniel Rochester, Colonel William Fitzhugh, and Major Charles Carroll in 1803.

Moderator Two returns to his seat.

Fourth Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Fourth Student / Inmate

A rock is a solid, but why has my Roc, my city fallen apart?
A lot of great things happened here.
A lot of great people are buried here.
But then again we are the flower city.
All that means to me is that they'll bring lilacs to my funeral.

What's the value of life? A chain? A car?
I thought it was the cars.
If not why make gas so high that sooner or later only the rich will drive
because it will be nearly impossible to keep up with the price of gas.

My rock fell apart on Plymouth rock or Prock.

Now I'm looking at 15 years.
I was 15 two years ago.
The Roc, a rock.

Moderator Two returns to his seat.

The Third Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Fifth Student / Inmate

Beat interweaves

Student / Inmate walks to front center of the group looks above audience, directly praying.

Locked up in MCJ,
what can I do,
what can I think?

Am I part of the Roc?

Looks directly at audience

Do you see me?

Do you know me?

Looks above audience again, directly praying.

I pray so much.

Locked in my cell I always think
what would I be doing if I didn't come to MCJ.

[*Beat*]

Who is this young boy who was lonely
and had nothing to eat.
He is uneducated, and
he made bad decisions.
He has nowhere to go
and no one to ask for help.

Hate,
this is what he thought,
this is what he showed,
this is what he knew.
What did he do?

He wanted to overcome the pain,
but he thought what for,
no one cared for him.
He didn't know people wanted to help,
wanted to show him the way.
All he knew is that he had been denied,
ashamed, and disrespected in his mind.

He did not know how to ask for help.
Why didn't he just ask for help?
Why?
Why?
Why?

He was lost. He was confused.
He was stressed.
He wondered if he would ever find anyone to help him
through the dark alley and all the obstacles.

He just wanted to find his way out.
Who is this little boy?
This little boy is me.

Looks directly at audience

Will I be labeled a nobody,
another deadbeat
who does have not a job in this city?

Fifth Student / Inmate returns to his seat in the audience.

Moderator One walks to the front and center of the group.

Moderator One

A dream of a city on the banks of a river,
the 1803 dream.

Dreams of fame, attention, and money are whose dreams,
yours, mine, or are they all of our dreams?

Sam Patch dreamed.
He wanted to be famous.
He wanted attention.
He wanted money.

On September 30, 1827 Sam Patch
jumped off the seventy-foot Passaic Falls in New Jersey.

He repeated this jump at least two more times.
The crowds loved him.
In the fall of 1828,
Sam Patch was the first person
to successfully jump into Niagara Falls.
Following Niagara Falls, Sam Patch came to the Roc
to challenge the 99-foot High Falls of the Genesee.
On November 6, 1829 Sam Patch went out onto a rock ledge in the middle of the falls,
threw a pet bear cub over the falls,
and jumped after the bear, successfully.
On Friday, November 13, 1829,
twenty six years after the purchase of the one-hundred acres,
Sam Patch
increased the height of his jump to 125 feet.
Schooners made special runs from Canada and Oswego.
People came from Buffalo, Batavia, and Canandaigua.
Accounts from the eight thousand people present differ on whether he jumped or fell,
but he never surfaced.
His frozen body was found in the ice in Charlotte early the following spring.
He is buried in Charlotte Cemetery.

Why is a tour boat named after him?
What does it mean?

What are we honoring?

We all have similar dreams.
We all want to be noticed,
and we jump, just like Sam,
we jump into the criminal life.

Why,
it's the easy way out.
Why wait ten years before there is even a chance for a good job
when it is so easy to buy a gun
and have instant popularity.

Dreams in our city on the Genesee River.
The mind seeks a reference to build upon,
a history for the river of thoughts
as we look at the promise of the potential
that was handed to all of us
who build our lives from the one hundred acre tract.

Austin Steward walks from the side to the front and center of the group.

Tips his head and identifies himself before speaking.

Austin Steward

About the time, too, "Sam Patch" made his last and fatal leap from a scaffold twenty-five feet above the falls of Genesee, which are ninety-six feet in height. From thence he plunged into the foaming river to rise no more in life. The following spring the body of the foolish man was found and buried, after having lain several months in the turbulent waters of the Genesee.

