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CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Oral History Interview
with
Yahney-Marie Sangare

Interviewer: Nora Malone

Narrator: Yahney-Marie Sangare

Location of Interview:
Alexandria City High School, 3330 King St, Alexandria, VA 22302

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Transcriber: Michele Cawley, PhD

Summary:

Yahney-Marie Sangare reflects on her experience on her experiences while on the Alexandria City Remembrance Programs pilgrimage to Mobile, Alabama, to honor Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas.

Notes:

This interview was conducted by a student from Alexandria City High School, Naeem Scott. This interview was part of Student Experience Week in the Spring of 2023, where a select group of students served as interns for the Office of Historic Alexandria for 2 weeks. Students from Alexandria City High School were trained in oral history practices and then conducted their own interviews. This is one interview from this project.

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General	Black Student Union; Remembrance Project
People	Mr. Shabazz
Places	Alexandria High School

Nora Malone [00:00:00] Okay. Okay, cool. So, can you say your name, age, the date and the location?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:00:17] Hello, my name is Yahney Maria Sangare. I'm 17 years old and it today is May 22nd, 2023. I am Alexandra City High School, King Street Campus in the Black Box Theater.

Nora Malone [00:00:29] Hi. And I'm Norma Malone. I'm 18 years old. It is May 22nd, 2023, and I am in the Alexander City High School Blackbox Theater. So what did you think about slash do to prepare before going on the pilgrimage?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:00:49] Before the pilgrimage, I truly wanted to go in, not entirely blind, but I want it to be able to feel in full capacity, whatever it would bring me. I would say that most of the preparation I did was the scheduled readings that they did give us, any website they sent out, I did look through. I had an idea of the basic itinerary of the program, and I obviously had background on the racial terror lynchings. And I did look into the lynchings of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas in Alexandria to understand what we were coming to, what we were bringing to Alabama. But what I wanted to receive with the trip is what Alabama was bringing to us. So what I'll say, what I did know was about, I had happened with Benjamin Thomas, what happened with Joseph McCoy. I also had background on terms of, you know, the basics of what we were doing, but in terms of preparation that had been years prior, really, you know, the journey obviously starts with birth if you're a black American but I think that prior to that, in 2021, I had written a play, "Someday," which was about a lynching that took place and its impact. And in writing that play about the lynching, I both had the process, the idea and the legacy of lynchings and all of their violence and horror, as well as the pertinence that it could hold to Alexandria. Interestingly, although I aimed to tie those things, I never did discover that early the paths of Joseph McCoy and Thomas. But it was something that I had been reckoning with for a year at that point or so.

Nora Malone [00:02:22] And can you explain why you chose to attend the pilgrimage?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:02:26] So I am a dual member of both Black Student Union as Vice President for two years now, and I am also heavily involved in the theater department. So, I was kind of on both sides there. Me and Nathan Desta were both involved on both fronts. In addition to that, I understood that having this knowledge going to a place with such deep history was intrinsic to understanding the condition of black people. So, we live in Alexandria and obviously we can understand that sort of faction or faction of our history. But to further understand that, we must approach a point where that activism is birthed and really considered. And we have that here, but not in the same sort of birth that they have it or breadth that they have it in Montgomery, Alabama. I also further wanted to delve into what I did know about history. I'm passionate about history, it's effect on where we are in the present. And I knew that going on this trip would be a first hand experience to get closer to understanding that point. I also knew that it was a sort of once in a lifetime opportunity to have that sort of realization moment alongside, you know, my high school peers, which is a very unique opportunity to come to that sort of racial consciousness and not, of course, entirety, because that's a lifelong journey but to have a moment of that be in tandem with other individuals, other individuals with common goals or who participated in other processes that sort of bond us together. Because I mentioned earlier my one act and several people from that who

were members of that were on this trip alongside of course, the allyship of BSU and the Theater Department. I understood that having that racial consciousness and that moment together was sort of an unprecedented opportunity that I wanted to, you know, it was truly beautiful, amazing. And I have been involved in some of the remembrance ceremonies beforehand. So knowing about the pilgrimage, I was very excited to embark upon that part of the journey.

