

# The High School View

The High School View is staffed and prepared entirely by students from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and published on their behalf by The Martha's Vineyard Times, with the generous assistance of the sponsors whose names appear below.

## Tap dancer Leo Sandoval connects through movement

BY JULIA SAYRE AND JAKE GLASGOW

Renowned Brazilian tap dancer and choreographer Leonardo ("Leo") Sandoval visited Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) recently as part of a partnership between the Yard and Martha's Vineyard Public Schools English language learning (ELL) program. During immersive workshops with a variety of students and staff, Mr. Sandoval introduced participants to the history and cultural significance of tap dancing and body percussion.

Mr. Sandoval is currently based out of New York City, where he dances with Music from the Sole, a tap dance and live music company. He traveled to Martha's Vineyard in March to complete a dance residency at the Yard. As part of this residency, Mr. Sandoval visited the high school to work with Portu-



ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVIA MACPHERSON

guese classes, the Black Student Alliance, theater classes, and the wider student body. Junior Jahzarah McIntosh participated in a dance

workshop with peers from the Black Student Alliance (BSA). "I really appreciate the administration creating this positive environment with

these cultural dances," she said. "[Mr. Sandoval] did an amazing job explaining the history and the dance itself."

Jahzarah and fellow students learned about the revolutionary tap dancer Bill ("Bojangles") Robinson, the cultural significance of body percussion during slavery, and the evolution of tap dancing in Harlem, New York.

Yvonne Mendez, acting executive director and program director of the Yard, helped arrange Mr. Sandoval's visit to the high school. "We started to identify what groups or classes would want Leo to come while he's here, and we got requests from several Portuguese teachers," she said.

Leah Palmer, the English language learner director for Martha's Vineyard Public Schools, believes these workshops served several important purposes for students. "It was exciting to see Leo's passion in his work, and for him to teach us about the

history of tap dancing being an African American dance," she said. "It was also great for students to see that you can follow your passion with hard work. Some students shine in academics, and for others, rhythm and movement might be a time to shine."

Ms. Mendez agreed that the workshop provided a new avenue to creativity and self-expression. "The goal was to engage people with creativity," said Ms. Mendez. "In a workshop, anytime there is someone who wouldn't ordinarily tap into their creative spark, and they're able to do that, then I feel like we had success."

Ms. Palmer said, "It was great to see [ELL] students light up with the experience. Leo is Brazilian and moved to the U.S. to start his life as a dancer, and this connected with many students who have uprooted to start a new life in the U.S."

When Portuguese teacher Daniel Soares learned that Mr. Sandoval was coming to MVRHS, he thought it would be a perfect opportunity for students to explore the similarities between dance and poetry. "In class, we chose [to study] a poem from a Brazilian writer, rich with nouns and rhythm," he said. "When students were exposed to the body movement that Leo brought to the workshop, it was important for students to realize that poetry is about sound, expression, movement, and rhythm."

Mr. Sandoval's workshop consisted of call-and-response movements as well as reading and chorus performances. "The students loved to understand that poetry is beyond words and interpretation," said Mr. Soares.

Reflecting on the significance of Mr. Sandoval's visit, Ms. Palmer believes that it comes down to connection. **HSV**

## April Armstrong channels Bessie Coleman

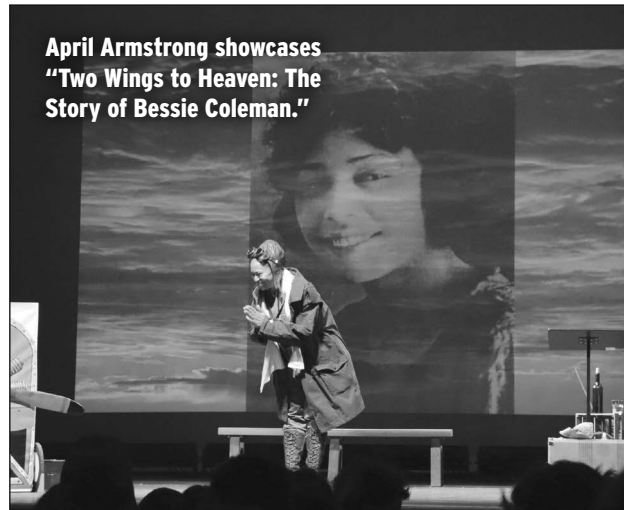
BY ANDREA MORSEA

Actress, singer, and storyteller April Armstrong performed a one-woman show for Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) students last week. In two separate performances, she depicted the life of Bessie Coleman, the first African-American woman and the first Native American to obtain a pilot's license. The purpose of the assembly was to offer students an experience with theatrical storytelling connected to both Black History and Women's History months, while exploring themes of empowerment

and perseverance.

Many students had never seen a one-woman show before, and found it to be impressive. "I thought it was really cool and interesting to see her changing characters. She would go from playing Bessie to playing her aviation teacher," said sophomore Caleb Dubin. "I was surprised she could perform so many characters [from the story of her life] as just one person."

Ms. Armstrong not only engaged the audience through different voices and seamless costume changes, but also included the crowd at different points in singing, with lyrics projected



ISA MERRIAM

on a backdrop for all to see.

Senior Maria Andrade was inspired. "[Bessie Coleman] clearly paved the way for

so many women, especially women of color," she said.

Throughout the performance, Ms. Armstrong

conveyed Bessie Coleman's experienced in pursuit of becoming a pilot in the early 20th century. The story chronicled the various obstacles she faced, including discrimination for being an African American woman in the predominantly male field of aviation.

One of the more surprising parts of the story was Bessie Coleman's journey to France to enroll in aviation school, because she wasn't allowed to enroll as an aviation student in the U.S. as a Black woman.

History classes were able to connect the performance to topics recently covered in class such as redlining and

Black nationalism. Freshman English students recognized the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar — who was featured in the play as one of Bessie Coleman's literary heroes — as poetry they'd recently studied in class. There were physics lessons on flight and aviation as Bessie Coleman learned about flying, and when she traveled to France for aviation school and met with reporters, she spoke French.

Many students left the performance feeling empowered and hopeful. When Bessie Coleman received her pilot's license, the audience erupted.

"She inspires me to try more things that are hard," said Caleb. "Maybe I fail at them, but she gives me hope that I can do things I never thought I could." **HSV**

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Julia Sayre ('23) • ASSISTANT EDITORS: Olivia MacPherson ('24), Nikeya Tankard ('24) • PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR: Isa Merriam ('23) • ART EDITOR: Madeleine Bengtsson ('23) MASTHEAD ART: Madeleine Bengtsson ('23) • FACULTY ADVISERS: Kate Hennigan, Rachel Schubert

**The High School View is back on Instagram!**

SCAN QR CODE for new story updates, articles, illustrations and photos.

**For more than 30 years The MV Times has published**

# The High School View

It's one of the few high school publications in the U.S. that is circulated throughout the community.

**To become a sponsor email [adsales@mvtimes.com](mailto:adsales@mvtimes.com) or call 508-693-6100**