Introduction

"Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it."—Augusto Boal

The purpose and goal of Mosaic’s education department is simple. Our program aims to further and cultivate students’ knowledge and passion for theatre and theatre education. We strive for complete and exciting arts engagement for educators, artists, our community, and all learners in the classroom. Mosaic’s education program yearns to be a conduit for open discussion and connection to help students understand how theatre can make a profound impact in their lives, in society, and in their communities.

Mosaic Theater Company of DC is thrilled to have your interest and support!

Written by Shirley Serotsky
Mosaic Theater Company of DC PRESENTS

Fabulation
Or, the Re-Education of Undine

By Lynn Nottage | Directed by Eric Ruffin

Set Andrew Cohen
Lights John D. Alexander
Costumes Moyenda Kulemeka
Sound Cresent R. Haynes
Properties Willow Watson
Movement Consultant Rashida Bumbray
Rhythm/Musical Consultant Christylez Bacon
Dialect Coach Kim James Bey
Dramaturg Faedra Chatard Carpenter
Stage Managers April E. Carter*
Laurel VanLandingham*
Assistant Director Jared Smith

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Fabulation Or, The Re-Education of Undine, is a social satire that follows successful and high-powered African-American publicist Undine Barnes Calles on an unexpected journey, after her smooth-talking but dishonest husband Hervé disappears with her hard-earned fortune. Suddenly bankrupt, homeless, and pregnant, Undine returns to her childhood home in Brooklyn’s Walt Whitman projects, where she reunites with the family and friends she attempted to leave behind. There she faces the realities of her new life, rediscovers where she came from, and gains a fresh perspective on her priorities for her future.
Characters

FELICIA CURRY as
Undine
A high-powered executive at a PR firm who loses everything, but gains a sense of perspective in the process; a self-made woman who endures with humor and honesty

Ensemble

Aakhu TuahNera Freeman as
Grandma: Undine’s grandmother, who recently became addicted to heroin

William T. Newman, Jr., as
Father: Undine’s father, he resents the way Undine left her family behind

Carlos Saldaña as
Hervé: Undine’s suave but dishonest husband
Guy: Undine’s romantic interest, whom she meets when she accidentally ends up in rehab, he is an optimist and an aspiring firefighter

Lauryn Simone as
Stephie: Undine’s assistant at the PR firm

Kevin E. Thorne II as
Flow: Undine’s brother, who works as a security guard and writes free-flowing hip-hop rhymes that look at the struggles of black existence and are inspired by the Brer Rabbit fable

James Whalen as
Accountant: Undine’s financial advisor, who shares the news of her bankruptcy with her

Roz White as
Mother: Undine’s mother, who works as a security guard and is more willing to welcome Undine back into the family
About the Artists

Lynn Nottage (Playwright) is a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright and a screenwriter. Her plays have been produced widely in the United States and throughout the world. Her most recent play, *Mlima’s Tale*, premiered at the Public Theater in May 2018. In the spring of 2017, *Sweat* (Pulitzer Prize, Obie Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Tony Nomination, Drama Desk Nomination) moved to Broadway after a sold out run at The Public Theater. It premiered and was commissioned by Oregon Shakespeare Festival American Revolutions History Cycle/Arena Stage. Lynn Nottage’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Ruined* has received an Obie, the Lucille Lortel Award, New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award, Drama Desk Award, and Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Play (Manhattan Theatre Club, Goodman Theatre). Other plays include *Intimate Apparel* (New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play; Roundabout Theatre, Centerstage, South Coast Repertory); *Fabulation Or, The Re-Education of Undine* (Obie Award; Playwrights Horizons, London’s Tricycle Theatre); *Crumbs from the Table of Joy; Las Meninas; Mud, River, Stone; Por’knockers,* and *Poof!* Nottage is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2007 MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant,” the National Black Theatre Festival’s August Wilson Playwriting Award, the 2004 PEN/Laura Pels Award for Drama, and the 2005 Guggenheim Grant for Playwriting, as well as fellowships from the Lucille Lortel Foundation, Manhattan Theatre Club, New Dramatists, and New York Foundation for the Arts. She is a member of The Dramatists Guild, an alumna of New Dramatists and a graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama, where she is a visiting lecturer. www.lynnnottage.net

