



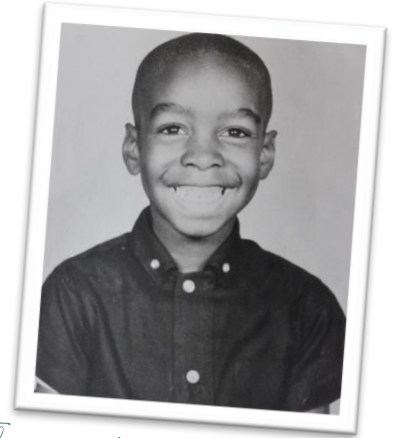
ROANOKE CULTURAL
ENDOWMENT

December 2022

Dear Friend,

I have a fantastic story to tell you. It's short, but you'll feel wonderful after you read it.

So, snag your favorite beverage... maybe something good and warm, like some hot chocolate or coffee... whatever you like.



This is a story about Fletcher

Grab your favorite, most comfortable spot and settle in. Ready? Ok...



Fletcher's birth home

The story starts with a little boy. A little boy named Fletcher, born on a sharecropper's farm. He grew up in a small rural town, smack dab in the middle of the Civil Rights movement.

When he told me his story a few weeks ago, *he said that arts saved his life.*

Here at Roanoke Cultural Endowment, we want to make sure the arts are alive and well so children can enjoy them for generations to come... to be inspired by them... to learn from them... and for some, like Fletcher – to be saved by them. But we can't do it without you by our side.

Fletcher's chorus teacher was by his side as he made his way through high school as a black kid caught up in desegregation in Franklin, Virginia.

But first, he had to get through Junior High. 7th grade was the first year his school district desegregated their schools. That meant Fletcher had to go to a different school. *Away from many of the friends and teachers he knew.*

And at the end of his 7th grade year, he was told he would have to repeat it.

Turn over to read more...

His grades were good. But his mother was told that Fletcher *“had too much pride”* and wasn’t ready to move on. Can you even imagine?

So, Fletcher repeated the 7th grade.

“I didn’t let it jade me. I was more determined than ever.”

It wasn’t long until he met his lifeline... his high school chorus teacher.

She took him under her wing as a mentor. He was excited to learn she was from New York city. She inspired him!

Fletcher took every possible arts class he could... especially from her. He learned to sight read and developed his ear for music. She helped him develop a passionate love for all things art. She was his lifeline.



High school Fletcher

When he was in the 11th grade, because he had so excelled, Fletcher was honored with an all-expense-paid, 3-day trip to Richmond where he experienced just about every art form that was offered.

“I couldn’t believe this was happening. That my dreams could become a reality.”

I want to make sure that our region continues to have the sort of culture where children can come and have their dreams come true. Where they can experience arts in every form possible.

It can happen because there are compassionate and generous people like you who believe in the arts. *I know you care and want children to be able to depend on a thriving arts community, too. And if you give a gift today, you can help ensure that our arts community remains healthy and thriving.*

Fletcher continued to thrive after high school. He went on to college and then became a visual arts teacher.

Fletcher got married. They had 2 sons and lived in Richmond. But they wanted their sons to be exposed to more diverse art forms from more diverse artists. They ultimately chose Roanoke.

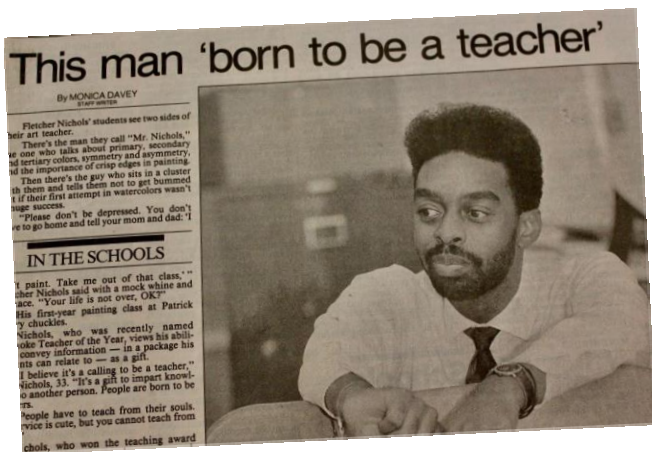
And oh... are we glad they did!

Fletcher and his wife, Synethia, have been driving forces in the music scene in Roanoke for decades.

We want to make sure music and other art forms have a place here for a very long time – to inspire and challenge children and adults alike. *We need good people like to you to make sure that happens. Will you consider giving a donation today, so together, we can ensure a dynamic and vibrant arts community?*

Fletcher was Chairman of the Arts Department at Patrick Henry High School for years where he fought for the arts program year after year. As a result, that high school has one of the most amazing art departments in the commonwealth.

But perhaps most importantly, he followed in the footsteps of his own beloved music teacher.



He took students under his wing. He encouraged them. He listened to them. He mentored them. He helped them fall in love with arts. He became the place where students went when they needed to feel accepted.

“There were times I didn’t feel like I had a voice growing up. I had my chorus teacher, though. I always wanted kids to feel they were heard in my classroom. It didn’t

matter what religion, race, or creed. They had a place with me.”

In 2018, Fletcher retired. Over his 30+ years as a teacher, there’s no telling how many kids passed through his classroom. And how many kids...

...stayed in school because of this art teacher.

...got better grades because of this art teacher.

...became teachers and lifelines to students themselves because of Fletcher.

It always seems arts programs are the first to get cut in our public schools. Even though we have study after study that says that kids who participate in the arts – any form of the arts – do better academically and when they grow up.

Even though the arts are a life saver for kids... like Fletcher.

It's never been more important that our region maintains its vibrant and diverse arts community and culture. For our teachers. For our kids. For YOU! Can you imagine your life without music, films, books... without ART?

Will you help ensure that the arts remain alive in our region? Will you give a gift right now to help ensure that our children, and their children, and their children's children have a place to go, just like Fletcher did?

This is one of the best holiday gifts you could ever give to our children.

With much hope,

Shaleen Powell
Executive Director



*Fletcher and family
today*

PS – For some kids, music, painting, dance, or theater are lifelines. It's why they come to school. Some even live for it. A vibrant arts community helps our teachers and inspires students. Will you give a gift right now that will ensure kids continue to have access to the arts?