



SPITTIN' TRUTH TO THE POWER WHILE LIGHT LEAPING FOR THE PEOPLE

By Alyce Smith Cooper and Shammy Dee

A La Jolla Playhouse Commission

Grade Level: Middle and High School

Before You Watch:

- Learn more about La Jolla Playhouse Digital [Without Walls \(WOW\)](#) Artists [Alyce Smith Cooper and Shammy Dee](#) and the creative team for this piece. Questions for class discussion or journal:
 - Consider the title for this piece. What do you think this title means? What do you imagine you will be seeing, hearing, and experiencing?
 - When you see the image of a person with their hand in a fist, stretched up towards the sky, what does that evoke for you? Where have you seen this symbol before and what does it mean?
 - Make a list as a class of the fairy tales and stories they have heard as children. Ask the students to consider who is the storyteller and who is the audience for these stories. Which stories did you connect to the most and why? Do you feel like the stories you heard as a kid represented who you are as a person? Why or why not?
 - What do the words *sermon*, *communion*, and *fellowship* mean to you, and in what context do you think of these words? Have the students share their various definitions and ask them why they think the three pieces of SPITTIN' TRUTH TO THE POWER WHILE LIGHT LEAPING FOR THE PEOPLE may have these titles--what might they expect to see or hear in each piece? (Revisit this question after watching each piece with each term).
- As a class, watch this [video](#) (6:10) which engages in the tradition and importance of the [Griot](#) people--the West African musicians, storytellers, custodians and teachers of tradition through music and dance. Why is the tradition of the Griots so important in our society? How can you relate this tradition to your own culture?

After You Watch:

- Questions for class discussion or journal:

- What are your first impressions of this piece? What feelings or emotions did the piece create and in what moments?
- Describe the methods that the creators of the piece and the creative team employed to create a sense of theatricality in a virtual setting.
- Who do you think the intended audience is for this piece and why?
- What themes or major ideas emerged for you while watching this piece. How did the artists convey those themes through poetry, music, and imagery? What specific examples can you notice?
- [Spoken Word Lesson Plan](#): Guide your students through a lesson plan in which they will create their own spoken word poetry around environmental justice. (full class period + extensions)
- Creating Your Own [Sermon](#): La Jolla Playhouse has created an open social media invite for the community to interact with us on *Light Leaping* by creating their own version of the "Sermon" video using dance, spoken word or whatever kind of interpretation lights up their hearts. Using Shammy's music and inspired by Alyce's striking words, we want the community to spit their own truth into the piece--and we would love your students to be a part and share their own sermons. Here are the [instructions](#) for how to upload created sermon videos.
 - The instrumentals to "Sermon" can be found here: bit.ly/LJPSermonInstrumental
- [Spoken Word Exploration](#): Starting on page 4 are the four pieces of spoken word poetry found in the piece by storyteller, healer, and minister, Alyce Cooper Smith. Read through the pieces as a class or in groups.
 - Have the students take a highlighter as they read and highlight any words or phrases that stand out to them. Share out these words or phrases as a class. Use the Literary Terms document at the end of the lesson plan to identify specific choices used by the artist, and how those choices help to tell the story, highlight themes, and create imagery.
 - Engage in a discussion in the differences in hearing/seeing the spoken word and reading these pieces. What is the same? What is different?
 - Encourage students to write their own pieces in the same titles--share out their pieces and focus on delivery in terms of persuasion and effectiveness.
- [SERMON Image Discovery](#): Starting on page 11 of this guide, you will see descriptions and links to the 64 images which appear in SERMON alongside the spoken word and music with Alyce Smith Cooper and Shammy Dee.
 - Share the list with the students, have them watch SERMON again this time, paying special attention to the images used in the piece--and following along with the descriptions.

- Discuss with the students about what images stand out to them and why. With the image they chose, have a discussion about the mood of the image and what about the image contributes to the mood? Discuss why this image was included in the SERMON and how it communicates towards the themes in the larger piece.
- Have students each select an image to research the people, places, and events present in the image to share with the class. Students may also:
 - Create a newspaper article about the people, places, and events from their image.
 - Create a monologue from the perspective of one of the individuals in the image.
 - Write a journal entry from the perspective of one of the individuals about what happened either right before or right after this photo was taken.

