

REFLECTION ON “SHAKESPEARE AND THE COMMON GOOD IN ATLANTA”

BY JULIUS CAMPBELL

It has been a rewarding experience to have been a part of the Common Good Atlanta Shakespeare program. Before this program, my only exposure to Shakespearian literature was Martin Lawrance’s comedy of *Romeo and Juliette*, and *The Holy Bible*. For many years I was a creative writer of poetry and short stories, so some of the vivid imagery found in the book was captivating. The creative interactions between facilitators, professional actors and students were greatly beneficial in maintaining attentiveness. Professor Shelley’s excitement was contagious, and he provided a welcoming atmosphere to those of us who were obvious novices. At first glance, the archaic literature would seem unintelligible and difficult at best; but the vocabulary page helped to set at ease any lingering fears.

There were two specific highlights of the course for me. The first was dramatizing. Acting out the part of each character was fun. Although there were professional actors accompanying us during the class sessions, we did not feel any pressure to perform perfectly. The second was interpretation. Some of the texts posed a great deal of challenges, but after interpreting it, it was very educational. Although there were professors accompanying us during the classroom sessions, our opinions were welcomed and entertained.

At first, I questioned the benefits of taking this course. How was it relevant and relatable to our culture? After reading *The Tempest*, it was easy to see that no matter what era you exist in, we all experience life ISSUES. Whether it is dealing with the fear of death, the shame of your past, or the isolation of friendlessness, we have all been there at one point in our lives. As a *Returning Citizen* recently returning home from a 26-year prison sentence, I can confidently say that I have experienced each of these feelings at one time or another in my life. But I have also found a few other benefits as a result of this course:

1. It creates confidence and community.
2. It provides learning opportunity for diverse literature.
3. It provides an all embracing, broad-gauge into the past.

In my conclusion, I do not want to sound bias in my assessment. There were some not-so-popular moments in the course, but the adventure and the benefits motivated me on to the end. I would encourage any student of art, or avid reader, to seriously consider Shakespearian literature. It is a history and creative writing course all wrapped up in one.

Appreciatively,
Julius Campbell