THE STUDENT SUBSCRIPTION SERIES 2015/16

INCLUDING
Disgraced, Another Word for Beauty, Carlyle, and The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window

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SPECIAL THANKS | The casts and crews of Disgraced, A Christmas Carol, Another Word for Beauty, Carlyle, and The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window, the Goodman Theatre Development Department, and FedEx.

This study guide is published by Goodman Theatre’s Education and Community Engagement Department for participants in the Student Subscription Series.

For more information related to Disgraced, A Christmas Carol, Another Word for Beauty, Carlyle and The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window, activities, lesson plans and resources, please visit the Goodman’s Education website at: www.goodmantheatre.org/engage-learn
Introduction to the Study Guide

BY WILLA J. TAYLOR

Have you ever thought about who you are? It is one of the big existential questions that we as humans grapple with. Are you you because of the body you’re in or because of how/what you think? Are you defined only by how you see yourself or how others perceive you? What roles do culture and race and class play in shaping your self-knowledge? Geography and nationality? Do you change with every experience you have or are you essentially the same person your entire life?

Who you are is not just genetically predisposed and it is not primarily about the inherent form your body takes, although our bodies (and our attitudes about them) are integral to how we see ourselves. You are the result of multi-varied intricate processes.

There are many sides to how our identity is formed, whether it is a mirror-image of how others perceive us, a social learning process, or merely an understanding of self through the understanding of the world around us. We are influenced by our culture, race, class, environment, the people we know, how strangers respond to us, the experiences we have – both good and bad.

Our identity acts as a guide, a compass in our lives. Identity helps situate each of us into society. It influences the friends we have, who we marry or live with, and the communities and groups to which we relate and belong.

Identity is formed by both elements of personal choice and the attitudes and influence of others.

Factors like social class, ethnicity and gender influence how others see us, sometimes boxing us into stereotyped notions of who we are/should be, regardless of how we identify and see ourselves.

Sociologists, psychologists, philosophers all have developed theories on the how’s and why’s of how we get to be who we are. Some assert that an individual’s identity is formed through the eyes of others, that we can only define ourselves in the way that others define us. Others posit that identity formation is a two-stage process of social learning: the primary socialization taking place as we learn from our family or those around us when we are children. The second phase takes place as we learn to take these early first lessons and abstract them to the larger world. Still another theory suggests that identity formation happens as we understand the histories and biographies of our society, and how we place ourselves along that continuum and situate ourselves in our own time.

Who we are, how we each define who we are – what we like, what we believe in, what we are willing to fight for – is a complex journey that takes a lifetime. It is the sum of all the living we do. In the plays of this season’s Student Subscription Series, we will explore how all these influences – socialization, race and gender, our choices, others’ expectations and assumptions – impact who we are, how we understand ourselves and the world around us, and how we respond when our ideas of self are challenged or distorted.

With our season opener, Disgraced, we’ll explore how culture and tradition impact a character’s self-determined identity. In Another Word for Beauty, we’ll look at what the social construction of “beauty” means in determining women’s ideas of who they are, and how the gendered notions of behavior and looks help determine who they can become. With The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window, we’ll examine how our sense of self can be lost and reconstructed. And in Carlyle, we’ll face racial stereotypes – both in politics and in society as a whole - and explore exactly how much free choice can play in determining for ourselves who we are.

I am looking forward to the discussions we’ll have.
What’s so special about seeing a play? A bunch of people walk into a room full of seats, settle in with their popcorn and watch some form of entertainment. We see this all the time. It’s just the same as going to the movies or heading out to see a football game, right? Who wants to sit in the dark and watch some silly people play pretend?

More people than you might think.

Theater is one of the first forms of artistic expression known to man, and throughout the years, it has played and continues to play a vital role in many civilizations. People have entrusted it to do everything from preserving their cultures to providing entertainment to inspiring social change. However, despite the various ways people utilize the story-telling power of the theater, every production has two elements essential to performance and the uniqueness therein.

The first aspect of the theater that makes it such a unique art form is that its occurrence depends on you being there. Yes, you! Every person who enters a theater to watch a show sits in one of many seats that collectively form an audience. You, then, as an audience member become a part of a larger group, which affects the way you respond to the action onstage. You might laugh louder or hold your silence longer because the people around you are doing so as well. Due to the variety of responses audiences can have, each audience that sees the show inherently becomes a part of the performance, making each night a new and spectacular event!

How an audience decides to respond impacts how all people in the room interpret the experience. This does not exclude actors. Though they work for weeks rehearsing, a great actor knows the importance of responding to situations in the moment, and his interpretation of the play may differ vastly every night depending on audience responses. All in all, you, as an audience member play as big a part in a theatrical experience as does anybody else in the space.

This leads to the second aspect of theater that sets it apart from any other form of art. It is common knowledge that art can present a mirror-like representation of the world in which we live. For instance, a painting of a bowl of fruit is a representation of an actual bowl of fruit, just as a sculpture of a bear is a representation of an actual bear. However, it is only in the theater that people get living, breathing interpretations of life. For in representing a man onstage, an actual man exists there simultaneously: an actor who might bike home and make himself dinner after his performance. The dual consciousness that emerges allows the audience to align what is happening onstage more closely with reality; for the things that this “representation of man” is doing onstage, he could also do in reality. In fact, he is doing it in reality, only on a stage.

These are just two of the reasons that theater remains such a resonating art form today. It is as unique an experience for the audience as it is for those who prepare it. However, judging by how long the theater has been around, isn’t it probable to assume that it has much more to offer than simply those two experiences?

The Purposes of Theater

One of the earliest known functions of performance is what is now known as “sympathetic magic,” which describes the phenomenon of acting out certain events in the hopes that they will come to fruition. As early as 2500 BC, men would perform ritualistic ceremonies depicting themselves hunting or battling, hoping that the gods would help them succeed.

Another purpose of theater arose in 600 BC, at an ancient Greek festival known as the City Dionysia. This giant celebration honored their god Dionysus, the god of wine, revelry, and religious ecstasy. The main event consisted of competitive performances of plays. They were not usually original works, but rather based on the legends and stories very familiar to Greek audiences. One of the most famous winning plays was Aeschylus’ trilogy the Oresteia, written in 458 BC. It tells the story of Orestes, the son of King Agamemnon and Queen Clytaemnestra, and the tragic downfall of their family. Since Agamemnon has been at war, Clytaemnestra has taken up an affair with Agamemnon’s cousin, Aegisthus, and is plotting to kill him for power over Argos. At the end of Agamemnon, the first play of the trilogy, Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus successfully murder Agamemnon to the rebuke of the Chorus, who claim that Agamemnon’s son, Orestes, will avenge him. In the second play, The Libation Bearers, Orestes murders his mother, Clytaemnestra,
in retaliation for her assault on his father. In the last play, The Eumenides, the Greek goddesses devoted to avenging patricide and matricide (also known as the Furies) hunt Orestes for his crime, continuing the cycle of retribution established by the previous murders. This situation is resolved with a trial featuring the god Apollo as Orestes’ council and Athena, the goddess of wisdom, as judge. After each side presents their case for or against the death of Orestes, Athena chooses to acquit him, passing judgment on one of the first displays of democracy, the governmental theory for which Greece would become famous. This play is just one example of the preservation of Ancient Greek culture and philosophical advancement. The Greeks used the theater as a way to maintain not only their stories and culture, but also the legacy of their greatness. While some of the most famous Greek tragedies are still performed today, the traditions of mask-wearing and male-only casts have not transitioned as easily to modern times. However, there are some cultural forms of theater, such as Japanese Kabuki Theater, that remain as popular today as when they were created. The highly stylized Kabuki Theater was born in 1603 and has been a constant reminder to the Japanese people of their cultural history.

Both the City Dionysia and Kabuki Theater, in addition to preserving history and culture, are early instances of theater as entertainment. Human beings have the inherent desire to tell stories and to hear and see stories performed. Stories enable people to use their imaginations to create and experience new worlds. These worlds allow people to observe, learn about and judge human behaviors, cultures and histories—whether they’re realistic or not. When seen merely as entertainment, however, theater is stripped of its inherent power of influence. This leads to yet another purpose of theater: the ability to instigate social change. People love to be entertained, and as we have seen, the theater is a perfect place for people to be entertained, making it an effective means of connecting with large amounts of people.

The worlds created in plays may be close representations of the real world or far from it, and every world has a different set of values. For instance, in A Christmas Carol, a person obtains power by having money, whereas in our world, one might say that a person obtains power by establishing good connections. The comparison between the two worlds challenges the audience to judge, based on the events of the play, whether the world of the play is better or worse than the world in which we live. Seeing a show will give you the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>600 BC</td>
<td>The Greek Chorus emerges, establishing the beginnings of classical theater, in which a group of actors tell a story to an audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>534 BC</td>
<td>Introducing elements such as masks, costumes, speeches, and prologues, the Greek dramatist Thespis creates the skeleton of drama, the tragedy. Most importantly, he sets an individual man apart from the chorus; their interactions creating dramatic tension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>449 BC</td>
<td>City Dionysia competitions begin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>365 BC</td>
<td>Romans begin to stage their own productions based on those of the Greeks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>335 BC</td>
<td>Aristotle writes The Poetics, in which he outlines the standards and elements of tragedy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>246 BC</td>
<td>The Great Wall of China is built.</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 AD</td>
<td>The Colosseum is built in Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>Christians speak out against the theater because of its pagan ritualistic origins. However, this is also the year of the earliest recorded religious plays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>618</td>
<td>Theatrical performance develops in China. On the stage, actors are placed in a chalk circle on the ground, and relay stories through dance, song and comic pantomime.</td>
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<tr>
<td>692</td>
<td>The Christian Church passes a resolution that forbids all theatrical performances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>925</td>
<td>Christian depictions of saints and martyrs are seen in miracle plays, solidifying religious drama.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1250</td>
<td>German drama emerges.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1325</td>
<td>The Japanese develop Noh theater.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1375</td>
<td>The first known English plays are written.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>Mystery and morality plays become popular among Christians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1490</td>
<td>Spanish drama begins to develop.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Commedia dell’arte first becomes popular in Italy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1548</td>
<td>The first permanent theater in Paris, the Hotel de Bourgogne, is built; it will eventually become the Comedie Francaise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1558</td>
<td>Queen Elizabeth I forbids religious drama, which results in an overflow of religious drama.</td>
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opportunity to consider: would you want to live in the world you saw represented?

