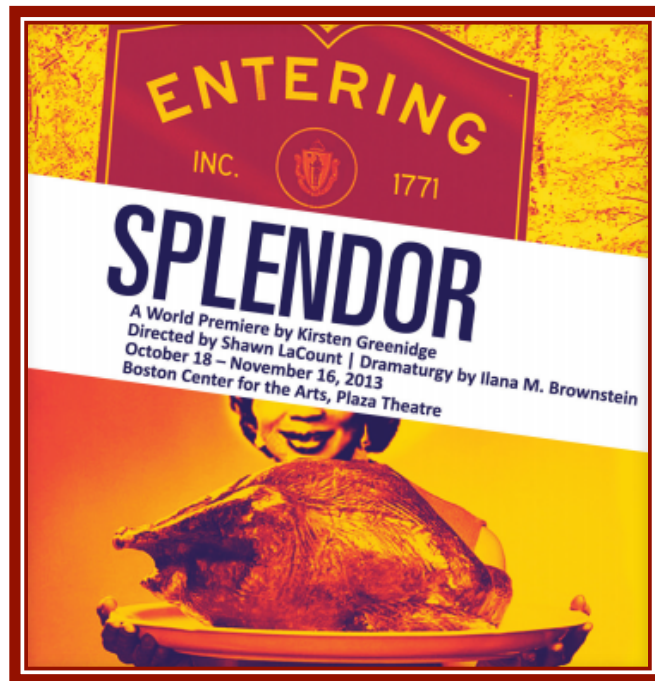


A Guide for Teachers and Students to Company One's Production:



Dear Educators and Students,

We are pleased to present to you our Curricular Connections Packet for Company One's production of *Splendor* by Obie Award Winning playwright, Kirsten Greenidge. We've developed these materials to facilitate your understanding and engagement with the production, and we encourage you to adapt the material to suit your needs. *Splendor* is an adult play with adult language. This curricular connections packet reflects the adult content of the play, and we trust you to use your judgment when deciding on the appropriateness of its content and activities for your students.

Enclosed you will find:

- * Introduction
- * Interview with the author, Kirsten Greenidge
- * Background Information
- * Script analysis and discussion questions
- * Lesson plans

If you have any questions, please contact us at stageone@companyone.org.

See you at the theater!

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Introduction



One way to think about art is as a form of expression which helps us to explore our place in this vast and ever-changing world and how we feel about it. *Splendor* certainly encourages us to do that. On Thanksgiving eve in a town just north of Boston, Fran (the play's central character) is determined to make a nice turkey dinner for her chain-smoking klepto mother and her couch-surfing older brother. If only it were that simple. A vivid collage of local stories exposes a community where generations of families collide over far more than pumpkin pie and stuffing. Kirsten Greenidge orchestrates 45 years of our history into evolving snapshots of race, class, dreams, and the place we call HOME.

Several big questions stem from the play, forcing us to take a deeper look at ourselves and the community around us. Some are far easier to address and dissect than others. Some of the questions raised in *Splendor* are:

- How do factors such as race and class affect the identities we create for ourselves, and the labels society casts upon us?
- How do our identities affect the traditions we establish at home as well as in the community?
- What is the importance of tradition and what happens when these ideologies shift?
- What effect does gentrification have on our shifting traditions and communities? Does it shatter them?
- Once our world is shattered, how do we put the pieces back together? How do we stop ourselves from drowning? How can we surface?

Through background information, script analysis, discussion questions, and lesson planning we will further explore and analyze these pressing issues as well as answer questions about ourselves and the roles we play in our community.

Interview with Kirsten

Making a Home in Bellington

Playwright Kirsten Greenidge has been incubating Splendor with Company One for several years and has had her creative team of Director Shawn LaCount and Dramaturg Ilana Brownstein on board the whole way. Kirsten and Ilana stole a few minutes from the middle of rehearsal to talk about process and pie.

ILANA: You're a prolific story teller, and your work spans a wide range of locations, but one place in particular -- the fictional town of Bellington -- appears in more than one of your plays. What makes this location important and compelling for you?

KIRSTEN: Recently I've been drawn to the voices I grew up with and the voices I recognize in many various "home towns" -- Arlington, Cambridge, Somerville, Medford.... In creating plays inspired by these places, I knew I needed to set them in a place where I didn't feel confined by geography or history that was so identifiably specific that it allowed any one community in the Greater Boston area to be let off the hook. I think Boston's racial and class history are easily referenced but not as easily absorbed: it's "that town's" problem; it's "othered" in a way that makes us comfortable. For *Splendor*, I borrowed from the Belmont-based writer Tom Perrotta and adapted the town of "Bellington" to represent all of these towns -- it's also where my previous play, *THE LUCK OF THE IRISH*, is set. The town allows for these plays to begin a conversation about "us," as opposed to "them," because I've designed it to be made up of different classes of people -- and to include people of color, which is crucial in terms of the conversations with which these plays engage.

