

2022 VISITING FACULTY LECTURE, July 29, 2022

Abigail Deville: I kinda, I'm like, mm, a tiny bit nervous, cause it's not every day you get to introduce a, an art hero, which you are for me. And I wanted to start out, actually, in using your own words, which is something that I think about a lot, actually, in, in conceiving work, but it's a, the quote starts, "Time for me works like a door. You have to go through time in order to be in it. It seems like one big cycle from within, like a spring. You start at the innermost part of the spring, and you move outward as you grow. As you grow, this materialistic body, which is flesh, takes its place and acts, and then it falls back to the beginning to recreate itself. Time is standing still if one is not moving in it, and if one is moving in it, time moves so fast that we cannot keep up with it. We can speed through time, and then we can be in time and not move at all. Man could stay still, and time won't even matter. But if man is moving in time and trying to keep up with time itself, then he'll somehow or another be like time, outrun himself. Because there is no distance, there is no limit, no space hidden."

Mr. Lonnie's work encompasses the registers in which we exist, how we breathe, alter material by our very presence, imbued with honor, tradition, found textures and meaning encapsulating the story of us all, articulated in the most essential way. The scope of his work reminds me of something George Washington Carver said: "Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough. Not only have I found that when I talk to the little flower, to the little peanut, they will give up their secrets, but I have found that when I silently commune with people, they give up their secrets also, if you love them enough."

Mr. Lonnie's practice is one of radical love, and speaking about a work titled *A Different Mountain* in 2005, he said, "The mountaintop that Dr. King mentioned in his speech in Memphis has gone through many transitions since his time. Too many of our people took the elevator or the escalator to the mountaintop. The road Dr. King spoke of was a long one, with no shortcuts." Mr. Lonnie's work exemplifies this long road, paved by perseverance and love.

Mr. Lonnie Holley's critically admired art practice spans painting, drawing, assemblage, sculpture, sandstone carvings, and performance that combines experimental music and poetry. Born in 1950, in Jim Crow era Birmingham, Alabama as the seventh of twenty-seven children, Holley had a difficult childhood working from the age of five in various jobs, picking up trash at a drive-in movie theater, washing dishes, picking cotton, digging graves, serving as a short order cook at Disneyworld. His itinerant childhood living across the south in various precarious circumstances was chaotic, leaving a deep imprint on his work. Holley made his first sculptures when he carved tombstones for nieces who perished in a house fire in 1979. Over the following years, he devoted himself to making sculptures that populated his property near Birmingham, eventually bringing some of his sandstone works to the director of the Birmingham Museum of Art. After his inclusion in the benchmark exhibition *Souls Grown Deep: African-American Vernacular Art of the South*, organized by William Arnett in 1996, Holley's work began to attract attention beyond Alabama. He soon became one of the foremost artists of the Afro-Atlantic aesthetic that blossomed across the southern United States.

Holley's Birmingham art environment was destroyed in 1997, and in 2010 he settled in Atlanta, Georgia, where he lives and works today. While he's been making music most of his adult life, his career as a performing artist did not begin until he began professionally recording his music in 2006. Since then, Holley has recorded five studio albums, his latest record a collaboration with Matthew E. White entitled *Broken Mirror: A Selfie Reflection* was released in early April, 2021. Holley has toured the world with various musicians. His ever-evolving compositions and lyrics are improvised and morph with each concert and recording.

In 2021, Holley was featured in *Lonnie Holley: Tangled up in de Kooning's Fence*, curated by Alison M. Gingeras, South Etna Montauks' gallery space. The exhibition coincided with *Everything That's Not White*, Holley's solo exhibition at the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, New York. Both exhibitions featured a range of painting, sculptures, and works on paper that Holley made over the course of his residency on the East End. His work is represented in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Smithsonian American Art Museum in DC, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, among many others. Holley's work has been presented in numerous solo exhibitions, including at Dallas Contemporary, in Dallas, Texas, the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, New York, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, Georgia, in 2017, the Halsey Museum of Contemporary Art in Charleston, South Carolina, the Birmingham Museum of Art, in Birmingham, Alabama, and many more. Holley has been the subject of several documentary films, and his own directed short film *I Snuck Off the Slave Ship* premiered at Sundance in 2019.

