



# Literature in Times of Crisis: Storytelling and the Ways of Knowing

CT<sub>2</sub> FACULTY INSTITUTE  
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Lucian Ghita (English)

## **Critical Thinking goals:**

- 1) A recognition that critical thinking, like storytelling, is a quest; often a conflicting, contradictory, self-looping one.
- 2) The quest should cultivate inquisitiveness and thoughtfulness.
- 3) It is participatory, experiential.
- 4) It strives to create an intellectual and learning place and community.

Peter Brooks, *Seduced by Story: The Use and Abuse of Narrative*

(New York Review of Books, 2022)





“Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used **to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize.** Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

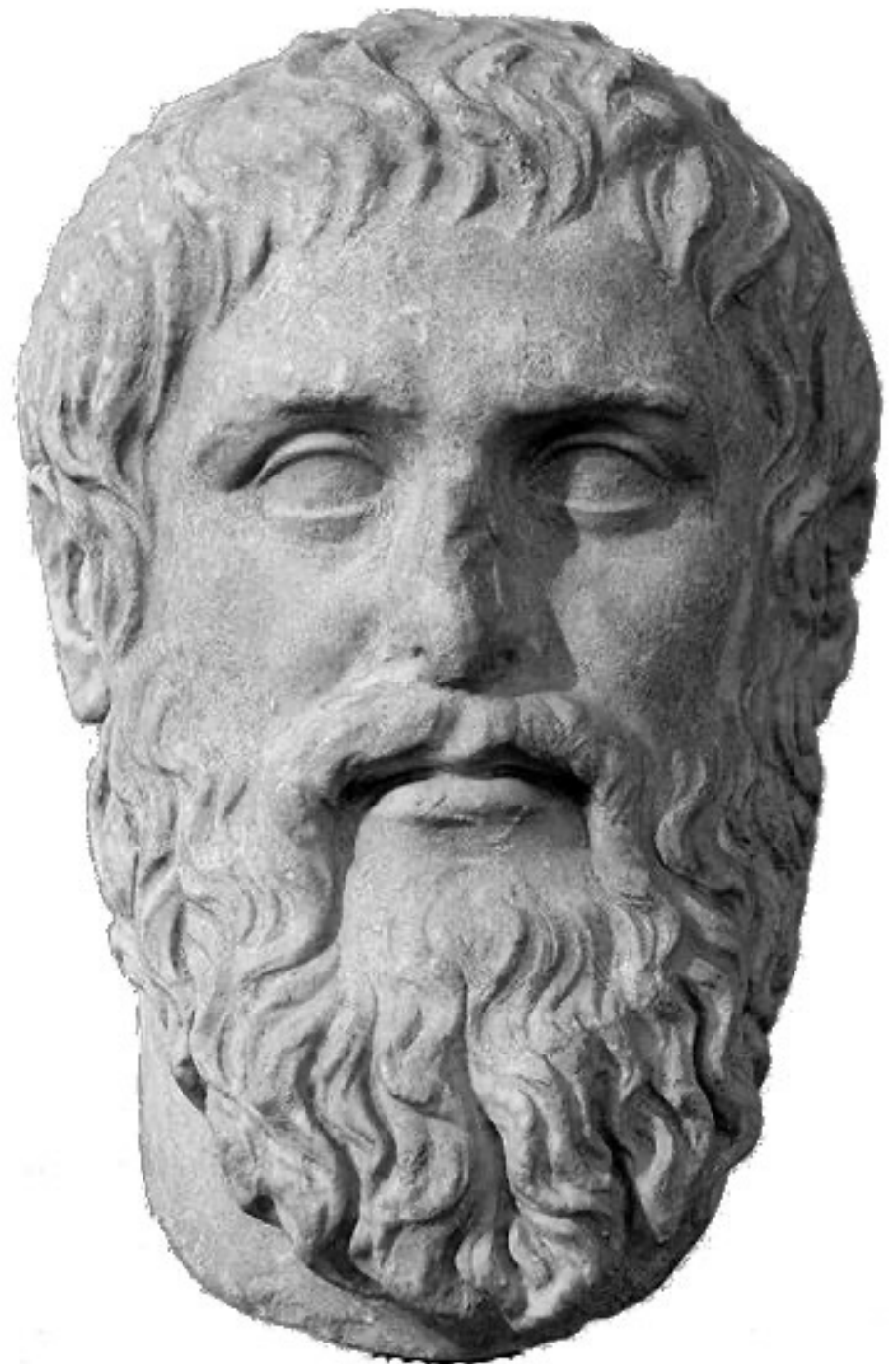
**Keywords:**

DUALITY

DOUBLE BIND

DEFAMILIARIZATION

**Plato (427–347 B.C.E.)**



**The allegory has three scenes:**

the inside of the cave

the escape to the outside

the return to the cave

# Plato's Cave



From Great Dialogues of Plato (Warmington and Rouse, eds.) New York, Signet Classics: 1999. p. 316.



The **first contradiction**: Plato rails against stories philosophically yet relies heavily on them rhetorically to get his ideas across.

Discussion Questions  
Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*

- 1) Plato suggests that all people are metaphorical cave-dwellers, are prisoners of some sort. What things imprison us?
  
- 2) Why might individuals prefer the comfort of known falsehoods to the uncertainty of new truths? How does Plato show that ignorance or prejudice predisposes one to reject reality? Can you think of an example in contemporary society?
  
- 3) Why does Plato believe that philosophers are best suited to govern?
  
