

THE LARAMIE PROJECT: TEN YEARS LATER

AN EPILOGUE



PHOTO: TIM CHESNUT

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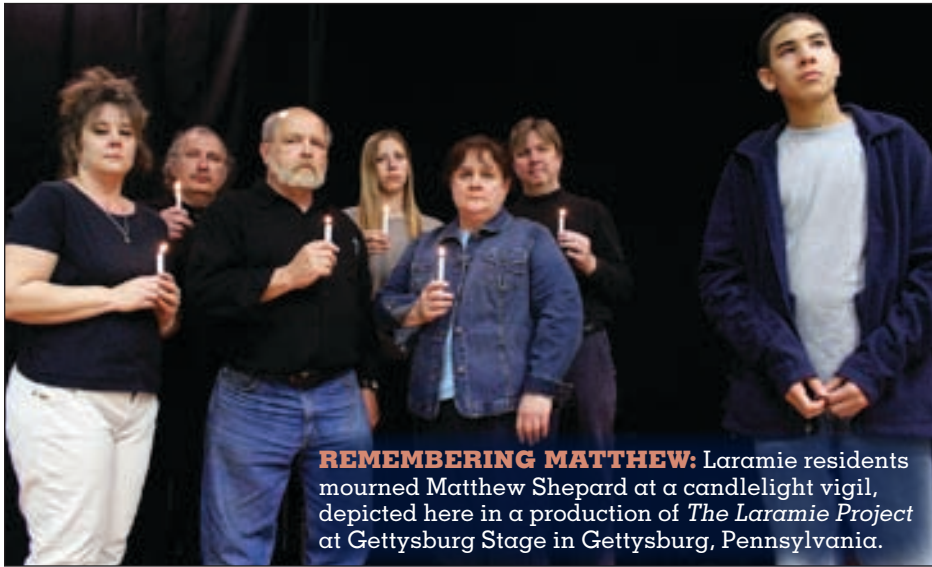
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ILLUMINATING A COMPLEX STORY:

Ambitious Questions, Inspiring Answers in a Groundbreaking Play



REMEMBERING MATTHEW: Laramie residents mourned Matthew Shepard at a candlelight vigil, depicted here in a production of *The Laramie Project* at Gettysburg Stage in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

BILL D'AGOSTINO

This is the fourth installment in a four-part Audience Guide to *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*. Be sure to review the previous three installments for additional context, discussion questions and activities. The guide—available at www.laramieproject.org in pdf format—is organized as follows:

Part 1:
Preparing To See the Epilogue

Part 2:
Issues and Themes in Focus

Part 3:
Viewing and Analyzing
the Epilogue

The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later

WRITERS Moisés Kaufman,
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DRAMATURG Jimmy Maize

Audience Guide to *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Moisés Kaufman
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Greg Reiner

In 2008, members of Tectonic Theater Company went back to Laramie to answer several ambitious questions. To what extent did they succeed in finding answers to these questions? And what was most surprising about what they discovered?

In a project overview, Tectonic stated: “The Epilogue will look at what has and has not changed in Laramie since Matthew Shepard’s 1998 murder. It will also explore how people construct stories and tell

history, both on an individual level and on a societal level. The Epilogue aims to examine how our own personal narratives and the narratives of our communities get constructed.

“From a theatrical perspective, we wanted to participate in this great experiment reminiscent of The Federal Theater and Hallie Flanagan. They used to perform the same play in dozens of theaters across the country simultaneously. This nationwide performance event is a nod to that period. But also an event that poses the question, ‘Can theater play a role in the national dialogue in this manner?’

“The murder of Matthew Shepard had such seismic impact on this small town in America that the company wanted to try to observe what, if any, were the long-lasting effects of such a crime. What does a town look like 10 years after an episode of this magnitude? Have the attitudes changed? The mythologies? Has change occurred that’s concrete and lasting?”