And Mr. Lonnie will be in conversation with Matt Arnett, who is an art historian, filmmaker, music producer, and curator. Matt, along with his brothers and father, founded the Souls Grown Deep Foundation and Tinwood Media to publish books and organize museum exhibitions that advance the study, visibility, and inclusion of the art and culture of the African-American South in museums and institutions worldwide. Matt was the project coordinator for the *Souls Grown Deep: African-American Vernacular Art of the South* in conjunction with the Cultural Olympiad of the 1996 Summer Olympics. He was project director for the publications *Souls Grown Deep: African-American Vernacular Art of the South, Volume 1* and *Volume 2*. Matt and Tinwood organized with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the *Quilts of Gee's Bend* and its follow-up *Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt*. Both shows toured museums across the country, including the Whitney Museum of American Art. The *New York Times* praised the show for exposing some of the most miraculous works of modern art America has produced. Matt was project director for the books which accompanied the exhibitions. He also co-produced and co-directed the short documentary film *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* and produced the two-CD set *How We Got Over: Sacred Songs from Gee's Bend*. Matt went on to help create and produce *Thornton Dial in the 21st Century*, an exhibition and book, *Purvis of Overtown*, an award-winning feature length documentary about artist Purvis Young, the touring exhibition and book *Mary Lee Bendolph, Gee's Bend Quilts and Beyond*, as well as numerous other exhibitions and books focused on African-American art. For more than two and a half decades, Arnett has worked closely with the artist and musician Mr. Lonnie Holley, and he co-produced Mr. Lonnie's

first three films, co-wrote and produced a short narrative film *I Snuck Off the Slave Ship*, directed and co-written by Holley, which premiered, again, at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. In 2010, Matt founded Grocery on Home, a non-traditional music space in Atlanta, Georgia, uniting his love of music with his passion for building community support for the arts. He is a graduate of Emory University, where he majored in art history and African-American Studies, and was an All-American soccer player who lives in Atlanta with his wife, Virginia Prescott, a former public radio host.

Please help me welcome Mr. Lonnie Holley and Matt Arnett. {applause, cheering}

Matt Arnett: From the age of five, until eleven, he had, he wired speakers on top of his house where he was living so he could watch movies at the drive-in, and when he realized this talk was on a Friday night, he thought it made sense to [UNCLEAR]. So, the first thing is a short, it's actually a music video for Lonnie's song, "I Woke Up in a Fucked-Up America," and it will be followed by a short film Lonnie directed called *I Snuck Off the Slave Ship*. And then he'll be up there! [videos play 00:08:56 – 00:34:20] {applause} [Arnett & Holley take seats on stage, where a slide show begins on screen behind them]

Lonnie Holley! {applause, cheering}

Lonnie Holley: Thank you all for the day we've had together. I might not have been able to get around to every individual, but I can see how much a place like this could bring to our reshaping personalities around the planet. A lot of times, we don't understand what our purposes are after we are born. But we are born for a reason. We live, we die. And in the process of living, we get an opportunity to see, hear, feel, experience so much. And what I've tried to do with those experiences are emotions and all the other things that came along, you all saw, I dealt with it. I deal with it in the sake of, for real, the persons that had, one would say, put me to the top. Why would you even help a human get to the top if you didn't see the meaningful purpose of getting them there? The top of human's experience, and I think you all are curious, and why? Why, Mr. Holley, the age that you are, and with whatever that you're going through, you're continuing to do what you have to do? I'm doing it for this young man's father, and all the others. The curators, the directors, the placements, places of the art. It's a lot of behind the scene humans, that we don't, never even see at work, that is working to place the arts that we do.

I'm not gonna overtalk, cause I want Matt to say some things, and maybe enflame some thoughts that I can help you all understand, the fire that is burning from those flames. But I do want to say thanks to William Arnett. I wanna say thanks to your brothers, and I want to say thanks to all the humans that saw fit, even say thanks to you, Sarah, and all of you students that I had an opportunity to see your works. And I want you to know, if you can't see any other thing that I have accomplished while I was here, if you don't text, or if you do text, or if you Instagram, wanna say go and Instagram this. Wanna say go and tell it over the mountain. Over the hill, and everywhere, that Lonnie Holly, Sr. came by here and gave us a bit of motivation and inspiration.

What you got to say about that, Matt?

