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THEATRE

ACT THEATRE PRESENTS

Bach at Leipzig

The Ugly American

Born Yesterday

The Night of the Iguana

Vincent in Brixton

FLIGHT

BY Charlayne Woodard

DIRECTED BY Valerie Curtis-Newton





OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2005



ACT THEATRE PRESENTS

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A Contemporary Theatre is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



Welcome to ACT Theatre's 41ST Season – A Season to Embrace!



It's been a wonderful year. As we conclude the 40th Anniversary Season we are reminded as always of how grateful we are to all of you for your continued support and loyalty, and *Flight* is the perfect play to illustrate the importance of our sense of family. We speak of the ACT Family often, with profound respect and appreciation for the many people who share in our common bond — passion for theatre.

As subscribers and/or frequent attendees your visits are like reunions. Often you share an afternoon or evening with many of the same audience members, encounter the same ACT staff and experience the work of the actors, directors and designers that have become familiar to us, all in this beautiful venue we call "home." Equally exciting is welcoming new artists to the ACT Family, as we have this year in *Vincent in Brixton* and this production of *Flight*. Whether this is your first time here or your fiftieth, welcome — we look forward to having you in our Family for a very long time.

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ACT THEATRE PRESENTS

FLIGHT

BY

Charlayne Woodard

DIRECTED BY

Valerie Curtis-Newton

Oct. 14 – Nov. 13, 2005

OPENING NIGHT
Oct. 20, 2005



THE PAUL G. ALLEN
FAMILY foundation

Flight is produced by special arrangement with Bruce Ostler, Bret Adams, Ltd., 448 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036. *Flight* was originally commissioned, developed and produced by the PLAY program of Center Theatre Group, Gordon Davidson, Artistic Director, Corey Madden, PLAY Producing Director.

**large print
version of the
Program is
available from
the house staff.**

ACT Theatre is a member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the American Arts Alliance and Theatre Puget Sound, and is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group. ACT is also a member of the Downtown Seattle Association. This theatre operates under an agreement between LORT and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States. Directors and choreographers at ACT are members of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, an independent national labor union. The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers are represented by United Scenic Artists Local USA-829, IATSE.

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30TH ANNUAL PRODUCTION

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Flight

BY CHARLAYNE WOODARD

NOVEMBER 25 – DECEMBER 24:

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ONGOING:

Late Nite Catechism

BY VICKI QUADE & MARIPAT DONOVAN

ONGOING:

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BY JEANIE LINDERS

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THE COMPANY

CAST (in alphabetical order)

David Brown, Jr.*	Nate
Johnny Lee Davenport*	Ezra
Dawn Frances*	Mercy
Tracy Michelle Hughes*	Alma
Margo Moorer*	Oh Beah

PRODUCTION TEAM

Valerie Curtis-Newton	Director
Matthew Smucker	Scenic Designer
Melanie Taylor Burgess	Costume Designer
Christopher Reay	Lighting Designer
Dominic Cody Kramers	Sound Designer
Kabby Mitchell III	Choreographer
Karl Fredrik Lundeborg	Composer
Jeffrey K. Hanson*	Stage Manager
Jessica Trundy	Assistant Lighting Designer
Erin B. Zatloka	Production Assistant
Timeca Briggs	Assistant to the Playwright

*Denotes membership in Actors' Equity Association, the professional union for actors and stage managers in the United States.

SCENE: A plantation near Savannah, Georgia

TIME: 1858


There will be no intermission.

Audience members are cordially reminded to silence all electronic devices such as cell phones, watch alarms, and pagers prior to the performance.

All forms of photography and the use of recording devices are strictly prohibited.

Please do not walk on the stage before, during or after the show.

