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## Sankofa Project

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# CSA

What We Learned and How We Learned it



# PREFACE

The Sankofa Project is a course in the American Studies Department at Kenyon College focused on education theory and its use in urban education systems in the United States. In addition to the close examination of major theoretical writings about education, we had the opportunity to have a participant-observer experience in a public high school, with a week-long residency the second week of spring break.

During our week-long residency, we had the pleasure of visiting the Cleveland School of the Arts (CSA). CSA provides students with a unique learning experience in which each is assigned an artistic major, which they audition for prior to their entry to the school in the ninth grade. These majors range from creative writing to dance, integrated art, music, theatre arts and visual arts.

During the school day, students have a daily 80-minute art block in addition to typical high school core classes. This allows them to hone their interest in their individual arts and encourages them to further their educations.

Students were paired off and assigned to shadow a teacher for the week, with the hopes that by the end of the week we would be more integrated into the class style and, perhaps, help teach a lesson. Unfortunately, our trip was cut short by the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing us to leave halfway through our week trip.

Though our time at CSA was cut short, we were still able to make meaningful connections with many students and faculty members. We were amazed by the passion and creativity that filled the halls of CSA and would like to make this book to reflect the individuality of the members of the community.

To commemorate our experience visiting CSA, we created this book filled with the interviews we conducted interviews with the CSA community and samples of students' artwork.

We hope you enjoy this capsule of our time in Cleveland!

- The Sankofa Class 2020 -

# 01.

## LAILA SHOTWELL

16 years old  
Junior in high school  
Creative writing major  
Plays in school band--  
saxophone



“(My favorite thing about CSA) I think it's the community and how they embrace art. Because poetry is and music is the only way I really know how to express my feelings. And since people like they embrace what I love, and I'm around people who love what I love. So that makes me feel comfortable. And I wouldn't feel this comfortable in any other school.”

“I'm in college. I'm like doing my second year. I'll have my associates degree by the time I graduate work. So we have something called CCI college credit plus and we go down to try see and take our classes and well there's high tech which is more like strict and I don't like that a lot of people don't like that. Especially here”



December 11, 2016 by Laila Shotwell

Thank you.

For giving me something that I could ne

A love that was never showered upon m

By anyone else

But you.

You gave me a sense of hope

For the future while my world seemed to

Deteriorate underneath my fingertips.

Thank you.

For severing any ties to mortality

And saving me from the dark side of the

You gave me the strength that I had

Never acquired independently.

Thank you.

For showing me how a girl should never

Showing me that I am a real human bein

and should be treated just as so.

Opening my eyes up to the world of toxi

You are a hero for that.

You made me a strong woman.

And I appreciate that.

The good and bad were amazing

And traumatizing

At the same time.

But when I look back,

There are both tears of pain and happin

And everytime I think of your name,

I smile and wish you the best.

So

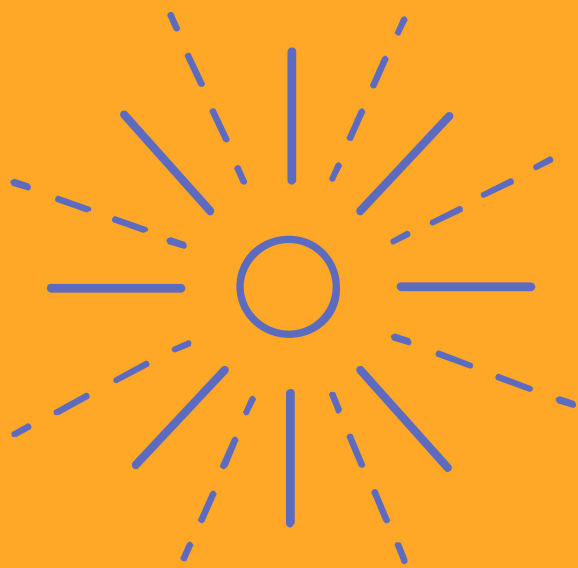
Thank you.

It's finally time to say goodbye.

Goodbye.

# DestinyStar Patton

15 years old  
Freshman at CSA  
Plays Viola in Orchestra  
Music Major



"Well being a music major itself is like when you listen to music, I used to tend to like naive and really listen to the like the words when I first heard music. Now, I listen to like the sounds. What instruments are playing. Beats make music cool. Normal people don't notice it. And I'm like, you don't hear that percussion and like, in like this certain beat right here. And it's like, yes, like you like really listen, like when I first hear a really good song on my list."

"Your teacher should like be your friend but your worst enemy because like, they'll criticize you, but they'll make sure that they still show you like was still good about it. Like I wouldn't want to be disrespected in class, I would want like my students to understand that like, Hey, I can be your friend, but we got to talk to each other a certain way."

# \* Ms. Audra Woods \*



Library Media Specialist  
Trustee Board Member  
Former English Teacher  
CSA Alum



**I try to empower us all.** So that the students know the system, they know how to use the system, I ask that they share the system that they have to new ones who may not be as familiar with the system, and then we all follow that system. My goal overall is **I want them to be the best person they can be.** Not just at CSA, but wherever. I want them to be able to ask a question, answer a question, to find a source via source, all of that.









CLEVELAND SCHOOL OF THE ARTS IN THREE WORDS:

**ENGAGING**  
**RESOURCEFUL**  
**NONDESCRIPT**



I say nondescript because **people often say we're [CSA] a best kept secret**. A lot of people don't know about us. I think some of that is because we're right here [in the middle of Cleveland]. We get a lot of mail from Institute of Music, they'll think we're CIA or CIM that sort of thing. So they don't realize we're a high school. Right? So I'm thinking that **we're a best kept secret**, that's what I mean by non-descript.