- 4) How does the allegory address the tension between the pursuit of personal enlightenment and societal responsibility?

### Question 3

”And so our city will be managed wide awake for us and for you, not in a dream, as most are now, by people fighting together for shadows, and quarrelling to be rulers, as if that were a great good. But the truth is more or less that the **city where those who are to rule are least anxious to be rulers is of necessity best managed and has least faction in it; while the city which gets rulers who want it most is worst managed.**”

## Question 4

“Then it is the task of us founders to compel the best natures to attain that learning which we said was the greatest, both to see the good, and to ascend that ascent; and when they have ascended and properly seen , we must never allow them ....to stay there and not be willing to descend again to those prisoners, and to share their troubles and their honors, whether they are worth having or not.”

# TRIPARTITE SOUL



RATIONAL | LOGICAL

*Seeks truth and is swayed by facts and arguments*

SPIRITED | EMOTIONAL

*How feelings fuel your actions*

APPETITIVE | PHYSICAL DESIRES

*Drives you to eat, have sex, and protect yourself*



Skeletal remains, with iron shackles on their wrists, are laid in a row at the ancient Falyron Delta cemetery in Athens, Greece, July 27, 2016. At least 80 skeletons lie in the mass grave. (Alkis Konstantinidis/Reuters)



*The Emperor's New Groove* (Mark Dindal, Roger Allers, 2000)

I use it in class to illustrate to my students how conflicted we are as human beings, simultaneously pulled in opposite directions by our motivations and desires, and how working through and negotiating these conflicts becomes the premise of any critical thinking act.