AFTER LARAMIE: GENERAL QUESTIONS AND THEMES TO DISCUSS POST-PERFORMANCE

- In your own words, recount what happens in the play.
- Brainstorm your own list of themes raised in the play.
- What was most moving to you? Did anything make you cry or laugh out loud?
- What surprised you most?
- What, if anything, confused you?
- What questions would you ask the actors if you could? The director? The writers?
- If you could interview the characters (the real people), what would you ask?
- Which theatrical aspects of the production were most memorable? Why?

FROM HATE TO HOPE: THE LEGACY OF MATTHEW SHEPARD



ANGEL ACTION: Romaine Patterson, a close friend of Matthew Shepard, organized a series of peaceful demonstrations against anti-gay protesters.

MANETTE MARTIN / NEW LIGHT MEDIA

“ You know where I started realizing what a hate crime was, was when gay kids were moving out of town after this happened. . . . These kids were dropping out of school—not just kids, but adults too—and leaving Laramie because of what happened to Matt. And that fear, I started realizing—that’s terroristic. ”

—DAVE O’MALLEY,
LEAD INVESTIGATOR ON THE
MATTHEW SHEPARD CASE

The House of Representatives’ passage of the **Matthew Shepard Act** on Thursday, October 8, 2009—just four days before the 11th anniversary of Matthew Shepard’s untimely death—is but one example of the important and powerful legacy Matthew Shepard has left behind.

In his introduction to the original *Laramie Project*, playwright Moisés Kaufman notes that in the immediate aftermath of Matthew Shepard’s brutal murder,

“[T]he nation launched into a dialogue that brought to the surface how we think and talk about homosexuality, sexual politics, education, class, violence, privileges and rights, and the difference between tolerance and acceptance.”

What does Kaufman mean when he talks about the difference between

tolerance and **acceptance**? Find dictionary definitions of the two terms and discuss. Name some things (concrete and abstract) that you tolerate and some that you accept. How can you move from tolerance to acceptance? Should you? Are there circumstances under which it might be dangerous to move from tolerance to acceptance?

Ten years later, how has this conversation evolved? Turn to pages 4 and 5 and consider the interview excerpts, “outtakes” and diary entries about realizations and new ways of thinking prompted by the tragedy. How has each individual quoted here changed? How has seeing the performance changed your thinking? After viewing the Epilogue, what other concrete changes can you point to within the Laramie community—in people, places and institutions?

A COMMUNITY REFLECTS



180 Degrees from Then to Now



“You know, quite frankly before all of this happened, that’s how I believed, pretty homophobic. And as a result of what happened to Matt, I was thrust into a situation where I had to interact with the gay community. And from where I was then to where my mind lays and my heart lays now, is 180 degrees. What I learned real quickly is that what I had been doing over my whole life is

precluding a really fine group of individuals from friendship. Why does it take a young man like Matt getting killed for me to start losing my ignorance? You know? Because that’s what it took.

“You know where I started realizing what a hate crime was, was when gay kids were moving out of town after this happened, you know? ... I mean people get killed in liquor store robberies all the time, [and] I don’t think twice about going in and buying a six-pack of beer. But these kids were dropping out of school—not just kids, but adults too—and leaving Laramie because of what happened to Matt. And that fear, I started realizing—that’s terroristic. And that’s what a hate crime does to a community.”

—DAVE O’MALLEY, LEAD INVESTIGATOR ON THE SHEPARD CASE, NOW RETIRED

Jabbing Our Conscience



“I think Matthew’s legacy is alerting people to how sinful so much of our society’s attitude is toward people who are different. Matthew sort of jabs the conscience of our society. And says: ‘Are you a bigot? Are you prejudiced? Are you biased?’

“... I’m much more courageous now than I was before Matthew. Matter of fact, I wouldn’t have been saying to you some of the things I am saying today if it wasn’t for Matthew Shepard. I talk about sexual identity a lot more now. I don’t talk about it every Sunday, but I do talk about it whenever the scriptures enable it to happen.

