

In an interview with poet Ocean Vuong that I listened to recently, he discussed how, at a young age, he developed an obsession with the story of Noah's Ark. Vuong said that he was fascinated with the idea of choosing items to bring into a new world and that he frequently contemplated what he would carry with him out of an apocalyptic time, for he was created out of a time of immense turmoil and destruction. With a Vietnamese grandmother and an American grandfather, Vuong was brought into the world as a product of great violence, the Vietnam war.

In *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, the main character Hiram is a slave in Virginia. The novel chronicles Hiram's journey on the underground railroad and his path towards learning the skill of conduction or traveling through time and space with the power of memory. Much like Ocean Vuong, Hiram was born into a horrifically violent time. In his journey through this apocalyptic time, Hiram discovers that the only thing he can carry with him is his power of memory and love. While this novel is somewhat fantastical and falls in the genre of magical realism, the message of bringing good out of destruction holds true.

Hiram also discovers the power of water and fluidity throughout his journey. Hiram learns through his friend and mentor, Harriet Tubman, that water can be used to conduct through space and time. Hiram refers to this as water dancing and can trace this power's lineage through his mother, whom he had a vision of at the beginning of the novel. Hiram learns that water not only can conduct, but it is also a representation of the fluidity one needs in their life. While Hiram cannot bring physical objects, or even the ones he loves, on his journey to freedom, he carries this knowledge of conduction and fluidity with him through tumultuous times.

I feel that coronavirus has brought a similar time of distress and loss to our world. Much like in the lives of Ocean Vuong and Hiram, this time begs the same question, what will we carry with us into the new world? I will fill my "ark" into the new world with movement, art, community, and grace. As the world has paused, we have been forced to retreat into our homes, and many people have discovered the beauty in a slower life. Like many others, I have tried to become an expert baker, worked through my reading list, frequently talked with extended family, and converted the few square feet of open space in my bedroom into a yoga, dance, and art studio. I may not bring with me the many skills I have attempted to perfect during this time, but I will bring the joy of movement and art with me into a post-coronavirus world.

While some are privileged enough to stay home, others, like Hiram in *The Water Dancer*, have to journey through the great sadness of this time every day. Racial, economic, and social divides in our country are growing deeper each day as the wealthy and affluent have the privilege to bunker down with loved ones. At the same

time, much of the working class must risk their lives each day, often without the promise of health care and a livable wage. Although certain divides grow deeper during times of crisis, just as they did during the Vietnam war and the underground railroad in the early 1800's, other divides close and strong communities form. Like many others, this crisis has shown the world that we are indeed a global community, and just as this crisis knows no borders, neither can our sense of community.

Although I did not grow up listening to the stories of the bible, I still find comfort knowing that history has shown that even when we are in the midst of a global crisis, we can carry good with us into a new world.