

# WALNUT STREET THEATRE

Touring Outreach Company

## Freedom Riders

By: Tom Quinn

### Study Guide

#### Play Synopsis

Join two girls from 1961, Jennifer and Tiffany, as they explore the intense history behind the Civil Rights Movement. As Jennifer persuades Tiffany to join her on the Freedom Rides to Alabama, historical figures appear to share their own stories. From Martin Luther King, Jr. to Malcolm X to the Little Rock Nine students, witness history come to life onstage. But will their stories be enough to convince Tiffany to take a stand against discrimination?



#### Pre-show Questions

- ◆ *What is racism? Can you think of any examples of racism that you have witnessed?*
- ◆ *How can we combat racism?*
- ◆ *What are civil rights? What have you learned about the Civil Rights Movement?*
- ◆ *What Civil Rights leaders do you expect to be in the show? Why?*
- ◆ *What are you expecting from a show titled Freedom Riders?*

#### Post-show Questions

- ◆ *What do you think the main idea of Freedom Riders is?*
- ◆ *Did you learn about any new Civil Rights leaders or events that you didn't know about before?*
- ◆ *If you were to go on a Freedom Ride today, where would you go and why?*
- ◆ *How far have we come in the fight for Civil Rights since 1961? What else do we still have to accomplish in order to achieve true equality?*

#### Pre-show Activity

Have your students cut or rip a piece of paper into five strips. On each strip have them write a word or a phrase that describes them. **No one is allowed to see another student's five strips.** Then tell your students to arrange the strips in order from what they most like about themselves to what they least like.

Now ask them to give up one strip. Ask them how that makes them feel to lose a part of themselves. Now ask them to give up another strip. Continue until only one strip remains.

Ask, "Now that you have given up most of yourself, what kind of person are you? What would it feel like to only be defined by one of those slips of paper (i.e. being defined by only your skin color)?"

#### Civil Rights Historical Figures/Events

*Before the show, you may want to review some of these historical figures and events with your class*

- **Brown vs. Board of Education**
- **W.E.B. Dubois**
- **Jim Crow Laws**
- **The Ku Klux Klan**
- **Little Rock Nine**
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**
- **Malcolm X**
- **NAACP**
- **Diane Nash**
- **Rosa Parks**
- **Plessy vs. Ferguson**





# Classroom Activities

*"As a young citizen of the world community, I stand with the United Nations against racism, discrimination, and intolerance of any kind. Throughout my life I will try to promote equality, justice and dignity among all people in my home, in my community, and everywhere in the world."*

- Pledge against discrimination from the United Nations' World Conference Against Racism

## The Pledge

After reading aloud the UN's pledge (above), have your students each write one idea of how someone could carry out this allegiance against discrimination. Some ideas are:



- I can start questioning stereotypes
- I can learn more about other races through books, films, events
- I can invite someone with a different background to eat lunch with me

## Thank You Notes

Your students should each choose a historical figure featured in *Freedom Riders*. Then they should write them a letter thanking them for their contribution to the Civil Rights Movement.

Include:

- The result of their actions
- How they triggered progress in America
- What we have in America today as a direct result of their contribution
- How your life would be different if they didn't take a stand against discrimination
- Any other personal opinions of their involvement with the Civil Rights Movement

## Quilt of Differences

Create a special class quilt to put on display! Give each of your students a 4" x 4" square piece of construction paper to decorate. Instruct them to adorn their square with a creative interpretation of what makes them a unique individual. This could be anything from their heritage to their interests.



Simply glue these squares onto a large sheet of paper, or staple them in a quilt format onto your bulletin board. Display your quilt to show others that you are proud of your differences, and that together your class is a beautiful sight to see!

## Freedom Riders: The Sequel

Almost 50 years after the Freedom Ride took place, America still faces issues of prejudice and discrimination. What would a sequel of *Freedom Riders* be like set in the year 2009? In pairs, write your own scene for the sequel between the granddaughters of Jennifer and Tiffany.