“As a matter of fact, just the other Sunday, I said, ‘You know, what if you knew the person next to you was gay? Would you welcome them into our community as long as they sit in the back or a safe distance? Or would you say, *I welcome you into our pew, come, come.*’”

—FATHER ROGER SCHMIT,
CATHOLIC PRIEST IN LARAMIE AT THE
TIME OF MATTHEW SHEPARD’S MURDER

Shock and Awe



“I’ve really come to understand the kind of power that my voice carries. In *The Laramie Project* I said that I wanted to be an activist and I went to work for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and there I got a sense of what it was like to work for a national activist organization. Now I lecture at schools and colleges. And I am forever in shock and awe when I go to a high school today and I see kids who were mere children when Matthew died and there is this kind of hope—these kids have the determination to make sure this doesn’t happen again. And they want to create change and they feel empowered. So it may not be the adults that are necessarily the ones who are benefiting from Matthew’s story but it’s these younger generations. Ten years later, I can honestly tell you, there are times that I wish I wasn’t the ‘friend of Matthew Shepard’—I wish I could just be Romaine again, but that Romaine is long gone and this is reality. And you know, even when I’m the most tired and the most fed up of dealing with it, I also sit down and

recognize: I may be tired, and I may not want to talk about Matthew any more, but by talking about Matthew, good things happen, good change is happening.”

—ROMAINE PATTERSON, FRIEND OF MATTHEW SHEPARD, ACTIVIST, RADIO HOST

Daughter of an Angel



“The change here in Laramie, I would say, really happened when the kids, the next generation, couldn’t remember what happened directly any more. The kids who were in junior high or in later elementary school when Matt was killed, they still had a pretty good connection with the experience. But the kids who were my daughter’s age at the time, in pre-school, or even younger, they don’t have that connection.

“My oldest daughter is 15 now, and she has this wonderful friend, this boy, and they were on the bus together, and these kids say to her friend, ‘Oh we should just tie you to a fence on the outskirts of town.’ These boys said that to this other boy ...

“But my daughter reported them. My daughter—who is the daughter of an angel—reported them. Ten years ago when I stood as an angel against the hatred of Fred Phelps, I did it for my daughter, in honor of my daughter. I needed my daughter to be raised in a world without hate; I needed to know that young men can grow up and young women can grow up and be treated safely.

“And I am very proud of her for saying, ‘We’ve got to report this,’ and she took it right to the principal and the principal pulled those boys right in. This was something that was taken very seriously in Laramie. Nobody would ever say now, ‘Boys will be boys.’”

—NIKKI ELDER,
LARAMIE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER AND
PARTICIPANT IN ANGEL ACTION

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Using the quotations presented here as a starting point, discuss the ways in which Matthew Shepard’s death has changed people, places and institutions.
2. According to the Epilogue, which people, institutions and practices have been resistant to change?
3. How do characters in *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later* stand up to hatred, intolerance and violence? Who strikes you as most and least accepting? Who strikes you as most courageous? Why?
4. Who is Dave O’Malley and how does he define hate crimes? What is your response to this definition?

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: ONE WRITER'S OBSERVATIONS

Greg Pierotti, a member of Tectonic Theater Project and one of the writers of *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*, shared the following journal entry in which he reflects on his return to Laramie in 2008 and on the process of bringing about social change.



Greg Pierotti

“It occurred to me during that walk that in many ways I had changed very little—still feeling deeply connected to Matt, deep grief for his murder, and for the emotional and violent abuse that has fallen on me and millions of others just because we are gay.”

—GREG PIEROTTI,
MEMBER OF THE LARAMIE PROJECT
WRITING TEAM

September 2008

My thoughts as I fly back from Laramie.

I was in Laramie in June just visiting with Beth Loffreda and a few other folks. This was before the Epilogue project started. During that visit, I got a haircut at the barbershop on Grand and Fourth Street. Beth came with me, and the barber kept referring to us as boyfriend and girlfriend. I did not correct him.

At a certain point in his banter, he said Laramie had a reputation among outsiders. I was seized with anxiety thinking I could not let inaccuracies about Matthew's story pass as easily as those about my own sexuality. But he moved on without mentioning Matt.

