Study Guide: RACE

BY: David Mamet

DIRECTED BY: Daniel Brooks

A Canadian Stage production

RACE is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

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Overview and Classroom Activities
Study Guide: *RACE*

A letter to teachers and students:

Education is a vital part of what we do at Canadian Stage. We are committed to sharing material with our audiences that will challenge, enrich and deepen their perspectives. Sharing art consistently diversifies our conversations and David Mamet’s *RACE* initiates discussions around particularly sensitive subjects. This play is an outstanding example of how theatre may be used as an entry-point to talk about delicate and often personal themes around race, gender and class.

In *RACE*, a wealthy white man, Charles Strickland, has been accused of raping a black woman. The only law firm willing to take on this incendiary case is composed of two ruthless, whip-smart attorneys – one white, one black. While the men prepare for the trial, their associate Susan, a young black woman, brings unique perspectives and different issues to the surface.

David Mamet wrote *RACE* in 2009 when Barack Obama had just been elected as the first black president of the United States and Mamet publically started to doubt his Liberal views and to shift towards a more Conservative mentality. The story also mirrors events of the time, such as the trial of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. While the circumstances that inspired this work are time-specific, the issues Mamet confronts throughout are relevant today. Furthermore, Mamet’s distinctive style of writing dialogue, marked by a cynical, street-smart edge, allows the discussions to happen in an unapologetic fashion.

David Mamet’s *RACE* is certain to evoke enlightening conversations in any classroom surrounding the pertinent subjects of sexism and racism in modern North American society. This guide explores American and Canadian perspectives in order to contextualize *RACE* based both on where it was created and where we are witnessing the production. It is meant to be a helpful tool in providing information as well as strategies for utilizing a trip to this production for teaching diverse learners. Throughout this document, connections to curriculums including Civics, Law, Philosophy, History, English, Media Studies, Sociology, Gender Studies and of course Drama become evident. This guide will illustrate that the issues *RACE* addresses are timeless, and that although we are striving for complete equality, and have certainly made progress in recent history, there remains to exist unfair expectations and circumstances.

See you at the theatre!

Cheers,

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This study guide is created to be a helpful resource for teachers by providing background and thematic information about this play as well as practical activities to use in your classroom. You are encouraged to draw information directly from it as well as to use it as a roadmap for further exploration. In it you will find:

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A Student’s Guide to Live Theatre

Here are your responsibilities:

1. Thank you in advance for turning off your cell phone, iPod, iPhone and anything else that makes noise before entering the theatre. These items distract the actors, your classmates and you! They can also affect our in-house technical signals and spoil the show. This is a common courtesy. Vibrate/silent is not the same as off.

2. No texting! Because your phone is off you will need to wait until intermission to update your Facebook status (and when you login, link to Canadian Stage at www.facebook.com/cdnstage) or tweet to us @canadianstage to tell us your thoughts.

3. No headphones of any sort. Listening to your own media is not only rude, but distracting to those around you.

4. In order to respect our theatre and you, our patrons, we only allow water in the theatre and no other food or drinks.

5. Please refrain from talking during the performance - the actors and the audience will hear you! (Laugh when it’s funny, cry when it’s sad. Otherwise, zip it!)

6. Please sit in the seat assigned to you. If you sit elsewhere the seating for everyone is disrupted.

7. Represent your school and yourself well with good behavior. Theatre is awesome. You should be too!

8. Keep an open mind and think critically. Theatre is engaging and challenging. Be prepared to examine what you see rather than judge it. You’ll be surprised how much you learn, even about yourself, when you try to see things differently.

9. Enjoy the show and come again soon!
RACE

Synopsis

A wealthy white man is accused of raping a black woman. Two lawyers, one black and one white, as well as the firm’s new young associate, a young black woman, struggle to agree on whether or not they should represent him in court. The debates that ensue pose challenging questions about race, gender and social class in modern society.

Characters

Jack Lawson - A white man in his forties; partner in a law practice with Henry Brown.

Henry Brown - A black man in his forties; partner in a law practice with Jack Lawson.

Charles Strickland - A wealthy white man in his forties; accused of raping a black woman.

Susan - A black woman in her twenties; legal assistant to Jack and Henry.

Theatrical Context

RACE, a political piece by David Mamet, was first published in 2009 and premiered on Broadway the same year. Mamet’s distinct style of writing and newly conservative political views are combined in RACE, which explores sensitive societal issues around race and gender equality.

Mamet’s plays are known for being witty, controversial and unconventional. His most famous plays include Glengarry Glen Ross (1984), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize, and Speed the Plow (1988). Interestingly, Glengarry Glen Ross was the first show performed at Canadian Stage in 1988 immediately following the merge of CentreStage and Toronto Free Theatre.

RACE premiered on Broadway to much critical and audience acclaim. David Alan Grier, in the role of Henry Brown, received a 2010 Tony Award® nomination for Best Featured Actor in a Play and a 2010 Drama League Award nomination for Distinguished Performance.

Mamet Speak

Mamet is known to be an expert in creating scenarios that are highly charged and confrontational. Mamet’s style of writing is so distinct that it has come to be known as “Mamet speak.” Mamet speak is characterized by dialogue that is highly naturalistic, and not necessarily grammatically accurate. For example, Mamet deliberately misrepresents certain figures of speech to show that the character is not
always paying close attention to what they are saying. In order to best indicate how the script should be recited, Mamet “often uses italics and quotation marks to highlight particular words, and to draw attention to his characters’ frequent manipulation and deceitful use of language. His characters often interrupt one another, their sentences trail off unfinished, and their dialogue overlaps.” ("David Mamet.” Wikipedia.org. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Mamet>)

Study Links
Here are some curriculum connection points and sample discussion questions. These questions may be used to prompt conversations in your classroom.

Civics
In the United States, “affirmative action” means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). In Canada, this type of program is called “employment equity” (see: Critical Exploration section below for additional information). Employment equity programs exist within all levels of government. How effective are employment equity programs? What are the benefits and the challenges associated with employment equity?

Law
What rules govern the behaviour of lawyers in Canada? Do the lawyers in RACE break any of these rules?

Discuss whether you believe all people are treated equally under the law. Based on policies from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, how might the events in RACE be different if Charles was a black character?

Philosophy
Jurisprudence is the theory and philosophy of law. Examine the four primary schools of thought in general jurisprudence (natural law, legal positivism, legal realism, and critical legal studies): which school or schools of thought best represent the beliefs of the characters in RACE?

History
Consider the history of race relations in Canada over the past century. What were the greatest successes and the greatest failures?

Identify specific historical events that catalyzed change in political and legal systems. Focus on gender and racial politics.