ILANA: *Splendor* is based on a one-act you wrote called *THANKSGIVING*, which was part of the GRIMM anthology Company One commissioned in 2009, and produced in 2010. You've been living with the three original on-stage characters -- and a whole host of implied off-stage characters -- for a long time. What does it mean for you as a writer to revisit an older piece, and expand it into its own epic, and episodic, portrait of an entire community?

KIRSTEN: Revisiting *THANKSGIVING* these many years later means appreciating the original play, but being ready and able to dissolve portions of it so that it can exist as part of a whole -- rather than as the whole, itself. I don't like the writer's term "killing your babies" (used to describe the editing process). I have two kids and this term is just too literal for my imagination. I do, however, know that you can't keep everything. You have to cut and trim and cut again. In terms of creating a play to work around *THANKSGIVING*, it has meant filling out the world that the original three characters -- Nicole, Colleen, and Lisa -- allude to initially.

We especially needed more about the central character of Fran Giosa, who was invoked but never seen. But, even as that world gets filled, being ready and receptive to the idea of re-shaping is crucial. Because so much exists in *Splendor*, one task has been to find proficiency in the language of exposition. How much information do we need? How much can we suspend but still follow story and journey?

ILANA: The development process for *Splendor* can seem at once languorous (the first dance with this world was four years ago), and incredibly intense. For the record, we're having this conversation while the play is still in flux – additions and cuts are being implemented on an almost daily basis. What has this been like for you, as a resident writer with the company?

KIRSTEN: When we had our first workshop of *Splendor* last November as part of the BCA/Company One XX PlayLab, the play and ideas and characters within it were so new they were barely breathing. Most of last year was spent building story and experimenting with the timeline of the play. At first glance the play can seem as if it is a somewhat random collection of scenes, but underneath it all, the timeline is rather rigid: there is an elastic unity of time. The action proceeds chronologically from Wednesday morning, the day before Thanksgiving, to late at night after the festive meal, even as we jump back and forth in years. Attention to this structure has been demanding. While each stage of the process was valuable, the most rigorous part was the March Festival workshop, and then our mini-workshops in which the cast and team supported me throughout the summer. The early work solidified the container used to tell these stories, while the summer workshops helped fill in that container. Essentially, every few weeks for the last five months, I had another draft written. This kind of work was quick and sloppy, as it must be. Some drafts worked better than others, but all drafts helped get us to the official start of our rehearsal process in late August. It can be difficult for actors and designers to work this way: nothing is permanent, everything is in flux. This is how you build a play. So it takes a lot of generosity, which is in abundance at Company One.

ILANA: Food is such a talisman of the holiday experience – it can unite or divide the folks at the table. What principles guided you as you built the gustatory events of the play?

KIRSTEN: Where you shop reveals a lot about who you are at a given time. Do you clip coupons and head to Stop & Shop down the street? Do you drive twenty minutes and brave the weekend rush just to get a good deal at Market Basket? Do you fill your cart at Whole Foods and not blink an eyelash? I've watched my now-husband work in restaurants for a decade-and-a-half, and people get very primal about what they eat. Because I am almost

always interested in class, I've given a lot of thought about how someone's financial circumstances delineate where they buy their food, and how there is so much judgment assigned to this choice. A grocery store – the kinds of foods within it, the types of people who frequent it – reveals a lot about the community that houses it. The holiday of Thanksgiving itself revolves around food; the entire custom is defined by what is served. Who cooks it and who serves, and what happens to us when we come together to eat it, are telling. It's amazing and insane that an entire nation of people all eat relatively the same food for non-religious purposes during one afternoon every fall. And that even after Aunt Clara throws the carving knife at Uncle Joe, we come back again the next year and do it all over again. Amazing and insane.

ILANA: What are your most potent memories of Thanksgiving?

KIRSTEN: I remember cooking with my mother as a child and, around seven, being given the job of ironing the cloth napkins. My daughter is six and I wouldn't let her near a hot iron, never mind place a laundry basket of napkins next to her with the expectation that she'd do anything with them. I remember trying to blend in and make myself as useful as possible to the adults so that I could listen to what they were talking about. I remember being horrified at finding out what giblets are, and sad when I learned there is a hotline devoted to Turkey cooking emergencies: who are these people cooking alone? To me, the most important part is being with family or, if your family drives you amazingly insane, finding other people to be with who are kind. I remember new Thanksgiving dresses and tights and Mary Janes. And slips. And I remember the abandon of "the kids table" where there were few rules and lots of noise. I remember Mary Poppins came on after Thanksgiving Day was all over and my sister and I would take back the TV from football. And of course, I remember pie the next day for Breakfast.