- MS. AUDRA WOODS

# Timia Atwater

- 16 years old
- Creative Writing Major
- CSA Junior
- Slam Poet



"I was interested in poetry because when I was seven or eight, I realized that my father wasn't around like my sisters. And I asked my mom about it and she told me that he died so after that I became very sad and really violent. I went to one therapy session when I found out about my dad and she told me to try to write it out. And I realized I was good so I just kept going so yeah."

"I came to see you CSA because I thought it was gonna be like High School Musical. It's not, but I like it a lot because of the people I think because everybody was so free and open. And just really cool. To see people that are so many different, have different types of stories and lifestyles. It's just really made me want to come here and experience that."



N: Do you feel like your other teachers care about you?

T: Academic teachers...only about one or two academic teachers that are really collectively oriented, deeper level than just academics like Dave guiding me really trying to understand me as a person before trying to force me to be a student. And that really helped me flourish. As for the other teachers, like a lot of the teachers here, they don't really care about the students with like, mental health or anything personal. They just did like you gotta be a student all day, all the time. I don't know, there's just not a lot of respect, teaching or respect a lot of us around here.

N: Do you plan on continuing with writing?

T: I do not. I'm not interested in any type of writing. I'm not interested in studying writing. Like I want to do it but to study it in the class no because writing comes from the heart and you can't put pen and paper to that, well, you can, you can. But yeah, you can't teach passion. You can't. You can't teach that. Yeah.





“To be a black girl  
Is to always be told i’m  
too  
loud  
Is to be irrational  
Is to be followed around  
in Target  
Is to be feared  
Is to be disrespected  
Is to be disrespectful  
Is to always be loud  
To be told “finna” ain’t a  
word  
Well i’m “finna” beat yo  
ass  
Because I’m a black girl  
Who is traumatized  
That trauma turned into  
aggression  
Cuz nobody believed he  
was  
Touching me  
Nobody to advocate for  
med  
It is to be copied without  
consent

It is to be trademarked  
It is seen as a paradox  
So surreal  
To believe something like  
me  
Could write something like  
this  
It is to be a beast  
To be submissive to them  
Let them have every piece  
of me  
Take my style  
Take my lips  
“My first name  
My first bite if i let you  
They don’t know the taste  
of their  
Own blood  
So they choose to lick our  
wounds”

- Timia Atwater



# CLARK

**WHERE:** Mrs. Telich 10th-12th grade Creative Writing Major

**BIO:** Sophomore, born in Youngstown, OH.

Moved to Japan and lived in Tokyo for 3 years.

**CLARK:** I feel like having more time for the arts helps students better express themselves and i feel like for some people, like me, it is a good creative outlet because schools do not usually give a lot of those. Usually schools just give extracurricular activities that are just more work, busy work. But you know hey they look good on your high school resume. I want to do something that I enjoy. Art is something that I enjoy. I am glad I get to do that here.

**Question:** Because you have this creative outlet has it been harder to focus on standard academic classes?

**CLARK:** Well standard academics they are just not my forte. It is hard to focus on things in general soo. ADD stuff.”

**Question:** Do you know what you want to do after graduating from an arts high school?

**CLARK:** i honestly have no idea. I could be an electrician or a vetermarian. Any path.”

**Question:** What do you think of CSA as a whole?

**CLARK:** I think it is nice we get to focus on art here. Most of the teachers are pretty good. Lots of fights. I am not into it, I just sit and kinda watch. It’s been happening less recently, which I like.

**Question:** What kind of school did you go to before this?

**CLARK:** I was always having trouble with my first school. I didn't like the structure and I didn't have many good friends. Coming out as bisexual in a very catholic school it didn't work out. I lost a couple friends from that. It's cool now. Uniform every day, button up shirt.

# Jerome



- **CSA Freshman**
- **Music Major**
- **Future Producer**

"They don't judge me by how much I know. I haven't been playing that long. I don't really get like, people don't look at me differently because I know I'm not at certain standards. So they just accept you for who you are and what you do."

"So I started this as a couple of years ago, I was in sixth grade I first started a couple of years ago and Okay, so my uncle He stays in...now he's from New York. He came here and like he stays in Cleveland now, what he does is to make beats, just make beats. Well, he's like his own producer, slash artists who make music. So I'm just sitting there watching him one day, just making beats and I'm like, Oh, this is interesting I might want to get into this because I love music. And so, after I started doing it, my first I started with like the little download apps and stuff. And then I started getting the equipment, started being able to go to studios and make beats to let people rap on my beats or anything like that. So, I mean, that's where I'm at right now where I'm at now."



## 9th Grade Visual Arts Major

I wouldn't say there's anything about CSA I don't like personally, a lot of my peers don't like stuff, but I think my school day is great, actually.

There's no drama. Any drama at our school is from outside of school. So nothing really happens here. It's not like, "Oh, she's looking at me." It's not really like that, it's like a family.

It's really an influence from, I would say from our Seniors to our Dean. And some teachers, they push that. Like, that's what it is here, that's how it is at CSA, it's different from any other school. You go to any other school, you wouldn't walk in feeling the same way. So it's like they just make you feel like a family. They're very welcoming and greeting, when you first come here.

Even orientation. Our orientation is a week long so you get to know everybody before you come in and everything so it's really like, "Oh, this is cool." And you get to know everybody before you start school, so you don't feel lost. Yeah, the feeling, it's like a second home.



