

RESOLUTE.



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LETTER
FROM THE

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Most of us have had that year or moment that lends itself to what "beauty in brokenness" means for us individually. For some of us, it's been a break-up—friendship or romantically. For others, death of a loved one or the loss of a job. Maybe there were times of feeling alone and isolated that preceded you truly being part of a community again. Maybe you're still in what seems to be only brokenness and you can't see any beauty in what is surrounding you right now.

When I decided on the theme of "Beauty in Brokenness" last year, I had just come out of a dark place. 2014-2016 offered some of the toughest lessons in my life; I lost people that I loved, cared for, and never wanted to see pass away—metaphorically or literally—in my lifetime. I was also fired from my first post-graduate job in 2016, which brought the grief of losing financial security.

In the middle of everything, Resolute Magazine was still an important part of what I wanted for myself and others. Although it was a publication that I let go of in 2013 to finish up school, thankfully it never let go of me.

In these pages, you will find stories of people who found beauty in brokenness. People who picked up the pieces and turned to God in some of their toughest moments. Who struggled with changes in their friendships. Who struggled with their purpose. Who grappled with God.

You will find poetry that makes you stop and ponder the world that surrounds you and the people you find yourself coming in contact with.

You may even find yourself in the stories that each individual shares.

I'm grateful that you have chosen to support us during this time. And, I hope you stay for the journey.

Soli Deo Gloria.

SHONETTE REED
FOUNDER AND EDITOR OF
RESOLUTE MAGAZINE

A large, abstract graphic consisting of multiple concentric, wavy orange lines that resemble topographic map contour lines. These lines are layered and overlap, creating a sense of depth and movement. The lines are centered on the page and frame the title text.

I KNOW NOT WHERE I GO

After Charles Spurgeon

POEM BY
MICHAEL STALCUP

I know not where I go, but know with whom
I brave these bleak and beauty-broken lands
And know that though he leads me through the tomb
Yet even there my life is in his hands;
Like Christ I cannot see around the bend
Of death except believe the Father's call
And pour my life out, trusting him to mend
This tattered soul so ravaged by the Fall;
For all the paths of God will end in pure
Unmingled good to every heir of grace
And though the world would with its fires lure
Its warmth cannot compare to his embrace.
So lead me through the valleys when you must,
My Father—only this: help me to trust.



WHISPERS

POEM BY
KELLI LAGE

If you lay still enough on the softest of ground,
you can hear the tittle-tattle and whispers among trees.
Listening for names and places,
for ache and redemption,
Chortles growing loudly into roars.



POEM BY
KRISTINA RIVERA

I didn't see you before,
masquerading as a disease to
weaken my spirit (add in something here about the body),
causing me to question
the absolute truth.

Subtle and
intentional,
posing as a man,
a woman.
Through them you
dangle injustice and
stir up anger,
I'm so easily
ready to receive,
comfortable,
because I'm so used
to the warmth
that I don't notice
it's burning me.

Discouragement
plagues thoughts of my future
and makes me believe
I know exactly what I need
to be happy,
healthy,
strong.
Distracted,
You know just what to throw at me when
I drift and crash
into an island of desires
I never even wanted.

Even as my body
washes onto shore,
I open my eyes and
now I see you.
It just turns out
I was fighting the wrong enemy
all along.

It is no longer time
to be afraid when
neither death nor life
angels or demons
present or future,
height or depth
nor anything else
in all creation
can separate me
from the love you so fear.
Veil lifted
and aware,
I stare back at you,
my anger redirected,
I'm ready now.

How God Met Me



Through Stories

Words by Veronica Alvarado | Photo by Kim Ilion

Throughout elementary and high school, I read books by Octavia Butler, Esmeralda Santiago, and Amy Tan. All amazing writers who looked like the women in my neighborhood. Women of color who were gifted in telling stories through their writing. All amazing women who validated experiences in my own culture and also helped me love and care for the stories of others around me.

These were women who wrote about the inequalities experienced while attempting to attain the American dream, which included the experiences of slavery, the antebellum south, and injustices within our American system. They brought to life the truths of others without imposing their personal truths onto what they had written. I say this as a proud graduate from “one of the worst high schools” in our district, but if it weren’t for my public school education and the teachers who realized the importance of sharing stories that were different than their own, I would not be who I am today.

If I hadn’t grown up falling in love with books like, *When I Was Puerto Rican*, *Kindred*, *Joy Luck Club*, and so many other diverse stories, then I would’ve never been able to care for relationships that didn’t share the same experiences as mine. These stories were reflected in the lives of my peers in the classroom and my community, and it taught me to be aware of the needs of others around me. To be aware of the suffering of others and to connect with those around me. These stories came from men and women who realized the importance of pointing students towards an awareness of their cultural backgrounds and identities, but not labeling one group as superior to another. These stories taught me that racism exists still in the United States, whether we acknowledge it or not. They taught me that our actions have consequences and we need to learn to be accountable for them. The Lord used the words of wise authors to break my heart for people and injustice all over the world where my own church did not.