Arnett: Lonnie asked me if I would join him, and I said, you don't need me to join you, and he said, I don't know what I'm gonna talk about, so I need your help speaking me to talk. Clearly, that is not the case. I told him that in advance. But, I'll do as you asked, sir.

I, I've been, Abigail thank you for the intros – I'll just add that I met Lonnie when I was a teenager, and he's had a profound impact on the rest of my life, from teenager, and I now have children who are teenagers and in their early twenties, and he's had a major impact on their life as well, and the way they see things, and I'm convinced the path they're on in their life is largely due to the influence of Lonnie. (00:40:01) But Lonnie, one of the things that I noticed, even as a young person, when I first met you, is that despite the, the oftentimes bad hand that you were dealt in life by society, and, you know, the, the city, and the state, and the authorities, and, and child services, and every other place where things could go wrong, they went wrong, and, you know, getting hit by cars, and being in hospitals and being declared brain dead, and, and spending four years in the Alabama Industrial School for Negro Children, which is a crime, that alone is enough that, you know, it's a horrible place. It's basically a slave camp in Alabama that was allowed to exist until the early '70s. Lonnie is a big part of a podcast that is coming out soon that will tell the story of that horrible place, but so many of the people, Lonnie, who ended up in Mount Meigs, the ones who have been contacted and found, are on death row, and serving life in prison, and talk about the brutality that they suffered there, and, how is it that you're sitting here talking about your art, sitting in front of a screen that's filled with images of your work? How is it that you – how did you get here, from there?

Holley: I've got something written down to play as a piece of music, if hope was not in my corner, if it wasn't meant for me to be who I am, it would, if it wasn't for my mother, struggling to give birth to me, and going on to giving birth to twenty other children, after me, and having thirty-two pregnancies, and not knowing when I was going to be born, or what my purpose were, or my grandmother, that prayed, day and night, at the time that I was lost from the family, for me to be found. Those that actually is not only the remnant of hope, but the epitome of hope. Those that probably you all didn't even know that they had said something so profound and great, in their brains, for you, even before you was born. How thankful they are.

I don't know very much about DNA, I don't know very much about lineage. But I do know that it matters. My heritage, my inheritance, whatever it is that I inherited, and I think I inherited this portion of the earthly manner that I could choose to do with it to make it better, I sometime get all teared up because I missed the loved one that had raised me. I miss the opportunities, and I don't always look to go back, and go back through those experiences, but because they are with me, at any time, I may have to speak about 'em. And they was not all joyful moments. So the noise that I make on this Mellotron, this musical instrument, is going to be noise. But how I choose to put it together, and put some of my vocal sounds with it, and hopefully tell you all a story, is gonna be because of me being able to get to this point in my life. I'm getting ready to be seventy-three years old, but some sixty-some years ago, I was considered brain dead. Broken up all the pieces. Had got drug up underneath a car for two and a half blocks. Stayed unconscious for three and a half

months. Laid there. Three and a half months, without consciously enough to even eat. Whatever it were that kept me alive, it kept me alive! That's something for, to be thankful for by itself.

But some years later, not that many years later, being banged upside the head, and banged upside the head, in less than a day and a half, getting hit, just like two fists hitting you at one time. And knocking you back out again. And then, the very next day, I was tied to the mourning bench, like this. My body was tied to the mourning bench. My legs was tied to the bench. And my arms were tied around a sing, a cedar tree. And I was whipped. Mr. Holloway told Mr. Glover to shoot him 150 licks. So Mr. Glover took his stick out of the oar, and he beat me, lick after lick after lick after lick, until around twenty-five licks, both of my thighs and down my leg had swole up so they was ready to burst. By fifty licks, they was busting open. Splitting. By 100 and some-odd licks, I had been knocked unconscious, again. And the whole thing is, do they know what kind of drama they had caused me to have to grow through? Nightmares after nightmares after nightmares after nightmares. All the time, getting whipped in my dreams, all the time, getting ran down by the hounds. All the time, being chased by the water boy, the, the trustees. Cause when they go catch me, they were gonna beat the hell out of me.