Eric Ruffin (Director) Recent directing credits include *A Raisin in the Sun* for Lyric Rep, *Three Cheers for Grace* for Young Playwright’s Theatre, *Sarafina!* (Kennedy Center and Mann Center), *Black Nativity* for Theater Alliance (11 Helen Hayes Nominations/3 Awards including Best Musical), *2-2 Tango* at Studio Theatre, *Christmas Gift* at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, *A Raisin in the Sun* at Crossroads Theatre, *Old Settler* for The African Continuum Theatre Company, *Gutta Beautiful* at New Federal Theatre, *New Kid* for Imagination Stage, and the critically acclaimed New Jersey premiere of *Topdog/Underdog* for Luna Stage. He has also directed *Radio Golf*, *Hurt Village*, *Venus*, *Passing Strange*, and *Cut Flowers* at the Ira Aldridge Theatre (Howard University) in addition to *In The Blood*, *Antigone*, *In Arabia We’d All Be Kings*, *Jesus Hopped the “A” Train* and *Our Lady of 121st Street* for the Rutgers Theatre Company. Ruffin holds a B.F.A. in Theatre Arts from Howard University and an MFA in Directing from Rutgers University. He is a Society for Stage Directors and Choreographers Associate and currently serves as a Woolly Mammoth board member. He is a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect and a recipient of the Drama League Directing Fellowship. He has also been honored with a Shakespeare Theatre Acting Fellowship, and the Princess Grace Grant for Dance.
EDUCATORS: To best prepare your students for your trip to Mosaic Theater Company of DC, consider these Pre Show Activities that you can do together in class.

MUSIC LISTENING: Take a listen to our generated Spotify playlist to help set the tone and the mood for the play: https://spoti.fi/2Zd98Iq
1. Reyna’s Interlude - Rapsody
2. Free Your Mind - En Vogue
3. Confessions - Usher
4. Boss - Little Simz
5. At the Top - Princess Nokia
6. Truth - Mark Ronson
7. Picture Perfect - Little Simz
8. Hungry Hippo - Tierra Whack
9. Drew Barrymore - SZA
10. Japo Kidogo - Otile Brown
11. Childs Play - SZA
12. Q.U.E.E.N. - Janelle Monáe
13. 101 FM - Little Simz
14. Black - Innanet James
15. Yoga - Janelle Monáe
16. Pilolo - GuiltyBeatz
17. Selfish - Little Simz
18. Broke - Ari Lennox
19. Gonna Have A Funky Good Time - James Brown
20. Girls - Innanet James
21. FOR MY PEOPLE - Joey Bada$$
22. Changes - DeJ Loaf
23. Shade - IAMMDB
24. Yego - Khaligraph Jones
Dramaturgical Essays

The Indefinable Ingenuity of Lynn Nottage

By Faedra Chatard Carpenter, Production Dramaturg

Brooklyn-born and raised, the playwright Lynn Nottage—informed by myriad experiences such as parochial school, an arts high school, Brown and Yale Universities, and four years as a national press officer with Amnesty International—emerged as a professional playwright in the early 1990s. Since that time, Nottage’s innumerable accolades speak for themselves, among them: two Pulitzer Prizes (one for Ruined in 2009 and the other for Sweat in 2017). A notable asterisk for these achievements: as of this writing, Nottage joins August Wilson as the only other playwright of color to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama twice, and, moreover, she is the only woman—of any race—to be awarded that distinction.

In other words, Lynn Nottage is a darn good playwright.

Of course, “darn good” is an understatement. It is common knowledge that Lynn Nottage is quite extraordinary. She is not only celebrated for her sharp, resonant dialogue and vivid characterizations, but she is a master of comedy and satire as well as searing, soul-searching drama. Subsequently, she has the uncanny ability to capitalize on both the weight and levity of a given scenario, whether it is inspired by conventional day-to-day routines, anomalous life-or-death predicaments, or the sheer ubiquity of life’s unpredictability. The astounding variety of subjects and styles found in Nottage’s writing has resulted in a recurring refrain among those familiar with her canon. Artists and scholars alike frequently refer to Nottage’s “complexity,” readily observing the absence of an identifiable “writerly voice” among her plays.

This is not to say, however, that Nottage’s works are void of any commonality—quite to the contrary. In an interview with the Washington Post’s Celia Wren, Nottage acknowledged both the diversity and central focus of her writing: “My plays are stylistically different yet thematically similar [...] What ties them all together is, by and large, women from the African diaspora, women who, in some regards, are marginalized by the culture at large.”

