

STORYTELLING ASSIGNMENTS

Each assignment below draws on an approach used by one of the performing artists who we have worked with over the past few years.

- I. **Assignment Number one: In-class writing: *Reclamation*** (inspired by Martha Redbone and Bone Hill.)
Take some moments and write down everything you think about when you think of your “origins.” Maybe it’s members of your family tree. Maybe it’s your hometown. Maybe it is how often you moved or how many different places you lived. Maybe it’s a migration story. Maybe it’s the schools you or your siblings or your parents attended. Maybe it’s the food and recipes you grew up eating. Maybe it’s medical and physical dilemmas that don’t have proper explanations. Jot down everything you can about these origin images, ideas, and narratives in a series of notes.

Then, pause. Look back at your notes. Ask yourself:

What do I wish I knew more about here?
Is someTHING missing? Is someONE missing? Is somePLACE missing?

Think about where the concepts of *erasure* or *absence* might be showing up in your own biography. Are there people whose lives have made your own life possible yet whose stories you don’t know? Are there places you’ve lived where certain community members have been marginalized or whose day-to-day lives you never considered? Imagine/describe those persons. Who are they? Where do/did they live? When do/did they live? What relationship do you have to them? What makes their presence important here, now?

Then: Write a letter to the person you just imagined/defined/described. Introduce yourself, the identities you hold, and the things, people, and places that connect you to that person. Imagine what it would be like to fill the gaps of your knowledge? Ask that person those questions. What does reclamation look like and feel like to you? Express that here. What kind of response would you like to receive from this person?

- II. **Assignment Number Two: Extended, take-home assignment.**
Create a playlist of your own. This assignment is intended to ask you to not only think about why the media you consume speaks to you, but how it can also illuminate how your own life connects to the world you inhabit.
- a. Write down the first song you ever remember hearing or singing. Maybe it’s a lullaby that was sung to you, maybe it’s a song you learned in a faith community, maybe it’s something taught to you in an early learning environment. Take a few minutes and track down a recording of the song if you can.

- b.** Write down your personal Summer Song of 2023. Again, don't overthink – what did you listen to on constant repeat at some point this summer?
- c.** In a few sentences, describe the single event in your life that most shaped the person you are today. Now, provide a song for that moment. It can be a piece of music that you can actually remember hearing during that event or it can be a piece that captures how you felt, how you were changed, or the emotional tone of that event.
- d.** What problem facing your community, your country or the world do you feel uniquely called to engage? Describe this problem, its ramifications, and its urgency in a couple sentences. Now, provide a song that speaks to dilemma you've just described.
- e.** Finish this sentence: *The world that I live in has been shaped the most by _____*. Write down a piece of music that captures the experience/idea/feeling of whatever you wrote in the blank above.
- f.** Write down a piece of music from a previous generation that still feels fresh and speaks to the you that you are in this very moment.
- You should now have six songs/pieces of music written down. Maybe some have descriptive titles, maybe some don't. Maybe some have lyrics, others may not. For those that DO have text (titles and/or lyrics), take a few minutes to pull those up. Look them over. What words jump out at you? Are there any common or repeated words, themes, ideas? Are there thoughts and feelings in one piece that connect to ideas in another? Write any of those down.
 - Listen to at least part of each track. Listen for the *aural sense* of the work. What does the music itself sound like? What are the tone words or adjectives you would use to describe the instruments or the voices? What sort of texture words ("rough," "grainy," "silky") might you use to describe the music. Write down those words that you like and that leap out at you.
 - Okay, you should have two banks of words and ideas now. Take a few minutes and **craft a title for your playlist** from these two collections. Remember that you and your identity are the common denominator here, so if you're struggling to come up with that title, take a moment to see how *you* fit in to this playlist.

Now, write the Liner Notes

- Now you get to create the "liner notes" for each track, but with a twist. You have your list of songs and you have your title. For each song, you want to describe the connection between three things:
 - 1) The song/piece of music itself
 - 2) The playlist title
 - 3) your own identity.
- Here's the twist: don't restrict yourself to simply writing down some explanatory prose sentences. Maybe there's a piece of visual art that really captures the connection you're trying to describe. Maybe you want to write a brief poem that captures the connection – or a dialogue or a piece of fiction. Maybe there's a memory, a recollection, or a family legend or story that will do it. Whatever form

your “note” takes, just make sure to provide two sentences that help us understand how you got from that song to the “note.”