Identity

Noted Indian Philosopher Dr. B.R. Ambedkar once wrote, “Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self.” While many believe this to be true, society has an undeniable effect on the way we view ourselves and the way others view us. For centuries, race and class have played a major factor in how we identify one another.



Race:

While the United States has a particularly interesting history of racial stigmas, the struggle between race and identity occurs in mostly every country across the globe. From the South African Apartheid to discrimination in Lebanon, from the hate-filled Hitler era to the Civil Rights movement in the U.S, prejudice and segregation have been the cause of a long fought battle for human rights and racial equality.

The United States' Constitution makes the claim: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” However, statistics prove that the war against inequality was never won and is far from over. The following are unemployment rates for White, Black, and Asian males and females in August of 2013 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

White males: 5.8%
Asian males: 5.1%
Black males: 13.3%



White females: 5.9%
Asian females: 5.1%
Black females: 11.5%



Race has bred issues in the workplace, education, and even marriage. In fact, it wasn't until 1967 that the U.S Supreme Court invalidated laws prohibiting interracial marriages. For centuries, interracial relationships have not only been taboo, but also illegal. However, despite continued racial profiling, many in today's society are venturing out of their own race when it comes to forming relationships. An article from the Los Angeles Times written by Emily Alpert explains, "More Americans are forming serious relationships across lines of race and ethnicity, moving in with or marrying people who check a different box on their census form. Married or unmarried, interracial couples were more than twice as common in 2012 than in 2000, U.S. Census Bureau data show."

Social Class:

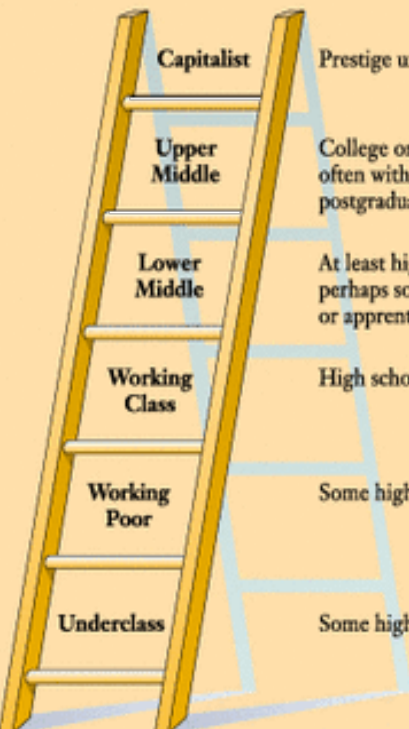
These long lasting racial implications not only alter the course of history, but also the course of class systems throughout the world. David Lindsay-Abaire, a Pulitzer Prize Award winning playwright, once wrote, "From a young age, I was rubbing elbows with a very different kind of person and social class, and I felt a lot of tension and conflict in my identity because of that." Social classes are an unavoidable part of our lives; they always have been and always will be. Their impact on how we view others in our community and ourselves is indelible.

The Marxist conception of class involves a group of individuals within a society that share common economic interests. These classes have tendencies and interests that differ from those of other groups within society.

In an article in the New York Times, Janny Scott and David Leonhardt examine social class: "But class is still a powerful force in American life. Over the past three decades, it has come to play a greater, not lesser, role in important ways. At a time when education matters more than ever, success in school remains linked tightly to class. At a time when the country is increasingly integrated racially, the rich are isolating themselves more and more. At a time of extraordinary advances in medicine, class differences in health and lifespan are wide and appear to be widening. The scramble to scoop up a house in the best school district, channel a child into the right preschool program or land the best medical specialist are all part of a quiet contest among social groups that the affluent and educated are winning in a rout."

In a time where economic and social systems are becoming increasingly immobile, belonging to a specific class affects your education, health, career, and social status, thus shaping your identity in ways that are difficult to escape.

The U.S. Social Class Ladder



Social Class	Education	Occupation	Income	Percentage of Population
Capitalist	Prestige university	Investors and heirs, a few executives	\$500,000+	1%
Upper Middle	College or university, often with postgraduate study	Professionals and upper managers	\$90,000+	14%
Lower Middle	At least high school; perhaps some college or apprenticeship	Semiprofessionals and lower managers, craftspeople, foremen	About \$40,000	30%
Working Class	High school	Factory workers, clerical workers, retail sales, low-paid craftspeople	About \$30,000	30%
Working Poor	Some high school	Laborers, service workers, low-paid salespeople	About \$18,000	22%
Underclass	Some high school	Unemployed and part-time, on welfare	About \$10,000	3%

Source: Based on Gilbert, Dennis, and Joseph A. Kahl. *The American Class Structure: A New Synthesis*. 4th ed. Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1993. Income estimates follow Duff, Christina. "Profiling the Aged: Fat Cats or Hungry Victims?" *Wall Street Journal*, September 28, 1995a: B1, B8.