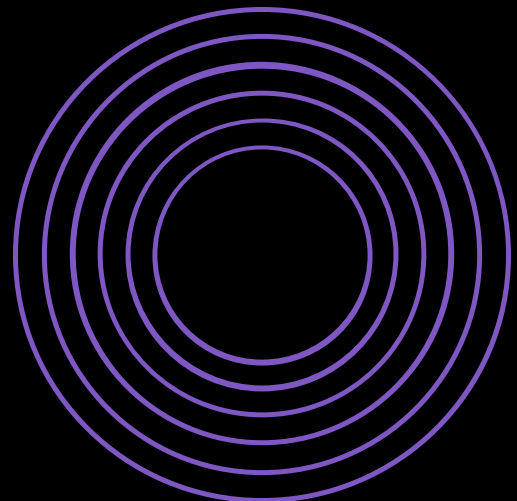


**9th Grade  
Visual Arts Major  
Future Tattoo Artist**

My first time wanting to go to CSA, I was in the fifth grade. I came here to see a play, A Christmas Carol. And over the years, I started drawing and eventually applied.

My favorite class would be my art class. We switch classes every quarter. I think that's pretty cool. I like the freedom that we get with our art and with the photos that we take in photography class, all of that.

There's a lot of freedom and there's not a lot of judgment in this school. It's a pretty nice school compared to the other places I've been. They give us more freedom to be ourselves at school, with our sexuality, with religion, with our art, all of that. We have more freedom to be who we want to be in this school.



**9th Grade  
Visual Arts Major  
Future Designer**

R.J.

My art teacher at my old school thought it would be a good idea for me to audition [at CSA]. And I always wanted to come here ever since.

The students make the culture here. It's really, like, different people that like different stuff. Everybody does something different, everybody has their own art style, everybody performs differently. And people are more understanding and accepting here.

I want to do art professionally. I really want to get into fashion designing, they have a class here for fashion. I like 90s fashion, and I like Paris Fashion Week. I'm looking forward to taking fashion next year and bettering myself as an artist and in overall academics.



# Brazil Jackson

"Ms. Telich is like my second mom. She's just so helpful and understanding. Not judgmental. She just there. She come to me when she see I have a problem. I don't really like to open up to people, so she be already knowing when I'm off. She probably just like, come rub my back and be like, 'What's wrong?' If I got a problem, I just come to her whenever. It was a point in time like, I wasn't even going to class. I was just skipping. We got a little office, like a little room, where it's like a couch you can lay down in there. And so I was just laying in there, sleeping and stuff. Not going to classes. And she was backing me up, making sure my teachers knew where I was at and letting them know. We really don't talk much. She just be there and let me cry. And she's like, 'You just gotta make it out and come to school.' She try to motivate me, like, 'Come to school, come to school, get good grades, so you can get scholarships and leave.'"



**Freshman**

**Creative Writing major**

# Julia Rivera

"My favorite thing about CSA is the culture. It's just very open for everybody. And you can really be yourself. I go to other high schools for my friends to visit them, and it's just not the same, and you can just feel it when you walk through the doors. I feel like it's different because all of our teachers are actually here to help us, and not through just academic stuff, but personal stuff as well. All our teachers are like, 'If you ever need to talk, you know, we can talk to you.' For example, my drama teacher is very there for anything that he can help you through. Anything. I feel like it comes from them. (One teacher who) was filling in for drama when Dr. Miller wasn't able to be here, he helped me through a lot -- just like his presence and him talking to me and uplifting me was really uplifting, and it helped me through a lot of stuff, like just getting out of my shell for high school. He helped me break that, and Dr. Miller as well. I just go in there, and they just make my day better. I was like a different person when I came to high school -- just very shy, and I didn't want to do anything in drama class because I didn't feel like I could do it. And he just helped me with that and did exercises to help me with that, and he just did anything in his power to make me feel comfortable in that room. And I am now, so it's cool to see the transformation."

**"That's what makes a (good) teacher, just putting in that effort to not only be there academically, but personally as well."**



**Freshman**

**Drama major**



# LeiJanay Hollins

"If you walk past the drama room during an arts block, you're gonna be really confused. And you're probably going to be scared. Yesterday, we had a warm-up, and it was ... First, we had to sneak up on 'somebody' and act like we're lighting them on fire while they're sleeping and we had to watch them burn. There was no real person. Then (our teacher) turns off the lights and goes, 'Now you're the person on fire.' And then he says, 'Sit down. Close your eyes. Fall asleep.' And then you had to wake up and then just burn, and then everybody started to scream and we were trying to get the fire off. And there were so many kids walking past the door! But we didn't stop! Because we're used to it. The visual majors, they come in to take pictures. Sometimes they come in at the wrong time, and it just looks like we're maniacs. But it's fun. And it's focused. It's work and it's not just, 'Oh, they're just running around.' No, we're working and it's really focused. But if it's not, it's off. You can feel it when you walk in the room."

