



DENVER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS Theatre Company

INSIDE OUT

A STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

ONE
NIGHT
IN
MIAMI

ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI

SYNOPSIS

After Cassius Clay's unexpected victory over Sonny Liston on February 25, 1964, he has become Heavyweight Champion of the World. To celebrate the victory, Clay holes up in a Miami hotel room with football star Jim Brown, music icon Sam Cooke and Nation of Islam activist Malcolm X. Soon afterward, Clay will announce his conversion to the Nation of Islam and change his name to Muhammad Ali. Playwright Kemp Powers imagines what these four pivotal men might have discussed that night.



INSIDE OUT

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One Night in Miami

by Kemp Powers

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CASSIUS CLAY / MUHAMMAD ALI

Muhammad Ali was born Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr. in 1942 in Louisville, Kentucky; he and his father were named after 19th-century abolitionist and Kentucky politician Cassius Marcellus Clay, who was appointed by President Abraham Lincoln as American minister to Russia during the American Civil War. An incident early in life led him to boxing: when 12-year-old Cassius's bicycle was stolen, he swore to whup the thief; local policeman Joe Martin told him he should learn to box before challenging people. He began training and soon won his first fight on Martin's local television boxing show, "Tomorrow's Champions." Upon winning, he declared, "I'll be the greatest fighter of all times!" He went on to win six Kentucky Golden Gloves titles, two national Golden Gloves titles and two Amateur Athletic Union titles before he made the 1960 Olympic team when he was 18 years old. Extremely popular with the press and his fellow athletes, Clay won the gold medal without facing much competition. He recited a poem at his homecoming reception in Kentucky:

To make America the greatest is my goal,
So I beat the Russian, and I beat the Pole,
And for the USA won the Medal of Gold.
Italians said "You're greater than the Cassius of Old.
We like your name, we like your game.
So make Rome your home if you will."
I said, "I appreciate your kind hospitality,
But the USA is my country still,
'Cause they waiting to welcome me in Louisville.

To launch Clay's professional boxing career, a collection of 11 white businessmen (the Louisville Sponsoring Group) contributed funds toward his continued training, with an agreement to receive a percentage of his fighting profits. Clay made his professional boxing debut late in 1960. Dissatisfied with his first trainer, Archie Moore, in California, Clay relocated to Miami, Florida, to train with Angelo Dundee at the Fifth Street Gym. Confident in his abilities, Clay began predicting in which round he would knock out his opponents, and he was almost always able to make his predictions come true, even if he had to dance around or practically hold his opponent up until the self-appointed round. He trash-talked his opponents before and during the fights and became known as the Louisville Lip for his big talk.

In February 1964, the morning after 22-year-old Cassius Clay won the world heavyweight championship, he announced to the world his conversion to the Nation of Islam and changed his name to Cassius X (later Muhammad Ali, meaning "The Great"). This announcement earned him instant notoriety, as mainstream America refused to accept his Muslim faith.

Public opinion veered further from Ali when he refused to be drafted to fight in Vietnam, considering himself a conscientious objector based on his religion; he stated, "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong - no Viet Cong ever called me nigger." His refusal to enlist cost him his championship and his boxing license in every state. He was unable to box professionally for more than three years, but he stood by his principles and appealed his conviction to the Supreme Court.

Finally returning to boxing late in 1970, he fought his way back to the top and earned the world heavyweight championship title for the second time at the highly publicized "Rumble in the Jungle" fight against George Foreman in Zaire on October 30, 1974. Before this fight, Ali defined his strategy in his typical boasting verse: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. His hands can't hit what his eyes can't see." The following year, Ali won another highly publicized fight, "The Thrilla in Manilla," in the Philippines, against Joe Frazier. However, boxing was taking a great toll on Ali's body. Though he announced his retirement in 1979, he couldn't resist returning to the ring for a few more fights. At the 1981 press conference after Ali's final fight, sportswriter Ed Schuyler said to him, "Muhammad, thank you. You gave us a hell of a ride."

In 1984, Muhammad Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson's syndrome. Unlike the hereditary Parkinson's disease, the syndrome is caused by brain trauma, a result of the thousands of punches Ali sustained during his decades of boxing. The syndrome does not affect intelligence and is not life threatening, but does cause visible symptoms: trembling hands, shuffling walk, a mask-like face and slurred speech.

