



Denver Center
Theatre Company

Inside

Out

A STUDY GUIDE

PRODUCED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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U S WEST
World
Premiere

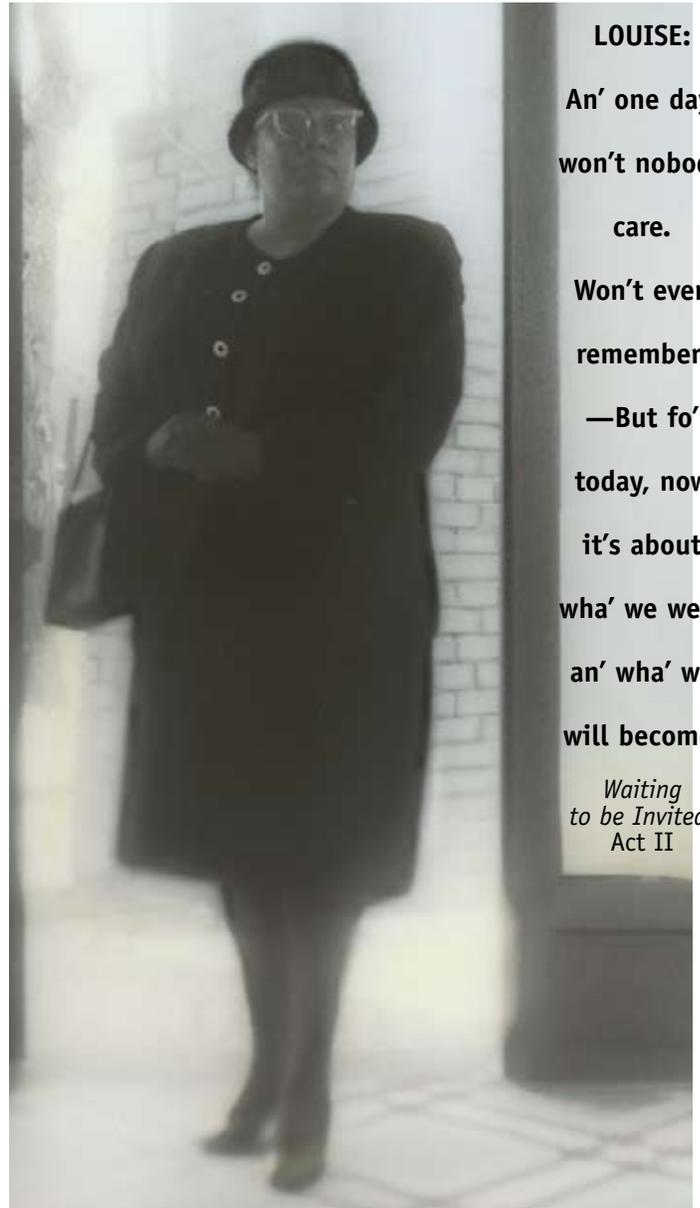
Waiting to be Invited

"I am not History's prisoner. I must not search there for the sense of my destiny.—It is by overcoming what has been historically given—that I start the cycle of my own freedom."

—Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*. 1952.

It is a hot summer day in 1960

in Atlanta, Georgia. The 1954 Supreme Court decision to desegregate schools has now been strengthened by the Civil Rights Act of 1960. But the South is slow to comply. The summer is tense because of sit-ins at local restaurants. However, three middle-aged black women, Miss Louise, Miss Odessa and Miss Delores, all employees of a doll manufacturing company, intend to assert their rights and have a meal at the (whites only) restaurant in a local department store. The play traces their preparations: dressing up; riding the bus with Palmeroy Bateman, the supportive black bus driver, and Miss Grayson, an elderly white passenger; meeting up with Miss Ruth, the not-so-eager fourth member of their group; and the final moment. With humor, pathos and anger, their journey explores the courage of thousands of ordinary people who fueled the Civil Rights movement and changed the course of our nation. ■



LOUISE:

An' one day,
won't nobody
care.

Won't even
remember.

—But fo'
today, now
it's about
wha' we were
an' wha' we
will become.

*Waiting
to be Invited,
Act II*

Special thanks to the Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust for supporting new American plays at the Denver Center Theatre Company.

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SIT-INS

- **Though the four women**
- **in the play do not use the term,**
- they were about to participate in a sit-in in an
- attempt to get served at a segregated restaurant. Officially, the sit-in movement began on
- February 1, 1960, when four black students
- from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical
- College in Greensboro sat down at a lunch
- counter in a Woolworth's variety store that did
- not serve blacks. Ezell Blair, Jr., Franklin
- McCain, Joseph McNeil and David Richmond
- asked for coffee and doughnuts but were
- refused service with the reply, "We don't serve
- colored here."¹ Although denied service, they
- remained seated all day until closing. That
- evening, they formed the Student Executive
- Committee for Justice which pledged to follow
- the non-violent tactics used by Martin Luther
- King, Jr. in the
- Montgomery Bus
- Boycott of 1955.
- The next day they
- returned 25—males
- dressed in coats
- and ties, and four
- women in dresses.
- By demanding ser-
- vice at a public place, they had started an
- attack on one of the South's fundamental
- racial rules—blacks could not have service
- equal to whites at restaurants, bars or hotels.
- Instead, they were restricted to small,
- separate spaces whose entrances were marked
- with signs reading "Colored," "Colored
-

"The genius of the demonstrations lies in their spirituality; in their ability to enlist every Negro, from laborer to the leader, and inspire him to seek suffering as a badge of honor."

