

Giselle

Hello, Taylor. I love me some Taylor. I'm here every day. Lock her up. Oh, no, no. Purpose. Purpose. So I'm going to keep it short. I believe in purpose. And I believe that we're here because we have to fulfill a purpose here on earth, wherever we are in the universe, you know.

But I came from just a little dot, dot, on the island of Trinidad and Tobago. And then I -- my mom was able to move us to New York City and so -- you know, you go to high school and then decided, oh, I'm an artist. So I wanted to go to -- I got a scholarship at Parsons School of Design in New York City. It was so difficult getting in there, but I made it, graduated.

My background is in illustration and I, obviously, went into the commercial world. Just a brief background, commercial illustration, did the editorial magazine stuff, and municipal and city compilation (???) and Universal Studios and then started -- went underground, started doing -- connecting with the past and illustrating cities with -- you know, just jazz greatest, and that was fun. Oh, my gosh, yeah.

But then the artist decided, okay, I need to figure out what I really wanted to do and to find my own niche myself, and I connected to the past and ever since I've been using my art as a vehicle to document history and tributes to -- whether it's rap musicians. KRS-One was a great thing I did in New York City.

And then moving into Austin. How did she get to Austin? A long story. I'm not going to talk about that tonight. But I ended up here and then -- and then journeyed out to Taylor, Texas, was the best thing I've ever done.

I mean, I went into -- I took, what is it, 29 and went down to Burnet County and then I found myself -- I kept going until I reached Buchanan, picking up junk from everywhere, rustic stuff, broken stuff, just metal, old pots, old whatever I could find, and create sculpture out of it.

So what I'm trying to say is I was a commercial artist and then I went into being a, you know, sculpture artist using broken things in my work and tribute -- and using it as tributes to historical -- as a vehicle to present stories through my work.

I hope you guys got that. Artists can be so complicated sometimes. I mean, really. No?

But anyway, I came into Taylor, right, and fell in love with it and I want to live here one day. I, like, so want to open up a studio here one day and, you know, just invite everyone, come on y'all, let's just enjoy the rustic antique world up in Taylor, Texas. I might just put a pillow outside and sleep outside. Wave to everyone.

Anyway, I -- I made a call, right, and I spoke to Susan and I said, "Ms. Susan, I would like to have a show at the museum." And I don't know if she's on the other line going, "Who is this?" But she was just the sweetest, kindest person that took the time to listen, and she said, "You know, just send me a few samples of your work." And I did and she said, "You know, we can consider it. I have to talk to the committee." And, you know, I was patient. I'm on the other end going, "Please, please, please, please."

So when I got the yes she said, "Is it going to be about Taylor?" I said, "Yes, it's going to be about Taylor. It's going to be an awesome show." And so I chose to put my focus on, you know, just creating a few pieces entitled Taylor the Unforgettable. And it meant a lot to me because, you know, we really were a

family, right. And I say "we" because now I'm your family now. You guys are going to adopt me. Yeah, right.

And so I -- I said, well, where do I start, you know, and I went back to, you know, just when I -- when I first start driving, you know, down 79, came into Taylor, I was just thinking, well, you know -- you know, where is the African-American population, which direction? You know, I just wanted to know more, you know, historically their contribution to the history -- the African-American history. And then someone mentioned Dr. Dickie and Mr. -- former mayor Don Hill and I said "Well, where are they? How can I meet them?"

And then I sort of connected with Leslie Hill and Mr. Hill and I told them my vision and they were quite, you know, intrigued and they wanted to help a young artist like myself. And they felt that I -- you know, I really wanted to do this and so they opened their home to me and welcomed me in, and when I walked in it was just amazing to see the archive of all the things they've collected and how important, you know, the history is to them. You know, it was just mind blowing and it pulled me in more. Well, maybe you have a purpose here, you have a calling here and you need to fulfill it.

So I'm talking to myself, because sometimes I try to back out of it, like what are you thinking calling the Moody Museum trying to display your art, you know. And I'm trying to talk myself out of it. But then I say, nope, you better go through with it. And so I tried and I went through with it.

Anyway, so make a long story short, right. Someone that I really -- while I was creating all these beautiful art, was Sterling Simms. And I'm just going to do this real quick. It's going to -- he was -- okay.

Sterling Simms, October 13, 1888, April 9, 1945. So Sterling Simms was born in Travis County to Oscar and Violet Simms. He was fourth of 21 children, some dying at birth. Sterling and Georgia Pickett Simms were married August 30, 1913. Georgia was the daughter of Lee Pickett and first cousin to famed bulldogger Bill Pickett.

The Simms raised three boys and three girls. Sterling was a farmer until 1928 when he moved his family into a new house he bought and built at 503 West Rio Grande in Taylor. They celebrated their first Thanksgiving there and the home is still occupied by his heirs.

He worked odd jobs at the compress and the roundhouse and seasonally at the oil mill as a cake knocker. Standing in a line he and a fellow worker knocked cotton seeds cakes out of molds one by one with their hands. It was at the oil mill where the Lord gave Sterling the vision to invent a wooden cake knocker for oil presses. A person had only to lift a lever and 12 cakes at a time would fall. Sterling was buried on the day president Franklin D. Roosevelt died, April 12, 1945.

Okay. So why him, because every visionary, every artist, every -- you know, when you have a vision, with him also, something out of nothing, valuing the little things. Visionaries are my heroes, because I believe when you have a vision you don't just shove it under a shelf, right. You don't have those -- that book that you want to write, that vision of painting 50 paintings or becoming the best scientist or the best writer, the book you also wanted to write, I don't believe it should be under a shelf. I don't believe it should be, you know, locked up anywhere. You need to breathe life into it, and that's what I do at my work.

I find these stories and these people who have made a contribution to society, or just our community, and for the ones who never spoke, whose story was never told, to represent them through my work. So when you go outside and you see these books, they were books that was donated by libraries. I think it was a few librarians who called me, "Giselle, do you need books? What's the next story?"

And so it was a perfect time to use that as the object in my work, the instrument to -- the driving force to bring forth, bring life, to breathe that life back into the Sterling Simms and the Dr. Dickies and all the people here in Taylor. Even Dan Moody, I did one with him, right, because he also played a part in American history, our history.

And so whether I'm from Trinidad, or whatever we may be, we are all a family. And so that's our purpose, to just kind of not let history fade away like the bag in the wind, right. Unforgettable, that's what you are. That's it.