

Question 1: Can you tell us a little bit about your creative journey?

Early in my life in elementary school, I exhibited early signs of, let's just say, a strong aptitude for math and science. As I got higher up and toward graduation, I started getting more and more letters from math and science schools. I got letters from North Carolina A&T, which is an HBCU that has a strong engineering program. I got letters for pre-college programs at Tuskegee, which is where I ultimately went. But at the same time, I also showed an interest in and early aptitude for literary arts. I remember in sixth grade, I entered a poetry competition and won. And that sixth grade one is important to me because it gave me the confidence to... No matter what I was doing, even though I was showing and was... to be honest, kind of being cultivated through... everyone was excited about as was I the possibility of being an engineer, a person that could make good money in a field that people respect and celebrate. And I went in that direction. Though I never let go of my identity, the things that interested me that was at the core of my passion, and at the time, it was writing first and then I discovered a love for photography whenever I was 17 years old. Me being open to possibilities allowed me to be able to see paths and channels that I think have been absolutely for me. But had I not been open to them, I would have closed them off had I simply followed the "script". You don't have to let go of the things that give you joy. You don't have to let go of the things that make you excited. You don't have to let go of things that you are passionate about, even if they are different from what you are pursuing as an education. We are, as human beings, dynamic. We are not one-dimensional. We exhibit and are multiple possibilities at once. The things that fuel you, that you are passionate about, that you exhibit, gifts that you are drawn to, they are important for you to to not let go of, to not sacrifice for the sake of doing something else. I think that I was able to get through difficult moments that I experienced in my formal education because I had the arts, I had the things that I was passionate about to be a place of refuge for me, to explore and to help me make meaning out of complexity. They actually helped me in engineering. They helped me as I was pursuing a Masters of Divinity.

Question 2: What does creativity and living a creative life mean to you? What advice do you have for students?

Response: What does creativity and living a creative life mean to me? As a writer, I journal and reflect and have thought about this question of creativity. What is it? What role does it play in my life? In my journal, I wrote that creativity is the courageous response to limitations. I run up against and meet limitations like so many other people, like so many other identities. And what I found to be true, particularly in the arts, those limitations often lead to ingenuity and innovation. Every time I travel, you know, we go to shops, or you see people, street vendors or street artists and what we find often is stuff that blows our minds like, how did you make that out of a can? You only had three colors, how did you? You had four pieces of wood and a stick of bubblegum, but you made a... You know, it's always what seems like outlandish limitations that would stifle a person and the reality is, oftentimes, they have very little, but it's those limitations with what they have and the courage to say that *I still am worthy of expressing my ideas, I still am worthy of the pursuit of that which I am passionate about*. And the world benefits from innovation, from inspiration. The lessons that we can learn from that can be applied to, you know, *insert, finding creative solutions* to anything, to even problems. But I think when we do

that, and when we describe so many other avenues as creative living, creativity is a response. And it can be applied to so many of us in so many ways. And I think it is a secret. It is the secret to a kind of healthy living. And from my perspective of living that is based on and is fueled by resistance, resistance to so many forces and so many things that tell us what we cannot, what we should not, and what we dare not even try to be.

Question 3: What were things that were unplanned/unexpected but meaningful to your growth?

Response: So I graduated from Candler School of Theology in 2005. Right before I graduated from Candler, one of my colleagues at Candler—her name is Kate—and I was on an elevator. I remember Kate getting on the elevator with me. She was telling me about the new position that she was about to take, how excited she was about it. And she said that, *I think you would be excellent, you would be the person, if I had it my way, you would be the person to take my place at the Center for Ethics.* I interviewed for the position. I had no idea that my involvement and my work, and my contributions at the Center for Ethics would grow and be transformed in the ways that they have proven to be. As I reflect on my work, the kind of my body of work that I release into the world, that is an extension of who I am and the change that I hope to see. I think about it, in the midst of COVID and just shortly after George Floyd was murdered in the streets, we had a conversation and I said that I cannot come back to the university and it be business as usual. What I do at this moment calls for me to exhibit and embody a bold solidarity with the oppressed, and with the end to do work that amplifies the voices that are not being heard. The result was committing to and designing an outline for what became a fellowship program that allowed us and Emory to be radical in the work that it does in teaching. It allowed Emory to be able to claim a kind of a radical pedagogy that led to, I think, transformation for students, faculty, and artists in the community. It really was me leaning into who I am and what I think I'm called to do. And as different as it may have seemed, as it may seem, from what I was educated to do, or what the trajectory or the path that it seemed like I was on, it's showing me that I am exactly where I'm supposed to be. And that following those passions and doing and exhibiting some of the courage that I talked about at the beginning. I think it's a result of all of those things coming together. And so I encourage those listening, those that are curious about where they are, the major that they will be: who you want to become is even as, if not more, important than what you do. And the courage you exhibit to be open to possibilities as you make those decisions can be as transformative as the decisions themselves. And so, thank you.