—Observer at Greensboro sit-in.²

Entrance," or "Colored Side."

The movement spread quickly. Two weeks after the Greensboro protests, 40 students sat in at a local Woolworth's in Nashville, Tennessee. Within months, sit-ins spread to 54 cities in nine states and included thousands of students. Unfortunately, change did not come peacefully or quickly in many places. Student protesters often risked being beaten, jailed, held in custody, or expelled from college.

In April of 1960, Ella Baker, executive secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), organized a conference to channel the energy of the sit-in movement. Out of this conference came the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an organization based on the ideas of nonviolent direct action and pacificism. Under Baker's guidance, it was shaped into a campaign all across the South.

The sit-ins and boycotts were appealing to

older black people as well. They enabled them to take part, to be involved and help the cause. They could participate in the boycotts that exerted tremendous pressure on Southern merchants or take part in their private sit-ins, as Odessa, Louise, Delores and Ruth do. Little by little, their efforts eroded the power exerted by whites in the South. ■

SIT-IN: a protest demonstration in which participants seat themselves in an appropriate place and refuse to move until their objectives are considered; especially a civil rights demonstration of this kind.

—*American Heritage Dictionary*

THE ATLANTA SIT-INS & BOYCOTT

Atlanta was the centerpiece of the southern black freedom struggle of the 1950s-1960s. The city had a strong tradition of civic activism dating from the Civil War. The general population growth had brought an increase of blacks in the central city. In addition, the median income of the black community rose after World War II. Besides being the home of the Atlanta University Center (AUC), with its predominately black undergraduate colleges—Clark, Morehouse, Morris Brown and Spelman it was the Southeastern regional headquarters for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League and the Southern Christian Leadership Council.

As education and favorable economic conditions fueled black aspirations, it also fueled resentment of segregation in Atlanta. When news of the Greensboro sit-ins reached Atlanta, it caused students at AUC to begin discussing a protest movement. Their leader was Lonnie C. King (no relation to Martin Luther King). The students met with the college presidents who helped them publish "An Appeal for Human Rights" in Atlanta newspapers. "An Appeal" stated that students would participate in "these sit down protests (because) they are dissatisfied, not only with existing conditions, but with the snail-like speed at which they are being ameliorated."³ The first sit-ins were held at state capitol and county courthouse lunchrooms, and 77 students were arrested. Afterwards, many black leaders felt the sit-ins had accomplished their purpose and should stop so that subsequent court cases could result. They were joined by Mayor Hartsfeld of Atlanta, who urged the stoppage before



Martin Luther King, Jr. had been persuaded to join in, and he and several others were arrested.

violence erupted. There was division between the established black leadership and the student group. The student leaders, unhappy at the opposition and feeling desegregation of eating facilities was within their power, decided to stage a sit-in at the restaurant in Rich's, the largest downtown department store. Rich's was chosen because it was locally owned and the dominant retail institution in town. However, Rich's had been the first store to give credit to blacks. Its clerks were instructed to address blacks as "Mister" or "Ma'am." In addition, the store managers removed the segregated drinking fountains and employed large numbers of blacks in non-sales positions. Mr. Rich, when informed of the impending action, arranged a meeting with Lonnie King and the student group. He informed them that he understood discrimination because of his Jewish heritage but argued that protests were dangerous. He proposed that the student group wait until after the public schools were desegregated in 1961; he promised that at that time he would call the merchants together and try to bring an end to segregated lunch counters and restaurants. The students replied that they could wait no longer and Mr. Rich departed, angry and disappointed.

A small sit-in was held on June 27, 1960, and students called for a boycott

of the store. The sit-ins discontinued in August, as students made more ambitious plans. On October 19, large scale sit-ins occurred at Rich's and seven other stores. Picket lines were set up around the store and students urged a boycott of the whole downtown area. Martin Luther King, Jr. had been persuaded to join in, and he and several others were arrested. Again, Mayor Hartsfeld intervened and called for a truce of 30 days, during which time he, student leaders and merchants would try to arrive at a settlement. Again, Mr. Rich reiterated his original proposal and promised to look into employment policies of the store, but the students were not satisfied. Picketing resumed.

To add to the tumult, the Ku Klux Klan arrived to protest the picketers more blacks joined the picket lines and tensions increased. Many lunch counters in town simply shut down. With attitudes hardening, the threat of racial violence finally erupted. On December 12, at 2am, a bomb exploded in a black elementary school.

The restlessness and picketing continued off and on until late February when black elders urged students to accept the compromise that restaurants would desegregate after schools did. When the agreement was announced in March, black Atlantans were outraged. They called for a special meeting at the Warren Methodist Church. Dissension reigned and many called for the resignation of established black leaders. Then Martin Luther King, Jr. rose to speak. He praised the agreement and pointed out it was the first crack in the resistance to lunch counter desegregation in the South. "We must move out now on the road of calm reasonableness. We must come to a mood of mutual trust and mutual confidence. No greater danger exists for the (black) community than to be afflicted with the cancerous disease of disunity. Disagreements and difference there will be, but unity there must be."⁴ The opposition to the agreement was silenced and the crowd dispersed.

Some private protesting of the downtown area continued, but no more organized protest demonstrations took place. The formal desegregation of restaurants, lunchrooms, and restrooms in department and variety stores in Atlanta took place six months later on September 27, 1961.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS

"I'm poor, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here."

