

PLAYBILL

Mainstage Theatre, Roxbury Community College

BRAVE LIGHT



written and directed by Johnny Blazes
featuring The Students of Neighborhood School

A Note from the Playwright/Director, Johnny Blazes

The first seed that was planted was a video.

In the spring of 2021, the 5th and 6th grade students of Neighborhood School's Level 4 created a video they called A Message from the Future, inspired by the two watercolor-and-narration videos of the same name, created by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Molly Crabapple. Level 4's video evoked visions of a future where relationships between people are restored instead of broken, and the earth is allowed to heal itself. They saw huge changes to the systems we live within today: voting, policing, schooling, energy consumption, farming, economy.

What I loved about this video (and those that inspired it) was that it didn't try to skip the hard stuff. "Things got worse before they got better."

I know that many of us are scared of discomfort. I know I very often am. I want things to get better without first getting worse. But I also know that this is not the way of things. The Level 4 students - these young people who will be coming into their adulthood in 2035, the year when this play is set - foresaw big challenges for our country and our world. Their bravery, naming the fire that we will have to walk through in order to see radical change, inspired me to imagine the world of this play, just a little more than a decade in the future, when despite all the "worse" going on around them, the young people are ignited, are joyful, are willing to ask the hard questions.

The text of the prologue and the final scene of the play comes from A Message from the Future. I encourage you to watch the video after the show is over, and imagine the future that these young people imagine.

neighborhoodschooljp.org/a-message-from-the-future/

Or open your phone's camera and scan this QR code:



Neighborhood School

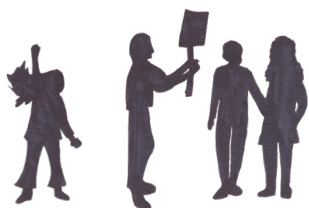
Neighborhood School is a purposefully small, artistically strong, and intentionally diverse independent school in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. Founded by Joyce and the late John Mallory, Donna DeVaughn, and Tricia and Scott Morrow with just 7 children in 1986, it has grown to include 60 students in grades from Kindergarten through 6th grade, grouped in four mixed-age levels. A mixed age model ensures that students have different positions in a level's age continuum from year to year, and helps create an atmosphere of acceptance for many layers of learning to happen simultaneously. Some of the school's pioneer students are now current parents and staff, including teacher/director/playwright, Johnny Blazes.

At Neighborhood School, children learn to find their voice, form community, stand up for social justice, and become the next generation of world-changers. Fostering social/emotional and communication skills in addition to problem solving strategies is foundational learning that happens each day in the classroom and on the playground. Cultural and ethnic diversity of children is explored and valued and the arts are used as a key learning platform. Within a cooperative learning framework, positive interdependence develops among students. Students see that they can reach their own learning goals while they work to ensure that others also reach their goals. Solutions to real problems in our community and the world are pursued, and justice work is ongoing.

When the curtain closed on our 2020 biennial play, Covid-19 was on our doorstep. One week later we shifted to virtual learning for the spring. Over the summer of 2020, NS teachers prepared for another new mode, outdoor learning, for the fall of 2020. Outdoor classrooms find their way into our 2035 script. After months of taking care that we all stay healthy at school, we are grateful for healthcare professionals, public health officials, scientists, supportive parents, dedicated teachers, and brilliant, open-hearted children who give us reason to work towards a brighter future. Given what we've all experienced, settling for the status quo doesn't make sense. Let's be the Brave Light we all need to create healthier systems and communities going forward.

"I had wanted my child to be the best and the brightest, but somewhere along the way that shifted to wanting his whole class to thrive."

- Parent of NS student



House Notes

Covid-19 Protocols

- Wear a mask indoors at all times
- Leave an empty seat between groups

General

- Flash photography is not allowed in the theater. Personal photos and video clips can be taken from your seat but should not block the view or disturb other audience members. A filmed version of the play will be available for online viewing sometime later in March.
- Bathrooms are located in the lobby and in the second level hallway, accessible via elevator or top of the house.
- Water fountains are located in the lobby and in the second level hallway.

Performers

- Family and friends drop off performers to teachers in the lobby and wait for performers in the house and in the lobby after the show. Please do not go downstairs to dressing rooms before or after the show unless you have an assigned role.
- Gifts/flowers for the performers should be given outdoors in a more private setting.



"Level Two Cast. Flashback: Red Light, Green Light"

*Top row: Mateo, Jean, Micah, Reena, Tommy, Lucy, Lani, Max,
Bottom row: Winnie, Lilou, Hannah, Coleman, George, Eli*



MERIDIAN ACADEMY

CURIOSITY CREATIVITY COMMUNITY

A standing ovation for our friends at Neighborhood School!

