

Old Glory

a new play by

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the characters

DENNIS COLBY – late 30's, early 40's. Caucasian. Dressed in casual business attire appropriate for a high school teacher

FILIZ MENDOZA – 17 years old, a high school senior. Striking appearance, dressed well, albeit on a budget.

DEREK McCURRY – 17 years old, slightly shorter than average, thin. Dressed in Khakis and pale blue Oxford shirts.

MIGUEL ORTIZ – 17 years old, muscular. Dressed in jeans and polo shirts.

DOROTHY LONG RUNNER – 17 years old. Long, straight dark hair. Wears jeans and tee shirts.

ALICE CARRELTON – 17 years old. Tall, blond, favors dresses or tailored pants and stylish blouses.

the setting

A medium-sized suburb in Colorado, sometime in the first decade of the 21st century. The majority of the stage is taken up by a modern classroom; blackboard, video screen, map of the world. A desk for the teacher, smaller desks for the students. An American flag hangs near the blackboard. Downstage of the classroom, an open area that can become other locations in and around the school.

a note on the play

Although the action is loosely based on actual incidents that occurred in a high school in northern Colorado in 2006, the characters are entirely fictional.

AT RISE: Five high school students -- DEREK, FILIZ, MIGUEL, DOROTHY and ALICE – stand far downstage. They recite the Pledge of Allegiance – except DOROTHY, who stands motionless and silent during the Pledge. The students exit and the lights crossfade to a modern high school classroom, with a blackboard, a screen for videos, and an apparent throwback, a map of the world that is mounted on a roller above the blackboard. As the lights come up, the map is unfurled, covering part of the blackboard. ALICE and MIGUEL enter)

MIGUEL

Do you know how long this is supposed to last?

ALICE

He said it would be short.

MIGUEL

Hope so. I've got practice in half an hour.

ALICE

You remember about tonight?

MIGUEL

How could I forget?

ALICE

It's a big deal.

MIGUEL

You think I don't know that? "Invite a leper over for dinner night."

ALICE

They don't think you're a leper.

MIGUEL

Your mother thinks I'm a leper. Your father doesn't think I'm good enough to be a leper.

ALICE

All fathers think that way about their daughter's boyfriend.

MIGUEL

But not all daughters bring home a wetback boyfriend.

ALICE

No one in my family would ever use that word.

MIGUEL

Glad to hear it.

ALICE

They wouldn't!

MIGUEL

I believe you. But just because it isn't said –

ALICE

They're adjusting.

MIGUEL

Great.

ALICE

If you don't want to come over –

MIGUEL

No, no, this is a major victory in the cause of interracial romance. They should write a play about us. "Romero and Juliet."

ALICE

You make too big a deal out of it. They'll get used to it, and pretty soon –

MIGUEL

Pretty soon their dislike will go from rabid to mild. Makes me feel terrific.

ALICE

My father likes you. Really, I think he does.

MIGUEL

He likes that I'm a good halfback. If God hadn't invented football, your father wouldn't know what to say to me.

ALICE

You obviously don't want to –

MIGUEL

I want to come. I love you. I just wish I didn't feel like a character from *West Side Story*.

(DEREK enters)

DEREK

Does anyone know what this is about?

ALICE

Some sort of special project.

DEREK

Great. Like we don't have enough to do already.

ALICE

They have no idea, Derek. They don't know how much work it takes to save the world for the right wing.

DEREK

You'd better believe it, my friend. It's a dirty job, cleaning up after all you traitorous peaceniks.

MIGUEL

Yeah, we do leave quite a mess behind.

DEREK

Can you do something about that? Tell your friends, you know –

MIGUEL

I'll let 'em know, man. We won't leave so many left-leaning ideas lying around next time.

(DOROTHY and FILIZ enter.)

FILIZ

He honestly didn't know?

DOROTHY

No idea.

DEREK

Who didn't know what?

FILIZ

Mr. Harver. He didn't know who Caesar Chavez was.

DEREK

Why doesn't this disturb me all that much?

DOROTHY

C'mon, Derek. Chavez is an historical figure, even if you don't like him.

FILIZ

And Harver is a social studies teacher. You don't think that's –

DEREK

The world would be better off if Chavez and his fellow socialists stayed in the dustbin of history, right where they belong.

FILIZ

C'mon. If there was a social studies teacher here who didn't know who Barry Goldwater was –

DOROTHY

Or Margaret Thatcher –

FILIZ

Or William F. Buckley, you'd have a fit.

DEREK

That's entirely different.

DOROTHY

Why?

DEREK

Because Goldwater, Thatcher and Buckley were right.

FILIZ

God.

FILIZ (cont'd.)

(to ALICE)

We still going to the museum on Saturday?

ALICE

Absolutely.

DOROTHY

Which museum?

ALICE

The art museum, the new one.

DOROTHY

In Denver?

ALICE

Yeah, I haven't seen it yet.

FILIZ

You want to come along?

DOROTHY

Can't. Gotta work.

FILIZ

Maybe next time.

DOROTHY

Sure.

(DENNIS COLBY enters. He rolls up the map that covers part of the blackboard.)

DENNIS

All right, people, let's begin. Can we settle down, please? You're members of a select group. We've gotten a grant from the Willis Foundation for a pilot project –

DEREK

I've always wanted to be part of a pilot project.

DENNIS

Mr. McCurry? Can you exercise the restraint necessary to let me speak, please?

DEREK

Absolutely.

Thanks so much. DENNIS

Mr. Colby? FILIZ

Ms. Mendoza? DENNIS

What's this pilot project all about? FILIZ

I was getting to that, if you'll be patient. DENNIS

Okay. FILIZ

Thanks. Here's the deal. We were supposed to pick our five best students and ask them to come up with a project that brings the Constitution alive in their community. DENNIS

(ALICE whistles.)

Hmm. DEREK

What does that mean, exactly? What do they have in mind? FILIZ

That's all they said. DENNIS

No more guidelines? FILIZ

Nope. DENNIS

Surely your political masters in Denver won't really give us free reign. DEREK

What "political masters" are you referring to? DENNIS

DEREK

That pack of Democrats setting up shop in the state capital.

DENNIS

They don't have any say in this.

DEREK

We'll see about that when we're all finished.

DENNIS

Look, Derek, this is up to us, to the local school district. I thought local control was what you wanted.

DEREK

It's a basic tenet of the conservative philosophy.

DENNIS

Very well, then. You got it. The only oversight here is me, the principal, and the local school board. And, of course, the people from the Willis Foundation.

FILIZ

How are they going to monitor us? Are they going to send someone here, or –

DENNIS

No. You'll all have to write papers on your projects.

(A collective groan)

Good grief. You people are supposed to be the best and the brightest. And you're supposed to be good writers.

ALICE

The time it takes to write the paper could take away from the energy we devote to the actual project.

DENNIS

Nice try, Alice, but you still have to write the paper. If it's any comfort, I have to write a report as well.

DOROTHY

About what?

DENNIS

About how you all develop your projects. And, of course, what grades you get.

ALICE

We're doing this for credit?

That's right.

DENNIS

And you assign the grades?

DEREK

That's correct.

DENNIS

Hm.

DEREK

Mr. C?

FILIZ

Ms. Mendoza?

DENNIS

How do they interpret "bringing the Constitution alive in our community?"

FILIZ

They leave it entirely open. I guess I'm the one who interprets that.

DENNIS

Wonderful. I can't wait to see how what I do gets interpreted through *that* filter.

DEREK

What's that supposed to mean?

DENNIS

Well, Mr. C, it's no secret that you and I exist at opposite poles on the political spectrum.

DEREK

Derek, this is one of your problems. You assume that the entire world is just as subjective as you are.

DENNIS

Derek, this is one of your problems. You assume that the entire world is just as subjective as you are.

DEREK

And you assume that because you're a liberal, you're automatically objective. One of the many faults in the species *Americanus Liberalus*.

DENNIS

You can always opt out if you don't think I'm capable of giving you a fair grade.

DEREK

No, I'll take the risk.

DOROTHY

How brave.

DEREK

From my perspective, it *is* pretty brave to put my GPA in his hands.

DENNIS

I'm sure as a result Rush Limbaugh will have you as a guest on his show.

DEREK

A man can dream.

DOROTHY

Mr. C, when are the projects due?

DENNIS

Well, the papers are due one week before the end of the semester. As for the projects themselves, the time frame is really up to us. If I were you, however, I'd get going. Moving a community isn't something that's easily done. Mr. Romero?

MIGUEL

Sir?

DENNIS

You've been awfully quiet.

ALICE

He's the strong and silent type, Mr. C.

MIGUEL

I've been thinking, that's all.

DENNIS

About what?

MIGUEL

About what I want to do for this project.

DENNIS

Good. Something we should all spend some time doing. We meet again one week from today. I expect you all to have something in mind by then.

(Everyone exits. Lights cross-fade to the space downstage. MIGUEL enters. DEREK follows.)

DEREK
Mike!

MIGUEL
Hey.

DEREK
That was a nice game on Friday.

MIGUEL
You were at the game?

DEREK
I always go to the games.

MIGUEL
I didn't know. I thought you were too busy reading Adam Smith.

DEREK
Even Adam Smith can wait for football. That pass you caught in the third quarter –

MIGUEL
That felt good.

DEREK
Great play.

MIGUEL
Thanks.

DEREK
Listen, I was wondering if I could ask you for a favor.

MIGUEL
What can I do for you?

DEREK
You lift weights, right?

MIGUEL
Yeah.

DEREK
Could you teach me?

DEREK

Why wouldn't you?

MIGUEL

Because I don't know how I'd pay for it.

DEREK

But with football –

MIGUEL

I'd have to be a lot better running back than I am to get a scholarship.

DEREK

You're good –

MIGUEL

Not that good. I'd be a walk-on at CSU. Or any other big school.

DEREK

But someplace else, I mean...

MIGUEL

I'm too small for a big program. And the little programs don't pay for living expenses.

DEREK

You could work, on the side, maybe.

MIGUEL

Not and play football at the same time.

DEREK

Sorry.

MIGUEL

It's my problem. So you wanna start lifting?

DEREK

Yeah, if you'd –

MIGUEL

Meet me at the gym tomorrow, after my practice gets done. About 6:00.

DEREK

Okay.

MIGUEL

I gotta warn you, though –

DEREK

What?

MIGUEL

I only use left-wing weights. Commit pinko faggot weights. I use weights that are the official weights of the Democratic Party.

DEREK

I'll cope.

MIGUEL

See you tomorrow.

(MIGUEL and DEREK exit. Lights cross-fade to the classroom.
DENNIS enters, followed by the students.)

DENNIS

All right, let's hear what you've got. Ms. Long Runner, let's hear what you've come up with.

DOROTHY

I want to do something called the Flag Project.

DENNIS

Okay...what's it about?

DOROTHY

I want to do a history of the American flag – How the flag has been interpreted through American history. The ideas in the Constitution are all wrapped up in the flag. And how we shape the meaning of the flag according to the times we live in.

DENNIS

Sounds good.

DEREK

There's just one problem with that.

DENNIS

And that would be?

DEREK

The flag is what it is. It doesn't change. It always stands for the same things.

FILIZ

Such as?

DEREK

Freedom. In all its forms. Political freedom *and* economic freedom.

FILIZ

And freedom always means the same thing to all people?

DENNIS

A very good question, Ms. Mendoza. Perhaps we should let Dorothy do some investigation and see whether Mr. McCurry's assertion is true. How do you plan to present what you find to the public?

DOROTHY

I hadn't thought about that. I don't know...maybe an exhibit in the library?

ALICE

Our library? Who will see it?

DOROTHY

Maybe the public library.

DEREK

Boring.

DENNIS

Okay, by next week, see if you can think how to make your exhibit something dynamic, something that will grab people's attention. Mr. Romero – what have you got?

MIGUEL

I want to do a film. Called "Colorado in Iraq."

DENNIS

Explain.

MIGUEL

I know two guys, who are over there. I want to do some sort of record about the people who are fighting the war, people from here in Larimer, maybe in Boonton, Silver Rock, Grand's Falls. This area, you know. Get some record about who they are, contact them if I can, get them to send their thoughts, maybe some video – then put it all together.

DEREK

What's the spin?

MIGUEL

I don't have any opinion about the war one way or the other. I was thinking about enlisting myself, actually –

ALICE

Excuse me?

MIGUEL

-- but I don't know enough about it. Maybe we should let the people who are fighting it speak for themselves.

DENNIS

Sounds great, Mr. Romero. Can you do this on \$500?

MIGUEL

The technology is there, Mr. C. Videos on the web, that sort of thing. I can do it.

DENNIS

Okay. Ms. Carrelton?

(ALICE is staring at MIGUEL.)

Alice?

ALICE

Sorry, I was just –

DENNIS

Is something wrong?

ALICE

No. I'm okay.

DENNIS

Do you have something in mind for --

ALICE

Yeah...yeah, I do, although it sounds sort of boring in comparison to a film about the war.

DENNIS

Just tell us what you're thinking about.

ALICE

This town is so evenly divided, politically. But there are still lots of people who don't vote, lots of people who aren't even registered to vote. What if some of them came into the process? I know it doesn't sound all that glamorous, but – well, I was thinking about a voter registration project.