Muhammad Ali had the honor of lighting the flame at the opening ceremony of the 1996 Olympic Games held in Atlanta. He publically promoted his biopic, *Ali*, starring Will Smith, in 2001, but his appearances in recent years have been less frequent.

THE FIGHT

On the evening of February 25, 1964, Cassius Clay fought Charles “Sonny” Liston for the heavyweight championship title, but the fight itself was just part of the story. Clay had been agitating for this fight for months. He announced to the press that he’d haunt Liston until he agreed to a fight. He traveled to Las Vegas to taunt Liston while he was in casinos. He went to Liston’s Denver home wearing a jacket that said “Bear Huntin’” and set a bear trap in Liston’s lawn. Liston finally gave in and signed a fight contract, expecting to beat Clay easily (Liston was a 6-1 favorite).

Though barely more than six-feet tall, Sonny Liston was strongly built, with an intimidating appearance and fists like cannon balls. He had learned to box while in the Missouri State Penitentiary for armed robbery and made his professional debut in 1953, less than a year after his release from prison on early parole. Further trouble with the law (assaulting an officer and resisting arrest) led him to take a hiatus from boxing in 1957, but he returned powerfully the following year. By 1960, he was clearly the No. 1 contender for the World Heavyweight Championship, but current champion Floyd Patterson avoided scheduling a championship bout, citing Liston’s links to organized crime. When they finally met in 1962, Liston knocked him out in the first round, thus claiming the title. Their fight contract had a rematch clause, with which Patterson tried to redeem himself several months later, but he lasted only four seconds longer in the second fight. He had continued run-ins with the police in Philadelphia, and chose to relocate to Denver.

Publicity was high for the upcoming Clay/Liston bout. Almost all sportswriters predicted Liston would win easily and early. As usual, Clay had predicted which round he’d knock out Liston: the eighth. He’d also composed one of his boasting rhymes:

Then Clay lands with a right, what a beautiful swing,

And the punch raised the bear right out of the ring.

Liston still rising and the ref wears a frown,

But he can’t start counting until Sonny comes down.

Now Liston disappears from view, the crowd is getting frantic

But our radar stations have picked him up somewhere over the Atlantic.

On the morning of February 25, 1964, the reigning world heavyweight champion Sonny Liston and the upstart contender Cassius Clay arrived for the weigh-in. Clay launched himself at Liston, screaming “I got you now, Sonny. I got your championship now!” Six people were required to restrain Clay, who was fined \$2,500 on the spot by the Miami Boxing Commission. Clay later told the doctor in explanation, “Liston is a bully, and a bully is scared of a crazy man. Now Liston thinks I’m crazy. I got him worried.” It was all part of the plan. Liston’s former opponent Eddie Machen had told Clay that Liston’s weak point was his temper, so Clay purposely drove him to distraction.

Despite pundits’ predictions of an early-round win for Liston, Clay won the first round. He danced away from Liston’s lumbering punches before jabbing back. In the third round, Clay’s punches caused a cut under Liston’s left eye, which was the first cut in his career and eventually required eight stitches. A ringside broadcaster shouted, “This could be the upset of the century!” But the fight wasn’t over yet.

During the fourth round, Clay’s eyes started stinging. In the break between the fourth and fifth rounds, he almost quit because he couldn’t see. Whether accidentally or on purpose, the ointment used to close Liston’s cut had gotten on his gloves and from there to Clay’s face and eyes. Seconds from disqualification, Clay’s cornermen pushed the nearly blind boxer back into the ring with their best advice: “Run.” So he spent the fifth round avoiding the huge boxer he could barely see. Luckily, Clay’s eyes had cleared before the sixth round, which he dominated. Sitting in his corner after the sixth round, Liston did not answer the bell for the seventh round. Clay was declared the winner by technical knockout. He danced a jig in the ring and repeatedly shouted such declarations as “I’m the greatest!” and “I’m pretty” and “I shook up the world!”

