Press Release

Jasmine Gregory I'd Rather Be Mourning

12 April - 18 May 2024 Opening 11 April, 6 - 8 pm

for the same reason Marco Polo rocketed We're going to Mars

to China

for the same reason Columbus trimmed his sails on a dream of spices for the very same reason Shackleton was enchanted with penguins for the reason we fall in love

It's the only adventure

We're going to Mars because Peary couldn't go to the North

Pole without Matthew Henson because Chicago couldn't be a city without Jean Baptiste Du Sable because George Washington Carver and his peanut were the right partners for

It's life seeking thing

We're going to Mars because whatever is wrong with us will not

Booker T.

get right with us so we journey forth carrying the same baggage but every now and then leaving one little bitty thing behind:

maybe drop torturing Hunchbacks here; maybe drop lynching Billy Budd there; maybe not whipping Uncle Tom to death;

maybe resisting global war.

One day looking for prejudice to slip.....one day looking for hatred to tumble by the wayside.....one day maybe the whole community will no longer be vested in who sleeps with whom.....maybe one day the Jewish community will be at rest......the Christian community will be content......the Muslim community will be at peace......and all the rest of us will get great meals at Holydays and learn new songs and sing in harmony

We're going to Mars

If Mare came here

because it gives us a reason to change

it would be ugly

nations would band together to hunt down

and kill Martians

and being the stupid underserving life

forms that we are

we would also hunt down and kill

what would be termed

Martian Sympathizers

As if the Fugitive Slave Law wasn't

bad enough then

As if the so-called War on Terrorism

isn't pitiful Now

When do we learn and what does it take to teach us things

cannot be:

What we want When we want As we want

Other people have ideas and inputs And why won't they leave Rap Brown alone

The future is ours to take



We're going to Mars

because we have the hardware to do it...
we have

Rockets and fuel and money and stuff and the only

Reason NASA is holding back is they

don't know

If what they send out will be what they
get back

So let me slow this down;

Mars is 1 year of travel to get there......
plus 1 year of living on Mars......

plus 1 year to return to Earth......

= 3 years of Earthlings being in a tight space going to an unknown place with an unsure welcome awaiting them... tired muscles... unknown and unusual foods... harsh conditions... and no known landmarks to keep them human... only a hope and a prayer that they will be shadowed beneath a benign hand and there is no historical precedence for that except this:

The trip to Mars can only be understood through Black Americans I say, the trip to Mars can only be understood through Black Americans

The people who where captured and enslaved immediately recognized the men who chained and whipped them and herded them into ships so tightly packed there was no room to turn... no privacy to respect... no tears to fall without landing on another... were not kind and gentle and concerned for the state of their souls... no... the men with whips and with chains were understood to be killers... feared to be cannibals... known to be sexual predators... the captured knew they were in trouble... in an unknown place... without communicable abilities with a violent and capricious species...

But they could look out and still see signs of Home they could still smell the sweetness in the air

they could see the could floating above the land they loved But there reached a point where the captured could not only not look back

they had no idea which way "back" might be there was nothing in the middle of the deep blue water to indicate which way home might be and it was that moment ... when the decision had to be made:

Do they continue forward with a resolve to see this thing though or do they embrace the waters and find another world

In the belly of the ship a moan was heard... and someone picked up the moan... and a song was raised... and that song would offer comfort... and hope... and tell the story...

When we go to Mars......it's the same thing...it's Middle Passage

When the rocket red glares the astronauts will be able to see themselves pull away from Earth... as the ship goes deeper they will see a sparkle of blue... and the one day not only will they not see Earth... they won't know which way to look... and that is why NASA needs to call Black America

They need to ask us: How did you calm your fears... How were you able to decide you were human even when everything said you were not... How did you find the comfort in the face of the improbable to make the world you came to your world... How was you soul able to look back and wonder



And we will tell them what to do: To successfully got to Mars and back you will need a song... take some Billie Holiday for the sad days and some Charlie Parker for the happy ones but always keep at least on good Spiritual for comfort... You will need a slice or two of meatloaf and if you can manage it some fried chicken in a shoebox with a nice moist lemon pound cake... a bottle of beer because no one should go that far without a beer and maybe a six-pack so that it there is life on Mars

you can share... Popcorn for the celebration when you land while you wait for your land legs to kick in... and as you climb down the ladder from your spaceship to the martian surface... look to your left... and there you'll see a smiling community quilting a black-eyed pea... watching you descend

Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea (We're Going to Mars) By Nikki Giovanni