When we left the barbershop, Beth (who cares so much about the story and has lived here the whole time) told me she had had the same fear. She also told me that now many in Laramie had reverted to misunderstanding the event as a drug deal gone bad. I was appalled.

In the Epilogue, we knew we wanted to focus in large part on how Laramie and the people of Laramie have changed. A few weeks before going to Laramie, I interviewed Father Roger and was amazed by how little he'd changed. He was as passionate and vocal about the human rights and dignity of "our gay brothers and sisters" as he was when we first met him. I remember as I spoke to him being worried that he wasn't having enough of a dramatic arc for our Epilogue. I also remember being sort of horrified by the fact that I was thinking such a thought ...

I had my interview with Jonas [Slonaker]. At the time of the murder, he was accidentally outed without his permission by a reporter in the local news. The night of the Unitarian vigil, he met Bill and they fell in love. They've been together 10 years. And they have consciously strived in all that time to be out in every area of their lives. When I first met Jonas, he was quite bitter about the homophobia that he felt existed in Laramie and Wyoming. But now he is relaxed and happy. It seemed to me quite human and natural that he would be happier after finding a supportive and loving relationship and no longer felt he needed to pretend he was someone he was not in any arena of his life.

The irony was so apparent to me. The homophobic factions in mainstream society frown upon gay people for lacking substance, lacking the ability to commit, for being promiscuous, not having "values"—and then deny us the

stabilizing influence of straight society's institutions and all the privileges that accompany them. Then when people like Jonas and Bill defy the odds and find commitment and stability in the face of all this hatred and institutionalized homophobia, it turns out that they respond in the same way that many straight people do, and better than a lot. Bill and Jonas are flourishing....

From there I tried a few man-on-the-street interviews. Nobody I talked to was thinking about the anniversary at all. This was definitely a change from last time we were here for the work, when nobody was talking about anything else. The folks I talked to weren't saying it was a hate crime, they weren't saying it was a drug deal. They just weren't saying anything about it at all.

After a few of these attempts, I tried to find where the fence had been. I wandered in the bright prairie but found nothing. It occurred to me, though, during that walk that in many ways I had changed very little—still feeling deeply connected to Matt, deep grief for his murder, and for the emotional and violent abuse that has fallen on me and millions of others just because we are gay....

Finally I interviewed Beth and then I interviewed Rob DeBree of the Sheriff's department. These two people have been working hard on a regular basis to create change and a better environment for gay people—Beth at the University and Rob in the Sheriff's office. It occurred to me that their deep commitment to the laborious and often boring daily work of creating social and political change correlated directly to the depth with which they were confronted by Matt's suffering and the suffering of his friends and community. When we are touched by pain, we develop compassion and connect with others. When we stay comfortable and keep suffering at a distance, it is easy to become complacent, apathetic and disinterested.

It occurs to me that political change is difficult because it is made by individual commitment to change and a willingness to put personal comfort aside for the happiness of others. The fact that political change has not yet happened in Laramie shouldn't be seen as particularly damning of the town, but more as indicative of the very universal habits of laziness and commitment to comfort that most of us human beings struggle with. Individual change and the individual commitment to put personal comfort aside to help others are rare. If we want change, we each have to dig deep and make a private commitment to be bored, tired, frustrated and never give up. Without at least a small group of people making this daily commitment, it is going to be a very long, slow road.



Cover of *The Laramie Project* DVD

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Who is Greg Pierotti and what changes and transformations does he chronicle in this journal entry? Of these observations, which do you find most striking? Why?
2. Why do you think Pierotti chose not to let the barber know that he is gay? How does Pierotti describe his personal connection to Matthew Shepard?
3. Why was Pierotti "sort of horrified" at his reaction to the conversation he had with Father Roger? What tensions does this journal entry reveal between Greg Pierotti as an artist and as a person?
4. What does Pierotti see as the connection between being touched by pain and engaging in efforts to bring about social change? Have you had a personal experience that led you to take political action? Discuss.