### Background Information Needed:

#### **Date:**

January 20, 2009

The day of Barack Obama's Presidential inauguration

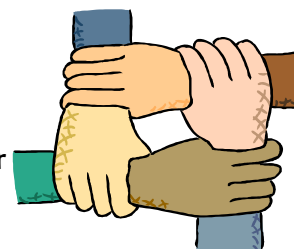
#### **Setting:**

Your Hometown

#### **Characters:**

Jessica: Jennifer's granddaughter

Tory: Tiffany's granddaughter



#### **Plot:**

Jessica is trying to persuade Tory to accompany her on a bus ride to see Obama's inauguration later that day.



# Classroom Activities

## Act It Out!

Sometimes it is difficult speaking out against racist remarks or actions. Use skits as a way to practice responding to offensive behavior.

Break your class into small groups of three or four. Each group should create a short skit about an act of discrimination they have witnessed. They should show positive ways to respond to the situation.

Have the groups perform the skits for the class. After each one, discuss how effective their response to the situation was. Have their peers brainstorm other ways they could have responded to the discrimination.

### **Questions to get the “creative juices” flowing:**

- *Have you ever heard someone make an offensive joke?*
- *Have you ever seen someone blatantly criticize or ridicule someone else because they were different?*
- *How did you respond in this situation?*
- *How could you prevent this behavior from happening again?*

## 🎵 Civil Rights Music 🎵

Even though the Civil Rights Movement would have probably been successful without music, the impact that songs had on the people of the 1960's is undeniable. There were many styles of civil rights music including jazz, soul, blues, gospel, and folk songs.

Have your students listen to and research a prominent civil rights movement song. Some examples include “We Shall Overcome”, “This Little Light of Mine”, “I Shall Not Be Moved”, and “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

Have them describe the content and sound of the song. What is the overall message? How does listening to it make you feel? What are the songs origins (i.e. songwriter, originated in times of slavery, etc.)? They can present their findings to the class.

For more information and sound clips:

<http://folkmusic.about.com/od/toptens/tp/CivilRightsSong.htm>

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99315652>

## I Have a Dream...

*In Martin Luther King, Jr.'s “I Have a Dream” speech from the 1963 March on Washington, he discusses how far America has come in the 100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation. He also elaborates on how far America still has to go in the fight against discrimination.*

*In Barack Obama's “A More Perfect Union” speech from his 2008 presidential campaign, he also speaks about America's progress and what racial problems the country still faces.*

- Read/listen to both speeches in class.
- Have your students pretend they are political leaders in the year 2050.
- Each student should write a 2 - 5 min. speech about racial discrimination in 2050.
- Include the progress America has made since 2009, how far America still has to go, and any solution possibilities for the future.
- Present your speech to the class as the future political leader.



The speeches in their entirety, along with audio versions and film versions, can be found at:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm>

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/perfectunion.htm>

## Living Witnesses

Often times, it is forgotten that there is a wealth of first-hand information at our fingertips. Ask your students to interview someone who lived during the 1950's-60's. Have them prepare their questions beforehand. Some examples are:

- What was your experience of race relationships during the 1950's-60's?
- Did you ever witness any racial discrimination during the 1950's-60's? How often?
- Were there any racial hate crimes or controversies in your town?
- What do you remember most about the 1950's-60's involving racial differences?
- What are the differences (involving equality) between then and now?

After their interviews, have them write the 5 most interesting things they learned from their “witness.”