Depending upon your answer, you may find a certain amount of social responsibility placed upon you; all stories are told with purpose. If the world you see onstage is not one you would want to live in, but you see striking similarities between it and the real world, what are you going to do about it?

Plays have inspired the same question in individuals throughout history, urging audience members to not only be conscious of the society they live in, but to combat the injustices represented in the plays they see. The development of Harlem Renaissance Theater, for instance, helped bring to light and fight inequalities African Americans faced in the post-Civil War era. Many white people based their opinions of black people on stage representations known as black

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THEATER: A GLOSSARY

**Chorus**: A group of costumed men who would sing and dance in praise of Dionysus, the god of fertility and wine. Eventually they created lines of text to speak as a group.

**Kabuki Theater**: Using elaborate makeup and costume, male actors are trained in traditional Buddhist and popular contemporary dance forms that reflect the culture of the common people.

**Interregnum**: Period of time (1642-1660) in which the Puritans take over parliament and rule without a monarch. It is initiated by the beheading of King Charles I.

**City Dionysia**: A celebratory event at which playwrights would enter their plays to be performed for Greek citizens.

**Restoration**: In the year 1660, the monarchy is restored with King Charles I’s son, King Charles II. He challenges his people’s resistance by erecting a statue of his previously beheaded father in Trafalgar Square.

**Mystery Play**: Depicts biblical episodes.

**Morality Play**: Depicts moral struggles of humans in the world.

**Noh**: A Japanese style of theater in which actors use stylized dance and elaborate masks to portray well known tales.

**Peking Opera**: A form of theater that requires very little in set and props, but uses elaborate costumes. Males from very early ages study the stylized movements accompanied by string and percussion instruments.

**Commedia dell’arte**: An improvisational performance that uses stock characters and comic story arcs.

**National Endowment for the Arts**: A nongovernmental organization dedicated to awarding grants to individuals and communities in support of artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation.

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1599: The Globe Theater is built in London
1600: Japanese Kabuki Theater is developed.
1615: Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes publishes a collection of plays.
1642: Interregnum: English puritans overthrow the monarchy and close the theaters.
1660: Restoration: London theaters are reopened.
1660: Actresses are permitted in theaters to play female roles.
1680: The Comedie Francaise is opened; it is the world’s first national theater.
1737: The Licensing Act in Britain submits all plays to censorship.
1774: The Continental Congress bans plays in America.
1800: Peking Opera takes over the Chinese theatrical sphere.
1861: The American Civil War begins.
1881: Richard D’Oyly Cartre builds the Savoy Theatre in London, the first theater to be lit solely by electricity.
1895: The Moscow Art Theater opens in Russia.
1925: The height of the Harlem Renaissance, a distinctive African-American cultural movement in which African American theater flourished.
1934: Konstantin Stanislavski finishes the Stanislavski system, a technique designed to aid actors in stimulating emotions and reactions in real time.
1947: First Tony Awards
1961: Martin Esselin writes an article terming The Theater of the Absurd, a movement of playwriting that embraces the idea that life is purposeless.
1965: National Endowment for the Arts established.
1968: Censorship is revoked in British theater, launching a surge of alternative theater with topics like politics, feminism, and gay culture.
1993: The United States Supreme Court rules in favor of performance artist Karen Finley in National Endowment for the Arts v. Finley, stating that the NEA must judge grant applications solely by artistic excellence, not by subject matter.
minstrelsy – a form of mimicry that founded many racist stereotypes popular during the early half of the 20th century. During the Harlem Renaissance, African American playwrights wrote plays that detailed the everyday realities of their people, debunking many of those stereotypes and challenging viewers to treat African Americans with respect and dignity.

In short, the theater has played and continues to play a multi-faceted role in society today, making it a useful tool for addressing a wide range of issues.

How It Can Be Produced
Congratulations! You have just been hired as the new producer at Goodman Theatre. This job requires a multiplicity of steps that you’ll need a whole team to complete. Not to worry; this list of steps will ensure that your experience putting up your first play goes as smoothly as possible.

Elements of a Production

Step 1: Choose a play.

Step 2: Hire a director.
A director establishes a vision for how the show will be interpreted and how all the elements of the production will come together to reflect his or her interpretation.

Step 3: Find a stage management team.
Stage managers are essential to the play-making process. They are in charge of keeping track of all the details and decisions the director and the designers make about the show, whether that be writing rehearsal reports, keeping meetings running smoothly, or managing where all people are supposed to be when. They are also in charge of calling all the cues for technical changes (sound, lighting, and video cues) during the show and maintaining the show after the director has finished their job on opening night.

Step 4: Work with designers.
There are many designers with whom a director must work to assemble the aesthetic they are looking to produce onstage: a costume designer, set designer, lighting designer, sound and video designers, and properties managers. Each designer contributes an essential element to the stage to create the right atmosphere of the world that will be represented.

Step 5: Find your actors.
The director works with their stage manager and potentially a casting director to schedule auditions at which they will see a number of actors read segments of lines from the script known as sides. The director then casts who they consider to be the best actor for each part.

Step 6: Rehearse.
Once all the parts have been assigned, the director can begin molding the actors, working with them to create the world of the play by better understanding their role and the script. Earlier rehearsals usually consist of read-throughs of the play, followed by a discussion of each character’s function and dynamic within that world, each objective, and point of view. These discussions help the actors identify with their characters. After this, the director adds blocking, which, combined with the text, is rehearsed over and over again until memorized by the actors. Layer that with the character work the
actors have done, and much of the performance on behalf of the actors is prepared!

**Step 7: Technical rehearsals.**
Usually the last week of rehearsals is when all elements of the production are combined. By this time, the set is completed and installed onstage, the lights are hung, and the sound and video cues obtained. The director will schedule a technical rehearsal at which the lighting, sound, and video crew will program and set the intensity levels of all their cues. Then, the actors are added. At this point, the levels are checked with the performers in the space to assure that the audience is able to focus on the right plot points and areas of the stage throughout the show.

**Step 8: Dress rehearsals and previews.**
During these rehearsals and performances, the show is run the entire way through without stops. During previews, this is done in front of an audience. The performances are meant to train the actors and stage hands how to respond when something goes awry during a performance, i.e. a costume rips, one of the lights goes out, an actor forgets a line, etc. As it is commonly said in show business, “The show must go on!” Previews also allow a director to see how an audience reacts to the production and what small changes may need to be made. After these performances, the director will give notes to his actors, crew and stagehands, and the show is ready to open!

**Step 9: Opening night and show time!**
This year’s *A Christmas Carol* will be the 38th rendition that the Goodman has produced to date. While many different combinations of directors, actors, costumes, sets, etc. have filtered through this Goodman tradition, the process of putting it up remains relatively the same. Despite popular belief, the standard production process is not the only way to produce a show. There are a wide range of techniques people use to develop a performance without the use of a written script.

**Improvised Performances**

Improvised performances have actors make up characters, scenes, and plotlines in the moment, without the use or prior knowledge of a script. Often, there is no director or producer, but rather an ensemble of actors who come together and create a spontaneous performance.

This form of theater has roots in two places: *commedia dell’arte* and the work of Viola Spolin. *Commedia dell’arte* is an Italian form of theater popularized by 18th century traveling actors. It relied on stock types, characters with set features and trajectories and an established plotline to communicate a story to its audience. However, much of the specific lines the actors said to each other were improvised.

Born in 1906, Viola Spolin is widely considered to be the creator of improvisation for the theater. Using original theater games to push actors to respond to situations in the moment, Viola developed a technique that allowed actors the ability to create plays using only their minds and situational awareness. In a 1987 interview now posted on YouTube, Viola stated that “the treasure house of the individual is inexhaustible; absolutely inexhaustible. [Out of the games comes intuition, which is] beyond the intellect; it is an ‘X’ area, an unknown, and that’s where you’re going to find new things – in the unknown. The moment the unknown is touched it becomes something known... [something that] comes out of an intuition.”