As a Christian, I learned to integrate my faith into what I was learning from what I had been assigned to read.

Although this fact wasn’t being overtly said in the classroom nor the church, I learned some very important things. Injustice still exists. Even if Christ died for our sins, evil is still present in this world. All people matter, not just His followers nor just the people who look and think like me. When one group is oppressed, it is my Christian duty to accept their suffering as my own. When one of my Latino brothers or sisters is being separated from their family by an ICE official, I am to grieve that loss with them and stand against a President who is unwilling to acknowledge his own privilege and prejudice. When a black brother or sister is oppressed or treated as inhuman by a police officer or any other person, I am to stand with them and remind others that “Black Lives Matter.”

When an LGBTQ brother or sister is told by a Christian that Jesus can’t love them because of their sexual orientation, I grieve with them, tell them Jesus’ word never said that, and pray that the Lord helps me show them that Jesus can love them back to life. When a person suffers from PTSD because of a horrific event such as sexual assault or losing a loved one due to a mass shooting, it is important to give others the space to share their story without injecting our input. The same goes for those experiencing depression and anxiety due to a chemical imbalance. We need to be exposed to the stories and sufferings of others and stop assuming that we’ve been called to judge what is right or wrong. We need to sit, listen, and be mindful as human beings, remembering that we live in a very broken world and that God did not put us on this earth to judge. He taught us to reflect His image as love and truth, but He taught us to do that by following Christ as an example. Jesus told stories of people who were not from his town or background. He captured people’s hearts through parables and asking people to check their actions. Never did he cast the first stone at someone who was hurting or in pain, even when he had the authority to judge. He instead used stories to convict them.

We need to do better at listening and reading stories that are different than our own.

We need to get better at sharing our stories. We need to understand that God breaks our hearts for what breaks His through the power of compassion and softening of our hearts by His Holy Spirit. So much of what God did not intend for His world is taking place. Rise up and open your heart. Expose your heart and mind to the stories of others around you, both those that do and do not look or think like you. God's truth and love are in His Word, but it's also in the stories of others. God's word is alive in this world through our painful histories, those glorious moments of redemption, and as we learn to apply His truth to a diverse world.

Love others as Jesus has loved you. Listen to others as Jesus has listened to you. Show compassion to others as Jesus has mercifully bestowed compassion upon you.

“

VERONICA ALVARADO:

WE NEED TO DO BETTER AT
LISTENING AND READING
STORIES THAT ARE
DIFFERENT THAN OUR OWN.

”

Beauty in Brokenness:



Friendships

Words by Sarah Amankwah | Photo by Thiago Matos

It's Thursday. November 21, 2019. I'm rushing around at work, trying to get myself settled at my desk. I sit and wait patiently, anticipating a very special moment; the moment one of my close friends walks down the aisle.

Not a typical moment you watch through a YouTube link, but it was definitely a moment I will never forget. As I watched the bridal party march arm in arm, paving the way for the great reveal, I could feel my eyes welling up. How I longed to be in that number. But stuck with work commitments, I became a conduit of regret. Not being present at this pivotal moment in my friend's life hurt. A lot. I felt like I'd been left behind.

Although it was beyond my control to get out of work, I still couldn't help but feel like I'd lost a huge part of my friend and didn't even get to say goodbye.

This moment with my friend reminded me that relationships are tricky things to navigate, especially when we begin to revere them more than God.

Have you ever let a relationship with something other than God rule your heart? Whenever this distortion takes place, it's our relationships that bear the weight. We load all our deepest longings on the backs of our friends, spouses, careers, and even our children; eventually, we end up crushing them with our expectations.

So, what causes this imbalance to take place? What is it about these relationships that make us 'prone to wander'?

Movies like Pixar's 'Toy Story' display these themes so beautifully. Feelings of rejection, jealousy and the ever existential crisis are displayed through the lives of toys. The thought that we might be deemed unlovable or unworthy is far too painful to contemplate. This can lead a heart not fully anchored in the gospel to become slightly possessive and controlling. These emotions, at best, are displays of buried treasures, threatened to be removed. (Matthew 6:21)

Within every human heart is a deep desire to be seen and known. For affirmation and acceptance. When our heart takes a good thing and turns it into the ultimate thing, we live out the reality of the fall. God calls this 'idolatry'. Anything can be an idol- even a close friendship. (Exodus 20:3, Ezekiel 14:3.)