Script Analysis and Discussion Questions

Read the following excerpts from Kirsten Greenidge's *Splendor* and answer the accompanying questions.

Clive: An African American male with Jamaican roots

Gloria: An Italian-American white woman

This scene takes place in 1976. Gloria and Clive are having their second child. However, they are no longer together, nor speaking to each other in 2012.

CLIVE:

Two is a lot of kids.

GLORIA:

Six is a lot. Two's one under each arm.

CLIVE:

This isn't right, we should be married.

GLORIA:

We can be gypsies.

CLIVE:

No, no gypsy-talking: We need to find a place.

CLIVE:

That's why I told you, I told you, trouble's just a heartbeat away, trouble —

GLORIA:

There are other places.

CLIVE:

You come to my mom's.

GLORIA:

I can't do that, Clive. Her place is so tiny, and your brothers still got years of school left.

CLIVE:

We find a place downtown.

GLORIA:

Me go live on Shawmut Ave or something

CLIVE:
It'd be ours.

GLORIA:
We can't afford.

CLIVE:
I know a guy.

GLORIA:
I'm not livin' out there, Clive. I'll work on my father. Once he gets to know you, he'll love you. He's not into all that. I watch him watch the news and he can't understand those kids either, half of Boston has lost its mind: throwing rocks at little kids, tear gas like this is down South: he sits there and wags his head I think he'll come around.

CLIVE:
I don't live on the news, Gloria.

GLORIA:
I know that.

CLIVE:
The man won't even shake my hand —

GLORIA:
I'll work on him. He'll love you.

CLIVE:
Sneaking around, makes me feel I'm doing something, we're doing something, wrong, I —. Two kids: I'll save up. Next summer, the four of us.

Discussion Questions

- 1. The following excerpt takes place in 1976. Imagine the same scene took place today. Do you think the issues of race and class would be different? Why or why not?*
- 2. Have you ever been discriminated against based on your race or ethnicity? If so, how did that make you feel? If not, why do you think that is?*
- 3. How do race and class affect the way you view yourself and the way you view others around you?*

Fran: Daughter of Gloria and Clive (Half black and half white)

Colleen: White female

Fran and Colleen grew up in the same neighborhood together, but were never friends.

COLLEEN: You Giosas always held yourselves apart. You can dial. You can pick up a lousy phone. It shouldn't be up to everyone else make you feel--.

FRAN: Say it.

COLLEEN: Why'd you move back for? What are you still doing here then? Move if you can't stand any of us.

FRAN: I grew up here same as you.

(Later on in the scene)

COLLEEN:

IT IS OVER. All that kind of talk should be over we all voted for *Obama*: but you just want to come in here and make me, make us all look like--. This town should've spit you out years ago. You, your mother; your lousy brother shouldn't be sleeping on my mother's couch, he shouldn't be in our house at all—

Discussion Questions

- 1. How do you think race affects Colleen and Fran's relationship or lack thereof? Do you think their relationship would have been different if they were of the same race?*
- 2. Is there someone in your life who wouldn't be your friend because of your race or social class?*
- 3. List three ways we can prevent this kind of discrimination in schools and in the community.*

Lesson Plan: Identity Flags

Materials

Colored Pencils

Magazines (Optional)

Paper

Goal: To encourage students to explore the ways they identify with themselves.

Activity:

1. Discuss with the class, what is Identity and what makes up our Identities? Ask students to pick one or two of their identities that affect them the most in the world. Which are most important to them? What symbols represent this identity visually? Students should identify clothing, make up, instruments, food, and other visual representations of their chosen identity.

2. Show students Iranian American artist Sara Rabar's textile flags.

(<http://www.sararahbar.com/index.php?page=20>) Here, the artist takes the American Flag image and infuses it with different symbology. Discuss the flags and Artist Statement with the students. What is the artist attempting to do here?



Artist Statement:

It's about falling, standing and attempting to survive it all.

In the end we are all just visiting and we all come to this world alone and we leave alone.

But while we are here we try so desperately to belong to something, to someone and to somewhere.

Metamorphosing and transforming for the means of surviving it all, our foundations lay, but our houses have burned to the ground. Building castles in the sky, for a species that cannot fly, brick by limb we tear it down.