### PRODUCING A PLAY: A GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blocking</strong></td>
<td>The staged movement of an actor onstage.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Costume Designer</strong></td>
<td>Person in charge of designing the clothes for the actors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cue</strong></td>
<td>A point in the show at which there will be a shift in the sound, lighting, or video design.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Director</strong></td>
<td>Person in charge of communicating and guiding their interpretation of the show.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lighting Designer</strong></td>
<td>Person in charge of designing the lighting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Producer</strong></td>
<td>Person who oversees logistics of all manners regarding the production, gathers the creative team and ensures all decisions they make come to fruition.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Read-Through</strong></td>
<td>A seated reading of a play with all players present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sides</strong></td>
<td>Short snippets of text from a play used for auditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sound Designer</strong></td>
<td>Person in charge of collecting audio recordings or creating sound affects for the show.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Manager</strong></td>
<td>Person in charge of keeping records of how the show is progressing and what else needs to be done.</td>
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Having used her children as guinea pigs for her experimental theater games, she transferred the power of improvisation to them. One of her sons, Paul Sills, eventually became a founder of Chicago’s The Second City, the most well-known improvisational theater company in the United States. Throughout the years, The Second City has trained and supported numerous talented individuals using Spolin’s techniques. They have encouraged the growth of actors, sketch writers and directors, producing such sensations as John Belushi, Gilda Radner and Tina Fey.

Spolin and Sills sowed the seeds of improv culture in Chicago, where it has flourished over the course of a century and pioneered other great improv houses like the internationally acclaimed iO. Today hundreds of improv troupes exist all over the city!

**Devised Performances**

Devised theater is another kind of production orchestrated without a pre-written script. In a devised performance, an ensemble comes together to create a script based on collaborative improvisation and discussions around the improvised scenes. Some forms of devised work incorporate real life events into their pieces, collecting story in the form of interviews, news reports, personal narratives, etc. This technique is commonly known as “documentary theater.” Together, they find common threads and themes in their work, highlighting interesting moments they hope to see in the final performance. These partial scenes are developed further to create more or less fixed plot lines and characters.
Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference
BY AUDRE LORDE

Paper delivered at the Copeland Colloquium, Amherst College, April 1980

Reproduced in: Sister Outsider, Crossing Press, California 1984

Much of Western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior. In a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, there must always be some group of people who, through systematized oppression, can be made to feel surplus, to occupy the place of the dehumanized inferior. Within this society, that group is made up of Black and Third World people, working-class people, older people, and women.

As a forty-nine-year-old Black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two, including one boy, and a member of an inter-racial couple, I usually find myself a part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong. Traditionally, in American society, it is the members of oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor. For in order to survive, those of us for whom oppression is as American as apple pie have always had to be watchers, to become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of pro-tection. Whenever the need for some pretense of communica-tion arises, those who profit from our oppression call upon us to share our knowledge with them. In other words, it is the responsi-bility of the oppressed to teach the oppressors their mistakes. I am responsible for educating teachers who dismiss my children’s culture in school. Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions. There is a con-stant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future.

Institutionalized rejection of difference is an absolute necessity in a profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people. As members of such an economy, we have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is domi-nant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals. As a result, those differences have been misnamed and misused in the service of separation and confusion.

Certainly there are very real differences between us of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those dif-ferences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation.

Racism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance. Sexism, the belief in the in-herent superiority of one sex over the other and thereby the right to dominance. Ageism. Heterosexism. Elitism. Classism.

It is a lifetime pursuit for each one of us to extract these distor-tions from our living at the same time as we recognize, reclaim, and define those differences upon which they are imposed. For we have all been raised in a society where those distortions were endemic within our living. Too often, we pour the energy need-ed for recognizing and exploring difference into pretending those differences are insurmountable barriers, or that they do not exist at all. This results in a voluntary isolation, or false and treacherous connections. Either way, we do not develop tools for using human difference as a springboard for creative change within our lives. We speak not of human difference, but of human deviance.

Somewhere, on the edge of consciousness, there is what I call
a mythical norm, which each one of us within our hearts knows “that is not me.” In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society. Those of us who stand outside that power often identify one way in which we are different, and we assume that to be the primary cause of all oppression, forgetting other distortions around difference, some of which we ourselves may be practising. By and large within the women’s movement today, white women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class, and age. There is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist.

Unacknowledged class differences rob women of each others’ energy and creative insight. Recently a women’s magazine collective made the decision for one issue to print only prose, saying poetry was a less “rigorous” or “serious” art form. Yet even the form our creativity takes is often a class issue. Of all the art forms, poetry is the most economical. It is the one which is the most secret, which requires the least physical labor, the least material, and the one which can be done between shifts, in the hospital pantry, on the subway, and on scraps of surplus paper. Over the last few years, writing a novel on tight finances, I came to appreciate the enormous differences in the material demands between poetry and prose. As we reclaim our literature, poetry has been the major voice of poor, working class, and Colored women. A room of one’s own may be a necessity for writing prose, but so are reams of paper, a typewriter, and plenty of time. The actual requirements to produce the visual arts also help determine, along class lines, whose art is whose. In this day of inflated prices for material, who are our sculptors, our painters, our photographers? When we speak of a broadly based women’s culture, we need to be aware of the effect of class and economic differences on the supplies available for producing art.

As we move toward creating a society within which we can each flourish, ageism is another distortion of relationship which interferes without vision. By ignoring the past, we are encouraged to repeat its mistakes. The “generation gap” is an important social tool for any repressive society. If the younger members of a community view the older members as contemptible or suspect or excess, they will never be able to join hands and examine the living memories of the community, nor ask the all important question, “Why?” This gives rise to a historical amnesia that keeps us working to invent the wheel every time we have to go to the store for bread.

We find ourselves having to repeat and relearn the same old lessons over and over that our mothers did because we do not pass on what we have learned, or because we are unable to listen. For instance, how many times has this all been said before? For another, who would have believed that once again our daughters are allowing their bodies to be hampered and purgatoried by girdles and high heels and hobble skirts?

Ignoring the differences of race between women and the implications of those differences presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women’s joint power.

As white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define woman in terms of their own experience alone, then women of Color become “other,” the outsider whose experience and tradition is too “alien” to comprehend. An example of this is the signal absence of the experience of women of Color as a resource for women’s studies courses. The literature of women of Color is seldom included in women’s literature courses and almost never in other literature courses, nor in women’s studies as a whole. All too often, the excuse given is that the literatures of women of Color can only be taught by Colored women, or that they are too difficult to understand, or that classes
cannot “get into” them because they come out of experiences that are “too different.” I have heard this argument presented by white women of otherwise quite clear intelligence, women who seem to have no trouble at all teaching and reviewing work that comes out of the vastly different experiences of Shakespeare, Moliere, Dostoyefsky, and Aristophanes. Surely there must be some other explanation.

This is a very complex question, but I believe one of the reasons white women have such difficulty reading Black women’s work is because of their reluctance to see Black women as women and different from themselves. To examine Black women’s literature effectively requires that we be seen as whole people in our actual complexities — as individuals, as women, as human — rather than as one of those problematic but familiar stereotypes provided in this society in place of genuine images of Black women. And I believe this holds true for the literatures of other women of Color who are not Black.

The literatures of all women of Color recreate the textures of our lives, and many white women are heavily invested in ignoring the real differences. For as long as any difference between us means one of us must be inferior, then the recognition of any difference must be fraught with guilt. To allow women of Color to step out of stereotypes is too guilt provoking, for it threatens the complacency of those women who view oppression only in terms of sex. Refusing to recognize difference makes it impossible to see the different problems and pitfalls facing us as women.

Thus, in a patriarchal power system where whiteskin privilege is a major prop, the entrapments used to neutralize Black women and white women are not the same. For example, it is easy for Black women to be used by the power structure against Black men, not because they are men, but because they are Black. Therefore, for Black women, it is necessary at all times to separate the needs of the oppressor from our own legitimate conflicts within our communities. This same problem does not exist for white women. Black women and men have shared racist oppression and still share it, although in different ways. Out of that shared oppression we have developed joint defenses and joint vulnerabilities to each other that are not duplicated in the white community, with the exception of the relationship between Jewish women and Jewish men.

On the other hand, white women face the pitfall of being seduced into joining the oppressor under the pretense of sharing power. This possibility does not exist in the same way for women of Color. The tokenism that is sometimes extended to us is not an invitation to join power; our racial “otherness” is a visible reality that makes that quite clear. For white women there is a wider range of pretended choices and rewards for identifying with patriarchal power and its tools.

Today, with the defeat of ERA, the tightening economy, and increased conservatism, it is easier once again for white women to believe the dangerous fantasy that if you are good enough, pretty enough, sweet enough, quiet enough, teach the children to behave, hate the right people, and marry the right men, then you will be allowed to co-exist with patriarchy in relative peace, at least until a man needs your job or the neighborhood rapist happens along. And true, unless one lives and loves in the trenches it is difficult to remember that the war against dehumanization is ceaseless.

But Black women and our children know the fabric of our lives is stitched with violence and with hatred, that there is no rest. We do not deal with it only on the picket lines, or in dark midnight alleys, or in the places where we dare to verbalize our resistance. For us, increasingly, violence weaves through the daily tissues of our living — in the supermarket, in the classroom, in the elevator, in the clinic and the schoolyard, from the plumber, the baker, the saleswoman, the bus driver, the bank teller, the waitress who does not serve us.