DENNIS

I think it sounds just fine. You'll have to get some forms from the –

ALICE

I've already been in touch with the County Board of Elections. I'm going to get a couple of hundred registration forms.

DENNIS

Okay. The workaday stuff in a democracy, the nuts and bolts, are very important. Good. Ms. Mendoza?

FILIZ

I haven't come up with anything yet.

DENNIS

Aw, c'mon, Filiz –

FILIZ

I just haven't found something I'm excited about yet.

(DENNIS sighs.)

DENNIS

I won't say I'm not disappointed. Mr. McCurry?

DEREK

Same story.

DENNIS

Excuse me?

DEREK

I haven't been struck by inspiration.

DENNIS

All right. Next week, I want an outline on how you propose to carry out your project – at least five pages, you can go longer if you need to. Be specific. What's the research going to be? Who are you going to need to talk to? How are you going to spend your budget? The more specific, the better, people. 'Til then.

(The students get up to leave)

Filiz, Derek?

(the two stay behind as the others leave)

All right, what gives? You two are the brightest students I know here. And you come up with nothing?

FILIZ

This is such a great opportunity, I don't want to waste it on something I don't care about.

DENNIS

Mr. Conservative – you've got a chance to move the cause forward. And you haven't come up with anything yet?

DEREK

It's like one of the Supreme Court justices once said about pornography – I may not be able to define it yet, but I'll know it when I see it.

DENNIS

All right. The next time we meet, I want something concrete from both of you.

FILIZ

Okay.

DEREK

Got it.

(DENNIS exits. FILIZ exits and moves downstage. The lights cross-fade as DEREK follows her)

DEREK

So we're his best students.

FILIZ

Why do I think you're not surprised by this?

DEREK

I'm the soul of modesty.

FILIZ

Right.

DEREK

Why don't we work together on something?

FILIZ

How on earth would we do that?

DEREK

I don't know, we pick a topic, maybe, I do part of the work, you do part of the work –

FILIZ

I get that much, Derek. What I want to know is how someone like me, who views the world one way, works together with someone who views the world in an entirely different way?

DEREK

That's what's so beautiful about it – there's this built-in exchange of ideas.

FILIZ

Derek...I'm trying to be as diplomatic as I can. How can I put this? Your version of an exchange of ideas is you telling everyone else why they're wrong, and trying to feed them whatever dogma the right wing of the Republican party has put on your plate.

DEREK

That's completely untrue.

FILIZ

Which just goes to show how deluded you really are.

DEREK

I thought you were more broad-minded than that.

FILIZ

Is *broad-minded* some kind of code?

DEREK

I may be many things, Filiz, but I'm not crude.

FILIZ

My apologies.

DEREK

See, we're getting along just fine. We could do this project together –

FILIZ

Derek – no. Got it? No.

DEREK

Well, if we can't work together, then maybe we could get together in some other way –

FILIZ

I knew it –

DEREK

Like dinner, maybe?

FILIZ

Derek, I don't know how to say this, but –

DEREK

Listen, chica –

FILIZ

What did you call me?

DEREK

I was just trying to –

FILIZ

Trying to *what*?

DEREK

Speak to you in your own language.

FILIZ

I speak English.

DEREK

Here, maybe, but at home –

FILIZ

My parents also speak English, they learned after they came here.

DEREK

See, I didn't know that. There's things you could teach me, if we could just spend some time together.

FILIZ

Derek, just about the only thing I admire about you is your tenacity. So I'm going to put this as clearly as I can – just so you don't go wasting your time. If the future of humanity depended on my having dinner with you, I would let the race die out.

DEREK

That's cruel.

FILIZ

I'm just trying to be clear. To speak in your language. Have a nice day.

(FILIZ exits. DEREK stands alone for a moment. He exits. MIGUEL and ALICE enter.)

ALICE

When were you gonna tell me about it?

MIGUEL

It's just something, you know, I was considering, I –

ALICE

So you were gonna make up your mind to join the friggin' army, and *then* you were gonna tell me?

MIGUEL

Look, it's one way to do what I want to do.

ALICE

Getting shipped out to the desert and getting shot is your idea of something you want to do?

MIGUEL

No, but getting an education is. Getting a degree, then maybe law school --

ALICE

There are other ways –

MIGUEL

We've been through this –

ALICE

You can work. I can work, if it comes to that.

MIGUEL

No. You're not going to get sucked into this.

ALICE

Sucked into what?

MIGUEL

Into my problems.

ALICE

But if they're your problems –

MIGUEL

Then they're mine, and I'll deal with it.

ALICE

So you cut me out?

MIGUEL

What? You wanna get tied up with that? What if something happens between us?

ALICE

Like what?

MIGUEL

Like, one of us finds someone else.

ALICE

Not this again, please.

MIGUEL

You're saying it never happens?

ALICE

I'm saying it won't happen between us.

MIGUEL

You don't know that. You can't know that.

ALICE

So I can't help you?

MIGUEL

I can't set up my life around that.

ALICE

So you join the Army instead? Instead of letting me help you, or instead of figuring out some way to work while you go to school, you decide that it's a great idea to risk your life?

MIGUEL

I haven't made any decisions. Not yet.

ALICE

This is great. What a great idea.

MIGUEL

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I don't have somebody to write a check for me. I wish I did. But not everybody has it that simple, Alice.

ALICE

I know that!

MIGUEL

You know it in your head. Now it's time to know it in your gut. This is what life is like for me.

ALICE

I can deal with that.

MIGUEL

Then let me think about this. Let me do what I need to do. If you can't do that, then you can't really deal with it, no matter what you say now.

(MIGUEL exits. ALICE stands for a moment, then she follows him off.
MUSIC as the lights cross-fade; DENNIS and the students enter the classroom.)

DENNIS

Okay, first – Ms. Long Runner – have you given any thought to how you'll present your material on the flag?

DOROTHY

I think I've come up with something.

DENNIS

Tell us.

DOROTHY

I thought I'd write it as a play.

DENNIS

Huh. Interesting. What gave you that idea?

DOROTHY

I went to see the drama club's production over the weekend. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I thought maybe I could write something they could put on.

DENNIS

Terrific. Get to work, and we'll read whatever you write here, let you test things out.

DOROTHY

Okay.

DENNIS

Ms. Mendoza?

FILIZ

I came up with something I really like, I hope it will be okay.

DENNIS

Tell us.

FILIZ

There's a march coming up in Denver. It's about immigration.

DEREK

Here we go.

DENNIS

Mr. McCurry, please. Go ahead, Ms. Mendoza.

FILIZ

The point is to get as many people as possible to march in favor of immigration –

DEREK

You mean *illegal* immigration.

FILIZ

Some of the people you call illegals have contributed –

DEREK

Oh, please, don't try to tell me that –

DENNIS

Okay, okay, let's settle down right now. Ms. Mendoza, what's the nature of your project?

FILIZ

There are a lot of people right here in Larimer who will be affected if there are new laws passed on the subject of immigration. Some of them might not know about the march –

DEREK

Because they can't read English?

DENNIS

Derek, *will you please* –

DEREK

I won't say another word. I promise.

FILIZ

I want to spread the word about the march among the immigrant community, get them to go down to Denver, participate in the march.

ALICE
Isn't that dangerous?

FILIZ
What do you mean?

ALICE
Won't they become targets if they attend the march?

FILIZ
From the INS?

ALICE
Maybe. Or their employers, if they miss a day of work.

FILIZ
Maybe. But there's a price for free speech, right? There's a price to becoming a citizen of this country –

DEREK
Thank you!

DENNIS
Derek!

DEREK
Sorry.

FILIZ
Everybody's talking about throwing illegals out of the country. I guess I just feel if the people whose future is at stake don't speak up, then who will? Who's going to stand up for these people if they won't take a stand for themselves?

DENNIS
So you'll be aiming to get so-called illegal immigrants to attend the march?

FILIZ
Mostly, yes. And others, of course.

DENNIS
How will you find them? Illegal aliens?

FILIZ
There are a lot of them here.

DENNIS

I know, but how will you –

FILIZ

I'll just have to go to certain neighborhoods, go to the bodegas, the streetcorners, go door to door, maybe -- try to get people to trust me.

DENNIS

Sounds ambitious.

FILIZ

I guess.

DENNIS

Good. Let us know if we can help out. Mr. McCurry?

(long pause as DEREK looks at FILIZ.)

Derek?

(DEREK smiles; an idea has come to mind.)

DEREK

I'm also interested in immigration.

DENNIS

In what way?

DEREK

Like Filiz, I think if the people who are being affected by this don't speak up, then we're going to be in a whole lot of trouble.

DENNIS

And so you want to...?

DEREK

I want to distribute information on illegal immigration right here, in our own community. Here at Ridgeview.

DENNIS

To what end?

DEREK

We have a student body that is about 60% white, about 40% latino, am I correct?

DENNIS

More or less.

DEREK

I want the white students – and, of course, the students who are the sons and daughters of *legal* immigrants – to understand exactly what illegal immigration costs them. I'll research the costs of social services used by illegal immigrants, the number of jobs they take, the tax dollars that are lost when they're paid off the books by local employers – that sort of thing.

DENNIS

And what will you do with this information?

DEREK

I'll put it in the hands of any student who wants to know.

DENNIS

And what do you expect them to do with it?

DEREK

That will be up to them, won't it? The free flow of information – a right guaranteed to the American people by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

DENNIS

Okay.

(beat)

Alice?

ALICE

I've got voter registration forms. I've got permission from King Sooper's and Safeway to set up tables outside their doors starting next week.

DENNIS

Good. Don't forget that we have students here who will be turning eighteen before November. I would hit them, if I were you.

ALICE

Right.

DENNIS

Miguel?

MIGUEL

I've found three guys from Larimer who are in Iraq. One of them is with the 101st Airborne. He's on his second tour of duty. He was in the original invasion, now he's back, he's in Anbar. His father gave me a letter he wrote.

DENNIS

What's his name?

MIGUEL

Brandon Selkirk.

DENNIS

You want to read the letter?

MIGUEL

Yeah. He says...“Dear Dad, we got hit today pretty bad. We were parked in a street near the mosque on this side of the river. They started to drop mortar rounds on us. I told the driver we had to get out of there. He was shaking, he didn’t move. I grabbed him, I said, you move forward, or you move back, but get us the fuck out of here, do it now! There was a reporter with us, he was leaning against a wall behind us, he couldn’t move, either. The driver finally got the thing backed up, I leaned out the door and grabbed the reporter by the collar and dragged him in through the door of the truck. We tore ass out of there. I looked back, a mortar round dropped right where the reporter had been standing. Guess I saved his life. His shit himself. He didn’t come back out with us again. I guess he’d seen enough of the front lines for one lifetime. The next day, we were out on by the bridge I marked on the map I sent you, the one I highlighted. The truck in front of us got blown up, the road was blocked. We got out of the vehicle and started to run for this embankment by the river. Hal, the guy from Minnesota I mentioned last time, was about twenty yards in front of me, he got hit. When I got to him, his leg was hanging by a thread, just some skin was all that was attached. I don’t know how I did it, but I carried him back to the bridge. We got lucky – an Apache came by, they lit up the other side of the water, where we’d been taking the fire. We hauled ass out of there. From where I sit, it doesn’t exactly look like ‘Mission Accomplished.’”

(long silence)

DENNIS

Pretty sobering stuff.

MIGUEL

I wrote him a letter, I’m asking him to make a video for me, if he has the time. His dad says it takes a month for a letter to get there.

FILIZ

A month?

MIGUEL

Yeah.

FILIZ

That’s awful.

MIGUEL

Yeah.

DENNIS

That's a good start, Mike. Keep going. See you all later in the week.

(DENNIS, MIGUEL, DOROTHY and ALICE exit. FILIZ is still packing her bookbag. DEREK looks at her. FILIZ notices him looking.)

FILIZ

What?

DEREK

Me? Nothing. Just putting stuff in my bag.

FILIZ

Right.

(FILIZ leaves. DEREK smiles. Lights cross-fade to the downstage area, where DOROTHY enters)

DOROTHY

There are times, when we're in class, or when we're sitting in meetings for the Constitution project, when I feel like I'm in somebody else's body. Everyone will be talking about America, as if it's one thing, or as if it ought to be one thing. They don't realize I'm completely disconnected from what they're talking about. It's not their fault; if I were them, I probably wouldn't understand it, either. But it's like listening to someone talking about another country, not the one where I live...it's like a cartoon I saw. Two native Americans are standing on the shore, watching a boat coming toward them with people from the Mayflower. The one native American turns to the other and says, "I don't know, they look pretty undocumented to me."...I look around this country now and all I see is land that was stolen, land that's being raped, and a bunch of books talking about ideas that have never been the reality of this nation. It's like living through a dream, and all the other people in the dream seem okay with it – you're the only one who realizes it's a nightmare.

(DOROTHY exits; lights cross-fade to DENNIS and DEREK in the classroom.)

DEREK

It's shocking, isn't it? The number of jobs lost, the amount of tax revenue that doesn't get collected --

DENNIS

If it's true.