***'We are made from love, for love, and to love.'* –Michelle Tepper**

The triune God, out of the overflow of perfect, abundant, life-giving love, created mankind in His image. (Genesis 1:26-27.) We were made for relationship.

In creation – this expression of love – we see an invitation into a relationship that existed before time. This relationship was later marred through the seduction of something good becoming ultimate. This act of disobedience severed a perfect union. Once freedom and intimacy left, shame and separation entered.

The danger in elevating anything above God leads us to a deadly addiction filled with control and emptiness. Can we endure this toxicity and still enjoy God's good gifts?

***'Our problems have everything to do with sin, and our potential has everything to do with Christ.'* –Tim Lane & Paul Tripp**

At the cross, we witness the intersection of Christ's beauty confronting our brokenness, our disobedience, and our idols, in order to restore us back into a relationship with him.

Jesus took on the weight of our sin, and it crushed him. God's wrath, stirred up by our spiritual infidelity, was fully satisfied. Jesus' resurrection grants us the ability to love Him rightly and see our idols for what they really are; mirages, broken cisterns, stumbling blocks that although seductive, will never truly satisfy. This is good news!

Much of our disappointment and heartache is a result of

our many attempts to find fulfillment from relationships that we already have in Christ.

The gospel is the gift of a grace-filled relationship. An eternal covenant that is strong enough to carry us, rich enough to satisfy, and pure enough to sanctify. Although we are free from sin, power, and penalty, its presence is still very evident amidst our relationships. It's shape-shifting nature and hidden agenda can cause us to mishandle and exploit each other, hindering our relationship with God. Relationships, on this side of glory, will be messy, inconsistent, and beset by temptation. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are taught how to steward these gifts in light of the gospel. We are recipients of His grace, instruments of his mercy, and dependant on him to do what we cannot do by our own strength: love one another.

Although I missed my friend's wedding day, I am so grateful to witness their covenant being lived out. They are a tangible reminder of a marriage yet to come. A foreshadow of the glorious union that awaits us. Amidst the brokenness of relationships and seasons of loneliness, I am constantly met with the satisfyingly sufficient saviour that calls our fearful hearts to wade deeper. To uncover a cosmic intimacy. An imperishable treasure. A good and perfect gift.

***'Our hearts are restless
Until they find rest in You
Our hearts are restless
Until they find rest in You
This is where my hope lies
This is where my souls sighs
I will always find my rest in You.'***

—Rest in You by All Sons & Daughters

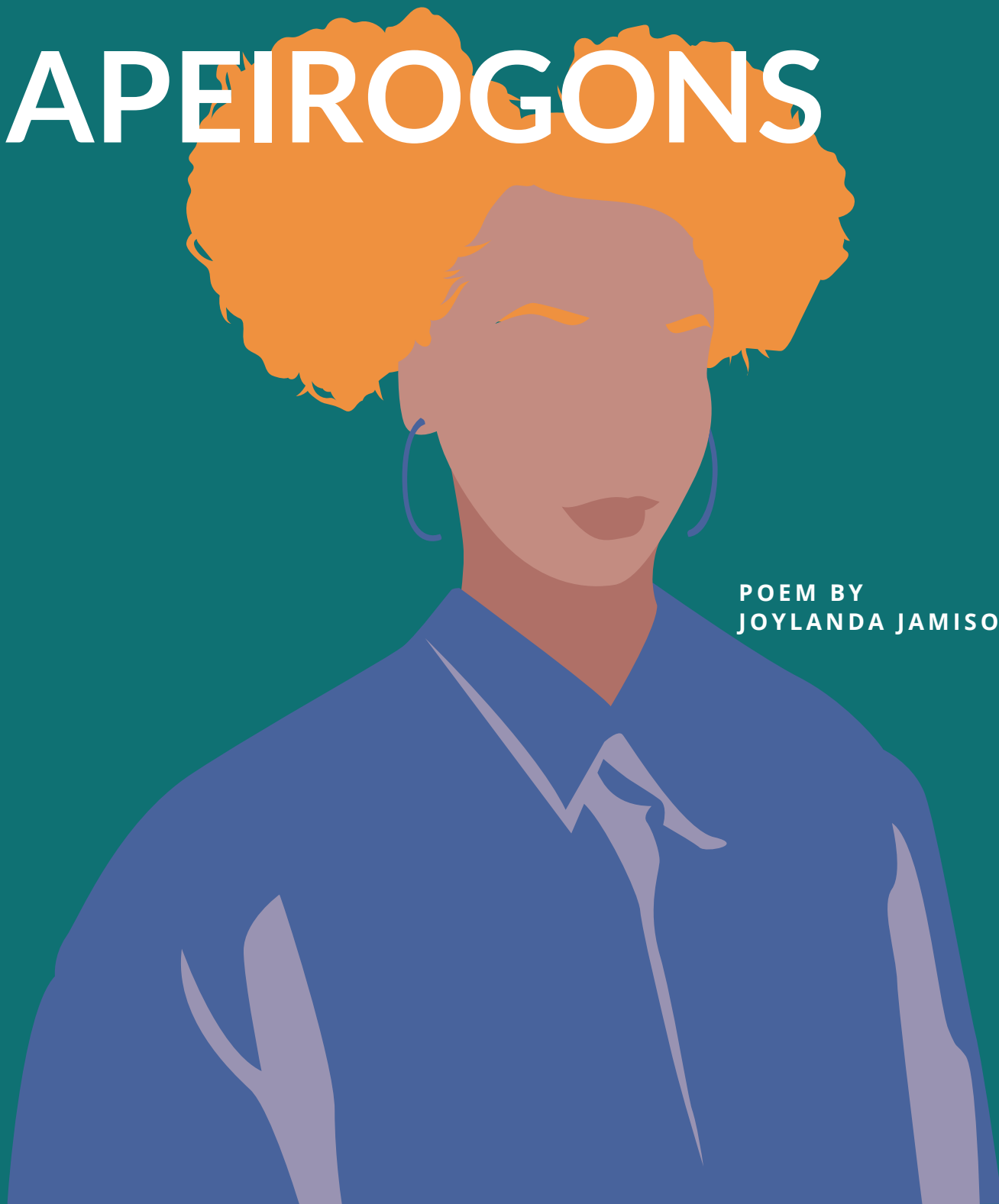
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SARAH AMANKWAH:

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”

DYNAMIC APEIROGONS



POEM BY
JOYLANDA JAMISON

I've felt the fatal blows
of friends that claim
the Lord's name,
careless words pierce my conscious
and demand a choice
between ethnicity and faith.

God's shown me His face
and He looks like us.

My body has been broken
and crumpled into
the most grotesque of forms—
my skin lacerated
by merciless hands, remnants of
my melanin stuck beneath their nails.

God's shown me His face
and He looks like us.

Halos meant to bless become
the nooses tightened around
our necks,
hanged for a desire to
evolve from static
ballers and fetishized dancers.

God's shown me His face
and He looks like us.

Conflicting sermons that speak
of inspired creation while
the congregation regulates
our roles–
cramped spaces that prevent
breaking stereotyped molds.

God's shown me His face
and He looks like us.

Blessed brown child know
your sacred place—
lift your tear stained cheeks
to heaven and allow your
curiosities to soar.

Blessed brown child give
your mind rest—
the potential you hold expands
from east to west, there is no space
where your ambitions cannot abound.

Blessed brown child learn
to live free—
remove the limitations of those
that fail to see
our crafted souls clearly.

God's shown us His face
and we look like Him.

CALLoused



HANDS

POEM BY
KELLI LAGE

Calloused hands tell the story of a man
who has held back the daunt lions,
that sent menacing roars through her mind.
His touch,
confined them to cages.
His soft and steady voice
healed the scratched walls.
Together he and the one he loves
clawed their way from bondage.
After the trying battle,
she reaches out her hand.
He meets it with his own
and lifts her weary body,

to carry them both home.

Melissa Davis



Owner of Open Profile

Words by Melissa Davis | Photo by Danielle Celaya

My very first thrift piece was a pack of Fruit of the Loom kid drawls. It was a brand new pack, so it was most likely donated by a retail store. I was around 10 years old, and my father and stepmother thought it would be hilarious to buy my kiddie grannie panties from a random thrift store. Little did they know the joke was on them because I wore that entire pack faithfully. So, to my loving and generous parents, "thank you kindly." (R.I.P John "Pop's" Witherspoon)

Fast forward to 2014 when I started paving my own path in the thrifting world. I was building my online clothing store, Open Profile, and I needed merchandise within my extremely low budget. I began with fast fashion pieces from trade shows, but I couldn't afford to stock the store with enough inventory each month. So I decided to take the Sophia Amoruso route and thrift. For those of you wondering "Who in the world is Sophia Amoruso?!", let me put you on. Sophia is the founder, and creative brain, behind the clothing website Nasty Gal. In 2006, she started an eBay store and began reselling precious thrift finds; one being a Chanel jacket that financially elevated her brand. She then wrote an inspiring book, *Girl Boss*, that recalls her humble beginnings as a starving entrepreneur. Shoutout to all my Girl Bosses for taking leaps despite all the obstacles in our way. You ladies are my real-life inspo's.