The whole thing were, why did I get out of that grave? I fell into a grave on the way to Tuskegee, Alabama. And that's where I found rest. And I got out of that grave, and I kept running until I got to Tuskegee, and that's where I found food. All of these things was a very young age, at an age when I didn't know, what the hell is going on? What? Why is all of this stuff happening around in the city? Why was dogs being unleashed on humans? Why were hose pipes being turned loose with great forces of water, that would knock a person down, why? And why was there a youth committee? And why were I affiliated with that youth committee, for me to put in the Alabama Industrial School for Negro Children by the order of Bull Connor? Bull Connor ordered us off the street, by having that curfew.

So I was ordered into – I tell my children, because of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, I down here in the lion's den. All the others that had been written about, why can't I be written about also? My troubles and my trials and my tribulations. And that's what your daddy did. (00:49:58) Your daddy saw that. Your daddy said, this stuff gotta be written. What you're doing gotta be shown. How you are taking this, and turning it into what you see behind me.

We're flashing images of Lonnie Bradley Holley, Sr.'s activities and works. Maybe you all did even not know, wow, this man doing all of this? And he's here with us? He's here with us? Maybe you didn't know. But it's okay. Now that you know, you'll write my name in your journal, and you'll further seek out information about me. And hopefully, because you are a leading institution, and America looks up to you guys, it may not be but a handful, but just a few of you, but there is a respect for everything that you all bring to the table. Everything you all bring to the table.

What else you got to say about that?

Arnett: I can't follow that.

What are you, you know, you have the keyboard here, you talked about playing some music. I was talking to some of the artists here the other day at lunch just about the idea of the, a visual art career, a music career, like, how do you see the two things relating to each other, how do you dedicate your time to each? Like, what, how do you see those two things in your life?

Holley: Well, I told my audience, or my fans, or whatever you want to call them, I told them time and time again, and I will tell them time and time and time over that my art and my music is like Siamese twins. They're coming from the same brain. They're there to support one another. And this is what you all have going for yourself. Just the walk of your life, the way you dress, what you're dressing in, what you have.

I remember the term, use what you got until you get what you need.

Arnett: I'll be right back. [leaves stage]

Holley: [plays song 00:52:47 – 00:57:46] {applause, cheering}

There's still some things that are going on behind me, and hopefully you all are enjoying my imagery, or what Matt has chosen for you all to see that my brain have done.

I'm a crybaby. I'm sorry, I get tear upped.

My grandmother loved me so. And she retrieved me from Alabama Industrial School for Negro Children, otherwise I would have stayed there until I turned eighteen or nineteen, and then they would have sent me on off to some prison in Alabama, god that will for some children were done. Or I would have gotten beat to death, because not only was I hardheaded, I was in a sense rebellious. I didn't know the meaning of their activities, and they wasn't gonna discuss them. They wasn't going to tell us, as children, why they was doing all of these things to us. They was not explaining that somewhere in the realm of our lifestyles, there were these strugglers. And these strugglers was protesting, demanding, demanding change, not so much of demanding the forty acres and the mules, that wasn't, that wasn't the thing. They wasn't demanding reparation, if, that wasn't the thing. They were demanding the right to use their brain to learn to read and write. (01:00:01) To learn to make things right. And this is what you all have, you all have that. But it can be turned around. If you all let them go back through the laws, and the rush rush rush rush rush rush declaiming, or de – the de is a big thing. De could mean disrespecting the rules and regulations that has already put on the books, for you all, to go follow. If we were considered to be a leading nation, and I think all the art, and I love the way the preparation, or the re-preparing, of me coming into this place here and seeing that they have scaffolds are in here, and cameras are in here, the pulpit, or the, this podium where you come and speak is there, the little bit, cause, you know, we didn't bring a whole lot of electronics for you all to hear what I'm saying. But I think you're all hearing what I'm saying. I'm giving you – my partner left, {laughter} he went to sit over the in the corner. He's not gonna

challenge me to go any further, you know what I'm saying. But we must challenge ourselves to go further.

I made a few things out of some clay since I been here. One thing I made, I think would stand out. And I may end up leaving it here. And that's that mother owl. The first day I started working on that clay, this mother owl came out. And she had one of her wings, and looked like she was in thought. And she was thinking, what are these humans doing here? She watched over you all and, for generations, she had been laying eggs and hatching new owls to take her place.

My thing with you all is, excuse my sweating, but it takes blood, sweat, and tears. It takes blood, sweat, and tears. I gave you some tears. I gave you some sweat. And over the years that we speaking about, you can see that it was a bloody experience for me to get to where I'm at.