DEREK

Mr. C –

DENNIS

I'll give you credit – it's fully footnoted. There are college students who could take some lessons from you on attributing sources. But so much of this is from the Minutemen website.

DEREK

Which doesn't make it invalid.

DENNIS

Not necessarily. But they're not doing the hard work that you're doing – they're not telling you their sources for the information they're spitting out.

DEREK

Just because they're interested in defending America doesn't mean it's inaccurate.

DENNIS

And just because you agree with their point of view doesn't mean that their information is true.

DEREK

How do you know it's not accurate?

DENNIS

This is exactly the point! How do we know it *is* accurate? Look, Derek... I may not agree with your conclusions, but that's really beside the point. If you want to spend your life preaching to the choir, you're welcome to do so. But if you want to convert people who are on the fence – if, if you want to convince people who don't currently agree with you, then you're going to need better documentation. I'm not trying to undermine you here. I'm trying to help you develop an argument that might speak to people who aren't already on your side.

DEREK

All right. Where do you suggest I look?

DENNIS

The United States Department of Labor, maybe.

DEREK

Government sources?

DENNIS

I know, I know, government is the enemy – but think how much more validity your argument would have if the information you get to support your contentions comes from the enemy. You'd be convicting them from evidence that comes out of their own mouth.

DEREK

I see your point.

DENNIS

Maybe even the state Bureau of Labor.

DEREK

Hm.

DENNIS

You see what I'm saying?

DEREK

Yes.

DENNIS

You're a smart guy, you can come up with other sources that aren't inherently biased. If you build an argument from the ground up, then you'll really have something.

DEREK

But you still won't agree with me.

DENNIS

I'll admit, I think it's fruitless to make illegal immigration the centerpiece of your political strategy.

DEREK

Why?

DENNIS

Because of something George S. Patton once said.

DEREK

Patton?

DENNIS

He was a general in World War II, he –

DEREK

I know who he is. I'm surprised *you* know. Patton's not exactly your kind of guy, Mr. C.

DENNIS

Patton once said “fixed fortifications are a monument to the stupidity of mankind.”

DEREK

Meaning?

DENNIS

Meaning that when you have a country with a failing economy that shares a border with a country that’s got the biggest economy in the world, you’re going to have people cross that border, no matter how many fences you put up, no matter how many militiamen you have crawling around the desert. It’s just inevitable.

DEREK

So your answer is to give up the security of our border?

DENNIS

My answer is to find some middle ground.

DEREK

You know what the problem with the middle ground is, Mr. C?

DENNIS

No, but I’ll bet you’re gonna tell me.

DEREK

The middle ground is where the sinkholes are.

DENNIS

You’ll get better sources?

DEREK

I’ll get sources that satisfy the standards of academia.

DENNIS

That’s all I ask.

(Lights cross-fade to ALICE, standing downstage with a clipboard. She follows people across the stage as she tries to get them to register.)

ALICE

Excuse me, sir, are you registered to vote? Would you like to...okay, have a nice day...
Excuse me, ma’am, are you registered to vote?...Great!...Excuse me, sir, are you
registered to -- ...Good afternoon, ma’am, are you registered to -- ...Hello, sir, are you...
Ma’am, are you...Hello, there, can I ask if you’re...Ma’am, are you...

(ALICE lets the clipboard fall to her side; she sighs. ALICE crosses upstage as the lights cross-fade to the classroom; DENNIS and the other students enter.)

DOROTHY

I don't know if it's any good –

DENNIS

Well, let's hear it and see what everyone thinks.

DOROTHY

I'm no actress, Mr. C, I don't know if I can --

DENNIS

Okay. Alice, how would you like to volunteer to read it?

ALICE

Sure. What's this?

DOROTHY

I think they're called stage directions. They say what's happening on stage when the characters are speaking.

DENNIS

Derek, would you do the honors?

DEREK

Sure.

(DEREK reads)

“Betsy Ross sits in a rocking chair. She sews an American flag that is spread across her lap.”

ALICE

“You probably think I sewed this flag. Almost *everybody* thinks I sewed this flag. Some people even think I designed it. Although even people who claim I sewed the flag admit that a committee from the Continental Congress did the actual design. Some people say that George Washington wanted the stars on the flag to have six points, and that I suggested five-pointed stars instead. No evidence for that, either. No evidence, actually, that George Washington and I ever even talked about a flag for our country.

“The truth is that there's no evidence at all that I ever sewed any American flag, let alone *the* American flag. There is evidence that I sewed flags for colonial ships in Pennsylvania, but nobody knows what those flags looked like. Most scholars agree that I had nothing to do with the Stars and Stripes.

ALICE (cont'd.)

“Of course, if you want to, you can visit my house. It’s on Arch Street in Philadelphia. Well, some people *think* it’s my house. Again, the evidence is a little sketchy. The numbering of houses has changed in Philadelphia since colonial times, so it’s not really possible to say for sure which house I lived in. Still, the museum is there. They’ll take you through, and tell you all about how I sewed the first flag, and how important I was.

“If you really look at it, I guess you would say that I’m a myth. Are you comfortable with that? You feel okay swallowing the myth? Or are you one of those pesky people who like some facts to anchor your myths? Up to you, of course. Until you make up your mind, I’ll be right here, living in your imagination, living in the imagination of every kid in every school in the country. God bless America.”

(DENNIS laughs.)

I like it. DENNIS

It’s great! FILIZ

Mike, what do you think? DENNIS

It’s good. MIGUEL

Good grief. DEREK

C’mon, Derek, have a sense of humor, will you? DENNIS

About my country? DEREK

Yes, about your country! Not everything has to be so solemn, you know. DENNIS

I’d just like to know the point. DEREK

What do you mean? DOROTHY

DEREK

So people believe in a myth. What's wrong with that?

DOROTHY

Nothing. As long as they know it's a myth.

DENNIS

Exactly.

DEREK

What do you mean by that?

(DOROTHY looks to DENNIS.)

DENNIS

Go ahead, you're doing just fine.

DOROTHY

I mean that it's okay if we believe in stories. It's nice to think there's this Quaker lady sitting on a rocking chair, sewing the flag. Fine. Maybe something like that actually happened. But at some point, you've gotta make room for what was actually true. Otherwise, you're not being honest with yourself, you're not being honest to history. At some point, you have to acknowledge the facts.

DENNIS

Well said.

DEREK

What if I told you that the creation story of your tribe is a myth?

DOROTHY

You don't even know my tribe.

DEREK

Arapahoe or Cheyenne, probably.

DOROTHY

So what if you're right?

DEREK

Let's get back to the question. Your tribe believes in a myth. What do you say to that?

DOROTHY

I say I don't live in a world that's so black and white, Derek.

DEREK

What does that mean?

DOROTHY

Maybe I can hold more than one idea in my head at a time.

DEREK

Ah, a relativist.

DOROTHY

What's wrong with that?

DENNIS

Okay.

DEREK

Maybe it's just muddled thinking.

DENNIS

Derek?

DEREK

What?

DENNIS

Never mind. Dorothy, good work. Keep going, bring in more next week. I'm looking forward to what you come up with next. Miguel, how are you doing?

MIGUEL

One of the guys from Larimer is in the Marines, he's in Fallujah. I e-mailed him, and he e-mailed me back.

DENNIS

He's got e-mail? But the other guy – what was his name, Brandon?

MIGUEL

Yeah.

DENNIS

You can only reach him through snail mail?

MIGUEL

It depends on where you are, I guess. Some of the guys have access to stuff, others don't.

DENNIS

What's the name of the Marine?

MIGUEL

Tom Layton.

DENNIS

What did he say in the e-mail?

MIGUEL

Here, ah... “Mike – you asked what’s the hardest part about this. It’s the monotony. Every day is the same here. You do the same things at exactly the same time. There are days when I’ll volunteer to man the gun on the humvee, I’ll actually ask to go out on missions outside the wire, just to break up the day. Maybe it sounds crazy, but there are times when getting shot at is better than sitting around doing nothing. You asked about the best day – that had to be last week. It was my twenty-first birthday. We went out on patrol, and there was no action. Nothing at all. It was the only time since I’ve been here where we went out and didn’t see any combat. Now *that* was something to celebrate. The worst day, though, happened just a few days after I got here. We were out, I was on the gun, and I turned around and saw an RPG round coming at us. You can actually see them, they leave a trail in the air. It was coming straight for us, I thought I was dead. It hit the back of the truck, and just bounced off. A dud. We got lucky. I plan on staying lucky.”

(ALICE runs out of the room.)

DENNIS

Is she not feeling well?

FILIZ

She gets upset when she hears Mike read this stuff.

DENNIS

Can’t say I blame her.

(to MIGUEL)

You said there were three guys over there from Larimer? Who’s the third?

MIGUEL

It’s a girl, actually. Her name is Melanie. I’ve been in touch with her family – but they haven’t heard from her in more than a week.

DENNIS

Keep us informed of where you are. Filiz?

FILIZ

I guess it’s not surprising, but finding illegal immigrants is sort of hard. But I did find one guy, he’s a kind of leader of the immigrant community here in town. He’s going to take me around to meet some people.

DENNIS

Who is this guy?

FILIZ

Well, I'd rather not say. I mean, I promised him I wouldn't give anybody any names. Including his.

DENNIS

I understand.

DEREK

Not surprising, since criminals usually don't want to give up their names.

DENNIS

Thank you, everybody. We meet again in two days.

(DENNIS and the students exit; FILIZ moves downstage as the lights cross-fade.)

FILIZ

Orazio, you've got to understand, I want what's best for all the people. This is our chance to stand up and tell them they can't ignore us any more, they can't make us into demons...I know it's a risk, I'm not stupid...I convinced my own mother and father to go to the march. Do you think I would have done that if I didn't know, in my heart, that this is what's right for all of us? My own flesh and blood...They'll listen to you, Orazio, if you tell them to go. If we all go, there will be a sea of people, it will convince them we're human beings...There will be so many, we'll all be anonymous. As if we didn't have individual faces, just one face, made up of thousands of people...You'll take me to see them, let me make my case?...Thank you, Orazio. This is the time, we have to act, you won't regret this...

(FILIZ crosses upstage as the lights cross-fade; DENNIS and the other students enter the classroom.)

DENNIS

Ms. Long Runner – you've got more pages for us?

DOROTHY

Yes, sir.

DENNIS

Well, let's cast it and give it a whirl.

DOROTHY

Mr. C? It's got some bad language in it.

DENNIS

Is there anybody here who will be offended by strong language? If so, it's okay; you won't be penalized.

DEREK

Mr. C?

DENNIS

Derek?

DEREK

It's not going to bother me, but just out of curiosity, what would we do if someone would be offended?

DENNIS

I'd ask that person to step out of the room while we read the scene, and then invite them back as soon as we were done.

DEREK

Got it.

DENNIS

Now, is there anyone who will be offended? No? Okay. Let's read it. Dorothy?

DOROTHY

It's all guys in the scene.

DENNIS

So we might have to do some gender-bending. Alice, Filiz, any problem?

FILIZ

No.

ALICE

It's fine.

DOROTHY

Okay, Mr. C, will you play the bartender?

DENNIS

Right.

DOROTHY

Derek, you'll play man #1. Miguel, you get to play Ira Hayes.

DEREK

How come his character gets a name and I'm just a number?

DOROTHY

Life's full of tough breaks, Derek. Filiz, would you play man #2?

FILIZ

Okay.

DOROTHY

Alice, you'll have to double up. Could you read the stage directions, and play man #3?

ALICE

Okay. *"Scene opens on a bar on the Gila River Indian Reservation in Arizona. It's a dingy, run-down place, a dive. Above the bar, a large reproduction of the famous photo showing several Marines raising the flag on Mount..."* I don't know this word.

DENNIS

Let me see...Suribachi.

ALICE

"Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima."

DENNIS

Do you all know what Iwo Jima was?

MIGUEL

It was a battle, right?

DENNIS

Yeah – on a Pacific island in World War II. Go ahead, Alice.

ALICE

"At a corner table, three men play cards. One of them, Ira Hayes, keeps pouring drinks from a whiskey bottle that sits on the table. Man #1 enters, sits at the bar."

DENNIS

"What'll you have?"

DEREK

"Gimme a beer."

FILIZ

"Ira, you want any cards?"

MIGUEL

“Let me think.”

FILIZ

“Well, while you think -- Deke, you want any cards?”

ALICE

“Yeah. I’ll take two.”

FILIZ

“Dealer takes three. Ira?”

MIGUEL

“I told you, I’m thinking.”

FILIZ

“It’s poker, buddy, it’s not some math equation.”

DENNIS

“He wants time to think, you give him time to think.”

DEREK

“What, you the referee for this game?”

DENNIS

“Maybe I am.”

DEREK

“First time I ever saw a referee at a poker game.”

DENNIS

“There’s a first time for everything, pal.”

DEREK

“Maybe you oughta wear a striped shirt.”

DENNIS

“Maybe you oughta mind your own business.”

DEREK

“Sorry. Jeez.”

DENNIS

“You need another beer?”

DEREK

“Nah, I’m all right.”

MIGUEL

“Gimme three cards.”