MALCOLM X

Malcolm X (1925-1965) was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925; the family soon relocated to Lansing, Michigan. His Georgia-born father, Earl Little, was an outspoken Baptist minister, a passionate civil rights advocate and an avid supporter of Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey. Malcolm X's mother Louise had been born in the Caribbean country Granada to a black mother and an unnamed white father; more so than his siblings, Malcolm X inherited his mother's paler skin and hair. In his autobiography, he speculated that his father unconsciously treated him better than his siblings because of his light-skinned appearance, though the opposite was true of his mother: "Nearly all my whippings came from my mother." Earl Little died in 1931 in what was officially ruled a streetcar accident, but which was more likely an orchestrated murder by the white supremacist group Black Legion. A few years later, Louise Little was committed to a mental asylum; her children were separated and raised in a series of foster homes.

Malcolm X initially excelled in school, but he lost interest after a white teacher told him his dream of becoming a lawyer was unrealistic. Moving to Harlem and later Boston, Malcolm X developed a life of petty crime; in 1946, he was convicted of burglary. During his seven years in prison, he joined the religious organization, the Nation of Islam (NOI), led by Elijah Muhammad, who preached black supremacy and the need for a state separate from white people. When he left prison in 1952, he had changed his surname to X: considering Little a slave name, he claimed the X to signify his lost tribal name. (He was later also known as Malik El-Shabazz.) In 1955, Malcolm X met Betty Sanders after one of his lectures. She joined the Nation in 1956 and changed her name to Betty X. The two married in 1958 and had six daughters, including twins born after Malcolm's death in 1965.

Malcolm X had become a national spokesman for the NOI, attracting thousands of new members; by the early 1960s, he and other NOI leaders were under FBI surveillance. In 1963, he became disillusioned with the NOI after discovering his mentor Muhammad was not living up

to his own teachings but having multiple affairs. Malcolm X refused to help cover up Muhammad's deceit, and his relationship with the NOI movement became strained. Also in 1963, Malcolm X began collaborating with writer Alex Haley on his memoirs; based on a series of interviews from 1963 to 1965, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* has become an influential classic.

After President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, the Nation of Islam ordered its ministers not to comment. However, when Malcolm X was asked directly, he replied that President Kennedy "never foresaw that the chickens would come home to roost so soon," meaning that his failure to address the climate of hate and the violence being perpetrated across America had led directly to his death. He added, "Being an old farm boy myself, chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad; they always made me glad." The press interpreted his words to mean he was pleased the president was dead. Infuriated with Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam forbade him from public speaking for 90 days, though Malcolm X suspected his comments about President Kennedy were merely used as an excuse to silence him on other issues (especially his criticisms of Elijah Muhammad himself).

In March 1964 (shortly after the events in this play), Malcolm X was excommunicated from the Nation; he soon founded his own religious organization, the Muslim Mosque, Inc. Later that year, on a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, he met "blonde-haired, blue-eyed men I could call my brothers." He returned to the United States with a broader understanding of Islam, a new outlook on integration and a new, hopeful message for all races. However, he had already been marked for assassination. His home in New York was firebombed, though the family escaped unharmed. A week later, at a speaking engagement in Manhattan on February 21, 1965, three gunmen rushed Malcolm X onstage and shot him 15 times at close range. The assassins, all members of the NOI, were convicted of first-degree murder. Fifteen hundred people attended Malcolm X's funeral in Harlem.

THE NATION OF ISLAM

The Nation of Islam is a religious movement founded in Detroit, Michigan, on July 4, 1930, by Wallace Fard Muhammad, who is considered by NOI teachings to be Judaism's long awaited Messiah and Islam's prophesied Mahdi. His mission was to restore and resurrect his lost people, the Tribe of Shabazz, those of African descent who had been captured and exploited as slaves in America. In 1933, Muhammad created a male-only paramilitary wing of the NOI called the Fruit of Islam, or Soldiers of Allah. Muhammad spent over three years training his chosen successor Elijah Muhammad (born Elijah Poole), who led the Nation of Islam movement from W. Fard Muhammad's disappearance in 1934 until his own death in 1975.

The syncretic Nation of Islam (sometimes referred to as Black Muslims) combined

orthodox Islam with the black nationalist movement, expecting its adherents to subscribe to Muslim rules for behavior (no alcohol, no pork, etc.) while advocating black separatism and freedom from the status quo of white domination.