It is 1829. The "Emancipation Act" had been passed in 1827 and the happy time for it to take effect was drawing nigh. Slavery could no longer exist in the Empire State nor receive the protection of her laws. Would to God it had so continued to be what it professed--the refuge of the bondman and the home of the free. But alas! Now the flying fugitive from Slavery finds no security within her borders; he must flee onward, to the dominion of Queen Victoria, ere he rests, lest the exaction of the odious "Fugitive Slave Law" return him to the house of bondage.

But the Emancipation Bill had been passed, and the colored people felt it to be a time fit for rejoicing. They met in different places and determined to evince their gratitude by a general celebration. In Rochester they convened in large numbers, and resolved to celebrate the glorious day of freedom at Johnson's Square, on the _fifth_ day of July. This arrangement was made so as not to interfere with the white population who were everywhere celebrating the day of their independence--"the Glorious Fourth,"--for amid the general and joyous shout of liberty, prejudice had sneeringly raised the finger of scorn at the poor African, whose iron bands were loosed, not only from English oppression, but the more cruel and oppressive power of Slavery.

Austin Steward returns to his seat.

The Sixth Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Sixth Student / Inmate

Beat interweaves

Student / Inmate looks directly at audience

Is there refuge today in the Roc, the home of the free?
I cannot vote with a felony conviction.
Can I get a job?
Can I get a job?

No job, no vote, this is a house of bondage?

I hope there is something out there for me.
I want it badly.

I have dreams that I'm afraid to follow.
That's why I believe I am in here now.
I want to change.

All my life it has been a struggle.
I am trying
but it is hard.
I want to do it right.
Sometimes I can't sleep at night.

Why isn't life fair?

[Beat]

My life is like a blinking of the eye.
I crave passion and understanding.
I would go to any limits
to obtain knowledge of myself and life.

I am in a struggle.
When will we all be equal?

[Beat]

I am in quick sand holding on.
Who will remember me when I'm gone.
I have to fight to overcome gloom.
Sometimes I wish it there was a rain
that could wash away all the pain.

I am an angry soul,
living in bondage.

Sixth Student / Inmate returns to his seat.

Austin Steward walks from the side to the front and center of the group.

Austin Steward

And are we alone excluded from what the world chooses to denominate polite society?

Austin Steward returns to his seat.

Moderator Two walks to the front and center of the group.

Moderator Two

Are we alone? Are we excluded? Why are we excluded? Why have we been excluded?

Are we anything more than crime statistics to Rochester?

What is our stake in building a dream on the city on the river?

Beat

We all do time in different places,
but when we get home it's all the same,
positive mindsets in the times sense,
maybe a jailhouse resume or another
certificate from a voc class you took
for a year and a half, but a break
isn't easy to come by.
You're still not hired and gas prices get higher,
so you go to negativity to pay the bills.
Pops is not around and your mom
is too sick to make your favorite meal.
Most people try to play the system, but
don't even know how to play for real.
Or are blind to the fact that rap
isn't the only way to pay the bills.
But until you come to jail and
realize you don't have to play a bill,
free food and friends.
Why wouldn't you want to come to jail.
The way most people come back
you assume it was fun on the inside.

Moderator Two returns to his seat.

Crescendo of beats

End of Part One

PART TWO

Facts Recited by All Fourteen Student / Inmates while they are seated.

Fact:

You can buy drugs on every corner in Rochester.

Fact:

In Rochester it is easier to get a gun than to get an education.

Fact:

In Rochester it is easier to die than to have a chance to live.

Fact:

Kids become parents at a young age.

Fact:

People die every day.

Fact:

Schools in Rochester do not giving kids the attention they need.

The Seventh Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Seventh Student / Inmate

Beat Interweaves

I dreamt about being a baseball player.
The position didn't matter.
When I was at Industry,
I pitched, played first, played second.
I have played baseball since I was small.
I always had a baseball bat,
and I hit rocks and bottles.
My mother bought me a ball.
I went around the neighborhood getting a team.
I wanted to be a baseball player.

[Beat]

I grew up trying to be like my family,
trying to be ghetto.
I wanted to be like my family.