3. Task students with creating a visual representation of their identities by making a personal flag made solely of images. They can use colored pencils, symbols cut from colored paper, but no words.

Flag Template: (<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/flag-day/printable/5925.html>)

4. Using Sarah's artist statement as guiding inspiration, students should write their own 5-10 sentence artist statement for their flag. They can be abstract if they wish, as Sarah's is, or more concrete, explaining their symbols directly.

5. Students present work in front of class.

Tradition



In a speech given on November 29, 1944, Winston Churchill explains, “A love of tradition has never weakened a nation, indeed it has strengthened nations in their hour of peril; but the new view must come, the world must roll forward.”

Traditions have been passed down from generation to generation since the beginning of time. For centuries, the samurai and their spiritual descendants followed "the way of the warrior," living lives governed by its tenets of honor, strict devotion to one's master, and, above all, self sacrifice. Mexican cultures honor the deceased in a national holiday known as Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead; pictured above). On the Atlantic side of Canada, birthday boys and girls are sometimes “ambushed” and their noses are greased, usually with butter, to ward off bad luck. Every culture has its traditions and it’s important to consider why. How do these traditions shape who we are? Do they define us?

As explored in *Splendor*, Thanksgiving, for example, is a tradition practiced in the U.S that dates back 400 years. In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Indians shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states. It wasn't until 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, that President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.



Another tradition Greenidge examines is one of America’s favorite pastimes: football. More specifically, *Splendor* takes a deeper look not at the game being played, but the uniforms the high school students parade around in. Despite the tradition’s widespread popularity, football team names and mascots have often times been the center of controversy.

Several activist groups view team names and mascots such as the Chiefs, Warriors, and Redskins as disrespectful and offensive. Most notably, the National Congress of American Indians have issued a resolution opposing continued usage of Native team names, mascots, and logos. While the debate continues, several organizations and schools are taking action against the usage of racial epithets. The NAACP passed a resolution calling for the end of the use of Native American names, images, and mascots in 1999. In a report on the status of Native American students, the National Education Association included the elimination of Indian mascots and sports team names as one of its recommendations and in 2010 a law was passed in Wisconsin to eliminate race-based nicknames, logos, and mascots in schools.



Today the controversy surrounding the issue of racially offensive sports team names is getting widespread attention. The Washington Redskins and the National Football League are at the center of the fight over whether or not to change the team's contentious name. NBC sportscaster Bob Costas weighed in on the controversy during halftime of the Sunday Night Football game between the Washington Redskins and the Dallas Cowboys:

"But think for a moment about the term 'Redskins,' and how it truly differs from all the others. Ask yourself what the equivalent would be if directed towards African Americans, Hispanics, Asians or any other ethnic group. When considered that way, 'Redskins' can't possibly honor a heritage or noble character trait, nor can it possibly be considered a neutral term. It's an insult, a slur, no matter how benign the present day intent."

Throughout the play, we explore many of these traditions, but more importantly, how they shift and how that affects who we are. Which traditions are important to keep and which ones should remain in the past? What do these traditions say about ourselves and our community?

Script Analysis and Discussion Questions

Read the following excerpts from Kirsten Greenidge's *Splendor* and answer the accompanying questions.

Gloria: Fran and Anthony's mother (Italian-American)

Fran: Gloria and Clive's daughter (Half white/half black)

Anthony: Gloria and Clive's son (Half white/half black)

ANTHONY:

Traffic out there's a son of a —

GLORIA:

Fran's ruining Thanksgiving for all the old people.

FRAN:

It's a lobster bisque and it's going to be delicious.

ANTHONY:

Long as there's drumsticks and turkey and stuffing...(Later on in the scene)

FRAN:

I just thought we could start some new traditions, spiritual, well, you know, meaningful -- Lobster's real New England. Even more than turkeys — (Later on in the scene)

GLORIA:

Soup at Thanksgiving is Harvard Square caca, that's what it is.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think having turkey, potatoes, and pie as opposed to lobster bisque at Thanksgiving Dinner is important to Gloria?
2. What are some of your favorite traditions? (Does not have to relate to Thanksgiving)
3. What do these traditions say about you?

Aline: High school counselor

Mike: High school student and football player

The football team name has just been changed from the Chiefs to the Trojans

MIKE:

Coach will chew me out good if I'm late. Thanksgiving Day Game tomorrow. You coming?

(Later on in the scene) It's gonna be *huge* if we win. If we win we're on the news and I think that'd be good. Good for morale, you know, with everything going on with the name change and all that. How they gonna change our name just like that?

ALINE:

You could have more goals than who the school mascot is, Michael.

MIKE:

We're the chiefs, always be the chiefs. I get on the news I think it'd be real good for school spirit.

ALINE: You could have more plans than the next football game.

