

CONNECTING

continued ▲ from front

nizes. Elliot is wrestling with a secret addiction to painkillers, and is tormented by a brief missed connection during his time in Iraq that had tragic consequences. Odessa is five years clean, but her own pain over a tragic missed connection in Elliot's childhood jeopardizes her recovery, especially when Elliot refuses her grace that he needs himself.

Playwright Hudes, herself a musician, often finds musical inspiration for capturing the complicated rhythms of human interaction in her plays. Here she takes jazz as her inspiration—specifically the work of John Coltrane. His works, "A Love Supreme" and "Ascendance" feature a complex wall of sound that achieves a kind of transcendent dissonance. It's a fitting metaphor for attempts at connection among people who are in pain; who are worlds apart in age, geography, or experience; who are broken.

Elliot's cousin, Yaz, is a music professor who teaches about Coltrane. Disappointed in her life and relationships, she struggles with Elliot to care for an ailing Ginny and to make sense of her connection to the family, in the face of success that leaves her isolated in both the academic world and her home community.

The worlds and relationships in the play exist in a mixture of isolation and connection. Haikumom and her diverse chatroom family—a young Japanese adoptee seeking to find her birth parents; a middle-aged IRS agent who has left behind any hope of reconnection with the family he failed, and an executive who minimizes his addiction—reach, in fits and starts, to connect deeply. All have burned through relationships and long for a sense of belonging.

This production cleverly places the participants in these chatroom

conversations on small islands on the stage, where they interact with energy but in isolation from each other. The visual captures a dynamic that arguably exists in all attempts at connection. The blood family of Elliot, Yaz, Odessa, and Ginny is an interesting contrast. How much does blood matter? Physical space? Is it easier to connect in the anonymity of a chatroom? Does that matter?

The play wrestles fruitfully with such questions. The characters—addicts in all phases of recovery, the educated, the poor, the grieving, the unforgiven—fail each other in small ways, reel from the pain of past failures, shut each other out, judge too harshly. But also, sometimes, they come through for one another. It's not didactic; there is no moral to the story. Rather, the play is a call to connection, and a depiction of just how messy and beautiful that can be.

You can catch "Water by the Spoonful" at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland from September to November. Among the other terrific options at OSF this summer and fall are "The Cocoanuts" (a boisterous Marx Brothers' musical that feels hilariously contemporary); "Two Gentlemen of Verona" (delightfully staged with an all-female cast—what bliss to watch women sample the rich array of roles typically denied them!), and "Richard III" (featuring a wonderfully ruthless king with a biting wit).

Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. She also serves on the board of directors of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Her movie review column *Opinionated Judge* appears regularly in *The Portland Observer*. You can find her movie blog at opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.

UO Senior Earns Scholarship

Kelsy L. Alston, an upcoming senior at the University of Oregon, was the first recipient of 40 \$1,000 journalism scholarships awarded by the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation scholarship committee during the NNPA's annual convention June 25-28 in Portland.

This is the fourth year in which the foundation has awarded journalism scholarships to deserving students throughout the nation. Students receiving the awards must be majoring in journalism, mass communications, multi-media or English and must have at least a 3.0 average in their major field. They are also chosen based on a recommendation from a school official and the candidate must also write an essay on why they think they deserve the scholarship.

Alston received a strong recommendation from Dr. Karla Kennedy, scholarship journalism outreach coordinator at the University of Oregon. Kennedy also attended the awards banquet during the NNPA convention.

The foundation has awarded a total of 116 journalism scholarships over the past three years with the help of generous sponsors. The support for the upcoming year includes Ford, General Motors, Pepsico and Chrysler. The chairperson of the NNPAF scholarship committee is Jackie Hampton, publisher of the Mississippi Link newspaper in Jackson, Miss.



Kelsy L. Alston

A Hidden History

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publicly whipped every six months until they left, a penalty now more commonly referred to as "lash laws."

Imarisha says this law and others dictated what black people could and could not do, and the punishment they could face was purposely designed as a message for African Americans to stay away from the state.

Whether it be on-the-book laws outlawing interracial marriage, real estate covenants confining black people to particular parts of town, or even de-facto segregation of the state's public schooling system, Imarisha says every one of Oregon's historic institutions eco-

nomically benefited the majority white population by disenfranchising black people.

For example, Imarisha points to the state's largest city, Portland, calling it a "white playground."

"The excess resources that allow Portland to be such a 'liberal livable city'—as long as you are middle class and white—are available because Oregon never intended to serve the needs of anyone but its white population," she says. "[Because of that] it is embedded in all of our institutions that shape every one of our lives, and has been reinforced and reaffirmed for centuries."

While it's vital for Oregonians to realize that there are no longer laws overtly stating what black people

can do, there is now a coded racialization that targets minorities to this day, she says.

"We have been taught by media and other institutions that gang member means Black and Latino youth, just like we have been taught that undocumented means Latino, and terrorist means Arab/Middle Eastern. So while we were told laws like Measure 11 would lock up criminals, we actually see that it has a racialized impact, and that people who have committed the same crimes are treated markedly differently based on their race," says Imarisha.

Despite this intentional targeting of blacks in the state, Imarisha says the mere existence of black communities in Oregon is solely because of the people's determination, creativity, resilience, community-building, and resistance.

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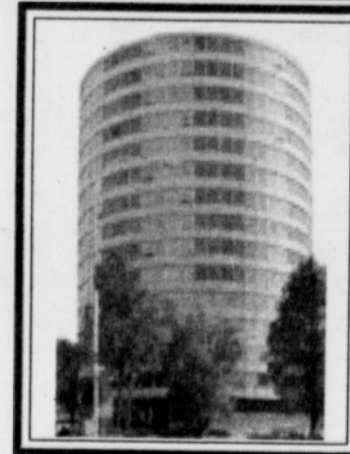
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