ALICE

“The dealer gives him three cards.”

MIGUEL

“Shit, shit! No motherfuckin’ luck. Never any motherfuckin’ luck! You’re dealing from the bottom of the deck.”

FILIZ

“I am not! You saw me! You saw me with your own eyes!”

MIGUEL

“You deal the lousiest cards in the whole fuckin’, stinkin’, miserable world.”

FILIZ

“I can’t help your luck, Ira.”

MIGUEL

“Fuck you. Fuck you to hell!”

ALICE

“Ira gets up out of his chair. Man #2 also gets up.”

FILIZ

“Just watch your mouth, Ira.”

MIGUEL

“I don’t think it’s luck. Bottom-dealing asshole!”

ALICE

“Ira shoves Man #2, who shoves him back. The bartender comes out from behind the bar and breaks up the scuffle before it gets out of hand. He tries to move Ira away from Man #2; Ira breaks away from the bartender and goes crashing into Man #1 in his seat at the bar.”

DEREK

“Hey! Watch it!”

MIGUEL

“You watch it, asshole, you’re in my way!”

DEREK

“Fuck off, why don’t ya?”

DENNIS

“All right, Ira, c’mon, leave the guy alone, will ya?”

MIGUEL

“Fucking luck. Miserable fucking luck. Let’s play some god-damned cards.”

FILIZ

“I’ve had enough. I’m outta here.”

ALICE

“Man #2 leaves the bar.”

MIGUEL

“Coward! You’re a coward! What about you?”

ALICE

“I gotta take a leak.”

MIGUEL

“Cowards! Nothing here but cowards!”

DENNIS

“Ira, let me take you home.”

MIGUEL

“No.”

DENNIS

“C’mon, Ira, I’ll close up early, I’ll drive you back.”

MIGUEL

“I said no!”

DENNIS

“If they arrest you again, they’re gonna -- ”

MIGUEL

“Fuck em, they can’t arrest me!”

DENNIS

“Ira!”

MIGUEL

“I can take care of myself! Get outta my way!”

ALICE

“Ira lurches out of the bar.”

DEREK

“What’s his problem?”

DENNIS

“You’re not from around here, are you?”

DEREK

“No, I’m from Peach Springs.”

DENNIS

“On your way to where?”

DEREK

“Oro Valley.”

DENNIS

“Well, maybe you’d better be on your way.”

DEREK

“What did *I* do? It was that asshole who caused all the trouble.”

DENNIS

“Don’t call him that.”

DEREK

“After what he did?”

ALICE

“The bartender points to the photo above the bar.”

DENNIS

“You see that picture?”

DEREK

“Yeah.”

DENNIS

“You know what it is?”

DEREK

“Yeah, it’s from, what’s-it, Iwo Jima, right? Everybody’s seen that one.”

DENNIS

“That’s right. The guy you just called an asshole is Ira Hayes.”

DEREK

“Is that supposed to mean something to me?”

ALICE

“The bartender points to the figure on the left of the photo.”

DENNIS

“That’s Ira Hayes.”

DEREK

“Oh.”

DENNIS

“He’s seen shit you and I have never seen. He comes back, and they treat him like just another drunken injun. But in this bar, he’s a hero, and he always will be. So don’t call him an asshole, buddy. Not in my bar. Not ever.”

ALICE

“The lights fade on the bar, except for a light on the photo. Ira staggers back onstage.”

MIGUEL

“Cold. Jesus, it’s cold. Stars. Look at ‘em. Millions of stars. They looked different on Iwo. Same stars, why did they look so different?”

ALICE

“Ira collapses in a heap on the ground.”

MIGUEL

“Sand’s different, too. Not the same. Not that black sand. Nothing’s ever the same. Nothing’s been the same...Harlon! You hear me, Harlon? They tried to gip you, Har, they did, the dumb crooked fucks. I set ‘em straight. I told ‘em who you were. I told ‘em, my pal Har, he’s in that picture. Before he died, he raised the flag. He was one of us. He had his hand on that pole. Couldn’t defend himself, ‘cause he died. Har! Why did you die? Why you? Why not me? Why you? Oh, God...the stars.

ALICE

“He falls face down on the sand. Lights fade on Ira; leaving only the photo of Mt. Suribachi illuminated. After a moment, the light fades on the photo and the stage is dark.”

(Long silence.)

Wow.

FILIZ

Wow, indeed.

DENNIS

How did you do that?

ALICE

I don't know – they just started talking to me.

DOROTHY

Who?

MIGUEL

The characters.

DOROTHY

It's like you were there when it happened.

MIGUEL

Hayes died in 1955. But I've seen people like him where I grew up. Things haven't changed that much on the rez.

DOROTHY

However you came up with it -- well done, Dorothy. Well done.

DENNIS

Thanks, Mr. C.

DOROTHY

And Miguel -- you were great.

DENNIS

Thanks.

MIGUEL

Listen...

DEREK

Derek?

DENNIS

DEREK

It's really good. I mean, it's well-written.

DOROTHY

Thanks.

DEREK

Can I ask you something, though?

DOROTHY

Yeah.

DEREK

I don't mean this to sound, I don't know...hostile, or negative, or anything...but could you explain to me what it has to do with the flag?

(a short silence)

DOROTHY

He raised the flag on Iwo Jima –

DEREK

I know that. Just what are you trying to *say* about the flag?

DOROTHY

It has to do with false promises.

DEREK

What do you mean?

DOROTHY

Did you pledge allegiance to the flag this morning?

DEREK

We all did – at least I *think* we all did.

DOROTHY

“One nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.”

DEREK

That's right.

DOROTHY

Except that it's not.

DEREK

That's not true.

DOROTHY

Easy enough for you to say.

DEREK

Because I'm white?

DOROTHY

You said it, not me.

DEREK

But that's not –

DOROTHY

Walk a mile in someone else's shoes, Derek, then talk to me about what is or what isn't.

DENNIS

All right. Let's keep focused, all right? Next week, Derek will present what he's got. Miguel, you're going to have some footage for us, right?

MIGUEL

Right.

DENNIS

Okay, see you all then.

(DOROTHY, MIGUEL, ALICE and FILIZ exit; DENNIS stands near the flag mounted on the blackboard. He is illuminated by a pin spot.)

DENNIS

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America..." Why, I wonder, do we pledge allegiance to the flag first, and only later to "the republic for which it stands?" Why put the symbol before the substance? Symbols become so freighted with emotion -- our hearts take the lead, and we forget to bring our brains along for the ride. The flag is meaningless if we ignore the core values of our nation. The Bible tells us to avoid idolatry. If we don't make the flag into an idol, then maybe there will be a little more room for us to consider the meaning of "liberty and justice for all."

(DEREK enters downstage as the lights cross-fade. As he speaks, DENNIS moves from the classroom to the downstage area.)

DEREK

Right here, get the goods on how illegal immigrants steal jobs from legitimate Americans! Right here, find out how America is being invaded by illegal immigrants! Find out how our tax dollars pay for services used by people who have no right to be here!

DENNIS

Derek, can I speak to you, please?

DEREK

I'm a little busy at the moment, Mr. C.

DENNIS

Derek, come with me, please.

DEREK

Mr. C –

DENNIS

Right now!

(DENNIS leads DEREK off to one side of the stage)

I thought you understood that we were supposed to meet again and go over your material before you started distributing anything.

DEREK

So you could censor it?

DENNIS

So I could help you refine it.

DEREK

That sounds suspiciously like censorship to me.

DENNIS

Your last draft was filled with material from sources that no reasonable person would say were objective.

DEREK

And look at this draft. Statistics from The U.S. Department of Labor. From the Colorado Bureau of Labor. From the Georgetown University Institute of Public Policy. Last time I looked, Georgetown wasn't exactly a conservative think tank.

DENNIS

That's not the problem.

DEREK

Then what is the problem?

DENNIS

The headings you put into the leaflet.

DEREK

What do you think is wrong with them?

DENNIS

“Do you want to live in the United States of Mexico?” “How to stop the Brown Tide of Illegal Immigration.” “Wetback Nation.” It’s inflammatory!

DEREK

They’re perfectly reasonable summations of what the data tells us.

DENNIS

Derek –

DENNIS

Just because you don’t agree with them doesn’t mean they’re wrong. People have the right to decide what ideas they believe, and what ideas they think belong in the trash.

DENNIS

You can’t yell “fire” in a crowded theatre, Derek, and then claim that it’s free speech. People could get trampled to death.

DEREK

You’re forgetting one thing, Mr. C. You have every right to yell “fire” in a crowded theatre if the theatre is really on fire.

DENNIS

Derek, please –

DEREK

There are millions of Americans who think illegal immigration is a crisis that threatens the American way of life.

DENNIS

When you start yelling about a “brown tide” –

DEREK

What else would you call it?

DENNIS

You don’t think there’s an element of racism in that?

DEREK

I have nothing whatever against Hispanic people who go through legitimate immigration procedures and get green cards. I have a great deal of respect for any Mexicans, or South Americans, who do that and go on to become citizens.

DENNIS

And where is that idea expressed in your literature?

DEREK

It's implicit.

DENNIS

Derek, give me a break!

DEREK

The leaflet only talks about *illegal* immigrants. It doesn't say anything about legal immigrants because they're not the problem.

DENNIS

You think the people who read the leaflet are going to make that distinction?

DEREK

You think they're not? So, between the two of us, who really believes in the basic premise of democracy – the idea that people are competent to make choices that govern their own future?

DENNIS

Don't make me pull rank, here, Derek. If I have to get the administration to stop you from distributing this, I will.

DEREK

So you don't believe in the First Amendment?

DENNIS

The Supreme Court has held that the First Amendment's protections don't necessarily apply in this country's schools.

DEREK

The Court is swinging to the right, Mr. C, in case you hadn't noticed. We have some people there now who believe in the law as it's written, and I'd be very surprised if they made any decisions that endorse illegal immigration.

DENNIS

Well, if you distribute any more of those, you may have an opportunity to find out exactly what the courts would do.

DEREK

Because you're going to –

DENNIS

Because I'm going to the principal's office right now. You've gone beyond the bounds of the project, Derek –

DEREK

I disagree.

DENNIS

Then we'll leave it up to Ms. Barrow to decide.

DEREK

I'm fine with that. Maybe she's more broad-minded than you are.

DENNIS

Don't do this, Derek.

DEREK

You want to get in a pissing match? Fine. You need to do, Mr. C, and I'll do what I need to do. Let's see who wins.

(Lights fade – end of ACT ONE.)

ACT TWO

(Lights up on the classroom. FILIZ, ALICE, DOROTHY, MIGUEL and DEREK enter. DEREK has a piece of duct tape over his mouth. DENNIS enters.)

DENNIS

All right. We'll start off with a progress report from Derek, who's gotten a bit of a head start in the public presentation of his work. Derek, would you like to explain what's happened in the last week?

(DEREK shakes his head "no.")

Oh, good grief. Is this some sort of protest?

(DEREK nods – with gestures that imply that it should be obvious.)

DOROTHY

What's he protesting?

DENNIS

How many of you have read the leaflet Derek was distributing earlier this week?

(Everyone raises their hand.)

Principal Barrow's forbidden Derek to hand out the leaflet on school property.

ALICE

Can she do that?

DENNIS

The Supreme Court says she can.

(DEREK shakes his head "no.")

Well, we'll find out, Derek, if you have the wherewithal to hire a lawyer.

(DEREK nods, vehemently)

In the meantime, let's proceed. Alice, how are you doing?

ALICE

I have to admit, Mr. C, it's pretty depressing.

DENNIS

In what way?

ALICE

We know there are a lot of people in this town who aren't registered to vote.

DENNIS

Yes?

ALICE

I had hoped that if we went to them, made it easy, helped them to fill out the form -- I hoped they would jump on the bandwagon.

DENNIS

They're not?

ALICE

I've been at it every day after school, I've set up a table outside different supermarkets -- but we haven't been very successful.

DENNIS

How many people have you signed up so far?

ALICE

Ten.

DOROTHY

That's ten more than were registered before.

ALICE

But hundreds of people have passed by. Thousands. I know some of them aren't registered, I mean, the odds are that *lots* of them aren't registered --

DENNIS

Alice.

ALICE

Yeah?

DENNIS

What are you learning here?

ALICE

That people don't care?

DENNIS

You're learning how difficult it is to make them care.

ALICE

But shouldn't they care -- automatically? Isn't that the whole point of democracy? Shouldn't they care just out of self-interest?

DENNIS

You'd think so, wouldn't you?

DOROTHY

So what do we do if they don't care?

DENNIS

That's the next phase of Alice's project. Figuring out a way to make them see why they *should* care.

(DEREK spreads his arms wide – “That's what *I'm* trying to do!”)

ALICE

I hadn't planned on that.

DENNIS

I know. But you know one of the things that's always made this country great? We're really good at improvising. So it's time to revise your plan. To some extent, the success of your project depends on the success of your classmates. Which leads us to Miguel.

MIGUEL

There's a guy from Silverthorn, he's in Baghdad now. His dad gave me a tape he sent home. Can I play it?

DENNIS

By all means.