... (Later on in the play)

MIKE:

Trojans is bull****, we should be the chiefs, we were always the chiefs some people just can't f***** leave well enough alone f***** troublemaker this is a good place, a good town, we're the f***** Chiefs, f***** warriors.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it is that Mike can't let go of past traditions and move forward with new ones?
2. Think of the most important tradition in your life. Now imagine that it is no longer the way you imagine and is something completely new. How does that make you feel? Could you move forward or be stuck in the past?

Lesson Plan: Interviews on Tradition

Materials

Paper

Pencil

(Electronic devices can substitute paper at the teachers discretion)

Interviewee

Goal: To encourage the students to explore traditions in their community that are similar to and that differ from theirs, as well as to analyze the affect of shifting traditions.

Activity:

1. Have the students interview an older member of *their* family or an older member of *their* community. Here are some suggestion questions; however the students are free to create their own.

- a. What are some of the most important traditions in your life? Which are old traditions and which are new?
- b. Who taught you these traditions? Have you formed traditions of your own?
- c. How would you feel if you no longer had these traditions? If they were shattered?
- d. How would you feel if they shifted?
- e. What is the importance of the role of tradition in your community? The role of tradition in your family?

2. Then have the students answer either these same questions, or the questions they constructed, based on their own experiences.

3. Have the students compare the two sets of questions and answers.

4. Share their findings with the class. What was surprising? What didn't surprise you?

Gentrification



“Like tooth decay, it's a slow process, but in time, when all the original teeth have been left to rot and pulled out, brand-new gold crowns can be put in their place.”

-An excerpt from *Chango's Fire* by novelist and journalist Ernesto Quinonez

Gentrification by its very definition is complex. It encompasses both positive and negative language. Essentially, gentrification is a shift in an urban community toward wealthier residents and/or businesses and increasing property values, sometimes at the expense of the poorer residents of the community. It can improve the safety of neighborhoods and restore local businesses and store fronts, while simultaneously displacing the original low-income residents of the neighborhood.

The concept of gentrification, as explored in *Splendor*, plays a significant role in the communities of Boston, Massachusetts. In June, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that Boston's population was on the rise and between April 2010 and July 2011, it increased to 625,087 from 617,594, reported the previous year. Along with this increase in population, came an increase in rent, property, and cost of living. Families, the elderly, and working class individuals continue to move further and further outside of their original urban neighborhoods to seek refuge from rent hikes and a changing face of a once recognizable community.

According to Dr. Japonica Brown-Saracino, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Boston University, there is more to gentrification than just housing being gobbled up by newcomers. Brown-Saracino said long time residents react not only to physical displacement, but “social displacement,” which is the loss of control in a gentrifying community. “It is a fight over territory, but not just physical territory, it's symbolic territory. It's not unusual to have this sort of discourse between the old and the new especially in a neighborhood with such a solid, highly visible, long-standing identity. There is really something to fight for there.”

Despite, many arguments have been made on both sides of the fence. According to Lance Freeman, an assistant professor of Urban Planning at Columbia University, “...Although higher costs sometimes force poor residents to leave gentrifying neighborhoods, other changes — more jobs, safer streets, better trash pickup — encourage them to stay. But to others, gentrification remains a dirty word.”

One major impact gentrification has had on the Boston community in particular is the closing down of family owned supermarket chain Johnnie’s Foodmaster. John DeJesus Sr. opened his first store in East Cambridge in 1947. The chain operated 11 stores at its peak in neighborhoods like Arlington, Medford,



Somerville, Charlestown, and Revere. In late August 2012, it was announced that Austin, Texas-based Whole Foods Market was in the early stages of talks to acquire the leases of six of the 10 Johnnie's locations to expand its presence in the region. In November of 2013, according to an article in the Boston Globe, “All 10 Johnnie’s Foodmaster supermarkets are closing, not just the six being taken over by Whole Foods Market, according to a company hired to liquidate the local chain. But a seventh store — in Medford — will reopen as a Stop & Shop.”

The following is an excerpt from the Nov. 2 letter addressed to the employees of the Alewife Brook Parkway, Somerville store:

“We wish to inform you that, as of November 30, 2012, your employment with Foodmaster will be terminated. We do not anticipate that there will be any other positions available with Foodmaster.”

While the letter stated that the official termination date was November 30, employees said the store was expecting to close its doors on November 19. That meant they would face unemployment before Thanksgiving. Employees said there were about 85 workers at the Alewife location.

Kirsten Greenidge closely examines the impact such gentrification has on the characters in her play. *Splendor* not only illustrates the effect it has on our wallets, but more importantly the ramifications it has on our identity as a community. How does society compete with vastly growing property and monetary demands, as well as maintain its identity?

