

STUDY GUIDE

GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE POTUS

OR, BEHIND EVERY
GREAT DUMBASS
ARE SEVEN WOMEN
TRYING TO KEEP
HIM ALIVE



LOS ANGELES PREMIERE
POTUS
OR, BEHIND EVERY GREAT DUMBASS ARE
SEVEN WOMEN TRYING TO KEEP HIM ALIVE
01.17–02.18.2024
GIL CATES THEATER

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Mark J. Chaitin, Brian Dunning, Bella Luna

STUDY GUIDE COMPILED BY
Brian Allman

This publication is to be used for educational purposes only.

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ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

POTUS

OR, BEHIND EVERY GREAT DUMBASS ARE SEVEN WOMEN TRYING TO KEEP HIM ALIVE

WRITTEN BY
SELINA FILLINGER

DIRECTED BY
JENNIFER CHAMBERS

SET & VIDEO DESIGNER
BRETT J. BANAKIS

COSTUME DESIGNER
SAMANTHA C. JONES

LIGHTING DESIGNER
ELIZABETH HARPER

ORIGINAL MUSIC & SOUND DESIGN BY
LINDSAY JONES

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
EMILY MOLER

FIGHT DIRECTOR
JULIE OUELLETTE

INTIMACY DIRECTOR
AMANDA ROSE VILLARREAL

DRAMATURG
OLIVIA O'CONNOR

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER
DARLENE MIYAKAWA

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
COLLEEN DANAHER

CASTING DIRECTOR
PHYLLIS SCHURINGA, CSA

CAST



**ITO
AGHAYERE**
CHRIS



**ALEXANDRA
BILLINGS**
MARGARET



**LAUREN
BLUMENFELD**
STEPHANIE



**SHANNON
COCHRAN**
HARRIET



**CELESTE
DEN**
JEAN



**JANE
LEVY**
DUSTY



**DEIRDRE
LOVEJOY**
BERNADETTE

SYNOPSIS

A derogatory comment, a summit gone awry, an anal abscess—it's a bad day at the White House. When the President unwittingly spins a PR nightmare into a global crisis, it inevitably falls on the seven women he relies on most to clean up the mess. Take a raucous romp through the halls of the West Wing in a riotous and irreverent farce about the men who hold the power vs. the women who get the job done.

RUNNING TIME 1 hour and 40 minutes, including one intermission.

PRODUCTION NOTES Contains herbal cigarette smoke, theatrical haze, strobe lighting effects, staged action in aisles, and profanity.

ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES



SELINA FILLINGER Playwright (she/her)

Selina Fillinger is an Oregon-based writer and performer. Her feminist farce, *POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive*, garnered three Tony nominations and made Fillinger, at 28, one of the youngest female playwrights ever produced on Broadway. Other plays include *Baby*, *Under the Sill*, *The Collapse*, *Something Clean*, *Faceless*, and *The Armor Plays: Cinched/Strapped*. Her work has been developed at Roundabout Theatre Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Old Globe, and Alley Theatre, among others. She is currently commissioned at Roundabout and South Coast Repertory. She has developed TV with AMC, Freeform, Hunting Lane, and Hulu, and a feature with Chernin/Netflix. She wrote for the third season of Apple TV+'s *The Morning Show*. Fillinger was named to the 2024 *Forbes* 30 Under 30 list for Hollywood/Entertainment.



JENNIFER CHAMBERS Director (she/her)

Jennifer is a Los Angeles based director. She developed and directed the world premiere of *The Cake* by Bekah Brunstetter at Echo Theater Company with subsequent productions at Geffen Playhouse and Barrington Stage Company, *The Enigmatist* by David Kwong (Geffen Playhouse, The Kennedy Center), *If I Forget* by Steven Levenson (Barrington Stage Company), *A Kid Like Jake* by Daniel Pearl (IAMA Theatre Company), *The Feast* by Deborah Stein (CalArts), Sheila Callaghan's *Bed* (Echo Theater Company), Jessica Goldberg's *Better* (Echo Theater Company), the world premiere of Stephen Belber's *The Muscles in Our Toes* (El Portal Forum Theatre), *The Pain and the Itch* by Bruce Norris (Zephyr Theatre), *Playdates* by Sam Wolfson (Theatre Asylum, Elephant Theatre Company), and the world premiere of *Complete* by Andrea Kuchlewska. She has worked with acclaimed playwrights Paula Vogel and Bess Wohl and has directed workshops and readings for South Coast Repertory, The Old Globe, Geffen Playhouse, Center Theatre Group, and McCarter Theatre Center. She was associate artistic director at the Echo Theater Company and ran the playwrights lab for 3 years. She is a proud member of the new class of The Kilroys, an LA/NY based collective of playwrights, directors, and producers who fight to achieve equal representation on our American stages and gender balance in the American Theater. She is the co-founder of Girl Crush Films. www.jenniferchambers.com

NOTE FROM PLAYWRIGHT SELINA FILLINGER



PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH

Selina Fillinger during rehearsals for *POTUS*.