Because in mathematics X represents an unknown variable, many followers of the Nation of Islam changed their surnames to X to represent their lost African names. Thus, Malcolm Little became Malcolm X, and Cassius Clay became Cassius X. These names would later evolve into Arabic names reflecting their character: Malcolm X (after his conversion from NOI to Sunni Islam) took the name El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, and Cassius X became Muhammad Ali.

SAM COOKE

Sam Cooke (1931-1964) was born in Mississippi, one of eight children of a Baptist minister. He sang in church and local gospel choirs from a very young age and replaced the lead singer of the popular gospel group, The Soul Stirrers, in 1950. Cooke helped bring gospel music to the attention of younger listeners, who clamored to get a glimpse of this handsome young man. He supported the nascent Civil Rights Movement and refused to sing in segregated concert halls.

In 1957, Cooke bridged the gap between gospel and pop music; his single "You Send Me" sold more than a million copies and knocked Elvis's "Jailhouse Rock" from the top of the charts. That same year he released a cover of the popular song "(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons." Other hits included "Chain Gang" (1960), "Bring It on Home to Me" and "Having a Party" (1962) and "Put Me Down Easy" (1963). He was a popular performer in many parts of the country, and his discography includes live performance at Miami's Harlem Square Club (1963) and New York City's

Copacabana ("Copa") nightclub (1964).

In addition to being a performer, Cooke established himself as a successful and groundbreaking black entrepreneur within the mainstream music industry. He was the first major African American artist to sign with RCA Records, but he was unhappy with the deal they offered him. He soon founded his own publishing company (KAGS Music) and his own record company (SAR/Derby) in order to retain control of his music. He also helped such fellow artists as Billy Preston, Lou Rawls, Johnnie Taylor and Bobby Womack make the transition from gospel to pop.

Sam Cooke died in mysterious circumstances. On the evening of December 11, 1964, he and Elisa Boyer, a young woman he'd met in a bar, went to the Hacienda Motel in Los Angeles. After Boyer ran out of the motel room with Cooke's wallet and clothes, Cooke (clad only in sports jacket and shoes) appeared in the motel manager's office, drunk and seeking Boyer. The manager (who had

shot and killed another man in the same motel six months before) fatally shot him. She said she fired at Cooke in self-defense because she feared for her life; a coroner's inquest immediately returned a verdict of justifiable homicide. Though authorities officially closed the case, some of Cooke's family and supporters suspected a conspiracy to lure Cooke to the motel and murder him.

Shortly after his death, Cooke's record company released his song "A Change Is Gonna Come," a civil rights anthem he'd written in response to Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind." He was inducted as a charter member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986; *Rolling Stone* magazine named him the fourth "Greatest Singer of All Time" in 2008.

JIM BROWN

"God ain't got nothing to do with winning a damn football game."

Jim Brown

Inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1971, Jim Brown (born 1936) was a running back for the Cleveland Browns from 1957 to 1965. After his retirement from football, he became an actor, appearing in dozens of films.

Jim Brown was born on Georgia's St. Simons Island, the site of Ibo Landing, where in May 1803 a group of slaves, freshly arrived from Africa, chose to walk into the water and drown rather than face a life of slavery. For Brown's first eight years, he lived with his grandmother on St. Simons Island; he then moved to Manhasset, on New York's Long Island, to live with his mother, who worked there as a maid. He excelled in high school athletics, including football, lacrosse, baseball, basketball and track.

Brown received football scholarship offers from at least 30 universities. With the encouragement of his mentors in Manhasset, he chose to attend Syracuse, where he participated not only in football, but also lacrosse, basketball and track. (Unbeknownst to Brown, his Manhasset mentor Kenneth Molloy had had to convince Syracuse to admit him and then raise Brown's scholarship money himself.) It was 1953 and most university athletic teams were barely integrated, if at all. Brown was the only African American on Syracuse's football team, and very few of their opponents had any African American players. While Brown had African American teammates in basketball, he

was never chosen as a starter due to an unofficial rule not to have more than two African American starters; despite Brown's success on the court, he chose not to play basketball his senior year. Brown was repeatedly warned not to date any white girls while at Syracuse, first by his quarterback and other white teammates, then by his football coaches. In fact, most of what he heard from his football coaches was criticism, and he came to doubt his abilities. He recalled in 1995, "There was a period when I was vicious on Syracuse. . . . I resented the fact that they almost broke me, that they made me doubt my own abilities." His roommate, basketball player Vinnie Cohen, summarized: "For African Americans, the America of the 1950s - and the Syracuse of the 1950s - was not a very nice place to live."