Educators:

- We'd love to see, hear, and experience the thoughts of your students in relation to SPITTIN' TRUTH TO THE POWER WHILE LIGHT LEAPING FOR THE PEOPLE. Please feel free to share any materials with education@ljp.org.
- Create, explore, and learn with more lesson plans, videos, and interactive materials by La Jolla Playhouse for educators [here!](#)
- Explore more of La Jolla Playhouse's Digital Without Walls virtual theatre [here!](#)

The Storytelling Segment of Spittin Mother wit to Power

by Alyce Smith Cooper

With Storytelling Hat on and in Griot garments-she begins...

So my beloveds, that is the way it was in those days. The impostors were so sure they had the people of LIGHT surrounded in a shroud of darkness sewn together by hatred fears and lies. So drunk on pride and arrogance that they became bloated , they forged ahead swimming in the blood of innocents and feasting on lynched flesh .

They planned to manipulate us , we the rainbow MELANIN peoples the visionpoets ...they thought we were convinced-blinded - deafened to the cried out anguished last breathes calling for MOTHER ... seeking compassions which were unavailable. They thought we would turn on each other, shedding each other's blood. HUMPH!

But then lightning flashed, the LION ROARED- our eyes popped wide our mouths opened declaring TRUTHS OF BROTHERHOOD-UNITY -VICTORY in the LIGHTNETWORK - silence to the tongues of liars- WE pulled down the strongholds of the IZMS...called forth the drowsy religions to WAKE UP!! SHOUT..Lead with tools forged of LOVE. We crafted community thru services to each other. We grew our food from blessed seeds, healed ourselves from the fruits leaves trees vines roots we grew .

We sang our singeing songs. The DIVINE LIGHT dissolved darkness; destroying hidden plots and schemes. We shifted the agendas toward true abolition, reparations . We chose to be the Agencies to usher in Transformation. We the Family of ALL choosing to live as one. We forged this new garden. Same MOTHER-AND same FATHER!

But a new garden!!!

©Alyce Smith Cooper

San Diego, CA

10/5/2020

Sermon

Mother. Father. Creator of All.

I'm howling in rage at the undeniable injustices continuing
 With contempt for you.
 In this country,
 This experiment in consciousness

No recognition of brotherhood,
 Common decency cast aside
 Compassion consumed by the lies and greed of darkness
 Refusing to admit defeat

Mother. Father. Creator of All.

You will not be denied or continually disrespected
 Victory lives in your word remembered
 We, your people,
 Built this bitch
 By our stolen blood, sweat, tears
 Sold, shackled, shattered but spirit not extinguished

We, the people of light, arise!
 We march
 We arm
 We aim to blot out ignorant envy of who we are and what we stand for
 Spirit ignited creativity
 We will not miss our shot into eternity

We live to erase the seed of racism
 Blind to our common creation, ha!

We are the agency (agencies?) of abolition
 We declare and claim reparation, restoration, renewal
 On this land with its Native People
 And those who come seeking to grab freedom...

Hah! It ain't free

Freedom ain't free in this infant democracy
 We still longing, crafting, fighting for it
 Still rubbing the sleep from our eyes
 Remembering the nightmare of the imposters trying to steal it!

Mother. Father. Creators of All.

We belong to YOU!

©Alyce Smith Cooper
 San Diego, CA, 10/5/2020

Communion

Lord, this is a prayer for my people.
Please watch over the families whose children have passed.
Place peace in their hearts.

You say invite the people - open arms
Inside the temple...I'll find you.
But I'm inside the temple,
It's dark.

My arms are outstretched to feel for walls and I grasp space...
Looking for you to put my faith in.
And I look
Because you say when two or more gathered, you are there.
There were plenty around Floyd. I didn't see you.
There were plenty more around Breonna. And I still saw not

And you say
Turn to you, in my times of trouble.
Turn to you when I am broken.
Turn to you when I have nothing else.
I will make you whole.