—Alice Walker. *The Color Purple*. 1982

In his **essay**, "Men Led, but Women Organized," Charles Payne questions why **women** over-participated in the **Civil Rights** movement of the **1960s**.



In his interviews with many participants, Payne finds that many women joined because of social networks of kinship and friendship. Mothers or relatives of protesting students were drawn in support of their children or relatives. Another reason was a religious one: the movement grew out of the church. "One estimate is that across all varieties of black religious activities, women represent 75 to 90 percent of the participants."⁶ Most of those who joined the struggle in the early years knew they would have to suffer and a strong faith in the Lord made it easier to cope with suffering and believe in the possibility of social change. Along with this religious zeal, the Southern Civil Rights movement blended Mahatma Gandhi's tradition of "satyaqraha" [suh YAH gruh huh] (non-violence) with ideals of Christian pacifism, enhancing the woman's ability to stand up against injustice and giving a sacred character of God's blessing to communal resistance. An analysis of the women participants reveals a final reason: "Women are organizers, men are leaders."⁷ Black women implemented the organization of a predominately male idea, made people feel a part of it, as well as doing the everyday detail work on which things depended, while "men made public announcements, confronted and negotiated with management."⁸

Before 1960, black women were influential in the Civil Rights move-

ment. They were the fore-mothers of the cause between 1935 and 1946. For example, Mary McLeod Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935 and Esther Cooper helped found the Southern Negro Youth Congress in 1937. But the woman credited with igniting the spark for Civil Rights was Rosa Parks. By refusing to relinquish her seat on a city bus to a white man and subsequently being arrested in 1955, she gave impetus to the Montgomery, Alabama Bus Boycott and its leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Black women lawyers such as Constance Baker Motley and Marion Wright Edelman were on Thurgood Marshall's team at the NAACP's Legal Defense and Education fund in its *Brown vs. the Board of Education* fight. Daisy Bates of Little Rock shepherded the six girls (part of the nine students) who bucked the white mobs and Governor Orville Faubus in the desegregation of Arkansas schools.

The black women leaders of the 60s and 70s are numerous and significant. Among them were Ella Baker, a founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and later the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); Fannie Lou Hamer, a leader in black voter registration; Gloria Richardson Dandridge, leader of the movement to desegregate schools in Cambridge, Maryland; and Ruby Smith Robinson, who took over SNCC when Baker left in 1964. All these women, plus the Misses Odessa, Louise, Delores and Ruth and countless others, led the hard-won fight for racial equality. ■

"If I have to, I can do anything; I am strong, I am invincible, I am Woman."

—Helen Reddy. *I Am Woman*. 1972

Successful Black Women of the 1990s



“Every woman has a right to be all that she can be, and to know all she can know.”

—Anonymous

In her book *No Mountain High Enough*, author Dorothy Ehrhard-Morrison interviewed successful African-American women to find similarities in their philosophies, habits and backgrounds. The women she consulted included: Aleta Carpenter, a founder of her own resource development company; Jewel Plummer Cobb, the first African American to be appointed president of California State University, Fullerton; Pat Cowings, a principal researcher at the Psycho-Physiological Research Laboratory at Ames Research Center, Nasa; Henrietta Davis Blackmon, concert singer; Eloise Greenfield, author of children’s books; Jennifer Lawson, vice president for programming and promotional services at PBS; Cynthia Shepard Perry, former ambassador to Sierra Leone and Burundi; Dr. Vivian Pinn, assistant director of the National Institute of Health; Betye Saar, artist; Norma Sklarek, the first African American woman to receive a license to practice architecture in the United States; and Susan L. Taylor, editor in chief of *Essence* magazine.

She writes that all the women she interviewed had parents that had strong



positive influences on the daughters; the family unit, whether two parents or one, empowered them with love and nurturing. Most of those interviewed had one parent who was a strict disciplinarian and the children had a sure sense of limits and boundaries. Rules were explained, enforced with consistency and there were set punishments when rules were broken. But their parents were not so much authoritarian as authoritative—there was a give-and-take relationship between children and parents. Points of view were expressed and considered. The parents, some living in segregated communities, also gave their girls positive and confidence building experiences to instill a strong sense of self esteem.

Their parents believed strongly that the lives of their children would be improved by education. Whether coming from segregated or integrated schools, all went on to achieve undergraduate and post graduate degrees. Some even balanced marriage, family, work and education. The author also noted: “as I listened to the women I interviewed, I noticed how articulate they all were. Somewhere down the academic road, these women, consciously or not, had made the decision to speak formal English rather than black English.”⁹ They perceived that a lack of standard American English would be a barrier to advancement in the workplace.

Even though all of the women experienced racism in some way, most refused to take “no” for an answer; they persisted until accepted, or “bucked the system” if they had to. All insisted that black women have to demand respect

from both white and black men. They will not accept condescending treatment, and frequently “network” in organizations for black women.

There were differing opinions about their experiences with affirmative action. For some, affirmative action was “the grease that turned the wheel.”¹⁰ The program made it possible for many of the women to pursue an education and a career that might not have been available to them otherwise. A few women viewed affirmative action as a disadvantage. They thought their white peers assumed they were not qualified for their place in graduate school or in

the workplace, when actually their credentials were better than their white counterparts. All of the women feel they are in their positions because they merit them, not because of any governmental program that favored blacks. To a woman, they know they can’t rest on their laurels. They know they have to be better than average and stay one step ahead of their white counterparts just to stay even. Missus Odessa, Louise, Delores and Ruth would be proud to see these women as successors to their “sit-in.” ■

A CONVERSATION WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT:

S H E R R Y

BY LINDA ELLER

L: Why did you write this play?