(MIGUEL presses a button on his computer. On the classroom screen, we see a male soldier dressed in desert camouflage. He speaks directly into the camera.)

STEVE

Hey, dad. Sorry I haven't sent anything to you guys in so long, but we've been pulling double shifts for almost a month now. By the time we get back to the base, it's all I can do just to drag myself into the bunk. Thanks for all the CARE packages, by the way. The skin cream and the bug repellent made such a big difference. Now if only you could put about a month's worth of sleep in a box and send it over here, that would be great.

There are so many things I want to say. Do me a favor and don't read this letter to mom. There are some things I have to talk about that she shouldn't hear. But if I don't tell someone, I think I'll just lie down in the road here and break down.

We were on a patrol today, it was a Sunni neighborhood, and we saw this house where the front door had been ripped off the hinges. We went in, and it was completely quiet, so quiet you knew there was something wrong.

STEVE (cont'd.)

Inside, we found the bodies. The man must have been around forty, his wife a little younger, I guess. The daughter was young, I don't know, less than ten. They all had their hands tied behind their backs with these blue plastic bands – I thought it was weird that they were blue, I don't know why. They'd all been shot in the back of the head. There were cigarette burns all over their bodies.

Standing there, in a room where somebody had been so filled with hate that they could do that, I realized something. It doesn't matter how many of us there are. It doesn't matter how many guns we have, how many tanks, how many helicopters. There's nothing we can do about a hate that's been building here for a thousand years. It's like trying to hold back the tide.

I'm sorry to be so down, but I feel so absolutely useless. I love you guys. I never found a way to say it when I was home, not so that it would say everything I feel. I can't wait to get back home to you. I promise I'll keep my head down. I'm counting the days. I love you guys.

(long silence.)

DENNIS

That's powerful stuff.

DOROTHY

What are those people going to come home to?

FILIZ

Yeah.

MIGUEL

What do you mean?

DOROTHY

They're going to be coming home to a country that has no idea what's really going on over there.

FILIZ

We walk around as if we're not at war at all. No one's paying any attention.

(DEREK rips the duct tape off of his mouth)

DEREK

That's not true.

DENNIS

Ah, Derek, you've joined us.

FILIZ (to DEREK)

Do you see people living their lives as if they know what's going on over there?

DEREK

They don't have to.

MIGUEL

Hey, man, that's not like you. You're the one always saying everybody's gotta wake up.

DEREK

People in this country know they're in a struggle against terrorism. They also know we've got the best army in the world. They're leaving it in their hands.

DOROTHY

Didn't you watch that?

DEREK

Yeah.

DOROTHY

Talk about a disconnect.

DEREK

You think I don't feel for that guy? I do, I absolutely do. He was having a bad day in a place where it's easy to have a bad day. He's the guy who's the sharp end of the spear, he's always going to see the worst of things. Who can blame him? But that's not the whole story.

FILIZ

And what is the whole story? If he doesn't see it, who does?

DEREK

He's too close too it. He can only see the trees, he has no idea what the forest looks like.

FILIZ

There are times when I wonder what planet you came from.

DENNIS

All right, there's no need to get personal, here.

FILIZ

It just amazes me, that's all.

DEREK

It amazes me you take an anecdote and blow it up into something more than it is.

FILIZ

You know –

DENNIS

All right, enough! Enough! Miguel, keep moving forward. Maybe if more people see that, they'll want to vote. Or maybe they'll be so depressed they'll feel powerless. I don't know. But all we can do is put the information out there and let them make up their own minds. Dorothy? Where are you at?

DOROTHY

I've been researching something.

DENNIS

What?

DOROTHY

The Sand Creek Massacre.

DENNIS

Ah. Interesting.

DOROTHY

There's a lot of stuff to read. I've been concentrating on that. Next week, I'll have a scene, I promise.

DENNIS

As long as you keep the project moving forward.

DOROTHY

The Drama Club's interested. They said if I can finish it soon, they'll put it on at the end of the spring.

DENNIS

Excellent. 'Til next week, then.

(DENNIS, FILIZ, DOROTHY, MIGUEL and ALICE exit. DEREK, his mouth again covered with duct tape, moves downstage as the lights cross-fade. He carries a large bunch of leaflets and a big bucket filled with small American flags on little wooden sticks – the sort of thing that might be handed out at a Fourth of July parade. DEREK hands out leaflets and flags to students as they pass by. FILIZ is going to pass by without taking one of DEREK's leaflets; he reaches out and tugs her sleeve. Annoyed, she nonetheless takes one of the leaflets just to get rid of him.

He thrusts a flag in her face. She takes it, just to end the moment. As he continues to hawk leaflets, FILIZ moves to the other side of the stage and reads the leaflet out loud.)

FILIZ

“I can’t hand out leaflets with specific information about illegal immigration. But log on to www.freeamerica.com to get all the facts. The Truth Will Keep Us Free!”

(FILIZ crumples up the leaflet and exits. DEREK continues to hawk leaflets as the lights dim. On the screen in the classroom, we see television coverage of the massive immigration march in Denver. The scenes fade out as DENNIS enters the classroom; after a moment, FILIZ enters.)

FILIZ

Did you see it on TV?

DENNIS

I did.

FILIZ

It was amazing.

DENNIS

How many people did you bring from here?

FILIZ

It’s hard to say, until a couple of days ago, I thought we’d be lucky to get twenty. But you could feel something building, there were people who wouldn’t even talk to me a few days ago, they were too scared, but they showed up at the last minute. I think maybe two hundred came from here.

DENNIS

How did you get them all down there?

FILIZ

I had about twenty people who volunteered to drive, I thought that would be plenty, but the day before I knew I needed more, so I called everyone I knew. Everyone. And they came, Mr. C, they came out, we had fifty cars yesterday. And they were all packed with people, sometimes six to a car, I couldn’t have imagined – we used some of the grant money for signs, the rest we’re going to use to pay people for the gas they used to drive, is that okay?

DENNIS

As long as you’ve got receipts, it’s fine.

FILIZ

I told people to get receipts, I have to collect them.

DENNIS

Okay. It's fine. It looked huge on television.

FILIZ

I saw the coverage, Alice burned a CD for me, but I'm, telling you, it was much bigger than it looked on TV. *Much* bigger.

DENNIS

How many people, would you say?

FILIZ

I don't know. A lot. Tens of thousands, anyway. The streets were jammed, it was – it was amazing.

DENNIS

It looked pretty impressive.

FILIZ

We got there early, I found myself a place, I was standing on one of the statues near the capital, I was watching this, I don't know, this *ocean* of people. It's crazy, but I found myself thinking about Derek.

DENNIS

Derek?

FILIZ

That leaflet of his – it made immigrants sound like numbers. Worse, it made them sound like animals. But I watched all these people marching down the street, saying – look, we're human beings, it's not about laws or borders, we live here, we work here, we work right next to you, *you see us every day, we're not invisible* – and suddenly, I had the weirdest feeling. It was so cheesy, but...

DENNIS

Tell me.

FILIZ

I felt them. Adams, Jefferson, Franklin. Like they were looking out at that crowd, right over my shoulder.

DENNIS

What do you think they would have said, if they had been there?

FILIZ

They'd say...we couldn't have imagined this, not even on our best day. But this is it. Even if we didn't know how far it would reach, this is what we meant. The people, speaking up, making themselves heard. *This* is what we intended.

(DENNIS moves downstage, toward what would be the window of the classroom. FILIZ moves to stand next to DENNIS; both look out the window.)

DENNIS

I'm from back east, it's pretty flat where I grew up, and the first time I went hiking here – I saw Pikes Peak from the summit of Longs. I remembered what's-her-name, she wrote "America the Beautiful" – ah, I can't remember. Anyway, she wrote it after she saw the view from on top of Pikes. It just hit me – "purple mountain's majesty, above the fruited plain." I wept. I cried like a child, because for the first time I really understood exactly what she meant.

FILIZ

Yeah.

(beat)

DENNIS

You said you called everyone you knew to drive people to the march.

FILIZ

Yeah, I did.

DENNIS

You didn't call me. I would have, you know. I would've driven people down to Denver.

FILIZ

I know. But this had to be us. You know what I mean? It had to be us, standing up for ourselves.

DENNIS

I understand.

FILIZ

My parents...It's a cliché, but they always wanted me to be an American first. And I was fine with that. I never really thought of myself as Mexican. But there's something about being with people who know where you come from. I can't explain it.

(DEREK enters; he sees DENNIS and FILIZ near the window, and retreats behind the door jamb. He stands there, listening.)

DENNIS

Okay. But if you need another set of wheels, next time...

FILIZ

Sure.

DENNIS

So is this it? The march is over, now you're done?

FILIZ

No.

DENNIS

So what's next?

FILIZ

A network.

DENNIS

For the illegals?

FILIZ

Between those with documents, and those without. I didn't know this when I started, but I found out pretty quick – these are two groups who speak the same language, but they don't talk to each other, not much. We might try to do some organizing at the Shield plant.

DENNIS

Lots of – undocumented people there?

FILIZ

Yeah.

DENNIS

I'm proud of you, Filiz.

FILIZ

It was hot yesterday.

DENNIS

Yeah.

FILIZ

Just like in Philadelphia. All those years ago. They were there, I swear.

DENNIS

I believe you.

FILIZ

I'll see you later, Mr. C.

(DEREK exits.)

DENNIS

See ya.

(DENNIS and FILIZ exit. We see MIGUEL downstage with his computer, editing video footage from soldiers in Iraq; we see the footage on the screen in the classroom behind him. It's from BRANDON, whose letter MIGUEL read out loud earlier. BRANDON is dressed in desert uniform. His face is dirty, he looks utterly exhausted. His eyes are lifeless.)

BRANDON

Hey guys. This may be short – I'm somewhere way beyond exhausted. Last week I hadn't slept for four days. You start to hear things, see things that aren't there. I was in the gun turret, I was asleep; my eyes were open, but I was asleep. I thought I heard some hajis in the bushes behind me. I swung around and fired without even thinking about it. It was a dog this time...I've seen things here – I've done things...

(ALICE enters and stands behind MIGUEL as he works.)

When I come back, tell people not to ask me if I killed anybody. I don't think I could take that. It's like people think it's some kind of joke, killing someone. Someone who's somebody's father, or brother...or son. Or daughter. Some kid, maybe, who was in the wrong car at the wrong time, whose father decided he wasn't going to stop at a roadblock...Things like that – I'm not the same person I was when I left...

ALICE

Are you still thinking about it?

MIGUEL

I thought we weren't going to talk about it any more.

ALICE

I see that, and – it's not just what would happen if you were killed. Or wounded. I could deal with it if you came back without an arm or a leg. I would hate the world for doing that to you, but I could handle it. But I couldn't handle it if you came back and you looked like that. If you came back and you were somebody else, somebody whose eyes looked like that.

MIGUEL

You're only seeing part of it.

ALICE

I've seen enough of it.

MIGUEL

Listen.

(MIGUEL cues up another section of the tape.)

BRANDON

When we first came over, we were up in Kurdish country. There was a little girl, she came up to me and gave me a picture she'd drawn of our humvee. It was amazing she could do it at all; when Saddam gassed the Kurds in her village, her mother was exposed to it when she was pregnant. This little girl was born with two fingers on one hand, and seven on the other. Her feet were messed up. She gave me this picture. I still have it. Anybody wants to know if we should have invaded, I say hell yes. You can't look at someone like this little girl and say we should've let Saddam get away with it.

(MIGUEL switches off the computer.)

ALICE

You can't save the world if you lose yourself.

MIGUEL

I won't lose myself.

ALICE

I'll bet that's what he thought before he went over there.

MIGUEL

So everybody just stays out of it? We let the world rot?

ALICE

I don't care about the world. I care about you.

MIGUEL

There's something else.

ALICE

What?

MIGUEL

All this shit that Derek's stirring up –

ALICE

So what?

MIGUEL

He's just the tip of the iceberg. It's going on all over the country. I want to make it hard for them to throw my parents out.

ALICE

You think if –

MIGUEL

If I'm in the army, if I'm over there, somebody could make a lot of noise about not deporting the parents of somebody serving their country.

ALICE

Ask your parents how they feel about that. If they knew what you were doing, they'd go back across the border themselves before they let you do it.

MIGUEL

That's why I'm not telling them. I may not even get deployed over there.

ALICE

You sound like you're going to volunteer.

MIGUEL

No.

ALICE

You will. And if you don't, they'll send you anyway.

MIGUEL

Maybe, maybe not.

ALICE

I can't.

MIGUEL

I know.

ALICE

I love you, but I can't do this.

MIGUEL

All right. But I want you to do one thing.

ALICE

What?

MIGUEL

If they get into trouble while I'm gone. Will you pick up the phone? Call the politicians?
Will you do that for me?

ALICE

Yes.

MIGUEL

Just keep an eye on them for me.

ALICE

Good-bye.

MIGUEL

I'm not gone yet.

ALICE

Yes, you are.

(ALICE exits. MIGUEL presses a button on the computer, and the images on the screen fade out. MIGUEL packs up his computer and moves upstage as the lights cross-fade and the others enter the classroom.)

DENNIS

So, Alice, where do you stand?