Nora Malone [00:04:10] And you were discussing Alexandria's history, and in your opinion, what is missing or incorrect in this like mainstream historical narrative in Alexandria?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:04:19] Well, it depends what you mean by mainstream. You know, there's really a different version of all of it. There are people who, if you are black in Alexandria, you know about the history of Franklin and Armfield, you know about sort of Old Town as a sort of center, you know, about how the slave trade was outlawed, the Compromise 1850 D.C. and how that led to, of course, that export to Alexandria City. I don't know if all citizens know that, not even all black citizens know that, but would I call that mainstream? Perhaps, it depends who you are. I would say that really what we need to approach it if talking about talking about honesty and authenticity in historical narrative is what is being told and why don't these people know that? You know, why is there disparity in knowledge? I would say that the foremost problem that I have with it would be, what are we doing to talk about the long term effects of this? You know a lot of our history is told very staunchly in past tense here and then we will add the "oh, and we're still working for equity and inclusion." I don't think that that's really the truth of the element. I think we gloss over a lot of the '80s, the post-civil rights but pre 2000 era. I think that we really look past. We don't look at the AIDS epidemic. We don't look at other lasting impacts of systemic racism. And I think that's a problem. Now, of course, also there's this legacy of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas, which unfortunately I think a lot, especially a lot of the younger citizens do not know about and I did not know about until the Remembrance Project. I lived almost my entire life in Alexandria City. I think that that absolutely must be included. But I think that it approaches a larger issue of black history in general. And I think that also, even in learning about these lynchings, we need to be careful about how we are teaching them. And you know, this is embedded history. This isn't something that exists in isolation. It's something that's deeply connected to, you know, a myriad of other sociological phenomena that still affect us today. So I think that history, we need to start looking at sort of a chain of events and start looking at it as a tapestry in which each thread interacts and colors the next.

Nora Malone [00:06:11] And did this pilgrimage alter your relationships with your peers?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:06:16] I would say it absolutely did. You know, I think it was inevitable that, you know, once you go through this experience on various fronts, there's different ways to see it. I'd say obviously there was a myriad of ethnicities on that trip. Most potently, of course, was the black and white divide. But, you know, and I wouldn't even say divide, I would just say difference. But of course, there were other people there as well. My roommate was actually, she's Asian-American, and we had some very interesting conversations that, you know, there's this sort of reality of racial consciousness, even if it isn't directly per se. I might say, a history that perhaps your people were statedly involved in. You know, it all impacts you. America is, again, a tapestry. It's interwoven. And, I'd say that in terms of with my, there was obviously a lot of very strong connections. Emotions are incredibly high. And even when they're not being expressed because this

trip was rapid fire, everything was very quick. And even when they're not being overtly expressed or even when that's not being said, it's implied in every conversation. And even how people interact with or think about racism. When you come back to Alexandria, even when I speak to some of my white peers who perhaps said some things that were off kilter on the trip, you know, the conversations that were had surrounding that. And further with my black peers understanding, you know, there is still a lesson of learning for all of us involved. As much as you may have experienced racism, the realization of it and the sort of authentication of which it creates that that's a journey that all of us went on, and it's an irreplicable one. I think that the conversations I've had after, the honesty and the authenticity is much more present. There's a complete transformation within how you view yourself and thus how you view other people. The interactions of people based on their ethnicity and still looking past or within it. You know, it's no longer a colorblind experience, which it never really was for me but I think for a lot of my peers, they began to understand the inherent presence and inseparability to which race, ethnicity, history, trauma and legacy informs our interactions, even as 17, 16, 18 year olds.

Nora Malone [00:08:14] And you talk about learning was, what did you learn on the pilgrimage?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:08:18] I would say that absolutely there were on the surface level, you know, there's the historical. There's the historical, you know, the the actual events that occurred. There's the names or the sort of methods of lynching you know, it was there's the three year olds or babies they hung from the trees, those sort of things stay with you. There is the idea of location and geography, where these things happened and why they happened there. You know, that's multivariable. But I'd say that learning really for me was very much understanding myself, understanding this concept of knowing before, you know, re-memory is what it's called or generational trauma, right. Connecting that for African-Americans in terms of there's this concept of you were there, right. Because that sort of thing passes through these experiences, these ways you feel about relics that you see of this society around or behind you, these concepts of what you understand from the life that you live. These things are learned intrinsically. They're connected to that history and putting a name and sort of experience to that world. It's really less so a thing of complete novelty and more so a connection and identification. And I'd say that that was the main thing I learned on the surface level. I'd like to connect to, of course, the stories of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas, two names and stories I did not know prior to my involvement with the Remembrance Project. Not the trip necessarily, but my involvement with the project which occurred beforehand and understanding, you know, these are, you know, 16, I think 16 and 18 year olds who, you know, in our city in a place where I often am, you know, a recreational place. Now really, it's to understand the weight of that land and how it was used and its purpose historically. And what that means for it currently is, you know, ground changing.