The love that Dr. King spoke about that we have to re-grow, and the seeds is unlimited. It's in the zillions and zillions and zillions of seeds. It's called the agape love. I think I was - I been baptized, I know that. I made [UNCLEAR]. And my grandmother made sure we got baptized, and mostly everyone, Uncle Jesse's children, and every one of mama children that my grandmama had anything to do with, she made sure we got baptized. But just going under the water, and a preacher saying some words over you, doesn't make you a saint. Coming back up out of that water doesn't make you sanctified. We gotta understand, my grandmama always told us on the mourning bench, on the mourning bench, when we got to church, we had to sit right there. She said, you gonna sit there until the spirit comes and get upon you. And that spirit is gonna get upon you, and it's gonna use you. And when you have that spirit get upon you, it'll last you all your life, no matter what it is you do. And I'm sorry to have to say, that's the spirit I been carrying, for my grandmamama. I think I told you that she dug graves, she was in her eighties, and she was still digging graves. She prepared those that had to be buried, that means she put the makeup on 'em. She dressed them. She told me, you can't wear but one pair of shoes. No matter how many pairs of shoes you buy, you can't wear but one pair of shoes off in your grave. She also told me, don't worry when you're digging a grave for somebody else to be put in. If you pick into another coffin, don't be so - she taught me to fret not, to fear not. To not be afraid. Sometimes we get so afraid of something that we don't do nothing, because we are too fearful. Don't let nobody play and wrap you up in fear. And don't get so caught up in love that love skrinkles you. It just skrinkles you.

To come together to make a pair of love, they have to share the responsibilities of love. They shouldn't smother each other with that love. Teach this in your teachings, you all are looked at students. I'ma go white keys. This thing is blinking brand new for me! {laughter} Oh, you all know what spanking brand new. {laughter} {laughs} If you all don't know what that is, when you was a baby, you came out new. But they said, {slaps hands together} spanking! They had to spank you. Spanking brand new. So Matt, if you don't mind, come and set me another tone. I, I know you told me to do it my, learn to do it myself, but I, practice make perfect. [Arnett comes over and helps] Yeah, okay, partner, okay, okay. [plays notes] Mm-mm, spacey.

Arnett: You're asking the wrong guy.

Holley: [plays notes] Yeah, that's cool. [plays notes over tone]

Could I get a napkin please? [plays note over tone] [plays song 01:07:59 – 01:16:03]
Thumbs up for mother universe, humans. {applause, cheering}

Okay. I have been guided to ask you all, do you have any questions? {laughter}
[Arnett returns to sit next to him] Ah, yes, you can – you back on the clock now? {laughter}

Arnett: I'll facilitate, if I can.

Holley: Yes, please.

Arnett: Oh we have, okay. We got a microphone.

Audience #1: Hi, thank you so much for that. I think the question that I've been wondering hearing you speak is, when did you find sort of like language, or where did you find language to sort of like, des, I guess describe sort of like how you sort of like came from your life and then started, started, like, making your work. When did you find, like, I guess language for like what you had been through? Do you know what I mean? And how did you start to frame it? Cause I feel like you, you have a handle on, like, theory, in relation to sort of like what happened to you, and I'm wondering where you found that.

Holley: I think in respect of what my mother had accomplished, and how much life she had given, a choice to be given that life, to this planet, my mother was a strong woman. She didn't say very much. Mawmaw was a strong woman. She didn't say very much. But, to see my grandmother actually get up and go to the landfill every morning, every morning, just before the break of day, with her long brick, and be raking material out of this pit, a burning fire. The thing never went out! It just burned, because keep dumping trash, more trash and more trash, and they was just trying to incinerate the trash, of the city. And I saw my mother doing, my grandmother doing that. And I saw my mother, before she ceased to just sit around and work, I saw her get up and go knock on people's door [knocks on table] and ask people, is there anything that you need me to do? Can I help you do anything? She wasn't a beggar, but she was an asker.

It's said, ask and it shall be given. I was taught how to ask and it shall be given. I was taught how to pay attention. Grandpere was in World War I. Daddy was in World War II. So I am a military child, but I didn't get the military credits that I supposed to got. My father and my grandfather was Masons. My mother was an Eastern Star. But I didn't get any affiliation with the Eastern Stars, or with the Masons. So I was like an outsider.