ALICE

Well, my basic approach – “hi, are you registered to vote?” – isn't working, so I thought I'd try guilt.

DENNIS

What do you mean?

ALICE

I thought we'd hit people with some leaflets on their way into the store, and then ask them to register.

FILIZ

What kind of leaflets?

ALICE

Here's what I was thinking about.

(ALICE connects her computer and turns it on, then displays a draft of a leaflet. It shows photos of Hitler, Stalin and Mao

Tse-Tung. Below their names, a large caption: “Tyranny has one mortal enemy: free elections. Register. Vote.”)

DENNIS

What do we think?

MIGUEL

I think it’s great for people who know Hitler, Stalin and Mao. But you’re gonna get a lot of people saying stuff like, “who are those guys with moustaches? Who’s the Chinese dude?”

FILIZ

I think he’s right.

DENNIS

I agree.

ALICE

How about this?

(She displays another mock-up of a leaflet. It shows a photo of a particularly bedraggled, sad-eyed American soldier in World War II. The caption: “Over one million Americans have died so you could choose your destiny. Register. Vote.”)

DOROTHY

That certainly ramps up the guilt factor.

MIGUEL

Yeah.

FILIZ

It’s past-tense, though. That guy did his thing sixty years ago. Will people feel connected to that?

DENNIS

I would hope so, but I see your point.

ALICE

I’ve got one more.

(ALICE displays one more mock-up. In this one, the bold-print caption at the top reads: “He’s over there...”, followed by a photo of an American soldier in Iraq, followed by another bold caption: “So that you can step in here” – followed by a photo of an empty voting booth. At the bottom, another bold caption: “Register. Vote.”)

MIGUEL

That's good.

FILIZ

Yeah, that's immediate. Nobody can pretend they don't know anything about this guy.

DOROTHY

I like it.

DENNIS

I agree, this is the best, but I wouldn't necessarily throw out the second one, either. Especially with older people, it might resonate.

FILIZ

Aren't older people more likely to be registered?

DENNIS

Yeah, but why not see if you can rope in those who aren't?

FILIZ

Okay.

DOROTHY

You're going to print these as leaflets?

ALICE

That's what I was thinking.

MIGUEL

People can toss the leaflets.

DOROTHY

Exactly.

MIGUEL

You kill a lot of trees and get no return.

DENNIS

What do we suggest?

DOROTHY

What about posters, big posters?

ALICE

Do people read posters?

MIGUEL
You read billboards on the road, right?

ALICE
Yeah.

MIGUEL
Same idea.

ALICE
Okay. I'd feel better about it if I thought it wasn't false advertising.

DENNIS
What do you mean?

ALICE
I mean, maybe it will work. Maybe people will feel guilty when they look at a picture of a soldier and say, "well, I guess I should register to vote." But when you listen to the stuff Miguel's been bringing in...it doesn't sound like those guys are fighting for the right to vote. It doesn't sound like they're thinking much about the Constitution.

MIGUEL
What do you think they're doing, then?

ALICE
They're just trying to stay alive from one minute to the next. They don't have much time to be concerned about abstractions when they could be killed any second.

MIGUEL
Maybe.

DENNIS
Derek, you've been atypically quiet.

DEREK
Posters are better.

DENNIS
That's it? No other thoughts?

DEREK
Well, I wasn't going to say anything, but –

FILIZ
Here we go.

DEREK

I think the project as a whole is misguided.

DENNIS

You don't think that voter registration is a good idea?

DEREK

Actually, no.

DOROTHY

I can't wait to hear your reasons for this.

DEREK

Think about it. Who are you aiming for? You're trying to sign up people who haven't bothered to stir themselves and make even the most token effort at participating in the political process. The people you're trying to sign up are probably going to be the laziest, the least informed, the least rational and the most easily swayed by appeals to their emotions.

DENNIS

Any response?

DOROTHY

Democracy is founded on the principle that people get to choose how they're going to be ruled.

DEREK

All the people?

FILIZ

Where does it say that it shouldn't be all the people?

DEREK

The Founding Fathers never imagined all the people would be involved. When the Constitution was written, every state had laws on the books that essentially restricted the privilege of voting to landowners. It wasn't quite an aristocracy, since anyone who made enough money could join, but it wasn't an unlimited franchise.

DOROTHY

It wasn't just money you needed to qualify. Lots of people were excluded back then regardless of money. African-Americans, women – and anybody who was an ancestor of mine.

DEREK

I absolutely agree that to limit the franchise of voting by race or gender is absolutely wrong. But maybe the Founders had a good idea when they kept the franchise more exclusive. Maybe what we really want is an aristocracy of the mind.

FILIZ

Oh, please.

DEREK

Tell me. Don't you think that the five of us in this room – sorry, Mr. C, the six of us – know a lot more about what's going on in this country, and in this world, than most people out there?

(silence)

It's embarrassing for us to admit that we're a lot smarter than most people out there. We don't live in a country that appreciates intellect, but maybe it should.

FILIZ

So who gets to decide who should vote?

DEREK

The five of us could figure out a way, I'll bet.

MIGUEL

An intelligence test?

DOROTHY

That wouldn't work.

MIGUEL

Why not?

DEREK

Because you can be very bright but still not give a shit.

DOROTHY

A current affairs test, then?

DEREK

Not a bad idea.

FILIZ

That works against your idea of a meritocracy.

DEREK

Why?

FILIZ

You can be well-informed but still have some very dumb ideas. Lots of prejudiced people know a lot about a few things. Should they be the ones running things?

DEREK

At least they care enough to invest their time in finding out what's going on around them.

DOROTHY

The three guys on Alice's first poster – they would all have passed your test. Hitler, Stalin, Mao – they all knew enough to be voters under your scheme.

DEREK

What's wrong with having some extremists as voters? There's supposed to be a marketplace of ideas, right? So you need some unusual ideas in the mix.

MIGUEL

It's not just their ideas that would be in the mix. It's their personalities.

DEREK

You think personalities would come into it if we had an informed electorate?

DOROTHY

They did in Germany. The German electorate was probably as well-educated as any in the world when Hitler came to power.

DEREK

But even there, the Germans weren't culling the herd. They weren't preventing the stupid and the ill-informed from voting.

MIGUEL

We're missing something here.

DENNIS

And what would that be?

MIGUEL

This project is about the Constitution, right? There's nothing in the Constitution that mandates, or even allows, what Derek is suggesting. If the Founders had wanted to limit the number of voters, they would have said so.

DEREK

But every bit of their experience told them that the franchise to vote *would* be limited!

MIGUEL

Maybe so. But these were guys with a lot of foresight. They knew they were designing a system that would stretch to fit the future.

DEREK

I can't understand why you want to be ruled by the rabble.

DOROTHY

Who defines who the rabble is, Derek?

DEREK

I don't see that as a problem.

DOROTHY

I know you don't. That's the problem.

DENNIS

Well, my friends, time for us to go home. Let me just say that there are lots of days in a teacher's life when you wonder why the hell you ever got into this business. And then there are times, like this afternoon, when you realize it's absolutely the best job in the entire world. Have a good weekend.

(DENNIS, DOROTHY, FILIZ, MIGUEL and ALICE exit; DEREK moves downstage as the lights cross-fade.)

DEREK

Illegal immigrants. What's the important word here? *Illegal. Against the law. Criminal.* That's what matters. Colby tells us that we're "a nation of laws, not of people." Does he mean it, or is it all just a big joke?

My parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents worked hard to build this country and make it the greatest place on earth. Now, there are millions of people who want to steal what they built. They want to pick the fruit off a tree that somebody else planted and tended.

It might be different if they worked to fit in. Learned the language, worked to become real Americans. If they came here and became citizens, like my great-grandparents did. But they don't. It's not fair, it's not right, it's not *legal*.

I refuse to stand around while America becomes a Third World country. This is my home, and I'm going to defend it.

(DEREK exits; lights cross-fade as DENNIS and FILIZ enter the classroom. They stand near what would be the window. In the downstage area, DEREK hawks leaflets to passers-by.)

DENNIS

Well, you've got to hand it to him, he doesn't give up.

FILIZ

I wish he would.

DENNIS

That's the problem with the right to free speech. Everybody's got it, including the people you don't agree with.

FILIZ

It's starting to get out of hand. I was in an English class today, and people wanted to talk about immigration.

DENNIS

It's a big issue, it's not necessarily because of –

FILIZ

They had copies of his leaflet, they were quoting it in class. They started handing out copies of stuff from the website he's started.

(beat)

DENNIS

The same thing happened in one of my classes yesterday.

FILIZ

What do you think we should do?

DENNIS

There's nothing we can do. He's being very careful. As soon as he crosses that street, he's off school property.

FILIZ

I'm just saying, people are starting to get angry. The anglos, they take those little flags he's handing out, they wave it in people's faces. They say things about green cards. People are getting mad.

DENNIS

Maybe the police can do something. I don't know, maybe he needs a permit to hand out that sort of thing on the street. I'll check into it.

FILIZ

That would be great. It's getting uncomfortable here. I mean, before, it's not like everything was easy, but people got along, most of the time, and if they didn't, at least kept to themselves. Now...

DENNIS

I'll see what I can do.

FILIZ

Thanks, Mr. C.

(FILIZ exits. DENNIS stands at the window for a moment, looking out at DEREK, handing out leaflets across the street. DENNIS moves to his desk, sits, and starts to grade papers. Lights fade on DEREK as he exits. DENNIS runs his red pen over one paper, then looks at it and sighs. Sounds of laughter from outside in the hall. DENNIS picks up another paper and starts to correct it. The laughter turns to more angry sounds, the sounds of a scuffle. A female voice is heard: "Hey, what are you...!" DENNIS heads to the door; just as he opens it, ALICE comes in, leading FILIZ, who is crying.)

ALICE

Mr. C, thank God you're here!

DENNIS

What happened?

ALICE

They wrapped the flag around her head, they –

DENNIS

Who? Who did this?

FILIZ

I don't know, I couldn't see!

ALICE

They were wearing masks!

FILIZ

Thank God you came!

ALICE

It's okay, I'm just glad –

FILIZ

They came from behind me, they were pulling it around my face, I couldn't breathe -- I thought I was going to die.

DENNIS

Alice, would you see if the nurse is still in her office?

ALICE

They waited, Mr. C. They waited until after the halls were empty, they were stalking her!

DENNIS

Maybe you're right, but for right now, would you please just go to the nurse!

ALICE

All right, I just –

DENNIS

Go!

(ALICE runs out of the classroom.)

FILIZ

I couldn't breathe, they pulled it tighter, I thought --

DENNIS

It's all right, you're going to be all right –

FILIZ

I thought they were going to kill me.

DENNIS

How many of them were there?

FILIZ

What?

DENNIS

Could you tell how many people attacked you?

FILIZ

Three, four, I think.

DENNIS

Did they say anything? Could you identify their voices if you heard them again?

FILIZ

I don't know, I -- They just grabbed me, then I couldn't see anything, I didn't know what was happening!

DENNIS

Okay, okay. We're going to get you some help.

FILIZ

Why would they do this?

DENNIS

I don't know.

FILIZ

I've never hurt anybody.

DENNIS

I know.

FILIZ

I'm an American, God damn it! God damn it. *God...*

DENNIS

I know...

(DENNIS exits. Lights cross-fade as FILIZ moves downstage; she carries a bucket of small Mexican flags on sticks.)

FILIZ

Celebrate your heritage as Mexican-Americans! Here, have a flag! Irish-Americans, Italian Americans, proudly fly the flag of their native countries, let's do the same! You can be proud to be both Mexican and American! Here, take a flag!

(FILIZ exits. DEREK enters, downstage. ALICE enters, also downstage.)

DEREK

Alice...how goes the whole registration thing?

ALICE

I don't want to talk about it.

DEREK

People still not responding? Even with the posters?

ALICE

Like I said, it's not worth talking about.

DEREK

You've heard about the rally?

ALICE

What rally?

DEREK

About the flag. Protesting Ms. Barrow.

ALICE

Protesting what?

DEREK

She banned all flags from school property.

ALICE

She did that?

DEREK

You can't even wear a tee-shirt with a flag on it. She says it's inflammatory. Although I suspect it's really Colby who's behind this.

ALICE

You don't think it's a good idea, after what happened to Filiz?

DEREK

What happened to Filiz was terrible. I deplore it, absolutely. When the Mexican kids –

ALICE

Mexican-American kids –

DEREK

When they started to shove the Mexican flag in the face of the Anglo kids – myself included – I deplore that, too.

ALICE

Then banning all flags, at least for a while, is probably a good idea.

DEREK

I'm surprised at you.

ALICE

Why?

DEREK

It's your future that's at stake, just as much as mine. You ban people from bringing the American flag into their own high school... What's going to happen if the culture we know, the culture where we grew up, just disappears?

ALICE

You really look at the world that way?

DEREK

Your grandparents, your great-grandparents, they would have understood. They would have told you to defend yourself. Defend your country.

ALICE

Turns out I don't have to defend my country. My half-Mexican boyfriend loves this stupid country enough to want to join the army and fight.

DEREK

Mike? He signed up?