Nora Malone [00:10:09] And would do you say that like any specific exhibits in the museums that really stuck out to you?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:10:14] I'd say, of course, going to the lynching memorial, there's a moment where when you walk down and it's the stones begin to hang and you're reading the names, it's, you know, it's very riveting. It's horrible. Riveting might not be the word. It's just shocking. It's horrible. And past that, you know, there were sort of these projections that almost were like ghosts as you walked by the jail cells in one of the museums where, wherein you could see the, you know,

mothers' young sons, you know, people behind jail cells awaiting to be sold into bondage. You could almost feel the trans-Atlantic voyage. And then the domestic slave trade and people so perpetually and horribly far from home. And then there were the letters written from jail cells and were connecting it to the modern day and how death penalty, mass incarceration, incarceration of youth, death penalty of youth when they executed a 13 year old, and the letters and modernly from prison cells of young black children who are locked up, written in crayon, asking for freedom. And you realize it's a perpetual cycle, you know, that it hasn't ended. It's just transformed. And I'd say that all of those things in tandem is probably what stuck with me the most or what I remember.

Nora Malone [00:11:36] And you talked about involved, in your involvement with ACRP events outside of the pilgrimage. Can you describe and talk about some of those?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:11:42] Sure. So I have done poetry readings for one of the memorial services for McCoy and Thomas. I did, I was present at both of the ones for Thomas and McCoy. I went to the soil collection ceremony and I read part of the oral narrative prepared for that. And then, of course, when it came to post the trip, I basically, I planned the remembrance documentary showing I wasn't part of the people who made that documentary, but I lended my poetry to it, which provides the transition narrations. And I was working with Max and Jalen and not Ben at that point, but Max and Jalen from the beginning, I had been speaking with the TMA people and trying to integrate them to the process. So that has been my involvement, mainly with ACRP outside of which. I'd say that really the ACRP has done a phenomenal job in localizing this history and looking at McCoy and Thomas specifically. And I'd say that that truly informed how we stepped into Alabama.

Nora Malone [00:12:40] What were some challenging moments for you on the pilgrimage?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:12:46] I think the rapidness of it all meant that really there was no time to process things sometimes, you know. And I think that part of that almost evokes a fight or flight response where you almost you don't tune out your listening, but the processing comes late at night in your hotel room right. It's not necessarily when you're on site. I'd say the most difficult part for me, and this wasn't like a difficulty that I necessarily leaned away from as much as embraced, was trying to honor the reality of the people around me, you know, honoring the complex relationships that everyone had. This was not a voyage of just black and white, you know. There were many people of varying ethnicities, varying experiences, intersectional identities who were involved in this. And those conversations between high school students are intense. They're very intense between teachers and student and teachers. And just understanding, you know, you're all, you're all within this unavoidably, and you must both bond together and understand what is holding you apart, societally and or otherwise. I'd say that those conversations were very difficult. And then also the processing element. It took me a while. It took me a long while. I was connecting constantly with the play I'd written because I'm a playwright, you know, fundamentally a writer. So that's how I process things. And that helped to a degree. But, you know, there were moments where you see your young friend crying. You're young, you know, young black girl crying, who you've known for many years. That's difficult to look out, to watch and understand that you're not the only one who has to process this. But every black person who comes after or before you has had to reckon with this legacy. You know, there is no post-racial America. There's only history that right now is repeating itself to such a degree that, you know, we're far from it and constantly exists. And it's

difficult to think about, for example, my little cousin, who's I think around seven years old now, who will one day have to understand the same thing. And as a black man will one day have to understand why he is where he is, why the police are the cops or the KKK reborn or the slave catchers, why that cycle hasn't ended. And I don't know how to explain that to him. And I think going to Alabama would and did but I. it's difficult to understand that this is unavoidable. This is not an option. This isn't just a learning experience. It's your reality. And you knew it before you knew it.