‘OUR MOST IMPORTANT TEACHERS’:

Examining the Interviews with Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney



TEN YEARS LATER: Russell Henderson, left, and Aaron McKinney (pictured here in 1998) agreed to be interviewed by members of Tectonic Theater Project for the Epilogue.

“ I do have remorse,
but like I said, for all the
wrong reasons. ”

—AARON MCKINNEY,
IN AN INTERVIEW WITH
TECTONIC THEATER COMPANY
MEMBER GREG PIEROTTI

“ I just wish I could ...
change what I did. ”

—RUSSELL HENDERSON,
IN AN INTERVIEW WITH
TECTONIC THEATER COMPANY
MEMBER STEPHEN BELBER

Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney—the Laramie residents convicted of murdering Matthew Shepard—were not interviewed for the original *Laramie Project*, though statements they made to the police and in court are quoted in the play. Near the end of *The Laramie Project*, Father Roger Schmit declares:

“I think right now our most important teachers must be Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney. They have to be our teachers. How did you learn? What did we as a society do to teach you that?”

For *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*, Stephen Belber and Greg Pierotti conducted a series of interviews with Henderson and McKinney, respectively.

Some months after Stephen Belber spoke with Russell Henderson’s grandmother and wrote to him at her advice, he received this reply:

Dear Mr. Belber,

I got your letter and I’ve considered your proposal to talk with me and I’ve decided that I will do it.

As you know, I’ve been reluctant to talk to anyone. But I think if there is something I might say that will help someone else to understand or to maybe help them not make the same mistakes I did, then it will be worth it.

I must admit that I’m not the best with words so I don’t know how much I will be able to help but I will tell you that I will be honest with you

I haven’t read or seen the play but maybe once you finish this new part of it you could send me a copy of it.

Respectfully,
Russell

RUSSELL HENDERSON

The following excerpts come from Stephen Belber's interview with Russell Henderson:

Russell Henderson: I was one of those guys who was brought up with values, but I actually believed them. I believed the values, I was raised not to hurt people and I agreed.

Stephen Belber: So why'd you go along with Aaron that night?

Russell Henderson: At first I told Aaron I didn't want to. I kept saying no. But he kept wanting to, so finally I just went along ... I guess I'm more of a follower. And he's a leader. So I just went along Let's just say I tried to stop him but I didn't try enough. You know what I mean? It's mostly just, you know, shame. That I didn't do more ... I wish I'd have stopped him. I made the wrong choice to go along with it from the beginning; I made the wrong choice to tie him up, I made the wrong choice not to get help. I've thought a lot about it, about every single thing I did; and I just wish I could ... change what I did.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does Russell Henderson talk about the choices he made on the night of Matthew Shepard's beating? What does he wish he had done differently?
2. What do we learn about Henderson's background from his "victim empathy" letter? How does he say he has changed since the killing? Do you believe him?

AARON MCKINNEY

When Greg Pierotti asks for Father Roger's help in convincing Aaron McKinney to agree to an interview, Father Roger offers this advice:

Father Roger: I think Aaron is not finished finalizing his experience of remorse. And remorse is something we ALL need to think about. So you ask him about that. And, Greg, do him justice ... You get to know him, Greg. Let him teach you what it's like to be Aaron McKinney, okay?

Below is an excerpt from Greg Pierotti's interview with Aaron McKinney:

Greg Pierotti: And what if Father Roger were here with us. Could you look him in the eye and honestly tell him you don't feel remorse for Matt?

Aaron McKinney: I'd have to. I would never wanna have to do that. You know how I feel about Father Roger. But I couldn't look him in the eye and not ... I'd have to tell the truth. I do have remorse, but like I said, for all the wrong reasons. For my dad. For ending up in here. For getting Russ stuck in here.

Greg Pierotti: But you think those are the wrong reasons?