From the whole Meridian community, including:

Aya Abramowitz NS '21

Kayla Sanchez NS '18

Amos Batalden NS '17

Jesse Eliot NS '16

And 9 other Meridian and NS alums!



References and Quotations in BRAVE LIGHT

Amanda Gorman

"For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it."

—"The Hill We Climb", written for the inauguration of President Biden

Amanda Gorman is the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history. She has written for the New York Times and has three books forthcoming (which we can't wait to read!) www.theamandagorman.com

Desmond Tutu

"There are different kinds of justice. Retributive justice is largely Western. The African understanding is far more restorative - not so much to punish as to redress or restore a balance that has been knocked askew."

—Quoted in "Recovering from Apartheid" at The New Yorker (18 November 1996)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu was a South African Anglican bishop and activist, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his central role in ending apartheid – a racist system of segregation – in South Africa. After apartheid ended, he was chosen to chair the Truth and Reconciliation Committee that held both pro- and anti-apartheid groups to account for past human rights violations. He also spoke out on a variety of subjects, including LGBT rights, the Iraq War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the need to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Archbishop Tutu passed away in December of 2021. May he rest in power and peace.

The Honorable Robert Yazzie

"The Western law way is to punish you, so that you don't repeat the behavior. But the Navajo way is to focus on the individual. You separate the action from the person."

"K'e means to restore my dignity, to restore my worthiness. Through the peacemaking process, an offender can come to feel better, especially when the person can say, 'I'm responsible, I'm accountable.' That does a lot to the spirit, the mind and the body."

—Quoted in IIRP News "Restorative Justice Practices of Native American, First Nation and Other Indigenous People of North America: Part One" (27 April 2004)

The Honorable Robert Yazzie is a citizen of and Chief Justice Emeritus of the Navajo Nation. While serving as Chief Justice, he helped develop the Navajo "bill of rights" by looking to the teachings of the early Navajo Elders and, drawing upon their wisdom, promoted the use of Navajo peacemaking techniques, or hozhooji naat'aanii. 5

References and Quotations in BRAVE LIGHT *(continued)*

Robin Wall Kimmerer

"We need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters and degraded lands, but also for our relationship to the world. We need to restore honor to the way we live, so that when we walk through the world we don't have to avert our eyes with shame – so that we can hold our heads up high and receive the respectful acknowledgment of the rest of the earth's beings."

Braiding Sweetgrass

Robin Wall Kimmerer is the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. *Braiding Sweetgrass* is a book about botany in Indigenous traditions, and guides readers to think about the relationship between humans and the land. www.robinwallkimmerer.com

Luis Valdez

Tú eres mi otro yo.
Si te hago daño a ti,
Me hago daño a mi mismo.
Si te amo y respeto,
Me amo y respeto yo.

You are my other me.
If I do harm to you,
I do harm to myself.
If I love and respect you,
I love and respect myself.

–“Pensamiento Serpentino”

Luis Valdez is a Chicano playwright, screenwriter, film director and actor, who is regarded as the father of Chicano film and theater, as well as one of the most influential American playwrights living today. This excerpt of his poem *Pensamiento Serpentino* (Serpentine Thought) draws on philosophical concepts held by the Mayan people known as *In Lak'ech*, meaning “you are the other me.” www.elteatrocampesino.com

Elizabeth Freeman

While the Elizabeth Freeman Middle School is a fictional school of the future, Elizabeth Freeman was a real person! Elizabeth Freeman was a healer, nurse, and midwife who was the first enslaved African American to win a lawsuit for her freedom in Massachusetts. Her case set a legal precedent that effectively ended slavery in Massachusetts.

Teachers!

Want to learn more about restorative justice practices? Interested in having conversations with your students about the themes and concepts in *Brave Light*? Scan this QR code to find out more!



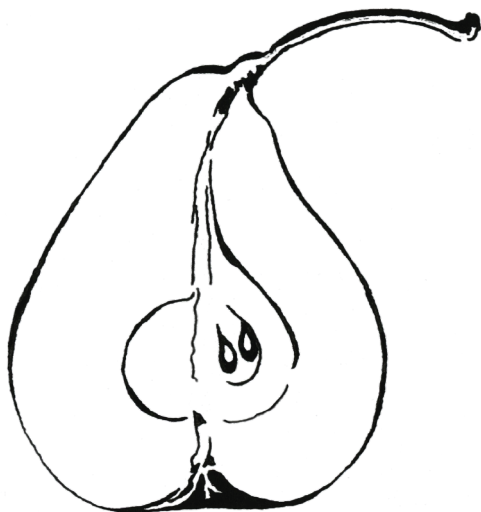
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Program Order

ACT 1

Setting: *Outdoor classroom at the Elizabeth Freeman Middle School, 2035*

Prologue: A Message From Our Future

The prologue is a message from kids in the year 2050, looking back at the social change of the 20s and 30s. The rest of the play takes place in 2035.