Nora Malone [00:15:00] And so, in your opinion, how do you think the residents and the city government of Alexandria can do continue to honor the lives of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:15:10] Well, honestly, I think the first foremost thing we have to do is launch a counterattack on the attack that's happening on education right now as we speak. You know, there are new education centers being proposed that completely erase this history that are trying to revert back to when my mother went to school in Alexandria, when her generation, they were taught about happy slaves working in the fields. So that's where we are right now. Right. And that's what they're trying to get back to. That's what a certain party in government is trying to force us back to. It's about education right. And I think it's also about remembrance past. Just knowing things, knowing really isn't enough. There's already knowing in the communities affected. What action is taking place? You know, gentrification is happening in this city. And I do not necessarily blame that strictly on the city council, city government. But I think that we need to have honest discussions about this whole NIMBY epidemic, about the idea of, you know, all of us want to remember until we look at the currency of it all. And really when we look past currency, we're looking past history. There is, you know, erasure is erasure no matter how you paint it. Because if you don't understand history as a continuous construct, then you don't understand history period. You know, you can't just chronologize the events of the past. That's not where history is. I think that obviously, we must repeat this voyage. Obviously, there must be opportunities for students to learn this history. Obviously, we cannot censor critical race theory. Obviously, we cannot censor teachers. Obviously, there need to be black people involved in these processes. Obviously, there needs to be oral narratives of history. There are still people alive who understood what the civil rights movement was like in D.C. and Alexandria. Obviously, we need to look at life history. These are things everyone has said. My question is, what are the connections being made with it? You know, it's great if students can understand this on a surface level, but we still have teachers who will skip over their lessons on lynching. You know, we still have teachers who think that it's irrelevant to bring up history that is, quote unquote, so far back. You know, we're still dealing with that. And racism as a whole is erasure, in my opinion. I think that any act of that, any act of violence against reality which occurs in our schools necessarily erases that reality. So if we're talking about, you know, honest, continuous effort, the citizens of Alexandria, ACFP, has done a phenomenal job. We have documentary. It should have been shown in every single classroom. That's not optional viewing if you live here. You know, if you live in America, understanding racism is not optional. It's fundamental. And I think that we really need to take a more rigorous approach where we're not trying to please everyone, but understanding there is an essential need for this. You know, we can't keep half sending it. We can't produce things that aren't seen and everyone is doing such hard work. And I think that we need to start really being rigorous with our approach. You know, and I think that a lot of people have been at a single level. But I think when it comes to city council, sometimes

when it comes to the, you know, the white liberal comfortability per se that we sort of operate on here, we need to look past that and understand, okay, you know, we need to be serious about what we're doing. So I'd love for every classroom at the middle schools yes and the high school obviously, I think should have seen that documentary. I think that's necessary. And I think that it's not critical race theory. And I think if it makes some white Americans uncomfortable, maybe that's a good thing. So, you know, let's have honest conversations and let's do honest actions and let's understand that that's going to evoke some honest emotions and let's still commit to honesty and authenticity, what we might call to action and, of course, pilgrimage again, everything else that's obvious.

Nora Malone [00:18:32] Yeah. And to elaborate on that, like what do you think the ACRP's next steps should be in this?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:18:37] I think the ACRP should really work towards spreading the, this both within Alexandria and a little bit more rigorously within a spear that puts Alexandria on the map, not necessarily to contact those outside of it, but just because that's when people kind of see their own city. A lot of people who live here kind of consider it a subsect of DC, and DC has wonderful and extensive black history, but we have history here too. And I think that sometimes we need that attention in order for people to look within themselves and go, "Oh, this happened." You know, there are some students at this school who don't know that there is a Remembrance Project. And I think that part of that is obviously sort of an effort of advertising, but I think it goes past that in terms of really making people understand the pertinence of these things. There should be street signs where Joseph McCoy, Benjamin Thomas were lynched, and I'm sure there are some, but that unveiling should be publicized. We should really be working hard to make sure that all of the effort that's taking place, because the issue isn't lack of effort, but lack of publicity. And I think sometimes we under do that publicity because we're scared of reactions. And I think we need to stop being scared of reactions. I also think outreach within majority black neighborhoods is very necessary. You know, we do have neighborhoods in the city. The city does have black history past fondant and during and, you know, before the lynchings and that era. So I think that we need to really be doing direct outreach so people understand, you know, this isn't just a history class thing. This is a fundamental piece of information that is why we are where we are today as a city.

