

Black Voices Ring with Clarity, Integrity

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tions, and with flashbacks of G. K. and her partner, Natalie, back in the mid-1960s, when G. K.'s writing was taking off. In a very different time from now, these two women love each other but both social pressure and the lure of artistic inspiration drive them apart.

It's a play about black people apart from the white gaze; they suffer but the play is not about black suffering. It's about love, and intimacy, and mistakes, and artistic inspiration, and mistakes one makes and seeds one plants in one's youth that bear fruit you may never see. It's also about *how to catch creation* -- How does one become a parent? Who creates a child, and how do they do it? What inspires creativity? Why does it feel so precious? Can creation and intimacy co-exist? What makes one an artist?

Anderson's play savors these questions without answering them. It gives us the opportunity to watch these six characters struggle with these questions, which is itself something to savor--because when do we get to

see black people with agency struggle with meaning on stage? Not often enough--and Anderson's play prioritizes the voices of black queer women. G. K., an invented character, stands in for a host of black women writers (Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Pat Parker, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, and so many more) who fought to be heard and to avoid erasure, and whose voices ring with clarity borne of struggle. In this play, black queer women lead the way for six people fighting to speak and love and live with integrity. With a uniformly excellent cast and as directed by Nataki Garrett, the new artistic director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, this production is especially worth making the trip to Ashland before it closes in October.

Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. Her movie review column Opinionated Judge appears regularly in The Portland Observer. Find her movie blog at opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.



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In the tradition of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, people have been making these origami Soul Boxes as a way to remember victims of gun violence. The Soul Box Project was started by a Portland artist and a current display is now showing at Milwaukie City Hall through the month of August.

Taking Aim at Gun Violence

Origami boxes represent the toll of lives lost

The Soul Box Project is a national community art project created by a Portland studio artist to raise the awareness to the epidemic of gun violence. In the tradition of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the project is collecting one handmade origami box for every person killed or injured by gunfire in the US since 2014.

Displayed in public spaces to draw attention to the number of people shot in gun violence, accidents, defense and suicides, the Soul Box Project has collected more than 50,000 3-x3-inch origami boxes from across the country to date. Each box represents one life, one soul gunned down.

Leslie Lee, founder of the Soul Box Project, believes that when people come face to face with thousands and thousands of boxes representing victims, they'll understand the enormity of the

gunfire epidemic and be inspired to take action, from enrolling in gun handling classes to securing firearms, to working towards gun-sense legislation.

Currently, the public is invited to take a look at a Soul Box exhibit now showing through the month of August at Milwaukie City Hall, 10722 S.E. Main St. Soul Box project volunteers have spent the summer doing outreach and area residents have created hundreds of boxes for the project. Earlier this year, a soul box display was presented in northeast Portland.

The goal is to take at least 200,000 Soul Boxes to the National Mall in Washington, D.C. next year, during the election year 2020.

"Soul Boxes can be made for any person killed or injured by gunfire. It can be healing for anyone experiencing this loss. No matter how or why a person is shot, people grieve," says Lee. "The collective spirit of people coming together to take action, to remember and to heal continues to inspire me."

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