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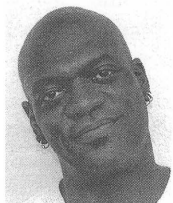
COLUMBIA CREST

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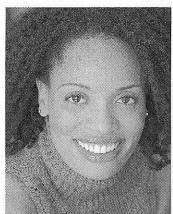
THE ACTORS



David Brown, Jr. (Nate) appeared off-Broadway in *The Exonerated*, in which he originated the role of Robert Earl Hayes. He also performed in the U.S. tour and the International Fringe Festival's production of *The Exonerated* in Edinburgh, Scotland. Other productions include *As You Like It* (Tribeca Playhouse), *Up Against the Wind* (New York Theatre Workshop) and *Y2K* (Manhattan Theatre Club). TV credits include Court TV's production of *The Exonerated*, directed by Bob Balaban, *Dead Line*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, and *As the World Turns*. Film credits include *Out of This World*, directed by Sakamoto Junji, and *Brother to Brother*, directed by Rodney Evans.



Johnny Lee Davenport (Ezra) is proud to be making his debut at ACT. This classically trained actor has performed not only in many of the major regional venues in this country, but also in Canada, Ireland and Greece. One of Mr. Davenport's personal goals is to become one of the few contemporary actors of color to do the entire Shakespeare canon (he has nine to go)! Most recently, he played Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* at Milwaukee Shakespeare, directed by Yale's David Chambers. He is a company member of Tina Packer's Shakespeare & Co. Johnny Lee is currently developing a training curriculum for minority actors who want to become more proficient in performing European classical theatre. Television credits include *The Mary Thomas Story*, *There Are No Children Here*, *Law & Order* and *Lateline*. Film credits include *The Blues Brothers*, *The Package*, *Chain Reaction*, *U.S. Marshals* and *The Fugitive*.



Dawn Frances (Mercy) is delighted to be on the ACT stage once again in *Flight*. Dawn was previously seen at ACT as Belle in *A Christmas Carol*. She most recently performed as Emma in Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* in Los Angeles, and has also performed on the stages of the Intiman Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, On the Boards, and the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. Dawn received her MFA from the University of Washington's Professional Actor Training Program, and is a proud new parent of her five-month-old daughter, Ameya.



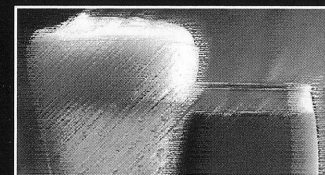
Tracy Michelle Hughes (Alma) makes her debut at ACT with this performance in *Flight*. A recent transplant from California, her first Seattle-area performances were with Harlequin Productions as Viola in *A Rock'n'Roll Twelfth Night* and Hannah in the workshop production of *Rejoice* at Seattle Repertory Theatre. Although Tracy loves performing onstage most of all, she has also appeared on film and television in *The Invisible Man*, *The Chronicle* and *A Family Affair*. One of her favorite roles she has played is the same role Charlayne Woodard originated in *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Tracy looks forward to working on the ACT stage again.

THE ACTORS



Margo Moorer (Oh Beah) is making her debut at ACT and is ecstatic to again team up with Valerie Curtis-Newton after the world premiere of *The Venus de Milo is Armed* (Lark) at Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Most recently Margo received a 2004 Helen Hayes Award nomination for her portrayal of Birdie Lee in *Tambourines to Glory* (Lincoln Theatre, Washington, D.C.) with Kenny Leon. Her regional credits include the world premiere of *Oo-Bla-Dee* (Lulu) at the Goodman Theatre, for which she won a Black Theatre Alliance Award. Alliance Theatre credits include *Jar the Floor* (Lola), *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* (Lily), *Once on This Island* (Mama Euralee) and *Amen Corner* (Sister Boxer). Television credits include *Odd Girl Out*; *Sheena* (recurring); *The Wedding*; *Keenan & Kel*; *Selma, Lord, Selma*; *Savannah*; *I'll Fly Away*; *American Gothic* and *In the Heat of the Night*. Film credits include *Runaway Jury*, *Forrest Gump*, *That Darn Cat* and *Fled*. Clay's wife, Amber's mom, Margo gives God the glory. Matthew 5:16.