My first personal thrifting experience was definitely overwhelming. I had no plans for what I needed or wanted. I was living in Brooklyn at the time, so I knew finding a thrift shop would be a breeze. One day, I went to my good friend Google and searched, "popular second-hand clothing stores near me" and tried the first thrift store suggested. During that time I shopped mainly at Beacons Closet and L Train Vintage in Williamsburg, Brooklyn; which is the go-to area for all things vintage, by the way.

Here's a little disclaimer: I'm not the Beyonce of thrifting nor do I have all the answers. What I do have is 6 years of

experience, 2 of which are consistent years, that could help you navigate the world of thrifting.

You may be wondering how did I know what to buy. Honestly, I started with what I thought would sell: jackets and sweaters. Unfortunately, that decision didn't work in my favor. My customers were not interested in thrifted jackets and sweaters. They were, however, interested in my uniquely designed fast fashion pieces. For my entrepreneurs in the resale industry here's some gold: When buying merch for your shop, don't just buy what you like. Know and study your target market enough to shop for what customers need.

For two years I struggled to take Open Profile from ground level to Bergdorf status. A girl has dreams! My L's (losses not lessons) outweighed all my wins. Then 2016 came and my personal life took a crazy turn. My ex and I were finito. I closed my store, Open Profile, due to my lack of mental and emotional capacity to run a business, and I completely surrendered my life to Christ. All three had their pros, but giving my life to Christ will forever be my best decision. Let me keep it 1,000 tho, that season was also my hardest season. It consisted of a lot of mental and spiritual healing (Roman's 12:1-2), and it prepared me for what was to come for my business. In 2017, God placed Open Profile back on my heart. Though I didn't care to have it, I couldn't ignore the strong urge to try again. Then, one day, I was hit with this vision to sell Vintage Christian tees. I know you may be confused on what that looks like, but no worries. Take some time today and head over to my Instagram @openprofile.us.

In the summer of 2018, Open Profile launched its vintage Christian and vintage streetwear pieces. Here's another disclaimer: I'm not against fast fashion, I do believe my store will eventually sell both new and thrift. Open Profile is all about unique personal style, street style, rather than trends, so it's fitting to have pieces from both ends. I would encourage people to find multiple ways to style their new and thrift pieces to appreciate the longevity of

your clothing.

God is still directing my steps with His plans and vision for Open Profile (Proverbs 16:9). For now, I have the opportunity to share my thrifting experiences and my love for personal style and my faith through my vintage Christian tees. I currently thrift 1-3 times per week for my business. And when I'm giving an opportunity to travel, I make sure to plan some thrift shopping within that state. For all my Thrifters in business that was another piece of gold for ya. (wink wink)

So, why am I here? Well, to include you on this thrifting journey. These past 2 years as a faithful "thrifty" has grown me, and I would love to pour my nuggets of wisdom into your hands. So, come ride with me these next few months as I share some tips and tricks about thrifting. Catch ya next article. Duce.

Note: You can keep up with Melissa Davis's thrifting series on ResoluteMag.com

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MELISSA DAVIS:

IN 2017, GOD PLACED OPEN
PROFILE BACK ON MY
HEART. THOUGH I DIDN'T
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”

Carvens



Lissaint

Words by Aasha Marie | Photo by John Louis

Carvens Lissaint found himself heavy hearted, wandering aimlessly around New York hearing God's voice pressing him to go to church. Amidst a huge show where he was slated to perform a poem entitled, "Beauty Part Three", about his personal insecurities and shortcomings with women, he found himself at a crossroads. His steps eventually led him to the Gramercy Theater, where Hillsong NYC was holding service. He walked in during the altar call weeping and crying out to God burdened to follow and put his trust fully in Jesus.

He was 22-years old at the time and in his last year of acting school at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. From there he went to St. John's University Queen's campus to finish his Bachelor's degree where he joined the gospel choir and immersed himself into ministry leadership. At the same time he was balancing his burgeoning acting career and new relationship with his then girlfriend now wife, Leslie.

As a first-generation, Haitian American, spirituality ran deep in his Caribbean roots. Born and raised in the upper west side of Harlem, New York--to Haitian immigrant parents--his Catholic upbringing was also mixed with supernatural phenomena.

"I saw the supernatural early, I always believed in a higher being at that time," Lissaint says.

However, growing up his view toward church--something he hated as a kid, was met with skepticism. From being baptized as an infant without his permission to confessing to a priest in a booth, there were things that rubbed him the wrong way. Though he believed in God, he wasn't a follower of Christ. His first real experience with God was onstage through poetry.