[Beat]

I always skipped school,
skipped class.
I went to school and never paid attention in class.

I fell asleep.
I went through nine grades.
One teacher cared.
One teacher did not give up on me.
This was my sixth and seventh grade math teacher, Ms. Murphy.
Ms. Murphy let me come in after school every day
to work on assignments.
When I was locked up at Industry,
she came and tutored me.
She didn't give up.

[Beat]

Nobody listened to me when I was little.
This is why when I got older
I don't read in front of people.
Someone might laugh.

People said I wasn't smart.
All the teachers except Ms. Murphy said I wasn't smart.

The teachers at Freddie Thomas
told me I wasn't going to be anything,
that I would drop out of school.
A lot of teachers told me that.

I teacher is supposed to wake a student up in class.
Teachers never woke me up.
They let me sleep.

I knew teachers really did not care about me.
This was when I dropped out.

Seventh Student / Inmate returns to his seat.

Frederick Douglass walks from the side to the front center of the group.

Tips his head and identifies himself before speaking.

Frederick Douglass

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, Cs. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master--to do as he is told to do. Learning would ~spoil~ the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and

special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty--to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it.

Frederick Douglass returns to his seat.

Facts Recited by All Fourteen Student / Inmates while they are seated.

Fact:

In Rochester kids get kicked out of their houses and then become drug dealers.

Fact:

In Rochester it is easier to get a job in the streets than to get a real job.

Fact:

Rochester is a place where a lot of people die.

Fact:

In Rochester lots of people go to jail.

Fact:

The ways kids dress means they are accused of being drug dealers.

Fact:

In Rochester lots and lots of people drop out of school.

Moderator One walk to the front and center of the group

Moderator One

Crazy, stupid, retarded,
These are words I heard on a regular basis.

I aw myself as unique.
Marvin the Martian was always my favorite cartoon character.
Just like kids want to be Superman and Batman
when Weezy said, "We are not the same, I am a Martian."
I was a Martian.

People asked how does he come up with this stuff.
I think like I came up with that when I was five.

They make me feel better with, "Great minds think alike."
Really?

Well for all those who didn't compare themselves to Marvin the Martian,
how does it feel to sleep in 3 North or 2 North?
I can tell you there is nothing animated inside these walls.
These walls damage the mind not the body.
These walls are the way the way to make a good slave.
The same recipe for a good inmate is the recipe for a slave

with a little bit of keep him blind on the side.

Moderator Two returns to his seat.

The Eighth Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Eighth Student / Inmate

Beat Interweaves

I'm sick of life, why?
Why?
I can't take it.
Why do I feel so mad all of the time?
Is it because I give out so much happy energy
that the madness just stays inside:
It hides inside.
It hardly comes out.
I have lost interest in life,
nothing seems to matter anymore.
I wish I weren't sick of life.
I wish that life wasn't unfair.
I'm sick of life.

[Beat]

I don't know anything about my real family. My adopted mother told me my real mother abandoned me at birth.

I was two
and I remember
coming out of an apartment building.
I saw
a white car.

I remember going into the car. I think it was my dad, not my real dad, my adopted dad.

I just kept having
dreams
until I was ten.

My sister and I were always at a kitchen play table. She was always eating. I look over and in the living room I see this lady. I see the back of her head. She has curly black hair. She is wearing a hat. In the dream I think this is my mother.

[Beat]

I
never
saw
my mother's face.

I never heard from my mother. I never heard from any of my family.

Eighth Student / Inmate returns to his seat in the audience.

Frederick Douglass walks from the side to the front center of the group.

Tips his head again and identifies himself before speaking.

Frederick Douglass

My father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion, I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me. My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant--before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor. For what this separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the inevitable result.

I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night. She died when I was about seven years old, on one of my master's farms, near Lee's Mill. I was not allowed to be present during her illness, at her death, or burial. She was gone long before I knew any thing about it. Never having enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful care, I received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.

Frederick Douglass returns to the side.

Ninth Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Ninth Student / Inmate

Theses last two years have been hell.
Since the end of 2006 when I lost my mom my life went downhill.
I'm started in, I started hustling.
I felt like I had to hustle to get what I wanted.
I had family on my side, but I felt like I had to hustle to get what I wanted.
I hustled because I felt like nobody would take care of me like my mom did.
It kills me inside that my mom is gone.
It will kill anybody inside when their mom is gone
because nobody loves you like your mom does.
It feels fake that my mom is gone, but it's real.