**“If I’m upset (...) I’m getting it out in a different way than arguing or just sitting there being upset about something you can’t change. You’re letting it out on a stage. Everybody’s seeing it, and it’s beautiful to them. And it’s beautiful to you because you’re feeling better.”**

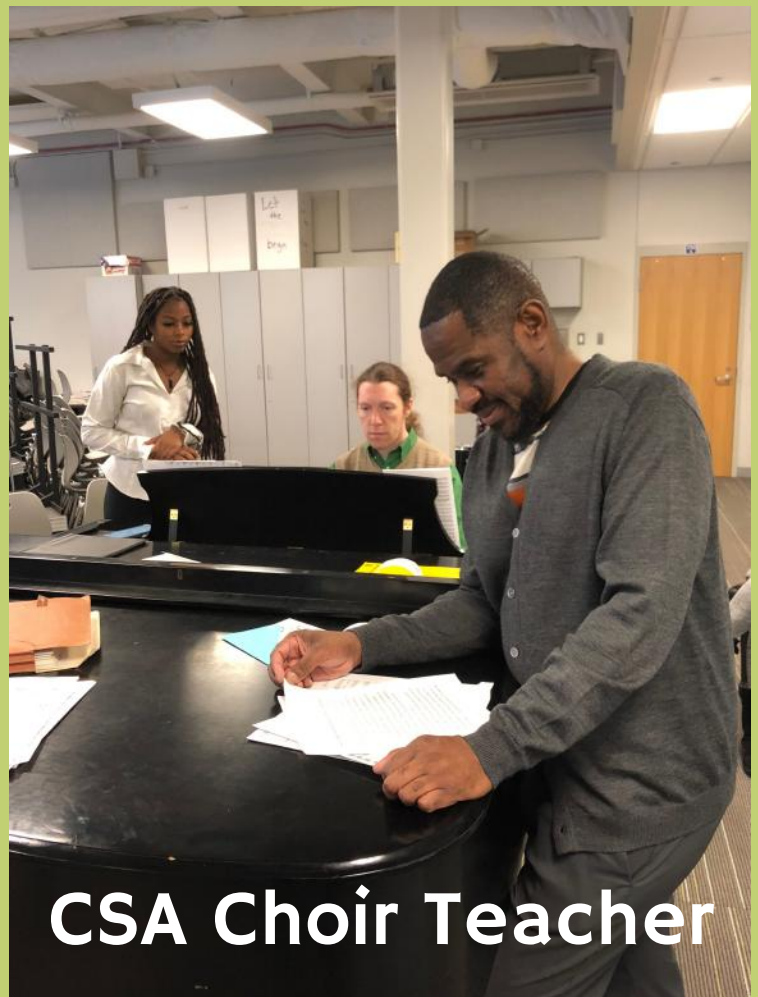
**Freshman**

**Drama major**

# Robert McCorvey

What is it about CSA that keeps you coming back?

"When I see progress. When I see the students growing. And sometimes they don't even see it themselves I was listening to my ninth graders yesterday as they were vocalizing, and I'm remembering the sound that I heard in September, and the sound that I hear today, and it's wholly changed. And it's for the good, it matured, it's a wonderful thing. And I'm hearing what I never dreamed I would hear. And so I like to compliment them. And when I compliment them and I see it's taking root, and they kind of even try harder, that— Oh it's one of the best feelings in the world. You know what I'm saying? Cause you're sparking something in them. And it's a good thing, so I like to see the growth in them. Not just musically, but emotionally, spiritually, academically. I guess that's why I teach."



**CSA Choir Teacher**

"I wish we would all value education. All of us... We all have to work as a partnership. I mean the parents, the administration, the teachers, everybody has to have the same goal in mind— to educate, and the final project is the education of the student. If we all work in synch it can be a wonderful thing, but if not, one of those links is off, and including the student themselves, if were not all vested in the process to get them from one place to the next, it doesn't work... If we're not making that product at the end of the day, I think we failed."

# Raquel Celeva

Sophomore Visual Arts  
Major at CSA

"I chose CSA because in my middle school as I said I liked to draw a lot. And I didn't want to go to a regular highschool, you know, where you just learn the four subjects that you have to learn. And I'm when I grow up I want to be an entrepreneur and sell my art and stuff like that so CSA seemed like a great place for me to go."

Actually, it has. It has. It's like, there's a lot of nice people here, I see everybody doing a whole bunch of different stuff. Like they can dance, they can draw, and it's like, it's great. And I love my teacher too, like all the teachers here are so nice. And they actually teach you the things that you want to learn and it's not just them like, *oh, you're gonna learn this*. We could actually communicate and talk, I wanted to do such and such and she was like alright, *okay, we're gonna make a project about it*. And you can see what we're gonna do to move forward.

**Mrs. Porter's 11th  
Period Class On...**

***WHY CSA?***

***THE OLD BUILDING &  
ARTS FRIDAYS***

***INTERACTIVE  
LEARNING***

# Mrs. Porter's 11th Period Class

## Why CSA?

"This is like really a good experience for anybody. Like no matter what your gender race, however you identify people here are respected. And I like how they respect who you are as a person."

—Student, Junior

"...And every single person here is important and that's why I love CSA."

—Tyler, Junior

"We're all still like us and nobody can take that from us. We're different. I just want to say that we are different— whole different breed especially our generation... We all are here for each other. You know? Even if we're not close to one another, we still check on someone. At least I do. I check on people even when I don't know them 'cause it's like a thing that I do... Once you get in the groove of like how things move here you start moving like everybody else move is like, it's like a train so like once you hop on, you on."

—Gabe, Junior



# Mrs. Porter's 11th Period Class

As expressed on the previous page, CSA radiates a strong sense of community and acceptance. In the next few pages, students share their ideas to give rise to a CSA that shines even brighter.

## What Would You Change About CSA?

Mrs. Porter delved a bit deeper into Charles's point, explaining that the old CSA building had an auditorium. "So it didn't cost us anything to do any production of anything because we just had it whereas now we don't." Despite its beautiful architecture, the new CSA building was built without an auditorium large enough to fit all CSA students at the same time. So now, in-school productions are held in the gym and people are hired to set up the stage—with the new building came as Mrs.

Porter called it, "a cost aspect". Ultimately, due partially to the building change, CSA itself had to go through quite a few changes itself.