# “Call My Name” Tour, April 2024

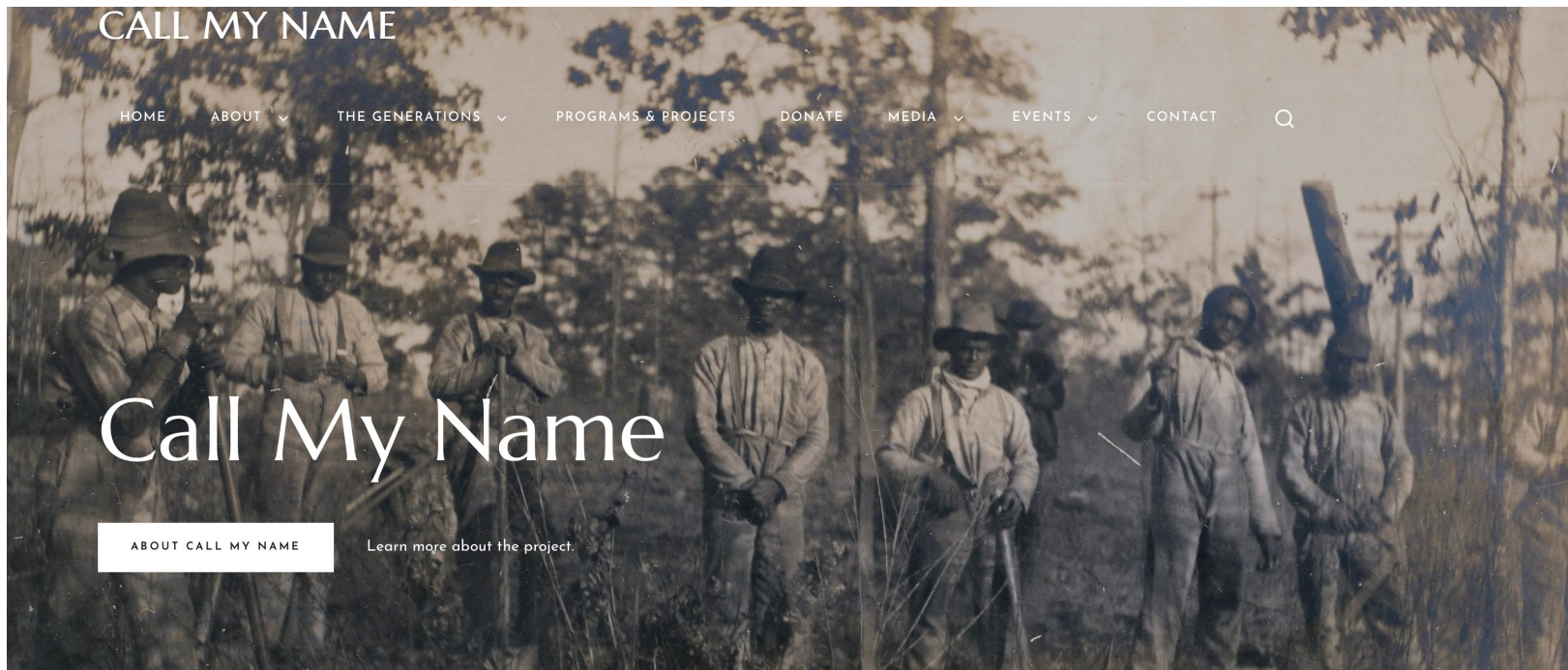


Photos: Gabriela Stoicea, Lucian Ghita

## Paper Prompt:

Write a 400-word reflection paper on your *Call My Name* tour experience. The objective of this assignment is to reflect on your tour experience and analyze how it deepened your understanding of the African American experience at Clemson and of the university community more broadly.