Nora Malone [00:20:07] And can you talk a little bit about the emotions you felt throughout the pilgrimage and the surrounding events?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:20:18] I, there was a lot of shock and terror and sadness, obviously, or, you know, given. When I saw the images of lynching that was indescribable. It was extreme, incredibly. You know, it was it was emotionally sort of catastrophic, I'd say. And it also drew a lot of very direct parallels to right now. So I don't want to say despair was the emotion, but there were a lot of moments where I realized it had been hundreds of years and we're doing the same exact thing. And that realization of psych, like cyclity or repetition, was horrifying, really. But I'd say that the other things I felt during the trip, you know, was this great sense of pride within blackness. You know, that there is resistance, that there is community organizing. And even in Alabama currently today, you know, when we went to neighborhoods, there were people talking about the local projects being done to better the lives of the black citizens there and hence of, you know, that area in totality. I think as much as there was that historical and current sense of absolute shock, horror

and displeasure with this foundation, the foundation of this country, which was founded on white supremacy given. There's also this great sense of solidarity and organization. I think the solidarity is something I want to comment on. You know, again, it wasn't just a trip of black and white people. There were so many experiences that sort of hold, you know holding hands across the doorways, everywhere in the hallways is the expression. Everyone sort of going through it together. There is this sense of togetherness and collectivism that truly drove the optimistic or even hopeful, I suppose is the better word part of the trip and understanding, you know, there's this horrible sense of where we are, how did I get here? And there's a horrible path of knowing that because it's not a good story, but there is a pen to pick up and write part of the future. Now, of course, there's many blockades to that founded on the fact that this is still a country founded on and partially running on white supremacy. But there is a great sense of collective power and organization that is the undercurrent and sort of resist against that and is why there is still the advancements and, you know, the sitting across this table. You could say the reason we are here today. So it's a multi-faceted story and I feel that the emotions I felt reflected that quite consistently.

Nora Malone [00:22:55] And can you talk a little about your personal history in Alexandria?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:22:59] Of course. So, I was born in Arlington and then raised entirely in Alexandria. My mother grew up within Alexandria, not Alexandria City, but Alexandria as a district. And her mother is French, actually French, not Luxembourgish, but French, French national. And her father was African-American from North Carolina and then had been living here for a while but did military. My father is Liberian and Malian and grew up predominantly in Africa, in Europe. So I am Alexandrian in terms of I, you know, it was basically, I was born in Northern Virginia. I lived my entire life here. But it was actually very interesting because I come from a, I consider a mixed heritage of African-American and African. And obviously things are same race but the sort of cultural and ethnic experiences, you know, very intermingled. Which I feel like this is going to diverge from the question. So I'm sorry for that. But I'd say that really was an interesting thing to think about during the trip. You know, a lot of black people in BSU, especially the BSU side, came from very diverse backgrounds. You know, all these people are black and live in Alexandria, but that doesn't mean they're from the same areas or even that their parents were from this country per se. And I exist on a convergence of being African diaspora on both sides, being African-American, going back, being Liberian, which is ACS, American Colonization Society. So African-Americans that came to Liberia and then also being Malian in terms of, you know, from West Africa. And my mother and father have had different experiences as my father's African, my mother's African-American. We're all black in America, of course. But, the history is so deep because you're seeing both the middle passage, both sides of the middle passage. Right. Which is a very hard thing to reckon with. And I really thought a lot about being African-American during the trip. I did. My grandfather, my mother's father, who passed way before I was born, is the person with the, you know, he's fully African-American heritage from North Carolina. I don't know any of that side of my family. So I've lived the African American experience being an African American in terms of I live in the U.S. and technically, you know, I am black. But that direct connection without the sense of, that deep understanding of what a community is here was something that I really thought about a lot in Alabama.