Some problems we share as women, some we do not. You fear your children will grow up to join the patriarchy and testify against you, we fear our children will be dragged from a car and shot down in the street, and you will turn your backs upon the reasons they are dying. The threat of difference has been no less blinding to people of Color. Those of us who are Black must see that the reality of our lives and our struggle does not make us immune to the errors of ignoring and misnaming difference. Within Black communities where racism is a living reality, differences
among us often seem dangerous and suspect. The need for unity is often misnamed as a need for homogeneity, and a Black feminist vision mistaken for betrayal of our common interests as a people. Because of the continuous battle against racial erasure that Black women and Black men share, some Black women still refuse to recognize that we are also oppressed as women, and that sexual hostility against Black women is practiced not only by the white racist society, but implemented within our Black communities as well. It is a disease striking the heart of Black nationhood, and silence will not make it disappear. Exacerbated by racism and the pressures of powerlessness, violence against Black women and children often becomes a standard within our communities, one by which manliness can be measured. But these woman-hating acts are rarely discussed as crimes against Black women.

As a group, women of Color are the lowest paid wage earners in America. We are the primary targets of abortion and sterilization abuse, here and abroad. In certain parts of Africa, small girls are still being sewed shut between their legs to keep them docile and for men’s pleasure. This is known as female circumcision, and it is not a cultural affair as the late Jomo Kenyatta insisted, it is a crime against Black women.

Black women’s literature is full of the pain of frequent assault, not only by a racist patriarchy, but also by Black men. Yet the necessity for and history of shared battle have made us, Black women, particularly vulnerable to the false accusation that anti-sexist is anti-Black. Meanwhile, womanhating as a recourse of the powerless is sapping strength from Black communities, and our very lives. Rape is on the increase, reported and unreported, and rape is not aggressive sexuality, it is sexualized aggression. As Kalamu ya Salaam, a Black male writer points out, “As long as male domination exists, rape will exist. Only women revolting and men made conscious of their responsibility to fight sexism can collectively stop rape.”

Differences between ourselves as Black women are also being misnamed and used to separate us from one another. As a Black lesbian feminist comfortable with the many different ingredients of my identity, and a woman committed to racial and sexual freedom from oppression, I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self. But this is a destructive and fragmenting way to live. My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves, without the restrictions of externally imposed definition. Only then can I bring myself and my energies as a whole to the service of those struggles which I embrace as part of my living.

A fear of lesbians, or of being accused of being a lesbian, has led many Black women into testifying against themselves. It has led some of us into destructive alliances, and others into despair and isolation. In the white women’s communities, heterosexism is sometimes a result of identifying with the white patriarchy, a rejection of that interdependence between women-identified women which allows the self to be, rather than to be used in the service of men. Sometimes it reflects a die-hard belief in the protective coloration of heterosexual relationships, sometimes a self-hate which all women have to fight against, taught us from birth.

Although elements of these attitudes exist for all women, there are particular resonances of heterosexism and homophobia among Black women. Despite the fact that woman-bonding has a long and honorable history in the African and African-American communities, and despite the knowledge and accomplishments of many strong and creative women-identified Black women in the political, social and cultural fields, heterosexual Black women often tend to ignore or discount the existence and work of Black lesbians. Part of this attitude has come from an understandable terror of Black male attack within the close confines of Black society, where the punishment for any female self-assertion is still to be accused of being a lesbian and therefore unworthy of the attention or support of the scarce Black male. But part of this need to misname and ignore Black lesbians comes from a very real fear that openly women-identified Black women who are no longer dependent upon men for their self-definition may well reorder
our whole concept of social relationships.

Black women who once insisted that lesbianism was a white woman’s problem now insist that Black lesbians are a threat to Black nationhood, are consorting with the enemy, are basically un-Black. These accusations, coming from the very women to whom we look for deep and real understanding, have served to keep many Black lesbians in hiding, caught between the racism of white women and the homophobia of their sisters. Often, their work has been ignored, trivialized, or misnamed, as with the work of Angelina Grimke, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Lorraine Hansberry. Yet women-bonded women have always been some part of the power of Black communities, from our unmarried aunts to the amazons of Dahomey.

And it is certainly not Black lesbians who are assaulting women and raping children and grandmothers on the streets of our communities.

Across this country, as in Boston during the spring of 1979 following the unsolved murders of twelve Black women, Black lesbians are spearheading movements against violence against Black women.

What are the particular details within each of our lives that can be scrutinized and altered to help bring about change? How do we redefine difference for all women? It is not our differences which separate women, but our reluctance to recognize those differences and to deal effectively with the distortions which have resulted from the ignoring and misnaming of those differences.

As a tool of social control, women have been encouraged to recognize only one area of human difference as legitimate, those differences which exist between women and men. And we have learned to deal across those differences with the urgency of all oppressed subordinates. All of us have had to learn to live or work or coexist with men, from our fathers on. We have recognized and negotiated these differences, even when this recognition only continued the old dominant/subordinate mode of human relationship; where the oppressed must recognize the masters’ difference in order to survive.

But our future survival is predicated upon our ability to relate within equality. As women, we must root out internalized pat¬terns of oppression within ourselves if we are to move beyond the most superficial aspects of social change. Now we must recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise ways to use each others’ dif¬ference to enrich our visions and our joint struggles. The future of our earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference. The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old pat¬terns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamen¬tation, and suspicion.

For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.

As Paulo Freire shows so well in The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors’ tactics, the op¬pressors’ relationships.

Change means growth, and growth can be painful. But we sharpen self-definition by exposing the self in work and struggle together with those whom we define as different from ourselves, although sharing the same goals. For Black and white, old and young, lesbian and heterosexual women alike, this can mean new paths to our survival.

We have chosen each other and the edge of each others battles the war is the same if we lose someday women’s blood will congeal upon a dead planet if we win there is no telling we seek beyond history for a new and more possible meeting.
Stories, Stereotypes, and the Ethics of Representation
BY BOBBY BIEDRZYCKI

Stories are one of the most essential forms of human communication. The art and media people consume is full of them. They are told to people on television screens and in movies, on stages and over the internet. Most stories people consume are center around human characters, which means they are full of representations. Media representations are the ways in which the media portrays particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics. This means, that as people consume stories, people also consume representations. And these representations effect how they think and feel about particular groups of people. For example, if people are shown image after image of Black men being arrested, as we have been on many news broadcasts for many years, people will begin to associate Black men with criminality. This example is about as real as it gets, because even though data shows us that more violent crimes in the United States are actually committed by white people (The most recent 2012 figures from the Bureau of Justice show us that whites were arrested for over 275,000 violent crimes. While for blacks, the number was about 170,000), studies show us that most people still hold an unconscious bias connecting Black males to criminality. And many media and social scientists have linked this bias to media representations of Black men. Eventually this type of representation becomes a stereotype. In social psychology, a stereotype is a general thought adopted about specific types of groups and individuals. These thoughts or beliefs may or may not accurately reflect reality. In her now famous Ted Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story,” the writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns against building a single idea or story about any one type of people. She posits that, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”

A stereotype might begin as a thought, but they can have dire consequences when acted upon in the material world. Stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination have become intimately linked. These three behaviors inform and influence one another, and together they play a major role in upholding the racism built into our larger structural systems. While stereotypes are usually the expectations and beliefs we hold about people perceived as different from ourselves, prejudice is the emotional response we have to that difference, and discrimination refers to actions taken toward these individuals or groups. In many ways, the plays in our Student Subscription Series this year aim to complicate, if not completely break down many widely held stereotypes. The prisoners in Another Word for Beauty don’t exactly fit the narrative we are often given about incarcerated people. Carlyle is a play that aims to interrogate many of the stereotypes held about both black and white people from both major political parties. And one of the characters in The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window is a sex worker who both adheres to certain stereotypes while shattering others. Often times it can be tough to distinguish which came first, the chicken or the egg, the stereotype or the discrimination. For example, thinking about Disgraced, did a majority of people in the United States begin to perceive many Muslims as potential terrorists because of the stereotypes projected in U.S. media? Or, did the prejudices many people hold against Muslims drive storytellers to represent them in a certain way? It’s probably a little bit of both. But here’s what we know for sure: stories and images are powerful. The stories people tell, and the representations within those stories affect what people believe about folks who are different from them, and ultimately how they treat those people both personally, and at the systemic level through racist laws and policies. In cases of Islamophobia (the dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force), counter-arguments are often made that certain people of the Muslim faith have committed acts of violence, and that this pattern of violence justifies the basis for the discrimination and prejudice. But the facts show that people of many different faiths commit acts of violence, Christianity and Judaism included. So one might ask, why aren’t those faiths vilified in the same way Islam is? Well, one major difference is that the U.S. media chooses to represent those two faiths with much more volume and variance. And this is where the ethics of representation resides.
Remember the quote from above, “...the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” There are many different stories and representations of people from the Christian and Jewish faiths in our national media. But there are far fewer stories with or about Muslims. So the lens becomes myopic, and many people adopt a single story of what it might mean to be Muslim.

So who is telling these stories and creating these representations? The answer to this might be the most significant clue as to why this happens and how our society can begin to change it. The poet and civil rights activist Audre Lorde talks about something called “the mythical norm.” She writes about how instead of dealing with human difference—celebrating it, talking about it, learning to understand each other—we are instead grappling with the idea of deviance from the norm, that there’s this mythical idea in the United States that one type of human is “normal” and that most others are not. Lorde writes, “Somewhere, on the edge of consciousness there is what I call a mythical norm, which each one of us within our hearts knows ‘that is not me.’ In america, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, christian, and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society.” Her claim is that this particular group of people has been deemed normal, and that everyone else’s difference (or deviance) is rated against them. And it’s this notion of mythical normalcy that implies superiority for this group. It allows one group to think “I’m normal” and most others to think, “I’m different or not enough.” This is definitely reflected in the stories told in U.S. movies, here are some numbers from a recent study done by the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism that looked at the characters in the 100 top-grossing fictional films released in the United States from 2007-2014:

1) Our movies are white: 73.1 percent of all the speaking or named characters in the top 100 movies were white.