That's the reason I did the song, on the other side of the pulpit, I don't mind being on that side of the pulpit for you all, but I don't want to shuck and jive. I don't want to fool you. I don't need your money that badly. (01:20:00) I need you to understand. I don't need to

trick you. I saw tricks, I saw abusers' tricks. And the treats that they gave you only drew you in to that part of yield not to temptation. We have to understand, especially now, with digitalization. Globalization, digitalization, puts us in a real, real serious spot. Because if we are the people, by the people, for the people, because of other people, we must show our brain to be the most powerful thing that we have as a tool. And I didn't learn to read and write. But, along the way, I never stopped trying to read, or trying to write. Not just write, but make it right. Make everything I do stand out to be right! Not for enough! That you all could see it, and want to get something from it. If it wasn't no more than, look at that man. Energy! How in the hell did he do that? You may ask, how in the hell did I do that? But I didn't do that in hell. {laughter} I did that just beyond hell. {laughter, applause}

Can y'all understood what I just said? I did it just beyond hell. Now hell, we haven't seen hell on this planet. Until we allow people that have the ability to touch a nuclear weapon. And that weapon backfires on us. Did you all see the movie? Did you see the movie? *I Snuck Off the Slave Ship*. It had the Hindenburg blow up right in your face! You saw, in that same movie, the space shuttle blow up in your face.

I, the part that I directed in that movie, I gave you a bit of my digital work, when it first came on, that blue work, that was animated. That was my work. Seriously, this brain of mines have did some things. And it's up to you all to judge that. Was I, when I leave here this weekend, and take that train back down south, I want you all to be thinking, that man came up and gave us the best that he could give us. Every day, he got up and he showed us. And you all, I know where he's sitting at. I'ma go by there and take him out, and see what he done did with that clay. See what he done did with the trash garbage, or the debris, or whatever else, the wire, whatever else. Whatever. Whatever.

But you didn't expect to see all of this, did you? You didn't expect to see all this. That's the part where Dr. King said, don't judge the book by looking at the cover. I'm the interior of the book. You all are the pages. You all are the pages that I have, I helped you with the writing of your page that's gonna fit into the book of reality.

Anybody else got a question? Yes, I see your hand.

Audience #2: Yes, I just, I was wondering about, like, location, and like, context. This morning, at breakfast, I think Matt – is that your name, matt? Was talking about his first trip down to Alabama, and how there was a very specific division between the men who showed work outside of houses, and the women in Alabama who were making quilts, and his first trip to see the Gee's Bend quilters, and the very specific context and location where different work was shown. And I was wondering, for you, because listening to you talk, a lot of what you were saying seems to me, to remind me, very specifically, of the South. It's very southern. You know, to hear you talk about, you know, go tell it on the mountain, or Shadrach, Mesach, and Abednego, it seems like your work was made very specifically in the South, and for a southern context, and a lot of it was initially shown outdoors. But now, now that your work has left where you came from, and has shown in, like, white gallery spaces in – I mean like white walls, not who's running it, but, like {laughs} like, it's shown in a very different space, and a different context, and I wonder how you feel that changes the

work, because you're the same person who's, you know, who's making the work, but it's in a very different space than where you initially made it, which was a very specific context and location. How do you feel about the way the location has changed, and how that has changed how you work, or how you feel about it?

Holley: I think what you asking me, how do I feel about locations and how are those locations changed my perception of what I have to create to show? When I'm in London, or, and moving around, I, I want to see the sheep in the meadow, and the cows in the corn. I want to go to some older regions of England, and see the castles that we got written to tell us the story. I want to see, when I'm in Australia, I want to see – because I travel a lot. So now that, again, now that my works have allowed me, again, our works will allow us to do things. But if it wasn't for Matt and the team that is orchestrating our travel, getting their proposals met, to get their grants, they say knock and it shall be given. Ask and you, ask, then you shall get.

The main thing for all of you all is if you learn how to get as well as educate yourself to the geographics, I think my geographic study, by having all those geographics, *National Geographics*, or encyclopedia, at a very, very young age, kind of set up what I was interested in beyond the South. I, I wanted to see the world, that was an expectation of mines. I wanted to get nearer to the humans that I had saw in the *Geographics*.