Script Analysis and Discussion Questions

Read the following excerpts from Kirsten Greenidge's *Splendor* and answer the accompanying questions.

Lisa and Nicole, high-school friends, sit at their daughters' dance practice as they converse about the following:

LISA:

And the Whole Foods— Who's going to go to all those Whole Foods they're gonna put up anyway? There ought be some kind of: all them people working there for years down the Foodmaster and suddenly they're gonna be good enough to sell twenty dollar loaves of bread to people who think cutting back means you knock a week off your ski vacation?

NICOLE:

Since he was fifteen he'd been working there.

LISA:

Twenty dollar bread, five dollar gallon of milk squeezed from a pigeon or some such s*: ridiculous: there oughta be a law is what I'm saying.**

NICOLE:

Mike's dad's beside himself, having to give all those people the ax. He was over the house the other day said he never thought, all those years first as the butcher, then as the manager, he never thought they'd all just go like that. I sure never thought I'd be cutting coupons and stuff like this. I remember. I remember when Mike met my parents, for the first time—

Discussion Questions

- 1. Lisa mentions that there "oughta be a law" against stores like Foodmaster closing down. Do you agree? Explain some of the negative and positive aspects of gentrification.*
- 2. Talk about an experience in the community in which gentrification has had an impact. What were the positive or negative affects on the community?*
- 3. How might such gentrification shape who you are and your identity?*

Lesson Plan: Mayoral Debate on Gentrification

Materials

Research Materials (Library, Internet, Newspaper, etc.)

Goal: Encourage students to analyze the positive and negative effects gentrification has on a community and to exercise their public speaking skills

Activity:

1. Students will research and analyze the effect gentrification has had in the Greater Boston Area throughout the last 45 years. Research materials can include newspapers, online articles, pictures, interviews, etc. They should focus on how gentrification has affected local businesses, cost of living, the tearing down and construction of new buildings/businesses, etc.

2. Students will then analyze and present their research via a faux Mayoral debate. They will assume the role of a mayoral candidate who has been asked a series of questions on the subject of gentrification in Boston. The debate should allow each student five minutes to explain his or her point of view. Their opinions should be well supported and based on their research. The following are suggested debate questions:

a. Many argue that while gentrifying neighborhoods tend to force poorer residents out of jobs and out of their homes, it also provides for safer streets, better jobs, and an overall, livelier community. Do you agree? Why or why not?

b. A *Whole Foods Market* recently opened up in Somerville, MA leaving two local, affordable Spanish and Haitian Markets out of business. How would you tackle this issue? What action would you take to prevent unemployment among these local business owners and workers?

c. Boston Mayor Thomas Menino created a regulation that requires developers either to dedicate 13 percent of units in their projects for affordable housing on site, or pay into a city fund to help get those units built elsewhere. If elected, what kind of regulation and/or reform would you fight for on the subject of gentrification, if any? Why or why not?

Drowning and Surfacing

“For in tremendous extremities human souls are like drowning men; well enough they know they are in peril; well enough they know the causes of that peril;-- nevertheless, the sea is the sea, and these drowning men do drown.”

- Herman Melville, *Pierre or the Ambiguities*



Many of the characters in *Splendor* feel, at some point, trapped, suffocated, and helpless. They're drowning in a sea of their own financial, social, and personal disappointments. The imaginary world in which these characters live isn't far from the reality in which many Americans are living today.

In December of 2007 the U.S began a downward spiral into what is considered by many economists to be the worst financial crisis our country has seen since the Great Depression in the 1930's. It resulted in the threat of total collapse of large financial institutions, the bailout of banks by national governments, and downturns in stock markets around the world. In many areas, the housing market also suffered, resulting in evictions, foreclosures and prolonged unemployment. The unemployment rate rose from 5% in 2008 pre-crisis to 10% by late 2009. The number of unemployed rose from approximately 7 million in 2008 pre-crisis to 15 million by 2009. Approximately 5.4 million people have been added to federal disability rolls as discouraged workers give up looking for work and take advantage of the federal program.

The Recession not only affected banks and businesses, but also education. According to an article in the Washington Post in 2010, “From coast to coast, public schools face the threat of tens of thousands of layoffs this year in a fiscal crunch likely to result in larger class sizes and fewer programs to help students in need. Reports of deep staffing and service cuts are emerging in several states, including California, Illinois, and New Jersey, as school officials say that finances have been stretched to the breaking point.”

In an article in the U.S News in that same year, “Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio have run out of scholarship money and are turning down thousands of qualified applicants. Public universities in Georgia, Virginia, and Washington have all raised their tuition by about \$1,000 for the fall semester. Public colleges in Florida, Louisiana, and Nevada are canceling hundreds of classes for lack of state funding. California has simply shut the door on hundreds of thousands of its high school graduates and workers hoping for new skills.”