Aaron McKinney: If I could go back and not be the one who killed him I would But I am better off in here, myself. I'm doin' way better in here than I ever was out there. I met guys in here with a real sense of honor. Out

there, people'll stab you in the back for a nickel bag. Besides, I am a criminal. I should be around criminals. I always was drawn that way... I remember crawling through people's doggie doors when I was eight years old to steal.... I don't know why, but I was always like this. Nature trumps nurture.

Like my brother's not like me at all. Works hard, going to school. He's a really good kid; he definitely is a totally different kind of person than me ... So like they say ... nature trumps nurture.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How did you feel when McKinney asks, "I said that?" when he hears parts of the trial transcript? How does he describe Russell Henderson?
2. Why does McKinney feel he is "better off in [prison]"? What does he mean when he says that "nature trumps nurture"? Do you agree?
3. For what does McKinney express remorse? How does he explain his lack of remorse for killing Shepard? How does his sense of guilt and remorse differ from that of Henderson?
4. Why does McKinney consider himself "the poster child for hate-crime murders"? What is your reaction to his statement that "[Matthew] needed killin'"?
5. In what ways are Henderson and McKinney our "most important teachers"? What lessons have you learned from them?

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: **STANDING UP TO HATE AND HATE CRIMES**



JUREK DURCZAK

“It’s hard when you’re very ashamed of yourself to stand up and say, ‘Yeah, we screwed up.’ Instead we start making excuses, and pointing the blame at somebody else or others—we do that as individuals, we do it as a community, we do it as a nation. And that’s what I think we’ve done.”

—REGGIE FLUTY, LARAMIE POLICE OFFICER WHO FOUND MATTHEW SHEPARD TIED TO THE FENCE

ACTIVITIES AND INVESTIGATIONS

- 1. Taking a stand.** Have you been in a situation in which you needed to stand up against intolerance, bigotry, hate or a hate crime? What did you do and say? What made it hard? What made it easy? Describe your experience in writing.
- 2. Countering intolerance.** With your class or community, come up with your own guidelines for dealing with bullying, hate speech, intolerance and/or violence. Consider language and jokes that are harmful and hurtful. As a starting point, see the worksheet entitled “Create Your Own Laramie Project” on page 3 of the teacher’s guide online at www.timeclassroom.com/laramie. Review and expand the list of steps you can take to promote understanding and improve your community.
- 3. Investigating hate.** Learn more about the 1993 killing of Brandon Teena in Nebraska; the 1998 dragging death of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas; or a hate crime that occurred in your own state. What do these incidents have in common with the murder of Matthew Shepard? How did each community respond?
- 4. A mother’s mission.** “I’m just doing ... what a mother does when you hurt her children. I don’t think I’ve done anything spectacular,” says Matthew Shepard’s mother Judy. Find out more about Judy Shepard’s work on behalf of a national hate-crimes law. Consult her new book, *The Meaning of Matthew*, as well as online resources in your research. Do you agree with her assessment that “I really haven’t accomplished anything yet, other than maybe talk to people around the country about losing my son”?
- 5. Polling your community.** In a TIME/CNN poll conducted in 1998, 68% of Americans said an attack like the one on Matthew Shepard could happen in their community. Design and conduct your own survey to answer this question for your community and, more generally, to assess local residents’ views on lesbian and gay civil rights. Share your findings and suggestions for creating a hate-free community with local media.

DIGGING DEEPER: ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND EXPLORATIONS



ONE OBSERVER'S VIEW: Laramie is "more tolerant than most [communities]," says Deb Thomsen, editor of the *Laramie Boomerang*.

CONNECTING TO THE ISSUES

1. The nature of rumor. John Dorst, the folklorist featured in the Epilogue, says: "People will back away very quickly if they're putting forward a rumor type thing and you question it further. When you do push back, you are violating the 'convention of rumor.' People inevitably back away. The convention is that you DON'T contend it. That's one of the reasons that it can circulate as sort of this vague, 'I don't know where I heard this.' It's just sort of in the air. It's just around. That's the nature of rumor." Discuss a rumor that has surfaced and circulated in your community. Do you know how it originated? How did it grow? Has it been contended? Resolved? Describe a time you have been either the originator, the disseminator, the contender or the object of a rumor.