So, pretty well since I been a traveling artist, and my art allowed me to do that. Because the first institutions, before my music, were mostly museums. Going to museums. Museums around the world, and seeing what the human brains around the world had produced it. Or, I'm trying to answer you, and take the shortcut around, because sometimes it takes a long time for me to just answer you, and, excuse that. But it's, it's so much that gets me out of my southern perimety, if you would say. And put me in the global perimety. You saw me say, thumbs up for mother universe. I wanted to get so global until I created, in my imagination, I created six space shuttles, and I added 144,000 elephants, and that was a song. (01:30:10) And I sung about how to make those things out of found objects, or how to allow the motors, and the engines that we create become elephant-powered. Like you got horse power engines? Elephant power energy. You see what I'm talking about. I talked about solar energy, solar adaptable. I talked about self-propelled. I thought, my thinking are, just like Matt was telling you, when he first introduced me, when I lay back in my meditated and concentrated manner, and see. Now, I did that when I was a little bitty boy. I don't know what was happening that three and a half months where my consciousness took me, but it took me somewhere. But I did make it back.

Arnett: I'll just add --

Holley: Yeah, please.

Arnett: -- you know, Lonnie's art, I think, comes out of, of an old, rich, southern tradition that he is a, you know, a part of, but Lonnie, at least as long as I've known him, which is almost forty years, has always had not, not ambition like we think of like a businessman has ambition. Lonnie has always had global ambitions and ideas. And like he said, and I think

our friend Jane Fonda was reading a quote, which I had forgotten about, where when Lonnie met my dad, and my dad was talking to Lonnie about having traveled with the world, and seen all of this, Lonnie said, you know, you've traveled the world and seen all this in real life; I've traveled the world and seen it all in *National Geographics*.

Like, in Lonnie's brain, he had been all around the world, and seen everything around the world, and, and had, you know, when he made art, his earliest art, you know, the tombstones he made for Maurice and Freeda, but then beyond that, when he started making art, and putting it out, he was like a, a, he was like, he came from a neighborhood where he was, he was the newsman. He was the teacher. He made art about ideas and put 'em out there, hoping to kind of teach ideas to his community and his neighborhood, and as more people, not just my dad, but scholars and curators and other people started coming and the work started, you know, leaving, and being able to travel, Lonnie never imagined he would have an audience like that. But the work being able to leave, it's interesting, I've gone back, we've recently done a lot of moving, and have gone back through a lot of archives of some of Lonnie's earliest work from the '80s and '90s, and it's incredibly consistent, thematically, in the things Lonnie was talking about in the early '80s, to now, and I've gone back and tried to archive a bunch of old interviews and videos of Lonnie, you know, when he's like in his thirties, and the shit he's saying in his thirties is, which, back then, the people in the South called him the crazy, you know, man in the woods making, you know, junk out of junk, is the same things that the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New Yorker* and historians are, you know, praising him as, like, revolutionary, in 2022. I want to say, like, where the fuck were you in the '80s? Why did this man have to get burned out of his houses and his environment destroyed, like, where the fuck were you people?

Like, it's not, and it's not just Lonnie. I mean, there are, Lonnie will be the first to say this, that he is just the survivor, he's the artist who comes out of that tradition who's still here who can talk about that, but there were so many incredible makers of things who just did not get respect during their lifetime, and had their work destroyed, and it real, Lonnie really is a testament to both genius and perseverance, because it took both to get where he is. And, you know, I want to say this Lonnie, I have to say this to you sometimes, and I'll say it again, that despite all of the, you know, the, whatever success is that he's had, and the ability to travel the world and play music with, you know, a big band, and, and have shows, and do all of that, still Lonnie's favorite thing is, whenever there's a tour getting planned, he always say, are there any schools we can go visit? Are there kids we can go, you know, talk to. And so like, you know, like a lot of musicians, when they have success, you know, they probably sleep til four, and get up, and go to the venue. Like, Lonnie's up at 7:30, going to a visit a school, you know, in a town where he's gonna play that night. I just want to thank you, Lonnie, and you don't have to do all the stuff you do. It's inspiring.

Holley: It brings tears to my eyes, to, Matt. You bring tears to my eyes, too. But the many tears, and I did a song called "Stepping into Teardrops." Stepping into teardrops of so many unfortunate humans. Those that have been left homeless, not because they chose to be there. Storm, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, all of these kind of things came through their lives and left them without.

