



## TOWARDS BELONGING

*By Anjanette Maraya-Ramey/Maraya Performing Arts*

*Produced in association with the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation's*

*Arts Park @ Chollas Creek*

Curriculum Connections

Grade Level: Middle and High School



*"Toward Belonging," a La Jolla Playhouse-commissioned work that will be streamed in May as part of its Without Walls virtual programming. Pictured: Jasmine Raphael, Anjanette Maraya-Ramey (in air) and Ala Tiatia-Garaud. (Courtesy photo by Beto Soto)*

### **Before You Watch:**

- Encourage students to learn more about La Jolla Playhouse Digital [Without Walls \(WOW\)](#) Artist [Anjanette Maraya-Ramey](#) and [Maraya Performing Arts](#).
- Read these two articles in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. Have students share their learning with the class in discussion.
  - [Column: Chula Vista's new multicultural performing arts center is a dream come true.](#)
  - [La Jolla Playhouse's 'Towards Belonging' a harmonious mix of stories told through music, dance, art and poetry](#)
- Questions for class discussion or journal:

- Consider the title for this piece, TOWARDS BELONGING. What do you think this title means? What do you imagine you will be seeing, hearing, and experiencing?
- What words/images come to mind when you think about your neighborhood or community? Notice how many words you chose that have a positive or negative connotation. Why do you think you described your community this way? What do you love about your community? What would you change about your community?
- Is there a time in your life when you felt “othered” by somebody? How did that make you feel, and where in your life do you work to create inclusive spaces?
- What borders do you see in your life? Geographically, in your family, with your friends, at school? Why do borders exist?
- Introduce your students to movement exercises taught [here](#) by LJP Teaching Artists

\*Please note that there is the use of some swearing in the piece. Poetry text can be found at the end of this document.

#### **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 movement? 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)
- [Spoken Word Exploration](#): Starting on page 5 are the poetry pieces created by [Gill Sotu](#) for TOWARDS BELONGING. 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 style-share out their pieces and focus on delivery in terms of persuasion and effectiveness.
  - Creating Your Own Movement Phrase:
    - Have the students rewatch the movement pieces, this time ask them to pay careful attention to certain visual/oral cues which highlight the themes.
      - **Finger gestures** = creating the number 4; and separating the number 4 into (2) different hands. The 2 fingers make the shape of a perceived Peace Sign. From Maraya Performing Arts: “The 4 is significant because we are the City's 4th District, also known as the Diamond District. You will also see a common theme of diamonds (through the fence and the camera angles creating shapes of diamonds, through the dancers costumes (each has a piece of diamond somewhere on their bodies). Gill Sotu also introduces the thesis of the piece stating: “Everyday, they pass by diamonds and dismiss them...as coals.”
      - Each of the dancers chose their own music and language for their pieces in order to highlight the themes of the larger piece, as well as their own personal identities. Have the students look and identify how each dancer demonstrates their own [intersectional identity](#) through their movements.
- Language below about each dancer shared with permission from Maraya Performing Arts.**
- *Ala at fence = he is Queer, Hawaiian, Samoan, Filipinx = you will see strong Polynesian influence in his hips swaying).*
  - *Hannah behind the fence = she is Japanese American, born in Japan. Being behind the fence is symbolic of Executive Order 9066 when Japanese Americans were interned.*
  - *Jasmine at the iron gate bars = she is Queer, First-Generational Filipinx. She talks about breaking free and never giving up and having appreciation for what her parents sacrificed to come to America.*
  - *Alyssa at the wall and near the brick = Alyssa is half Black and half Filipina. The brick is symbolic of when racists haters would throw bricks into people's houses as a threat for them to leave. The music is inspired by "Strange Fruit" by Billie Holiday.*
- Next, have students journal or write about their own identity and what symbols, gestures, movements, objects may represent themselves.

- Then, have students watch the two linked videos from Maraya Performing Arts below. Have them notice particular movements in each phrase, and have them find a space in their room to practice movements that they would like to incorporate into their own movement piece.
  - [Video 1](#): Partnering Work
  - [Video 2](#): Common Phrase Work
- Finally, have students create their own movement phrase (could be as short as 8 counts, or more)--it can be set to music of their choice, or can be without music, or set to any of the music/sound heard in TOWARDS BELONGING. Have students share their movement phrases with the class and if they are willing to share their symbols, gestures, or objects and how they help to represent their own intersectional identities.

#### **Educators:**

- We'd love to see, hear, and experience the thoughts of your students in relation to TOWARDS BELONGING. Please feel free to share any materials with [learningandengagement@ljp.org](mailto:learningandengagement@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!](#)

Standards Addressed in these lessons:

#### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

#### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Prof.DA.Cr1 b. Experiment with the elements of dance to explore personal movement preferences and strengths and select movements that challenge skills and build on strengths in an original dance study or dance.

#### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

TOWARDS BELONGING by [Gill Sotu](#)

Some cities,  
some cities are too proud to admit it...  
But they have real trouble seeing.  
Maybe they think too much of themselves for corrective lenses...Corrective measures...  
I don't know.  
Everyday, they pass by diamonds and dismiss them...as coals.  
How LITTLE we understand about the nature of what is valuable.