Sometimes I felt like I should have died with her
and be lying in peace with her,
but I know my mom is not lying in peace
because my brother and I are going nuts because she's gone.

Ninth Student / Inmate returns to his seat in the audience.

Beat to shift tone

Tenth Student / Inmate

Beat Interweaves

A father,
what's that?
I wouldn't know.
Growing up was hard.
I barely knew
what a dad or a father was.
I saw him only a few times growing up.
Moms went through trouble trying to take care of us.

[Beat]

*Why didn't you help?
I can't blame you.
I know it's hard to see your kid when you are locked up
or on the streets.
But time passed,
and I didn't really know you until I was about twelve years of age.
There was so much I needed to learn from you,
but I found most of the things out for myself.
I can't lie though.
You tried to show me a few things about life.
You
also treated me wrong
and
you lied.
I don't sweat that.
You tried.
I love you for that.*

[Beat]

My moms tells me all the time
that my father is no good.
That hurts inside,
but all I did was do things
that made me want to hurt other people.

*Without you I didn't know how to be a man.
I acted like a "nigga," yes that 's right, a "nigga."
I ran around to find ways to get locked up.
This is one of the reasons moms made me move with you.
Moms was getting stressed out by my little brother and me.
I ended up moving back with her.
What does that tell you?*

It's not hard to figure out.

I need someone to tell me what a father is
and what role a father was supposed to play in my life.

Tenth Student / Inmate returns to his seat in the audience.

Eleventh Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Eleventh Student / Inmate

I am going to start off by telling you
I don't respect anything you do.
I'm supposed to be your son,
but you don't know anything about me.
I just thought I would let you know how much this pisses me off.
You are the man
who helped my mom put me on this planet
and you didn't give a darn enough
to watch who you created grow up to be.

I want to ask you some questions.

Why weren't you there for my mom when she was giving birth to me?

Why weren't you there for my mom when she needed help raising me?

Why weren't you there for me when I needed you the most?

Why weren't you there for me when I was getting in trouble?

Why did you put your hands on my mother when I was younger?

Why didn't you ever sit down in the morning to eat
Fruit Loops or Captain Crunch with me?

Why weren't you there for me when I needed a father figure in my life?

Why weren't you there for my mom
when she cried at night because of all the stress
I put her through when she needed to control me?

Why did you never give me or show me any kind of love?

Why every year does somebody have to tell you when my birthday is?

So now can you tell who I am.
You do not really know me.

So now I am going to end this by saying
you are a coward

for not being a father to me.
You disrespected my mother.
You were not there for me.

Thanks for nothing.

Eleventh Student / Inmate returns to his seat in the audience.

Moderator Two

What can we do?

What is our truth?

A life-time, if we die young, if we are arrested,
we haven't seen anything and
we haven't really learned anything

How do we know what life is?

Moderator Two returns to his seat.

Crescendo of Beats

End of Part Two

PART THREE

Twelfth Student / Inmate rises and walks slowly to the front and center of the group.

Twelfth Student / Inmate

What is wrong with us? Why do we always sabotage ourselves by coming back to jail over and over again? How come every time I look in the newspaper or ask around, I find out another young person gets enslaved to the system and will never come home, never make anything of himself, or do anything positive. What is wrong with us? Don't we know the only way to get out of this game is prison or death? And if so, why do we keep playing Russian roulette with our freedom? You see I'm no new mind to the streets. Basically I've been there and done that. I've been in and out of the system for felonies since I was thirteen. I've almost lost every man I have ever respected to the system. I've almost been killed three times in the past year. I've known cats personally who get out of jail and go back faithfully. This leaves me with the question, what is wrong with us?

Twelfth Student / Inmate returns to his seat.

Mildred Johnson walks from the side to the front center of the group.

Tips her head and identifies herself before speaking.