Sometimes I get tired of turning.
What I want is justice.
What I want is compassion.
What I want is a way out
What I want is to live my life like they can.
What I want is the killing to stop

What would it take to bring the babies back?

Turn Brianna into the modern day Lazarus
Give Elijah three days.
Resurrect Floyd from under the knee

I'm asking you for miracles hopefully it's not too much to ask for.
Respect.

I'm in your temple
Arms stretched out
Searching
Hands up
Guide my steps...

You're all I need.

Benediction

Behold
We create together new visions of life
On this renewing Earth
We walk in the names of our Creator forever
And ever
To us, it is so
And so it is

©Alyce Smith Cooper
San Diego, CA
10/5/2020

Fellowship

So my beloveds
That's the way it was in those days

The imposters were so sure they had the people of light surrounded in a shroud of darkness
Sewn together by hatred, fears and lies

They were so drunk on pride and arrogance
They became bloated
They forged ahead, swimming in a blood of innocence
And feasting on lynched flesh

They planned to manipulate us

Ha / Huh

We the rainbow melanin peoples
The vision poets
They thought we were convinced, blinded,
Deafened to the cried out anguished last breaths
Calling for mother
Seeking compassions which were unavailable

They thought we would turn on each other
Shedding each other's blood

Ha / Huh

But then, lightning flashed
The lion roared
Our eyes popped wide
Our mouths open declaring truths of brotherhood
Unity / Victory in the light network
Silenced to the tongues of liars
We pulled down the stronghold of the -isms

Called forth the drowsy religions to wake up / Shout!

Lead with tools forged of love
We crafted community through services to each other
We grew our food from blessed seeds
Healed ourselves from the fruits, leaves, trees, vines, roots we grew

We sang our singeing songs
The divine light dissolves darkness*
Destroying hidden plots and schemes
We shifted the agencies toward true abolition, reparations

We chose to be the agencies to usher in transformation
We

The family of all
Choosing to live as one

We forged this new garden
Same mother
And same father
But a new garden

©Alyce Smith Cooper
San Diego, CA
10/5/2020

Definitions of Literary Terms

- Rhyme: The correspondence of sounds, particularly at the end of words. Examples: Fair and Square, Hocus-Pocus, Fender Bender
- Alliteration: The repetition of sounds at the beginning of words or syllables. Examples: White Water, Pretty Please, Five Fat Frogs Feeling Fairly Feverish Frequently Fall Flat...Hip Hop.
- Onomatopoeia: The use of words whose sounds suggest their meaning. Examples: Bow Wow, Swoosh, Beep
- Simile: A phrase that uses the words like or as to describe someone or something by comparing it with someone or something else that is similar. Examples: She is like a rose, As brave as a lion
- Metaphor: The definition of a metaphor is a word or phrase used to compare two unlike objects, ideas, thoughts or feelings. Examples: All the worlds a stage, He is the black sheep of the family
- Repetition: Repetition consists of repeating a word, phrase, or sentence, and is common in both poetry and prose. It is a rhetorical technique to add emphasis, unity, and/or power.
- Personification: Giving human traits to objects or ideas. Examples: Water on the lake shivers, The sunlight danced, The streets are calling me
- Hyperbole: Exaggerating to show strong feelings or affects. Examples: I will love you forever, My house is a million miles away, She'd kill me
- Symbolism: is the practice or art of using an object or a word to represent an abstract idea. Page 7
- Tone: is the attitude you feel in it; the writer's attitude toward the subject or audience
- Mood: literary element that evokes certain feelings or vibes in readers through words and descriptions.

Literary terms from [SPOKEN WORD](#) lesson developed by Venneasha Davis for Remake Learning.

Image glossary and descriptions for SERMON compiled by Shammy Dee

1 -2016 Time magazine cover. Taken by David Allen during the Baltimore protests of Freddie Gray's preventable death.