2. The climate in your community. "I would be afraid to walk down the street and display any sort of affection for my [female] partner. You don't do that here in Laramie," says Zackie Salmon in *The Laramie Project*. How are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people treated at

your school or in your community? What would happen if a same-sex couple held hands on your campus or attended a school dance? How are people treated who are considered "different" in any way? What concrete steps can you propose to make your campus or community a safer place?

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

It takes effort to see our own prejudices as clearly as others do. Human-rights experts recommend starting with our speech and thought patterns. Am I quick to label "rednecks" or "liberals"? Do I tell gay jokes? Am I careless with gender descriptions?

Here are some other questions to ask yourself: How wide is my circle of friends? How diverse is my holiday card list? How integrated is my neighborhood? Why is that? Do I belong to clubs that exclude? How often am I in the minority? Do I have the courage to ask a friend not to tell a sexist, racist or homophobic joke in my presence? How can I go out of my way to know people who are different?

—ADAPTED FROM TOLERANCE.ORG



'IT HAPPENED HERE': Zubaida Ula, depicted above in a *Laramie Project* production at Cal Poly Theatre, makes this point as she reflects on the killing of Matthew Shepard.

“ We don’t have a hate-crime law on the books [in Wyoming], but the conversations that go on in our locker rooms, in the hallways at schools, on the playgrounds, in our living rooms and places of worship—that to me is progress. ”

—JIM OSBORNE,
FRIEND OF MATTHEW SHEPARD

THINKING ABOUT THEATER

3. Create your own program notes.

What program notes, if any, were offered at the Epilogue performance you attended? What other background would you find useful for future audiences? Investigate and create such a set of program notes.

4. Dramaturg for a day. October 12, 2009, marks the premiere of *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*. Tectonic plans to develop the play further and share it with other communities. Are there changes, additions or deletions you would suggest?

5. Design your own poster for a future production of *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*. What images, symbols and text would you incorporate? Why?

6. Biographical sketches. While the “characters” in *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later* are portrayed by actors, it is important to remember that they are real people who agreed to be interviewed. Choose one of the major characters about whom you’d like to know more. Use the Internet to research and write a one-page biographical sketch.

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

7. The debate over same-sex marriage. Consider the speeches given in the Epilogue by state representatives Childers and Peterson during the debate on Wyoming’s “defense of marriage” bill. What argument

does each make? How does Peters’ personal experience bear on his vote? In the end, Wyoming’s DOMA bill failed—though same-sex marriage is still illegal there. What are the laws on same-sex marriage in your state? Has a defense-of-marriage law been enacted?

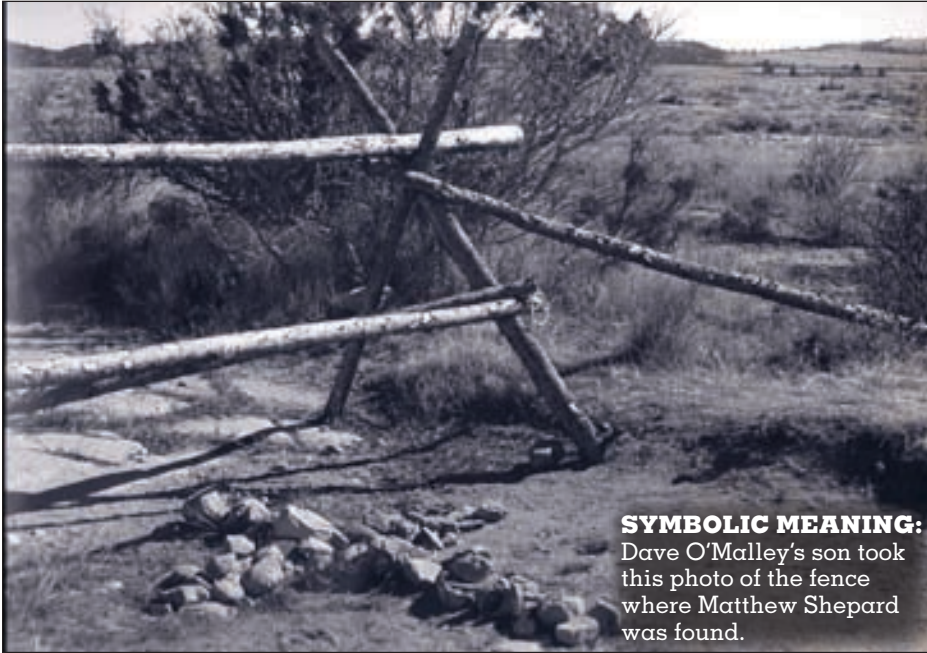
8. Out in politics. In 2008, Catherine Connolly became the first openly gay or lesbian member of the Wyoming legislature. Does your city, town or state have openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender politicians? How have they been received in the community? What impact have they made?