In the first round of the 1957 draft, Brown was taken by the Cleveland Browns. He won Rookie of the Year in 1957 and NFL's Most Valuable Player in 1957, 1958 and 1965. He was the league's leading rusher for eight of his nine years, and he played in nine straight Pro Bowls, scoring three touchdowns in his final one. At the time of his retirement after the 1965 season, he held several NFL records, including most career touchdowns, most yards rushing (career, season and game), most rushing attempts (career and season) and most games with 100 or more yards rushing.

Jim Brown's film career began with the western *Rio Conchos*, released in 1964; he played a Buffalo Soldier on a team with a mission to Mexico to prevent a former Confederate from selling stolen rifles to a band of murderous Apaches. He continued

with *The Dirty Dozen* (1966) and *100 Rifles* (1969), one of the first films to feature an interracial love scene (with Raquel Welch). In later decades he appeared in *The Running Man* (1988) with Arnold Schwarzenegger and as an ex-football legend in *Any Given Sunday* (1999).

In addition to acting, Jim Brown has long advocated the black business community. In the 1960s he helped create the Negro Industrial Economic Union; in 1988 he founded the Amer-I-Can program, a life management skills organization, to help reform young gang members.

BOXERS

Joe Louis (1914-1981) was World Heavyweight Champion from 1937 to 1949, the longest span of any heavyweight titleholder. Nicknamed the Brown Bomber, Louis is widely regarded as the first African American to achieve the status of a nationwide hero. He volunteered for the Army in 1942; upon his release from military service in 1945, he was awarded the Legion of Merit for “incalculable contribution to the general morale.”

Rocky Marciano (1923-1969) was World Heavyweight Champion from 1952 to 1969; he remained undefeated throughout his professional career. Born to Italian immigrants in Massachusetts, Marciano

idolized Joe Louis; in 1951 Marciano knocked out Louis in the latter’s final fight before retiring. Marciano served as the inspiration for Sylvester Stallone’s *Rocky* movie series, the first of which debuted in 1976.

Willie Pastrano (1935-1997) was a light heavyweight boxer called “the dancing master” because he developed a style of boxing in which he hardly got hit. Pastrano held the world crown from 1963 to 1965 and appeared on the cover of the March 22, 1965 issue of *Sports Illustrated* with the caption “Light Heavyweight Willie Pastrano Ready to Defend His Title.”

ACTIVISTS

W.E.B. Dubois (1868-1963) was the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard (in 1895) and the most famous spokesman for African American rights in the early 20th century. Born in Massachusetts, he identified himself as “mulatto” but was able to attend school with whites; moving to Tennessee for university in 1885 gave him his first experience of Jim Crow laws. He founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 and openly criticized Booker T. Washington for not demanding equality for African Americans.

Adam Clayton Powell (1908-1972) was a Baptist pastor and a politician, representing Harlem in the House of Representatives, where he supported civil rights and other social legislation throughout his 12 terms in office. Of mixed African, European and Native American ancestry, he was the first person of African

American descent from New York to be elected to Congress, where he integrated congressional restaurants, recreational facilities and press boxes. He also advocated for independence for African and Asian nations.

Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) was an African American educator, author and orator. His mother was a slave and his father an unknown white man. Freed by Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, Washington and his mother moved to West Virginia after the Civil War. He put himself through school and became a teacher, later founding Alabama’s Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (now Tuskegee University) and serving Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft as an advisor on racial matters. His autobiography *Up from Slavery*, published in 1901, was the most popular African American autobiography until that of Malcolm X.

The Beatles were an exceedingly popular English rock band formed in 1960. During their first tour of the United States, the Beatles posed for photos with Cassius Clay in a Miami boxing ring a week before his victory over Sonny Liston made him the new world heavyweight champion.