2) Our movies are straight: Only 19 total characters were lesbian, gay or bisexual — none were transgender.

3) Our movies are young: Only 19.9 percent of female characters were 40 to 64 years old.

4) Our movies are made by men: Only 1.9 percent of the movies were directed by women.

This last figure leads us to the deeper question of, who is allowed to tell stories in our country? As stated above, the majority of the movies made in the United States are written and directed by white men. The numbers shift very slightly from year-to-year, but a comprehensive study by the Hollywood Diversity Report from 2011 tells us that white men wrote 95 percent, and directed 88 percent, of the movies made in the United States that year. This is a pretty staggering number. It makes it easy to see why so many films are lacking diversity, or are full of misrepresentations. So what would happen if a more diverse set of storytellers acquired access to film equipment and stages and TV screens? It’s hard not to imagine that the types of stories being told would change. If racism is basically about power, and we know that stories are incredibly powerful, then it matters who tells these stories and how different people are represented within them.

As consumers:
What stories get told, and what stories get left out? And, what are our responsibilities as consumers of images and stories?

As subjects:
Who gets to tell our story? And, what impact do these representations have on our communities and our sense of self?

As creators:
What stories need to be told and how do we tell them? What control do we have and what consequences do we risk?
Visible
BY KHANISHA FOSTER

Cari Beauchamp’s glasses sit on top of her short curly brown hair. Her hands rotate around her face like she’s juggling volleyballs. Her voice has the scratch of Greta Garbo and the humor of Sally from The Dick Van Dyke Show. “If you don’t write your story, someone else will, and they’ll leave you out of it.”

The room’s reaction rocks from laughter, to a sigh of recognition, to the scribbling of 20 pens to write it down. Cari is the author of Without Lying Down: Frances Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood, a book dedicated to the histories of women in the film industry. She’s just screened her documentary on the same subject for our Stephens College MFA in TV and Screenwriting inaugural class. A program in and of itself that focuses on Women Screenwriters in Hollywood. Our class is made up of 17 women and 3 men. Many of us in the room came from undergraduate film programs that never mentioned the women in the book, or if they did followed it up with dismissive innuendoes.

It might be easy in today’s climate to assume that women did play a tiny role and that is why there is a severe lack of coverage in history books and in programs developed to teach the history of film. Especially with the statistics released in the Writers Guild of America study in April 2014. The study found that as of a year ago female screenwriters “ . . . accounted for just 15 percent of sector employment — down from 17 percent in 2009 — and are outnumbered by more than three-to-one among screenwriters”.

What you find if you read Cari’s book, which I highly recommend, is that when films began, “Half of the films copyrighted between 1911 and 1925 were written by women.” During that time, Frances Marion was not only the highest paid screenwriter, male or female, but she was also the first writer to win two Academy Awards. Even with her success and the success of the women in her industry at the time, their stories began to disappear. The question is, how did they become invisible? How do so many of us, become invisible?

A dominant cultural group can determine what is viewed as “normal” by a society, what will be seen and accepted. Now there are two very important parts of the previous sentence that need to be defined, dominant cultural group and normal. The dominant cultural group holds the most power and influence over a society. You would think this means they are greater in numbers, but not always. The dominant group may have more economic power, more control over media, or more structural power. Look at the example above, women held equal numbers in society, but men held the power. Now, normal, is an interesting and misleading word. You would think that normal means average, a mathematical equation that determines what the most amount of people do, who they are, and how they identify. The brain however, tallies normal in a different way. By the time we are toddlers our brains have sorted images into categories and the images that we see the most become normal. The trick here is that if the dominant culture is editing the images we process to what they deem as normal, consciously or subconsciously, “normal” is then shaped and defined by their reality not by the real numbers.

This is how truth can become invisible. It is also how multiple parts of your identity can be simplified and ignored by society and individuals. In the case of the
screenwriters, if you have a set of ideals that you attach to all women then you look at women through that lens. Suddenly it becomes hard to believe that a woman could contain multiplicities. So even though the numbers tell you she was incredibly successful, you could remain convinced that your opinion, which contains bias, is more correct than the factual information.

Let’s do a little exercise...

1. Make a list of all of the parts of your identity, not by others definitions, but by your own. This could include race, ethnicity, nationality, gender (do remember there are more than two ways to look at gender), appearance, music taste, introvert, extrovert, sexual identity, orientation, expression, favorite types of comedy, favorite color, etc. Make the list as long as you like.

2. Now circle the top three that you think are the most authentic for you.

3. Underline the three that society perceives you as the most. If society perceives you as something that is not on the list skip a line and add it at the bottom.

4. Star the three that very few people know about you.

5. Put a box around the three that you feel are dominant cultural groups.

6. Take each group of three and write them next to each other.

Do they match? Are they very different? Are you comfortable with the results? Uncomfortable? Have any of the lists of three effected your chances of getting a job? Being recognized for the work you do? Your safety? Have they been helpful or harmful in those situations? Feel free to journal for five minutes on any discoveries you have found. They will be different for each individual.

Being recognized for one’s identity can be quite freeing and in some setting quite dangerous, but it is important to keep in mind the idea of telling our stories for ourselves so that we remain. All the parts of us, even the ones that may seem contradictory, are what connects us to each other. When those challenges seem daunting, and they will, I’ll leave you with something that Cari shared with us that day, “We don’t run from, we run to.”
The Social Construction of Racial Identity

BY TERESA RENDE

In America, and indeed many nations across the world, race is a very important facet of identity. Many people wear jewelry, clothing or headwear that denote their religious affiliation or ethnic background. Language is an aural identifier for where we might be from or what have had the opportunity to learn. The aromas that come out of your lunch bag or the music on your iPhone all have the potential to speak to where you are from, where you are going and who you are today. All of those identifiers, though, can be stripped from you. Many people can choose not to participate in their family or culture’s religious or moral convictions and as a result, dress, speak, eat and drink differently than those around them. When some folks relocate, they adopt elements of the new culture, while others bring the cultural identifiers of their region, country or family to the new community they are joining. All of which can inform and shape our identity and others’ perceptions of us. Race, though, is one of only a handful of identifiers we are always wearing; regardless of your relationship with other cultural identifiers, you cannot leave your race at the door.

It may seem a bit mystifying, then, that race is often referred to as a social construct and not a biological one. If race is a primary element of identity, and race is not malleable, how is it not a biological fact? If I cannot take it off and it is innate to my being, how could it be constructed by society? Race is certainly a lived experience, so how is it not living within us, biologically? The answers to this bevvy of contradictions lie more in history than in genetics. Often, when asked to speak or write on this topic, folks will ask an anthropologist to describe “race as a social construct,” explain how race might be socially constructed or speak to the elements of race that are biologically fallible, indicating that some elements of race are biologically certain. It is important at this point in the dialogue or piece of writing to cease use of the word “as” and instead embrace the word “is,” because race is a social construct.

For many years, race was perceived to exist among both the public and the scientific community; in fact, the scientific community went to great lengths to prove race, and certain race’s superiority or inferiority, through analysis of behavior, measurements of the human body and, most notably, visible physical differences among groups of humans. It wasn’t until May 1998 that the American Anthropological Association issued its official statement on race, clarifying its stance — shared by most practicing anthropologists — that race does not exist as any provable genetic entity.

The visible physical differences we can easily see among humans do indeed exist. We can see variations in skin color, hair type and eye, lip and nose shape. These phenotypic variations, however, do not equate to isolated and definable human races. As explained in the AAA’s statement on race, “…it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics (e.g., DNA) indicates that most physical variation, about 94%, lies within so-called racial groups. Conventional geographic ‘racial’ groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. This means that there is greater variation within ‘racial’ groups than between them. In neighboring populations there is much overlapping of genes and their phenotypic (physical) expressions. Throughout history whenever different groups have come into contact, they have interbred. The continued sharing of genetic materials has maintained all of humankind as a single species.”

Physical differences are inherited independently of one another, so the presence of certain physical traits does not predict others, and such traits tend to vary gradually across regions as opposed to abruptly. To borrow again from the AAA’s statement, “For example, skin color varies largely from light in the temperate areas in the north to dark in the tropical areas in the south; its intensity is not related to nose shape or hair texture. Dark skin may be associated with frizzy or kinky hair or curly or wavy or straight hair, all of which are found among different indigenous peoples in tropical regions. These facts render any attempt to establish lines of division among biological populations both arbitrary and subjective.”

Society has given weight to certain physical traits and proceeded to use such traits as justification for slavery, persecution and death. Functionally, since race served favored groups for hundreds of years, it follows that those looking
to maintain this hegemonic structure would do “research” to prove race’s genetic existence. Such research and the repeated enslavement or killing of other ethnic groups have shaped our world and continues to shape our understanding of race and unrelenting interest in phenotypic variation, primarily skin color, as some type of hyper-important human characteristic.