9. Barack Obama and change. In what ways are gay and lesbian Americans treated as second-class citizens in America? Consider the federal Defense of Marriage Act, the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, and federal anti-discrimination laws. Where does President Obama stand on gay rights? What steps has he taken to honor campaign promises on this issue?

10. Continuing the dialogue. Go to the Laramie online community at www.laramieproject.org. Read some of the comments. Choose one comment that resonates with your experience and one that does not reflect your personal opinions. Write responses to each one, trying to consider both sides of the case. Ask a partner to read them before deciding whether to post them on the website.

SIGNPOSTS OF CHANGE: **VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE MARKERS**

COURTESY DAVE O'MALLEY



SYMBOLIC MEANING: Dave O'Malley's son took this photo of the fence where Matthew Shepard was found.

“ I remember one older man—spent thirty years in the military—had to be in the closet through the whole thing. And Matt's death had a huge impact on him . . . and one day he just showed up, and I took him out to the fence. ”

—DAVE O'MALLEY,
LEAD INVESTIGATOR ON THE
MATTHEW SHEPARD CASE

Of all the symbols related to the story of Matthew Shepard, the fence is arguably the most iconic. Review page 6 of Part 1 of the Audience Guide, which presents the section of the Epilogue script in which we first learn that the fence has been taken down. What does its disappearance mean to Laramie's consideration of its past and conception of its future? Three participants in *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later* shared their thoughts.

COMPANY MEMBER ANDY PARIS:

We heard that when they took the fence down, the pieces were incorporated into other fences. So no one knows where the original pieces are.

LARAMIE RESIDENT JONAS

SLONAKER: I remembered where the place was and I would still go back, and it's ... yeah. The fence is gone. Ten years later and the fence is gone ... and ten years of snow and rain have washed through there. I mean it's just a place, in the end I guess. And I decided not to go any more. I had to let it go.

DAVE O'MALLEY, LEAD INVESTIGATOR ON THE SHEPARD CASE:

This is a photograph of the fence that my son took, and some people had been out and kind of made a little memorial there and ... I don't know how many people came to town when I was still working at the police department to visit the fence. But I remember one older man—spent thirty years in the military—had to be in the closet through the whole thing. And Matt's death had a huge impact on him. He was from Vermont and one day he just showed up, and I took him out to the fence. I did that with several people; it was important for them. It was important enough for them to come all the way to Laramie to see it! You know?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Apart from the fence, what other “visible markers” of the tragedy have disappeared?
2. What markers of change, both tangible and intangible, have appeared in Laramie?
3. What changes do you predict will occur in Laramie over the next decade?

REVELATIONS

In his introduction to *The Laramie Project* in 2002, Moisés Kaufman wrote:

“The experience of working on The Laramie Project has been one of great sadness, great beauty and, perhaps more importantly, great revelations—about our nation, about our ideas and about ourselves.”

After seeing the Epilogue, what revelations have you had about our nation and its ideas—and about yourself?