<https://time.com/magazine/us/3841445/may-11th-2015-vol-185-no-17-u-s/>

2 - IG caption: A protester takes a knee during a [#SanJose](#) protest on Friday after [#GeorgeFloyd](#)'s death in [#Minneapolis](#) [#GeorgeFloydprotest](#). On assignment for [@mercnews](#) [@ebtimes](#) by [@daisugano](#)

3 – Iesha Evans, nurse and mother to a 5 year old son, her dress flowing in the wind, as she stands before two police officers clad in full riot gear—surrounded by an entire brigade of similarly equipped officers—just moments before her arrest. In New Orleans. Photo by Jonathan Bachman

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jul/11/baton-rouge-protester-photo-iesha-evans>

4 – “Straight Voice.” A young man, illuminated by mobile phones, recites protest poetry while demonstrators chant slogans calling for civilian rule, during a blackout in Khartoum, Sudan. Photo by Yasuyoshi Chiba. It won World Press Photo of the Year 2020.

<https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/2020/39605/1/Yasuyoshi-Chiba>

5 - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., marches with other civil rights protesters during the 1963 March on Washington.

6 - Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King Jr., and Civil Rights leader John Lewis (center) cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1975, commemorating a decade since the brutal events of “Bloody Sunday.”

<https://news.gsu.edu/magazine/summer2018/following-the-footsteps-of-freedom/>

7 – A crowd at a Johannesburg, South Africa protest meeting which defied a ban on such gatherings, circa 1952.

<https://www.history.com/news/apartheid-policies-photos-nelson-mandela>

8 - On May 22, 1969, around 500 students from Central State University protested the school's limit on the number of out-of-state students admitted to the college. The demonstrators gathered at the Ohio State House. Almost every member of the large group raised their hands in protest.

9 – Mamie Bradley, mother of Emmitt Till, Mamie Bradley speaking to anti-lynching rally after acquittal of men accused of killing her son, Emmett Till, Harlem, NY

10 – Frederick Douglass, escaped slave who became a prominent activist, speaker, and author.
<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/frederick-douglass>

11 – Ax Handle Saturday. <https://aaregistry.org/story/ax-handle-saturday-a-brief-story/>

12 - A 17-year-old civil rights demonstrator, defying an anti-parade ordinance of Birmingham, Ala., is attacked by a police dog on May 3, 1963.

Not related to this picture but wonderful images of different moments during this era:
<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/05/1964-civil-rights-battles/100744/>

13 – Front page newspaper headline of Emmitt Till's murder.

14 – Breonna Taylor

15 – George Floyd

16 – John Lewis getting beaten on Bloody Sunday in front of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. In this March 7, 1965, file photo, a state trooper swings a billy club at John Lewis, right foreground, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, to break up a civil rights voting march in Selma, Ala. (AP Photo/File)

<https://www.history.com/news/selma-bloody-sunday-attack-civil-rights-movement>

17 – A member of the state militia faces off against an African-American veteran during the 1919 Chicago Race Riot.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/chicago-race-riot-of-1919>

18 – National Guardsman, called in by Mayor “Big Bill” Thompson after three days of rioting, question an African American man in Chicago, 1919. Jun Fujita / Chicago History Museum, Getty Images

19 - The story behind the iconic photo - Soiling of Old Glory:

<https://www.npr.org/2016/09/18/494442131/life-after-iconic-photo-todays-parallels-of-american-flags-role-in-racial-protes>

20 – Freedom Riders attacked in Anniston, Alabama.

<https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/may/14>

21 – City Commissioner T. Eugene “Bull” Conner uses police dogs and fire hoses on demonstrators, Birmingham, Alabama, 1963

<http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1358>

22 - View of Black Panther Party members as they demonstrate, fists raised, on Centre Street (outside the New York County Criminal Court), New York, New York, April 11, 1969.

The demonstration was about the 'Panther 21' trial, over jailed Black Panther members accused of shooting at police stations and a bombing; all of whom were eventually acquitted. Visible in the background is the New York County Criminal Court (at 100 Court Street).