Mildred Johnson

It is 1981. Crime in the black community has run amuck in Rochester. The most recent tragedy is that of the brutal killing of the youth at the War Memorial last Saturday while ten thousand came to enjoy themselves hearing 'Cool & The Gang.' It is sad for all parents: the victims and the youth accused of the stabbing. What really provoked the incident is not the main issue, it is the lack of values we have taught our children of the precious gift of life. Taking one's life in one way or another is wrong and the blame is placed on all of us Blacks, because that is the way society sees us. If one of us does something that is out of line, all of us are put in the same category, which we cannot afford this kind of reputation. We all know the race is blamed for incidents such as this and it is an individual not a group of people, but because of the racist element in our country we are blamed.

Mildred Johnson returns to her seat.

Moderator Two walks to the front and center of the group.

Moderator One

Shouts

What values do we have?
What is important to us?

How did the dream turn into the riots of the sixties, the crime dilemma today?

It is 2008.

These walls damage the mind.

Moderator Two returns to his seat

Thirteenth Student / Inmate walks to the front and center of the group.

Thirteenth Student / Inmate

Beat Interweaves

Why did I do what I did? Why was I so stupid when people were telling me to chill? Why didn't I just stop?

I always try to keep my thoughts to myself. I also know my thoughts can drive me crazy. I believe if you can just find someone to talk to you'll feel much better. But in here who can you talk to when you can't trust anybody. How can you trust somebody if you can't even trust yourself?

[Beat]

When I get out, where will my home be?

Will
my

dad
be
there?

Will he be dead? Will he be in jail?

Where will home be?

Where can I go, Florida, Philly, Texas, the Roc?

Where
is
my
home?

[Beat]

I won't be able to leave the Roc. I will be on papers. Is my home the Roc? Where do I belong?

Thirteenth Student / Inmate Returns to His Seat

Mildred Johnson walks from the side to the front center of the group.

Tips her head and identifies herself before speaking.

Mildred Johnson

How do I see things today in my hometown, dear old Rochester today in 1974? That's quite a question.

The problems are deep rooted and complex and very hard to deal with. At times, one finds grown people who seem on the verge of a complete mental breakdown. They often have given up all hope and seem incapable of doing anything for themselves. They're hungry for little attentions and some love.

I see myself, and far too many others, as still being poor and denied many of life's privileges. The fight and struggle must not cease to exist.

I'm now a widow with one child, and feel as though I can't give up trying to keep the wolf away from my, nor anyone else's, door.

Like many others in Rochester, I belong to the poor minority constituency and have never been able to draw more than \$10,000.00 a year salary in my life.

How do I see Rochester shaping up and meeting the needs of the poor and disadvantaged?

Well, it's a very bleak picture indeed. Today there is so little that I can point to in terms of real progressive gains for Rochester's black and Puerto Rican community. At least not since the days of the 1964 riots or when the Fight organization had its grassroots beginnings in 1965.

There's one exception though. And that's when you begin talking of WDKX, Rochester and Monroe County's first black radio facility a little over a month ago.

It is quite rewarding today to hear the recorded voice of my friend and colleague Malcolm X on WDKX's station slot at 104 on the FM dial each day.

The most distressing factor I see is the unemployment of so many blacks and Puerto Ricans. Many are seeking good jobs and can't find work.

Kodak and Xerox are hiring on the professional level but few in unskilled jobs.

I'd like to see industry do more hiring and training of the unskilled worker on a 'sincere level.' By this mean give a person training and then give him a chance to work.

The segregated housing pattern that we have in Rochester is most appalling. In the year 1942 a black family moved on Varinna Drive and there was panic in the neighborhood; a black was moving in, so that was cause for the whites to move out.

This family was a professional couple who were an asset to the neighborhood; few on the block were professional and trained as these blacks were.

There needs to be more education of people here so that they will not judge us by our color but by our character. Color really has nothing to do with the abilities of a human's mind.

One has to go to school and study to become anything or anyone of importance. People need to think on these things.

I say it again: if more of the unskilled were hired our crime rate could be cut in half.

Mildred Johnson returns to her seat.

Facts Recited by All Fourteen Student / Inmates while they are seated.

Fact:

More than 1 in 100 American adults are behind bars.

Fact:

More than one in nine black men, ages 20 to 34, are serving time, as are 1 in 36 adult Hispanic men.

Fact:

In the United States the prison population hovers at 1.6 million, which surpasses all other countries for which there are reliable figures.