What is the current state of race relations in Canada?
English
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee was published in 1960. What parallels can be drawn between RACE and To Kill a Mockingbird? How do the two works address issues of race relations, gender relations, and the legal system?

Drama
What qualities distinguish David Mamet’s writing from his contemporaries? What challenges does Mamet speak raise for actors and what techniques might an actor use to meet those challenges?

Mamet intentionally leaves the outcome of the trial unknown. How does this choice influence the play’s message?

In RACE, major issues that propel the action forward, such as rape and betrayal, victimize women. Despite this, the voice of the female characters in the play is impotent. How does this affect blocking and acting choices in a production of this play?

Media Studies
Examine episodes of television series that depict lawyers and identify common characteristics among fictional lawyers. Has the lawyer’s image changed over time? How is the television portrayal of lawyers different from that in RACE?

How does coverage of legal cases involving issues related to gender and race vary in different news sources? Consider how mass media outlets (the newspapers, music videos, television and films) influence how we view racial stereotypes? What influence does this have on our relationships with others?

Economics
To what extent does a government program like Affirmative Action or Employment Equity affect employers? Compare and contrast the economic differences resulting from the two different programs.

How does the economic right of minorities to be considered fairly in the workplace balance against the employer’s right to hire who s/he thinks will benefit the company in economic terms? Do these programs result in employers hiring based on factors beyond just skill?

Sociology
Canada is considered by many to be a strong model of a successful multi-cultural society. Is this opinion valid? To paraphrase George Orwell, “All cultures are created equal, but some cultures are more equal than others.” In Canada, do certain cultures or races receive preferential treatment? Consider specifically education, legal and employment issues. If so, why do Canadians tolerate this?

How does multiculturalism in Toronto compare to the situation in Chicago? To another Canadian city?
Identify and assess the major influences that contribute to Susan’s reasons behind her betrayal of Jack Lawson as they relate to her race, gender, or environment. For example, consider Susan’s college thesis is titled: “Structural Survivals of Racism in supposedly Bias-Free Transactions”.

How does Henry differentiate himself from Jack based on his race?

Gender studies
There is a recurring suggestion through Mamet’s plays that white men are under attack in today’s society. Does popular media change the discourse so women and other historically disenfranchised groups appear to now be the victors and the dominant group, white males, to be the victims? Can you think of other examples in literature or media that reflect this theme? What is it about this particular theme that may have contributed to the success of RACE?

Considering Jack’s definition of the law, are Susan’s actions truly betrayals? Why or why not?

Karen C. Blansfield’s “Women on the Verge, Unite!” (pp. 125–42) argues that many critics misread Mamet’s attitudes toward women and suggests that the power of Mamet’s female characters is generated by men’s insecurity and fear of women and their pathetic dependence on women for identity. Comment on Jack’s attitudes towards women based on his relationship to Susan, and on Charles’ attitude towards the alleged rape victim.

How does this play’s title acknowledge gender issues? Discuss “race” as a competition for power.
Historical and Social Background

1. About David Mamet

David Mamet is an American playwright. He was born on November 30th, 1947 in Flossmoor, Illinois. By the time he was 16 years old, he moved to Chicago, Illinois and landed his first job in theatre at The Second City working as a bus boy. He also worked backstage at the Hull House Theatre. During this time Mamet was introduced to the works of playwrights who influenced his writing such as Harold Pinter, Bertolt Brecht and Edward Albee.

Mamet started out thinking he wanted to be an actor, but after studying in New York at the famous Neighbourhood Playhouse he realized that acting wasn’t his true calling. He went to Goddard College in Vermont and earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature. His reputation as a writer grew when his play *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* (1974) won the Joseph Jefferson Award for best new Chicago play. The work was subsequently mounted off Broadway in New York City.

2. Historical Influences

Published in 2009, *RACE* can be viewed against two events: the election of Barak Obama as the first black President of the United States, and Mamet’s own journey from a Liberal to Conservative political worldview.

From a Liberal to Conservative:

In a highly controversial article written for *The Village Voice* entitled “Why I am No Longer a Brain-Dead Liberal” (attached as appendix), Mamet reflected on his past, liberal viewpoint. He states in this article that he was brought up to see America as a state where “everything was magically wrong and must be immediately corrected at any cost.” *(Mamet, Village Voice)*

The result was an ingrained distrust of the military and hatred of corporations. “As a child of the ‘60s, [he] accepted as an article of faith that government is corrupt, that business is exploitative, and that people are generally good at heart.” *(Mamet, Village Voice)* However, Mamet began to perceive that liberalism was idealistic, leaving him with more frustrations and questions than answers. This political viewpoint did not accurately reflect the world in which he functioned on a day-to-day basis and he therefore shifted towards an acceptance of a more conservative worldview.

During Mamet’s political conversion, he was introduced to the writings of Shelby Steele. Steele specializes in the study of race relations, multiculturalism, and affirmative action. Like Mamet, he shifted from a liberal to conservative worldview. Steele has written several books on the topic of race in America, including *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era* (2006) and *A Bound Man: Why We Are Excited about Obama and Why He Can’t Win* (2007).
The Influence of Shelby Steele:

The extent of Steele’s influence on Mamet is exhibited in Mamet’s dedication of *RACE* to Steele. According to his book *White Guilt: How Blacks & Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era*, Steele believes that racism at an individual level manifests itself in societal structures. These structures excuse black America from responsibility for its own troubles, while white America falls into a “vacuum of moral authority that comes from simply knowing that one’s race is associated with racism” (Steele, 24). Steele expresses that white America has forfeited its ability to speak on any matters of race. Furthermore, he suggests that a white person or institution can be branded as racist and “threatened with a stigmatization that [could] gravely injure businesses and ruin careers” for making any racial criticism. (Rubin, 14) In addition to Steele’s ideas affecting the action of the narrative within *RACE*, these sentiments may have been part of why Mamet felt inclined to write a play rooted in these issues in the first place.

3. Select Key Moments in Racial History: 2000-2010

Source:
- Nittle, Nadra Kareem. *Top 10 Events in Race Relations This Decade (2000-2009)*

A look back at the first decade of the 2000s presents several significant events involving racial minorities in politics, pop-culture and art alike. Some notable events include:

- **Dora the Explorer (2000)**
  The debut of *Dora the Explorer*, a television series about an adventurous bilingual Latina and her animal friends, proved the ability of girls and boys of all ethnic groups to readily embrace culturally diverse characters. The show and its characters were so popular that it immediately became a huge success.

- **Collin Powell becomes Secretary of State (2001)**
  Colin Powell became the first ever African American Secretary of State when he was appointed by George W. Bush. Powell stepped down from the position in 2005 and was succeeded by Condoleezza Rice. Rice became the first African American woman to serve as Secretary of State. She was the second African American and second woman to fulfill the role.