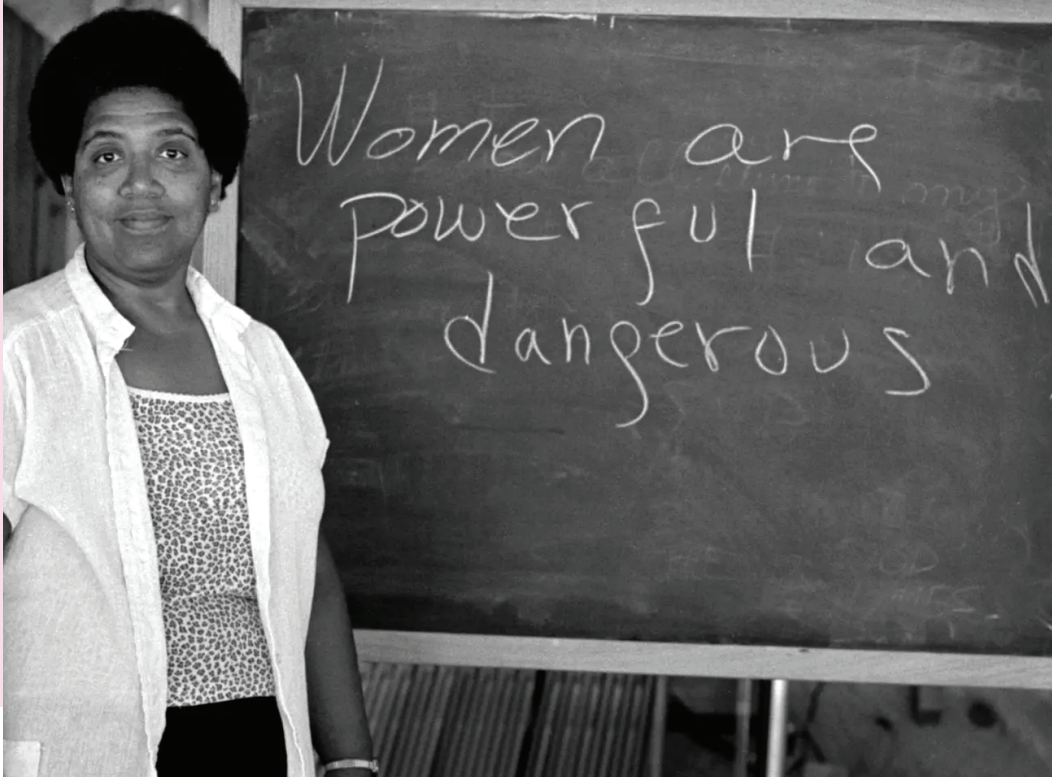
In 2016, the soon-to-be 45th President of the United States was heard bragging about grabbing women by their genitals. I, in turn, sat down to write a farce. I wrote the first act in two weeks. The second act took me a year. After Trump was elected and the data revealed how many white women had voted for him, what began as a screed coalesced into a contemplation on culpability: the ways in which we are complicit in our own subjugation and the subjugation of others. Many regional theatres felt that my crass play about femme rage was too provocative for their audiences, and it sat dormant for several years. But in 2022, well into Biden's first term, *POTUS* premiered on Broadway.

Not long after we opened, Justice Alito's draft opinion foretelling the end of *Roe v. Wade* was leaked to the press. Suddenly, I was inundated with people telling me my play was "newly relevant." I had to fight the urge to scream in response. The erosion of bodily autonomy was neither new nor unpredictable. Countless poor women, queer people, trans people, and women of color were already

facing and fighting for healthcare long before the Supreme Court ruling. Much has changed, domestically and globally, in the year since the Broadway production, but I continue to find myself in the same conversation: a political crisis ensues, a headline emerges, an election looms, and suddenly people hear an old line in a new light. "It hits differently!" they tell me, shaking their heads, as if the lines I wrote six years ago about white patriarchal governance were mere shots in the dark.