Scene 1: Coming Together

OurSpace Comments: Duct Tape?!

Scene 2: Time to Organize

OurSpace Comments: Poll Time!

Scene 3: Consequences

OurSpace Comments: Stop Trolling!!

Scene 4: They're Interrelated

Scene 5: Welcome to the Very First Meeting!

Flashback: Red Light, Green Light
performed by the students of Level 2

ACT 2




Musical Interlude: *"Born to Be Brave", performed by the Level 4 Rock Band*

OurSpace Comments: Ask Me Anything (AMA)

Scene 1: What is Justice?

OurSpace Comments: Generic Villain LOL!

Scene 2: What is Accountability?

OurSpace Comments:   

Scene 3: What is Repair?

Scene 4: A Message For Our Future



Mass POETRY

Mass Poetry harnesses the power of words to engage diverse communities across our commonwealth. Our innovative programs spark dialogue, connection, and self expression. We envision a vibrant, inclusive community that lifts all voices.

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JPTAEKWONDO



1. Regular classes

Adults, Teens and Kids (3.5yrs~)

2. Summer Camp

7/25/2022 ~ 9/2/2022

JPtaekwondo@gmail.com

A Round of Applause

Director & Playwright	Johnny Blazes
Music Direction	Samantha Hale
Choreography	Mar Parrilla
Level 2 Interlude	Rachel Shapp, Shari Feibel
Stage Management and Crew	Anna Slavin, Cait Palm, Drew Curtis, Haeli Warren, Lisa Nam, Malena Castilla, Tricia Morrow
Costume Designer	Jai Underhill
Level 2 & 3 Costume Coordination	Malika Walker, Zainab Shuaib
Costume Team	Elizabeth Potter, Heang Rubin, Jennifer Wood, Pam Charpentier, Sarah Dryden-Peterson, Sheena Anello
Properties & Set	Drew Curtis
Sets Painted by	Inkwon Jang, Jai Underhill, Julianne, Soonyoung Kwon
Bucket Drum Painting	Jovielle Gers
House Management	Cara Ross, Dinah Shepherd
Poster Illustration	Julianne Jang, Maya Wood
Poster and Program Design	Priscilla Saul
Videography	Jesse Epstein

Special thanks to Joel Sindelar for the loan of the risers for our set. And to all of the parents of NS for their support with shoes, costumes, and everything you do to help your kiddos be part of such a huge endeavor!

Thank you to NS Class of 2021: Christopher, Gwen, Jacob, Mateo, Maya, Nina, Pearl, and Zahra for co-creating A Message from the Future, the seed that grew our play. Thank you to Amanda Gorman and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for your inspiration lighting the fire within us. Thank you to Dan Pecci for the name OurSpace, to David Ryan Barcega Castro-Harris at Amplify RJ for your way-showing, to my colleagues who read play drafts and offered critique and support, and to the friends on social media who helped workshop the play title. Thank you to the incredibly patient and steadfast Brendan Higgins. And deepest gratitude for the students of Level 4, who are so brilliant, witty, and brave, and will never, ever let me forget that I tried to put "ROFL" in an early draft.

Cast List

ADAM	Eishan
ADRIENNE	Aviva
ALEX	Casey
DIANA	Julianne
DIEGO	Aidan
INDIGO	Maya W.
JASMINE	Malaya
JT	Ethan
LEO	August
MARTIN	John
PHOEBE	Zoe
SAGE	Krishna
SAM	Griffin
SUKO	Mimi
WILLOW	Mara
XYLA	Olanna

Alice – @koalahug25
Ben D. – @whenfigsfly
Ben R. – @zaksull932
Caleb – @7calebninjacougar
Luka – @lynxluka1240
Darshan – @therogueone
Gabe – @SushiLionThe11th
Jane – @pogdogiseggdog
Jenny – @kinfox
Maeve – @maevedabrave1216
Mandala – @snowleopard2813
Mirah – @pancakethehamster
Oliver – @magnablade196
Ruby – @yogapuppy13
Sam – @greeneggsandsam999
Siji – @princesseva1224
Ru – @tinysushihorse



Creative Team



Jai Johnson Underhill began her relationship with NS in 1991 when her daughter, Emma, enrolled in Level 1. Trained as an artist, Jai shifted from parent volunteer to the NS visual art teacher a few years after Emma graduated. She has taught tap dancing to children and adults throughout Boston since 2001. Jai has long made her mark on the NS community as costume mistress for our school plays, and she has added her talents to set and props design as well in recent years.

