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THE LIVING HASHTAG PLAY: A MODERNIZED LIVING NEWSPAPER WITH
THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED APPROACHES TO PLAY DEVELOPMENT

by

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B.A., University of Central Florida, 2015

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Theatre
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ABSTRACT

In a time where the majority of our news sources and justice movements are received, hashtagged, mobilized, and scrutinized through technology and social media, this thesis embarks to resurrect a once short lived concept of introducing theatre as an informative and educational news source. *The Hashtag Play* will be an experiment to create a modern living newspaper play that will utilize techniques and approaches found in Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed Pedagogy to devise meaningful and impactful art determined to educate, inform, and challenge artists and audiences while fostering a sense of community.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will be focusing on the issues of sexual violence in America, investigating such cases as *People of the State of California v. Brock Allen Turner*, and the prosecutions of Harvey Weinstein and David Daniels. These cases, among many, have ignited the movements of #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #Let's Be Clear, which have affected men and women within local communities across the U.S.

The goal of the project is to create a piece that improves upon the original Federal Theatre Project's Living Newspaper while creating an impactful tool to be utilized in the field of theatre for social change. The play will explore both sides of each trial to expand audience perspective, while attempting to define the blurred lines that surround the complexities and narratives of sexual assault, harassment, and consent. The project explores the questioning of rape culture, how it is defined and if it truly exists in our social climate. The process ventures to identify systematic flaws and social contributors while seeking solutions for social and justice change. It will scrutinize over the presence and purpose of sexual violence within art, while questioning if it is viable to separate art from the artist, or forgive the art and condemn its

creator. It will grapple with the challenge of remaining neutral for the sake of education and news delivery. Most importantly, it will be inclusive to all voices, challenging us to use passion and discussion, instead of argument and aggression. To effect a change, the work must first set to identify, clarify, and challenge our former notions to create improved ones that encourage thoughtful and proactive actions.

...the [Living Newspaper] seeks to dramatize a new struggle – the search of the average American today for knowledge about his country and his world; to dramatize his struggle to turn the great natural and economic forces of our time toward a better life for more people.

— Hallie Flanagan, National Director of the Federal Theatre Project.

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My time as a graduate student at the University of Central Florida has featured some of my toughest challenges to date. Though I owe a great deal to those obstacles for shaping me into the artist, scholar, and person that I have grown to be, it would not have been possible without the exceptional support and guidance of my educators, colleagues, and peers. To these incredible beings I owe a great deal of thanks.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: EVOLUTION TO THE LIVING HASHTAG PLAY	6
Why a Living Newspaper?.....	6
Theatre of the Oppressed and Living Newspaper Theatre.....	8
The Making of a Hashtag Play: A Marriage Between Living Newspaper and Newspaper Theatre	9
Newspaper Theatre, Image Theatre, and Intimacy Choreography	14
CHAPTER 3: TO AND REHEARSING A HASHTAG PLAY	18
Weekly Journal Entries	18
CHAPTER 4: REFLECTION OF A LIVING HASHTAG PLAY	53
CHAPTER 5: THE FIRST LIVING HASHTAG PLAY	59
Play Packet.....	61
The Script.....	64
REFERENCES	112

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- F.T.P. Federal Theatre Project
- T.O. Theatre of the Oppressed
- W.P.A. Works Progress Administration

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

We need to bring back the practice of The Living Newspaper. A new form of The Living Newspaper. An evolved one. One rooted not in the dramatization of headlines and the human experiences attached, but one that eliminates the sensationalization of people's stories, and attempts to limit any subjectivity of their truths. We need one that seeks honesty and to educate. One that implores change, incites action, fosters community, and helps us explore the possibilities of something better that benefits everyone.

When I began this journey, my mission was to create a directing and rehearsal approach that would help guide artists through complex materials taking on social and political topics. I wanted to create a method that would foster community and empathy among ensembles to better understand, articulate, connect, and present challenging subject matter. Soon after the commencement of the project, however, I learned the method needed to dive deeper. It wasn't enough to guide artists through politics and social matters. It needed to help create a safe space for vulnerability, intimacy, comfort, and support to thrive as company. It needed to help artists process their emotional responses and prior experiences without triggering prior traumas. Or, if those traumas are triggered, we needed an improved method that could help safely see them through. It needed to be a process that could help make intimacy work more accessible, and ensure mental and physical safety. It needed to establish consent of physical touch and acceptance of one another without fear or judgement. It *needed* to establish the concept of consent in all that we do as theatre makers. Through the combination of old and new practices, the project soon became more than an endeavor to create a culture change within our society. It became a mission to make a change within our own industry.

As a director and writer, I spent the majority of my undergraduate studies working within the realm of comedy. It was a genre I enjoyed playing in, but looking back it may have also been a genre that helped me to navigate difficult circumstances. In truth, comedy and satire allow for the exploration of complicated matters through the use of humor; a mechanism often wielded in social situations to help provide a safe place to cope and reside in whenever life's moments become too hard to manage or even unbearable. This fact applies to both art and life. Humor in writing, like what we may see in television shows such as *Dear White People* simply helps us to digest and process difficult truths about the world we live in. It wasn't until my senior year when I directed a production of *The Vagina Monologues* that I began practicing a more serious and direct approach to social issues. It wasn't until my first theatre for social change course, which came almost too late in my undergraduate studies, that I realized how much I was already exploring social issues through my art, and how much I wanted to contribute to the creation of positive cultural shifts. To not only get our audiences and artists thinking, but to work out a course of action. To safely explore the complexities of difficult issues in a matter that could still be processed and digested in the absence of comedic reliefs and satire. Hence the endeavor of graduate school.

My first year of study I spent the majority of my time working closely with our university's victim services unit. It was there, as a graduate intern, where I collaborated with advocates and workshop facilitators to assist with their bystander intervention and education programs and training. Together we implemented Theatre of the Oppressed pedagogy to create a hands on learning approach for students, faculty, and staff throughout the campus to reduce sexual and interpersonal power based violence on campus. This was also the time where the

feminist in me was being awakened, though I was still learning to discipline the rage within her, turning that anger into passion as well as compassion.