<https://callmyname.org>

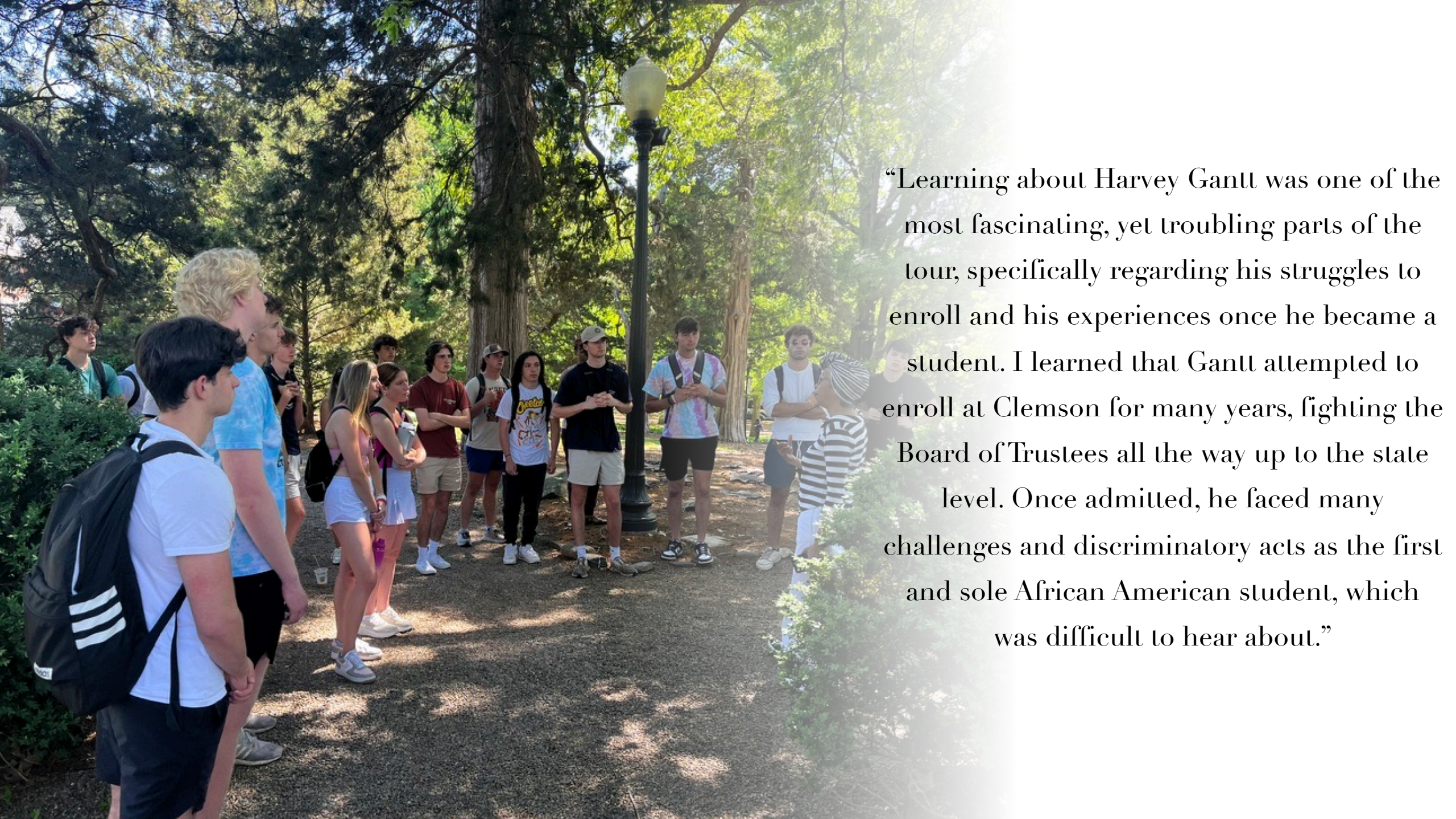


# STUDENT REFLECTIONS “CALL MY NAME” CAMPUS TOUR

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“Personally, I found that the tour was very beneficial in further solidifying my thoughts on how racism is systematically intertwined with Clemson University. Even though much of the tour was about the past, there are still elements of this history on campus. From the renaming of Old Main into Tillman Hall to the plantation house in the middle of campus, Clemson’s dark history looms in plain sight. As a white student here, I can not imagine how the names of buildings or statues impact black students, but I can try.”





“Learning about Harvey Gantt was one of the most fascinating, yet troubling parts of the tour, specifically regarding his struggles to enroll and his experiences once he became a student. I learned that Gantt attempted to enroll at Clemson for many years, fighting the Board of Trustees all the way up to the state level. Once admitted, he faced many challenges and discriminatory acts as the first and sole African American student, which was difficult to hear about.”



“Winston Churchill once said, "History is written by the victors." The Call My Name tours on Clemson Campus are working to bring the previously buried histories of campus to the present. The tour both exceeded my expectations and encouraged me to think deeper. Throughout the tour, we heard many stories about the people who made Clemson University what it is today. Clemson University was built using the labor of convicts. The prisoners sent to Clemson were mainly African American because the people in charge of constructing the school did not want white convicts to be seen working next to African American convicts. A fact that stuck out to me was the ages of the prisoners who were forced to work on buildings.”

What reading in your discipline have you found crucial for teaching critical thinking skills to your students and why?

(group discussion, 3 minutes)