He was introduced to poetry by way of singing in R&B/hip hop groups as a teen. A part of a non-profit organization called Urban Dove where he took frequent trips around the city, he attended his first poetry open

mic called Urban Word NYC at 16 years old. After seeing the show, he was convinced that poetry was for him.

"In performances, I felt that I saw that God was using me and that got me curious," Lissaint says.

He developed an interest in acting as a teen as well after seeing a musical called "In the Heights" by Tony award winning writer of "Hamilton," Lin-Manuel Miranda. Lissaint was sitting in the audience mesmerized, and Miranda became the very reason Lissaint pursued acting. Fast forward to the year 2009 Lissaint found himself onstage at the Urban Word NYC poetry slam finals at the Apollo theater. He did a poem about Haiti, expressing the poverty and his experience visiting there before the earthquake. After reciting the poem for an audience of 1200, he vividly recalls there not being a dry eye in the house.

"I just remember being like I'm just a dude, I know I don't have the ability to make 1200 people cry, I must have a gift, and then I was like oh snap! If I have a gift then that might suggest that there's a gift giver," Lissaint says.

Through poetry, Lissaint performed all over the country and beyond. After years of questioning the faith it was at the urging of Christian friends who surrounded him and encouraged him to visit Hillsong's New York location. Though initially he resisted routinely, they kept inviting him routinely as many tumultuous moments were unfolding in his life.

"My mother was in Haiti at the time of the earthquake so we were preparing for her funeral because we hadn't heard from her at all. I remember praying to God, "if you spare my mother's life, I'll be a better person." Then a few days after that the phone rang and my dad answered and he screamed and told me it was my mother and he was crying, I grabbed the phone from him," Lissaint says. "I literally remember a force bringing me to my knees, and I felt it was like a presence of worship in the room that I

never felt or understood,” Lissaint says.

At the height of his touring with Strivers Row, a poetry group made up of Lissaint’s closest friends, his relationship with women is what ultimately led Him to Christ.

“We had an international fan base and I would encounter women who wanted me for my gifts and not me. I was continually heartbroken, seeking out companionships and relationships and I was already so vulnerable and emotionally open,” Lissaint says.

“I was very overweight as a kid and felt unwanted in a verbally abusive household with no affection, so I desired that and wanted that---so much so that I put myself in a compromising, heartbreaking situation. The moment when I realized I was seeking validation in something that was empty and was gonna be void. I was seeking love in things that would never fulfill me, I was empty and void and I felt like I needed to speak to God” Lissaint says.

Lissaint felt that God gave him words that specifically tapped into the human condition that moved people. He felt something supernatural in the art form. He eventually formed a habit of regularly praying before every poetry slam, ending with “In Jesus Name,” not sure where it came from.

“I didn’t even pray like that when I was in the Catholic Church. I would often talk about ‘being used’ I had a lot of Christianese sayings that I didn’t know where it came from, people in the poetry community used to call me ‘Pastor Carv,” Lissaint says.

Four colleges and three degrees later (completing graduate school at NYU), he left Hillsong church and joined the newly planted Bridge Church NYC under Pastor James Roberson. Fully immersed in preaching, teaching and singing he continued his pursuit of acting.

In 2009, Lin-Manuel Miranda got asked to perform at the

White House for then President Barack Obama’s spoken word poetry night. Joshua Bennett, poet and best friend of Lissaint, was also invited to perform. As Lissaint sat in the audience, he would witness what would later be the opening song of Hamilton, written and performed by Miranda.

As it turns out Joshua Bennett and Lin-Manuel Miranda became good friends, opening the door for then aspiring actor Lissaint to get tickets to see “In The Heights” for a backstage encounter with Miranda.

In 2011, Miranda had a birthday party where Bennett brought Lissaint as his plus one. During his first year of grad school, Lissaint was invited to audition for Hamilton but turned down the opportunity. However, during his second year of NYU, while watching his friends secure Tony Awards and movie deals he had second thoughts about it. Fast forward to his last year of grad school, the casting office of Hamilton ended up seeing Lissaint in a show and loved his performance.

After a recommendation from another actor, he got the chance to audition. He went through a grueling 9 auditions over a time span of 7 months before he finally got the role as George Washington in Hamilton. He got booked on Broadway as a stand-by at first but later received the role as George Washington in Hamilton.

Now as a full-time actor, the 30-year-old is balancing being a husband, actor, and a Christian. He has developed a system to ensure that he honors the Lord in his acting roles while not compromising the Christian faith. Acting can obviously present challenges for the actor involved that can contradict and flat-out oppose a person’s Christian faith. However, Lissaint understands this well and established some ground rules to help him navigate this space.