While I felt I was thriving in my internship, there was a part of me that also felt every ounce of passion fade from my bones as I struggled to find a rhythm and place within my graduate program. I was living in a toxic home environment with people I once trusted, my personal relationships were being compromised, and I was watching my grandfather wither away for an entire year. Life was shaking me down and it was causing full blown anxiety attacks and constant triggers on a weekly basis. I wasn't enjoying the very thing I loved: My art. I found it hard to throw myself into theatre and my education as I had done in the past to cope, so I threw myself into work with UCF Victim Services and learning about how my art can affect social change off stage. It was a tremendously difficult year but it was a vital one of personal growth.

As an educator, teaching college for the first time rather than a classroom of little ones, I was observing how many of my young students, experiencing life's first taste of adulthood, were struggling to comprehend typical social issues and even social situations within and outside of the theatre industry; specifically mental health and intimacy. Whether it was in the classroom or the rehearsal room, students were struggling to communicate with one another and their professors healthily due to fear of losing their position in the department or social taboo. Students were grappling with personal matters, but had no idea how to cope or process properly. Like me, they didn't know how to ask for help either, or felt there wasn't a space of acceptance to ask for that help. And here we are as educators and theatre makers, sometimes knowing their struggles or even going through it ourselves, being completely compliant with a silent culture.

The more I was living in it, and observing it, the more I realized we needed to change our approaches to theatre and to human beings.

We often forget that artists, particularly performing artists, are not entertainment machines, yet we too often treat them as such. As theatre makers, we have all experienced or witnessed the discomfort of two actors, left to their own devices, to construct an intimate scene. We may have even felt unprepared to guide artists through physical *and* emotional intimacy for the stage. Young artists, just as many adults, often have difficulty navigating complex issues and circumstances discussed within the script due to a number of reasons, whether it be lack of experience and education, personal triggers, and social barriers. Even leading conversations regarding social and political issues can be a daunting task due to anger and aggression often fueled and left without discipline or restraint. The conversations often turn to arguments rather than discussions and someone almost always gets hurt or feels attacked.

Intimacy and mental health, in regards to other social commentary, have been things often ignored or silenced in our social environments, and theatre is no stranger in the lack of recognition of these factors as part of our everyday norm and human nature. The more I have worked with students rather than peers, the more I have come to realize how fragile they are as human beings, how fragile we ourselves are, and how we as an industry have lost a tremendous amount of empathy for our artists. The deeper I have dug into this work, the more friends, peers, colleagues, and other fellow artists I have found that have been left completely abused by the art they once loved. As important as it was for me to create a practice for social change outside of theatre, I needed to develop a process that would prompt social change within our own community. Between my theatre training, coping and overcoming personal emotional conflicts,

and working as an educator, researcher, and facilitator, picking up more and more materials tackling difficult social and political narratives, the more I began to think: If Theatre of the Oppressed pedagogy is helping audiences and communities relate to one another and to themselves, while helping them to navigate challenging issues affecting our culture, maybe it could do the same for our artists within a rehearsal space. Maybe we could be implementing the pedagogy in play development and practice, and maybe we *should*.

We have a responsibility as artists that has gone neglected for too long. We live and breathe an art form that demands full vulnerability and open hearts from our artists with little to no regard for their personal wellness. It forces a disregard for personal and social boundaries and with a lack of guidance to help one lean into what makes them vulnerable. We barely have control of these things on an everyday basis, let alone on command. Our industry needs to do better. This project and this thesis embarks to find a way to just that.

The practicum portion of this thesis sets to explore the different ways in which Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) can be utilized within the rehearsal process and new works play development: From character development and informed storytelling, to staging intimacy. It will use an original and modern take of the Living Newspaper Drama as a model for the work. This document shall provide documentation of the practicum's progress while additionally providing a comprehensive understanding of what the work aims to do and ultimately achieves.

CHAPTER 2: EVOLUTION TO THE LIVING HASHTAG PLAY

Why a Living Newspaper?

When originally plotting ideas and approaches for the practicum portion of this endeavor, I had considered revising an older piece, written in the comedic genre and neo-classic formula I was accustomed to. The story would highlight the social issues of race, mental health, and learning disabilities through the familiar characters of history's most famous literary writers. It would be light in mood, while touching on the issues and initiating conversations among our audience. However, in these seemingly dark times, I knew discussion through humor wasn't enough. I wanted to dive deeper than the surface, for there is a profound need for education and perspective. I felt a responsibility to tell stories of those silenced, protect those voices, and begin healthier patterns within our creative practices and throughout our communities. I needed to go back to my field's roots. Thus, the concept of a reimagined Living Newspaper Play that would derive from how we receive, track, and share headlining news stories: A Living Hashtag Play.

Imagine a time where a program was funded by the government on the belief that art matters; That artists have much to contribute to society, culture, and economic growth. A time where a job program was initiated to ensure employment for those artists, and ultimately aided in the betterment of a nation during difficult times. Our congress had once done just that. In 1935, post World War I and in the throws of the Great Depression, the Federal Theatre Project was born under the Works Progress Administration, birthing a portion of American theatre's most socially and politically influential written dramas of the time.

Among the most interesting aspects of this imaginative plan to dramatize the news was its immediate and expedient purpose: to put as many people to work as possible. For this

reason, and this reason alone, actors and newspapermen were wedded in a community of activity that produced some of the most controversial and challenging plays in the history of the American theatre. (Isaac 16)

The program sponsored a number of groups including the Federal Players, Variety/Vaudeville and, considered the most active of the groups, the Negro Repertory Company, as documented under the FTP history on HistoryLink.org. These groups set to devise original pieces based on headlining news stories while providing their audiences with commentary on the social issues plaguing their communities. Not to mention, this groundbreaking, limit pushing, and power challenging program was directed by a *woman*, named Hallie Flanagan, a Vassar College drama professor. According to the website, FTP and WPA employed up to 13,000 artists and newspaper workers across 31 states, and impacted audiences by the thousands. In his 1968 publication in Educational Theatre Journal entitled, *Ethiopia: The First "Living Newspaper,"* Dan Isaacs writes "The Living Newspaper, then, was an immensely collective and collaborative effort that was intended to do something more than merely present the news. Indeed, it was at first an attempt-without editorializing-to dramatize a problem."