S: There were so many reasons. I have been trying to write this story for a long time. We had moved to Chicago and had no close friends or family. I was lonesome and in the middle of a difficult pregnancy that restricted me to bed rest. There wasn't much I could do. I had been trying to write this story for a long time but I had never had the time to sit down to do it. I wrote the play because my mother started telling me these [family] stories when I was a kid. One particular story stood out. It was how we got lettuce and tomato salad in the house and how we started eating it on Fridays with fish sticks. She said that Muddy (we used to call my Grandmother, "Muddy," short for Mother Dear) ...Yeah, Muddy, everybody called her Muddy or Lou. Muddy used to go downtown on Fridays with her friends and have lunch and have a salad. At the time, I didn't think much of it because salad had become a household thing, but every few years I used to get a little bit more of the story about when they [my grandmother and her friends] had gone downtown. By the time I was learning about civil rights in the history of this country, I began to put the story together and realized that she had started to do this "eating out" thing at a time when it wasn't done or had just begun to be done. By this time, she had already passed away, so I could not talk to her specifically about it, but my mother could tell me. I actually remember her [my grandmother] going out on Fridays because the character, Palmeroy Bateman, was a friend of hers and used to visit often. That's his real name too. (In a raspy voice) Palmeroy used to talk like this. He was a heavy smoker. He was older than my grandmother. They used to carpool together. He would bring her home in the evenings from work and they would sit and talk. He's very much still alive somewhere but of course a lot older. He wasn't really a bus driver, but he drove her and talked to her.

L: Your grandmother is one of the characters?

S: Miss Louise.

L: What was your grandmother like?

S: She was a little bit of everything. By the time I got her as a grandmother, she had settled down considerably but she had a "rep" before that. She was very lively and everybody liked her. I never met anybody who did not like her. She drank her beer, listened to her music and partied on the weekend. She was very lively and lived a full life. She had my mother when she was 17.

L: Was she strong willed?

S: She was very strong willed. She was about five feet tall and always wore Bermuda shorts, year round. We lived in

To go to school, I begged, borrowed, got scholarships and worked two and three jobs.

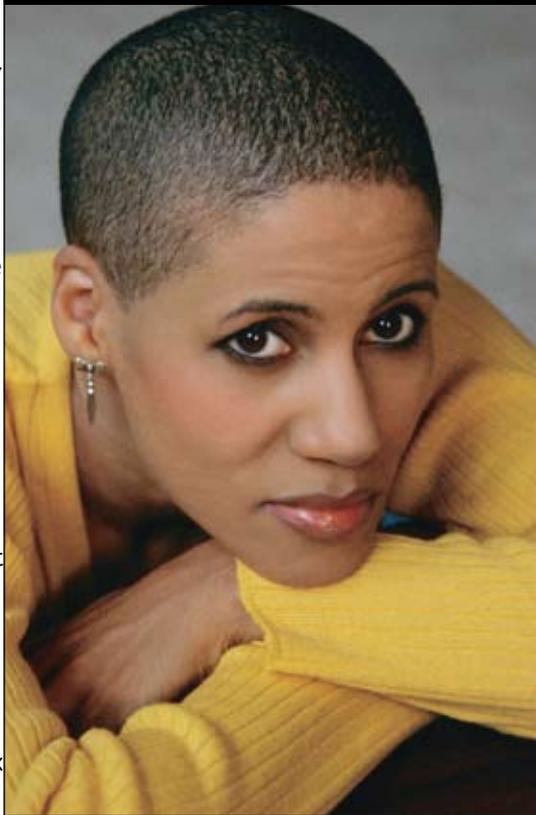


PHOTO BY MELANIE SIMONET

Georgia. We didn't get snow; it did get cold, but I never saw her in a pair of long pants. Never! I also remember that she always wore sneakers with a hole in the toe. Because of her job at the toy factory, she didn't have to dress up. After she passed away, everybody spread out.

L: Did she actually work at a doll factory?

S: The Rushton Toy Company. They were

nice to us. They were very good to my Grandmother when she was there. Rich's, the department store, is still there too, but I changed the name in the script. I wanted it to be more of an everyman's story. I changed it to Marshes.

L: What about the other three women in the play?

S: They were all friends of my grandmother and I knew them. Miss Ruth was the wife of our pastor. Miss Delores was a women's club member and friend of my grandmother's. She was the youngest of the four and the most naïve.

L: Have they read your play?

S: No. They are from a different place and time. They would never read it; they would just say, "Oh, isn't that nice."

L: Did you know Miss Odessa?

S: Yes. She lived in the apartment downstairs. She was a great big lady. All her kids were grown and gone. She was older than my grandmother and she was very good to the neighborhood kids; she always had candy waiting. At that time, if you saw a kid in the street, you could correct him, but now you have to be very careful.

L: Did all four women go with your Grandmother as a group?

S: I am not sure. I wish that I had been able to ask my grandmother more about it. I know that she didn't go by herself. I know that she went with her friends. I deduced that these women went together.

L: Do you know what happened the first time?

S: I don't know, that's why the play stops. I wish that I did know.

L: Do you know how they felt afterward?

S: No. I couldn't get any of that information.

L: Did your grandfather support your grandmother in this?

S: No. He was gone when my mother was a kid.

L: So, your grandmother raised your mother alone?