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PRODUCTION TEAM

Charlayne Woodard (Playwright) is an actress and playwright. Her first solo play, *Pretty Fire*, was produced at Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC). It received LA Drama Critics and NAACP awards for best play and best playwright. Her second solo play, *Neat*, was developed at Seattle Repertory Theatre. At MTC, it received the Irving and Blanche Laurie Theatre Vision Award and an Outer Critics Circle Award nomination. Her third solo play, *In Real Life*, was commissioned by Center Theatre Group (CTG) and Seattle Repertory Theatre, and was developed at Sundance Theatre Lab. At MTC, Ms. Woodard was nominated for Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards for best solo performance. The play received an Audelco award, Backstage West Garland award, and NAACP awards for best playwright and actor. *Flight* was commissioned by P.L.A.Y. at CTG. It was produced by CTG in the inaugural season of the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Los Angeles. Ms. Woodard completed a TCG/PEW Charitable Trust National Theatre Artist Residency Program Fellowship at CTG. She is a guest artist at California Institute for the Arts, where she teaches solo performance to third year Masters students. Ms. Woodard's recent acting credits include *In the Blood* by Suzan Lori-Parks, for which she received an Obie Award, and *Fabulation* by Lynn Nottage. On Broadway, she was nominated for Tony and Drama Desk awards for her role in the original company of *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Ms. Woodard's recent film credits include John Sayles' *Sunshine State*, M. Night Shyamalan's *Unbreakable*, Wim Wenders' *The Million Dollar Hotel*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, and John Schlesinger's *Eye for an Eye*. Currently, Ms. Woodard has a recurring role as Sister Peg on *Law & Order: SVU*. She trained at the Goodman School of Drama in Chicago and is a member of The Actor's Studio.

Valerie Curtis-Newton (Director) is the artistic director of The Hansberry Project and an Artistic Associate here at ACT. Currently on the faculty of the University of Washington's School of Drama, she has served as Artistic Director of Hartford, Connecticut's Performing Ensemble, Inc. (1987-1993) and Artistic Director for Seattle's Ethnic Cultural Theatre (1993-1998). She has directed the world premieres of Constance Congdon's *The Midwife's Apprentice* and Kia Corthron's *The Venus de Milo is Armed*, as well as well-received productions of *Porcelain*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Neat*, *Santos & Santos*, *Stevedore*, *Blood Knot*, *Chain* and *Hiro*. Her credits include work with the Mark Taper Forum, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Northwest Asian American Theatre, Southern Repertory Theatre and The Empty Space. Valerie was a participant in the National Endowment for the Arts/Theatre Communications Group Career Development Program for Directors from 1997-1999, assisting Tina Landau, Lisa Petersen, Gordon Edelstein and Sharon Ott. She was also the recipient of the 2001-2002 SDCF Gielgud Directing Fellowship, assisting and observing Libby Appel at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Matthew Smucker (Scenic Designer) designed *Bach at Leipzig* earlier this season at ACT. Other recent designs include *Jumpers* and *Black Coffee* last season at ACT; *Living Out* for Seattle Repertory Theatre; *Nora* and *Blue/Orange* for Intiman Theatre; *The Secret Garden*, *The Outsiders* and *The Gingerbread Man* for Seattle Children's Theatre; *Living Out* for Missouri Repertory Theatre; *No Exit* and *Saving Grace* for Tacoma Actors Guild; *Strange Attractors* and *G-D Doesn't Pay Rent Here* for The Empty Space; *Cry*, *the Beloved Country* and *Giant* for Book-It Repertory Theatre; *Così fan Tutte* and *Il Matrimonio Segreto* for the University of Washington School of Music; and *The Changeling* for Annex Theatre at the Rendezvous Jewel Box. As a resident designer and company member at Annex Theatre, Matthew has created over a dozen designs with the

PRODUCTION TEAM

company including *Sex*, *Beatrice*, *Bartleby* and *The Glory Booty Club*. Matthew is currently an adjunct faculty member at Seattle University and a teaching artist at the Seattle Center High School in design and production. Matthew received his MFA in scenic design from the University of Washington.