It is not. In an April 2001 article titled, “The Genetic Archaeology of Race,” published in the Atlantic Monthly, prominent anthropologist Steve Olson writes “the genetic variants affecting skin color and facial features are essentially meaningless — they probably involve a few hundred of the billions of nucleotides in a person’s DNA. Yet societies have built elaborate systems of privilege and control on these insignificant genetic differences.” Some biological anthropologists have researched how skin color differences evolved, their evolutionary function or lack thereof, and although they have a few solid theories, there is no absolute determination of why, evolutionarily speaking, skin difference evolved. As Steven Jay Gould, author of The Mismeasure of Man, explains in a 2003 California Newsreel interview, “We don’t really know what causes differences in skin colors is the honest answer. And they’re not, in an evolutionists’ sense, at all significant. Obviously it’s been significant historically and culturally. But I think an evolutionary biologist tends not to be enormously troubled about it because skin color differences are so minor with respect to the immensity of evolutionary change.” When skin color variations didn’t satisfy, folks often linked other shared traits to phenotypic variations as proof of race’s existence. Wrong again! Many such associations are nonconcordant, meaning these traits tend to vary independently from each other. In “Race and Gene Studies: What Differences Make a Difference?” author Larry Adelman gives a fine example of one such misunderstood confluence and how it actually plays out, genetically and geographically:

“Take sickle cell. Doctors were long taught that sickle cell anemia was a genetic disease of Negores, a marker of their race. Yet sickle cell is found among peoples from central and western Africa, but not southern Africa. It is also carried by Turks, Yemenis, Indians, Greeks, and Sicilians. That’s because sickle cell arose several thousand years ago as a mutation in one of the genes that codes for hemoglobin. The mutation soon spread to successive populations along the trade routes where malaria was common. It turns out that inheriting one sickle cell allele confers resistance to malaria and thus provides a selective advantage in malarial regions (inherting sickle cell alleles from both parents causes sickle-cell disease). In other words, sickle cell, like tandem repeats in the Science study, is a marker not of skin color or race but ancestry, or more precisely, having ancestors from where malaria was common.

...The reason for all this within-group variation is because unlike most other species, modern humans, Homo sapiens, are young, only about 150,000 years or so old, and we’ve always moved. As humans migrated
around the globe, populations bumped into each other and shared their mates — and genes. Sometimes genes flowed across great distances — through trade, war, slavery, piracy, exile and migration. More often they flowed from village to village to village. Human populations just haven’t been isolated from each other long enough to evolve into separate sub-species, or races.”

Folks will point to many things to try and assert the biological proof of race. It’s important to note, even if you can find other frequently repeated traits among folks sharing a particular shade of skin color, that such classifications change throughout history and place. Alan Goodman, professor of biological anthropology at Hampshire College, explains the issue in trying to cobble these shared phenotypic variations together as evidence of race:

“We’ve developed a universal system for thinking about hat size that’s measurable, for example. So you can go into Sao Paulo, Brazil and the hat merchants there have the same scale that the hat merchants do in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And we can have universality because it’s objective, it’s measurable, we’re just measuring the circumference around the head. It doesn’t change culturally from one place to another.

But think about race and its universality or lack thereof. Where is your measurement device? There is no way to measure race first. We sometimes do it by skin color. Other people may do it by hair texture. Other people may have the dividing lines different in terms of skin color. What’s black in the United States is not what’s black in Brazil or what’s black in South Africa. What was black in 1940 is different from what is black in 2000. Certainly, with the evolution of whiteness, what was white in 1920 — as a Jew I was not white then, but I’m white now, so white has changed tremendously.”

Angela Onwuachi-Willig echoes this in her June 2015 New York Times piece, “Race and Racial Identity Are Social Constructs,” explaining, “There is no gene or cluster of genes common to all blacks or all whites. Were race “real” in the genetic sense, racial classifications for individuals would remain constant across boundaries.” Onwuachi-Willig, though, continues on in her piece and reminds us that “...the fact that race is a social construct, defined by markers such as skin color, hair texture, eye shape, ancestry, identity performance and even name, does not mean that racial classifications are free of consequence or tangible effects. More than 50 years ago, Congress enacted the most comprehensive antidiscrimination legislation in history, the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Half a century later in 2015, the same gaps in racial inequality remain or have grown deeper.”

Although race might not be concordant, biologically, it is still very much a lived reality. Racism exists even if race doesn’t have a scientific classification because racism is exercised through human actions. As Adleman explains later in “Race and Gene Studies: What Differences Make a Difference,” “Race may be a biological myth, a social construction, but it nonetheless remains very real ... The likelihood that toxic waste has been dumped in your neighborhood, your ability to get a home loan, the quality of your kid’s education, connections to job opportunities, whether or not you’re likely to be followed in a department store or pulled over by police, are all influenced by your race. Race does matter ... The factors that lead to differential outcomes between races live not in any ‘racial’ genes but in our social institutions and practices.”

Novelist Heidi Durrow, whose mother is Danish and father is African American, asserts in her short New York Times piece “Identity, Race or Otherwise, Is Your Lived Experience,” that “…your blood quantum shouldn’t define your identity rather your lived experience should. I learned that because of the peculiar way that math and race work together in America, I was black. But those facts conflicted with my actual experience. I spoke Danish at home. I ate Danish food. At Christmas we danced around the Christmas tree singing Danish carols. But when I went outside my home, I was black. It wasn’t until I was almost 40 years old that I proudly claimed my Afro-Viking identity.”

We, as scholars and students of the earth, must accept race as a lived reality, and an extraordinarily important, though sometimes
TEN THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT RACE

Our eyes tell us that people look different. No one has trouble distinguishing a Czech from a Chinese. But what do those differences mean? Are they biological? Has race always been with us? How does race affect people today?

There’s less and more to race than meets the eye:

1. Race is a modern idea. Ancient societies, including the Greeks, did not divide people according to physical distinctions, but according to religion, status, class, even language. The English language didn’t even have the word race until it turned up in 1508 in a poem by William Dunbar referring to a line of kings.

2. Race has no genetic basis. Not one characteristic, trait or even gene distinguishes all the members of one so-called race from all the members of another so-called race.

3. Human subspecies don’t exist. Unlike many animals, modern humans simply haven’t been around long enough or isolated enough to evolve into separate subspecies or races. Despite surface appearances, we are one of the most similar of all species.

4. Skin color really is only skin deep. Most traits are inherited independently from one another. The genes influencing skin color have nothing to do with the genes influencing hair form, eye shape, blood type, musical talent, athletic ability or forms of intelligence. Knowing someone’s skin color doesn’t necessarily tell you anything else about him or her.

5. Most variation is within, not between, “races.” Of the small amount of total human variation, 85 percent exists within any local population, be they Italians, Kurds, Koreans or Cherokees. About 94 percent can be found within any continent. That means two random Koreans may be as genetically different as a Korean and an Italian.

6. Slavery predates race. Throughout much of human history, societies have enslaved others, often as a result of conquest or war, even debt, but not because of physical characteristics or a belief in natural inferiority. Due to a unique set of historical circumstances, ours was the first slave system where all the slaves shared similar physical characteristics.

7. Race and freedom evolved together. The U.S. was founded on the radical new principle that “All men are created equal.” But our early economy was based largely on slavery. How could this anomaly be rationalized? The new idea of race helped explain why some people could be denied the rights and freedoms that others took for granted.

8. Race justified social inequalities as natural. As the race idea evolved, white superiority became “common sense” in America. It justified not only slavery but also the extermination of Indians, exclusion of Asian immigrants and the taking of Mexican lands by a nation that professed a belief in democracy. Racial practices were institutionalized within American government, laws and society.

9. Race isn’t biological, but racism is still real. Race is a powerful social idea that gives people different access to opportunities and resources. Our government and social institutions have created advantages that disproportionately channel wealth, power and resources to white people. This affects everyone, whether we are aware of it or not.

10. Colorblindness will not end racism. Pretending race doesn’t exist is not the same as creating equality. Race is more than stereotypes and individual prejudice. To combat racism, we need to identify and remedy social policies and institutional practices that advantage some groups at the expense of others.

Psychologists and social scientists generally agree that we determine our identity through a series of conscious and subconscious discoveries. The facts we learn about ourselves (IE: race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity) combine with our experiences living in society (IE: triumphs, failures, how others treat us, how we treat others). We will find some traits and experiences to be more important or prominent than others, helping us put together a sense of who we are and how we fit into the world—our personal identity.

A simple example of identity would be if I were to discover that my sense of humor makes other people laugh. I then experience joy from making others laugh: it validates me as a person. I feel empowered by my ability to tell jokes and begin to identify as a “funny guy.” This identity gives me a way to interact with the world. My jokes help me build a group of friends—probably people who value me for my ability to make them laugh, and who I value for making me laugh. We form a community because of these shared qualities, supporting and helping one another succeed in the world. Another Word for Beauty explores how communities form and how they can influence a person’s identity.

