

Yale SCHOOL OF DRAMA

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Dear Miami Dade Commissioners,
Department of Cultural Affairs,
Family and Friends,

courier
305 Crown Street
New Haven, CT 06511

I am very sorry I could not be in attendance at this occasion. I had to leave Miami for work. It is often thus.

Since graduating from the Yale School of Drama in 2007, I have been fortunate enough to work in London with the Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Court, and Young Vic; the Alliance Theater in Atlanta as well as the NYSF/Public Theater in New York have produced my body of work. I was selected as a member of the Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago-- home to great artists like John Malkovich and Gary Sinise, and I won an Academy Award for the film Moonlight.

I am mentioning all of this not because it makes me confident, but because I hope it makes you *proud*. I hope you all can look around the room and feel proud that a boy from Liberty City (east of Hialeah) can work hard in the Arts and become a Storyteller.

My latest play, which I left Miami to work on, is about a woman who lives near the water ways in a modest house that she intends to keep and pass on to her children, but a terrible storm comes and changes all of her plans.

It isn't hard to see where I got the inspiration for this story.

My grandmother, who was born in Coconut Grove some ninety years ago, right on Charles Ave, told me the story of the 1926 storm that devastated her home as a baby-- but I didn't need to go back that far to be inspired. As a young boy, living with his mother and brothers in Homestead, a storm named 'Andrew' came and tore life apart. It sent me sprawling back to Liberty City and split up our family for good. This is just one of the Miami-made stories that I travel the world to tell. But I long to tell these stories to people who understand that even after the storm, we don't move, we rebuild, no matter how long that takes. I want to tell stories to the people who taught me that we don't need to make up History-- it is all around us. We are *living it* everyday in our fairly young city.

That is why I seek to come home, as often as I can, to work in the city that raised me. And no one has made that more possible than the courageous Joseph Adler at Gable Stage. When other

companies failed to invest in my potential, and went with someone who was ‘already a star’, Joseph Adler invited me to shine at his theater. And for that I will be forever grateful.

Earlier, I mentioned my grandmother, born in Coconut Grove to immigrant, Bahamian parents. Her parents taught her to love the freedom and opportunity she was afforded here in this country, in this City. They capitalized on the free education offered to their daughters at Carver and Booker T. Washington. With that knowledge, my grandmother was able to introduce me to the classics, reciting texts memorized in her childhood from the King James Bible and William Shakespeare. I remember forgetting a line from Hamlet’s ‘to be or not to be’ speech while rehearsing for a class at New World late one night. My grandmother heard me fumble the line and from the other room she finished the phrase, ‘To die to sleep, to sleep perchance to dream.’

My grandmother born right on Charles Avenue in Coconut Grove, who loves Theatre, and can recite Shakespeare has never once been in the Coconut Grove Playhouse. It’s been in her neighborhood since 1927. Lets change that.

We have a chance to make history by supporting Gable Stage and the current plan for the re-opening of the playhouse. We now have a chance to include programming, like the time Mr. Adler invited an audience full of students, day after day, for free, to view the Royal Shakespeare Company perform Antony & Cleopatra set in Haiti starring a Black woman as Cleopatra, a first for the Royal Shakespeare Company, would have never happened without the insistence of Gable Stage.

Because of Mr. Adler, thousands of Miami-Dade Students will know a Latino man can portray Hamlet, a Black women can portray a queen, and that an African American kid from where they come from can go to Yale and be considered a genius and win an Academy Award. Mr. Adler is and has been committed to celebrating local artists and their talents and to introducing the artists and patrons of tomorrow to the world.

But he, and we can, do one more thing...

With your support of this current plan, we can see a 90-year-old Miami woman, who loves Shakespeare, get a chance to enjoy the theater on the same street where she was born and raised. We are so close. Lets not wait another moment.

I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



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