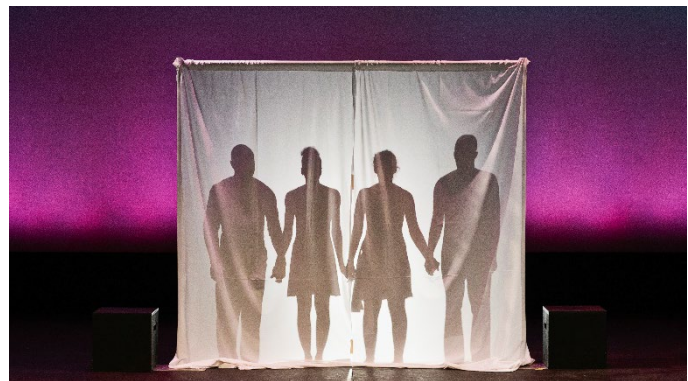


Where Blooming Flowers Meet the Sky

Curriculum Resources Introduction

Context and Classroom Resources

In 2020, civics education took a big turn. Not because the Department of Education released a new policy or because social studies teachers adopted a new approach. Rather, this seismic shift was initiated by students themselves. From the confinement of the pandemic lockdown, students along with the larger society witnessed the brutal tragedies of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor – and locally in the South Sound, Manny Ellis. Racial injustice catapulted into the center of public consciousness, and students engaged in direct action, protests, and demonstrations at a level not seen for at least a generation. In parallel, schools and school boards became highly politicized as various groups emerged to control the policies that shape school experiences and even the materials and topics addressed in the classroom.



Civics – the study of the rights and responsibilities of belonging to our society (along with our spectacular failures) moved to the center stage.

“What does the story of Civil Rights have to do with me?”



At its heart Tacoma Arts Live’s Civil Rights Legacy Tour is about inviting students to see how they fit into the ongoing story of civil rights in the United States. *Where Blooming Flowers Meet the Sky* by Darryn Cunningham is the latest play in the series and one of the best at centering the questions of equity directly in the experience of a young person.

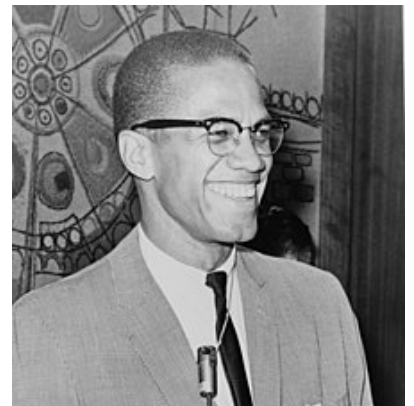
Zhuli, the central character is a rising poet and artist who is visited by the spirits of civil rights luminaries John Lewis, Nina Simone, and Malcolm X. No longer are these giants of social change relegated to black and white pictures and printed words in a textbook: instead they are in her living room! Through the course of the night before a big deadline – and with the weight of her and her brother’s experiences – these icons of change counsel and challenge Zhuli until she eventually emerges with her own vision.



That is exactly what we hope to accomplish with the performances and supporting lessons/resources for *Where Blooming Flowers Meet the Sky*. We invite you and your students to **use primary historical sources** as well as **secondary artistic works** to not only explore our common national story – but assert one’s place in it. The learning resources for this production include leveled opportunities for students of various grades to engage with historical and civic concepts and information. But the materials also challenge students to move back and forth between the Past and the Present, the Self and the Other, as they find their own voice and role in our civil society. Activities draw on **social studies, civics, the arts, language & literacy, and media**, and align to central concepts in each of these learning areas.



Like Zhuli, students may use visual art to explore these topics. Like Nina Simone, they may draw on the power of music and the performing arts to express their concerns and aspirations. Or, like Malcolm X they may draw on history and rhetoric. But, hopefully all students will emulate John Lewis, who did not wait for adults but rather engaged in the civic arena as a young person.



The collection of lessons and activities includes both pre- and post- assembly resources as well as standalone content. For questions, comments, or to share student work, please contact us at education@tacomaartslive.org.