The very basis of the program was to call for change in post war American society while providing a decent living for artists and newspapermen. The very foundation of theatre for social change is to call for change through the utilization of the arts. The living newspaper dramas of the FTP, and the efforts made by many theatrical companies and productions sponsored by the WPA, were some of the earliest work in the theatre for social change field. That was until its disbandment by Congress in 1939, due to fear of communist infiltration, and belief that the

interest in funding the arts via American tax dollars was limited and dwindling.

(<https://www.historylink.org/File/3978>) Despite the demise of FTP, the Living Newspaper Drama managed to impact audiences through meaningful, innovative, and controversial work of substance that continues to be prevalent today. It gave us plays such as *One-Third of a Nation*, *Power*, and *Triple-A Plowed Under* by Arthur Arent (just to name a few,) that spoke upon political, social, and economical issues of the time. It's influence can still be felt within the field of theatre for social change today, including within Augusto Boal's pedagogy for Theatre of the Oppressed.

Theatre of the Oppressed and Living Newspaper Theatre

It is said that Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as we know it was the result of a man's experimentation to break the fourth wall and allow for integration of audience participation. During the height of political strife in 1960s Brazil, Dr. Augusto Boal, inspired by Brechtian theatre and the education philosophy of Paulo Friere, believed that human beings learn through relating to one another and to their environment. He believed audience members shouldn't be present to merely react, but to engage with the performers within the playing space by breaking the fourth wall. Originally, he experimented with merely halting a performance to take suggestions from the audience to change and impact the action of the story. According to a brief biography of his work, written by Doug Paterson and found on the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed webpage (ptoweb.org) the style of forum theatre was created when a performer couldn't understand an audience member's suggestion. When she became frustrated by the lapse of understanding, the audience member took the reins and tapped into the performance, taking

part in the action and influencing change in the storytelling. This began a trend, and the discovery would ignite an entire movement in the theatrical field, contributing to Boal's unique styles of interactive performance based theatre including Forum, Image, Invisible, Legislative, and Newspaper Theatre. (<http://imaginaction.org/media/our-methods/theatre-of-the-oppressed-2>)

Once Boal found a way to engage and welcome audiences as part of the action, he began devising techniques and methods to help guide artists and spec-actors through a political performance. This was achieved by creating his own approach to a Living Newspaper, thus creating Newspaper Theatre. Much like Forum Theatre, where spec-actors can tap into a performance to change or influence the action of the story for further exploration and discussion, Newspaper Theatre implements these techniques but not with existing play texts or personal experiences of oppression. Instead, it uses non dramatic texts such as newspapers, religious documents, and media sources. Unlike the Living Newspaper, audiences are a part of an unfinished production rather than a complete product. Through 12 applied techniques that range from several styles of play reading (simple, complementary, crossed, rhythmical, and historical,) and methods of presentation (reinforcement, concretion of abstract, text of context, insertion of actual context, parallel action, integration or field interview) to improvisation, Newspaper Theatre aimed to help audiences and theatre makers alike make sense of the world around them through theatrical means. (<http://imaginaction.org/12-techniques-newspaper-theatre>)

[The Making of a Hashtag Play: A Marriage Between Living Newspaper and Newspaper Theatre](#)

In his book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal states that “theatre is necessarily political, because all the activities of men (and women) are political and theater is one of them. Those who separate theater from politics try to lead us in error – and this is a political attitude.” (ix, Boal)

Practitioners and students of theatre know that for centuries a power struggle has gripped the artistic practice due to fear, thirst for control, threat of power, battle for justice, and need for change. This is evident in the aforementioned disbandment of The Living Newspaper Drama. While theatre often fuels or condemns politics in the name of parody or social justice, politics often uses or disband theatre for political gain. This struggle remains apparent in our theatrical, film, and televised entertainment riddled with a history of corruption, communism, propaganda, and its contributions to social and political change that date back farther than the Living Newspaper. We must understand that is near impossible to separate the art of entertainment from the art of politics. It is for this very reason we set out to do this work. During a time where racism has been reanimated, women’s rights are being dragged decades backwards, and gun violence and public mass shootings are at an all time high, it’s hard not to stay impartial to the political dealings of today’s biggest and oldest social issues. Why be impartial during such a crucial time in our history? Impartiality further contributes to a silent culture, and we have seen the damage silence can do.

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. (Freire 69)

Art like that of the Living Newspaper and Theatre of the Oppressed allows artists and audience members to educate each other and raise their voices against oppressive forces and social injustices. After all, “theatre is a weapon. A very efficient weapon. For this reason one must fight for it.” (ix, Boal) For this reason, we endeavored to create a modern Living Newspaper Play practice that improves upon the original methods and approaches to help benefit the fight for social justice. While Theatre of the Oppressed was once influenced by the Living Newspaper, our Living Newspaper and rehearsal process was influenced by Theatre of the Oppressed.

The concept of a “Hashtag Play” rather than a Newspaper Play came from the idea of how modern social media and technology assists app users with tracking daily updates and relevant news stories through the use of hashtags. Our media searches become more refined with hashtagged topics that are tailored to us by personal importance, helping us stay connected to the world happening outside our electronic devices and screens. These hashtags have become a powerful tool for not only expanding the reach of headlining news but for also initiating momentum for our powerful social movements including Black Lives Matter, March For Our Lives, and the topic of this piece, Me Too.

Just as the Living Newspaper set to accomplish, the Hashtag Play uses a journalistic style of writing that bases its stories on headlining news. One of the challenges of the Living Newspaper was FTP’s ability to remain unbiased. This inability often caused scrutiny and fueled fears of propaganda and communism. Though threats of communism was a challenge absent within our process and performance, remaining unbiased was a personal feat for our work. How

can one remain unbiased in the face of government and legislative upheaval? This is where Boal's techniques aided our efforts.