People love to say that we are living through unprecedented times. Unprecedented, perhaps—but surprising? Scientists and historians and artists have been telling us where things might lead for a very long time. I think it's time that we stop being surprised. We cannot keep navigating our present crises with the well-worn methods that got us here. Unprecedented times require unprecedented courage. I started working on *POTUS* when I was a very scared, very sad 23-year-old woman who needed to laugh. I wrote this play to give myself joy and catharsis and courage. I hope it offers you the same.

WHAT ARE THE FOUR WAVES OF FEMINISM?



The history of established feminist movements in the United States roughly breaks down into four different time periods.

Since the mid-19th century, organized feminist movements in the United States have called for greater political, economic and cultural freedom and equality for women. Yet not all of these movements have pursued the same specific goals, taken the same approaches to activism or included the same groups of women in their rallying cry. Because of these generational differences, it's common to hear feminism divided into four distinct waves, each roughly corresponding to a different time period.

This concept of the "waves of feminism" first surfaced in the late 1960s as a way of differentiating the emerging women's movement at the time from the earlier movement for women's rights that originated in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention. At the same time, the idea of a "second wave" also linked the movement to those earlier activists in a long, worthy struggle for women's rights.

Critics of the "wave" concept argue that it oversimplifies a more complicated history by suggesting that only one distinct type of feminism exists at any one time in history. In reality, each movement includes smaller, overlapping sub-groups, which are often at odds with each other. While the wave concept is certainly imperfect, it remains a helpful tool in outlining and understanding the tumultuous history of feminism in the United States, from its origins at Seneca Falls into the social media-fueled activism of the #MeToo era.



FIRST WAVE: 1848-1920

The first organized movement aimed at gaining rights for American women effectively began in July 1848, with the convention organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott at Seneca Falls, New York. Attendees signed the Declaration of Sentiments, which affirmed women's equality with men, and passed a dozen resolutions calling for various specific rights, including the right to vote.

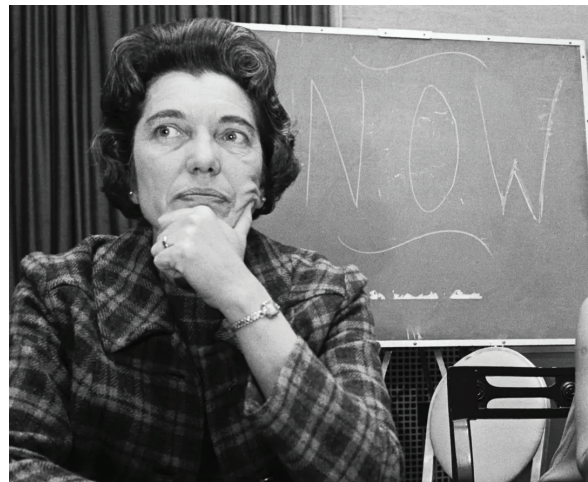
Although the early women's rights movement was linked to abolitionism, passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870 angered some women's rights leaders who resented Black men being granted suffrage before white women. Similarly, the women's suffrage movement also largely marginalized or excluded Black feminists like Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells. Though ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 fulfilled the principal goal of feminism's first wave—guaranteeing white women the right to vote—Black women and other women of color faced continued obstacles until passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

SECOND WAVE: 1963-1980s

In 1963, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, which argued that women were chafing against the confines of their roles as wives and mothers. The book was a massive success, selling 3 million copies in three years and launching what became known as the second wave of feminism. Inspired by the civil rights movement and protests against the Vietnam War, second-wave feminists called for a reevaluation of traditional gender roles in society and an end to sexist discrimination.

Feminism—or “women's liberation”—gained strength as a political force in the 1970s, as Friedan, Gloria Steinem and Bella Abzug founded the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971. High points of the second wave included passage of the Equal Pay Act and the landmark Supreme Court decisions in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965) and *Roe v. Wade* (1973) related to reproductive freedom. But while Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972, a conservative backlash ensured it fell short of the number of states needed for ratification.

Like the suffrage movement, second-wave feminism drew criticism for centering privileged white women, and some Black women formed their own feminist organizations, including the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO). Despite its achievements, the women's liberation movement had begun to lose momentum by 1980, when conservative forces swept Ronald Reagan to the White House.