Certainly, Undine, the central protagonist in Fabulation Or, the Re-Education of Undine, is such a woman. In her attempt to escape marginalization, however, Undine makes choices that bring forth their own set of challenges. What transpires is a journey that not only makes an outrageously entertaining play, but it also provides potent socio-political commentary about our society’s tenuous value systems and the precarious reality of supposed fiscal security.

So, we have all that within this rags-to-riches-to-rags story, plus moments of laughter and despair, as well as the conjuring of African deities, Germanic folklore, Brer Rabbit Tales—and much, much more. Emblematic of her much-lauded complexity, Fabulation Or, the Re-Education of Undine, is a model microcosm of Lynn Nottage’s expansive oeuvre, giving further credence to the fact that Nottage is one of the most well-versed, exciting, and impactful playwrights in our contemporary moment. And that is no understatement.
The Wonderful Brer Rabbit Story

By Faedra Chatard Carpenter, Production Dramaturg

FLOW: I’m exploring the role of the trickster in American mythology. I am using Brer Rabbit, classic trickster... We love, but we despise him. We admire, yet rebuke. We embrace, yet we push away. This glorious duality enlivens and imprisons him. Because ain’t he only hunting for “a way out of no way,” as it’s been said. And so you know, the poem is not about Brer Rabbit, he is merely a means to convey a truth... It is open-ended. A work in progress. A continuous journey...

— Fabulation Or, The Re-Education of Undine

A number of notable scholars have addressed how the mythic figurations of West Africa’s duplicitous deity, Esu Elegba, survived the Middle Passage to be born anew in the cultural expressions of enslaved Africans and their successive progeny. Without question, Elegba’s most notable (and, perhaps, notorious) American descendent is the character of Brer Rabbit, a “double-voiced” trickster figure made famous in the Uncle Remus stories that were collected and compiled by the Atlanta journalist, Joel Chandler Harris, at the tum of the 20th century.

While Harris popularized the tales of Brer Rabbit and his fellow critters through the publication of several anthologies (beginning in 1881 with Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings), he was always forthcoming in noting that his stories were not entirely of his own divining, but rather were drawn from African American folklore. What was wholly original to the Uncle Remus tales, however, was the creation of Uncle Remus himself—a character that was heartily embraced by white audiences through the first half of the 20th century, but later became the subject of modern day contention and debate.

Crafted according to the racial stereotypes of Harris’ time in both speech and cadence, Uncle Remus was a character that was designed to embody an idealized visage of a politically and physically impotent black male. The Uncle Remus of Harris’ imagination was a man who seemed satisfied with his lot in life, ever-content with doting on his white charge and relishing in his simple existence—an undoubtedly welcomed image in the wake of America’s tumultuous post-Reconstruction era. Nevertheless, despite the well-founded critiques regarding the racist elements of the famed Uncle Remus tales, Harris’ racialized lens must be separated from the artistic significance of the Brer Rabbit tales themselves and what they represent in terms of African American culture, folklore, and history. Within the tales Brer Rabbit is a duplicitous trickster who repeatedly manages — through wit as well as menace — to escape and conquer his primary rival, Brer Fox. One such notable, oft-referenced example of this narrative is found in “The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story”:

One day, Brer Fox comes up with a fool-proof plan to catch Brer Rabbit; he decides to bait and trap the rabbit using a doll made of tar. After mixing up a batch of tar and turpentine, Brer Fox shaped his concoction until it resembled a small child—his “Tar-Baby.” The fox then placed his Tar-Baby on the side of the road and hid himself in some nearby bushes, waiting quietly for Brer Rabbit to pass. Just as Brer Fox expected, Brer Rabbit came by, spied the Tar-Baby, and greeted him warmly. The Tar-Baby, of course, didn’t answer. So, being the gracious fellow he was, Brer Rabbit tried again to engage in pleasantries with the Tar-Baby, but she still didn’t respond. Assuming that the Tar-Baby was a little deaf, Brer Rabbit tried to talk a little louder, but the Tar-Baby still didn’t answer. Now thoroughly offended by the Tar-Baby’s apparent aloofness, Brer Rabbit started to threaten her into being polite until, finally, Brer Rabbit found himself
throwing punches at the Tar-Baby. After throwing his fists (and getting them stuck, one by one), Brer Rabbit resorted to kicking his feet, and then, in a moment of utter frustration, even butted the Tar Baby with his head—only to find himself thoroughly and completely stuck.