With your father and also with you, we traveled through those aftermaths, and we got a chance to visit. We have went. And I saw mountains and mountains of landfills being created all around America. And the other day I was messing around and I made mention to this young lady, because she's, she said, you brought me to tears. And I was just telling her that at some point I would like to get together with children that lives around landfills, see the instruments that they have took and made into instruments to make their music. And those are the kind of challenges that still left out for me to do. You all have your laptops, your computers, and your cell phones. And you could – and I know some of you all are gonna Instagram, or, I got a chance to be with this Mr. Holley. Or some of you all are gonna have thoughts of drawing, and going back through, because a lot of this is online. You can Google me. My Google page is almost endless. {laughter} And Matty's going to be making it possible for my music Spotify, dotified, we shall find {laughter} – no, that was brand new stuff {laughing} I just did. But, we shall find! {laughs} That could be a new musical outlet, you know, and say, we shall fire it up, baby! {laughs}

I don't want to overtalk, I know you all got a class to get up for in the morning. But I appreciate you all {laughter} paying attention. I want to say, one more, if there is one more question, please, come on with it.

Audience #3: Alright! Mr. Holley, I wanted to say it's an honor to have you here. And this has been beautiful, and outstanding. I wanted to ask you, in a very, like, sensitive way, in the in between in your life, what grounded you, or kept you going in this pursuit of experience and, and success, and, and expressing this concern about the globe globally?

Holley: What kept me grounded was grandpap's story, and grandpap said, yes lord, until the day he died. He had been off in World War I. And wherever he were, he had been in the trenches and the ditches, in that cold weather. (01:40:12) And he said that they, the ones that survived, had to pull the bodies of the dead on top of them. And he said it was more than sixty dead mens in that trench that he was in, and he had to dig his way out from under just to get back home.

My grandmother, again, she always kept me focused. She said, cause I was young, I was just turning fifteen years old. Having to dig a grave. And I dug my grave so quick and so fast, and she said, come here! Get back down in that grave. She told me, she said, you cannot put a straight coffin in a crooked grave. She said, now, straighten that out. Straighten it out! I remember a neighbor in our neighborhood, her name was Ms. Smith. And she told me, she said, you will not always need a ruler to measure what you're going to do.

All of those is metaphors of what people tell you, you have to figure it out for yourself. And Sarah Kelly, that's when I told Sarah, she was like – sometime, love have a tendency to rebirth itself. And I could still feel like Sarah tapping me on the cheek and saying, don't wait for town to come to you; take your work to town. You have worked so hard to create all these sculptures, and Mr. Walter Mitchell was a Tuskegee airman. He let me know what sculpture were. He said, I been all around the world. I flew these airplanes all around the world. And everywhere we went, I've seen these things called art, and

sculpture. But I never seen any of our peoples doing it. He said, you that Holley boy, isn't you? I said, yes sir. And he said, what you are doing is fantastic.

I never forget turning mama Reed's [?] doorknob, an eighty-something-year-old woman, and every time I came through that door, she would get up, she would rush through the door, to open it, and then she'd rush from there on into the kitchen. She'd say, you sit down now. You sit down. And she would fix me and my children something to eat. Because my wife had been put into prison, and I was trying to raise my last five children by myself. That's who you, you honor, and you never stop honoring.

I remember aunt Sarah gave me a heater out of her house, the very heater that we worked together to get wood and coal to put in. She'd find a new heater, she gave me hers. She said, you need some heat in that house for them children. Take this stove. And she had written in her will that I have her house. But greed, animosity, and jealousy got in the way, and I didn't stand in the way. I don't fight greed and animosity and jealousy. I never have, I never spend my time battling jealousy, animosity, and greed. Because a lot of times, you can win, but it ain't no need of fighting! I let the person have what aunt Sarah had given to me. I let the person have what mama Reed had given to me. All of these women said, gave me their love, but they also had written me in their will.

So if, if, if it's you all's will, let us leave tonight with thumbs up for mother universe. Thumbs up for mother universe, humans. And thank you all, thank you, thank you, thank you. {applause and cheering begins} I'm finna get ready to go to bed, so I can get up in the morning. [Holley gets up and bows, receives a standing ovation]