<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/05/14/archives/black-panther-party-members-freed-after-being-cleared-of-charges-13.html>

<https://www.workers.org/2016/05/25321/>

23 – The Black Panther Party rallies together.

Interesting article about the BPP:

<https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/public-health-now/news/black-panther-party-stands-health>

24 – People marching against police brutality. New York, 1963. Photo by Gordon Parks.

25 – A little girl holds up a sign in San Francisco. Photo by Lynn Adler

26 – Black American youth march against segregation in St. Augustine, Florida. The Atlantic Magazine writes “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gives a young protester a pat on the back as a group of youngsters started to picket St. Augustine, Florida, on June 10, 1964.”

<https://blackbutterfly7.wordpress.com/2016/06/03/june-this-month-in-black-american-history/>

27 - Dr. Martin Luther King being shoved back by Mississippi patrolmen during the 220 mile 'March Against Fear' from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi, June 8, 1966. (Credit: Underwood Archives/Getty Images)

<https://www.history.com/news/for-martin-luther-king-jr-nonviolent-protest-never-meant-wait-and-see>

28 - Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. kneels with a group in prayer prior to going to jail in Selma, Alabama. Getty Images

<https://globalnews.ca/news/3769534/martin-luther-king-jr-take-a-knee-history/>

29 –People filling out the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/march-on-washington>

30 - Plans of a ship for transporting slaves, engraving, 1790.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Middle-Passage-slave-trade>

31 - An illustration shows slaves being shackled on board a slave ship.

32 - Circa 1850: An overseer riding past people picking cotton in a field in the southern states of America.

<https://time.com/5377803/slavery-labor-day/>

33 – Enslaved people returning from the cotton fields in South Carolina, circa 1860.

<https://www.history.com/news/slavery-profitable-southern-economy>

34 - An escaped slave named Peter showing his scarred back at a medical examination in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1863.

<https://www.history.com/news/whipped-peter-slavery-photo-scourged-back-real-story-civil-war>

35 – Possible pic of slaves in Congo during the rule of Belgium King Leopold who killed and maimed 10+ million people under his colonial rule.

36 – Unknown source. Photo of two black teens encouraging people to vote.

37 – Ruby Bridges being escorted out of school by federal marshalls.

<https://www.nps.gov/people/rubybridges.htm>

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/video/ruby-bridges-goes-to-school/>

38 – On March 25, 1964, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X meet for the first and only time.

<https://www.biography.com/news/martin-luther-king-jr-malcolm-x-meeting>

39 – I Am A Man – Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike. National Guard troops lined Beale Street during a protest on March 29 , 1968. “I was in every march, all of ’em, with that sign: I AM A MAN,” recalls former sanitation worker Ozell Ueal.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/02/12/i-am-a-man-the-1968-memphis-sanitation-workers-strike-that-led-to-mlks-assassination/>

40 - African American freshman students from North Carolina A&T (from left: Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, William Smith, and Clarence Henderson) holding a sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, February 2, 1960.

<https://snccdigital.org/events/sit-ins-greensboro/>

41 – Photo from the Freedom Summer Movement.

<https://stmuhistorymedia.org/cause-freedom-aint-free-freedom-summer-movement-in-1964-mississippi/comment-page-1/>

https://medium.com/@kirstyn_21077/freedom-now-68d68ac76e16

42 – Activist holds up a sign.

43 – Maya Angelou, poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist

44 – James Baldwin, American novelist, playwright, essayist, poet, and activist

45 - Alice Walker, American novelist, short story writer, poet, and social activist.

46 – Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors, co-founders of Black Lives Matter

47 – Stacey Abrams, American politician, lawyer, voting rights activist, and author who served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 2007 to 2017, serving as minority leader from 2011 to 2017.