At this point, Brer Fox—who was mighty pleased with himself—sauntered out of his hiding place, laughing at poor Brer Rabbit and taunting him with his plans for “rabbit barbeque.” Brer Rabbit, in turn, expressed due humbleness and began pleading to Brer Fox, insisting that he was fully prepared for his inevitable fate, but begging that the fox grant him one grace: “please, Brer Fox, don’t fling me into that briar patch!” Brer Rabbit explained that Brer Fox could hang him, drown him, skin him, snatch out his eyeballs, tear out his ears, or even cut off his legs—he was ready for almost anything—except being thrown into that briar-patch. Hearing Brer Rabbit’s plea convinced Brer Fox that there was only one way to really hurt Brer Rabbit. So, Brer Fox took that rabbit by the back legs and swung him high and clear, throwing him right into the middle of that forsaken briar-patch! After a bit of a flutter, there was nothing but silence.

But then, Brer Fox heard someone call his name. The fox looked up to see Brer Rabbit on top of a hill on the other side of the briar patch. Combing the tar out of his hair, Brer Rabbit sat upon a log, laughing and hollering at the sullen fox: “I was born in a briar patch, Brer Fox, bred and born in a briar patch!” And with that, Brer Rabbit hopped out of sight.

Delightful tales like “The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story,” captivated and continue to enchant folks, young and old. However, considering the source of these tales (as well as some of the more sobering, even violent-narratives), these stories offer more than entertainment; they provide unique insight into slave life and culture, with Brer Rabbit representing enslaved African Americans and Brer Fox representing their white masters. In reflecting upon the significance and multi-layered meanings of the Brer Rabbit tales, Historian Lawrence Levine notes that:

The white master could believe that the rabbit stories his slaves told were mere figments of a childish imagination... Blacks knew better. The trickster's exploits, which overturned the neat hierarchy of the world in which he was forced to live, became their exploits; the justice he achieved, their justice; the strategies he employed, their strategies. From his adventures they obtained relief; from his triumphs they learned hope (“Introduction,” Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings, p. 25).

In other words, the tales—just like Brer Rabbit himself—are "double-voiced," presenting differing life-lessons for those willing and able to interpret their folkloric mediations. Through their coded fictions these stories illustrate strategies for physical and emotional survival and offer “the possibility of imagining a revolutionary change”; lessons and aspirations that are as relevant today as they were during American slavery (Robert Hemenway, "Introduction," p. 30)

Thus, it is poetically befitting that Fabulation's hip-hop griot, Flow, utilizes the trope of Brer Rabbit, recognizing that the poems, stories, and songs about Brer Rabbit are not about Brer Rabbit as much as they are a "means to convey a truth." Likewise, in conveying its own truths, Fabulation Or, The Re-Education of Undine reminds us that life is “open-ended. A work in progress. A continuous journey.” Moreover, Nottage's play cautions us to recognize that regardless of whether we are black or white, rich or poor, we will all find ourselves at the crossroads one day, thrust into a situation where we must use our wits and will to "make a way out of no way.”
Discussion Themes

**Social Mobility:** Up and down the social ladder

**Self-fashioning:** Fulfilling our self narratives

**Family Ties:** Acknowledging family history

**Addiction:** When substance dependence hits close to home

**The Black Middle Class:** How race plays a role in social mobility

Activities After the Play

**SCENE STUDY**

In this monologue, Undine recounts the day she disowned her family and her history. With equal parts adoration and regret, she finally recognizes the past she abandoned in order to will a new future into existence.