S: And my mother raised me alone, so it's kind of a generational thing. The women in my family, my aunts, my grandmother, my grandmother's mother, I heard that they never had men in the house. It was said that whenever my great aunt was

PLAYWRIGHT continued on page 7

PLAYWRIGHT continued from page 8

late coming home from work, several months later there would be a kid. She had three. But you never saw the father. If there were men, I never knew, I never saw them. My great grandmother cleaned out movie theatres for a little bit of nothing. My grandmother sewed the heads on dolls at the doll factory. My mother was a step above because she had two years of college. They were in tears when I was born; they did not want me because my mother quit school and went to work.

L. Were they very strong women?

S. They were.

L. Were your mother and grandmother protestors?

S. No. They just lived their everyday lives. They decided that this is what they will do and this is what they won't do. They were the heads of one-parent families.

L. Did your mom encourage you to go to college?

S. No. I thought that I would just go and become a secretary. She didn't encourage or discourage me. It was all up to me.

L. Was it a nurturing environment?

S. Yes. I was raised to believe that I could do whatever I wanted to do if I worked, made my own money, didn't step on anyone else's toes and wasn't asking anyone to give me anything. It was a subconscious thing because they never stopped me. If I said that I wanted to go to the moon they'd probably say, "Oh, that's nice. Who's going to pay for it? How are you going to get there? Have you got enough money? (Yes?) Okay." As long as I didn't say that I didn't have enough money to go to the moon. Because then they'd say "You know where the MacDonal'd's is; you go down and make that 'moon money' and then you can go." I always worked; I never asked for money. I worked, saved my money, went where I wanted to go and nobody told me that I could not go.

L. Do you think that you got your drive for achievement from your grandmother?

S. Yes. I think I do have her drive. To go to school, I begged, borrowed, got scholarships and worked two and three jobs. I'd go to one job, go to class, leave class early and go to another job, and then go to another class late. I ran out of money to do that and I was too tired, so I took what I had left and went to England and that was one of the best times of my life.

L. How does your mother feel about your success?

S. Oh, she thinks it's great.

L. Was she a big influence?

S. On writing the play? No. She just told me about it. She is not a play-goer and when I asked her why, she said, "things I've seen just didn't speak to me." She wouldn't appreciate Shakespeare because she's like most people in the black community. You've got to speak to them first and then they'll come. They'll come to other things as well when you have spoken to them first. That's like something that came up when I was in England at the Royal Court Theatre as an intern in 1991. Another female intern was reading a great big notebook about something and I asked her why they had her reading that book and she said, "It's research about why people of color don't come to the theatre more." Now you must understand that on the night staff they had all kinds of people of color; they had me,

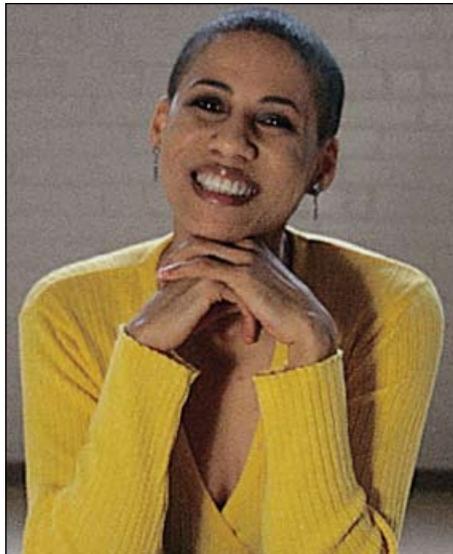


PHOTO BY MELANIE SIMONET

I was raised to believe that I could do whatever I wanted to do if I worked, made my own money, didn't step on anyone else's toes and wasn't asking anyone to give me anything.

kids from India, people from Taiwan and many more. I asked, "If they want to know, why don't they ask one of us? Why do they have you reading this big book on it? If the theatre started out doing something that is speaking to us as people or speaking to our culture we might come." I did have a great time [in England] and the people were lovely but no one there ever asked us about it. I was an American and always on a soap-box.

L. Have you written any other plays?

S. Yes, I have a new play, *Some Place Soft to Fall* that will have a reading at

the Denver Center Theatre Company. It's about a woman trying to come to terms with how she raised her son. It has been a question with me. When you are from a family of two, three and maybe four generations of women and then you have one son come along, can you really connect with that male figure and give him what he needs? Because not only are you used to being in a house without a male figure, you might not have that much regard for them in certain ways. My family, from the stories I have heard, probably didn't appreciate men that much or maybe didn't know how to. In the play, the mother struggles with whether she really did love her son.

L. How do you like Denver?

S. Oh, it's great. The reading of my play last spring had a response I didn't even expect. The play for me is pretty matter of fact, I guess, even surface. What is happening is very obvious; it's not a heavily psychological thing except that the women are afraid and because they are afraid they are arguing with each other and their commitment is falling apart.

L. They are doing something that had been banned. I'd like to think that I'd be able to do something like these four women, but I am not in the same situation.

S. Part of the gist of the play is that you can be in favor of something, but actually going out and participating...that's something different. A funny thing happened when this play had a reading at the Karamu Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio. A young girl in the audience about 17 or 18 years old did not know what the play was about. Instead of thinking that there was anything wrong with her education she said, "I don't know who this writer is and I don't know who she is writing for, but people my age won't know what is going on. The play was on a whole long time before I understood what was happening." It really surprised me that this generation does not know about what happened to give them their freedom.

