

## **INTRODUCTION by Margaret Porter Troupe**

The Gloster Arts Project Summer Arts Camp arose out of an attempt to fulfill a wish. In 2009, on a visit to my hometown of Gloster, Mississippi, I was reading letters in the local town paper, *The Wilk-Amite Record* (now defunct) from kids to Santa Claus. Gloster is a rural enclave in the southwestern corner of the state, about 125 miles northwest of New Orleans. I was struck by the fact that many children were asking for piano and dance lessons, musical instruments like guitars, and books, while others were asking for Big Wheels, guns, and hunting rifles.

Having created VèVè: Visual Environments for Visual Education, an award-winning after-school program for middle and high school kids in San Diego while operating a contemporary art gallery during my thirteen years living there from 1990 to 2013, I'd seen first hand how kids thrived when given the opportunity to engage with art making activities. The difference the arts made in their personal self-esteem and confidence was dramatic. Kids who otherwise had difficulty managing their schoolwork experienced incredible success at drawing and painting, bookmaking, and other creative pursuits. This kind of success was transferred into better achievement at school.

So, as I read those letters to Santa from children in Gloster, I made a silent promise to do something about it. I created The Gloster Project, which everyone in Gloster immediately called "the Gloster Arts Project", hence, the name change. I created the program, which offered -- prior to the pandemic -- three weeks (75 hours) of in-person learning. Since the pandemic it's been offered online.

In the Gloster Arts Project summer arts camps, creative young people ages 6-18 years old learn the basics of animation, ceramics, dance, drama, drawing, drumming, film, painting, guitar, poetry, performance, silkscreen printing, 3-D sculpture, five days a week, Monday through Friday. Camp culminates with an end of camp public performance where campers show off all they have learned to their parents and friends and the Gloster community at large. Their artworks become the set design. We also include a character-building component, the Values Code, that we use to help children think about who they are and what kind of person they wish to become as they grow and develop.

Our faculty is composed of professional artists with distinguished careers. They are the most dedicated, hardworking, committed artists-turned-teachers anyone could wish for. In addition, we bring well-known celebrities and creatives to Gloster as well, because we want campers to meet high achievers, people they recognize as movie actors, writers, and musicians. These special guests act as mentors and role models. They are artists who look like the kids and who share similar ethnic, cultural socioeconomic backgrounds.

To date, whether in person or virtually, we've brought celebrities like animation director astrophysicist and Brown University professor, Stephon Alexander, Lyndon Barrois, Joy Harjo, Danny Glover, Chester Higgins, Jaron Lanier (the father of "virtual reality"), Delroy Lindo, Cassandra Wilson, Terry McMillan, Will Calhoun, Quincy Troupe, Princeton

University professors Eve Aschheim and Tom Hare, and many others to Gloster, as well as to our online classrooms.

Here's a sample of some of the poetry the children produced in the summer of 2021. Our poetry teacher this year was Leslie Reese, a Detroit native living in Chicago. Leslie is the Chicago Poetry Center Poet-in-Residence at Swift Elementary School and the founder of folklore & literacy, which uses poetry, books, visual art, music, movement, and performance as gateways to literacy, discovery, and self-expression..

A perfect fit for our program, her goal this summer was to introduce young people to poetry as a gateway to discovering their own voices, cares, stories, questions, and imaginations, to believing that poetry is accessible, and that making meaning with language is something that they can do.

In addition to finding ways to make poetry engaging and accessible, Leslie's goals were to introduce a variety of poems for listening, reading aloud, and examination; to cover the basics of line, line break, and stanza, pattern and repetition, free verse, rhyme, alliteration, and figurative language (personification, metaphor, and simile) and the basics of form: [rhyming] couplets, haiku, *cinquain*, and blues and so on.

By giving kids access to some of the best creative minds among us, this program is building community and the next generation of leaders. Who can say from where the next great mind will come? Could be somewhere in Gloster, Mississippi, or another under-resourced community. Just because kids don't have access doesn't mean they're not genius.

## Poetry

This presentation of kids' poetry opens with a poem by teaching artist, Leslie Reese titled *First Draft*.

### **First Draft**

*A poem for Gloster Arts Project Student Poets, Summer 2021*

By Leslie Reese

word.

oh to roll it around in your mouth. whisper, taste, chomp, and belch sound with it

oh to unravel story with it

oh to learn to read it, to write and make your own meaning with it

besides reading, you can hear it and think with it

decipher, decode and make questions with it or

you can question it. curl it with voice lilt, music, hurt, and power

word.

see what Langston Hughes and Margaret Walker and Carolyn Rodgers did with it?  
see what Gil Scot-Heron and Lucille Clifton and Shel Silverstein said with it?  
see how Janet S. Wong, Natasha Trethewey, Lamont Lily, Kwame Alexander and  
Quincy Troupe use it?

you may struggle: fighting before delighting with it  
hissing, missing, and kissing with it, because of it  
maybe even navigating traffic & love, finding your way home with it

word.

tussle and roll around on the ground with it, get dirty  
dance and wonder and play with it: laughing, toothless-grinning with it  
ride your imagination to paint visual poetry and time travel with it

*jump at de sun, counting rhythm with it*  
*jump at de sun, counting rhythm with it*  
*jump at de sun, counting rhythm with it*

take us on your adventure

## **Campers' Poems**

### **"Recipe of Love"**

By Avery Bailey, age 7

Add 3 cups of cookies  
2 cups of sugar  
Stir it with a mixing tool and crayon  
Any color  
Add a little bit of sunlight  
Mix 2 lollipops and pour the batter  
Into a greased loaf pan  
Bake it in the hot oven for 50 minutes.  
When you eat it you will feel happy.