THIRD WAVE: 1990s

While the advances of second-wave feminism had undoubtedly achieved more equality and rights for women, the movement that emerged in the early 1990s focused on tackling problems that still existed, including sexual harassment in the workplace and a shortage of women in positions of power. Rebecca Walker, the mixed-race daughter of second-wave leader Alice Walker, announced the arrival of feminism's "third wave" in 1992, while watching Anita Hill testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee about her accusations of sexual harassment against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. That same year, dubbed the "Year of the Woman," saw an unprecedented number of women elected to Congress.

Embracing the spirit of rebellion instead of reform, third-wave feminists encouraged women to express their sexuality and individuality. Many embraced a more traditionally feminine style of dress and grooming, and even rejected the term "feminist" as a way of distancing themselves from their second-wave predecessors. "Riot grrl" groups like Bikini Kill, Bratmobile and Heavens to Betsy brought their brand of feminism into pop music, including songs that addressed issues of sexism, patriarchy, abuse, racism and rape.

Third wave feminism also sought to be more inclusive when it came to race and gender. The work of scholar and theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw on the concept of "intersectionality," or how types of oppression (based on race, class, gender, etc.) can overlap, was particularly influential in this area. Third-wave feminists also drew on the work of gender theorist Judith Butler, including support for trans rights in this type of intersectional feminism.

FOURTH WAVE: PRESENT DAY

Though fourth wave feminism is relatively difficult to define—as some people argue it's simply a continuation of the third wave—the emergence of the Internet has certainly led to a new brand of social media-fueled activism. Launched by Tarna Burke in 2007, the #MeToo movement took off in 2017 in the wake of revelations about the sexual misconduct of influential film producer Harvey Weinstein.

In addition to holding powerful men accountable for their actions, fourth-wave feminists are turning their attention to the systems that allow such misconduct to occur. Like their predecessors in the feminist cause, they also continue to grapple with the concept of intersectionality, and how the movement can be inclusive and representative regardless of sexuality, race, class and gender.



SOURCE

What are the Four Waves of Feminism? by Sarah Pruitt on History.com. Read the full story at www.history.com/news/feminism-four-waves.

GOALS OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT— WHAT DID FEMINISTS WANT?



IMAGE COURTESY ISTOCK.COM/HALFPOINT

Feminism changed women’s lives and created new worlds of possibilities for education, empowerment, working women, feminist art, and feminist theory. For some, the goals of the feminist movement were simple: let women have freedom, equal opportunity, and control over their lives. For others, though, the goals were more abstract or complex.

Scholars and historians often divide the feminist movement into three “waves.” First-wave feminism, rooted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is closely related to the women’s suffrage movement, as it focused primarily on legal inequalities. In contrast, second-wave feminism was mainly active in the 1960s and 70s and focused on inequalities embedded in social norms more than laws. Here are some specific feminist movement goals from the “second wave” of feminism.

RETHINKING SOCIETY WITH FEMINIST THEORY

This was accomplished by, among other disciplines, women’s studies, feminist literary criticism, gynocriticism, socialist feminism, and the feminist art movement. Looking through a feminist lens at history, politics, culture, and economics, feminists developed insights into

just about every intellectual discipline. To this day, the fields of women’s studies and gender studies are major presences in academia and in social criticism.

ABORTION RIGHTS

The call for “abortion on demand” is often misunderstood. Leaders of the women’s liberation movement were clear that women should have reproductive freedom and safe access to legal abortion, making the choice for their reproductive status without interference by the state or paternalistic medical professionals. Second-wave feminism led to the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, which legalized abortion in most circumstances.

DE-SEXING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Feminists helped spark debate over assumptions embedded in the English language that reflect the notion of a male-dominated patriarchal society. Language was often centered around males, assuming that humanity was male and women were exceptions. Use neutral pronouns? Identify words with gender bias? Invent new words? Many solutions were tried, and the debate continues into the 21st century.

EDUCATION

Many women went to college and worked professionally in the early 20th century, but the mid-20th century ideal of the middle-class suburban housewife and the nuclear family downplayed the importance of women's education. Feminists knew that girls and women must be encouraged to seek an education, and not just as "something to fall back on," if they are to become, and be seen as, "fully" equal. And within education, access by women to all programs, including sports programs, was a major goal. In 1972, Title IX forbade gender discrimination in education-related programs that received federal funding (such as school athletic programs).

