

Dr. Michael H. Montgomery and Lisa Goods

Boalian theater seeks to turn the spectators of a play into “spect-actors”, joining the cast, changing the script as they wish it to really be. At an inter-racial gathering where this Script was ‘performed’, a Black cast first performed the play, followed by a white cast. After each production the group discussed how they saw the race displayed in the script, how they would like it changed. Because it was the script being discussed, a full and engaging conversation was launched. Another group joined the meeting because we seemed to be having a good time, and the full range of people participated (white and black, clergy and laity) and not just ‘elite actors’. The script was second rate, the conversation was first rate!

A Second Rate Script

Act 1

Moderator: It was a stormy night in the south suburban area of Chicago, and for the Andrews family the storm was about to get, well, “interesting” as the family sat down for dinner. We’ll listen in on the conversation held by Dad, Mom, Sis and Bro as they discuss a Friday night party.

Sis: Anyway, Kay and John Johnson are having a lock in at their church this Friday night and they wanted to know if we would like to come. The building will be locked after everyone is there, no one is allowed to come in late, you can’t leave in the middle and there will be lots of adult chaperones. John’s got their car and he will drive us home when its over. Can we go?

Dad: What kind of church is this?

Bro: Well, it’s in the same denomination as ours, but I don’t know too much about it. I’ve never been there.

Mom: Kay Johnson. Have I met her? Isn’t she the Black cheerleader?

Sis: Yeah. That’s her.

Dad: Oh. Will the people at the lock-in be mostly from the church or mostly from your school?

Bro: Mostly from the church, I expect.

Mom: Oh. So you will be some of the only whites there, won’t you?

Sis: I expect so. Is that a problem?

Dad: Isn’t that church in New Holland?

Sis: I think so, I’m not really sure. Well, can we go?

Mom: Your father and I need to talk.

A Second Rate Script: Version 2

Moderator: It was a stormy night in the south suburban area of Chicago, and for the Andrews family the storm was about to get, well, “interesting” as the family sat down for dinner. We’ll listen in on the conversation held by Dad, Mom, Sis and Bro as they discuss a Friday night party.

Act 2

Sis: Anyway, Kay and John Johnson are having a lock in at their church this Friday night and they wanted to know if we would like to come. The building will be locked after everyone is there, no one is allowed to come in late, you can’t leave in the middle and there will be lots of adult chaperones. John’s got their car and he will drive us home when it’s over. Can we go?

Dad: What kind of church is this?

Bro: Well, it’s in the same denomination as ours, but I don’t know too much about it. I’ve never been there.

Mom: Kay Johnson. Have I met her? Isn’t she the white cheerleader?

Sis: Yeah. That’s her.

Dad: Oh. Will the people at the lock-in be mostly from the church or mostly from your school?

Bro: Mostly from the church, I expect.

Mom: Oh. So you will be some of the only Blacks there, won’t you?

Sis: I expect so. Is that a problem?

Dad: Isn’t that church in Orland?

Sis: I think so, I’m not really sure. Well, can we go?

Mom: Your father and I need to talk.

Questions:

1. How does the issue of race enter into the discussion?
2. Did you feel more or less comfortable when the Johnsons and their church were the same race as yourself? Did the story 'feel' the same or different?
3. Which would make you feel more uncomfortable, the idea of your kids being out really late where they were the only kids of their race at an event, or the idea that your kids would be out late in a neighborhood that was a different race than your own?
4. How would you change the script? What would you have the parents do?