### **"A Recipe for How to Be A Superhero"**

By Austin Carr, age 8

10 cups of a terrible accident  
(to get the super powers)  
20 cups of courage  
30 cups of power like pyrokinesis (fire!)  
25 cups of justice

Put it in a bowl, stir it up  
Put it in a large pan and bake it  
On 150 degrees Fahrenheit

Put it in a hero when it's done!

### **"Making Somemores"**

By Riya Robinson, age 7

My Gigi's friend invited me,  
My brother and Gigi to her house  
Everyone was outside  
There was a big blazing fire  
We could smell the smoke  
We had to be careful  
We used long sticks, big white marshmallows,  
Graham crackers, and Hershey's chocolate  
First, I roasted the marshmallows  
Mine turned blackish and brownish  
I blew out the fire on the marshmallows  
Next, I put a piece of chocolate on the Graham cracker  
Then, I put the marshmallows on top of that  
I put another Graham cracker on top  
Then I ate it  
It was actually awesome!

### **"Wednesday"**

By Austin Carr, age 8

On Wednesday nights the  
The wind whiffs like a magical wand in winter

On Wednesday morning when you smell  
The wheat bread with jam we wish on the stars  
That we have infinite wishes,

Like water  
It flows and flows

You open the window  
The wind is carrying you like a magical spell  
When you dance you feel happy  
When you sing you feel amazing  
When you do it all together, you feel  
Unstoppable!

### **“Tuesday “**

By Avery Bailey, age 7

In the tub, I saw some tissue  
And a towel  
On a trip  
We had some toast.  
And after that, I brushed my teeth.

### **“Wednesday”**

By Adalyn Bailey, age 7

On Wednesday  
I looked out my window and saw a whale  
Wishing for watermelon  
Wow!  
After, I saw a wishing well!

### **“Birthday Poem”**

By Adalyn Bailey, age 7

I want to make someone else happy on their birthday  
And then we can have a trampoline, a water slide, and a  
Bouncy house and balloons with water in it!  
I want someone else to feel happy on their birthday  
They don't have to feel sad  
They can feel happy

Because sometimes birthdays are happy  
When you have new friends.

**“Lauryn’s Birthday Poem”**

By Lauryn Boss, age 7

On my birthday  
Me and my family  
Go out to eat.  
I choose the restaurant  
That makes me happy.  
We order pizza with pepperoni  
And meat.  
Delicious!

**“Samara’s Birthday Poem”**

By Samara Johnson, age 6

My birthday is going to be like:  
I’m going to be Holly Quinn  
My family and me and my friends  
Are going to go eat at Chik-Fil-A  
For chicken nuggets  
We are going to have French fries  
I’m going to feel happy  
My dad is going to sing  
Happy Birthday to Me!  
And I am going to be 7!

**“Waking Up”**

By Riya Robinson, age 7

In the morning  
When I’m asleep  
I hear the TV in the kitchen.  
I wake myself up  
I feel good.  
My pajamas are soft

I go into the bathroom  
Wash my face, brush my teeth.  
The soap feels soft  
I go to the couch  
And I see the sunlight.

**“High Energy”**

*Making a rhyming poem, together*

By Austin, Avery, Riya, Addie, Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. Robinson, and Ms. Leslie!

Walking so many places with these feet  
I like eating meat.

Another thing that we could eat  
May be sour or may be sweet.

When I’m out in the heat  
I need a sweet and cool treat.

If you want a sweet treat  
Go out in the heat.

If I go out in the night  
I may find a kite.

If I go out in the sun  
My mom will give me a cinnamon bun.

When we play out in the sun  
We jump and relax and run!

**“Two Collaborative Haiku”**

(Ti’Amber Gordon, Yvens Saint-Pierre, Brandon Jones, Riley Abbs)

Eyes in the darkness  
She likes cupcakes but there is  
No one to share them.

Never wrote a poem  
Before. How do I begin?  
Words, stanzas, and lines.

### **“My Ancestors”**

By Riley Abbs, age 10

They are black like me  
They look like me.  
They talk like me  
They could be older than me  
They can be younger than me.  
They can be taller than me.  
They can be shorter than me.  
They can run like me  
They are strong like me  
They do not give up like me  
They have good clothes like me  
They have a family like me  
They have feet like me  
They have a a whole body like me  
They have a language like me  
They have a face like me  
They have arms like me  
They have legs like me  
They do things like us.

### **Untitled**

By Brandon Jones, age 10

People normally tell us  
How our ancestors lived  
But is the info accurate?  
We can't know unless we were there.

If I could go back in time  
To see how they survived  
I would ask them about their adventure  
And how they stayed alive.