INTRO before gate:

*(Gill as the gatekeeper introduces the dancers solos and stories):*

**"I have the key, you have their attention. Take off your mask. there are people coming who would like to be let in. To know you...it's ok, tell them who you are".**

WHEN DANCERS DELIBERATELY PUT ON THEIR MASKS:

*(Gill as the gatekeeper introduces the dancers when they put their masks on and explains why they sometimes have their masks on and why they are sometimes off - this describes safety and the need to code switch in different environments and around different people):*

**"Trust is hard. Vulnerable. We often only display a portion of who we are...understand a fraction of what we can become. For now, masks, but not forever...not forever."**

Some cities,  
 Some cities won't mention it...  
 But it's easy to POM POM for the aggressor when you are NOT the target/  
 When they are your stonewashed prayers answered/  
 The SPIKED VINE WALL between what's familiar,  
 and the crisis beyond your kingdom/  
 I know it feels safe where you're at,  
 bare feet digging into where the manicured grass is greener/  
 The sand is cleaner.  
 (I don't know how you are able to pull off cleaner dirt...but you did it, congratulations)  
 Where the cops are kinder  
 As long as you're their kind of...people.  
 On the other side of the vine there are times  
 where we strain our necks keeping watch for bullets and/or badges  
 When unity and uniform don't always taste right together in our collective mouths  
 May need to add some mo flavor  
 Ray Ray, go on down to Food 4 Less,  
 get me some Lawry's and Tapatio  
 We turn what's barren into bounty/Having to scarp over scraps  
 Do you realize how FUCKED UP it is to have to wait for a SOCIAL, POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC FIRE  
 in order to receive an adequate amount of city funding?  
 Our children have NO TIME to wait for your conscience.  
 For you to Charles Dickens dream your way into a sense of honor and justice/  
 The long walk towards belonging,  
 Is really a walk TOWARDS BALANCE  
 Come on and visit...  
 Do your schools, services, and supermarkets feel the same as they do here?  
 Shit's different right?  
 We built different right?  
 We bleed renaissance and resilience right?  
 We pour all we got into this pot/  
 Into our community, into our families/  
 Ray Ray done come back from the store with the Lawry's and Tapatio/  
 Come on get this sociopolitical gumbo...  
 This multi-ethnic and generational casserole  
 Try something new  
 Might learn you a thing or 3 about those who refuse to give up on themselves  
 The heart of a people/  
 Unwavering survival  
 We may not HAVE or be GIVEN much/  
 But what we got and share with the world...is undeniable

Some cities,  
 Some cities just need to be held,  
 I remember  
 In high school I once helped to tease a girl so bad she ran out of the room crying/  
 Her tears left dark stains trailing behind her upon the light choir room carpet/ I just  
 wanted to belong to those who seemingly held the power.  
 She just wanted to belong to anything and anyone safe/  
 I remember, being damn near in tears myself, trying to comfort her on the sidewalk.  
 Problem is, I am EXCELLENT at failing /  
 Ashamed at how easily wanting to belong turned to apathy,  
 Turned to isolating,  
 Turned to “othering” whomever needed to be “othered” at the moment. Targeting  
 whomever needed to be targeted at the moment.  
 And there she was, across the classroom, but we treated her HEART like it was a city away/  
 Like it didn’t matter, as long as from where we sat laughing, we couldn’t hear it break.

See Some cities,  
 Some cities just need to be held.  
 To know that if we BELONG to one another, then we are RESPONSIBLE to each other/  
 Truly.  
 The long walk towards belonging,  
 Is a walk TOWARDS BALANCE/  
 Come visit/  
 Really, come visit...  
 Break bread with us like food and community is essential to sustain life and we are some of the  
 blessed ones that happen to live in proximity to both/  
 Dance with us like we all are a part of something greater than our understanding/ Jazz and  
 mural with us like art is the key to unlocking our subconscious’ deepest questions/  
 BALANCE the weight of what WAS with the beauty of what currently is and can be/ Treat these  
 freeways as bloodlines, as blood ties  
 Why’d we spend millions of our tax dollars building them? Just to get to work?  
 We are infinitely stronger as San Diegans when we KNOW, COMMUNICATE, and PLAY  
 together...  
 (so go ahead) GET TO WORK!  
 OUR JOB IS TO WALK TOWARDS NEW BEGINNING/  
 Towards reconciliation/  
 Towards listening...  
 Towards empathy  
 Towards, belonging...

It merely takes one foot in front of the other.  
 And whenever you stop, ask your spirit...  
 Why am I not MOVING?

### **TOWARDS BELONGING - MINING SOUTHEAST (Section 2)**

Some cities...  
 Some cities won't say it,  
 but they dream in black and white.  
 Dream in division  
 in the right or wrong sides of the trolley tracks  
 anything less than that,  
 For them, becomes a nightmare.  
 Our city, our district,  
 Lives in color  
 Our breath smells of pollo and carne asada,  
 and we will NOT apologize for it,  
 These streets crack and bump like our music  
 They tried to give us chaos but we carved it into character  
 Play Doh'd it into community  
 Polished it into a Diamond District  
 An Emerald Hill, A Paradise Valley, A Chollas View, an esoteric Skyline Look  
 at those colors  
 We remixed the rainbow  
 Mama, just look at what we made  
 A village of good folks who don't look, speak, or CULTURE the same/ AND  
 THAT'S OK!  
 Southeastern San Diego,  
 BIENVENIDO A MI CASA/  
 Come outside and play...  
 We got festivals and a two story mcdonald's  
 Breath smelling like Lumpia and Pancit,  
 and we will NOT apologize for it!  
 Ask the Jacobs Center,  
 visit the parks and recs of Paradise Hills, MLK, and Encanto...  
 Peep the fresh murals  
 We are brimming to the top of the old menudo pot with TALENT(S), PLURAL! We



got something GOOD happening here/  
We literally get it Poppin' like Warner,  
Producing melanated stars with honors,  
Heisman and Olympic Gold Medal winners  
These my people!  
Breath smelling like collard greens and jerk chicken  
And we're not apologizing for nothing.  
Don't worry bout our perceived double negatives...  
We ain't perfect, but yo,  
that's the most beautiful part about it.  
We make flawed, look fabulous

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### 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.
- 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.