Theatre of the Oppressed is rooted in the idea that change can be mobilized through active, education, and performative approaches that help participants raise critical awareness of their circumstances and seek actions toward social change. Boal's pedagogy drew influence and contribution from Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator of grammar and literacy who formulated his education practices with the idea that his students should "read the world" or how he puts it, the process of "conscientization." In other words, to learn more efficiently, it was important for students to relate the content of what they were reading to the world around them. This encouraged critical thinking and awareness within their studies through relating that information back to their social circumstances. Author Sandra Smidt explains in her book *Introducing Freire*, that conscientization is "almost synonymous with critical consciousness and/or with consciousness raising." (Smidt 15) This idea later evolves in to Freire's concept of "liberatory education," which the author further exemplifies with the following:

The Pajaro Valley School project was exploring the power of literacy as a consciousness-raising tool and also used dialogue and the asking of questions to generate a real exploration of the many issues affecting the lives of the children, their parents and their communities. Teachers and parents, teachers and children, children and parents began to take on the roles of both teacher and learner. (Smidt 16)

Liberatory education is the idea that everyone is a student as much as they are a teacher. We learn from each other and practice together. Freire and Boal utilized these approaches to

education and integrated them within a playing space of performers and spec-actors. Thus the foundation for their Theatre of the Oppressed Pedagogy.

Yes, it is near impossible to remain unbiased when discussing political and social matters. However, rather than attempting such a near impossible feat, our focus had to simply change. Our intent then would be to educate, and to educate upon multiple perspectives of a given social topic. Though the pedagogy would be mainly practiced within the rehearsal space for the performer's benefit, it was important to maintain the idea of critical awareness and liberatory education with our audience so that they may be more engaged, conscious, and aware with any discussion had within or outside of the performance space. Though our audience may not be physically participating within the performance, it is important that we leave a lasting impact and that we provide a thorough education so that they may continue to carry it with them.

Another TO practice that was integrated in our work was that of Newspaper Theatre. Unlike the Living Newspaper Play, Newspaper Theatre implements the written texts and media sources into the performance. Rather than writing a dramatization based from reference sources, traditionally practiced by FTP, we took it a step further by integrating inserts and quotations from the written sources, creating a happy marriage between old and new practices of journalistic writing within a theatrical scope. In doing so, we attempt to limit any over dramatization or sensationalization of a given story by providing contextual support to the performance. This effort continues to support the idea of providing an education on multiple perspectives while continuing to raise awareness on the issue. This process of writing and performing required several of the 12 techniques used in Newspaper Theatre including

- *Insertion of text*
- *Parallel actions* (lines directly quoting a news article or audio of media coverage is played while action is simultaneously performed on stage. Reference Act I. sc. iv, Act I. sc. v, Act I, sc. vi, and Act II, sc. I, stage directions.)
- *Crossed Reading* (Lines quoted from two contradicting or linked stories alternate between characters/performers for deeper understanding and dimension. Reference Act I, sc. i opening scene.)
- *Historical Reading* (Direct quotes of new item or audio of media coverage plays as action of a similar event that took place during another time is played out on stage simultaneously. Reference Act I. sc. iv, Act I. sc. v, Act I, sc. vi, and Act II, sc. I, stage directions.)
- *Concretion of the abstract* (Staging what is subtracted from or masked in the media. Reference Act I, sc. iv.)

In implementing these techniques, we have created a version of a newspaper play with dimension that is thought provoking, deeper in critical thinking, more concrete for both performers and audience members alike.

Newspaper Theatre, Image Theatre, and Intimacy Choreography

With #Metoo and #Timesup at the center of our hashtag play, the topic of sexual violence presented us with a number of challenges to address. The first was the consideration of censorship in content when discussing accounts of rape and sexual assault. For example, in Act I

sc.iv, the character of Emily Doe goes in excruciating detail recanting her experiences following her sexual assault, including her detailed account of receiving a sexual assault forensic examination, otherwise known as a rape kit. Additionally throughout the play the collective Doe characters describe explicit details of the aftermath of their rapes including blood, nudity, physical and mental trauma. As a playwright, decisions have to be regarding what details should and shouldn't be included in the piece. These decisions were inevitably made with the following questions in mind: Will the audience be able to digest the information? Can the explicit details in question be given to audience in a way they can process easier and better understand? Is inclusion of the details important? Do they serve the story? Does the inclusion of these details serve the victims at the forefront of the story? Once answering these questions, I came to the final resolve: If the victims said it, described it, or mentioned it, then the inclusion of these details in their public statements were important in the impact left on their lives. Through *concretion of the abstract*, I was able to frame these details as a reveal of what the news often hides or masks. The public is often unbeknownst to physical and mental trauma endured by victims while a trial is in progress. This is done purposefully to both protect the victims and defendants of a case, while additionally attempting to remain unbiased until the case closes. However, in a time where out of every 1,000 sexual assaults 995 perpetrators will walk free (<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>) and the majority of victims will not report due to fear of retaliation or retraumatization by the criminal justice system, government politics, and the society in which we live, it is important that we use this tool to combat the social injustices of a rape culture we intentionally and often unintentionally contribute to every day.

The second challenge involved the staging of two simulated rapes and one assault. This presented obstacles for both the playwriting and directing processes. For the playwright, once more it came down to censorship and having to refer back to the aforementioned questions posed in helping to decide. Once more, I felt it was important to include visuals on stage to assist with what was being described, as seeing can sometimes be more powerful than seeing. Just as, *crossed readings* helped the collective Doe characters to express similar feelings and experiences through their dialogue, the technique of *parallel actions* was used to provide coinciding visuals to, in this case, audio of the news reports describing the crimes (*parallel actions*.) These enactments were additionally pieced together in a way that created an overlap of events to show commonalities and patterns in the behaviors and actions involved in sexually violent crimes, even when they occur during different points in time (*historical reading*.) The *insertion of text* helped to support and make both the action and dialogue concrete in the storytelling.

From a directing standpoint, however, staging intimacy was a whole new level to rise to. While Chapter 4 will continue to explore elements of Forum Theatre and other Theatre for Social Change exercises as an overall directing and rehearsal approach, the intimacy choreography of this piece required another form of TO. *Image Theatre* is considerably a more accessible form of TO in that, while it still has a performative element, it requires less movement and action. In fact, it's more about fostering conversation through stillness. Image Theatre asks participants to work together to create statues or tableaux depicting a moment of oppression. The images act as a tool to help initiate critical group thinking, reflection, and dialogue. It was a tactic often used in my workshops with victim services that I felt would best assist our efforts for a safe and consensual process.