Harry Belafonte (born 1927) is a singer, actor and activist. Born in New York to Caribbean immigrants, Belafonte was educated at the Dramatic Workshop of The New School in New York alongside Marlon Brando, Walter Matthau and Sidney Poitier. He won a 1954 Tony Award for his featured role in *John Murray Anderson's Almanac*. He achieved popular success with his 1956 album *Calypso* and is known as the King of Calypso for popularizing this Caribbean music style. He also starred in several films throughout the 1950s before focusing more on his music.

James Brown (1933-2006) was an African American musician known for his energetic dance moves and high-octane vocals; he is known as the Godfather of soul music.

Bobby Darin (Walden Robert Cassotto, 1936-1973) was an American singer, songwriter and actor who crossed genres, performing pop, rock 'n' roll, folk and country. His famous songs included "Dream Lover" and "Mack the Knife"; he won the 1962 Golden Globe for the romantic comedy film, *Come September*, co-starring his wife Sandra Dee.

Sammy Davis Jr. (1925-1990) was an African American actor, singer and dancer. He began performing at the age of three, joining his vaudeville dancer father and Will Mastin as the Will Mastin Trio, touring nationally. Later, as a member of the "Rat Pack," along with fellow superstars Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra, Davis appeared in several movies, starting with the original *Ocean's 11* in 1960. Sam Cooke and Sammy Davis Jr. were both actors in "The Patsy," an episode of the CBS television show *General Electric Theater* in 1960.

Rock Hudson (1925-1985) was an American actor often voted Star of the Year, Favorite Leading Man and similar titles by film magazines. He starred in many romantic comedies (some opposite Doris Day) in the 1950s and 1960s. Hudson, who died in 1985,

was the first major celebrity to die of AIDS-related complications; his diagnosis had an immediate impact on the visibility of AIDS and on the funding of medical research related to the disease.

Sidney Poitier (born 1927) was the first black person to win an Academy Award for Best Actor, for his role in *Lilies of the Field* (1964). Born in Florida to Bahamian parents on vacation in Miami, Poitier spent his early years back in the Bahamas before moving to New York as a teenager. His Broadway debut came in *Lysistrata* in 1946; his Hollywood debut followed soon after with *No Way Out* (1950). His impressive film career also included starring roles in *Porgy and Bess* (1959), *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967).

The Rolling Stones are an English rock band formed in 1962 including (among other musicians) Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. They became very popular in the United States amid the British Invasion of the mid-1960s.

Frank Sinatra (1915-1998) was an American singer, actor, director and producer. Born to Sicilian immigrants in Hoboken, New Jersey, Sinatra was expelled from high school for rowdy conduct and began singing professionally as a teenager. In 1953 he won an Oscar for his first non-singing role in *From Here to Eternity*.

The Valentinos (also known as The Womack Brothers) were an Ohio-based R&B group comprised of five brothers: Friendly Jr, Curtis, Bobby, Harry and Cecil. Sam Cooke signed the group to his label, SAR Records. Bobby Womack toured with Sam Cooke as a backing guitarist and later married his widow.

Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield, 1913-1983) was an African American blues musician known as the father of modern Chicago blues; his music had a wide influence on blues, R&B, rock 'n' roll and other genres. The Rolling Stones (see above) took their name from his 1950 song "Rollin' Stone."

Jackie Wilson (1934-1984) was an African American singer and dancer known as "Mr. Excitement" for his dynamic dance moves; his stagecraft influenced other performers, including James Brown, Michael Jackson and Elvis Presley.

MIAMI

Overtown is a neighborhood just northwest of downtown Miami. When the city of Miami was originally incorporated in 1896, the area now known as Overtown was designated “Colored Town,” catering to the segregation laws of the Deep South. Overtown was a popular center for nightlife in the mid-20th century, and Overtown hotels served the needs of touring African American performers who were not allowed to lodge in other parts of Miami.

The Fontainebleau is a famous Miami Beach luxury hotel built in 1954. The hotel was featured in several major films,

including *Goldfinger* (1964) and *Scarface* (1983).

The Hampton House Motel (the setting for this play) was frequented by such guests as Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali and Martin Luther King Jr. The Miami chapter of the important civil rights organization the Congress for Racial Equality also held its weekly meetings there. The building is currently being restored to its early-1960s heyday to serve as a museum and jazz club; the Historic Hampton House Community Trust hopes to preserve and celebrate the building’s unique history.