Nora Malone [00:25:34] Okay. And can you talk about important individuals and moments in your life that shaped your understanding of racism and oppression?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:25:47] In a good way or a bad way

Nora Malone [00:25:49] Whatever way you want.

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:25:50] Okay. Well, my parents raised me very pro-black. I knew about Malcolm X when I was very young. I was telling my first grade classmates about the transatlantic slave trade and that Abraham Lincoln didn't even really free the slaves. Frederick Douglass talked to him. And, you know, my teachers weren't too happy about that, but it was the reality of the situation. So, my parents are very pro-black, obviously. My father is, you know, my, both of them, very invested within the black literature, etc.. I would say that I went to Charles Burr Elementary School. So when I went to first, I went to, oh, I don't remember the name of the preschool. I went to a pretty much all white preschool, Christian preschool, which was an interesting experience. I think we were a little too young for me to explicitly understand the difference besides like, "Oh, your hair is different," between me and my classmates. And then in elementary school, I went to Charles Burr Elementary School, which is outside of, I'm from the west end of Alexandria. It's in the east end of Alexandria, very affluent area. And there was a very stark contrast between the few African-American children who did attend that school, were not of the same background that and I wasn't from either of them because I was from the West End. I went there because of a technicality and, I'd say when I was younger, I was always aware I was black because my parents didn't let me be unaware I was black. I was proud of it. And then I also experienced a sense of dissonance almost constantly for it, of course, because, you know, there's, you know, it's, I had a lot of Caucasian white friends, you know, I ended up doing competitive cheerleading where, you know, I was surrounded by all black people where I wasn't the minority. But then I was in other ways because, you know, African. And it was it was very interesting. In terms of understanding racism, I think it was really consistently very vigorous and subtle. I now cannot, could not tell you like explicitly every like the events that formed it, because I just don't you know, I think about black pride before I think about other things. But I remember, you know, it was always, if I was good at something, it was in spite of my race. If I was bad at something is because of my race. And I would always feel exceptionalized because of my race. I got the comments, "You're so articulate," more times than I can count for doing nothing. And I was a writer, you know, but I am a writer. But it was very interesting how people thought it was impossible that I could be both black and excellent, you know, that it had to be some either some abnormality or they had to discover something else within me. Constantly, people asked how I was mixed, which I'm not. Both my parents are black, you know. It's as if they could not conceptualize a black person participating and doing etc., and doing what I did. In middle school, obviously, I fully understand the concept and I always understood racism was historically, especially in middle school. You know, it was first day of sixth grade. Our English teacher decided to show an image of a slave master whipping slaves and then laughed at it and said that it's not a character versus character conflict because, quote, "Clearly you cannot fight back." This was on the first day, I was the only black kid in the Honors English class. When I went to get in to TAG in like fourth, fifth grade. As someone who has a you know, I was very advanced in English writing, etc., and mathematics at the time. You know, they almost did not let me in. My parents had to like especially ask them to let me take the test, which obviously I did well in and did get into TAG. We wherein some white people did not have to take any test whatsoever and got into the program. So there was that assumption as well. And then, you know, it's a bunch of subtle things. And then there were very overt things in middle school. Everyone saying the N-word, you

know, that the white people thought that they could get away with it. They wouldn't say it towards me. The bossy, sassy microaggression comments, the idea that I was aggressive or too assertive or either only got things because of my race or, you know, wasn't good. I think it's interesting. Racism really doesn't make sense. Right? But it's always been there. If I could say names, my parents obviously told me my entire family is very Afrocentric, very, you know, black, prideful. And then in high school, I'd say that doing Facing Our Truth, which was a play that we did here, directed by Miss Leslie Jones, that reflected upon blackness in terms of theater and told stories of black trauma in that way. So absolutely, that was transformative. And then, of course, Mr. Riley Shabazz, who is the sponsor of the Black Student Union here, I've never had one of his classes, but I've been a BSU since ninth grade. And he is a transformative individual. He really is. But in understanding racism historically, I must give all credit to my parents. I mean, I, you know, they truly, there were no parts they left out. I will say that. There were just no parts they left out. They were very comprehensive. And, I was never under any impression that I was anything besides black. And I was never under any impression that meant anything besides what it means, really, since I was four or five years old.