## WEB RESOURCES



Here are some websites that provide more ideas for your classroom activities:

<http://www.sbgmusic.com/html/teacher/reference/historical/civilrights.html>

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/civilrightstimelinet.html>

<http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-65/index.html>

<http://www.janeelliott.com/>

### **Did you like the show? Let us know!**

Write to us at:

Walnut Street Theatre  
Education Department  
825 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

## **About the Playwright**

*Tom Quinn* is the author of *Freedom Riders*, *No Easy Road to Freedom*, *Martin and Malcolm*, *The Boy Who Cried Bully* and *MeanGirlz*. Holding a bachelor's degree from Bucknell University, Quinn was a recipient of the Dorothy Haas Acting Fellowship from Walnut Street Theatre in 1991-92. Quinn also performed in regional theatre and Los Angeles before obtaining a teaching degree and Masters in Education from West Chester University, along with a Masters in Educational Administration from Gwynedd-Mercy College. Quinn also helped to create and write the anti-bullying initiative and policy for the Central Bucks School District and has conducted workshops on using drama in the classroom for elementary and secondary teachers. He is currently a teacher of American History at Conestoga High School in Berwyn.

***This production was directed by Heather Krause.***

### **Walnut Street Theatre Education Department Staff**

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.....*Matt Mancuso*  
.....*Tinuke Oyefule*  
.....*Emily Rast*



## **WALNUT STREET THEATRE**



Walnut Street Theatre has the unique distinction of being the oldest, continuously operating theatre in the English-speaking world, having served Philadelphia audiences for 200 years! It is also the Official State Theatre of Pennsylvania, and a National Historic Landmark.

Today, under the direction of Producing Artistic Director Bernard Havard, Walnut Street Theatre is in its 26th season as a self-producing, non-profit theatre. Walnut Street Theatre continues to entertain and enlighten diverse audiences with high quality theatrical programming. With more than 56,000 season ticket holders, the Walnut is also the most subscribed theatre company in the world!

The Walnut Street Theatre is celebrating 24 years of bringing high-quality professional theatre to schools across the Delaware Valley. Our multi-cultural Touring Outreach Company introduces students to the world of theatre through age-appropriate, curriculum-based pieces, that are socially relevant, entertaining, and exciting. Last season, 111,505 children and adults were impacted by the Walnut's Education Programs.

### **Touring Actors**

Each season, Walnut Street Theatre holds a nation-wide search to recruit accomplished young professionals for Dorothy Haas Acting Apprenticeships. These actors form our Touring Outreach Company. Nearly 350 candidates are considered each year for these four positions.

### **The Walnut Street Theatre Educational Programs gratefully acknowledge support from the following:**

*ARAMARK \* The Barra Foundation*

*Bazelon, Less and Feldman, P.C. \* Louis N. Cassett Foundation \* Connelly Foundation*

*The Peter & Audrey Denton Fund \* Fox 29 \* William Goldman Foundation \* Hamilton Family Foundation \* Harmelin Media \* Hassel Foundation \* Hellendall Family Foundation \**

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*Capital Region, North Penn, Southeastern PA, and Tri-State \* US Airways Education Foundation \**

*Virginia and Harvey Kimmel Arts Education Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Hope

Hope... when all is lost

Hope... at any cost

Hope... when you are down

Hope... is freedom's sound

Hope... is believing

Hope... is conceiving

Hope... is achieving

*Written by Paula Young Shelton*

*teacher and member of the National Black Child Development Institute*

The one thing that all the participants of the Civil Rights Movement had in common was hope. Despite the many obstacles, hope led the way toward equality. Can you think of a time when faced with a difficult situation you didn't give up hope? How has hope ever changed your life?

Based on Paula Young Shelton's poem (above), create your own poem. After each prompt, fill in the blanks with a word or phrase that comes to mind. Try to think of what each word personally means to you.

Hope is... \_\_\_\_\_

Dreams are... \_\_\_\_\_

Brotherly Love is... \_\_\_\_\_

Tolerance is... \_\_\_\_\_

Optimism is... \_\_\_\_\_

Freedom is... \_\_\_\_\_

# Create Your Own Freedom Ride!

*In groups of 3-4, create a "scrapbook" of your adventure!*

**Name of Our Ride:**

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**Our Cause:**

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**Draw the Group Logo**

**Our Favorite Place  
We Went To:**

**Why:**

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**Draw A "Snapshot"  
of Our Group**

**Biggest Challenge  
We Faced:**

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**Map of Where Our Ride Went:**

**Draw Our Bus**