GLOSSARY

Alexander the Great: Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 BCE), ancient Greek king and military conqueror who created an empire from Greece to Egypt to India.

Champale: a brand of malt liquor, brewed with yeasts commonly used in wine fermentation, producing a beer with a flavor resembling sparkling wine.

Gladiators: armed combatants, often slaves, forced to fight to the death (against wild animals or each other) as entertainment in arenas in ancient Rome.

Haymaker: a powerful, forceful punch.

J. Edgar Hoover: founder and director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Howard University: a private, historically black university in Washington, D.C.

Obstreperous: noisy and difficult to control.

Ofay: a derogatory term for a white person used by black people.

Pharaoh: a ruler in ancient Egypt; a king and god.

Philly: Philadelphia, the largest city in Pennsylvania.

Toledo: the fourth largest city in Ohio.

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One Night in Miami

STUDY QUESTIONS

Pre-Performance Questions

- 1) What historical conversation or decision would you like to have observed? Who was involved? In what ways do you think the conversation or decision might have had an impact on the lives of those involved?
- 2) Why do some people consider modern athletes role models? Has the role model status of athletes changed over time? What causes sports celebrities to be a contributing factor in changing United States' culture?

Post-Performance Questions

- 1) How do the set, costume, sound and lighting design help to tell the story?
- 2) How would you describe each of the characters: Jim Brown, Cassius Clay, Sam Cooke and Malcolm X? How do these characters differ from your original perception of them?
- 3) How are the characters Kareem and Jamaal portrayed in the play? What purpose do they serve to the story?
- 4) What was the “test” that Cassius faced before the play starts? How does he explain how he passed or failed this test?
- 5) How are women portrayed in this play?
- 6) What is the “transition” that the characters are celebrating? How does each of the characters react to this transition? Why is Cassius on the fence about the transition?
- 7) How does Jim feel about football and what it has given or taken away from his life?
- 8) What happened at the Copa and why does Sam feel he needs to redeem himself? How was Sam’s experience there different than his usual venues?
- 9) How does Sam compare musical performances to religious experiences?
- 10) What is the “struggle” that the characters refer to? What does each character believe their contribution is to the struggle?
- 11) How does Jim feel about where people stand? Why does Malcolm take issue with Jim?
- 12) What is going on between Malcolm and the Islamic Nation? How is it portrayed in the play?
- 13) How would you describe the relationship between Sam and Malcolm? What causes the conflict between them? How did their first meeting affect their relationship?
- 14) Why is Malcolm trying to give Sam a wake-up call? Why does he bring in the record? What is the significance of the record that Malcolm gives to Sam? How do they react to it? What song does Sam play in contrast to the song Malcolm plays?
- 15) Explain the quote, “The penalty one pays for avoiding the path of righteousness is walking whatever other path they choose alone.”

ACTIVITIES

Historical Fiction for the Stage

Materials: Pen and paper

- 1) Start by choosing a historic or contemporary event that had a profound impact on people's lives. For example: organizing a sit-in in the 1950s, the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan, a gay couple getting a marriage license, etc.
- 2) Identify two characters. If you are using historical people, research the people and their lives. Find out how this moment affected them personally and how this moment affected other people. Describe the characters and incorporate any details about these people you deem necessary.
- 3) Identify a "dramatic moment" that happens within the environment. (example: outburst of laughter, sadness or anger.) Describe that "dramatic moment" in detail.
- 4) Add important details about the physical setting: the sounds, costumes and the lighting of the scene. Begin with the description of the place and note the possible entrances and exits of the room and the objects that are found in the place.
- 5) After writing the first draft, cast the scene and have the students read the scenes aloud that they have written.
- 6) Discuss the difference between what really happened and what was written. What did the authors do to convey the characters and plot? Did they have to invent, delete, or change anything to communicate the story?
- 7) Raising the bar: After the first draft of the scene or monologue has been written, change the narrative voice. For example, if the scene was primarily told through one character's voice, what changes would need to be made if the scene was told through the other character's voice? What changes would have to be made to clearly show that the events being described are from a different person.
- 8) Discuss how the scene may change when told through the different voice. Discuss the process of an adapter and how you chose the best voice for the perspective?