### **“Future Poem”**

By Brandon Jones, age 10

Everyone has their own idea  
Of what is in the future  
But we'll actually never know  
Until it finally comes.

Travelling at the speed of light  
Might be possible  
Although many things make no sense  
They just might exist.

### **"Spring Poem"**

By Savannah Jones, age 13

Now that winter is gone  
And spring is here  
I can set up a table  
Make pink lemonade.

It may be sour  
It may be sweet  
But it's hot outside  
So come get a treat

Pink cherry blossoms bloom  
In Branch Brook Park  
They have the best scenery  
Especially in spring months.

### **"Poem Inspired by the Color Yellow"**

By Lauren Johnson, age 13

Yellow is a bright feeling of joy  
It has a sour smell  
Or a sour twist

The best ride ever  
Was at the Rodeo in Houston.  
It was called "The Alien Chaser"

It was painted yellow  
It tickled my stomach  
Because of the force that pulled me back.

Like a burst of joy

**“Pretty Dog Washington”**

*An origin of the name poem*

By Lauren Johnson, aka *Pretty Dog Washington*, age 13

Pretty Dog Washington  
That’s what they call me  
They probably gave me this name  
Because I am pretty like my silky fur  
Washington is the last name of my owner  
I love the tone that he whistles  
My hair is white like a swan’s  
My eyes are as blue as a blueberry  
No wonder why they call me Pretty Dog Washington

**“Jazzy Aqua Reign’s Blues”**

By Savannah Jones, aka *Jazzy Aqua Reign*, age 13

COVID has me in the mood  
Nothing yellow but definitely something blue  
This pandemic has me doomed  
Sighing in bed and saying boo-hoo.

The malls look like a straight-up Ghost Town  
Every time I go there a store has shut down  
It’s painful and sad as I wonder why  
COVID had to mess up my summer jive.

**“Who I am, Where I’m from”**

*A collaborative poem by Group 4 (Ages 14-17)*

I am brown  
I am nice  
I am red

I am unidentifiable  
I am courageous

I'm from Woodville, Mississippi  
I'm from Jersey  
I'm from Texas  
I'm from Liberty, Mississippi

I am helpful  
I am enigmatic  
I am strong  
I am mean

I love Mom  
I love food  
I love history  
I love God,  
And sleeping

I'm from St. Louis  
I'm from my mom  
I'm from the unknown  
I'm from a country

**“South Carolina, ‘Til Next Time”**

By Nakeelah Wilkinson, age 14

Family, how I have missed you!  
We should plan a trip  
Maybe the ocean or the beach,  
Where I can take a dip  
South Carolina? That's a trip!  
So much fun wouldn't it be?  
King Kong! What a great sight to see!

The ocean is like a drink of blue Gatorade  
The beach feels calm and happy  
We should plan a trip  
Maybe the ocean or the beach,  
Where I can take a dip  
South Carolina? That's a trip!

**“Blues Can’t Rhyme With Me”**

By Nakeelah Wilkinson, aka *Peg Leg Harp Bailey*, age 14

Blues can’t rhyme, blues not my type  
I like to do this, but it just don’t rhyme for me  
That’s the blues, that rhyme with me

When the blues don’t rhyme,  
You can’t for me  
Blues ain’t for me  
When you’re sad you’re emotional  
That’s the blues that  
Tell you about it

Blues are for me, and they don’t take back  
When the blues know you, you are the blues  
That’s the blues that I’m talking about,  
That blues rhymes with you.

**“There’s Always a Way”**

By Johntavia Boygents, aka *Boney Liver McGee*, age 17

I fell into the pit of sadness  
And need to get out of this madness

The more and more I try to run away  
It comes back to me everyday

I strive to find the light  
But sadness puts me in a fight

Yay yay I found a way  
To light up that dark dark day

When you know God’s power  
His blessings will rain on you like a shower

**Samara Johnson, age 6**

Dolls  
Medium, soft  
Driving, camping, going  
for a walk in my Barbie car  
dreamhouse.

**Riya Robinson, age 7**

Drawing  
People, shapes,  
Trying, painting, coloring  
Can be easy or hard  
Mine.

**Avery Bailey, age 7**

Flowers  
Beautiful, nice  
Looking, seeing, blooming  
They look nice  
spring.

**Adalyn Bailey, age 7**

Food  
Yummy, delicious  
Lunching, munching, crunching  
It helps me feel healthy, strong, and big  
eat.

**Lauryn Boss, age 7**

School  
Learn, friends  
Reading, writing, thinking  
Get on the bus  
listen.

**“Windy Day”**

A Group Cinquain by Nekeelah, Rakeisha, and Laylay

Wind  
Cool, smooth  
Swirling, blowing, moving  
A strong storm that blows trees and sand  
fast!

**“Clothes”**

By Samantha Johnson, age 14

Clothes  
Colorful, stylish  
Keeping warm, comfortable  
Make people feel good about themselves  
Fashion

**“Noodles”**

By Rakeisha Simmons, age 15

Raw  
Warm, steamy  
Slipping, sliding, swirling  
Good yellow sauce  
Tasty