“Is this a story worth telling? Is this a story interesting to me? Does the story have elements [not every story has to be a Christian story in order for you to see God in it] are

there moments of redemption in the story, are there elements of reconciliation in the story? Are there truthful elements of an individual wrestling and struggling with something? We can see God in a lot of that stuff and it doesn't have to be explicitly Christian. So I look for those things," Lissaint says.

Lissaint further explains, "I want to bring dignity and honor to myself, to my wife, and to the people in my life. I'm an actor because I believe it's my job to tell stories outside of myself to truthfully investigate the human condition that allows people to see the truth."

Though there are many professing Christians in a variety of entertainment fields, including Denzel Washington and Chance the Rapper among others. Lissaint feels a lot of Christian artists struggle with balancing the two worlds. From his perspective the entertainment industry tends to view Christianity primarily through a traditional westernized cultural lens which brings hostility.

"I understand the friction and disdain that I get from people who hear the word Christianity. The Christian church that the world understands is the church that perpetuates patriarchy, male privilege and dominance, perpetuates homophobia and enslavement but they don't understand the biblical Christianity of Jesus. So I have to be very conscientious in listening to people's pain about the church and hearing their narrative before I try to present them with Jesus. I want to be a human with them and identify with their pain because outside of what I profess theologically, there are things they say on a human level that I agree with, when it comes to people not being Christ like," Lissaint says.

Learning to be the gospel and not just speak the gospel transformed how Lissaint shares the gospel with those in the industry. He identifies with the humility of Paul in the bible who "became all things to all men so that he might win some." Lissaint's preference is not preaching at people or beating them over the head with the Bible but creating a space for them to feel safe, comfortable and

heard.

"The responsibility of the actor feels like a similar call to me as a Christian, where you are to be in complete service to something that is greater than yourself that will end up expanding the kingdom. I feel as Christians that's what we're called to do, to look at people who are hurting, who are broken, identify with their pain and then show them the beauty that is the LORD that can help redeem and save them," Lissaint says.

Onstage, the driving force for where Lissaint draws the line and how far he will go in the industry, is deeply impacted by the gospel. He aims to present the gospel message in a doctrinally sound and culturally relevant way. Offstage, Carvens is shining light on deeper issues in society much closer to his heart. In 2019 he released a book called "Target Practice" which he describes as a mixture of spoken word over jazz and R&B ballads that examines police brutality as a form of state sanctioned violence against black bodies. The project also features an EP of songs that reflect on his experience growing up as a Haitian American in New York and his inner thoughts on racial injustice on a daily basis that allows him to lament the lives lost to these tragedies. His upcoming piece entitled "Golgotha," an Aramaic word which translates to "place of the skull," where Jesus was crucified, focuses on a group of black men suffering from mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

"I'm writing a piece about a group of black men who are suffering from mental health issues like depression and anxiety. For black men, this can feel like we are walking to our own crucifixion but really, God is using it to set up a resurrection. I want black men to know that they have a space to be soft, loved, nurtured and a space to be completely honest about how and what they feel. I think God wants us to live in full hope and faith in Him, but we have to investigate the history of blackness in this country and how that sometimes makes the walk with Christ difficult," Lissaint says.

In many ways Lissaint is still in the throes of healing his own “PTSD” of the soul through his relationship with Christ.

“I’m really putting a lens over a specific time in my life and allowing the gospel to shade over that so that I can heal and live a life of freedom where I’m not bound by my past. The advice I have for people who are trying to heal from past trauma and baggage is to slow down your life and allow yourself the time to actually think, unpack, pray and let the gospel shed light on those places. I think people should seek out mental health practitioners, therapists, and psychologists as there’s both a spiritual element of what it means to heal a clinical one. I think we need to let both of those things work hand in hand. I’ve been seeking out mental health professionals and seeking out biblical counselors to see how those things intersect so that I can live a healthier life” Lissaint says.

After a successful run and rave reviews in theater, the accolades pale in comparison to what he wants his legacy to be. “If I were to win countless Oscar, Tony, and Grammy awards just to come home and be a bad husband, I would’ve failed at life. I would’ve failed at everything. My number one priority right now in my life is my relationship with God, being the best husband and neighbor to my fellow people that I can be. My career comes after that,” Lissaint says.

Desiring the freedom he experienced at the moment of salvation to permeate through his life. “God called me to bridge and I think that there’s a lot of intersection. I think both faith and the world intersect and I’m trying to find ways to exist in both and bring people where I am,” Lissaint says.

Using the power of words to nurture, heal and restore broken people, ultimately, Lissaint wants his life to speak much louder than his words.