ALICE

Yes, he did. The asshole. So I don't think I'll be going to any marches or rallies to defend the white race, Derek. I think there's room here for everybody.

(ALICE starts to exit. She stops.)

By the way...his name is Miguel.

(ALICE exits. DEREK stands, a bit stunned. Sounds of a protest march are heard from a distance. In the darkness, images of high school students protesting are seen on the screen in the classroom. One of them shows students trailing a Confederate flag behind an old Volkswagen Beetle. Lights cross-fade as DEREK crosses upstage and DENNIS enters the classroom. They stand near the window.)

DENNIS

Do you know what's happening out there?

DEREK

No more than you do.

DENNIS

Derek, there are 150 students out there who are cutting classes.

DEREK

That's one way of looking at it.

DENNIS

How else would you suggest we view it?

DEREK

You could say that there are 150 students exercising their constitutional right to free speech.

DENNIS

They're legally obligated to be in classes, Derek. They're truants.

DEREK

Or you could say that they're part of a grand American tradition of civil disobedience.

DENNIS

Do you imagine all 150 kids out there know what civil disobedience means?

DEREK

Any time you have a popular movement, there are leaders and followers. The leaders always know more than the average Joes.

DENNIS

The ringleaders are going to be suspended.

DEREK

I'm sure the people in charge are aware of that.

DENNIS

I'm very glad to hear that.

DEREK

You don't think *I* organized this?

(DENNIS is silent)

Is that why you brought me in here? Good God. Does it occur to you that if I had organized this, there would be twice as many people out there marching? The truth is, Mr. C, I'm abiding by the terms of the experiment.

DENNIS

What experiment? What are you talking about?

DEREK

The experiment from the Willis Foundation. They wanted to put out the yeast of some ideas about our freedom in this country, and see what happened when those ideas started to ferment. Well, here you go. I put my little leaflet out there, and 150 people took the cue. They're sick and tired of watching their country sold down the river by politicians who don't have enough spine to protect what we've built in this nation.

DENNIS

You're saying you had nothing to do with this?

DEREK

I didn't organize any of this. A bunch of people just took the ball and ran with it. If you want to blame my ideas, then go ahead. I can stand up for everything I put in that leaflet. It's documented – as you well know – and it's true. But I will tell you this right now: I didn't ask a single person to go out in the streets and protest today. You can try to silence me, but *the people* – don't think you can fool them forever. You can't.

DENNIS

Derek, did you see what was at the head of that march?

DEREK

Yeah. A car.

DENNIS

A car with two students waving a Confederate flag!

DEREK

Yeah.

DENNIS

Derek – You have to realize just how divisive that is! We both know what that flag stands for!

DEREK

I know what it stands for. I'm sure you *think* you know what it stands for. I'd bet there's a pretty big gap between what I know and what you think you know.

DENNIS

Oh, please...everyone agrees about this. It's a symbol of racism and slavery.

DEREK

Not at all. Now you see, here's the essence of free speech, right here. The Confederate flag stands for a different way of looking at liberty.

DENNIS

Derek, that's not –

DEREK

It stands for the idea of federalism that the Founding Fathers had in mind when they started this country – a place where local governments – the *states* – had the real power.

DENNIS

The fact that the Confederate States of America supported the rights of slave owners doesn't bother you?

DEREK

It's not a view of property rights I would support now.

DENNIS

Would you have supported it at the time?

DEREK

Who cares? That was then, this is now.

DENNIS

You amaze me.

DEREK

I'm sorry I don't go along with the herd, Mr. C. I'm sorry I think most of your ideas about this country are dangerous fantasies.

DENNIS

You know, there are times when I can't tell whether you're lying to me, or lying to yourself. That's what makes me worry for you.

DEREK

First of all, what you just said is really, *really* offensive. Second, thanks for being worried, but I can take care of myself.

DENNIS

I'm sure you think so.

DEREK

Mr. C...Unless you want to charge me with truancy -- which would be pretty hard, since I've been in this building since 8:00 this morning -- I'm leaving. Good luck containing this little insurrection out there. I should warn you, though -- little insurrections become big insurrections. And that's something you can't ever control.

(DEREK exits. DENNIS stands perfectly still for a long moment.
DENNIS moves downstage as the lights cross-fade.)

DENNIS

They drove down the street in a convertible, streaming the confederate flag behind them. Don't talk to me about the confederate flag as a symbol of state's rights. Don't talk about it as "part of our history." That's bullshit. Does anyone imagine these kids were using that flag because they care about state's rights? Is anyone laboring under the fantasy that they care about history? They carried that flag for one reason, and one reason only: because it's a symbol of racial hatred. The white kids -- some of the white kids -- hate anyone who has the effrontery to attend their school, even though they're poorer and have skin that's a few shades darker. They don't want anyone to invade their lilly-white world. They're looking for a license to be narrow-minded bigots. It turns my stomach. But here's the great part: the car they used to wave the confederate flag? It was an old convertible, an ancient Volkswagen Beetle. It must have been thirty years old. You want to know the last place that car was manufactured? *Mexico*. If irony was water, we'd be drowning in it.

(DENNIS moves upstage and the students enter as the lights cross-fade.)

DENNIS

I've got some bad news.

DOROTHY

They're not going to allow the play to go on?

DENNIS

No. With the war... They thought that doing the play would be "unnecessarily divisive." Those are the words they used.

FILIZ

Don't they realize that *not* doing the play is going to be divisive? Do they think we're going to take this lying down?

DOROTHY

There's no point, they'll never let it go on.

FILIZ

What if we get someone else to do it?

MIGUEL

Like who?

FILIZ

Somebody in Denver, maybe. This could get some theatre there a lot of publicity.

MIGUEL

How do we –

FILIZ

We have a press conference. We make a lot of noise.

DENNIS

Listen – this is a great idea. I'll help you do it. But we can't do it on school grounds.

ALICE

Why not?

DENNIS

Their building, their rules.

ALICE

So where do we do it?

DENNIS

I'll see if we can get the Town Hall.

DEREK

Good luck. They're going to be even more cautious than the school.

ALICE

He may have a point.

DEREK

Wow, I'm actually being given credit for something? Hallelujah.

FILIZ

If not the Town Hall, then where?

DENNIS

I have an idea. Larimer County Democratic Headquarters. I'm a county committeeman, I think I can –

DEREK

If you want to be marginalized, that's definitely the way to go about it.

DENNIS

If it's the only place available –

DEREK

I'm just saying -- no one will listen if you do it there.

DOROTHY

Listen, can I say something?

(beat)

I'm all for a press conference. I hope it works. But just in case, I'd like to read something now.

DENNIS

What is it?

DOROTHY

It's the last scene in the play. Just in case it never gets done, I'd like to hear it. At least once.

DENNIS

Okay.

DOROTHY

Miguel, I want you to do Captain Silas Soule.

MIGUEL

Okay.

DOROTHY

There are two soldiers. Alice, Filiz –

ALICE

Time to bend some genders?

DOROTHY

Yeah. Mr. C, there's a narrator in this scene.

DENNIS

Okay.

DOROTHY

And for the leading role, Colonel John Chivington – that's gotta be you, Derek.

DEREK

I'm always up for doing the lead.

DOROTHY

Mr. C?

DENNIS

“On November 29, 1864, troops of the First Colorado Militia approach an Indian encampment near Sand Creek in Kiowa County, Colorado.”

DEREK

“Captain Soule!”

MIGUEL

“Sir?”

DEREK

“Tell your men to saddle up. We're going in.”

MIGUEL

“Going in to the village, sir?”

DEREK

“If you want to call that collection of tents a village, then yes, that's where we're going.”

MIGUEL

“Are we going on an inspection, sir?”

DEREK

“Why in God’s name would we do that?”

MIGUEL

“To search for any hostiles among the tribes camped there, sir.”

DEREK

“We know who the hostiles are, Captain. We’re going to attack and wipe those red bastards off the face of the earth.”

MIGUEL

“Sir, with all due respect -- ”

DEREK

“You have an objection, Captain?”

MIGUEL

“The Indians here are peaceful, sir.”

DEREK

There’s no such thing as a peaceful Indian, Captain.”

MIGUEL

“Sir, they signed the treaty of Fort Wise.”

DEREK

“They’re Cheyenne, Captain. The Cheyenne slaughtered the Hungate family, and I intend to avenge their deaths.”

MIGUEL

“The Hungates were killed by Dog Soldiers, Colonel.”

DEREK

“Are the Dog Soldiers Cheyennes, Captain, or are they not?”

MIGUEL

“Yes, sir, but -- ”

DEREK

“No buts, Captain, there’s no doubt here. The Cheyennes have killed good Americans, and we must avenge their deaths.”

MIGUEL

“*These* Cheyenne are loyal to the United States, Colonel!”

DEREK

“They say they are, my friend, but in fact -- ”

MIGUEL

“They’re flying the American flag, sir! That’s what we told them to do when they signed the treaty at Fort Wise. We said we would know they were friendly if they flew the flag!”

DEREK

“Flying the flag didn’t prevent them from killing the Hungates, Captain!”

MIGUEL

“These Cheyenne haven’t killed anyone, sir! Black Kettle is our ally, he’s kept the rest of his tribe from following the Dog Soldiers -- ”

DEREK

“Tell that to the Hungates, Captain. Tell that to the other Americans whose families have been slaughtered by the Cheyenne.”

MIGUEL

“The Dog Soldiers are renegades, they -- ”

DEREK

“Saddle up, Captain, and prepare to kill those murderers.”

MIGUEL

“I won’t do that, sir.”

DEREK

“You don’t have a choice, Captain, that’s an order.”

MIGUEL

“With all due respect, Colonel, I won’t obey that order.”

DEREK

“Do you have any idea what you’re risking, Captain?”

MIGUEL

“Do you have any idea what you’re risking, sir, if you open fire on friendly Indians who are our allies?”

DEREK

“Get out of my way! Soldier!”

FILIZ

“Sir!”

DEREK

“Prepare to attack the Indians by that creek!”

FILIZ

“Yes, sir!”

DEREK

“Kill ‘em and scalp ‘em all, big and little!”

ALICE

“Sir, what about the women?”

DEREK

“Kill ‘em!”

ALICE

“The children?”

DEREK

“Nits make lice, soldier. Kill ‘em! Kill ‘em all.”

DENNIS

“53 Indian men were killed at Sand Creek, and 110 women and children. On April 28, 2007, portions of the Bowen Ranch, near the Big Sandy Creek in Kiowa County, were officially designated as the Sand Creek Massacre National Historical Site by the National Park Service. Even George W. Bush has conceded that Sand Creek was an atrocity.”

DEREK

Oh, my God.

DOROTHY

What?

DEREK

That is just so much...I can't believe –

DOROTHY

You have a problem with it?

DEREK

I can't believe you wrote that.

DOROTHY

It's true.

DEREK

You were there?

DOROTHY

He said it. "Kill 'em, nits make lice." Eyewitnesses testified, it's on the record.

DEREK

So what if he did, by the standards of the day –

DOROTHY

You want to talk about the standards of the day? Fine! You want to know what his contemporaries said? Here it is. They did a Congressional investigation. Here's what they said: "As to Colonel Chivington, your committee can hardly find fitting terms to describe his conduct. Wearing the uniform of the United States, which should be the emblem of justice and humanity; holding the important position of commander of a military district, and therefore having the honor of the government to that extent in his keeping, he deliberately planned and executed a foul and dastardly massacre which would have disgraced the most savage among those who were the victims of his cruelty. Having full knowledge of their friendly character...he took advantage of their defenseless condition to gratify the worst passions that ever cursed the heart of man."

DEREK

Of course it was terrible. But there were Indian attacks –

DOROTHY

These weren't the Indians who did it! And he knew it!

DEREK

"Even George W. Bush conceded it was a massacre" – c'mon, now, that's --

DOROTHY

When even a tyrant and a butcher admits his country committed a grievous sin --

DEREK

That's over the line!

FILIZ

Who are you to say where the line should be drawn?

DEREK

Is that an insult?

FILIZ

It's a fact. You enjoy starting a race war.

DENNIS

All right –

FILIZ

No, Mr. C, I'm sorry, but this is way too much. They attacked me!

DEREK

I had nothing to do with that!

DENNIS

All right, all of you, stop it!

FILIZ

You hand out those lies, you incite people –

DEREK

I didn't have anything to do with –

FILIZ

I could've died! And you started it, you little worm! You started it!

DENNIS

THAT'S ENOUGH!

(beat)

We're done for today. Go home. All of you, go home.
(the students start to leave.)

Dorothy?

DOROTHY

Mr. C?

DENNIS

It's a good play. I hope we can get it done someplace.

DOROTHY

I wouldn't hold your breath, Mr. C.

(DOROTHY exits. DENNIS sits at his desk. He turns to face the American flag that hangs near the blackboard. He turns to face front and sighs. DENNIS exits; DEREK enters downstage as the lights cross-fade.)