Nora Malone [00:30:56] And you've got one more year left at the school. And what do you think the, you want to, is there anything you want continue to work with from the ARC that you can bring into like maybe the next year, people who are entering the school, type of thing?

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:31:08] I'd say that we should do this trip with the ACRP right?

Nora Malone [00:31:12] Em.

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:31:12] I say that we should absolutely do this trip again. I think it's very important that other students and I think honestly even non theater non BSU students. Because sometimes I think the students who need this most are the people who are not involved in BSU, other people who do not enter the door, you know. And I think that it'd be a good opportunity to open those things up and really understand, you know, who really needs to know this. And I think BSU students absolutely deserve it. But I think we also should bring in people who otherwise would not understand even this sort of element of their history, because this could be transformative for them. It really could be. I think, additionally, the theater department is also part of this trip. We should not understate the importance of that. Every year we do a play for Black History Month using the Advanced Drama class. For the past two years, I've written that one act play. There's Mirrors of Marquis, and this year, 200 years in the House of Resistance, 200 years in a House of Resistance, addressed the impact of the Underground Railroad, and then how that led to civil rights movement and throughout the years, Mirrors of Marquis was a story about a police shooting of an African-American male and ___ in a Northern Virginia high school, which I wrote and went on. And the Theatre Department also did one acts, which, you know, for two years I've written one acts that went on about racism. You know, it's we did Facing our Truth about Racism, Chicken and Biscuits, and ____ black _____ addressed racism. But really I think that we can talk about total celebration of black, you know, black, our black existence. We can talk about education, you know, showing remembrance, documentary, a lot of resources, I think is here. We should be really rigorously involved in the school. I think that that documentary, as I said prior, must be mandatory viewing. I think every history class needs to take a day to watch it. I know everyone's busy. They need to take a day to watch it and end of the year is fine. We could really do it now. Honestly, no one is doing anything, but I think students are really at the forefront of this. As

an adult, you know, you're encountering these things, but you might not necessarily be in a place where you sort of exit the complacency of understanding your own experience. And then, oh, well, this happened. But as a student, you know, you're in a place where you're always learning. You don't fully understand the world yet, and this is still schematic building. And we have people whose, you know, mental schematics are built upon authentic knowledge of history. Then they take that knowledge and they do something with it because it's part of how, you know, the brain is formed to understand that, to use that as a framework for the rest of their activity. So I'd love to see ACRP really coming in and making sure that all the amazing and very like comprehensive work they do is really being known and like applied within the schools. And of course with the arts. I think the arts are really some of the best way to communicate these, you know, because they invoke those emotions. And I will never stop writing about racism as long as I'm here, there will be a play about racism that I'm putting on, you know. And I would love to just, you know, Miss Leslie Jones and Miss Bachmann but of course, Miss Leslie Jones has done so much work, really, to allow black students that space to tell those stories. And, you know, she's _____ and I'm endlessly grateful. She just, she does so much. And it's incredible work. I just think a lot of it is making sure it's being seen and appreciated.

Nora Malone [00:34:13] And is there anything else you like to talk about regards the program manager.

Yahney-Marie Sangare [00:34:18] I think that we cannot understate the importance of solidarity. You know, this is a multifaceted experience. This is a incredibly diverse nation we're in. There are so many tensions that exist right now today. And Alexandria City High School, I think we have a really unique opportunity where a lot of different types of people from many different backgrounds who all go to the same high school for the entire city are all here together at once. That something that does not exist in other places. And we have the opportunity to have these really comprehensive and difficult and necessary discussions. And I really think that we need to embrace that difficulty and that complexity and understand that history is a continuation. I wrote in a play about lynching that I did in 2021, you wouldn't know but you were there. Rememory exists. You know these shared generational experiences. Studies show, show and pretty much all people of, people of the global majority, and even then with white, you know, white Americans, there is or you know, white non-Americans defer school. Those discussions need to be hard. They're difficult. They're challenging. They are hard to staff, there are hard to coordinate but they're unavoidable. If they don't happen here, they're going to happen eventually. You know, and we have to make the choice of when people are prepared for it. This is the central conversation, and I really think we need to dive into it. And I'm excited for all the work that's been done and all the work that will come next.