Like every once in a while we'd do this big thing: all the classes come down and all the arts perform what they know. But like, the more we got to, the more school got into doing that, the more we had to think cost wise and like we had to pay for like lights and stuff people to set up and then get people to take it down people to put it up"

—Charles, Junior

"Our Arts Friday was we get to switch our majors. So it's like if I used to do dance, then I could go to choir, or if I didn't want to go to choir I could go to art. Basically, it just gave us more of an expansion of the different majors to see more people, to talk to more people, stuff like that. And I feel like we're not disconnected as a school as much, but we'd be closer with more hands-on stuff like that. So I think that's what we're trying to do because there's a lot of kids I see now that I never knew went to this school and I feel like we woulda knew or I could know better if we have more things like that."

—Alaiyah, Junior

The first response the students had to this question was to bring back Arts Fridays, as described below by Charles and Alaiyah. Additionally, Students in Mrs. Porter's 11th period class believed the lunch periods should be longer so that students *actually* have time to eat *and* socialize rather than the 20 minutes students have. One student explains why students "can't get in the line, wait there for 10 minutes" because "by the time you get to go eat, lunch over, like we got 20 minutes of lunch."

# Mrs. Porter's 11th Period Class

Answers to the previous question continue onto this page. Here students emphasize what Alaiyah touched on in her response on the previous page: The Hands-On learning experience—also known as Experiential or Interactive learning.

## What Would You Change About CSA?

Mrs. Porter felt that teachers and staff do get to know their students "hands-on" as Alaiyah expressed but through the unique setting CSA provides:

"As teacher, I feel like we do and maybe you guys don't feel it as much but I feel like we get to see some other sides of you that when I came here, I was really like, so excited about!"

Mrs. Porter described being able to watch students perform and "the different sides" her students show. For example, she describes watching Gabe play the drums:

"when I get to go watch him actually play drums. I'm like, Oh, yeah, like it all fits together. I get to see that side of Gabe, I don't get to see in class. And so I absolutely love that because I think more so than any other place like anywhere I've ever taught, you get to see this whole different aspect of kids. And as a teacher, I love that. I'm just saying in general, I think it's really cool that you guys are out there showing these other sides that we get the opportunity to see."

"I feel like Our teachers and staff should get to know students more like hands-on because...I feel like our teachers could make it more connected with what We got going on...so they get to know their students and some things, like Gabi said, I might not want to share what I got going on. But it's a reason why I can't do this or that. So i just feel like our teachers and staff should be more hands on instead of trying to make decisions for us when they don't know our circumstances."

—Alaiyah, Junior

"In this class we open up to you about our parents, our family and stuff. In other classes and you can't really do that because it's always about "you got to learn, you gotta learn, you gotta learn to pass this test", But with you, it's like we can have a side note and be like, "Oh, this happened to me the other day!" We can talk to you like you like our sister or something. Like it's so different."

—Student, Junior (to Mrs. Porter)

# Joshua Soto



Becoming an educator

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Challenges at CSA

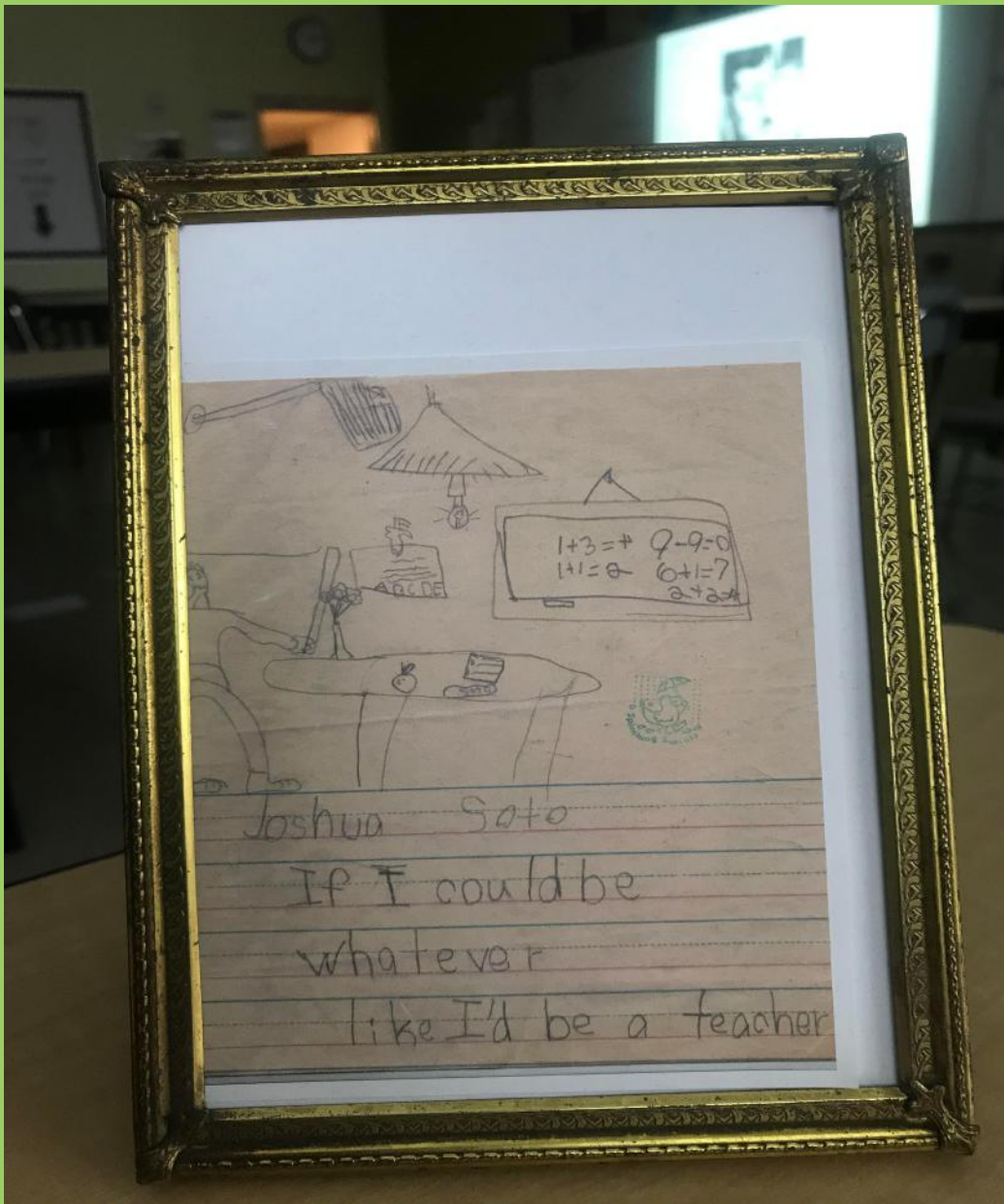
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Why CSA