In José Rivera’s musical play, each patio, or cellblock, throws women who have committed similar crimes into the same living situation. Whatever their racial or social background, they now find themselves grouped together. For Nora and Tatiana, two opposing political dissidents who would have killed each other outside the prison walls, they must both live in Patio 4. Their new living situation forces them to interact. Enemies at first, they eventually find common traits and values in each other. Each sees the other as an individual, separate from her political identity. As this happens, each woman begins to see herself differently. Each woman’s identity shifts from political militant to member of a diverse Colombian family. As Nora says, after renouncing her political affiliations, “... people can change. [A] soul is greater than an ideology …”

Being part of a community brings benefits and challenges. The benefits come from the solidarity of being a part of a larger group: you can advocate for each other’s benefit, you gain comfort from shared experiences, and you gain confidence from knowing that you are not alone in the world. To remain a part of the group, however, you might have to conform to certain behaviors. Questioning decisions that your friends make—or displaying other aspects of who you are—might jeopardize your relationships within the group. Suddenly you are no longer just a funny guy. You become a troublemaker because you don’t enjoy everyone’s jokes. Alternatively, maybe you’re a funny guy who’s gay, and that new distinction makes others uneasy.
The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window demonstrates how communities break down when they start to view each other differently. Sidney and his circle of bohemian friends maintain their friendship because they are outcasts. Their aversion to politics and success protects them from mainstream expectations; their shared experiences and beliefs make them equals in each other’s eyes. However, when the outside world—politics, success, family—breaks into the group it crumbles. Each friend begins to judge the other by standards set by mainstream society. The quirks and differences they once overlooked suddenly become unavoidable, and their outcast comradery dissolves in the light of individual difference—leaving each person alone and in search of a new community.

The subtle differences between people within a community might seem monumental to members of that group; people on the outside, however, might view things differently. They might not see the nuances that distinguish one individual from another and, instead, see only one homogenous group. For instance, if you meet a stranger and they suspect you to be a “funny guy” or a “gay male,” they may see you as only that. Your identity includes more than simply being funny or gay; but, the stranger fixates on only one aspect of your character. They prejudice you: “If he’s a funny guy, then he can’t be very serious about his work” or “If he’s gay, then he shouldn’t know much about sports.” People base these prejudices on what they see and expect—not what they experience.

Carlyle spends an entire evening trying to convince you not to see him for what he is, but know him for who he is: a black Republican. Thomas Bradshaw’s play presents an intelligent, affluent African-American man who chooses political positions that undermine social programs and institutions that have historically benefited African-Americans. The play pokes holes in “truths” about race, politics and people. As Bradshaw said before the premiere of his similarly controversial play Mary in 2010, “All blacks aren’t homogenous ... all black people don’t think alike ... there are lots of universals within the human experience, and society is pretty much what leads us off in different directions.” The shocking on-stage fun of Carlyle comes from how society views and shapes the character of Carlyle; off-stage, audiences watching the play might feel a little squeamish because they must question their own opinions and “truths.”

Similarly, Disgraced tears into the psychological trauma and complexities of identity. Ayad Akhtar uses his character of Amir to explore the burden of legacy and appearance in his scintillating drama. Amir wants to be his own man. He distills the tradition and belief system his family gave him through the lens of his experiences and education. He finds his own unique perspective of the world, distancing himself from his ethnic background. He becomes to be his own man; but that is not how his colleagues and friends view him. His expensive clothes, education, and the power of his mind cannot raise him beyond his physical appearance: his friends and family still see him as a Muslim American. That conflict—between the identity Amir wants people to see versus the identity people choose to see—wreaks havoc upon a strong, intelligent man.

The conflict between how people see us and how we want to be seen weighs heavily on us all—and it shall only grow heavier. As we learn more and more about the human condition, discovering new aspects of who we are as a human family, new ways to identify and interact with the world will emerge. In recent years, the public recognition of the transgender community demonstrates only one new facet of our growing human diversity. But we have the ability to engage, with ourselves and with each other, in conversations like the ones that José Rivera, Lorraine Hansberry, Thomas Bradshaw and Ayad Akhtar create in their plays. We can challenge, support, and learn from our differences. They may not always be pleasant conversations, but they can teach us more about ourselves and the world.
Who are you? Are you the person you are with your friends? Does your Facebook represent who you really are? Like most people, you probably switch and choose parts of yourself to showcase depending on your audience. For as long as we have been able to express ourselves, we have been interested in playing an elaborate game of hide-and-seek, never fully exposing who we are. By choosing what to display and what to hide, humans create a manipulated image of who they are in entirety, making this fabricated illusion of what it means to be human the norm.

When man invented the front facing iPhone camera, he was not inventing the self-portrait. In the Renaissance, professional portraiture – a picture depicting a person in their profession was not uncommon. A botanist is pictured with a book of botany in one hand and a plant sprig in the other. The viewer sees him only as what is pictured in the frame: a botanist. This is the same concept behind the modern frame of social media – that friend whose Instagram depicts a perfect, beautiful life might as well hold up sign that says “I’m having fun,” for all that they are trying to convey. The portrait becomes the whole of a person to the unknowing viewer. This is the position the audience is set up for at the beginning of Ayad Akhtar’s *Disgraced*, as Emily paints her Muslim, brown-skinned husband as a slave, rather than the high powered lawyer he is, which demonstrates the power of other people’s perceptions. It isn’t only the frame that matters, but also what others see in the frame. Emily references this, saying “And how people must have reacted when they first saw it. They think they’re looking at a picture of a Moor. An assistant….. Fine. A Slave. But who’s portrait – it turns out – has more nuance and complexity than [Velazquez’s] renditions of kings and queens” (Act 1, Scene 1). At first glance, the portrait says only one thing about the person, much like the botanist. It takes effort to see what’s underneath.

Thomas Bradshaw’s *Carlyle* also deals with the power of people’s perceptions on our public image. In the play, the title character is a young black republican who went to a predominantly white private high school. Throughout the play, he is constantly changing his image and battling with his peers’ perception of what a black man, and what a republican should be – and to the people around him, those images don’t mix. Carlyle is first tugged towards what his black identity “should” be (according to his friends, Tyrone and Shaniqua), as they tell him “You’re never going to be white. So stop dressing like one of them,” followed by a stage direction that depicts a gold chain and baseball hat falling from the sky (Act 1). Later, he is admonished for embracing this part of his identity by his headmaster: “Whatever you’re doing right now is not you…you have to get your head back in the academic game. If you want to keep engaging in this negro stuff I guess that’s your prerogative…” (Act 1) Carlyle’s image, and what that image means, is being determined by what other people think he should be, rather than what he is actually presenting. Both Amir and Carlyle face people who expect them to be something they aren’t, and expect them to manipulate and edit themselves to better fit into a mold or stereotype.

The media has always had a
hand in shaping perception of an image or person. In the modern age, reality television is so edited and over-produced it’s almost impossible to discern what actually goes on in front of the cameras. It’s hard to believe there’s anything “reality” about reality television, which is a notion discussed in Jose Rivera’s *Another Word for Beauty*. In the play, the women of El Pastor Prison in Bogota, Columbia, prepare for the yearly beauty pageant in which they compete, an event that is televised to demonstrate the femininity and peace inside the prison. For this one, televised day, the women wear dresses and dance, and their voices are heard. The people who see this pageant don’t see the struggles of the women, only the laughter and frivolity – all hosted by “from our very own long-running soap ‘Soul Mate from Hell’ – Danny Angel Milagros Concepcion Cruz!” (Act 2, Scene 1) Everything is sensationalized. But reality television has become such a cornerstone of our society that we have taught ourselves how people should act on camera, just like the women of El Pastor have been taught to act on stage with a soap opera star. They know it isn’t real, and the audience knows it isn’t real, but faking their way through it is expected and normal, and allows the audience to believe that this is reality, or a version of it.

Media manipulation also plays a role in Lorraine Hansberry’s *The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window*, in which Wally O’Hara, an up-and-coming politician, tries to convince Sidney to endorse his campaign in Sidney’s newspaper. Although he is initially hesitant, Sidney eventually does endorse him, creating the public image of O’Hara’s campaign and eventually helping him get elected. It is later revealed that O’Hara is a corrupt political sham, and Sidney has to face that it was partially his version of O’Hara presented through his newspaper that helped him gain power. This demonstrates both sides of the treatment of image, as well as revealing the dark side to it this fabrication becoming a norm. Sidney acts as a media source that creates a colossal image of a man who isn’t so colossal, allowing O’Hara to fully embrace his image as a fake revolutionary. While Sidney is horrified with the result, it is an everyday story in the political world: a politician is a different man during a campaign than he is post-election. As a public, we understand that concept much like we understand that reality television isn’t real. This lie is normal, and we embrace it, even when it leads to undeserving people in power.

Every day, we play a game of managing expectations, perception, and sensationalism in who we are to the world, and what we believe in what the world shows us. And although there is no stopping the manipulation of our public images, there is something to be learned from Emily in *Disgraced*. Just like the portrait of Juan De Pareja, there is always something lurking beneath the initial glance. You just have to search for it.
“What is another word for beauty?” This is the final question asked of the female inmates participating in a beauty pageant at Buen Pastor Prison in José Rivera’s *Another Word for Beauty*. Their answers vary immensely: family, strength, justice. One woman responds, “There is no other word for beauty.”

Beauty is commonly defined as a characteristic present in objects, be it nature, artwork, or an individual, that provides a continuous experience of pleasure, joy, and satisfaction to the observer. It often manifests itself through the senses and conveys some level of harmony amongst the object’s components. In modern society, when something is called beautiful does it mean that it is merely aesthetically pleasing? Or does modern beauty delve deeper than that? In order to comprehend the concept of beauty, we must weave together its nuances and intricacies.

“Get glowing skin, gorgeous hair, and more from our beauty experts.” “Did you see that beautiful dress she was wearing?” “What a beautiful day!” From waiting in line for our morning coffee to the covers of nationally printed magazines, these phrases are embedded in our language on a micro and macro scale. In discussing a celebrity’s designer gown or the weather, why is “beautiful” the word we want to use? Perhaps our own vocabulary diminishes beauty’s depth. When we regularly describe people or things as beautiful, we imbue the word with a sense of normalcy. But in reality, the complexities of beauty are anything but normal.