- **Sept. 11 Terrorist Attacks (2001)**
  The September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon left nearly 3,000 people dead. The terrorists responsible for the attacks were from the Middle East which resulted in Arab Americans experiencing increased scrutiny in the United States. Hate crimes against Middle Easterners rose markedly and the subject of racial profiling became a topical issue.
• Angelina Jolie puts International Adoption in the Spotlight (2002)
  Trans-racial adoption was not very common when actress Angelina Jolie adopted her son, Maddox, from Cambodia in March 2002. Soon after, Jolie adopted a daughter from Ethiopia and a second son from Vietnam, which increased public acceptance of racially diverse families. International adoption has its critics, of course. Concern rose that international adoptees became status symbols for Westerners.

• Halle Berry and Denzel Washington win Oscars (2002)
  At the 74th Academy Awards, Halle Berry and Denzel Washington won Oscars for Best Actress and Best Actor, respectively. Berry, who won for Monster's Ball, was the first African American to ever receive the award. In her acceptance she said, "This moment is so much bigger than me. This moment is for Dorothy Dandridge, Lena Horne, Diahann Carroll . . . it's for every nameless, faceless woman of colour who now has a chance because this door tonight has been opened." Notably, some people expressed dismay that the actors both won Oscars for portraying less than admirable characters. Washington played a corrupt cop in Training Day, while Berry played an abusive mother who moves in with a man who participated in her late husband’s execution.

• Hurricane Katrina (2005)
  Hurricane Katrina touched down in southeast Louisiana on August 29, 2005. One of the deadliest hurricanes in American history, Katrina claimed more than 1,800 lives. The Federal Emergency Management Agency was criticized for being slow to take action. The most vulnerable residents of the Gulf region were left without water, housing, healthcare and other necessities for days. President George W. Bush and his administration were accused of reacting slowly since the community was predominantly African American.

• Rallies for Immigrants take place Nationwide (2006)
  An estimated 1.5 million people demonstrated from coast to coast on May 1, 2006 in support of immigrants in America. May 1st is known as “May Day” or “International Workers’ Day,” a national holiday in celebration of the labour movement. Immigrants and their advocates were encouraged to stay home from work and school so that the nation could feel the impact of what life would be like without them. Some businesses were forced to shut down for the day.
In 2009 (the year RACE premieres on Broadway):

Source:
- RACE, Study Guide. Goodman Theatre Company, Education Department
- Barack Obama became the 44th U.S President and the first African American to hold this position. He is from Chicago, Illinois, the same city David Mamet spent most of his life in and ironically the most segregated city in the United States.
- Michael Jackson, the King of Pop, died at age 50.
- Sonia Sotomayor is appointed by Obama as the Supreme Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. She is the first person of Hispanic decent to hold this title.
- The film The Blind Side is nominated for an Oscar. Based on a true story, The Blind Side tells the story of a wealthy white Southern family taking in a local black teen.
- Disney features its first ever African American Princess, Princess Tiana, in The Princess and the Frog.

From the News: Prominent World Leader Dominique Strauss-Kahn Charged with Sexual Assault

JACK: I’ll tell you what I think. I think that women. Just like men. In the main, being self-interested, will exploit every advantage they may have. Chief among theirs, youth and beauty. Just as will men, who possess the advantages of being old and rich.

SUSAN: And white.

JACK: You bet.

(RACE, Act 1)

SUSAN: I thought. Here’s a fellow, “charismatic,” as they say (...) Or, yes, or we might say “intelligence?” Or quote “natural grace,” because nobody’s going to come out and admit that they’re awed by his money.

(RACE, Act 1)

On May 14, 2011, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, was charged with sexually assaulting 32 year-old Naffisatou Diallo, a hotel maid of African American descent. A prominent political figure, Strauss-Kahn was the prime Socialist Party candidate in France’s 2012 presidential elections. The case was very controversial and sparked international headlines, resulting in Strauss having to drop out of the elections. This news headliner parallels the story of RACE.
Nafissatou reported that Strauss-Kahn assaulted her in a hotel room in the Sofitel Hotel in New York. “[Strauss-Kahn] came out of the bathroom naked, ran down to a hallway...where she was, pulled her into a bedroom and began to sexually assault her” stated Paul Browne, the New York Police Department Spokesman. "She pulled away from him and he dragged her down a hallway into the bathroom, where he engaged in a criminal sexual act, according to her account to detectives. He tried to lock her in the hotel room."(The Guardian, 2011) Shortly after the case was made public, a woman named Tristane Banon filed a similar case against Strauss-Kahn, accusing him of raping her in 2003. Banon said she was initially advised to not press charges against Strauss-Kahn by her mother, a Socialist Party politician.

In the end, inconsistencies in Dallio’s reporting of the incident and an investigation into her past, in which some previous forgeries with the law were brought to light, lead to the case against Strauss-Kahn being dropped. In the aftermath of the case reports dismissed Diallo as a ‘prostitute’ and went on to claim that Strauss-Kahn should be pardoned from the case because of his brilliance as a world leader. The articles in the media focused more on ‘forgiving’ Strauss than on trying to understand the emotional and psychological turmoil that Diallo may have been going through, which might have caused her to forget the exact order of events. Instead, the implication seemed to be that women often accuse men of status and power of rape for their own gain.

Critical Exploration:

1. The American Civil Rights Movement

Source:

   JACK: Black people are allowed to commit adultery.
   SUSAN: Is that in the Constitution?
   JACK: No. It’s in the public’s mind.
   SUSAN: Well, that’s harsh
   JACK:....you want the truth or a lie?

   (RACE, Act 1)

In RACE, each character’s race is outlined in the script by Mamet since it significantly affects the play’s events by feeding tensions which drive the plot. Mamet highlights that despite our growth as a more culturally diverse and racially-inclusive society, we still live in a world where the colour of one’s skin may result in undeserved stereotyping. The fight against racism – being prejudice towards someone because of the colour of their skin – is not new. It is a struggle that has always existed. Activists have been
working against racism since at least the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Their activity peaked during the American civil rights movement, and still continues to this day.

The American Civil Rights Movement was the largest social movement of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Though the roots of the movement go back to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, it peaked in the 1950s and the 1960s. The movement was in support of promoting African Americans right to basic privileges of U.S. citizenship. African American men and women, along with white supporters, organized and led the movement at local and national levels. They pursued legal means, petitions, and hosted nonviolent protest demonstrations in support of their mission.