**UNDINE:** Because mostly I feel rage. *(Undine realizes the addicts are eavesdropping and finds herself including them in her confessional.*) Anger, which I guess is a variation of rage and sometimes it gives way to panic, which in my case is also a variation of rage. I think it's safe to say that I have explored the full range of rage. And it has been with me for so long, that it's comforting. I'm trying to move beyond it, sometimes I even think I have, but mostly I'm not a very good human being. Sometimes I'm less than human, I know this, but I can't control it. I killed my family. *(A collective gasp.)* Yes, I killed them. It was on the day of my college graduation. Dartmouth. My family drove 267 miles in a rented minivan, loaded with friends and relatives eager to witness my ceremony. They were incredibly proud, and why not? I was the first person in the family to graduate from college. They came en masse, dressed in their Alexander's best. Loud, overly eager, lugging picnic baskets filled with fragrant ghetto food ... let's just say their enthusiasm overwhelmed me. But I didn't mind, no, I didn't mind until I over-heard a group of my friends making crass unkind comments about my family. They wondered aloud who belonged to *those* people. It was me. I should have said so. I should have said that my mother took an extra shift so I could have a new coat every year. My father sent me ten dollars every week, his Lotto money. But instead I locked myself in my dorm room and refused to come out to greet them. And I decided on that day, that I was Undine Barnes, who bore no relationship to those people. I told everyone my family died in a fire, and I came to accept it as true. It was true for years. Understand, Sharona had to die in a fire in order for Undine to live. At least that's what I thought. What I did was awful, and I'm so so sorry. And, Guy, you are such a good, decent man. And I wouldn't blame you if you walked away right now. But I don't want you to. I feel completely safe with you.
Questions:

1. Undine describes killing her family, but she doesn’t mean it literally. What does she mean?

2. Think about a time you had to let something meaningful go in order to move forward; how did you feel about this decision? What did you lose? What did you gain?

3. Undine describes herself as angry, but her language doesn’t suggest that she expresses anger throughout this: how might you interpret the emotions of the monologue? How might these affect your vocal and physical choices?

WRITING PROMPTS

When Lynn Nottage was asked in a 2015 interview with the web publication *The Interval* about her writing process she explained, “I find it changes with every piece. I approach each play that I write as a new adventure. I love to travel and I like to go off the beaten path and I think I’ve used that same philosophy with writing. I don’t want to write the play the same way, otherwise I’ll get bored.” Every writer has their own methods for finding inspiration, and as Nottage states above, that can change from play to play. We challenge you to respond to the following writing prompts, inspired by *Fabulation*, to get your own creative juices flowing!

1. Think about a person you grew up with, or knew when you were younger, with whom you’ve since lose touch. Imagine the conversation you would have with them if you encountered them now. What memories would you bring up? What questions do you wish you could ask them? Write that dialogue now.

2. Consider a member of your family, or a friend, that you once hurt through an action or behavior. Write them a letter explaining why you did what you did. Think about whether you want to apologize, and how you might do that.

3. Picture one of your neighbors — from now or from your past. Write a character sketch for that person. What would they be wearing? How do they talk? What was most memorable about them? Help your reader picture them; include vivid and rich details.
**Vocabulary**

**Ashe:** “Ashe is power, generative energy, life-force. It is present in all things, concrete and abstract. Humans, animals, plants, rocks, bodies of water, hills, savannahs, forests-ashe, in varying degrees, is everywhere and in every thing...In this respect, ashe should be understood as the prolific presence of the Deity within everything in the universe... Art historian Robert F. Thompson refers to ashe as the "power-to-make-things-happen ... God's own enabling light rendered accessible to man and woman."... In prayers and sacrifice, ashe is invoked to ensure the efficacy of the act or ritual... Or to extract the potency of an herb used for curing a disease of healing the soul. ..or it is used as an affirmation, as in "so be it!" (See Miguel Ramos, "Ashe: Divine Essence of Existence.")

**B-Boy:** A person devoted to hip-hop. According to Wikipedia: "The term originates with the first hip hop DJ, Kool DJ Herc, who, noticing the reaction of some dancers to his playing the part of the record with a drum break, named them break-boys or B-boys. It quickly came to include any follower of hip hop, identifiable by clothing habits, listening tastes or lifestyle, but has returned in latter years to the more specific usage in connection with dance."

**Brer Rabbit:** The central figure and prankster in the "Uncle Remus" stories collected by Joel Chandler Harris. While Harris popularized the stories through his anthologies (beginning with Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings first published in 1881), they are actually drawn from African American folklore and most can be traced to West African storytelling and mythology.

**Brokerage House:** A brokerage house is a company licensed to buy and sell stocks and securities. There were many scandals about heads of brokerage houses embezzling money in the mid 90s.