Melanie Taylor Burgess (Costume Designer) previously designed *Vincent in Brixton* at ACT. Locally, she has designed for Seattle Repertory Theatre, The Empty Space, Village Theatre, TAG, Seattle Shakespeare Company and Seattle Opera (design coordinator). She has also designed 21 productions for Seattle Children's Theatre, including *The Red Badge of Courage*, *The Big Friendly Giant*, *The Outsiders* and *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. Additionally, she has designed for Idaho Theatre for Youth and Honolulu Theatre for Youth. She received the *Seattle Times* Footlight Award for best costume design of 1995 for the Seattle Children's Theatre production of *Pinocchio*, and again in '93 for the Empty Space production of *Ming the Rude*.

Christopher Reay (Lighting Designer) served as Resident Associate Lighting Designer at Seattle Repertory Theatre for three seasons. During that time he had the opportunity to work with such artists as Stephen Wadsworth (*Game of Love and Chance* and *Don Juan*), Mary Zimmerman (*Metamorphoses* and *The Odyssey*), August Wilson (*Jitney* and the world premiere of *King Hedley II* prior to its move to Broadway), Dan Sullivan (*The Real Life* and the national tour of *Proof*) and Ping Chong (*Obon*). In 1996, Chris received the Gilbert Hemsley Lighting Internship Award in New York City. Chris has worked as the associate lighting designer on numerous productions for the McCarter Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Seattle Opera, New York City Opera, New York City Ballet, Santa Fe Opera, Portland Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and on the new *Ring* cycle for Seattle Opera. Recently he worked on *The Secret in the Wings* for Seattle Rep and *Florencia in the Amazons* for Seattle Opera. His lighting design work in Seattle also includes *When Grace Comes In* and *Boy Gets Girl* for Seattle Rep, *Black Coffee* for ACT, *Ubu Roi* and *Biro* for The Empty Space, *Juicy Point B* for Maureen Whiting Dance Company, *The Red Room* at the Richard Hugo House, and *Mag Mor* and *Monster* for Theater Schmeater. Chris currently serves as Lighting Director for the Santa Fe Opera and teaches lighting design at Cornish School of Design.

Dominic CodyKramers (Sound Designer) is proud to be in his 6th season at ACT Theatre, where he most recently designed *The Night of the Iguana*. Other notable designs include *The Woman In Black*, *Jumpers*, *Alki*, *Black Coffee*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Wintertime*, *Dirty Blonde*, *Fully Committed*, *Polish Joke*, *Big Love*, *Monster*, *In the Penal Colony*, *Talley's Folley* and *Communicating Doors*. Additionally, Dominic serves as ACT's Master Sound Engineer. His work has also been heard at Seattle Repertory Theatre, The Flying Karamazov Brothers, Universal Studios Hollywood, Pasadena Playhouse, Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts, Oregon Cabaret Theatre, Spectrum Dance Theater, Santa Clarita Rep and Corridor Theatre Collective. He holds an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts and a BA from UNC-Asheville, and teaches at the University of Washington. Dominic is a member of United Scenic Artists 829, IATSE Local 15 and is a recipient of USITT's Sound Achievement Award. Appreciation and good vibrations to Lyna & the furry girls.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Kabby Mitchell III (Choreographer) is a choreographer, educator and performer, and has danced with Dance Theatre of Harlem, Nederlands Dance Theater, Civic Light Opera, Oakland Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet. Kabby has been a dance instructor for more than 20 years, having taught ballet, modern jazz and Haitian dance at schools and dance academies in Seattle, Iowa and Mexico. In Seattle, Kabby has worked with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Cornish College of the Arts, University of Washington and Ewajo Dance Workshop. He is currently on the faculty at Evergreen State College in Olympia. His local choreography credits include work with Spectrum Dance Theater, The Group Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Bathhouse Theatre, ACT and the Civic Light Opera. Kabby's signature choreography is seen in the annual presentation of *Black Nativity*, directed by Jacqueline Moscou, at Intiman Theatre, and most recently in the production of *Hamlet X*, directed by Tyrone Brown. He also frequently contributes his time to help programs that support the development of young urban dancers, and is a supporter of local art and theatre companies whose goals are to serve the underserved community through the arts.

Karl Fredrik Lundeberg (Composer) Mr. Lundeberg's bio was not available at press time. To read Mr. Lundeberg's bio, please visit www.acttheatre.org.