The Civil Rights Movement centered on the American South, where the African American population was concentrated and where racial inequality in education, economic opportunity, and the political and legal processes was most blatant. Beginning in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, state and local governments passed segregation laws, known as “Jim Crow laws”, and mandated restrictions on voting qualifications. These criteria left the black population economically and politically powerless. As a result, the movement primarily addressed three areas of discrimination: education, social segregation, and voting rights.

The Civil Rights Movement has a mixed legacy. On one hand, it succeeded in getting legislation that reformed American society, and it opened up new political, social, and economic opportunities to blacks. On the other hand, however, many felt that the movement fell short of addressing the economic needs of poor Americans.

2. Affirmative Action and Employment Equity
In \textit{RACE}, Susan (a young African American woman and recent law school graduate) questions whether or not she was hired at Jack and Henry’s law firm on the basis of the colour of her skin colour and the fact that she is a woman. Her concern is based on Jack Lawson’s pointed remarks:

\begin{quote}
SUSAN: Whites would think to find him innocent is racism. Blacks would think that to do so is treason.
JACK: Do you think he raped her?
SUSAN: Do you?
JACK: I want to know what you think.
SUSAN: Why? Because I’m black?
JACK: \textit{Sure. And, “women,” alright, know things no man knows. You look at a man, across a room, you know. What his intentions are. (RACE, Act 1)}
\end{quote}

In the United States, “affirmative action” is defined as positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). The existence of a policy of
this nature substantiates Susan’s concern. In Canada, an equivalent initiative exists known as “employment equity.”

**Employment Equity**

Historically, examinations of occupations and unemployment rates have indicated that there are large disparities in the labour experiences of specific groups that are considered “designated groups” by the Canadian government. These groups are women, visible minorities, Aboriginals persons, and persons with disabilities. To address these discrepancies, the Canadian government created the Federal Contractors Agreement in 1986, followed by the Employment Act in 1996. These acts ensure that no one is denied employment opportunities based on reasons unrelated to ability.

These acts also address the elimination of systemic barriers such as racism or sexism in the workplace and a lack of access to training. It also addresses a need for accommodating family responsibilities like child care, the impact of child rearing on the promotion process, and lack of awareness about cross-cultural issues.

Both Employment Equity and Affirmative Action are government legislated initiatives aimed at creating a workforce that reflects the pool of talent available in the labour market. However, a major difference between them is that Affirmative Action is rooted in an employer achieving specific quotas or facing punitive action. In contrast, Employment Equity relies on targets employers set themselves. Instead of quotas, employers set targets in terms of hiring for the four designated groups mentioned above.

### 3. A History of Women’s Rights in Canada

Given that *Race* was written following President Obama’s election, in her *New York Post* review of *Race* Elisabeth Vincentelli asks, “If Hillary Clinton had been elected, would we be watching "Sex" instead?” An underlying, yet important theme in *Race* is the prevalence of gender politics. Gender issues have been a strong theme in Mamet’s previous plays such as *Oleander*. In *Oleander* a university student, through the advice of feminists, falsely accuses her professor of rape.

The only two women in *Race* are Susan, the naïve and perhaps idealistic young law associate, and the alleged rape victim. One may recognize the fact that both of these characters’ voices are incidental or entirely absent. For much of the beginning of the play, for example, Susan is present but does not
speak. Furthermore, both of these female characters are only ever referred to by their first names, as is the case in several of Mamet’s plays.

Throughout the play, Jack and Henry continuously undermine Susan’s intelligence and are reluctant to regard her as a person of equal ability, knowledge and power. Susan is representational of women who, despite being in respectable positions of authority, still must consistently fight to have their voices heard and to be taken as seriously as men.

Select Key Moments in the History of Women’s Rights


1800: Attitudes Towards Women Slowly Changed
The fight for equal rights, and specifically the ability to vote, began in Canada, the United States and some European countries around the 18th century. The women involved in these causes were regarded as radicals, disregarding old laws, customs and accepted senses of social behaviours.

1876: The First Canadian Suffrage Organization
Dr. Emily Stowe, a feminist and one of the only female doctors in the country at the time, established the Toronto Women’s Club. This club was the first formal organization of its type in Canada. The Women’s Club was on the forefront for women’s suffrage initiatives and was committed to fighting for women’s right to vote. The club worked tirelessly to convince Canadians that all men and all women were equal should have the same rights. In 1883 the same organization changed its name to the Canadian Women’s Suffrage Association.

1912: The Winnipeg Political Equity League
Teacher and author Nellie McClung helped establish The Winnipeg Political Equity League. This suffrage organization has a legacy of being one of the most efficient of its kind in Canada. The league appealed to the Manitoba premier to give women the right to vote. The premier replied stating that “nice women” didn’t want to vote. In response, the league staged a mock Parliament at a Winnipeg theatre, which highlighted their goals and embarrassed the premier.

1916: Manitoba First to Give Women the Vote
In quick haste after being shamed by Nellie McClung’s mock Parliament theatre performance, the Manitoba government awarded women in Manitoba the right to vote. This triggered a domino effect, as other Western provinces took part in the movement towards ensuring women had the right to vote.
1921: A Woman Elected to the House of Commons
Agnes Macphail became the first women elected to federal parliament. She was ridiculed by her male peers and at one point stopped regularly attending House of Commons sessions. Still, she managed to disprove the popular sentiment that politics was a man’s occupation.

1927: The Person’s Case
The Person’s Case of 1927 is still one of most famous and important cases in Canadian history. This case challenged the federal Parliament’s definition of a "person" within the British North America Act, the constitution of the time. “The Famous Five” were five Alberta feminists – Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney and Henrietta Edwards. This collective of accomplished women challenged Parliament to include women in their definition of “persons”. This would thus qualify women to be appointed into the Senate.

1928: The Supreme Court Ruling of the Person’s Case
The Supreme Court ruled that women were not legal “persons” and therefore could not hold appointed offices. This prevented women from achieving equality. The Famous Five appealed this ruling to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Britain. Since Canada was not yet independent from the Empire, this British court could overrule the Supreme Court’s decisions.

1929: The Supreme Court is Overruled
The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council overruled the decision made by the Supreme Court of Canada. They declared that women were indeed "persons" and could therefore qualify to be appointed to the Senate.

1930: First Woman Appointed to the Senate
Carine Wilson was the first woman in Canada to be appointed to the Senate.

1939: Women in WWII
During WWII, 45,000 Canadian women joined the army as nurses, drivers, firefighters and radio technicians. Although they wore uniforms and received military training, they were not allowed in combat. Furthermore, these women were paid 20% less than men doing their same jobs who had the same rank. On the home front, more than one million women joined the workforce and were continuously treated unequal to their male coworkers.