**Cowrie Shells:** A smooth, egg-shaped snail shell used in the art of Yoruba divination. The cowrie is the symbol of Yemaya, the Great Goddess and mother of all the gods, who is also represented by fish. Yemaya is a West African creation goddess, often depicted as a mermaid. She is associated with the moon, the ocean and female mysteries. Typically portrayed as a beautiful woman, Yemaya governs the household and intervenes in women's affairs. She is a merciful goddess, invoked by women for aid in childbirth, love and healing. She rules over the conception and birth of children and ensures their safety during childhood.

As a creation goddess, Yemaya's womb spilled forth the fourteen Yoruba goddesses and gods, and the breaking of her uterine waters caused a great flood, which created the oceans. From her body the first human woman and man, who became the parents of all mortal beings on earth, were born.

**Desert Storm:** Operation Desert Storm, popularly known as the first Gulf War or the Persian Gulf War (August 1990-February 1991). While soldiers of Desert Storm have reportedly suffered from the psychological trauma that is an inescapable consequence of military combat, many soldiers have also been specifically diagnosed with "Gulf War Syndrome." "This illness has been diagnosed in an overwhelming number of Desert Storm veterans and is signified by a wide-range of symptoms, such as chronic fatigue, loss of muscle control, headaches, dizziness and loss of balance, memory problems, muscle and joint pain, indigestion, skin problems, shortness of breath, and even insulin resistance. Brain cancer deaths,.....Lou Gehrig's disease and fibromyalgia are now recognized by the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments as potentially connected to service during the Gulf War."

**Double Dutch:** A jump-roping skills game utilizing two long jump ropes and at least three players (two "turners" and at least one jumper). Double Dutch's popularity is undergoing a resurgence, resulting in a comprehensive competitive network as well as exercise classes for adults.

**Eartha Kitt:** Recently passing at the age of 81, Kitt was an international African American performer who has distinguished herself in film, theater, cabaret, music and on television. Miss Kitt is one of only a handful of performers to be nominated for a Tony (three times),
the Grammy (twice), and Emmy Award (twice). Her most distinctive trademarks is her husky, "cat-like" voice (she portrayed Catwoman in the 1967 television series) and her slinky sensuality. She worked her way up from a life of dire poverty and a fragmented home life to fabulous wealth.

Elegba: (Also known as Eshu/Esu Elegua, Elegbara, among other variations). Yoruban messenger deity. A protective god who guards a person's fate. He is also a trickster and is responsible for a person's destiny being thrown into disarray.

Fabulation: The act of inventing or relating of fabulous tales (dictionary definition).

Fish: Fish imagery pervades this play. Undine's name is taken from a type of water spirit, the cowrie shells used by the dubious Yoruba priest evoke Yemaya, goddess of the ocean and creation. Some people say dreaming of fish symbolizes finding a revelation, or is a symbol of increasing fertility or wealth. Dream "Fish" can also represent pregnancy.

Flamenco: "Generic term for a particular body of song, dance and guitar music, mostly from Andalusia ... Many different metres are used, sometimes in combination, and cross rhythms are provided by heel-stamping and similar devices. Accompaniment is normally played on a guitar (or more than one guitar), which provides an introduction and has a dual role as both solo and accompanying instrument." (see www.answers.com)

Fort Greene: Brooklyn neighborhood once famous for its tough reputation, now being slowly gentrified with restored townhouses and fancy shops.

Geechie (also Geechee, often used interchangeably with Gullah): a term commonly referring to the African descendants of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Gambia, and Senegal who reside on coastal South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The Geechie/Gullah people often speak a Creole language known as Gullah.


Green Beret: A member of the U.S. Army's special forces unit. According to the US Army's website, Green Beret missions "are conducted worldwide and are sometimes classified. They range from Counterterrorism missions to humanitarian efforts to Unconventional Warfare." In order to qualify for the Green Beret special forces, one must: "be mentally and physically tough, endure difficult training and face all challenges head-on." In addition you must be a male, "age 20-30; be a U.S. citizen; be a high school diploma graduate; achieve a General Technical score of 107 or higher and a combat operation score of 98 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery; qualify for a secret security clearance; qualify and volunteer for airborne training; take Defense Language Aptitude Battery or Defense Language Proficiency Test; achieve a minimum of 60 points on each event and overall minimum score of 229 on the Army Physical Fitness Test; and successfully complete the Pre-Basic Task list." (see goarmy.com)

Green card: Formerly identified by its green color, a "green card" is a term used for the alien registration card that is carried by permanent resident aliens in the United States. “Permanent resident status is a first step in becoming a naturalized citizen. It is evidence of a person's status as a lawful permanent resident with the right to live and work permanently in the United States. There is no time restriction, as long as the Green Card holder is a permanent resident of the USA. There are several ways you can obtain a Green Card: Marriage to a United States citizen, Through Investment, Through Employment, As a Special Immigrant, Green Card Lottery (DV Lottery Program)."