Writing PG: Effectively use content-specific language, style, tone and text structure to compose or adapt writing for different audiences and purposes.

Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

Drama and Theatre Arts PG: Employ drama and theatre skills, and articulate the aesthetics of a variety of characters and roles.

Columbian Hypnosis

1. Students are to pair up and stand two feet from each other. Student A places the palm of his/her hand six to eight inches from Student B's face. THE STUDENTS ARE NOT TO TOUCH AT ANY TIME and the exercise should be performed in total silence. The students are to pretend that a string runs from the palm of Student A to the nose of Student B.
2. Student A explores the space with his/her palm by moving it back and forth or up and down and around and B must follow so that imaginary string will not break. Start by having students mirror each other but then encourage movement in the space without collisions. Have a Student A manipulate Student B into grotesque shapes and images.
3. After the initial exploration, switch positions. Student B now leads Student A.

Discussion Questions

How did it make you feel when you were the person leading or the person following? What do you think would happen if you add another person and had to both follow and lead at the same time? Where are some of the places that we see a power struggle take place in *One Night in Miami*?

History PG: Analyze and practice rights, roles and responsibilities of citizens.

History PG: Analyze the origins, structure, and functions of governments and their impacts on societies and citizens.

Perspective Writing

All the characters in *One Night in Miami* have their own particular view of what is happening around them and how they perceive the other characters. Write a short narrative from the perspective of a chosen character to tell their part of the story. For example, how does Cassius feel about Sam's song or what does Jim think about Cassius's impending transition?

Writing PG: Effectively use content-specific language, style, tone and text structure to compose or adapt writing for different audiences and purposes.

Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

Make your experience unforgettable when you join us for one of these insightful, educational events:

Insider Perspectives

Get an exclusive insider's perspective of each play when you join us for a professionally-moderated discussion with our creative team. Held at The Jones at Speer & Arapahoe. Free.
Mar 20 | 6pm

Talkbacks with the Cast

Join a fun and engaging discussion with the actors directly after select performances. Free.
Mar 29 | 3pm

Page to Stage Discussions

Delve into the creative process behind our shows when you join our actors, playwrights and directors for an in-depth discussion about their work. Held at the Tattered Cover, 2526 E. Colfax Ave. Free.
Apr 7 | 12pm

Theatre & Theology Talkbacks

Join Pastor Dan Bollman of the Rocky Mountain Evangelical Lutheran Synod to examine each show through a theological lens directly after select performances. Free.
Apr 7 | 8:30pm

Talkbacks with Higher Education Advisory Council

Participate in a topical discussion led by members of our academic community held directly after select performances. Free.
Apr 12 | 3:30pm

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The Denver Public Library recommends:

Read!

Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare by James H. Cone

Go beyond the mainstream portrayals of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X in this title that reexamines the ideologies of these two prominent Civil Rights movement leaders. This book illustrates the more radical side of King, as well as the more moderate side of Malcolm X in this comparison and contrast of the two's experiences and struggles throughout 1960's America.

Watch!

Betty and Coretta (Lions Gate, 2013)

This 2013 film explores another unique and lesser known friendship -- that between Coretta Scott King and Dr. Betty Shabazz, wife of Malcolm X. After the tragic assassination of their husbands, these two women formed a friendship that spanned for several decades while continuing the Civil Rights movement. A powerful look at two incredible leaders in the fight for equal rights.

Listen!

Portrait of a Legend, 1951-1964 by Sam Cooke

Listen to the legend himself in this compilation of over a decade's worth of recordings. This album includes program notes from Peter Guralnick, providing background on each of the 30 tracks, along with recordings from Cooke's early career as a gospel singer. From 1951's Soul Stirrers' gospel classic "Touch the Hem of His Garment" through to 1964's "A Change Is Gonna Come" and "Shake," this album gives highlights from every stage of Cooke's career.

Download!

Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention by Manning Marable

An essential reading for anyone wanting to learn more about the life of Malcolm X and his advocacy for social change, now available in downloadable audio or ebook format. This book looks at Malcolm's life from many different angles and in many different contexts -- from a troubled youth to a radical activist to leader in the Nation of Islam to a pragmatist working towards equality for all people. Ebook and audio available for download at downloadmedia.denverlibrary.org.



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