1960: The Canadian Bill of Rights
Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and his government passed the first Human Rights Legislation in Canada. It stated that it was illegal to discriminate against people because of their sex, race, religion, or colour. The constitution, which stated what the rights of a Canadian citizen were, was still controlled by Britain through the British North America Act. This document paved the way to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
1982: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
The protection of women’s rights was cemented in section 28 of a revised version of The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, stating that rights and freedoms were guaranteed "equally to male and female persons."

1985: The Canadian Human Rights Act
The Canadian Human Rights Act was passed in 1985, guaranteeing pay equity.

1995: Employment Equity Act
The federal government passes the Employment Equity Act. This protects other marginalized groups as well as women from being discriminated against in the workplace.

2012: Women’s Rights Today
Women’s rights activists, and the organizations that support them, are still focused on achieving equality. Cases on discrimination against pregnant women, sexual harassment, employment and pay equity are all at the forefront of the ongoing fight for women’s equal rights. Women in this country have strong role models to look to both the past and present for the achievements and continued battles for equality in Canada.

4. Chicago: America’s Most Segregated City
Source:

*RACE* playwright David Mamet spent most of his life in Chicago, Illinois. The city of Chicago likely inspired his desire to write about the issue of race, since Chicago is considered one of the most segregated cities in America, with over 200 ethnically exclusive neighbourhoods.

Founded in 1832, Chicago is an old city with a long history of institutional segregation. One hundred years ago, systems and laws defined parts of the city that were meant not only for particular races, but specific ethnic groups as well.

When such laws were slowly becoming illegal, the practices of redlining and steering became popular. Redlining is the now illegal practice in which banks and other lending institutions arbitrarily refuse to lend to certain borrowers, as well as increase the costs of loans for homes in certain, usually racially determined, areas. Through redlining, essential services such as insurance, access to jobs, health care and other products were denied to people based on their location and ethnicity.

Steering is the illegal practice of real estate agents directing buyers to and away from particular neighborhoods based on the buyer or renter’s race and/or ethnicity. Steering was often justified with comments such as “you will be happier here, among your own kind” and “you don’t want to live there, you won’t be comfortable.” Both of these practices were outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968,
which, in addition to making it illegal to refuse purchase or rental of real estate based on race, declared neighborhood integration a national goal.

Perhaps coincidentally, Chicago’s Eisenhower Expressway also physically divided the city racially with a predominantly black population to the south and white to the north. For years since it has stood as a widely-accepted marker indicating where one should live based on your skin colour.

In December 2008, the *Chicago Tribune* published an extensive study on segregation in Chicago. This study pointed out the surprising statistic that there are more African Americans in Chicago than Hispanics or whites. It was reported that of Chicago’s nearly three million people, 35% were black, 30% Hispanic, and 28% white.

5. **Racial Profiling**

Source:

*SUSAN*: When I was hired you made the request for an exhaustive background check and a quote complete field investigation [...] In all your years of operation. You’ve requested that investigation. Twice. [...] Both applicants were black. Did you make the ‘in depth’ request because of their race?

*(RACE, Act 2)*

In *RACE*, Jack Lawson, a white lawyer, does an intensive background check on law student Susan before hiring her to work in his law firm. Susan realizes that Jack has only taken such measures in two cases before her, and in both cases the applicants were black. This is an example of racial profiling – the practice of substituting skin colour for evidence as grounds for suspicion. (“Racial Profiling: what does it feel like to be racially profiled?” *Quora.com*) Racial profiling occurs when a person has preconceived prejudice towards another person from a different ethnic background, or when one allows certain biases and stereotypes to colour one’s interpretation of a situation.

Racial profiling is "any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin rather than on reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment." -The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC).

Racial profiling is based on the assumption that members of certain ethnic groups are disproportionately more likely to be involved in certain criminal cases. It is a practice that is often subtle and difficult to
monitor. Therefore, statistics on it are hard to come by. Furthermore, it is of great concern that the collection and publication of any race-based data will reinforce racial prejudices.

The OHRC gives some non-police related examples of racial profiling:

a. School officials suspend a Latino child for violating the school's zero tolerance policy while a white child's similar behaviour is excused as being normal child's play.

b. An employer insists on stricter security clearance for a Muslim employee after the September 11 attacks.

c. A bar refuses to serve First Nations customers because of a belief they will get drunk and rowdy.

The Toronto Star covers Racial Profiling

In 2002, the Toronto Star published a series of articles about racial profiling that caused public stir. The articles were based on statistics that were collected by the police, which were then made available to the Toronto Star.

Analysis of these figures by the Star reporters presented troublesome statistics. It was noted that blacks in Toronto were over-represented in certain offence categories such as drug-possession. Black individuals were also more commonly convicted of “out of site” traffic violations, such as driving without a licence. The analysis also suggested that black suspects were more likely to be held in custody for a bail hearing than white subjects facing similar charges who were more likely to be released at the scene.

People from all backgrounds agree that there are problems associated with taking the figures on such a complex issue at face value. There are variables to consider that affect these numbers. One such concern is about access to proper legal representation. For example, one may consider whether the courts are more likely to drop charges against white offenders or agree to a plea bargain that keeps whites out of jail, or whether convicted individuals from different racial groups have inequitable access to skilled lawyers.

Another ongoing issue has to do with distribution of law enforcement resources. Half of the inmates in a provincial jail are First Nations, yet First Nations individuals represent only 10 percent of the province's population. Are First Nations committing more crimes or are police simply spending more time in their community? Some point out that it is not surprising that certain ethnic groups are over-represented in arrest statistics if their community is subject to much greater police scrutiny. The question is why are members of a certain community more targeted than others?
Race in the news: Racial profiling by police tribunal

Source:

In November 2005, a particular case and testimony of racial profiling in Toronto became highly contested.

A black man named Rawle Maynard was followed home by Officer Ryan Baker as he drove his black BMW sports car. Maynard approached the police car, which Baker had parked close to his home, to find out why he was there. The confrontation escalated and resulted in Baker’s gun being drawn. Maynard was forced onto his knees and detained.

The major question in the case was whether Maynard’s race was a factor in the events that occurred. In the summer of 2012, Ontario Human Rights adjudicator Leslie Reaume concluded that “I do not believe that if the suspect had been a Caucasian man in the same circumstance, with no other defining characteristics, particularly age …[that the officer] … would have chosen to investigate the first Caucasian man he saw driving the same car at the same intersection.” It was this observation that qualified Baker’s actions that day as racial profiling, resulting in the Toronto Police Services Board and Baker being required to jointly pay Rawle Maynard $40,000 in damages “for injury to dignity, feelings and self-respect.”
Classroom Activities

Pre-Performance Activities

We highly recommend exposing students to the sensitive subject areas that David Mamet touches on in *RACE* before seeing the play. Here are a few suggestions that utilize action, written response, personal reflection, and group work which allow a teacher to touch on these themes while still leaving room for further exploration after watching the production.