Jeffrey K. Hanson (Stage Manager) stage managed his first production at ACT, *Lloyd's Prayer*, in 1990. Now in his 16th season, he has stage managed over 40 ACT productions including *The Night of the Iguana*, *Bach at Leipzig*, *Alki*, *Jumpers*, *Fiction*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Fully Committed*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Yellowman*, *Fuddy Meers*, and *A Christmas Carol* the past three seasons. In 2001 he stage managed *Grand Magic*, *Big Love*, *Dinner With Friends* and *Waiting to Be Invited*. Other highlights from past seasons at ACT include *A Skull in Connemara*, *Quills*, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Halcyon Days*, *The Illusion* and *The Revengers' Comedies*. Outside of ACT, Jeffrey has stage managed at Seattle Repertory Theatre on such productions as *Metamorphoses* and *The Cider House Rules, Parts I and II*. Other regional credits include productions at Seattle Children's Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company and New Mexico Repertory Theatre.

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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

There is at least one child in every family who is fascinated with history and family lore. Like Charlayne Woodard, I was that child. I vividly remember huddling at the top of the stairs, listening to the women in my family speak their lives. It is no secret that stories, whether funny and fantastical, musical, sad or outrageous, have the power to help us understand our place, and our connection to each other. It was at the top of the stairs that I began to understand my role in our common march to the future. The power and simplicity of their stories taught me that we as black people are fully human with all of the power, vulnerability, joy, love and strength that implies. Ultimately, I suppose those top-of-the-stairs stories are the reason that I became a theatre artist.

Our job as artists is to create a place at the top of the stairs for audiences where they can hear stories. I am thrilled to be working with this wonderful company on material by the truly gifted Charlayne Woodard. The characters in *Flight* have wonderful, powerful, healing stories to tell.

It is truly gratifying to be making this play at ACT. From Kurt Beattie down throughout the staff, this theatre is committed to creating a place at the top of the stairs for us all. Thank you for joining us.

Valerie Curtis-Newton
DIRECTOR, *FLIGHT*

AUNT SUE'S STORIES

*Aunt Sue has a head full of stories.
Aunt Sue has a whole heart full of stories.
Summer nights on the back porch
Aunt Sue cuddles a brown-faced child
to her bosom
And tells him stories.*

*Black Slaves
Working in the hot sun.
And black slaves
Walking in the dewy night.
And black slaves
Singing sorrow songs on the banks
of a mighty river
Mingle themselves softly
In the flow of old Aunt Sue's voice,
Mingle themselves softly
In the dark shadows that cross
and recross
Aunt Sue Stories.*

*And the dark faced child listening,
Knows that Aunt Sue's stories
are real stories.
He knows that Aunt Sue never
got her stories
Out of any book at all,
But that they came
Right out of her own life.*

*The dark-faced child is quiet
Of a summer night
Listening to Aunt Sue's stories.*

LANGSTON HUGHES

PAINTING IN BACKGROUND: AARON DOUGLAS, 1934

In studying the folk tales that were handed down by my people in bondage to teach and comfort, I learned vital lessons about the people themselves.

I come from storytellers. My grandfather, the best storyteller in the family, often taught his 22 grandchildren lessons through stories.

Just before I left home for college, Granddaddy told me about a college girl who never drank or did drugs. He said, "She was a good church girl, just like you, Charlayne. One night she went to a party with some of her friends. There was dancin' in some rooms and people was watching a movie in the other. The college girl preferred to dance. While she was on the dance floor, somebody offered her a can of soda. Oh, she drank it down right away. Next thing she remembers was wakin' up in her dorm room. It was the next day!

"Now, the very next weekend, the college girl was invited to another party. Once again some people was dancin' and others was watchin' a movie. When she peeked into the dark room, this time she saw herself right up there on the screen with the star of the football team. And I don't have to tell ya, they was doing a whole lot more than dancin'."

Granddaddy never had to tell me to "be careful, don't trust everybody, and stay away from drugs." I got it from the story.