48 – Protesters took to the streets of York, Pennsylvania, for the second consecutive day, Tuesday, June 2, 2020, as emotions continued to boil over the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis earlier in the week and the state of policing in America. Picture by Frank Bodani, York Daily Record

<https://www.ydr.com/story/opinion/2020/06/09/bobby-simpson-offers-advice-yorks-blm-young-protesters/5329189002/>

49 – In 1968, athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, gold and bronze medalists of the 200 m run at the Summer Olympic games in Mexico, raise their gloved fists during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner to highlight the social issues roiling the US at the time.

<https://www.history.com/news/1968-mexico-city-olympics-black-power-protest-backlash>

50 – In 2016, athlete Colin Kaepernick kneels during the National Anthem in protest of US race relations at the time.

<https://www.nfl.com/news/colin-kaepernick-explains-why-he-sat-during-national-anthem-0ap3000000691077>

51 - Rev. Charles Billups and Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth lead a kneel-in in April of 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama

Interesting article about racial reconciliation from a religious perspective:

<https://religiondispatches.org/from-kneel-ins-to-the-condemnation-of-racial-sin-the-meaning-of-the-pcas-overture-on-pursuing-racial-reconciliation/>

52 – Demonstrators from the Black Lives Matter movement march through central London on July 10, 2016, during a demonstration against the killing of black men by police in the US. Police arrested scores of people in demonstrations overnight Saturday to Sunday in several US cities, as racial tensions simmer over the killing of black men by police. / AFP / DANIEL LEAL-OLIVAS

53 – Demonstrator raise their fists at the Lincoln Memorial during a protest on June 6 in Washington, DC (AFP via Getty)

54 – Activists hold up a sign about Native Sovereignty during a DAPL protest.

55 - Native American tribes and their supporters protested against the Dakota Access Pipeline. This rally was outside the White House in 2017. Jose Luis Magana/AP

56 – Protesters stand together outside a Donald Trump rally in Orlando, Florida in March 2016. Racism in America has been a leading issue of the 2016 presidential election.

57- Demonstrator is arrested in Minneapolis during the George Floyd protests.

58 - Protesters are sprayed with pepper spray by Detroit police officers in riot gear in downtown after an afternoon march and rally against police brutality extended into the evening and became contentious on Friday, May 29, 2020 in Detroit.

<https://www.thetimesnews.com/picture-gallery/news/local/michigan/detroit/2020/05/30/protesters-gather-detroit-rally-march-against-police-brutality/5288326002/>

59 - An activist speaks to demonstrators organized by Black Lives Matter LA. The rally was in front of the Los Angeles County Hall of Justice to protest District Attorney Jackie Lacey. About 10,000 Angelenos protested police violence, the proposed LA city budget, and the death of George Floyd. June 3, 2020.

60 - Los Angeles, USA. 31st May, 2020. Protesters confront the police during a massive street protest over the killing of George Floyd in Los Angeles, the United States, May 30, 2020. Over 530 people were arrested Friday night and early Saturday after protests against police brutality turned violent in downtown Los Angeles, authorities said Saturday noon. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti announced at a press conference Saturday afternoon that a curfew will be in effect in the city's downtown beginning from 8 p.m. Saturday to 5:30 a.m. Sunday local time.

61 - Demonstrators march through the street on Oct. 13, 2014 in St Louis, Mo. The St. Louis area has been struggling to heal since riots erupted following the Aug. 9 killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown by a police officer in suburban Ferguson. Another teenager, Vonderrit Myers Jr., was killed by a St. Louis police officer on Oct. 8.

62 – A child protestor raises his fist. Caption from the IG account of the photographer. Marching yesterday with hundreds of people in downtown Brooklyn, I saw this young kid launch through his sunroof to join in protest. Jaw dropped, screaming in unison. His black power fist clenched with the angst of the zeitgeist. June 2, 2020.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-mtCRJDc2/>

63 – A 7-year old protestor raises his fist during demonstrations in June 2020.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/19/us/young-protester-atlanta-kai-ayden-cnnphotos/index.html>

64 – A 7-year old protestor lights up the internet with her passionate protest.

<https://www.liherald.com/elmont/stories/the-girl-who-lit-up-the-tweetsphere,125911>