EQUALITY LEGISLATION

Feminists worked for the Equal Rights Amendment, the Equal Pay Act, the addition of sex discrimination to the Civil Rights Act, and other laws that would guarantee equality. Feminists advocated for a variety of laws and interpretations of existing laws to remove impediments to women's professional and economic achievements, or full exercise of citizenship rights. Feminists questioned the long tradition of "protective legislation" for women, which often sidelined women from being hired, promoted, or treated fairly.

PROMOTING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The League of Women Voters, which has existed since just after women won the vote, has supported educating women (and men) in informed voting and worked to promote women as candidates. In the 1960s and 1970s, other organizations were created and the league extended its mission to promote even more participation in the political process by women including by recruiting, training, and financially supporting women candidates.

RETHINKING WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE HOME

Although not all feminists called for collective mothering or went so far as to urge "seizing the means of reproduction," as Shulamith Firestone wrote in "The Dialectic of Sex," it was clear that women should not have to bear the sole responsibility for raising children. Roles also included who does the housework. Often, full-time working wives did the majority of housework, and various individuals and theorists proposed ways of changing the proportion of who did which household chores, and who held responsibility for those chores as well.

An essay from the first issue of *Ms. Magazine*, called "I Want a Wife," did not mean that every woman literally wanted a wife. It *did* suggest that any adult would love to have someone to play the "housewife" role as it had been defined: the caretaker and the one who runs things behind-the-scenes.

And while feminism re-examined the maternal role expected of women, feminism also worked to support women when they were the primary caretaker of children or the primary custodial parent. Feminists worked for family leave, employment rights through pregnancy and childbirth including covering pregnancy and newborn medical expenses through health insurance, child care, and reform in marriage and divorce laws.

POPULAR CULTURE

Feminists critiqued the presence (or nonpresence) of women in popular culture, and popular culture expanded the roles which women held. Television shows gradually added women in more central and less stereotyped roles, including some shows featuring single women who wanted more than just to "find a man." Movies also expanded roles, and female-driven comics saw a resurgence and widened audience, with "Wonder Woman" leading the way. Traditional women's magazines fell under critique, with the result of both some change in how women were depicted there and specialty magazines like *Working Woman* and *Ms. Magazine* created to meet the new market demands—and to reshape the market.

EXPANDING THE VOICE OF WOMEN

Women had often been shut out of unions or relegated to a ladies auxiliary through much of the 20th century. As the feminist movement gained momentum, pressure on the union movement to represent more jobs that were "pink collar" jobs (mostly held by women) increased. Organizations like Women Employed were created for representing women in offices where unions were not strong. And the Coalition of Labor Union Women was created to help women in leadership roles within unions develop solidarity and support in getting the union movement to be more inclusive of women, both among those represented, and in leadership.

SOURCE

Goals of the Feminist Movement by Linda Napikoski on ThoughtCo.com. Read the full story at www.thoughtco.com/goals-of-the-feminist-movement-3528961.

WHAT IS RANKED CHOICE VOTING?



PHOTO COURTESY PIXABAY.COM

Ranked-choice voting is an electoral system that allows people to vote for multiple candidates, in order of preference. Instead of just choosing who you want to win, you fill out the ballot saying who is your first choice, second choice, or third choice (or more as needed) for each position.

The candidate with the majority (more than 50%) of first-choice votes wins outright. If no candidate gets a majority of first-choice votes, then it triggers a new counting process. The candidate who did the worst is eliminated, and that candidate’s voters’ ballots are redistributed to their second-choice pick. In other words, if you ranked a losing candidate as your first choice, and the candidate is eliminated, then your vote still counts: it just moves to your second-choice candidate. That process continues until there is a candidate who has the majority of votes.

In comparison, the U.S. federal government and most American states and cities currently use what’s known as the plurality system: the candidate with the highest number of votes wins—period. It doesn’t matter whether that candidate earned the majority of the vote.

In a ranked-choice voting system, it works differently. The winning candidate almost always ends up with a majority of votes—even if some portion of the electorate selected him or her as a second or third choice.

In a traditional voting system, voters select just one candidate. With ranked-choice voting, they rank candidates in order of preference.

Traditional ballot

Voters select their favorite candidate.

Candidates	Choose one
● Alice Green	●
● Bob Orange	○
● Carol Lavender	○

Ranked-choice ballot

Voters rank candidates from most to least favorite.

Candidates	Choices		
	1st	2nd	3rd
● Alice Green	●	○	○
● Bob Orange	○	○	●
● Carol Lavender	○	●	○

The bronze statue above portrays Dame Milicent Fawcett at the age of 50 when she became president of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). The figure holds a banner reading COURAGE CALLS TO COURAGE EVERYWHERE, an extract from a speech Fawcett gave in 1920. (Courtesy of The Guardian.)