Intimacy choreography is a unique practice that has continued to grow in the entertainment field as its importance and relevance has become vital. The process itself is a delicate one that aims to protect the physical and emotional well-being of the performers involved. The challenge faced in this piece is the use of intimacy as an oppressive force. For that reason, I found approaches such as *The Pillars* (Intimacy Directors International, <https://www.teamidi.org/theatre>) wasn't enough alone to tackle the choreography. As this was a project and is a thesis about the implementation of TO for an improved Living Newspaper, it seemed only right to integrate Image Theatre into our work, and potentially triggering circumstances.

Image work allowed for a step by step process that gave the performers time to think, communicate, and adjust, while using IDI's *The Pillars* practice (Context, communication, consent, choreography, and closure) as a guiding force.. The practices combined influenced each other's techniques and worked together to help better create a safe environment for the actors to work in. We were not only working with two formulas to assist in our critical thinking and reflection, but additionally allowed us to safely map out our actions. Both practices together fostered open dialogue, communication, and consent among all involved; Three elements paramount to our practice and sustained throughout the entire process of our work.

CHAPTER 3: TO AND REHEARSING A HASHTAG PLAY

A Living Hashtag Play is born from the implementation techniques found in Newspaper Theatre to create an improved and modern form of the Living Newspaper Drama. If successful, *Times Up, An Original #MeToo Play* will be the first living hashtag play, with hopes of igniting a movement within the field of Theatre for Social Change. In this chapter, biweekly journals will track the progress, experimentation, and discoveries made during the rehearsal process of this piece, with the continued integration of Theatre of the Oppressed Pedagogy as a guide for our work.

Weekly Journal Entries

Tuesday, February 12, 2019.
Rehearsal 1: Table Read

Times Up was a piece I had been engulfed in since the time of summer. For months prior it was a struggle to finalize the intentions, goals, methods, and approach to what I would be venturing into. From the submission of my thesis packet to this moment, the project has seen great changes from the original concepts devised in my mind a hundred times over. Much of these changes derived from the organic style of writing I am accustomed to when approaching any type of writing. While the intentions still hold, I felt the play itself strayed from the usual structure of a Living Newspaper Play and began to encompass a more journalistic style popular in the 1920s. I started sensing a *Machinal* feel to the writing, only instead of the central focus revolving around the perpetrator and whether Ruth Snyder's defense gave her validation to commit murder, my piece centralizes around the validation of the victims, their trauma and experiences, pleading to be

heard.. It seems fitting. Sophia Treadwell and Susan Glaspell are two of my favorite playwrights. Both were women ahead of their time, considerably feminist in their own right, and their writing rooted in their journalism and research. Their plays spoke to the power of women, while calling out the negative impact society has on the female being. Writing about a movement powered by today's standards of feminist activism, it seems natural and appropriate that my piece has taken this turn, even if accidental.

For months I was at conflict, attempting to condense the piece into three cases. How could I choose *just* three? How is it possible to even choose one? To weigh which case may be more important or prevalent enough to have a discussion over another, when all of them are the display the very debase parts of our culture and humanity. And just when I *thought* I had narrowed my topic, a new case would develop, harder hitting than the last, more monuments in comparison, and deeper in the spotlight. But in truth, the more I researched, the more they all sounded the same. It was a matter of the people involved and how important their social standing was that captivated our attention and impacted the way we viewed the acts and allegations. Fame, gender, wealth, race: All things that dictate the weight of someone's actions, not the actions themselves, while ignorance and privilege seemed to plague our perspectives, opinions, and understanding of what was unfolding in front of us.

It came down to choosing cases based on how they related to me, related to the culture, and related to my industry. The 2016 case of *The People of the State of California vs. Brock A. Turner* shook our comprehension of rape culture on college campuses. It was additionally said to be the case that would change the handling of all future sexual assault and rape cases in the criminal justice system, and yet dozens of cases displaying the same pattern, same story, same crimes,

would occur promptly after the conviction and continue for years later. It was important to note: There was **no** change. The surfacing allegations against American countertenor, David Daniels, were brought forth thanks to the Me Too Movement. Additionally, the developing case impacts the theatre and classical music industries, further exemplifies rape culture on college campuses, introduces the element of power dynamics between professor and student, and dissects a further stigmatized, underreported, and neglected issue of rape culture: Male on male sexual assault. Lastly, Harvey Weinstein. Hundreds of allegations and stories were brought forth by the Me Too Movement. The case that helped to launch #TimesUp in the entertainment industry, and now even puts to question the line between sexual assault and human trafficking.

Since August, I have been researching and writing this piece. It wasn't until December that a first draft was completed. The emotional drain of the process caused many mental breaks. Not just for an hour, eat something, shower, take a nap, return to work kind of break. Weeks. Two weeks. Three weeks. Time I needed to breathe again. To feel my own self and happiness again. Time to worry about the people in my life rather than be consumed by the tragedies of strangers I didn't know but loved, cared, and worried for as much as the beings in my life. Time to stop tears. Time to relieve anger. How are we still letting this happen? Why are we still allowing this to be a part of our culture? Why would anyone give permission to allow someone to hurt me or someone else for a reason as small as the fabric hiding underneath my clothing, unseen by the public eye? Yet is all still stands.

When I had finished writing the play, I went back several times and looked it over, focusing on the content first, rather than the abundance of typos and formatting errors. Was it too graphic? Were there too many quotes? Should I leave moments, words, or certain details out? Would it be

too much for the audience? Too much for the artists? Is it too much for me? Should I censor? Would censoring lessen the value of the art? Would it hinder the purpose of the overall thesis or benefit it? It came down to a simple answer: If the victims and the defendants said it, wrote it, did it and admitted to it... It should be included.