1. “You know what happens when you *ASSUME*...”
   Curriculum Connections: Drama, Media Studies or English.

   1. Divide the class into smaller groups of 4-6 members. Ask them to write an airtight definition of the term “assumption.”
   2. Have each group share what they came up with. Agree upon a solid working definition for this exercise. Note: This can get complicated since “assumption,” as a noun, does have at least two meanings; embrace this complexity and see where the discussion goes with your students. Here is a strong definition from dictionary.com to support if your groups need some coaching:

      1: A thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof
      2: The action of taking power or responsibility

   3. Using this co-constructed definition as a theme, have each group identify a scenario where the key conflict is assumption. Encourage them to start from a world of familiarity and write from what they know: where do they encounter assumptions and what conflicts does this lead to? Encourage them to seek out colliding assumptions; the drama is heightened when many characters are operating under different assumptions. Guide them to examine the cycle of assumptions: one assumption then leads to another, then another, and then you have a situation that has been blown completely out of proportion.

Examples:

A girlfriend assumes that her boyfriend will text her when he is finished his Friday night shift so they can meet up. Her boyfriend, however, assumes that since he is working his girlfriend would have made plans with her friends, so he plans to proceed to a party at a friend’s place. What happens next?

A teacher assumes that all her students know the proper behavior when on a field trip to a religious site. A few of the students assume that “field trip” means “holiday from appropriate school behavior.”
4. Share these situations between groups and encourage input from other groups.
5. Have the groups stage these scenes for the class. After each presentation, discuss the kinds of assumptions that are made and record these as they may serve as sparks for future work.

Extension: Now that the students have a clear picture of how assumptions can lead to drama and they have seen several scenes from the class, divide them into pairs or new small groups. They are now in the role of playwright(s) and the activity is to draft the climax scene from their soon to be staged play called RACE. Do not try to connect this to David Mamet’s play explicitly, as it will be more authentic for them to explore racial assumptions through their own lens. Depending on the group, this writing process can go quickly, or it could go slowly. What should be emphasized is that they will be turning over their scene to another group to perform. They should go through several drafts and readings on their own before they are ready to pass it on.

Give the scenes to other groups who will cast, block and stage the scene as they see fit. After each version of RACE, there should be a conversation to discuss reactions to the acting, writing, and ideas about assumptions that are coming out. In these discussions, the teacher may allude to more play-specific elements.

2. Speak the “Mamet Speak”
Curriculum Connections: Drama, Media Studies or English

Goal: Contextualize who David Mamet is, and connect the success of his plays to his efforts to “write real”. This quote from Wikipedia’s article on Mamet may be helpful:

Mamet’s style of writing dialogue, marked by a cynical, street-smart edge, precisely crafted for effect, is so distinctive that it has come to be called Mamet Speak. He often uses italics and quotation marks to highlight particular words and to draw attention to his characters’ frequent manipulation and deceitful use of language. His characters often interrupt one another, their sentences trail off unfinished, and their dialogue overlaps. Moreover, certain expressions and figures of speech are deliberately misrepresented to show that the character is not paying close attention to every detail of his dialogue (e.g., “or so forth” instead of “and so forth”). Mamet himself has criticized his tendency to write "pretty" at the expense of sound, logical plots. When asked how he developed his style for writing dialogue, Mamet said, "In my family, in the days prior to television, we liked to while away the evenings by making ourselves miserable, based solely on our ability to speak the language viciously. That's probably where my ability was honed.”
(quote from Mamet’s Writing in Restaurants)

1. Divide the class up into small groups of 4-6. Challenge them to improvise a scene inspired by Mamet’s quote. The scene will take place around a dinner table and the goal is to mimic Mamet’s style (think: crafted, edgy, cynical, emphasis on specific words in a sentence, interruptions, unfinished sentences, overlapping dialogue...etc.). The scene needs to have a specific beginning, climax and a resolution.
2. Share the scenes with the class. Discuss whether Mamet Speak can help with their approaches to writing. What is their version of Mamet Speak?

**Extension:** Now that the students have taken one crack at Mamet, let’s dive in deeper. Using the basic premise of some of his most famous plays, have students create the climax from these plays using their own Mamet Speak style. Give the students free-reign on time period and gender. Use the seeds below to inspire a Mamet festival of student written scenes: provide each group with only a title and a very simple synopsis:

- **Glengarry, Glen Ross:** Four real estate salesmen are supplied with names and phone numbers of leads (potential clients) and regularly use underhanded and dishonest tactics to make sales.

- **American Buffalo:** A team of men, Don, Teach, Bob, and Fletcher are conspiring to steal a coin collection from a wealthy man.

- **Speed the Plow:** Bobby Gould has recently been promoted to head of production at a major Hollywood studio. His job is to find suitable scripts to bring to studio head Richard Ross to be made into big Hollywood movies. There is vicious competition within the office, and what makes a successful film is always being questioned.

- **Oleanna:** A power struggle ensues between a University Professor and one of his female students, who accuses him of sexual exploitation and, by doing so, spoils his chances of being accorded tenure.

(more can be added based on size of class, or different groups can take on the same title)

**Post-Performance Activities**

*RACE* will catalyze many conversations for students. Here are a few suggestions as how to leverage the momentum of seeing *RACE* when you return to your classroom.

1. The “most incendiary topic in our history” Discussion/Debate
Susan, the young black female who has been hired as a legal assistant and serves as the front line at the law firm is quoted saying:

   *I. Know. There is nothing. A white person. Can say to a black person. About Race. Which is not both incorrect and offensive. Nothing. I know that. Race. Is the most incendiary topic in our history. And the moment it comes out, you cannot close the lid on the box. That may change. But not for a long while. (53)*

Now that the students have seen the play they have been exposed to further examples of how the issue of race is relevant to their generation.
1. Highlight the excerpt above for your students. Ask them these questions:
   - Do they agree with the various arguments presented through the characters of the play?
   - Is race an issue that can be discussed?
   - Have students ever personally been effected by or witnessed incidents of racism?
   - What can they do as a group to address this discrimination?
   - What role does history play in racial inequality? How has history changed since the days of the Civil Rights Movement?
   - What do the students see as the most incendiary (provocative, controversial) topic for their generation?

After this discussion, arrange a debate based on the question of race (or perhaps the issue has expanded to include elements like: social status, religion, economic status, etc.). It is best to follow official debate structures (one example: www.albertadebate.com/adebate/resources/styles/parl.pdf) and if the class is big enough, it would be very valuable to have debates on a variety of controversial topics that the students are passionate about.