# Becoming an educator

Four 52 min long classes

“I only teach ninth grade world history. So I’ve been teaching that here for four years. Previously, I (taught) special needs to teach two elective courses that utilize the Facing History and Ourselves curriculum, which is a history curriculum. It’s like social emotional learning, then, like, learning history at the same time, so I needed to teach a Holocaust and human behavior course”



So I was young, probably like, second grade or so. I created this. I don't know why I've always wanted to be a teacher. It's kind of just something that I don't know, maybe I admire teachers growing up. You know, teachers have very positive impacts on people's lives.

"I've been very close to teachers growing up, kind of the role that they played in my life. So, you know, I kind of saw the importance of that. I had a pretty good history teacher in high school. So that's kind of what kind of led me down that path I was interested in the subject. And I know people always remember their teachers."

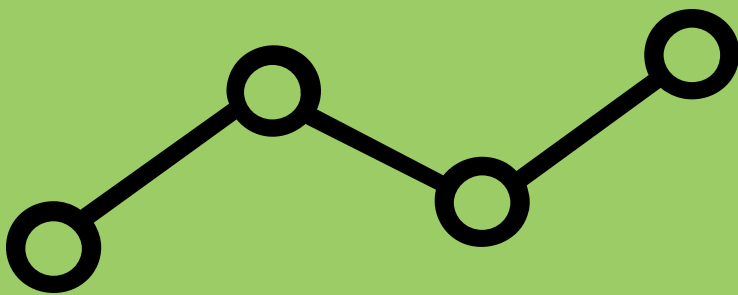


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# CHALLENGES @CSA

MR. SOTO

They're pulled (students) to make murals around the district around the city. They could be doing like field trips or all sorts of other things that are arts related. And they may have like in school performances, Other schools come in here for field trips, and we're like, leading those students, or even if they have rehearsals, that sometimes they do that could affect class time-as a result, students are losing some instructional time. And, I mean, that makes it difficult for students to be successful, at least in our case, because of that fact.



"I mean, there's obviously other things that affect, you know, students and urban location. You know, some of them are dealing with homelessness or their, their home situation isn't, is, you know, less than ideal. Or this may be the only place where they're getting, you know, to warm meals and a safe place to be for a couple hours a day. So, you know, students are coming in with all sorts of, you know, different experiences, perhaps trauma, and, you know, trying to educate the whole student, you know, like Obviously, I do want to teach them oral history, but you also have to be empathetic and understanding that, you know, a lot of us are fighting and visible battles. And I know just approaching it in such a way, where I guess I don't lose this student"

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# Why CSA + Teaching style

I enjoy my work.

“I like the content that I teach. I like who I teach, I mean students are students”.

“wherever those students are, I want to teach them”

“I don't try to overcomplicate the history. I mean, you can but, you know, I feel as though you know, I, you know, someone can teach a lesson on you know, Snow White, and I can teach that lesson to kindergarteners and they can understand it, but I can also teach it at a college level and they still understand it too. So the same story. So I, you know, I just want to take this history and just, I don't know, just expose them to it. I don't try to overcomplicate it... I kind of want to show them that history could be different, you know, they can look at primary sources and create their own evidence based company. So be like a historian, you know, just like in science, you know, we teach students to be like scientists, you know, they do experiments, they do the scientific method”

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"I mean, there's obviously other things that affect, you know, students and urban location. You know, some of them are dealing with homelessness or their, their home situation isn't, is, you know, less than ideal. Or this may be the only place where they're getting, you know, to warm meals and a safe place to be for a couple hours a day. So, you know, students are coming in with all sorts of, you know, different experiences, perhaps trauma, and, you know, trying to educate the whole student, you know, like Obviously, I do want to teach them oral history, but you also have to be empathetic and understanding that, you know, a lot of us are fighting and visible battles. And I know just approaching it in such a way, where I guess I don't lose this student"

-Joshua Soto

# Ivy Amour

a senior year perspective

"It's kind of bittersweet because I've made it this far—it's bittersweet because I am going to miss this safe environment, this safe space that high school has created because I feel like I am very, very, very very privileged to be here at CSA. And not just only because, like, the environment of, okay friends, and like just the staff here but like the fact that I do have a major and I do have this space where I can just focus on that, but I am going to miss that. And I also call it bittersweet because even though it has helped me creatively, it has stifled me a little bit because I am a person who lacked balance my other years of high school, so I had my grades interfere with me working on my artwork because, say, if I had to work on a paper and it had to be turned in here but I also want to work on my artwork, I wanna work on my paper because I can do art whenever. So, it was just a balance. And also I'm just gonna miss my friends, you know."