SOURCES

New York City Voters Just Adopted Ranked-Choice Voting in Elections. Here’s How It Works by Purna Kambhampaty on Time.com (www.time.com/5718941/ranked-choice-voting)

How Ranked-Choice Voting Could Change the Way Democracy Works by Harry Stevens on WashingtonPost.com (www.washingtonpost.com/politics/interactive/2021/ranked-choice-voting-guide)

THE BILL OF RIGHTS EXERCISE



Over the past 50 years, the erosion of certain provisions within the Bill of Rights has raised concerns about the robustness of constitutional protections in the United States. One notable area of contention involves the Fourth Amendment, which guards against unreasonable searches and seizures. Advances in technology, such as widespread surveillance and data collection, have prompted debates over the extent to which individuals' privacy rights are compromised. Additionally, challenges to the First Amendment's guarantees of free speech and assembly have emerged, with debates surrounding issues like censorship, online expression, and restrictions on protests.

These dynamics underscore the ongoing tension between evolving societal needs and the preservation of fundamental rights, highlighting the need for vigilant scrutiny and public discourse to ensure the enduring strength of the Bill of Rights

Read the full text of the United States Bill of Rights at:
www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights/what-does-it-say.

ACTIVITY

You need to rebuild society after its inevitable collapse. Come up with 10 Amendments to a new Constitution. Consider:

- How will you word each Amendment to guarantee it isn't misinterpreted?
- What protections against the government will you include?
- Knowing what you know, what rights will you give the people?
- Will you be utilizing any of the original Bill of Rights? Which? And, why?

What is the name of your new country? _____

THE NEW BILL OF RIGHTS

Amendment I: _____

Amendment II: _____

Amendment III: _____

Amendment IV: _____

Amendment V: _____

Amendment VI: _____

Amendment VII: _____

Amendment VIII: _____

Amendment IX: _____

Amendment X: _____

GET LIT PLAYERS

This season, Geffen Playhouse Education & Community Engagement has partnered with the Los Angeles-based nonprofit Get Lit. Get Lit ignites student engagement, literacy, and young voices around the globe using the power of Spoken Word, technology, and community.



Every Study Guide this season will spotlight written response pieces to Geffen Playhouse Gil Cates Theater productions, crafted by students enrolled in Get Lit Players literacy programs. Get Lit receives complimentary tickets to all Geffen Playhouse Gil Cates Theater productions as part of our Lights Up & Access Community Engagement programs.

The next Get Lit written response, for Selina Fillinger's *Potus: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive* will be shared in the Study Guide for *Fat Ham* in March 2024.

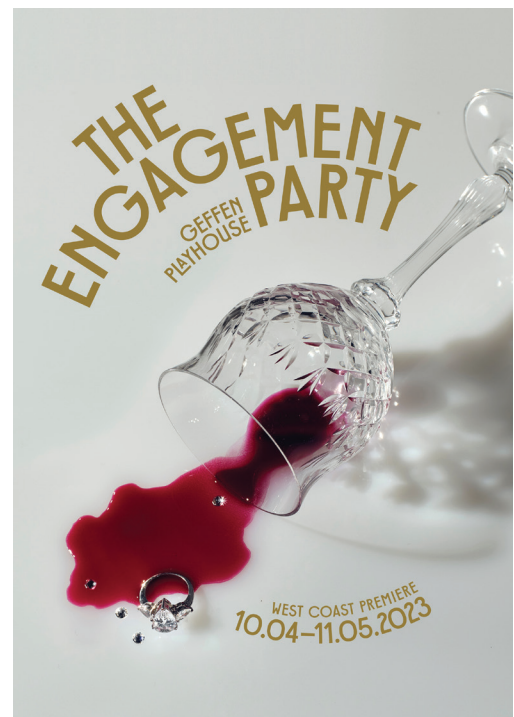


GABBY/LEX WONG (they/any) is a junior from Mark Keppel High School, a poet for Get Lit: Words Ignite, and co-founder of 501(c)(3) pending nonprofit, Therapicasso. They were featured on *PBS NewsHour* for their work with Therapicasso. During their time with Get Lit, they've performed poetry at various institutions (incl. UCLA, Dynasty Typewriter, etc.), won first place for two years consecutively at the Get Lit Classic Slam, and were chosen to perform the opening group centerpiece at the 2023 Get Lit Gala. Throughout their pursuits, their passion lies in using art for advocacy, empowering youth to speak out.