Fact:

In California they plan how many jail cells they will build in the future by how many children are not reading on grade level by third grade.

Fact:

In Indiana the number of new prisons to build is based, in part, on the number of second graders not reading at second-grade level.

Fact:

70% of all prisoners in state and federal prisons are classified as illiterate.

Fact:

70% of all people entering state correctional facilities have not completed high school and 14% have no high school education at all.

Fact:

85% of juvenile offenders are classified as being functionally or marginally illiterate.

Fourteenth Student / Inmate walks to the front and center of the group.

Fourteenth Student / Inmate

Beat Interweaves

I Am Not A Monster

When you look into my eyes,
what do you feel?

When you listen to me speak,
what do you hear?

When I am in your sight,
what do you see?

When you deliberately examine my scent,
what do you smell?

Tell me
when you feel, smell, listen, or look at me,
do you think a monster is in your presence?

No!!

You cannot think of me as a monster
because I am not a monster.

I am not a monster!

I am not a monster!

I am a human being,
who needs someone to believe in him
and who needs to belong.

I know that a lot of people look at me and my situation
and feel that I am cold hearted,
but if you actually take the time to speak with me
and ask me questions about what I want to do when I get out,
you would be surprised at my answers.

You see,

I know I am to a point in my life that could negatively affect my whole life,
but I do not want to let this problem become the Achilles heel in my life.

I am a human being who needs to know there is a place where he belongs.
I most certainly am not a monster!

Fourteenth Student / Inmate returns to his seat.

Mildred Johnson walks from the side to the front center of the group.

Tips her head and identifies herself before speaking.

Mildred Johnson

Just what is wrong? Is it that none of us care or are the least concerned about the crimes being committed around us? Or have we become unconcerned? Is it a lack of God in our lives? Or is it the times we are living in? We are all asking these questions, but none of us know why these things happen and why they happen so frequently here in Rochester?

What does the future hold for us?

Mildred Johnson returns to her seat.

Fifteenth Student / Inmate walks to the front and center of the group.

Fifteenth Student / Inmate

Beat Interweaves

Help, help, help, we hear it everyday,
but we need to believe it.
We need to believe we have a future.

We need to believe we are part of the dream.
We need to feel connected.

[Beat]

I want to believe in education.
I am eighteen,
and I have been in trouble since I was a little kid.
I made wrong choices,
and I never really went to school.

I have seen too many brothers go upstate
because of the street life,
robbery, shooting, hustling

[Beat]

I am writing this now for me.
I want to show people I can write,
I'm not dumb.
I am writing because I want to change my life.

I am writing for the truth,
so you can feel my pain
and know that I have an emotional side.
I am writing to say I am human.
I am writing to say I am sorry.

[Beat]

I am writing
because the volcano I call my mind

has been building up inside of me for years
and now it is erupting in words, flooding pages
with my heart and soul.

I am writing for me.
I am writing for you.
I am writing to say I want to be part of the dream.

Fifteenth Student / Inmate returns to his seat.

Frederick Douglass walks from the side to the front center of the group.

Tips his head and identifies himself before speaking.

Frederick Douglass

I sincerely and earnestly hope that this little book may do something toward throwing light on the American slave system, and hastening the glad day of deliverance to the millions of my brethren in bonds—faithfully relying upon the power of truth, love, and justice, for success in my humble efforts—and solemnly pledging myself anew to the sacred cause,—I subscribe myself.

Frederick Douglass returns to his

Moderator One walks to the front and center of the group.

Moderator Two

We sincerely and earnestly hope that our words may throw some light on the system and will help us to connect to that dream that we were not part of in 1803.

We have kept it real.
This has been our language to make ourselves vocal.
We took you for a ride around, around history, around the Roc, around Monroe County Jail.
What does it look like?

Life is a spin because we are going through
ups and downs.
Every time we turn around
another body is down.
Life is no joke.
Life is real.
Listen.

Get in the light we are throwing,
can you see?
You are not blind.
Where is the positive,
all we know is the negative?

Stand up and holler.

We want to make it in the world.

Beats to shift tone

We have no ending
except to ask you what you are thinking now.

Crescendo of beats

THE END

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Community