Growing up with storytelling came in handy when the Center Theatre Group commissioned me to write my first multi-character play. Until then I'd only written solo work for myself. I decided to adapt folk tales, from Africa and the American South, for the stage. I read hundreds of other folk tales. I chose my favorites, wrote my adaptations and there it was — folklore project completed!

But my real journey had just begun. I read narratives of the enslaved Africans

brought to America — oral histories of life in bondage from the mouths of the very people who experienced it. Only then did I begin to understand the evolution of storytelling in our culture. I learned that as soon as the Africans arrived, their languages and religions were outlawed. They were not allowed to read or write under penalty of death.

In this new land, there was a great need for folk tales. Those living in bondage had no sewing circles, no Bible study and no debutante gatherings to help them endure their everyday trials and tribulations. Consequently, storytelling was the HBO, the "Masterpiece Theatre," of the day. The special effects were the storyteller's gift of gab, movement and music. Because of the prohibitions, the storyteller cleverly disguised culture and history within the stories.

My people used these tales to teach, to comfort those in mourning, to celebrate births and weddings, and to provide strength and hope in times of tragedy and loss. These tales were passed from generation to generation.

As I adapted the folk tales and narratives, the spirit and the humanity of my people were revealed to me. The man who loved his wife so, he carved a wedding ring for her out of a red button. The single mom so brave she fought an elephant to save her children and their home. The wise man who outsmarted the bear and found his freedom. The gardener who cultivated her memory and whose great memory saved her life.

As a result, I created *Flight*, focusing not only on the tales but also on the people who told them. I set my evening of story-

telling in 1858, on a plantation 20 miles outside of Savannah, Georgia. And what makes this night different from all the rest? Sadie, a wife and mother, got sold.

What a commotion this choice caused! "You can't use the 'S' word! Not slavery! Don't go there! Just adapt the folk tales and have a band of actors tell them. Slavery is too tough on children..."

The subject of slavery in America makes many people, black and white, uncomfortable. Whites don't want to be blamed for events that took place hundreds of years ago; blacks are tired of the ridiculous depictions of enslaved men and women as ignorant, powerless victims who like to sing and dance.

I have a friend who was asked to audition for a role in a film. "No way will I ever play a slave," he said. "Charlayne, they actually show this slave being whipped in public. I won't play a slave."

I begged him. "Please. For God's sake don't play a slave. Play the human being. Dig deep and find the man. Do your research. These people were survivors. If they weren't, you and I wouldn't be here having this conversation today."

My friend refused to audition, but another actor, Denzel Washington, went on to brilliantly breathe life into that very human being and won an Oscar for *Glory*.

Our stories must be told. We have an obligation to our forefathers and mothers, as well as to our future. We must search for the truth, all of it — the good and the bad — because knowledge of our past can only empower us.

Other cultures, such as the Roma (Gypsies), the Inuit (Eskimos) and the Jews, use storytelling to empower their people. In fact, the Jews simply refuse to forget. Jewish tradition embraces their struggles as well as

their victories. As a result, many Jews develop a sense of pride in themselves and their culture from an early age.

A few weeks ago, I flew to Chicago for my uncle's funeral. When I arrived at the house, I stood on the front porch listening to the symphony of loud voices inside. Nobody could hear the doorbell ring, so I opened the door and stepped into a room filled with laughter that nearly knocked me back out into the cold Chicago night. James Jones had died, yet the night before the funeral his family and friends were sitting around the dining room table telling stories — stories that lifted them out of their grief and celebrated a life.

I encourage our young people to discover our history and embrace our culture — the good and the bad — because all of it inspires and strengthens. Whoever said, "Whatever doesn't kill you, makes you stronger" was right. We must witness and tell the stories of our people.

We must remember who we are and refuse to forget our survivors of bondage. Because they lived, we live.

"A Telling Tradition" first appeared in the LOS ANGELES TIMES, January 2005, as part of its Playwrights on Writing series. Reprinted by permission of the author.



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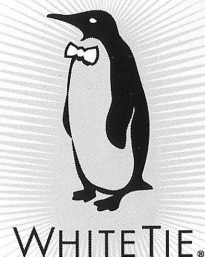
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