L. Then, maybe this is the right time for this play.

S. Yes. Maybe it is!

TIMELINE



OF MAJOR EVENTS IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

1953 A successful ten-day boycott of buses takes place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in June. Led by Rev. T. J. Jamison, a former NAACP president, black citizens gain modifications in the segregation rules.

1954 On May 17, the U.S. Supreme Court (in *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*) declares segregation in the public schools to be inherently unequal and mandates desegregation.

1955 The *Brown II* decision of the Supreme Court implements the 1954 ruling by requiring desegregation "with all deliberate speed."

■ On Dec. 1, Mrs. Rosa Parks is arrested for violating the bus segregation ordinance in Montgomery, Alabama.

■ The Montgomery bus boycott begins on Dec. 5; the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. is elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association.

1956 The Supreme Court upholds a favorable district court decision declaring Montgomery's bus segregation to be illegal. On Dec. 21, Montgomery's buses are integrated and the bus boycott is called off after 381 days.

1957 The Southern Christian Leadership Conference is founded in January and Martin Luther King, Jr. is chosen as president.

■ Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas calls out the National Guard to prevent nine black students from entering all white Central High School in Little Rock; a court order requires Faubus to withdraw the National Guard. After threats of violence, President Eisenhower orders paratroopers to Little Rock to enforce integration and places 10,000 National Guardsmen in federal service. The troops remain there for the rest of the year to protect the students.

■ The first Civil Rights Act in 82 years is passed by Congress. Though weak, it has investigative and advisory functions as well as the power of subpoena. The Civil Rights Commission is established.

1958 A successful voter registration drive in Fayette and Haywood counties, Tennessee, leads to severe economic reprisals. Many black sharecroppers are evicted. In 1960, "Tent City" is set up and a national appeal for aid made.

1960 The sit-ins begin in Greensboro and spread to more than 100 cities. Dr. King is jailed in Atlanta. Democratic presidential candi-

date John F. Kennedy telephones Mrs. King to express concern. This act is credited with gaining him the election.

1961 On May 4, Freedom Riders, led by James Farmer of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) leave Washington, D.C. by bus in order to expose illegal segregation practices in terminal accommodations. On May 14, a white mob burns a Freedom Riders' bus near Anniston, Alabama. Klansmen in Birmingham beat riders aboard a second bus. The Freedom rides continue. In September, segregation in all interstate transportation facilities is declared illegal by the Interstate Commerce Commission.

1962 On October 1, James Meredith becomes the first black person to attend class at the University of Mississippi after a weekend of riots during which the National Guard has been called in.

1963 On April 3, major demonstrations are launched in Birmingham, Alabama to protest segregation. These continued throughout May. Schoolchildren are recruited for demonstrations and marches. Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor responds with police dogs, fire hoses and mass arrests.

■ On June 11, Alabama Governor George Wallace tries to block integration at the University of Alabama by standing in the door. The first black student is admitted.

■ The March on Washington, sponsored by a coalition of Civil Rights groups, churches and some unions, attracts hundreds of thousands of peaceful demonstrators to the nation's capitol on August 28.

■ An assassin kills President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, on November 22.

1964 Hundreds of volunteers arrive to work in Freedom Summer, the Mississippi voter registration project organized by the combined Civil Rights organizations. Three Civil Rights workers, James Chaney, Mickey Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, are abducted on June 21, while investigating an incident of violence. Their bodies are found buried near Philadelphia, Mississippi on August 4.

■ The 1964 Civil Rights Act is passed by Congress on July 2 and is signed by President Lyndon Johnson.

■ Martin Luther King, Jr. receives the Nobel Peace Prize.

1965 President Lyndon Johnson outlines the Great Society Program to attack poverty.

■ Malcolm X is shot to death at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City on February 21.

■ In August, the Voting Rights Bill is signed into law by Lyndon Johnson.

■ In the same month, the first major urban conflagration occurs in Watts, California, as black ghetto dwellers burn and loot, following a police arrest of a black youth.

1966 In June, Stokely Carmichael popularizes the slogan "black power" on a march retracing the steps of James Meredith who was gunned down earlier that month in Mississippi.

■ The formation of the Black Panther party by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale takes place in Oakland, California in October.

■ Martin Luther King, Jr., SNCC and CORE take positions opposing the war in Vietnam.

1967 The President appoints a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders to inquire into the causes of the urban rebellions. The report is published in 1968.

1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated on April 4, while assisting striking garbage workers in Memphis, Tennessee. Massive riots take place throughout the nation.

■ Robert Kennedy, a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, is assassinated on June 4, as he is leaving a rally.

■ Richard Nixon is elected president.

ACTIVITIES

1. Create a tiered timeline of the United States in the 1950s and '60s. Break out the events of civil rights movement into the second tier. Look for relationships between the two timelines. Are there any?

In each of the tiers, organize major events, people and ideas that characterize this time period. From this two-tiered timeline, extract important dates, people, places and themes that would best describe the time period. (Incorporate information on the cold war, arms race, anti-war movement (Vietnam), hippy and the women's movement.)

2. Extend this activity by Creating a third tier with a timeline of the world during this same period. Extract important dates, people, places and themes that best describe the time period.

These exercises contribute to Colorado Model Content Standard #1.2 for History. (Students use chronology to organize historical events and people.)

3. Create a who's who and a what's what of the Civil Rights movement. Who stands out in your timeline? Why were they important historical figures? What is their background? What, if any, organizations did they start and do they still exist today? What is their purpose?