So what do we do? How do we keep from drowning when our resources are becoming increasingly slim?

“360 degrees of Financial Literacy” is a FREE online program of the nations certified accounts to help Americans understand their personal finances through every stage of life. The following was taken straight from the website (www.360financialliteracy.org):

Generation Z (teens to early 20s): Accustomed to instant gratification, the "Digital Generation" may need to recognize that financial success takes diligence and patience. Consider sharing the following advice:

Live within your means. Your first paycheck provides the chance to learn valuable lessons, such as creating a budget and spending less than you earn.

Build a saving habit. You have one powerful advantage over other generations--time. Why not make saving automatic and direct a part of your paycheck into a savings or investment account?

Understand credit and credit reports. A good credit history helps you get a car loan and a mortgage, but a bad one can ruin your borrowing chances for years. Reviewing your credit report regularly can help you manage your finances and protect your identity.

Script Analysis and Discussion Questions

Read the following excerpts from Kirsten Greenidge's *Splendor* and answer the accompanying questions.

Anthony: Clive's son (who he hasn't seen in almost 18 years)

Clive: Anthony's father

Aline: Clive's girlfriend

Anthony found Clive in the phone book and went to pay him a very long overdue visit

ALINE:

...So you work, if you're not in school.

ANTHONY:

I...well...truth is, I'd love school. Expensive though.

CLIVE:

Sure is. Sure is an arm and a leg.

ALINE:

Sh...(Later on in the scene)

ANTHONY:

That's why I thinking design school, draw stuff about the New World. If I can get enough together—

CLIVE:

I don't got deep pockets, T.

ALINE:

That's not his name.

ANTHONY:

That's not why I...

ANTHONY:

Me and Davey Murphy had those games locked down, right? But after Davey—?. After that, if there was tapes to show schools after Davey was gone, no one was asking to see them: we stopped playing like we did. I didn't get in anywhere—

In that lighthouse I think about my first pair of cleats; the guy in Michelson's telling my grandmother I had strong feet, that I'd play some good ball; the smile on her face as she slid the check across the counter. She even bought me gym socks because Gloria couldn't—. I think about the promise of me in a helmet: everyone...everyone seemed to really like it—.

First cleats, first practice, first game. Other dads with coffee cups in their fists, wearing their old numbers and swearing at refs. And yesterday your name was on the table like an answer. And I had this idea maybe I could try to go to school without that football in my hand, and I wanted to tell you, you about it, I, I—

Discussion Questions

- 1. Explain how Anthony is “drowning” in this scene and why.*
- 2. Do you have goals that seem nearly impossible to reach? If so, why?*
- 3. Name three ways in which you can overcome the obstacles stopping you from reaching your goals.*

Lesson Plan: Goals Sheet

Materials

Paper (several sheets)

Pencil (electronic devices may substitute at teachers discretion)

Timer

Goal: Encourage students to articulate tangible goals and give themselves a time frame in which to complete these goals.

Activity:

1. Teachers will have students sit at their desks with only several sheets of paper and a writing utensil. There should be no discussion throughout the activity. The teacher will start a timer for 20 minutes (time is also up to the teacher's discretion. However I don't recommend exceeding 30 minutes). The students will start writing a list of goals. The instructor will talk them through this process. What they write can range anywhere from long term goals such as marriage, school, and finance, as well as short term goals such as learning to drive stick shift, playing an instrument, writing a book, playing a certain role, etc. It is important that the students never stop writing until the time is up. They should be writing down any and every goal that comes to mind no matter how minute. Teachers can talk the students through by giving examples. (I.E- Do you want to talk to your parents more often? Do you want to visit a foreign country? Do you want to graduate college? With what GPA? Do you want to get married in 5 years? 10 years? Do you want to learn a second language? Etc.) It is also important to reiterate that they should write down anything that they would like to do or see before they die, had they access to infinite resources.

2. Students will take their goals sheets home (which should be several sheets of paper) and organize their goals into three categories. The first is time:

1= 4 years

2= 4-15 years

3= 15 + years

They will allot each goal a time frame. For example, if one of their goals were to learn Spanish in the next 2 years, they would assign that goal a number 1.

The next step is to organize the goals by priority:

A= MUST do before I die

B= Would like to do

The last step is to organize each goal by the role in which they play:

Personal (i.e go to the gym more often)

Professional (i.e send out 5 resumes a week)

Citizenship (i.e vote in the next presidential election)

3. Have the students then analyze their findings and pick their top ten goals. They will share and discuss with the class.

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