**Extension:** Based on the context of the discussions and debates surrounding controversial issues, have the students create visual essays either based on photos, sketches, or even words (example: wordles, http://www.wordle.net/). The emphasis for this is that the students’ sentiments on the issues are explored in a visual fashion.

With all the responses complete, create a visual essay gallery and invite outsiders to visit. Encourage these guests to engage in the volatile issues the students are addressing. If it goes well, perhaps the students can take their reactions, ideas and responses from the gallery and create large-scale installations or statues.

2. Decide Charles Strickland’s Fate
Mamet intentionally leaves the trial of Charles Strickland open ended. As a class, stage a trial. The class should use Mamet-like portrayals of the prosecution lawyers. Develop a judge and witnesses who present to a designated jury.

3. Racism and Colloquialisms
Throughout the play, many racial terms are used, some noticeable, others more subtle. Mamet uses these sometimes derogatory terms to emphasize people’s ignorance.

discusses the popularization of what can be perceived as racism in pop culture, and the secretive nature of racism in language and our behaviours.

2. What actions are perceived as racist by students today? There are countless examples in language and in imagery. Guide the class to identify and contextualize cultural trends that we often condone simply because we are scared or ignorant of their origins and meanings. Some examples that can get you started:
   1. Words like: “gyp,” “picnic,” “barbarian,” “bugger,” and “hip hip hooray”, have deeply racist roots.
   2. Look to some of the propaganda used during the Holocaust, the Civil Rights Movement, The Tea Party Movement, Reverend Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church

3. Assign each topic that was collected in step 2 to either an individual student or pair of students. Each group should research their topic. Use the following questions to guide this activity: Is this kind of hatred intentional or not? Why do we condone this? How can you respond to this?

4. Students can report their findings to each other.

If this goes well, a Gallery, similar to Activity #1, can be created on the subject of Invisible Hatred/Visible Hatred.

4. Parallel Book/Play Study
The theme of race and its pernicious persistence within human history appears within a significant number of novels and plays. The benefit of looking to someone like Mamet as a counter point in an essay, an independent study, or even a multi genre research project, is that he is part storyteller and part philosopher. RACE serves as a really interesting foil to some of the great pieces on racism that exist in the canon.

Consider how RACE compares to another literary work with racist themes.

5. Write a Review and Submit it to Canadian Stage
As a company, Canadian Stage is very excited to hear from our audiences, especially our younger patrons. As a class you can examine different formats for play reviews and take a crack at reviewing RACE. All reviews can be sent to eschacter@canadianstage.com. Who knows? Your review might even be published on our website or in our Educations materials.
Appendix:

David Mamet: Why I Am No Longer a 'Brain-Dead Liberal'
An election-season essay

By David Mamet
From The Village Voice
published: March 11, 2008


John Maynard Keynes was twitted with changing his mind. He replied, "When the facts change, I change my opinion. What do you do, sir?"
My favorite example of a change of mind was Norman Mailer at The Village Voice.

Norman took on the role of drama critic, weighing in on the New York premiere of Waiting for Godot.

Twentieth century's greatest play. Without bothering to go, Mailer called it a piece of garbage.

When he did get around to seeing it, he realized his mistake. He was no longer a Voice columnist, however, so he bought a page in the paper and wrote a retraction, praising the play as the masterpiece it is.

Every playwright's dream.

I once won one of Mary Ann Madden's "Competitions" in New York magazine. The task was to name or create a "10" of anything, and mine was the World's Perfect Theatrical Review. It went like this: "I never understood the theater until last night. Please forgive everything I've ever written. When you read this I'll be dead." That, of course, is the only review anybody in the theater ever wants to get.

My prize, in a stunning example of irony, was a year's subscription to New York, which rag (apart from Mary Ann's "Competition") I considered an open running sore on the body of world literacy—this due to the presence in its pages of John Simon, whose stunning amalgam of superciliousness and savagery, over the years, was appreciated by that readership searching for an endorsement of proactive mediocrity.

But I digress.
I wrote a play about politics (November, Barrymore Theater, Broadway, some seats still available). And as part of the "writing process," as I believe it's called, I started thinking about politics. This comment is not actually as jejune as it might seem. Porgy and Bess is a buncha good songs but has nothing to do with race relations, which is the flag of convenience under which it sailed.

But my play, it turned out, was actually about politics, which is to say, about the polemic between persons of two opposing views. The argument in my play is between a president who is self-interested, corrupt, suborned, and realistic, and his leftish, lesbian, utopian-socialist speechwriter.

The play, while being a laugh a minute, is, when it's at home, a disputation between reason and faith, or perhaps between the conservative (or tragic) view and the liberal (or perfectionist) view. The conservative president in the piece holds that people are each out to make a living, and the best way for government to facilitate that is to stay out of the way, as the inevitable abuses and failures of this system (free-market economics) are less than those of government intervention.

I took the liberal view for many decades, but I believe I have changed my mind.

As a child of the '60s, I accepted as an article of faith that government is corrupt, that business is exploitative, and that people are generally good at heart.

These cherished precepts had, over the years, become ingrained as increasingly impracticable prejudices. Why do I say impracticable? Because although I still held these beliefs, I no longer applied them in my life. How do I know? My wife informed me. We were riding along and listening to NPR. I felt my facial muscles tightening, and the words beginning to form in my mind: Shut the fuck up. "?" she prompted. And her terse, elegant summation, as always, awakened me to a deeper truth: I had been listening to NPR and reading various organs of national opinion for years, wonder and rage contending for pride of place. Further: I found I had been—rather charmingly, I thought—referring to myself for years as "a brain-dead liberal," and to NPR as "National Palestinian Radio."

This is, to me, the synthesis of this worldview with which I now found myself disenchanted: that everything is always wrong.
But in my life, a brief review revealed, everything was not always wrong, and neither was nor is always wrong in the community in which I live, or in my country. Further, it was not always wrong in previous communities in which I lived, and among the various and mobile classes of which I was at various times a part.

And, I wondered, how could I have spent decades thinking that I thought everything was always wrong at the same time that I thought that people were basically good at heart? Which was it? I began to question what I actually thought and found that I do not think that people are basically good at heart; indeed, that view of human nature has both prompted and informed my writing for the last 40 years. I think that people, in circumstances of stress, can behave like swine, and that this, indeed, is not only a fit subject, but the only subject, of drama.

I'd observed that lust, greed, envy, sloth, and their pals are giving the world a good run for its money, but that nonetheless, people in general seem to get from day to day; and that we in the United States get from day to day under rather wonderful and privileged circumstances—that we are not and never have been the villains that some of the world and some of our citizens make us out to be, but that we are a confection of normal (greedy, lustful, duplicitous, corrupt, inspired—in short, human) individuals living under a spectacularly effective compact called the Constitution, and lucky to get it.