ROME KHATIBI (they/them) is a Get Lit Drop-In Class participant and sophomore from the International School of Los Angeles (LILA). As the president of their school's poetry club, they often draw inspiration for their work from topics such as classical literature and mythology. Recently, they started an Instagram featuring some of their poetry works. They are also a student ambassador for LILA, as well as a fencer. Some other activities they enjoy are reading books, choir, writing, theater, and most especially, musicals.

TAKE THIS RING BY GABBY WONG & ROME

Written in response to the Geffen Playhouse production of *The Engagement Party* by Samuel Baum



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

BOLD=UNISON LINES

Rome
Gabby

LIGHTS UP on January, 2007!

In a perfect Upper East Side Park Avenue
Apartment

Our perfect girl awaits
in her perfect Pottery Barn living room
And her perfect **open floor plan**
with the perfect dining table from Z Gallerie,

All perfectly arranged for

Our perfect girl
bound to be a perfect wife

as soon as I can mend my -
her **wounded heart** and
find the perfect words that would render Apollo
As good as dust

The gleam in his eye should've spoken for itself
when it landed on me years ago
The brightest gem in the world,
he said it was my eyes / her eyes

sparkles for just a moment,
wringing out my heart's love with the words:

Take this ring as a symbol of my love.

Promises made behind a veil of truth, and
cradled secrets over my heart.

Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies.
Heavy with words that shall never be heard
Etched into platinum promise,

Forever yearning for the freedom that is spoken
(OUR PERFECT GIRL EXTENDS HER RING
FINGER)

Forever yearning for-
OH MY GOD, LOOK AT THAT BOULDER
HOW STRONG ARE YOUR FINGERS?!

AHEM

And when you said to me, take this ring as a
symbol of my love

The gleam in the lie should've spoken for itself

The gleam in the \$300,000 ring
The gleam in his eyes glazing over the floor

The red flags as deep as the wine -

It is none but the desire for forgiveness
Which drives the mind mad,

The hopeless yearning for a requitedness

The illusion of just barely missing.
Merely an accident.

My love, forgive yourself and let me go

So that you may reap the sorrow sewn
from your secrets

And of the warmth

In which they provided you

My love, I forgive you and let you go

Because all that is left is

The beginning of new

My love, I am no voiceless nightingale

I'll keep myself and nothing else

Drown my doubts in waves of Paramore

Let them sink to the bottom

And keep my platinum promise to myself

SOOO, YOU'RE KEEPING THE RING?! / YES!

ABSOLUTELY!

My love, I am not your **perfect girl**

Never your perfect, elegant, Southern wife

No voiceless nightingale waiting in the wings

I'll keep my platinum promise to myself

The brightest gem in the world

The brightest gem in the world

The truth through my eyes / her eyes

sparkles for a lifetime

I'll take this ring

Keep this ring

as a symbol of my love

THEATER-MAKING AT HOME HIGHLIGHT: ERIKA JOLLY

In March 2020, Geffen Playhouse was forced to pivot programming in light of the COVID-19 lockdown. Under the leadership of then Education & Community Engagement Director, Jennifer Zakkai, we developed a series of “Theater-Making At Home” writing modules and encouraged participants to share with us their work!

Below is a submission from Erika Jolly, Actress and Voice-Over Artist.

I was born in Colombia and have been acting for over 10 years, playing, studying, and creating my group (two actresses) allows me to explore my passion for interpreting characters. I have been in theater festivals since 2011.

What are the character’s superpowers and how did they get these powers?

She is ambitious, persistent, very curious, likes to study, prepare, also has a magical power of conviction. She knows that she has a good power of conviction because she is always focused on achieving her goals and tries in different ways until she achieves.

What is your superhero’s backstory?

She comes from another country and as an immigrant it is more difficult to start a new life, although she handles the new language well, it will never be the same in front of natural language, while she got her documentation she worked in different places, it was not easy to locate in a place that was not very expensive and close to work. One of the company’s partners told her to come to this country and work for her.



Scan QR Code to watch Erika Jolly’s Superhero Monologue titled “I Got This! Part 1,” where she plays Auxilio del Socorro Diaz AKA Mrs. Auxilio.

MAKE YOUR OWN THEATER!