Johnny Blazes (NS Class of '94) got their start performing as a student at Neighborhood School, and they're grateful to continue that legacy by listening to and learning from younger generations of actors. Throughout their past 15 years of teaching, Johnny has toured performances and workshops to universities and theaters across the U.S., leading students of all ages in learning about identity, gender expression, clown, and performance as a means of self-expression and social critique.



Award-winning Borikua choreographer **Mar Parrilla** is the founding artistic director of Danza Orgánica (DO). She is the founder of the Dance for Social Justice™ program, as well as the annual arts festival: We Create!. Most recently, DO was awarded the Powering Cultural Futures Partnership with the BARR foundation. Her choreographic work has been presented at Jacob's Pillow, The Yard, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, and the Brooklyn Museum, to name a few.

Samantha Rose Hale is a music therapist, performing artist, educator, and facilitator. Since their childhood, the arts comforted Samantha's heart and fostered a sense of belonging. Now, Samantha centers creative processes in their work with others to tap into their inherent power to realize and act on their individual and collective potential. They have partnered with youth and adult activists and artists to deconstruct harmful narratives and amplify the voices of those who have been systemically silenced. Samantha is grateful to be part of the NS community since 2018.



Music Credits

"Born To Be Brave", from *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series*
music and lyrics by: Doug Rockwell and Tova Litvin, arranged by Samantha Rose Hale, performed by The Level 4 Band

Reprise and Curtain Call:
"Dynamite"

words and music by: Taio Cruz, Lukasz Gottwald, Max Martin, Benjamin Levin, and Bonnie McKee



Liberty Realty

www.libertytealtyteam.com

Alfred.libertyteam@gmail.com



Ways to Help

It takes many hands, a lot of heart and quite a few dollars to keep a small, not-for-profit, alternative elementary school afloat in Boston - especially during a pandemic! Your contributions, both in kind and monetary, keep our books balanced and our spirits encouraged. **Contributions** dropped into our “**Brave Light Bucket**” in the lobby will help cover the cost of this production. **Offers to help** can come to any Sustainer (see below) or members of our Board of Directors: Aba Taylor, Bruce Feibel, Jocelyn Heywood, Johnny Blazes, Joyce Mallory, Leslie Belay, Linda Camp, and Tricia Morrow.

Fair Share Tuition, Funding the Arts, and our Annual Fund

Neighborhood School is an economically diverse independent school. Our commitment to Fair Share Tuition for all families helps address issues of accessibility and equity. Involving all students in visual, musical, and dramatic arts throughout the year culminates in rich experiences like our biennial play. Your gift to our Annual Fund helps us bridge the gap between income and expenses.

Our current school year giving goal is to raise \$190,000 by May 31st.

To date, \$146,000 has been donated. Would you consider helping us sustain financial diversity through your contribution? Checks designated to the Annual Fund will help us reach our goal.

Your tax-deductible contribution makes possible a sustainable future for NS, fulfilling its mission of providing transformative, justice-centered learning to children of all families of all economic means representing Boston's neighborhoods, helping students find their voice, form community, stand up for social justice, and become the next generation of world-changers.

Neighborhood Schools, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

NS Sustainers are individuals (or families) who are connected to Neighborhood School as either parents, alums, relatives of alums, or friends, and have demonstrated their support for the school through their donations (monetary or in-kind), volunteer efforts and/or expertise and resource sharing consistently over time. The Sustainers' Circle is the group of Sustainers who formally commit to be a part of this group, receive regular communications, attend periodic meetings and regularly commit time and resources to support the Neighborhood School and its ongoing mission. Since 2018, three Board/Sustainer working groups have been established: Leadership (chair Jeremy Phillips), New Home (chair Leslie Belay), Fund Development (chair Jude Goldman), and Technology (chair David Gibson). If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Board Chair Linda Camp at lindawellscamp@gmail.com.



Tricia Morrow, Director
neighborhoodschooloffice@gmail.com
www.neighborhoodschooljp.org
Facebook: Neighborhood School, JP