For the Constitution, rather than suggesting that all behave in a godlike manner, recognizes that, to the contrary, people are swine and will take any opportunity to subvert any agreement in order to pursue what they consider to be their proper interests.

To that end, the Constitution separates the power of the state into those three branches which are for most of us (I include myself) the only thing we remember from 12 years of schooling.

The Constitution, written by men with some experience of actual government, assumes that the chief executive will work to be king, the Parliament will scheme to sell off the silverware, and the judiciary will consider itself Olympian and do everything it can to much improve (destroy) the work of the other two branches. So the Constitution pits them against each other, in the attempt not to achieve stasis, but rather to allow for the constant corrections necessary to prevent one branch from getting too much power for too long.

Rather brilliant. For, in the abstract, we may envision an Olympian perfection of perfect beings in Washington doing the business of their employers, the people, but any of us who has ever
been at a zoning meeting with our property at stake is aware of the urge to cut through all the pernicious bullshit and go straight to firearms.

I found not only that I didn't trust the current government (that, to me, was no surprise), but that an impartial review revealed that the faults of this president—whom I, a good liberal, considered a monster—were little different from those of a president whom I revered.

Bush got us into Iraq, JFK into Vietnam. Bush stole the election in Florida; Kennedy stole his in Chicago. Bush outed a CIA agent; Kennedy left hundreds of them to die in the surf at the Bay of Pigs. Bush lied about his military service; Kennedy accepted a Pulitzer Prize for a book written by Ted Sorenson. Bush was in bed with the Saudis, Kennedy with the Mafia. Oh.

And I began to question my hatred for "the Corporations"—the hatred of which, I found, was but the flip side of my hunger for those goods and services they provide and without which we could not live.

And I began to question my distrust of the "Bad, Bad Military" of my youth, which, I saw, was then and is now made up of those men and women who actually risk their lives to protect the rest of us from a very hostile world. Is the military always right? No. Neither is government, nor are the corporations—they are just different signposts for the particular amalgamation of our country into separate working groups, if you will. Are these groups infallible, free from the possibility of mismanagement, corruption, or crime? No, and neither are you or I. So, taking the tragic view, the question was not "Is everything perfect?" but "How could it be better, at what cost, and according to whose definition?" Put into which form, things appeared to me to be unfolding pretty well.

Do I speak as a member of the "privileged class"? If you will—but classes in the United States are mobile, not static, which is the Marxist view. That is: Immigrants came and continue to come here penniless and can (and do) become rich; the nerd makes a trillion dollars; the single mother, penniless and ignorant of English, sends her two sons to college (my grandmother). On the other hand, the rich and the children of the rich can go belly-up; the hegemony of the railroads is appropriated by the airlines, that of the networks by the Internet; and the individual may and probably will change status more than once within his lifetime.

What about the role of government? Well, in the abstract, coming from my time and background, I thought it was a rather good thing, but tallying up the ledger in those things
which affect me and in those things I observe, I am hard-pressed to see an instance where the intervention of the government led to much beyond sorrow.

*But* if the government is not to intervene, how will we, mere human beings, work it all out?

I wondered and read, and it occurred to me that I knew the answer, and here it is: We just seem to. How do I know? From experience. I referred to my own—take away the director from the staged play and what do you get? Usually a diminution of strife, a shorter rehearsal period, and a better production.

The director, generally, does not *cause* strife, but his or her presence impels the actors to direct (and manufacture) claims designed to appeal to Authority—that is, to set aside the original goal (staging a play for the audience) and indulge in politics, the purpose of which may be to gain status and influence outside the ostensible goal of the endeavor.

Strand unacquainted bus travelers in the middle of the night, and what do you get? A lot of bad drama, and a shake-and-bake Mayflower Compact. Each, instantly, adds what he or she can to the solution. Why? Each wants, and in fact needs, to contribute—to throw into the pot what gifts each has in order to achieve the overall goal, as well as status in the new-formed community. And so they work it out.

See also that most magnificent of schools, the jury system, where, again, each brings nothing into the room save his or her own prejudices, and, through the course of deliberation, comes not to a perfect solution, but a solution acceptable to the community—a solution the community can live with.

Prior to the midterm elections, my rabbi was taking a lot of flack. The congregation is exclusively liberal, he is a self-described independent (read "conservative"), and he was driving the flock wild. Why? Because a) he never discussed politics; and b) he taught that the quality of political discourse must be addressed first—that Jewish law teaches that it is incumbent upon each person to hear the other fellow out.

And so I, like many of the liberal congregation, began, teeth grinding, to attempt to do so. And in doing so, I recognized that I held those two views of America (politics, government, corporations, the military). One was of a state where everything was magically wrong and must be immediately corrected at any cost; and the other—the world in which I actually functioned day to day—was made up of people, most of whom were reasonably trying to maximize their
comfort by getting along with each other (in the workplace, the marketplace, the jury room, on the freeway, even at the school-board meeting).

And I realized that the time had come for me to avow my participation in that America in which I chose to live, and that that country was not a schoolroom teaching values, but a marketplace.

"Aha," you will say, and you are right. I began reading not only the economics of Thomas Sowell (our greatest contemporary philosopher) but Milton Friedman, Paul Johnson, and Shelby Steele, and a host of conservative writers, and found that I agreed with them: a free-market understanding of the world meshes more perfectly with my experience than that idealistic vision I called liberalism.

At the same time, I was writing my play about a president, corrupt, venal, cunning, and vengeful (as I assume all of them are), and two turkeys. And I gave this fictional president a speechwriter who, in his view, is a "brain-dead liberal," much like my earlier self; and in the course of the play, they have to work it out. And they eventually do come to a human understanding of the political process. As I believe I am trying to do, and in which I believe I may be succeeding, and I will try to summarize it in the words of William Allen White.

White was for 40 years the editor of the Emporia Gazette in rural Kansas, and a prominent and powerful political commentator. He was a great friend of Theodore Roosevelt and wrote the best book I've ever read about the presidency. It's called Masks in a Pageant, and it profiles presidents from McKinley to Wilson, and I recommend it unreservedly.

White was a pretty clear-headed man, and he'd seen human nature as few can. (As Twain wrote, you want to understand men, run a country paper.) White knew that people need both to get ahead and to get along, and that they're always working at one or the other, and that government should most probably stay out of the way and let them get on with it. But, he added, there is such a thing as liberalism, and it may be reduced to these saddest of words: "... and yet ..."

The right is mooing about faith, the left is mooing about change, and many are incensed about the fools on the other side—but, at the end of the day, they are the same folks we meet at the water cooler. Happy election season.
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STUDY GUIDE: RACE


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