“

CARVENS LISSAINT:

I FEEL AS CHRISTIANS
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE
CALLED TO DO, TO LOOK AT
PEOPLE WHO ARE HURTING,
WHO ARE BROKEN, IDENTIFY
WITH THEIR PAIN AND THEN
SHOW THEM THE BEAUTY
THAT IS THE LORD THAT
CAN HELP REDEEM AND
SAVE THEM.

”

COMMUNAL



TABLE

POEM BY
ARCHULETA CHISHOLM

As collard greens simmer,
over the high fire,
nervous laughter ensues.

Weary hands,
picking,
washing,

and arms numb from
carrying
heavy burdens.

Still gentle,
even though
this work
is never done.

At each corner
of the cherrywood,
seeds are tightly
embedded.

Passed down
through generations,
this is where
the women gather.

Filling rivers over
empty wombs
and men deciding
they want to be elsewhere.

Over the potatoes
being peeled,
the shed of grief
is scattered like ashes.

Women know
what it's like
to flee
and hide
and fight
and scream.

This beautiful work,
tending
to the family soil,
planting,
watering,
and pruning
everyone's hopes,

sacrificing their own.

An abstract graphic on an orange background. A large, thick white circle is positioned on the right side. A white line starts from the top left, curves around the circle, and extends downwards on the left side. The word "UGLY" is written vertically in blue capital letters, partially overlapping the circle and the line.

UGLY

POEM BY
KRISTINA RIVERA

I don't dare turn over
to the side
where he once slept
and dreamt
of escaping the
responsibility
of me.

Nights are long
and quiet.

My mind silences my body,
my eyes,
when they want to
be weak
and wet my pillow.

I throw away the
pictures,
his letters,
as I laugh
and feel nothing.

Always on the move
But when I get home,
the stillness
unnerving,
smothers
the memories
we created.

“She must be so sad.”
you say, as you
clutch onto your husbands,
thanking God your lives
don’t mirror mine.
But I’ll tell you one thing....
The empty recliner
dinner by myself,
the bare walls where
his pictures once hung.
I’ll take all of it
because when I am alone
there’s no one to call
me ugly.

REBORN HEART



POEM BY
KELLI LAGE

If my old life could see me now,
it would be astonished by the
steady rhythms of my reborn heart.
It would watch me count the passage of time by how long the
birds take to bathe
in cool muddy puddles, near the farmhouse.
Wearing my hair naturally, I let each curl find a place of its own,
as I open my heart to whispers of warmth,
and the promises He illustrates with each
morning sunrise.



THESE DAYS

POEM BY
CHANTELLE GIBBS

Tuesday,
or was it Wednesday
perhaps Monday it was
that I sat in the kitchen
leafing through the rolodex in my mind
trying to find the word for when
there are things
that don't quite fit
that oppose each
other that are not supposed to be —
the paradox of “social distancing ”
the oxymoron of being separated, together

some days, words fall short
most days, words spit out too fast
these days?
these days
unfold like the crumpled up sketch I thought I threw away,
one look at it and I knew
it wasn't quite right
it sure wasn't what it should be:
weather this beautiful means a trip to the beach
lessons to be learned yet
classrooms sit there, empty
lights off and signs on storefronts like mirrors
of a reality, of a world we have not faced before
but turns wildly to face us now

new words
find their way out just fine
not as surprised as I am to see them there:
quarantine, pandemic,
crazy, crazy times
new words make room, sure
but new rhythms do too

like the FaceTime ring coming in
that I will not refuse, that I cannot refuse
or the daily walk-sometimes-turned-run
six feet apart from you, yes
but smiling to greet you
in these collective breathing moments
just the same

these days, I am stubborn
much more than I ever have been
stubborn to call
and see your face
and show up for you
and hear these new rhythms tell me:

it is okay that it is blurry
the pixelated mess is beautiful to me
it is okay that I do not do my Sunday best
the casual nature of this moment is beautiful to me
it is okay that dishes are in the sink
from a meal that would be better seasoned by professional chefs
it is okay that she is 3 and does not know that I am working from home
and crawls into my lap asking to watch the same movie from yesterday
I see her marvel at the simplest sounds,
unphased and unbothered by repetition,
her oblivious grin

the most impactful thing to my restless spirit
it is okay that love has slowed its pace,
that a touch once so fresh is fleeting now
the sweet euphoric beginning of him and I is not lost on us forever
it is okay that their laughs come delayed now through a computer screen
we still greet the same sun, still bid adieu the same moon
it is okay to hang your head low in fear and defeat and worry
but only
if you promise
to lift it now
to see
that it is okay &
that there are words
and there are rhythms
to outnumber the things
that shouldn't be
there are words
and there are rhythms
to encapsulate the things that are still good
and always will be good

these days.

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