

THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT

By Mark Fauser and Brent Briscoe

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DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to
Charles Nelson Reilly and Burt Reynolds

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The Right to Remain Silent achieved considerable prestige before being published. The work was well received when it was produced in Florida at the Burt Reynolds Institute for Theatre Training and in Los Angeles at the Tamarind Theatre. It then quickly went on to become a Showtime original movie and earned a cable Ace award.

STORY OF THE PLAY

The Right to Remain Silent takes place during a graveyard shift in a big city police booking room where alleged criminals' mug shots are taken by two cops, a hardened veteran and a rookie on her first night. The "criminals" include an African-American graduate student who infiltrated a meeting of the Klan; a drunken driver who caused a fatal accident; a pistol-packing pizza delivery woman; a husband who helped his dying wife commit suicide; a raving husband obsessed with the talk show host who has influenced his newly-liberated wife; a young schoolteacher violently furious with her AIDS infection; a cross-dresser arrested for shoplifting; and a homeless man whose profound concern for humanity is movingly displaced from his own sense of reality. Pathetically, tragically and sometimes comically, they reveal their lives and what led them to be charged with a crime. Each actor gets an opportunity in the spotlight delivering a 5 to 10 minute monologue. The audience, taking the role of the mug shot photographer, is presented an ingenious way to gauge their own insights.

CAST/SCENE BREAKDOWN

- REILLY - Rookie cop spending her first night in the booking room.
- BOSCOE - Veteran cop willing to share his advice on work and donuts with a rookie.
- "DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COLOR" - An idealistic young man who proves you can't always judge a person by the sheet he wears.
- "A B Z" - Person who learns the ABCs of driving while intoxicated.
- "AND HERE'S YOUR CHANGE" - Delivery Guy/Girl defends self in a mugging, killing an assailant.
- "FOLLOWING PHIL" - Man resents losing the wife he knew to talk-show psychology.
- "TILL DEATH DO US PART" - Man helps release his wife from her sickness and pain.
- "BLUE LIGHT SPECIAL" - Kmart shopper throws some punches over the last blouse on sale.
- "PASSIONATE PLEAS" - Two women on opposite sides of a hot issue share remarkably similar thoughts.
- "KOBIAASHI MURU" - A "trekkie" brings the peace of the 23rd century to the 20th—almost.
- "UNFINISHED PLANK" - A man has a hard time accepting and expressing the beauty he sees in himself.
- "AMERICA'S MOST WANTED" - An actor finds himself mistaken for the criminal he almost portrayed on a "real-crime" television show.
- "IRON CLAW" - Two sibling rebel rockers show what they really care about behind their facade.
- "VISUAL AIDS" - An educator goes to great lengths to dispel ignorance about herself.
- "I SCREAM FOR ICE CREAM" - The ice cream man avenges the underdog against the bully in a somewhat frightening way.
- "FRIGIDAIRE OBSTETRICS" - Street person cleans up his little corner of the world, but gets angry when it's messed up.

PROPS

Reilly: watch, lunch bag with carrot, bag of donuts.

Norman: picture of his wife.

Boscoe: box of donuts.

Carpenter: Kleenex, false eyelashes, wig, earrings, heels.

Teacher: gauze.

Captain Kirk: wallet.

Ice Cream Man: wrist and ankle shackles.

Street Person: bottle of lotion, whisk broom.

AUTHORS' NOTES

The Right to Remain Silent has proven to have many versatile production qualities to it. It has been performed with as many as 18 actors and with as few as 5 actors playing several roles. It has been done with an elaborate set and with no set at all. Most of the roles can and have been played by either gender. Since it's a theatrical piece, in our minds, the adage is true, "less is more."

ACT I

(Opening MUSIC, BLACKOUT.)

VOICE OVER: You have the right to remain silent and not answer any questions. Any statement you make must be freely and voluntarily given. You have the right to the presence of a lawyer of your own choice before you make any statement or during any questioning. If you cannot afford a lawyer you are entitled to have the presence of a court appointed lawyer before you make any statement or during any questioning. If at any time during the interview you do not wish to answer any questions, you are privileged to remain silent.

“DON’T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER”

(AT RISE: A police station. A HOODED MAN in a Ku Klux Klan outfit is ready to get his mug shot taken. He “addresses” the AUDIENCE/POLICE OFFICER who quietly sits out in the very center back of the house.)