4. Define: racism, integration, picket lines, Freedom Riders, civil rights, segregation (desegregation), prejudice, discrimination, passive resistance, boycott, compromise, protest marches, nonviolent demonstration, civil disobedience, human rights, social change, militant, activist, separate-but-equal, "Black Power."

5. Targets for discrimination are those people society fails to protect. Refer to your definition of discrimination and give an example of discrimination from each of the following categories: gender, sexual orientation, beliefs, race, age, ethnicity, physical size, physical ability, occupation, location, citizenship, income, style

of dress. Can you think of more categories? Ask for more examples from the class.

EXERCISE

As a class discuss how you and your friends are treated by shop assistants, parking lot attendants, receptionists, etc. Are you treated in the same manner as your parents? Why?

ACTIVITY

a. Materials: a paper and pencil

b. Ask students to recall an incidence of discrimination against themselves. Instruct them to

write how they felt about the incident and whether it still bothers them.

c. Ask for volunteers to share them with the group.

d. Do any common feelings emerge?

Fear?
Loneliness?
Isolation?

e. Ask the students what they would do differently if it happened again. Why? Does this knowledge empower you?

f. Ask the class members to try to imagine what they would do to help a victim of discrimination.

g. Create a culminating activity of role-playing some of the student's situations as they actually happened, then as they wish it would have happened.

6. Oral History: Interview a parent, grandparent, neighbor or an older friend. Ask about experiences with discrimination. Have they ever experienced it? How did it make them feel? How did they overcome it? What do they feel now? (Remember that there are many forms of discrimination based on gender, sexual

orientation, beliefs, race, age, ethnicity, physical size, physical ability, occupation, location, citizenship, income, style of dress, etc.) Set up an uninterrupted time. Do it over a period of days so no one gets tired or tape it. But if you tape it, ask permission.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

How old were you? Where did you live? Were you involved in the movement? If so, how? Try to draw out interesting stories and details. Be sensitive and considerate. Some people may be more reluctant than others to discuss some of the subjects. At the end of the interview, explain that you will write up what you have learned and that this story will become part of your class's oral history collection. Find out whether your subject would like to be referred to by name or remain anonymous.

7. All of us discriminate every day:

Synonyms of discriminate include: to judge, to be critical, to favor, to distinguish. We discriminate

between things and make choices of clothes, religion, friends, classes, foods. What makes discrimination harmful?

(When does it disallow someone from enjoying the same freedoms as you do?)

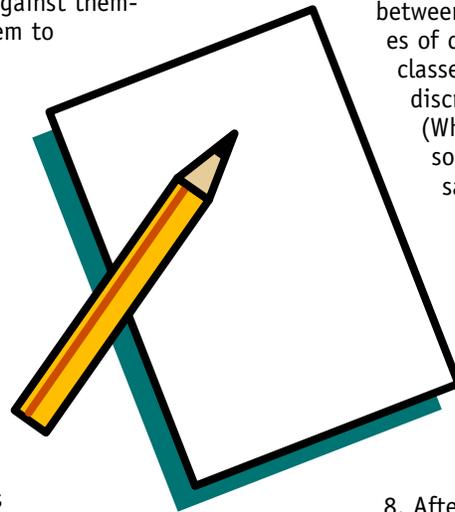
Is there such a thing as positive discrimination?

Identify ways in which you discriminate every day. Create your own definition of positive discrimination and harmful discrimination.

8. After the show: Ruth,

Dolores, Odessa and Louise entered a place that had once been banned and still did not welcome them, a restaurant that historically only served white customers. Although the Supreme Court had overturned "Separate but Equal" it was up to the people to sometimes realize their rights. What must they have felt just before entering the restaurant? What kind of courage did they have to make the final step? Imagine that you are entering a new school, job or other slightly threatening environment. You have never been there before. Try to imagine or remember how you felt the night before, the morning of and the moment before going to this place and describe your feelings.

a. How do you feel the moment before



ACTIVITIES continued from page 9

you go in.

b. Why are you going in?

c. What do you expect to encounter?

d. How have you decided to act?

e. What makes you nervous?

f. Do you fear anything?

g. How will you retain your composure?

Use this information to write a paragraph, poem or journal entry as one of the characters of how it felt, the strengths you had to draw upon and how you felt afterwards or write and perform an interior monologue. Write a short scene or story about the four women going back home on the bus. How did they feel? What happened to them in the restaurant? Are they going back on Friday? Are they stronger because they participated in desegregating Rich's? Was this experience as terrifying as they thought it might be? You are a reporter, write of the event for the town newspaper.

This exercise contributes to Colorado Model Content Standard #3 for Reading and Writing. Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. This exercise also contributes to Colorado Model Content Standard #4 for Reading and Writing. Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing.

9. Research and Represent: Select pairs of students. Assign one of the following to a pair or come up with others of your own choosing.

■ Martin Luther King and Malcolm X about similarities and differences in their approach to protest during the Civil Rights movement.

■ President John F. Kennedy and Governor George Wallace of Alabama about Federal versus States rights in the Civil Rights movement.

This exercise contributes to Colorado Model Content standard #2 for Civics. Students know the structure and function of local, state, and national government, and how citizen involvement and democratic principles shape public policy.

■ Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi about their belief in and their use of nonviolent protests. This exercise contributes to **Colorado Model Content Standard 6.2 for History. Students know how societies have been affected by religions and philosophies.**

■ Stokely Carmichael (Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating

Committee) and Roy Wilkins (Leader of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People) on "Black Power."