Part of the difficulty of writing a piece like this is honoring the stories that it is telling. Though the victims' names are left anonymous, these stories are directly their's. And as one who you will later be later reflected upon once said, "My story will not be sensationalized. I will not be sensationalized." Rather than being presented in the privacy of a courtroom or through journalism and social media where their stories may be skewed for scrutinization or censored to fit a network's objectives, these stories are being told to the public in raw form. It was important to maintain every detail expressed so the audience received the full picture. It is important for the audience to understand things they would not otherwise know unless they themselves have done the research or studied/practiced law and criminal justice. Society lacks education and insight, and the majority aren't always willing to seek it for themselves. It's easier to formulate an opinion and stick to one's ignorance rather than indulge differing perspectives and thoughts.

Writing this piece was a challenge to say the least. But hearing it out loud for the first time was chilling and terrifying. I wanted a piece that would make these issues and concepts more tangible, more *real*. Because they are real. They happened. They are happening. It's one thing to play a game of telephone, where the facts and information are changed, stretched, misshapen, or misconstrued. It's another to have it played out in front of you. Just listening to it in real time, as if the real people the characters are based from were sitting in the room speaking to us, made my

heart sit in the pit of my stomach. Understand, this play is not composed of just my words. It is composed of the thoughts, facts, statements, actions, hurt, and trauma of living human beings.

The overall purpose of the thesis is for experimentation. However, after the first read it became quite apparent this isn't even for the sake of the thesis anymore, and perhaps never was. While everyone is excited to set forth on this endeavor, there are fears in approaching the material. There are fears of performing it. Not for the sake of the success of the thesis, but for the sake of our own personal boundaries and barriers. For the demand of vulnerability. For the personal experiences that may seep into the performances. We have quite the task at hand. In the end this project has become not for the sake of graduation, but for the sake of the fight for change. For the sake of defending and honoring these stories. It no longer feels as though it is for my sake. It is for everyone's sake.

Friday, February 15, 2019.
Monologue Work:
Emily Doe

Emily Doe's monologue within the script poses unique challenges for the actress playing her. It flips between a nonchalant, black and white, scientific description of a process that is anything but casual and completely traumatizing to anyone who has to endure it, to an emotional rabbit hole of the immediate traumatization withstood directly after the procedure. The actress herself has had personal experiences relating to sexual assault that poses an additional set of challenges.

In my acting classes, classes taken throughout high school from the time I was fourteen to my early undergraduate years when I was in my early twenties, method acting did not come with a warning label and some tactics and techniques were even encouraged from time to time. Uta Hogan's *transference* was read about but not really taught in a hands on matter, yet we were expected to "just do it" in practice. And though the technique can be beneficial to a performance that sometimes demands the worst from us, it could be dangerous and teeter on the now acclaimed dangerous practice of method acting if not taught thoroughly and properly. I knew with a piece like this, directing an actor to perform in a certain way by telling them to "just do it" would not work. Nike does not have a place in the intimacy of the bedroom, nor does it have a place in the intimacy art. And yet I have heard the phrase be casually uttered to myself and students time and time again without any discussion of consent. I never questioned it before, but my studies during my graduate education have shed new light. It now rather troubles and, quite honestly, angers me as an artist. There seems to be little to no discretion when it's directed. Frankly, it's lazy and careless directing and it has been the norm for far too long.

Becca, the actress playing Emily Doe, will inevitably and unconsciously tap into her previous trauma the more she channels her character and despite our efforts to keep her out of a dark mental space. It's expected to occur in an art form that purges so much emotion and asks for such deep vulnerability from its artists. It is important moving forward to not only walk through and teach methods that restrain from completely losing oneself into a role that touches so close to the heart, but it is additionally important to contingency plan in the event trauma is triggered.

My first step was to walk her through the monologue and ask her questions about the character's experiences, making sure to differentiate between the character and herself. One on one sessions with her and Pablo to review and rehearse the pieces will help to initiate and maintain trust and communication. It is important that they each feel comfortable coming forward with questions and concerns. Their performance will only be good if they feel comfortable, supported, and safe. Their well-beings are additionally crucial throughout the process, as we all must hold ourselves responsible for taking care of one another as we continue to create safe spaces for intimacy and vulnerability.

Prior to our meeting, Becca read the emotional impact statement written by Brock Turner's victim as the majority of her monologue and character are based from the 13 page statement. We discussed things that may have translated or didn't translate in the script. Becca pointed out details that I, the writer, may have overlooked after reviewing the statement an abundance of times, while she, a first time reader with fresh eyes, connected to things that jumped out to her more. We asked why these details called to her and how we could include them within the script.

After discussing the logistics of her character development, I asked her 3 questions: "What worries you? What intrigues you? What would you want to know more about?" We ask these

questions often at the end of a forum theatre exercise to gauge where our audience's comprehension and understanding lie, and what will require further clarification outside the forum. The following were her responses:

- Intrigued by: "Evidence. Clear evidence that pointed to him [Turner] being guilty of these actions and where he was at fault. Yet one person deemed that it was both of their faults."
- "It worries me that phrases like '20 minutes of action' seems to desensitize the idea of rape."
- "I want to know how her sister found out about what happened to her."
- "Why does this keep happening?"

These questions will help Becca as her character, and me as the writer, attempt to inform ourselves and fill in any holes that the script may leave out. This may require additional edits or it may just be answers that benefit us as a performer and writer. Her last answer was impactful. It was a question she wasn't just posing as her character. It is one we are all grappling with. The answers for it are inexcusable and yet they are permissible. Another challenge that we will face in our work: Uncertainty and fear. Tuesday. February 19, 2019.

Blocking Day1
Lightning Form

Today we blocked the a skeletal version of our first act, as we will do for act 2 on Thursday. Because of the nature of the show, I wanted the actors to be informed of all entrances, exits, and important marks to hit first. We will have plenty of time to work particular moments. This is also

the time to get to know one another. The coming rehearsals will involve intimate touching and emotional vulnerability which many may not feel comfortable performing with and in front of each other quite yet. It is one thing to confidently perform prepared emotional vulnerability in front of an audience of strangers, it is completely another to stumble through difficult material in front of familiar faces, friends, and new acquaintances in an intimate space. So the cast will be given the week to get to know one another, work as a group, have discussions, and mentally prepare for the work ahead.