HOODED MAN: Death to all the wetbacks, dagos, kikes, dykes, chinks, spics, spades, gooks, queers, camel jockeys, jungle bunnies, butt pirates, bean eaters. Then you got your Jew boys, slant eyes, wops, cops, homos, wiener tasters, moon crickets, hooked-nose heebies, moolies, porch monkeys; you got your Catholics, krauts, goo-guzzlers, bush bumpers, fudge packers, dirt road moon lighters, muff divers, pollocks, yips, sand people, yard apes, yellow bellies; don’t forget your cornholers, ragheads, carpet munchers, lawn jockeys, ruskies, boogie lips, nacho-de-la-spikos, oreos, sodomizers, half-breeds, zebras, Aunt Jemimas, the faggity French, white race traitors and worst of all ... those lazy ass, welfare-living-off-the-white-man NIGGERS! *(HE pulls the hood off to reveal he is a black man.)* Whoooooo! These people are CRAZY!! I know. I know what you’re thinking.

HOODED MAN: (*Cont'd.*) What's wrong with this picture? Believe me, I'm just as confused as you are. Imagine me trying to explain this. Me, the friendly neighborhood black Mexican ... Ree Ree Hernandez Ware Jackson the III ... arrested at a Ku Klux Klan march. Wow, I didn't really believe things would get that violent, but I guess I underestimated the explosive possibilities of hate. When you squeeze that much hatred into one city block there's no way to prevent an incident. You see, I'm a graduate student enrolled at Harvard going for my doctorate in psychology, and I wanted to see what made these people tick. So I had this brilliant idea that I would be a visionary. Think about it. What a great thesis I can write. Figure this whole thing out and change the world. So, I went undercover ... literally. I infiltrated the Klan.

Heck, I made my own costume, for a lack of a better term, and started attending their rallies. I got as close as I could without having to take off the sheet. A sheet. For \$12.95 at Sears I became a card-carrying member of the invisible empire.

But you know what's funny? THEY LOVE ME! The imperial Wizard's daughter is a beautiful blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl who can't keep her hands off my black ass. She actually asked me to go to the annual "Send Them Back to Africa" dance. She said, "We could do such fun things like enter the watermelon seed spitting contest ... or play pin the tail on the chicken-eatin' spear chucker." Sick son of bitches. Of course, I'd have to take the mask off, so I took a rain check. And on top of all that ... her father loves me, too. He told me just yesterday that he thought I'd make an excellent Grand Dragon. Can you believe that? A Grand Dragon! What a knucklehead. You see, they only know me by my insides so they accepted me. What's ironic is that ... well, I'll just finish my story.

So, anyway I was at the rally ... way back in the back ... minding my own business. With all these rednecks saying the most vile and hateful things I've ever heard. You've got this one guy on the right waving the confederate flag.

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HOODED MAN: *(Cont'd.)* I got this guy on the left, saying, "Jesus told me to kill all the chocolate drops." And you listen to this and you're completely shocked. I felt like I was in a real life Jerry Springer episode. And then through all this chaos I see these three black guys come over to me and say, "You dumb ass honkey son of a bitch," and they go booyah! They punched me and knocked me to the ground and I'm like "Hey man, what are you doing? I'm one of you! Hey Pookey Pookey, what are you doing? It's me Ree Ree!" You see, they too thought I was something I wasn't. They knocked me to the ground for the way I was dressed and for what the people around me were saying. Hey, don't get me wrong, I don't like the Klan. In fact, I think most of them are a bunch of Jethro Bodeans. Rrrrrrr.

But like them or not ... and this is the hard part I had to defend their inalienable right to freedom of speech. I guess hate can work both ways if we don't take the time to read people through. Wow! I have to write that down. Won't this make a great thesis? I'll bet I get an A. You know, when we all get together there is no hate.

(FLASH simulating a mug shot. HE exits.)

(REILLY frantically enters looking at her watch. She ends up on the line where people get their mug shots taken. She notices it, looks up and pauses as she steps off. She has a lunch bag in her hand.)

BOSCOE: *(Offstage.)* You're late, rookie. What's your name?

REILLY: Reilly, sir. Ah, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but my shift doesn't start for another five minutes. Boy, it's kind of weird being on this side of the camera.

(BOSCOE enters from the back of the house.)

BOSCOE: Where's the donuts?

REILLY: What?

BOSCOE: The donuts. *(HE takes the sack.)* What is this?
(HE pulls out a large carrot.)

End of Freeview

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