Raising the Volume Episode XXXIII

JaMeeka D. Holloway shares her experience as a Black theater artist and director of Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls.

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Middle School and Up
Mastery of core subjects and twenty-first century themes is essential for all students in the twenty-first century. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history and government, and civics. In addition to these subjects, schools must move forward to include not only a focus on mastery of core subjects, but also an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving twenty-first century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects.

**Global Awareness**
1. Use twenty-first century skills to understand and address global issues.
2. Learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts.

**Civic Literacy**
1. Participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes.
2. Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national, and global levels.
3. Understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.

**Work Creatively with Others**
1. Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively.
2. Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work.
3. Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work; understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas.
4. View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.
5. Implement innovations.
6. Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur.
Everyone has a story. It’s our place to take a moment to listen. Once you listen, your eyes open. You can put yourself in someone else’s shoes and try to comprehend their experiences. You may be inspired, you may come away with more knowledge, or you may find a bit of yourself in someone else.

“Raising the Volume” is a series of Black stories. Stories about Black entrepreneurs, judges, authors, artists, and leaders in our community. Stories that need to be heard. Led by the Gaillard Center’s Artists-in-Residence, Charlton Singleton and Marcus Amaker, “Raising the Volume” gives a platform to Black community members and opens us all up to honest discussion.

As you introduce this series to your students, follow the bullet points below for discussion. Your students will find that they are challenged to think about uncomfortable things. Those conversations are what will help us change our world. In the words of Judge McFarland, “To break down racial barriers, start where you are.” Let’s start where we are and see what change we can bring to our community.

For each lesson, split your class into small groups for discussion or discuss as a whole. Choose the model that is the most comfortable for your students so they feel free to discuss opinions openly.

Teachers, if you are interested in scheduling a cross-school discussion on Raising the Volume Episode XXXII, please email Kailey Jones at kjones@gaillardcenter.org. Through cross-school Zoom calls, we can offer students from one school a different perspective on the video with students from a second school. We will schedule class-to-class meetings where whole groups can discuss various topics covered in Episode XXXII.
EPISODE XXXIII

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JaMeeka D. Holloway shares her experience as a Black theater artist and director of Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls.

(CLICK THE IMAGE TO WATCH EPISODE XXXII)
JaMeeka Holloway describes her directorial role as a “story-shaper” and how she takes text that feels unapproachable to Black audiences, from the works of William Shakespeare to historical pieces such as Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls, and cultivates a modernized, inclusive, and colloquial translation of the piece for the stage. She highlights the historical lack of inclusion for Black theater artists and how she views stereotypically “elite” works, such as Shakespeare, as an introduction into spaces where Black theater and art would not have been welcomed previously.

Read the article here on BLK GIRLS LUV THE BARD, a program founded by Holloway in 2020 that seeks to reimagine Shakespeare work through a BIPOC lens. Write down three points to discuss with your group.

Holloway later elaborates on how she first found her voice within the arts by discovering Black playwrights, namely August Wilson and Alice Childress, and how they opened up the world of theater for her, giving her a home in the arts. Think about a place that you consider “home.” What about this space makes you feel welcome and safe?

As the director of Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls, Holloway expresses gratitude for her creative and production teams as well as her cast for helping to breathe life into this story - from devising a script to the show's final curtain! Click here to visit our website for more information on Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls and those who made the project possible. Notice the quote from Holloway for the City Paper. Why do you think it is important that the creative team be comprised of artists who originally hail from the South?

Holloway also touches upon the importance of rest and recharging her “artistic battery” by expressing self-care. For her, this means prioritizing her personal relationships and spending quality time with her family:

“To really stay in and allow my work to not disrupt relationships for me is very revolutionary because I feel like so often like, we are taught that our personal relationships have to suffer in some way or we have to sacrifice portions of it in order to really thrive in this business, and I know that there's slight truth to that, but I believe we can imagine and then live out the lives that we want, and I am not allowing this work to disrupt my relationships anymore.”

Unpack this statement. Why might some Black artists find it necessary to prioritize their work over their personal relationships in order to be successful?

The interview closes with JaMeeka Holloway and Marcus Amaker highlighting professional career possibilities within the arts for People of Color. “You can get paid! You can make a profession and career out of this, ya’ll,” said Holloway. “It doesn't just have to be a hobby.” What are some careers within the arts that interest you? How do you think someone would pursue that career path?

ABOUT JAMEEKA D. HOLLOWAY

Raised in Durham, North Carolina, JaMeeka Holloway has been a professional theater artist and champion for Black theater in the Triangle for years. She earned her theater degree from North Carolina Central University and continued her education as an apprentice for The Lark Play Development Center, and later, as an assistant director with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and PlayMakers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill. An Indy Arts Award winner in 2018, she is a 2019-2020 grant recipient of both the Manbites Dog Theater Fund and the Ella Fountain Pratt Emerging Artists Program. In February 2019, Holloway was honored by the African American Heritage Commission and Governor Roy Cooper for her contributions to the arts and culture landscape of North Carolina. She also served as a 2019 theater panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and for the North Carolina Arts Council. Her directing work has appeared on numerous stages, including: Vermont’s Northern Stage; Shakespeare in Detroit; New York City’s Classic Stage Company; Durham’s Manbites Dog Theater; the Department of Theater at Dartmouth College; Durham Performing Arts Center; and the National Black Theater Festival.
Marcus Amaker was named Charleston’s first Poet Laureate in 2016. He’s also an award-winning graphic designer, an accomplished electronic musician, the creator of a poetry festival, and a mentor to hundreds of students. His poetry has been featured by PBS Newshour, SC Public Radio, Huffington Post, A&E Network, Charleston Magazine, and more. In 2019, he won a Governor’s Arts Award. His poetry has been featured by PBS Newshour, SC Public Radio, Huffington Post, A&E Network, Charleston Magazine, and more. In 2019, he won a Governor’s Arts Award. His poetry has been featured by PBS Newshour, SC Public Radio, Huffington Post, A&E Network, Charleston Magazine, and more. In 2019, he won a Governor’s Arts Award. His poetry has been studied in classrooms across the country and has been interpreted for ballet, jazz, modern dance, opera, and theater. Amaker has recorded three albums with Grammy Award-winning drummer and producer, Quentin E. Baxter. His latest book is The Birth of All Things from Free Verse Press.¹

https://marcusamaker.com/bio/.


https://marcusamaker.com/bio/.

https://playmakersrep.org/artists/jameeka-holloway/.

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