At the end of rehearsal, I had the cast stand in a circle to partake in lightning forum as a sample introduction into forum theatre. The following questions were asked and explored:

- 1) What are some common statements, accusations, or assumptions made regarding victims reporting sexual assault/rape?
- 2) What examples of media influences contribute to the way we perceive/treat victims in cases of sexual assault/rape?
- 3) What contributes to the behaviors of assailants who commit these crimes?
- 4) We know why rape culture is bad, but why does our culture make it okay?
- 5) What worries you?
- 6) What intrigues you?
- 7) What would you like to know more about?
- 8) How can we change the culture?

Forum theatre presents a unique opportunity for participants to explore multiple perspectives of a social problem while practicing small solutions in a safe role play environment. It allows us to process difficult and questionable matters as a group with both shared and different experiences and perspectives. It allows for openness to new ideas and various perspectives. It helps us

understand the inconceivable at times, rethink actions, and relate to one another. It helps to inform ourselves, our characters and their actions and reactions, while also informing our own actions and reactions. It makes us think about what we want out of the experience, what we are curious about, and how might we act on that curiosity.

When asked, “what would you like to know more about?” the cast answered with the following:

- Solutions
- Psychology of rapists
- Psychology of victims
- Organizations and activism
- Prevention and community outreach
- Strength
- Better attainable research

I hope that in asking these questions it holds us responsible for seeking answers. The nature of this show is to not just ask these questions to benefit our characters and performance. It is to benefit ourselves and what we stand for as well.

Thursday, February 21, 2019.
Blocking Day 2
Spectrum of Difference

Spectrum of Difference is one of my favorite activities when practicing Theatre for Social Change. It acts as a measure of morals and values. It is another fantastic way to gage a group's

comprehension of a given scenario while enhancing the understanding of differing perspectives. The activity is performed by designating three sections of the room from left to right as “Agree,” “Neutral,” and “Disagree,” essentially forming a spectrum out of the space. Participants move where they feel best fits their perspective of a given statement. They are invited to discuss their reasoning, and are welcomed to move about the room if they feel compelled to do so throughout the conversation(s). The following statements were read aloud to the actors for submission into the spectrum, accompanied by some interesting responses:

1. Clothing is an indicator of consent.

“Clothing MIGHT be an indicator of interest, but interest is not the same as consent.”

2. If you are a woman who wears “sexy underwear” you are intentionally looking to have sex.

Women: “Sometimes. But not always, and usually note from just anyone. Usually for a specific person, if not for oneself. I can still revoke my consent at any point.”

Men: “It’s whatever’s closest (or clean.) If it’s tight, it’s usually by accident.

Red might be if we know there’s a chance something might happen...

Consent may be revoked at any time and we respect that, and ask that for ourselves.”

3. There is no reason for a victim not to report being raped to law enforcement.

Those who agree: “Your voice must be heard. And if you don’t say something, someone else might get hurt.”

Those who disagree: “There are many reasons that elicit fear. A victim should not be condemned if they are not ready to come forward or make a report.”

Neutral: Agreed with both perspectives.

4.) It’s not sexual assault if alcohol is involved.

Neutral: “I’m still so genuinely confused about this. If both parties are drinking than how do we know?”

Disagree: “I’ve never been blacked out drunk, but I have been decently drunk. I know even when she’s saying yes, I can just tell if her body is saying no... And if she is saying no then it’s definitely a no.”

“I’ve grayed out before. When he asked me if I wanted to, I had the ability to say no. I knew in my head somewhere it wasn’t a good idea, but I was also lucky enough to still have the ability to use my words. But I think as drunk as he was too, even if I didn’t use my words, I think he understood there was a line there, and he needed verbal confirmation to cross it. Otherwise it was a no.”

“I was definitely more sober than the guy was. He had me on top of him with nothing but my panties. He ‘wanted it.’ He was initiating everything physical. I knew he wasn’t black out drunk. Just enough that he would still remember this in the morning. And knowing him, I think he would have regretted it. And if it were me in his position I would have felt taken advantage of. It could have been considered rape if the roles were reversed. It still could have been considered rape the roles as they were. It wasn’t right. I told him not tonight. He apologized to me the next morning. If the roles were reversed, I would have been thanking him.”

“I think it’s a moral compass... I mean I have never been in that situation or anywhere close to black out drunk, but even in my absolute drunkest I would know it would be wrong. I’ve done stupid embarrassing shit. Not harmful though. Anything potentially harmful to myself or others I would know that that’s the line. I think in the back of your head, drunk or not, you just know it’s wrong.”

“I think that moral compass isn’t lost when you are taught. When you are educated about consent and you are educated that rape is wrong, that consent under the influence is not consent, then when you are drunk and you don’t know if the person is consenting, you know it’s not a good idea and you take responsibility and you make the decision for both of you, if not at least for yourself, and you say no. Your moral compass may be a little skewed but if it is a strong and educated one it doesn’t go away.”

5.) It’s only assault if the victim puts up a fight.

*Everyone disagreed with the above statement.

6.) Women who report rape are either lying or want attention.

*Everyone disagreed with the above statement.

(FBI reports only 2% false victim reports, same as any other crime)

7.) Defense attorneys are all bad people for defending alleged criminals.

Agree: “How could you defend someone who committed this crime?”

Neutral: “It may be a matter of survival. Having to pay bills, provide for a family.”
“Not all defendants are criminals. And maybe they believe the person they are defending.”

Disagree: “There are crooked lawyers on both sides: Public Defenders and Prosecutors. And private attorneys.”

“It’s not just one against the other. The way the court works is that you have two non-partial attorneys presenting the evidence and two perspectives. A non partial jury that votes guilty or not guilty. But in the end it is the judge that makes the final decision. The system is such to keep a trial fair... But obviously our system has a lot of flaws and holes in it.