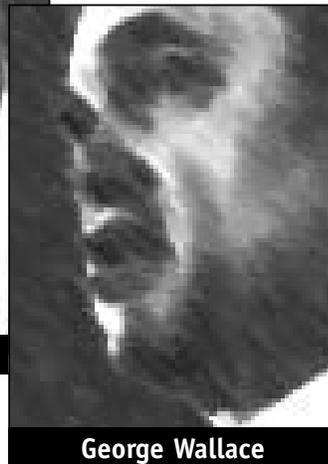
■ A white Freedom Rider and parents that do not want him/her to participate in a Freedom Ride. The issue is about why the young person wishes to participate and why the parents do not want him/her to go.

Ask the students to create a dialogue about their issues. The student actor can then respond to prompts or questions from the teacher and class.

10. After investigating the intent of the Civil Rights movement and present day condition of civil rights in the U.S., write a letter to President Kennedy, Martin



John Kennedy



George Wallace

Luther King or another civil rights personage. Explain the state of civil rights in America today and how their work helped or hindered contemporary issues of civil rights. Take a current event regarding civil rights to provide as an example. The letter might be a criticism of its failure or praise for its success. The letter might take the form of a thank you for our freedoms or the letter might be in the form of the question: "is this really what you intended?" Use historical information to interpret and evaluate decisions or policies regarding contemporary issues. Allow the students interpretational latitude in the type of letter they write.

This exercise contributes to Colorado Model Content Standard 2.3 for History. Students apply knowledge of the past to analyze present-day issues and events from multiple, historically objective perspectives.

11. Bias: to give a settled and often prejudiced outlook, to influence. (*Webster's Third International Dictionary.*) Are newspaper articles objective or do

they influence by biased reporting? Language can be subtle and cunning. The skillful usage of words can manipulate the readers perceptions. Assignment: Look through the newspaper to see how people are represented through language. Are all groups identified by their race, gender, age, physical limitations, ethnic origin, occupation, income, location, religion, etc. Are most white middle class American represented in the same way? Rewrite what you find eliminating the biased words. Does the article sound more objective? Look at editorials, crime reporting, check out the photographs, the headline and where the article appears.

12. Privilege: A right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage or favor. Privileged: not subject to the usual laws or penalties because of some special circumstance. (*Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*) On separate sheets of paper write: white, male, female, heterosexual, middle class, rich, working, a teacher, foreign diplomat, a student, etc.

Pass out a paper to each member of the class. Ask each student to fill in the phrase "because I am

I can _____" and list the privileges that go with their label. After the class is finished, write the labels on the board and the list the privileges that go with the label underneath. Discuss whether everyone should have these privileges.

13. Mother May I?

The object of this game is to be the first one get from one place to another first (usually from one end of the room to the other.) That person then becomes mother. One person is the power broker (Mother) she gives permission to take steps and tells the participants what kind of steps to take: baby steps, giant steps, skipping steps. Each type of step has advantages or disadvantages for crossing the room. Each participant must say "may I" and not move before mother says "yes you may." If they move before saying "may I" they must go back to the beginning. Questions: If your goal is to get across the room, how does it feel to have someone make it easy or difficult for you? You are totally in "Mother's" control. Can she influence your success or failure? Why should she care if you get across the room first? You are mother. What are you trying to do and what is your strategy? Reflect upon this activity by relating it to the play. ■

HISTORICAL EVENTS

MENTIONED IN THE PLAY

Scottsboro case

In 1931, nine young black men were arrested in Scottsboro, Alabama on a charge of raping two white women as they all rode together on a freight train through Alabama. The entire case rested on the testimony of the two women, one a prostitute, the other a semi-literate cotton mill worker, who later recanted her story. Narrowly avoiding being lynched, the nine men were convicted. But publicity generated by the U. S. Communist party brought attention to the case and a new trial resulted. Although again convicted, several of the men did not serve their full sentences because of the belief in their innocence.

Emmett Till

Emmett Till was a 14-year-old boy from Chicago who was visiting Mississippi in 1955. In Money, a small town, he was taunted by a group of black boys into speaking to the white woman working behind the counter in a store. Unfamiliar with the ways of the South, Till purchased some candy and said "Bye, Baby" to Mrs. Carolyn Bryant, the owner's wife. When Mr. Bryant returned, he and his brother-in-law, J. W. Milam, sought out Till. They crushed one side of his skull, pushed in one eye, shot him and threw his body in a river. His mother, Mamie Till, demanded his body be sent to

Chicago, where he was eulogized in an open-casket funeral so everyone could see what had been done to her son. Black Americans were outraged, but white Mississippians rallied around Bryant and Milam. They were found not guilty at their trial.

Little Rock School Desegregation

In August 1957, nine black students attempted to register at the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. They were denied access to the school by Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus. When the federal government ordered Faubus to allow the students to register, Faubus said he could not guarantee the safety of the students.



A Black school in the South before integration.

The students were taunted and terrorized by local white people until the federal government stepped in. President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered federal troops to Little Rock to protect the students and ensure that Faubus would comply with the school integration order (Brown vs. the Board of Education).

Notes

1. Jackson, p. 311.
2. Wolff, p. 160.
3. Garrow, p. 66.
4. Garrow, p. 90.
5. Garrow, p. 92.
6. Payne, p. 5.
7. Payne, p. 8.
8. Payne, p. 8.
9. Ehrhar-Morrison, p. 78.
10. Ehrhart-Morrison, p. 110.

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