Heroin addiction: To some physicians, heroin addiction is similar to diabetes in that both are "chronic diseases that require long-term treatment." You could use diabetes as a cover for heroin addiction to justify frequent injections.

Heroin is a highly addictive drug that is used in various ways. In addition to the classic injection method, it can be snorted, sniffed and smoked, depending mainly on the purity of the drug and the preference of the user.

Shortly after injecting heroin, users report that they feel a surge or "rush" of euphoria, dry mouth, a warm flushing of the skin, and heaviness in the extremities.
After this initial euphoric feeling, users will enter a state that alternates between drowsiness and wakefulness, during which mental functioning becomes hazy. Those who snort or smoke heroin may not feel the intense rush that injection users feel but will experience the same other effects. Traditionally, the majority of people seeking treatment for heroin abuse were injection drug users, but the availability of pure heroin has created a shift toward sniffing and smoking the drug, particularly among young users.

FROM: “The Various Ways Heroin is Taken,” by Buddy T., www.verywellmind.com

Hundred Black Women: The National Coalition of 100 Black Women: National organization, founded in 1981 (but whose roots go back to older organizations in New York) and dedicated to promoting and celebrating leadership roles for black women. Their emphasis is “to develop leaders to rebuild our communities”

Jay-Z: The hip-hop mogul who grew up in another Brooklyn project, the Marcy Houses.

JPMorgan Chase & Company: One of the oldest, and presently one of the most stable, financial service firms in the world.

Langston Hughes: Acclaimed poet, playwright, lyricist and prose writer who wrote of the beauty as well as the challenges of the African American experience. Hughes was one of the central figures of the Harlem Renaissance and in later years was often referred to as “The Poet Laureate of the Negro Race.”

Martha’s Vineyard: An island off the United States east coast (south of Cape Cod). Previously known as a “summer colony” (its year-round inhabitants have markedly increased since the 1960s), Martha’s Vineyard has traditionally been a vacation spot frequented by upper middle-class African Americans (to that end, it served as the site for the nostalgic film The Inkwell).

Methadone: “Taken orally once a day, methadone suppresses narcotic withdrawal for between 24 and 36 hours. Because methadone is effective in eliminating withdrawal symptoms, it is used in detoxifying opiate addicts. It is, however, only effective in cases of addiction to heroin, morphine, and other opioid drugs, and it is not an effective treatment for other drugs of abuse. Methadone reduces the cravings associated with heroin use and blocks the high from heroin, but it does not provide the euphoric rush. Consequently, methadone patients do not experience the extreme highs and lows that result from the waxing and waning of heroin in blood levels. Ultimately, the patient remains physically dependent on the opioid, but is freed from the uncontrolled, compulsive, and disruptive behavior seen in heroin addicts.” However, Methadone is a controlled substance and it, too, can lead to addiction, overdose, and possible death.

Neo-Afric: “Neo-African” -contemporaneous subjects of the African diaspora. The term also suggests a social and nationalistic consciousness.

Nouveau Riche: A French term meaning “newly rich” (in other words, “new money). This term is often used with some denigration since it makes social and class distinctions according to acculturation and lineage. Typically the “nouveau riche” are viewed as more ostentatious in their wealth than the “old rich” because they are insecure in their status or are not considered to possess the sense of “class” and style that comes from a lifetime of privilege (see www.dairiburger.com).

Nzingha: Queen of Ndongo (present-day Angola), 1582-1663. Orisha: A Yoruba deity, see Elegba.

Provincial: “Of or characteristic of people from the provinces; not fashionable or sophisticated.”

Rabbit and the Fox: Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox were both tricksters and adversaries in the “Uncle Remus” stories. (See Brer Rabbit).