DEREK

My classmates are sheep. They follow trends, they're slaves to fashion, they have no idea what's going on around them. The brightest kids – like the ones doing the Constitution project – are mostly content to talk. There's an awful lot of talking that goes on. This weekend, my dad and I drove down to the border in Arizona. We stood guard

DEREK (cont'd.)

with the Minutemen. Here were some people who wanted to do more than just chat. We were with a patrol that found some illegals – we had night-vision goggles, we found ‘em, stopped ‘em and held ‘em until the Immigration guys showed up. No violence, no abuse – just a clean, simple defense of our country. We had to draw our weapons, but they were pretty tame – I think they were scared shitless, actually. I doubt they knew we weren’t Immigration until the real Immigration guys showed up. It really meant something to me, being on the front line like that. It reminded me: talk is cheap. It’s useless unless it leads to action. That’s something I’m going to bear in mind from now on.

(The lights cross-fade to another part of the downstage area. MIGUEL enters. DEREK crosses to him.)

DEREK

Alice told me you enlisted.

MIGUEL

Yeah, I go to basic after we graduate.

DEREK

Congratulations.

MIGUEL

Thanks. I guess.

DEREK

A lot of people aren’t willing to do anything for their country. You put your money where your mouth is. I respect that.

MIGUEL

Yeah, well –

DEREK

Your dad works at the Shield plant, doesn’t he?

MIGUEL

Yeah, how did you –

DEREK

Does he work the morning shift?

MIGUEL

Yeah, he does.

DEREK
Has he left for work yet?

MIGUEL
Why?

DEREK
Just – has he left yet?

MIGUEL
He’s probably leaving right around now.

DEREK
Call him. Tell him to stay home today.

MIGUEL
What are you talking about? Why should he –

DEREK
Take my word on this, will you?

MIGUEL
Why? What do you know?

DEREK
It’s because you’re putting yourself on the line. Maybe we owe you a favor.

MIGUEL
We? Who?

DEREK
Will you just call him, please? Just do it.

(DEREK starts to exit)

MIGUEL
Derek, what the fuck did you – I don’t have a phone.

(DEREK hands him his cell phone)

DEREK
Make the call. Now.

(MIGUEL dials. He speaks in Spanish – “Dad, it’s me, don’t go into work today. There’s going to be trouble at the plant. Immigration, I think. I

just know, don't ask me how. Stay home, just do it, do it for me, okay? Okay?" MIGUEL hangs up. He hands the phone back to DEREK.)

MIGUEL

What did you do?

(Lights cross-fade to the classroom as MIGUEL and DEREK exit. It's still early morning – semi-dark outside, and the lights in the classroom are off. DENNIS enters the room and switches on the lights. We see FILIZ, curled up on one of the desks, asleep.)

DENNIS

Filiz? Filiz?

(FILIZ wakes, slowly.)

What are you doing here?

(FILIZ looks around, not quite sure where she is. Then she remembers.)

FILIZ

Oh. I didn't have anyplace else to go.

DENNIS

What are you talking about? Have you been here all night?

FILIZ

Ah, yeah.

DENNIS

What's going on?

FILIZ

Yesterday, just after school, Homeland Security raided the Shield plant. They took away my parents.

DENNIS

What? They what?

FILIZ

They took them away. I heard from my friends.

DENNIS

You spent the night here?

FILIZ

I was afraid to stay at home.

DENNIS

But you're a citizen, you were born here –

FILIZ

I was afraid anyway.

DENNIS

Where are your parents being held?

FILIZ

Miguel drove me to the Homeland Security office in Denver. They said they didn't know which jail they'd be put in. Apparently the jail in Larimer was already full. Looks like the Immigration people had a busy day.

DENNIS

Filiz, I...I don't know what to say.

FILIZ

I talked to some of my friends – my friends in the immigrant community. All the places I recruited people to go to the march – they got raided.

DENNIS

How do you know –

FILIZ

There were people who were legal, citizens, they saw what was happening, and there were others, people with no documents, who managed to run and get away. I talked to them last night. I talked to them all. Then I came back here.

DENNIS

How did you –

FILIZ

There was a basketball game last night. I got in and then came in here. I couldn't stay at home.

DENNIS

But --

FILIZ

My parents were gone. It wasn't home anymore. Almost all the people at the march got arrested, Mr. C. People I recruited to go. People I –

DENNIS

This isn't your fault.

FILIZ

I know that. I know that very well. I know whose fault it is.

DENNIS

What are – who?

FILIZ

He tipped off Miguel. So Miguel could warn his parents.

DENNIS

Who did?

FILIZ

Derek. He told Miguel the plant was going to get raided.

DENNIS

Derek?

FILIZ

Miguel tried to find me, but my father had already left for work.

DENNIS

You don't think Derek actually --

FILIZ

He's followed me, Mr. C. I thought it was because he had some sick crush on me. But that wasn't it. He was watching, he waited until – that sick little bastard.

DENNIS

C'mon, let's see if we can find your parents.

FILIZ

You have classes, I couldn't –

DENNIS

We'll see Ms. Barrow on the way, I think she'll understand. Let's go.

(DENNIS and FILIZ exit. Lights cross-fade as DENNIS re-enters downstage.)

DENNIS

We tried to teach them a lesson. We tried to say, look, you can't use the American flag as a symbol of intolerance. And you can't use the Mexican flag for that, either. The Anglo kids respond with outright racism. They seem proud of it. It's as if the last fifty years of American history never happened. Who taught them to be proud of their hatred?

DENNIS (cont'd.)

Sometimes, when I think what must be happening behind the doors of these suburban houses, I'm truly afraid. Maybe I'm just beating my head against a wall here.

(DENNIS crosses upstage as the lights cross-fade. DEREK enters the classroom.)

DENNIS

What did you have to do with this?

DEREK

What are you talking about?

DENNIS

You know damn well what I'm talking about.

DEREK

Mr. C, you're imagining things.

DENNIS

I'm imagining you tipped off Homeland Security about the Shield Plant.

DEREK

I have no idea who did that.

DENNIS

No idea?

DEREK

Not a clue.

DENNIS

I'd really like to know what was going through the mind of whoever did it. How they could betray someone they knew. Someone who was a classmate of theirs.

DEREK

I'll bet I could tell you what was going through their mind. They were thinking about their country.

DENNIS

They thought informing on their neighbors would make this country a better place?

DEREK

You have a strange definition of "neighbors." A neighbor is someone with whom you share things in common. Values. Heritage. Even, God forbid, *citizenship* in the same country.

DENNIS

So your next-door neighbor isn't *really* a neighbor?

DEREK

Not if they pledge allegiance to a different set of values, to a different flag.

DENNIS

Dear God in Heaven.

DEREK

I didn't know you believed in God.

DENNIS

Well, I do.

DEREK

But you've never shown even the slightest willingness to admit that He exists. Your whole philosophy –

DENNIS

You think I don't believe in God because I don't agree with your politics? *Who are you?*

DEREK

I'm a patriot, Mr. C, pure and simple. It's not such a hard notion to –

DENNIS

You really believe this? That I can't believe in God if I don't agree with you?

DEREK

You see, this is the problem. You expect me to be a moral relativist, just the way you are. It's so sad.

DENNIS

That's one thing you and I might just be able to agree on. How sad this is.

DEREK

You just don't get it.

DENNIS

Get *what?*

DEREK

Whoever called Homeland Security did it for a simple reason: to protect his country from an invasion.

DENNIS

So you give up your friends?

DEREK

I'm sure Filiz will be able to stay in this country. She's a citizen.

DENNIS

But her family!

DEREK

Sometimes, in a democracy, sacrifices have to be made.

DENNIS

What the hell do you know about sacrifice?

DEREK

You'd better be careful, Mr. C –

DENNIS

You wouldn't know what a sacrifice was if one walked up and bit your ass.

DEREK

You are on such thin ice at this moment --

DENNIS

I think you're a cowardly, sniveling little liar.

DEREK

I don't deserve that. I didn't do anything.

DENNIS

Tell that to Filiz and her family.

DEREK

Her family's in a holding cell, awaiting deportation back to Tijuana, or whatever part of Mexico they hail from.

DENNIS

You are truly a worm. And I hope you rot in hell, you little shit.

(DEREK pulls a small tape recorder out of his pocket.)

DEREK

And I hope you have your apology prepared for when I play the tape of this conversation for the school board.

DENNIS

You know something? There are times when you have to be willing to tell the truth at any price.

DEREK

And that's probably the one thing we actually do agree on, Mr. C.

(DEREK exits. DENNIS sits at his desk. DENNIS stands and moves to the blackboard. Lights change as he writes in chalk: "I have a dream that one day, my children will be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character – M.L. King." Lights change again as DENNIS moves back to his desk, packing books into a box. FILIZ enters.)

FILIZ

I wanted to hand this in.

DENNIS

You're going with your parents?

FILIZ

That's still, I don't know, undecided. I want to go back with my parents. They want me to stay here. It's up in the air, I guess.

DENNIS

I wish I could say something. Some words that would mean something.

FILIZ

Nah, there's nothing. It's really funny. I bitched about this school, I was lazy about my work –

DENNIS

You weren't ever lazy.

FILIZ

I could have done more. I complained all the time, I wasted too much time doing that. But you know, I really loved it here. I thought, this is a place where I can make a start.

DENNIS

You did.

FILIZ

Don't, okay? I don't think I can listen to anything uplifting right now. I don't think there's anything upbeat left to say.

DENNIS

You're right. I'm sorry.

FILIZ

It wasn't your fault.

DENNIS

I got the grant from the Willis Foundation – I wrote the application for it. I was up for tenure this year, I thought it would be the last piece in the puzzle. Didn't quite work out that way.

FILIZ

They're not giving you tenure?

DENNIS

I'm out. As of now. They're having a sub come in for the last week of classes.

FILIZ

They can't do that! You're a great teacher.

DENNIS

It's generous of you to say that, given what's happened.

FILIZ

You'll find something else.

DENNIS

Not in Colorado. I'm a bit too much of a hot potato here. I finally convinced my girlfriend to move here from Ohio. Now...

FILIZ

It'll work out.

DENNIS

I thought you weren't in the mood for anything upbeat.

FILIZ

You're right. Life sucks.

(They laugh, briefly)

DENNIS

Stay here, if you can. It's where you belong. You're an American.

FILIZ

That's what I used to think. My mother, she was pregnant with me when my parents came across the border. They almost died of heat stroke in the desert when they crossed over the Rio Grande. She wanted me to be born here. Both of them, they always wanted me to be an American. They worked so hard to act like Americans, I almost forgot they weren't. I was naïve. But I'm starting to think I might be more at home on the other side of the river. I'll see you, Mr. C.

DENNIS

Bye.

(As FILIZ starts to exit, DEREK enters.)

FILIZ (to DEREK, in Spanish)

What sewer have you lived in all your life that you could treat other people so badly? What snake did your mother mate with to beget you? I hope she dies a horrible death, and the snake, your father, eats her guts in Hell from now until the end of time. I hope you spend eternity in Hell, listening to her scream in pain.

(FILIZ exits.)

DEREK

I have a feeling that wasn't a compliment.

DENNIS

She knows what you did. Everyone knows. What are you doing here?

DEREK

I came to give you my paper.

DENNIS

You know damn well I've been fired. You're always so well-informed, Derek, always so *connected*.

DEREK

Knowledge is power.

DENNIS

And you're good at knowing just when to drop a cliché into the conversation. You have all the white boy skills, don't you?

DEREK

Looks like you could've used a few more of those skills yourself, Mr. C.

DENNIS

You see, that's the difference between you and the robber barons, all the other old guard right-wing you probably think of as your mentors. At least they knew how unseemly it is to gloat when you win.

DEREK

I do have my rough edges. But they haven't stopped me. At least the folks at the Liberty Foundation don't think so.

DENNIS

I really don't care what –

DEREK

They've given me a full scholarship for college. A free ride for four years, anywhere I want.

DENNIS

I'm sure Bob Jones University will welcome you with open arms.

DEREK

They have been in touch, but I'm aiming for Cornell instead. Or maybe Williams.

DENNIS

I doubt you'll be very happy there. That may be my only consolation, Derek.

DEREK

Oh, but you're wrong. I think I'll love it there. More liberal myths to bust. I'm looking forward to it.

DENNIS

I think you're more interested in destroying people than busting myths.

DEREK

Well, it *is* a Darwinian world out there.

DENNIS

Maybe I should let the Liberty Foundation know you believe in evolution. It may ruin your reputation.

DEREK

I don't think the word of a disgraced former teacher can hurt me at this point.

DENNIS

Can I ask you something?

DEREK

In the spirit of intellectual inquiry you always worked so hard to foster?

DENNIS

Just as one person to another.

DEREK

Go ahead.

DENNIS

Have you ever had a friend?

DEREK

Of course I have.

DENNIS

Really? Someone who knew the things you were afraid of? Someone you could actually be vulnerable with?

DEREK

What difference does it make?

DENNIS

It's the least Christian thing I've ever said, but I hope someday, you understand what difference.

(DENNIS picks up the box with his books and belongings and exits. DEREK moves to the door of the classroom and watches DENNIS walk down the hall. DEREK looks at the blackboard and reads the quote from Martin Luther King. He erases it and writes: "Extremism in the defence of liberty is no vice -- Barry Goldwater." Lights fade to black.)

CURTAIN