The concept of beauty is rooted in classical philosophy. In ancient Greek societies, *kalos* “beautiful” was used not only for describing sensibly beautiful things but also morally admirable characteristics and conduct. For Plato and many philosophers of his time, the experiences of beauty and that of being good were inseparable. While Plato did not discredit the notion that beauty is found in the physical, he claimed that it began with the body and gradually transcended to the soul and character. Aristotle described beauty to be a property of nature and works of art. Aristotle’s examination of art and beauty in art planted the seeds for the way in which we view the world today.

![The statue Aphrodite of Milos or Venus di Milo, exemplifies the Greek ideals of naturalism, beauty and grace.](image)

In *Disgraced*, by Ayad Akhtar, Emily finds tremendous beauty and wisdom in the Islamic tradition. She draws inspiration from its art, writings, and teachings. However, her husband Amir rejects these things. Two observers are examining the same subject, yet their opinions hold firm on opposite ends of the spectrum. This discrepancy points to an important component of the concept of beauty: it is subjective. All people are complex individuals composed of ancestry, tradition, and experience. All of these things inform the way in which an individual walks through life, the way in which they encounter people and things. For Amir, the Islamic tradition holds a part of his identity that he has tried so desperately to rid himself of. When something is called beautiful, one cannot assume that it is universal truth.

Another example of beauty’s subjectivity is in Lorraine Hansberry’s *The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window*. Sidney escapes to the woods, his personal beautiful universe. He finds peace and solace where the imposing mountains replace towering skyscrapers and the only sound that can be heard is that of a running brook. His wife, Iris, on the other hand, wants nothing to do with the woods. She had been surrounded by them all her life. They are not beautiful, but a place, “to run from, to get the hell away from as fast as you could.” In this text beauty is, again, in the eye of the beholder. Proving that hard as we may for someone to see what we see, to feel what we feel, beauty is defined by perception not persuasion.
Beauty’s subjective component leads to its standards changing over time. Who decides what the standards will be? In today’s society, the media plays a major role in what we deem as beautiful. Mobile screens and magazine covers are filled with very specific beauty standards: extreme thinness, appearance-focused sex appeal, and whiteness. For example, Vanity Fair’s 2012 “Fresh Faces of Young Hollywood” features only white women on the cover. Images of white women dominate all media, especially those featuring “beautiful” or “desirable” women. These standards of beauty are unrealistic on countless levels. Media’s definition of beauty chooses to ignore not only the depth and intricacies of beauty, but also the depth and intricacies of human beings.

To designate another word for beauty is no easy task. It is to encompass a depth that starts with the senses: a touch, a smell or a sight, and works its way down to the core of who we are. The difficulty in defining beauty stems from the fact that it is entirely up to the individual to do so. In Carlyle, by Thomas Bradshaw, Carlyle might say another word for beauty is freedom. As a lawyer for the Republican Party, his hope is that “every American, of every race and religion is able to experience the joys of absolute freedom. Freedom from paternalism. Freedom from fear. The freedom to be exactly who you are.” Carlyle believes that freedom sets the stage for one to feel deeply without reservation. Beauty must be defined in a similar way. We must feel its gravity in order for it to set us free.
Goodman Theatre Artistic Director, Robert Falls.

What should I wear?

Definitely dress nicely but comfortably; try business casual. No tank tops, ripped jeans, etc. Baseball caps or hats must be moved once you enter the theatre. The Goodman is air-conditioned, so be sure to bring an extra sweater or dress warmly.

What should I bring?

Only what you really need. Electronic devices such as PSP, Nintendo DS, smart phones, and laser pointers are not permitted during the show. If it makes noise or is distracting, please refrain from having it out in the theater. A purse, bag or backpack is fine. School supplies are not necessary. Remember that you are here to sit back, watch and enjoy, so don’t bring anything you don’t need.

(Please remember):
No smoking, and no eating or drinking while inside the theater.

What if I need to leave the theater during the show?

Only if it is an emergency. Otherwise, it’s very disrespectful. Make sure to use restrooms before the show, or wait until intermission.

Have respect for other audience members. This means no talking during the performance, no feet on seats and no kicking. (For your safety and others’!)
How should I respond to what's going on on the stage?

Honestly but appropriately. If you find something funny, then laugh—but don’t laugh for five minutes straight or laugh so hard that you need to leave the theater. Theater is very different from watching a movie at home. Always remember that you are in a room full of people who are there to watch the performance. They can hear your responses just as well as you can hear theirs. Most important, the actors can hear and see you. They will appreciate any appropriate feedback but might be extremely offended if it is inappropriate. Whether you enjoy the play or not, you owe respect to the actors for having given it a try.

What to do before the show:

When your class arrives, your teacher will let the Education staff know how many people are in your group. It is a good idea to arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the performance.

If you are late, often you will not be allowed to enter the show until after intermission. Once your group is called, an usher will lead you to your seats and hand you a program.

Please promptly sit where you have been assigned. Remember that the show needs to begin on time and everyone needs to be seated.

What to do during intermission:

Most plays have a 15 minute intermission. This gives you time to stretch your legs, walk, use the restroom, get water and discuss the play with your friends.

We do ask that if you are sitting on the main floor that you remain downstairs and if you are sitting in the mezzanine that you remain upstairs. There are restrooms on both floors. When intermission is over, the lights in the lobby will flash several times; that is your cue to get back to your seat because the performance is about to begin!

What to do after the show:

There will be a post-show discussion immediately following the performance. Members of the cast will come out on stage and answer your questions. Feel free to ask anything that’s on your mind about the show, but please remember to be respectful.

And remember the Golden Rule of Theatergoing:

Theater artists are paid professionals. When you enter a theater, you are entering their work space. Respect their work as you would have them respect yours.

Enjoy the Show!
Reading a Goodman Theatre Ticket

By Goodman Education

As a patron of the theater, it is important to know how to read your ticket and find your seat. Generally, seats for performances in the Goodman’s Albert Theatre are assigned seating, so it’s good to know how to find your seat. When you come with your school, though, you will not have an assigned seat and instead be ushered to a section where you and your classmates can sit and enjoy the play together.

Below is a seating chart—a map of all the seats in the Albert Theater—and an explanation of how to read a theater ticket. If you have any problems, ask an usher for help. They’re there for you!

This will guide you to the lobby door closest to your seat—aisle numbers are on plaques that hang above the doors to the theater.

The section of the theatre you will be sitting in: Main Floor or Mezzanine.

This is your seat number, located on the edge of the bottom seat cushion.

The row where your seat is located, noted in a letter on the side of the end seat of each row.

Day and date of performance.

Curtain time.

Play you are seeing and its author.

Goodman’s Albert Theatre

Albert Ivar Goodman Theatre—Main Floor

Albert Ivar Goodman Theatre—Mezzanine
Writing A Response Letter to an Artist

BY GOODMAN EDUCATION

After you have seen the show and discussed your responses in the classroom, it’s time to let us know what you thought! Your response letter plays an important role at Goodman Theatre. All of the letters we receive are forwarded to our artists, and you may get a response!

Pick one of the artists involved with the play you saw, whose work was particularly memorable to you—an actor, designer, the playwright or the director—and write that artist a letter describing your experience at the show and your feedback about his or her work. Be honest and ask any questions that are on your mind.

Send us your letter within one month of seeing the show, and we’ll forward it on to that artist!

Here is an example, a great student letter we received in response to Animal Crackers:

Dear Cast and Crew,

I would have to say that every single one of you have done a superb job in this play. All the effort you have put forth into this play has resulted in a memorable experience for all of us. I thought it was clever that the actors, actresses and the orchestra interacted with the audience. From viewing the original film of Animal Crackers, I think the cast played in the play and the original cast of Animal Crackers very similar! This play might have been the first encounter of the Marx brothers for many teenagers and children and I believe that the crew and cast of Animal Crackers proved that early comedy can also be entertaining and memorable!

The director’s vision of the play was a rather conscious one. Exposing the Marx brothers to the vast majority of people who never knew about them and bringing back nostalgic memories to the older audience was a great idea. This play was actually my first play and a first trip to Goodman Theatre. I myself, as a young adult, finally realized that plays are enjoyable and gratifying. The play had all the elements of emotion and slapstick comedy which made it a great one. The technical aspects as well as the props were amazingly set to follow each scene. My favorite scene had to be the scene where Harpo and Rivelli tried to clear up the misunderstanding of “The Flash.” I though the script was very flowing and comfortable. Was there any improv involved? I did not find any negative aspects of this play. I have found the play and the ambiance of Goodman Theatre very positive. I give Animal Crackers two thumbs up.

Sincerely,
A CPS student

Important information to include:

• Your name, age and school

• Your mailing address (where a response may be sent)

• Any questions or special observations you want to share with the artists!

Send your letters to:

Education and Community Engagement
Goodman Theatre
170 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60601

Or email us at:
education@goodmantheatre.org

Goodman Theatre Education & Community Engagement is also online!

Check us out on Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/goodmaned

Or Twitter:
http://twitter.com/GoodmanEd

We love hearing your thoughts, so don’t be afraid to drop us a line, comment, tag us in a note, @reply or retweet us. Also check out our online educational resources for more information regarding the play you’ve seen, or anything else you’d like to know about how our programs (and theater) work!

Keep checking in for updates online!
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