



# The Roger Lehecka Double Discovery Center

Getting community youth to, through, and beyond college

## ESCAPING A HAUNTED SCHOOL

You went into Star Elementary School for a dare. The moment you entered the doors and windows disappeared. You see a paper with 3 tasks you have to complete in order to escape or else you will be trapped.



CAN YOU MAKE IT OUT SAFELY? WE WILL SEE... LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN.

Click on the image and answer the questions to find your way out - To help you get started, the answer to the 1st question is KEY - Good Luck!

You can hide the HTML codes by clicking on the arrow top left corner of the image.

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### In this May 2021 Issue:

#### 1. Spotlight on:

- **Margaret Banks, DDC Fellow and Ph.D. candidate in English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University**, presented her project *Unbecoming Me: Models of Transgressive Black Girlhood* at the Heyman Center for the Humanities. Her **guest speaker, Jydin Harwell, DDC '23**, discussed her experiences in the course. This May 5 panel opened the Heyman Center's *Building Publics Spring Graduate Series*.

**Congratulations Margaret and Jydin!**

#### 2. DDC Reviews:

- *Unbecoming Me* - Explorations of Black Girlhood
- DDC's *Code Nation* - Building Interactive Websites

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## ***Unbecoming Me - Explorations of Black Girlhood***

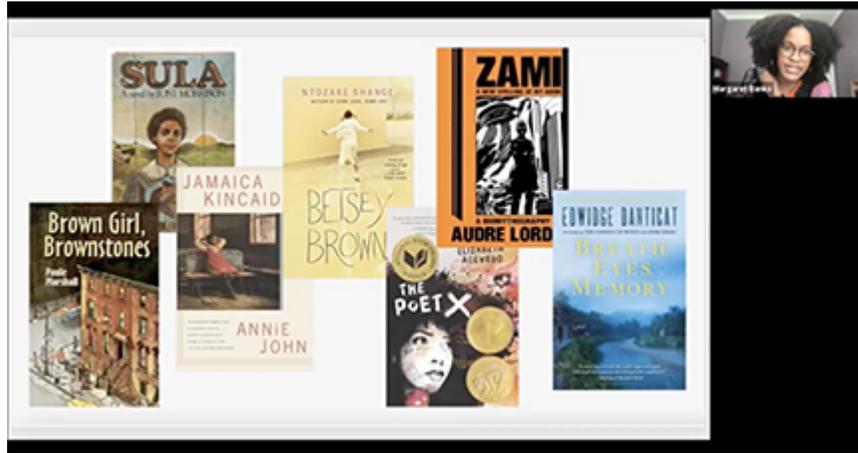
*Black girls are often denied the space and time to be children, says Margaret Banks who is the instructor of DDC's *Unbecoming Me* course. Studies have found that Black girls are perceived as adult-like, aggressive, and hypersexual. These racist and sexist stereotypes rob them of innocence and space for the curiosity, play, exploration, and mistakes inherent to growing up, she adds. Black girls understand quickly that because they are neither white nor male, their freedom and upward mobility are limited and they have to create “something else to be” beyond the stereotypes.*

*Unbecoming Me* grapples with what it means to “become” and to define ourselves as individuals. Students read and analyzed coming-of-age narratives of black girlhood from well-known writers – Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, Annie John, etc. They closely examined how the characters transgress stereotypes and recreate themselves. Students unpacked their identities, unraveled the scripts that society and families had taught them, and decided how they can redefine ideas of black girlhood and womanhood. In the process, they sharpened their critical thinking skills as they analyzed a writer's argument, crafted their own theory, stated their claim, provided evidence, asked questions, and debated. These are crucial skills for college and beyond.

As part of the course, DDC students participated in a paid internship where they worked as consultants to organize a summer camp for teenage black girls. The summer camp will be centered around creative activities, from photography to journaling to dancing, to help the young girls reimagine black girlhood. *This initiative is unique, says Margaret. There are few summer enrichment programs for black girls and they focus on academics to address the summer slide.* To design the summer camp activities, students reviewed stories of black girls and women who broke rules in literature and pop culture, researched the history of black summer camps in the US, and evaluated visual arts and dance workshops to make their final recommendations. *Black girls are the experts on black girlhood, stresses Margaret.*

*The class helped me rethink the purpose of claiming and re-identifying myself as a black girl, says Jydin H. DDC’23. We have to set about creating something else to be, because we are not accurately represented as a people, and we don’t have a true place in our society.* In addition to reading the literary works of others, the students created their own, including *We’re Not Okay*, a poem by Serenity B., DDC ‘22, and *Black Girlhood*, a presentation by Mariam D., DDC ‘22.

*I am always impressed by DDC’s students’ breadth of analysis and creativity, says Margaret. They identify so many important connections and generate theories about the world they experience. I was very surprised to see how much students needed that safe and relaxed space to talk about the misogynoir they are experiencing, she adds. I really appreciate that DDC offers them the opportunity to have these crucial conversations with each other, while they hone their skills as active readers and critical thinkers.*



**Margaret Banks** introduces her project *Unbecoming Me: Models of Transgressive Black Girlhood*, at the Heyman Center, on May 5, 2021.

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## ***DDC's Code Nation - Building Interactive Websites***

- “[Escape the Haunted School!](#)” - On a dare, you enter the haunted building of the abandoned Star Elementary school. Immediately, doors and windows disappear! To get out of this nightmare, you must give the right answers. The answer to the first question is: "key" - Final project for the Code Nation class, Aparajita B, DDC ‘23

DDC's Code Nation course is a year-long introduction to the fundamentals of computer science and front-end web development. Students learn HTML, CSS, and JavaScript to make websites and web apps. This process of coding feeds the computer instructions to perform the tasks we want. *This is a fun and community-oriented class*, says Andrew Mulinge, Code Nation Instructor. *The world relies more and more on innovative computer technology to connect and coding is a very valuable skill for all sorts of industries. The time to learn coding is now*, he stresses.

Supported by volunteers who are software engineers and web and game developers at leading technology companies, the course provides DDC students with the skills, connections, and experiences necessary to explore and pursue a career in the field. Once students complete the course, which is a collaboration between DDC and Code Nation, they can enroll in the Code Nation Fellowship that places students at some of the best tech companies in the city - from Google to Salesforce to American Express - where they further develop their coding and professional skills while building valuable business connections.

*Building trust and consistency in a virtual setting can be challenging*, says Andrew, *but our volunteers created a welcoming and exciting space. I am very pleased that we were able to sustain that same energy from October to May. In addition, to give students insights into the tech industry and opportunities to build a professional network, we invited developers from various backgrounds and skill sets to talk about their career pathways and current issues in the tech world.*

*This is one of my favorite classes, adds Andrew, I enjoy teaching DDC students. They bring joy, excitement, and curiosity to the class. They are thoughtful about the stories they share and their projects are so creative and varied – from scary to funny to informative. I am very excited to return for another class next fall!*

*I created the whole story, selected the images, and developed the codes to escape the haunted school, says Aparajita B, DDC '23. It was hard at first, but now I know how to design an interactive website. I have come a long way!*

Sebanyah B., DDC '24, is developing an adventure game *Elijah*, where a demon-like creature breaks free from a secret government lab. *I enjoy creating the scenario and writing the code, she says. I am so proud of myself, I have so much fun doing it!*

Alexandra N., DDC '22, is designing an app to select vacation spots tailored to specific tastes. *The favorite part of this project for me, she says, is getting totally comfortable with coding.*

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**Calling all DDC Alumni and Former Volunteers!  
We want to hear from you!  
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