If you would like to work on one of our Theater-Making at Home writing projects, please visit www.geffenplayhouse.org/education/theater-making-at-home



AN INTERVIEW WITH BELLA LUNA



What is your position and how long have you been at the Geffen?

My position at the Geffen Playhouse is Company Manager in the Artistic Department. I've held this position since October 2022, but I've worked with the Geffen off and on since 2009 as a Production Assistant, Stage Manager, House Manager, and COVID Compliance Manager.

What educational, artistic, and professional experiences led to you working at the Geffen?

I started my career working as a stage manager throughout Southern California, making connections and learning from theatrical professionals. One of my connections recommended me to the Geffen and when the opportunity to become a full-time Company Manager was presented, I was thrilled to take it on!

What are your primary responsibilities as Company Manager?

My primary responsibilities are making sure our acting companies are set up for success! I work closely with the Stage Management teams and our General Manager to ensure all our artists have a safe and welcoming environment in which to do their best work.

What key skills and dispositions does a Company Manager need to possess in this day and age?

Organization is definitely key, especially with larg-

er companies. A Company Manager handles a lot of information when preparing to welcome a cast and throughout the run of the show, so having a system that is efficient and easy to digest is invaluable. The best person for a Company Manager position will be someone who truly enjoys taking care of people and can think on their feet.

Was there a pivotal moment when you realized you wanted a life in the arts or did it occur incrementally?

There was definitely a pivotal moment when I was in college. I didn't plan to study theater, but I had enjoyed drama club in high school, so I started out just taking a stagecraft class. I discovered that I not only really connected with the people I met, but I also really enjoyed the work!

What do you find most challenging about your work?

Learning when to take breaks is honestly the hardest part for me. I love my job and taking care of others so much that sometimes I forget it's also important to take care of myself and make sure that I am resting and recharging my batteries so that I have something to give!

What do you find most rewarding?

The most rewarding thing is hearing an actor say they felt comfortable and taken care of during their time with us!

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH

Depending on the time available and your participants' interests, guide them to respond to questions selected from those suggested below. Encourage everyone to participate and respect differing opinions. Individuals can share their thoughts with a partner or in a small group. Ask for several volunteers to share their groups' answers with the larger group.

- Overall, how did you feel while watching this show? Engaged? Conflicted? Amused? Inspired? Provoked? Put off? What made you feel this way?
- Why would someone think that feminism is 'anti-men'? Are those who are confused about feminism insecure about themselves? Are they just ignorant of the facts?
- What would be the best way to talk to someone about potentially challenging topics like Feminism? Ranked Choice Voting? Voting for a 3rd Party Candidate?
- What did you enjoy most about the play? What did you find difficult to enjoy? Why? (Provide evidence from the production.)
- How would you describe each character's inner life in the play? Are they conflicted? If so, how, and why?
- Did you identify or empathize with any of the characters? If so, which character(s) and why? If not, why not?
- What did you find most moving about the play?
- What did you appreciate most about the performances by the actors?
- How did the set, props, costumes, and music contribute to the impact of the show?
- What is your reaction to the four waves of feminism? How is each wave categorized?
- How would you characterize a "fifth wave" of feminism? How would a new wave differ from the previous waves?
- Would you recommend this production of *POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive* to other theatergoers? Why or why not?

RESOURCES

BE EDUCATED on Ranked Choice Voting at www.rankedvote.co.

CALL the National Drug Hotline at 1-844-289-0879 if you or a family member needs help.

DISCOVER more about the storytellers who are remaking the American Theater at www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/film-tv/a45830148/black-storytellers-remaking-american-theater-interview-2023.

EDUCATE YOURSELF about intersectional feminism at www.thoughtco.com/intersectionality-definition-3026353.

EMBRACE why feminism is an important concept to understand at www.theodysseyonline.com/why-is-feminism-important.

KNOW about the different jobs in the White House at www.stacker.com/politics/25-jobs-white-house-and-what-they-do.

LEARN about the various women who have run for U.S. President at www.thoughtco.com/women-who-ran-for-president-3529994.

READ about Presidential Scandals at www.thoughtco.com/top-presidential-scandals-105459.

REGISTER to vote at www.registertovote.ca.gov.

SEE bell hooks view on feminism at www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9l9zqv2wB4.

UNDERSTAND comedy better at www.masterclass.com/articles/types-of-comedy.

UNITE with others against corruption in government at www.represent.us.

WATCH Audre Lorde discuss “I am Your Sister” at www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTSCMYELLcs.

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