-- ON SENIOR YEAR

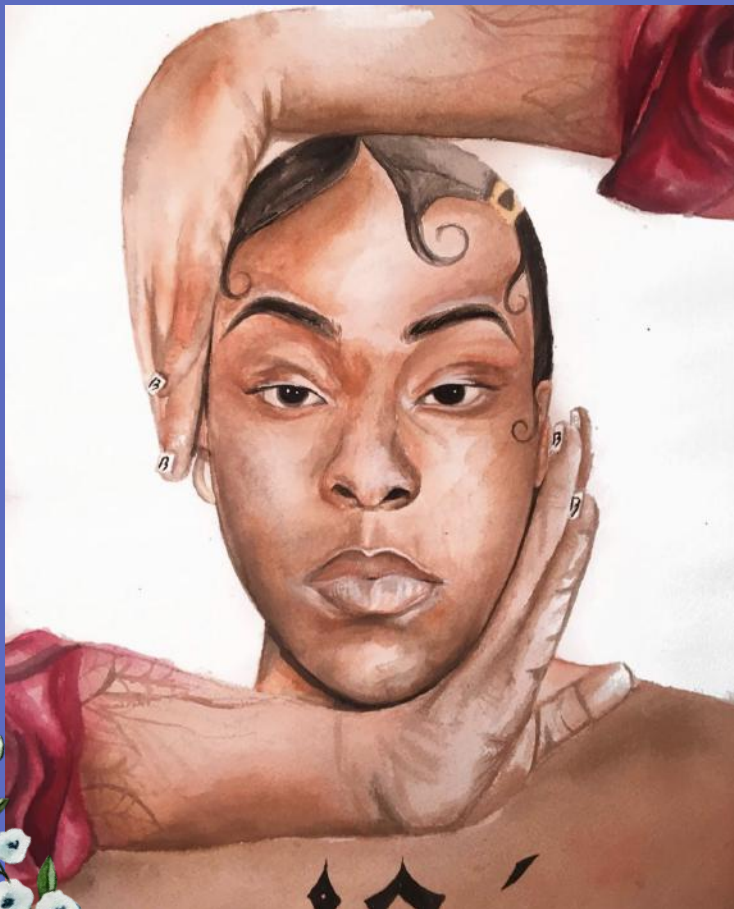
"...[S]elf-awareness did not come easy. Even right now, I have self-awareness or, you can see that I have self-awareness and confidence, but like certain days I do struggle, but it's something that is just coming more and more with my coming of age and that is what CSA is helping a lot with, is coming of age and self-awareness."

-- ON CSA AND SELF AWARENESS



"Yeah, I like it because I'm a person who needs stability, like, I cannot have things just be all over the place. Which is tough because I'm a "perfectionist." When it comes to my art, I cannot have things looking weird or unorganized. I look at Art Education as a way for me to still do what I wanna do and teach people about what I love to do, with people who love to do what I love to do. That and summers off is cute, so I love that."

-- ON DECIDING TO STUDY ART EDUCATION IN COLLEGE



" When I tell you no one can motivate me like I can motivate me. Yes, I can be inspired artistically by this or that, but like at the end of the day, it's YOU getting yourself up in the morning, it's you doing this it's you doing that, it's you living in this world, you being birthed, you dying alone, like its—not dying alone but like when you die it's you dying so it's like I feel like me, I look at myself as being a big role model because I look at certain situations I have gone through and it's like well girl I'm here. It's like what I said, I'm still tired but I'm still here. Like how I can look back at how I was freshman year artistically and mentally and grade-wise and I see that I've triumphed and came a long way so it's like, wow, like I did that."

-- WHEN ASKED WHO HER ROLE MODEL IS





# Mrs. Thornton

11th grade English &  
Creative Writing  
Teacher, CSA

**"The kids are my favorite part. They're just special. They're so unique and they all are like multi talented and creative and fun, just so funny."**

**"They're so funny and so smart. And just getting to know them has been awesome. And they're weird and Goofy, and that's how I am. So, like, they're my people."**

When asked how she chooses what topics to cover in her courses and how to intertwine those with the curriculum standards, Mrs. Thornton had this to say:

"It's important to me that whenever we're reading something that they care about it for many reasons. Like the main one is that they are better students when they care about what they're reading...If you want to be a teacher, you just have to get to know your students like for real. Yeah. And listen to what they care about and what they're worried about, and all that stuff and then talk to them about it."

"So I try and think about what the greater context of anything that we're reading is, and that I think it makes them more aware of stuff that they didn't really know about, or like, you know, the definition of redlining, but you never saw it happen. And when it's happening to this family [in the book], and they can't move into the neighborhood that they like, but rightfully have the money to move into that neighborhood, then [the students] are like, Oh, that's actually crazy."



# Gianna

## 11th grade Orchestra Major

As a transfer student from a Cleveland suburb high school, she has had a different experience at CSA than many of her classmates.

"Now I'm pretty much the only white kid all my classes ...And it's showing me lots of perspective on the world. My privilege as just being a person in this country. You know, it's interesting to learn about other people's perspective on life. And I've never had a non white teacher in school."

"Being able to learn how to be a good ally for my peers, and it actually kind of inspired me to want to help others more. Because I see how my world has expanded and how the world can change and what I might be able to do to help that so yeah, it's awesome. This place is very special."