Rikers Island: A jail facility in New York. Located on the island of the same name in the East River (between Queens and the Bronx), Rikers “houses 15,000 or so ‘special’ residents, making it the world’s largest penal colony. With schools, medical clinics, ball fields, chapels, gyms, grocery stores, barbershops, a power plant, a tailor, a bus depot and even a car wash, Rikers is virtually a city of its own.”
Undine: According to Teutonic (Germanic) folklore, "undines are female water-spirits who like to associate with humans. They often join villagers in their dances and merry-making. An undine was created without a soul, but by marrying a moral and bearing him a child, she obtained a soul and with it all the pains and penalties of the human race." (definition from the *Encyclopedia Mythica*)

**Undine (The novel, A German Fairytale):** The myth of an undine (also spelled ondine) water spirit inspired a popular nineteenth century German fairy tale. Here is a brief summary of Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's novella, *Undine*, published in German in 1811 and first translated into English in 1818:

The water-sprite Undine, whose name the author took from Goethe, has been adopted and brought up by an old fisherman and his wife who have lost their own child. She meets the knight Huldbrand, who comes to the fisherman's cottage; the two fall in love and Undine marries him, only then revealing that she is not human (although she has a child with Huldbrand and this bestows her the gift of a soul). However, Huldbrand subsequently falls in love with Bertalda, who proves to be the fisherman's long-lost daughter. Undine return to her watery element, but when Huldbrand marries Bertalda the water-sprite reappears and kills the knight with a suffocating kiss.

In relation to Nottage's play we see that both Undine's leave their worlds, and then experience bad relationships that make them return to their worlds. Also notable is the fact that de la Motte Fouqué's Undine (the water nymph) gains a soul be giving birth to a mortal's child (rather than simply gaining a soul through the act of marriage). Furthermore, there is a medical condition referred to as "Undine's Curse" which is said to be inspired by some versions of the Undine tale in which Undine punishes her husband by compromising his ability to simultaneously sleep and breathe. The breathing order is called congenital hypoventilation syndrome (CHHS), a.k.a "Undine's Curse." In short, this disorder causes one to "forget to breathe" when they fall asleep. This emphasis on breath and breathing is significant in that it is a central motif in Nottage's play and can be traced from the introduction of Undine's breathless anxiety attacks, to the play's conclusion when Nottage's Undine, urged by Guy, finally allows herself to "breathe" as she gives birth to her child.

**Upper East Side, New York:** "The Upper East Side is a neighborhood in the borough of Manhattan in New York City, between Central Park and the East River. Once known as the 'Silk Stocking District', it has some of the most expensive real estate in the United States.

**Walt Whitman Projects:** Housing project on Myrtle Ave in Brooklyn named for the famous American poet. Walt Whitman (1819-1892), according to the Poetry Database, is considered by many to be the greatest of all American poets. He celebrated the freedom and dignity of the individual and sang the praises of democracy and the brotherhood of man. His *Leaves of Grass* is among the most influential volumes of poetry in American history. It is ironic that a housing project be named for a poet who celebrated freedom, dignity and equality, but Whitman was also instrumental in establishing the first "housing project" in the US-Coble Hill Towers in Brooklyn. He worked with a leading philanthropist to build housing for "low income" workers and pioneered the then (for the 1800s) revolutionary idea of including a courtyard so people would have access to light and space (something poor people were supposed to do without). In reality, the Walt Whitman Houses are in desperate need of renovation. Some units do not have a kitchen; others don't have proper lighting or electricity. The city has run it for decades under conditions that would be unacceptable for private rentals.

**West Point:** The prestigious and rigorous military academy school located in West Point, New York. With a mantra emphasizing "Duty, Honor, and Country," West Point emphasizes on four areas of cadet development: physical, academic, moral/ethical, and military performance. In order to be admitted to West Point, high school students must demonstrate significant accomplishments in their academic work, as well as in sports and physical activities, and leadership and community service.

**Yoruba Priesthood & Religion:** The Yoruba are a tribe who live in what is now southwestern Nigeria and Benin. The Yoruba religion centers around the worship of several deities/gods called orishas. Although the Yoruba religion originated in West Africa, elements of the religion carried over to the New World during the slave trade, and it is now practiced throughout the Americas. Divination is an important part of the Yoruba religion, and some priests use divination boards, or opo on ifa, to determine a person's fate, or to solve a person's problem or dilemma. (Today, you can buy a Yoruba divination board on the Internet for $200 - $300) Boards can be simple, or elaborately painted, and in different shapes. In the New World version of Yoruba religion, some of the gifts offered to please Elegba include candles and cigars (cigars are his favorite gift).
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