### On future plans:

"I feel like being a music teacher would be a really cool job for me and that's something I might think I want to major in college, so music education or music therapy or something along those lines, where I can help others share music because music is so important to me and I think I am a caring person. I like to care about other people."



# Bre'Juanna



"I only got here because I've always been writing even when I was in kindergarten, My English teacher in middle school suggested that I should come here because writing is a way to express myself.

I can help people see a side of a story that they've never seen before, and potentially open their eyes to new matters."

## Bre'Juanna, 16, Creative Writing major

"A family member of mine had gotten arrested for something that he didn't do. But because of the way that the political system is, they didn't really want to listen to his story. So I didn't really get to know him because for half of my life, he was in prison for something he didn't do. So that's why I decided to start writing about that.

"My mom is my hero. I wrote a lot of poems in this book about her because she's been through a lot and she's still so strong. I hope that I could be like her with things that happen in my life."

# Alonzo

"The teachers care a lot. Even though sometimes we wish they wouldn't, they actually care and they will help you pass."



Alonzo Anderson, Drama Major.

"My biggest role model has to be Nicki Minaj. She started she was an illegal immigrant and she worked her way to the top, purely on her talent. We got to work at it real hard, considering she wasn't even a legal citizen. It's inspirational to see how she literally started from nowhere in New York and she came here and now she's one of the greatest artists in the world. She is inspirational and she always speaks about getting our education even though education is not a right for everybody, everybody, don't go to college, everybody don't finish high school. She always says, finish your education, go to school, do what you want to do. Don't let nobody tell you the opposite. She keeps it inspirational."

# "What do you think of CSA?"



## In Their Words:

"I might have trouble explaining it. All I know is I really like CSA a lot. And I mean, like, it's not like, How do I explain it? It's kind of like it's fun here. We have performances a lot early and it's exciting and it's hard to explain. There's not like bullies here or anything like that. It's just kind of like peaceful you can talk to people and enjoy, like what you're learning. It's an art school. So, you're able to express yourself like we don't have a uniform. So like, people with a unique sense of style could just do what they want and feel comfortable in their own skin. It's really nice."

-Laura

"You can feel comfortable being yourself without anyone judging you. It's like at CSA, It's not like other schools. At my old school, when you were saying things or you talk a certain way or you act a certain way and you get judged for it, but here, it really doesn't matter like that. None of that stuff matters."

-Alyssa

"I like this school. But there's stuff that I really want to do that I can't do in school. Like, for example, like I want to get piano lessons to continue my music career, but the school doesn't offer that."

-Jose (Ghxst.Cxndy)

## In Ours:

**"During my short week at CSA, I met so many gifted students whose intelligence, artistic talent, and charisma blew me away. The school certainly has a knack for attracting young people with kind hearts and impressive amounts of talent."**

**-Dan Frank, Sankofa Team Member**

# **"How has your art evolved since you started attending CSA?"**

**"I feel like I'm like, not struggling as much as I used to. And so I think that I've been picking up more talents here than I did when I first started. So, next year, I thought I was going to be going for painting and drawing but now I'm thinking more along the lines of doing ceramics."**

**-Treasure**

# **"What's stayed consistent in your art?"**

**"I try to put messages in my drawings and paintings like, back when it was, like gun violence, was a big problem, I did a portrait of one of my friends that was killed by police. I put it into an art competition and I got first place. So yeah, I've always tried to put an important message out into my paintings and drawings."**

**-Jada**



# **What do you think is the most important thing for someone to focus on at CSA?**

“Your core group of friends in high school are always such a huge part of your life. If school does become too much, they do like, you know, have people to talk to, but my friends are a guidance. My friends also are some of my inspiration. So if, like school is getting too much, I will talk to them and like if I miss an assignment something they will get me caught up.”

-Savanna

“Take it seriously, please. At first, I thought it was nothing like, Oh, I can do whatever I want. No, you can't. I thought that I would be able to get away with a lot of stuff that I didn't get away with. But I'm doing way better now. Like, just take it seriously. Don't mess around. Don't skip your classes. If you do that, you'll be fine.”

-Kera



# EPILOGUE

We'd like to thank Professor Gourrier, Professor Rutkoff, Principal LePelley and everyone at Cleveland School of the Arts and our host families for welcoming us and making this experience possible.

Our brief week in Cleveland has taught us about passion, creativity, and the beauty of learning in such a unique academic environment. You're truly an inspiration to us all.

We wish to express our regret at our week having been cut short due to the spread of COVID-19, but our time was incredibly valuable. We appreciated the passion of the students towards their art and in making CSA a new community for us.

One of the biggest regrets we feel as a community of experiential learners is our not having been able to host our own classes at the end of the week. This would have added another element of leadership and challenge to our participant-observer experience, but the little time that we did with our students was thought-provoking and invigorating nonetheless.

*Sankofa* can be translated to "gaining knowledge from our roots". It symbolizes the quest for knowledge based on critical examination, and intelligent and patient investigation which is what we had the pleasure of exploring at CSA. Furthermore, our time in Cleveland planted roots that we can return to in our future endeavors in education. Thank you so much to everyone who made this happen!

*Dan Frank '23*

*Nathalie Orellana '21*

*Cherish Banks '22*

*Julliette Montoya '22*

*Haley Witschey '20*

*Fadia El Hadj '20*

*Valeria Garcia-Poza '23*

*Felecia Hamilton '22*

*Sara Rosenthal '22*

*Chloe Shane '22*

*Lili Bernstein '22*

*Mamadou Fofana '21*

*Caroline Lehman '20*



# **SANKOFA**

*Gaining Knowledge from Our Roots*