Why is important for us to discuss these things, especially when many of our characters have opposing thoughts and opinions? Well that’s just it. We as a society hate to be wrong, and thus our comprehension of each other and how we relate to one another is incredibly troubling. If we have that issue as people in general, how can we play a character different from our being if we don’t try to understand our characters’ actions, intents, tactics, objections, thoughts, opinions, etc. We have to better understand how they are functioning in their world and how that affects the way they see others and the way others see them. Any time a script’s content reflects that of real life, which happens quite often, it is worth taking the time to discuss the material as a group. For we may relate one way to each other as an ensemble, but our characters relate and function in very different ways. Theatre of the oppressed is built on the concept of understanding how we relate to the world and others, and how the world and others relate to us. This principle does not change in the imaginary world. And sometimes the imaginary world magnifies the problems we are facing in reality.

Isn’t that just character and script analysis? Yes. But it’s a different approach to analysis. While sitting down, journaling, filling out a worksheet, whatever a performer may choose to do,

is helpful in getting to know their character and others, Theatre of the Oppressed may offer us hands on tactics to help us physically and emotionally work through our character and script analysis. It allows us to further investigate the world of the play with each other simultaneously as our characters and ourselves. The practice additionally allows us to improvise as our characters and explore how they interact in their world, outside what is scripted. It additionally promotes a safe space to communicate, encourage dialogue, play, and curiosity. It provides a connection among the cast that builds trust and a sense of empathy. Before ending the activity, a cast member asked,

“What do you guys think about artists who commit crimes that we find out about later? For example Kevin Spacey... He was once of my favorite actors but now he as a person is tainted for me, but his work is still brilliant to me. How do you separate the art from the artist?”

This was an interesting question I feel our theatre department has been grappling with themselves between discussing issues of sexual misconduct and diverse representation in the institution as well as the industry. The actor admitted that it had been a question he had for a long time, but only felt comfortable discussing with his roommate. He understood, however, the question couldn't be dictated by one perspective, he needed multiple. After being a part of a conversation that sustained productivity, kindness, and consideration despite the many differing, similar, and conflicting opinions, he felt comfortable enough to pose the question to his castmates. Everyone became excited for this question, for it had been one we all have been asking ourselves for some time. The question also highly relates to our views on prominent figures such as Weinstein and Daniels. Many suggested that we can recognize and appreciate talent, but we do not

accept the harmful actions of others. Another offered that if the person's work supports negative social commentary, that it may be more difficult to recognize the talent behind a bad message that encourages bad behavior or unhealthy thinking. By the end of the activity I felt good about the cast discussion, and I feel they may have relief knowing they share similar ideas, and when they do oppose each other, they can still have a productive conversation that does not dismiss or condemn one another.

For the remaining 10 minutes of rehearsal, Carlos led the cast through a self-love meditation. The meditation allowed each member to feel a particular emotion and let it be, whether positive or negative. The purpose was to purge the emotion so that they may let it go. At the end of the meditation, Carlos directed everyone to take a moment to be kind to their self. To give affirmation to the self. To validate the self. And permit the self to be happy. When the cast opened their eyes some felt calm and relaxed, while others wiped tears from their faces. It is important to us that the cast recognize what they are feeling, validate it, and not be afraid to feel it. But most importantly, to know they are supported and loved.

Tuesday, March 5, 2019.
Intimacy Training

Creating a production that dissects rape culture has presented a unique challenge: Staging I have witnessed my peers and students be pushed, pressured, and left to their own devices when staging their intimate scenes with little to no guidance. I've heard time and time again that awful little phrase of, "just do it, it's your job" and accepted it as so. My entire training as a director until now had no concerns or regard for staging intimacy, as if it didn't exist in theatre, and yet it fully does in some capacity or other with almost every show we have produced. And now, here I was,

having worked so hard to create a safe environment for my actors to work in, about to lead a portion of them in our most challenging physical scenes, terrified to steer them wrong. Because in this process the realization became more clear: Actors are not ever fully blank canvases or objects that we build and create characters upon. They are human beings with emotional weight, traumas, challenges, vulnerabilities, and triggers that cannot be wiped clean or recalled for use freely despite all training and every attempt to do so for the sake of any given role. We ask them to unearth these things for the sake of our art without providing full support, respect, and trust to guide them through when they are struggling to perform. We as leaders and scene partners become frustrated instead, our egos getting the better of us, and sometimes even disregard them. As directors and artists, we have to realize we share a responsibility to care for each other's mental and emotional health. We have been an industry so focused on product that we forgot to take care of each other in the developing process. And leaders are unprepared to do so and lack the proper training. This is not just a theatre education issue. This is an industry wide issue. Had I not worked with UCF Victim Services, I too would have been severely under prepared for this task. So when the opportunity came to sit in on an intimacy training workshop, I leaped at the chance. I would do anything to protect my actors and myself.

The workshop began with the sharing of prior experiences that led us all here. The years and decades of actors feeling trapped into performing an uncomfortable action, or being on the receiving end, in the absence of any discussion of consent. The lack of communication, fear of losing a job or upsetting an authority figure, getting hurt physically or emotionally, the false development of romantic feelings, sexual harassment and misconduct, etc, all lead us to the disturbing revelation that we as a community of artists have been ignorant and compliant in our

work, and we have been inadvertently harming each other in the process. Intimacy direction and training helps to bridge these gaps to help us guide our actors safely through the process, as well as provide them with protection and resources when they feel unsafe.

The 5 Pillars is a guide to help set a standard of rehearsal and performance practice when working with intimacy. It includes context, communication, consent, choreography, and closure. In other words, actors should understand the context and circumstances of the scene surrounding the intimacy they are about to perform. There should be a clear line of communication and discussion between performers, direction, and stage management. Consent addressed and permitted by and between the **actors**, and an understanding of their boundaries prior to staging. Choreographing a scene with an understanding that the choreography is not to change or defer from what was originally staged and agreed upon without permission from direction and stage management. And a closing moment, to help the actors leave behind their characters and begin a ritual of self-care.

I found the workshop to be incredibly valuable and it helped to make me more confident in what I was doing. It gave me clear and concise points to cover with my actors so that we may maintain a level of comfortability within our vulnerability. It was a true eye opener to the responsibility we as artists share in taking care of each other. It concerns me that not more professors were in the room with us. In honesty, I felt anger to see such a lack of participation from our theatre staff as many (not all) lack the training and empathy required to educate their students. For me, that is one of the biggest changes we as a department need when approaching the education of students and young artists. I hope that this training becomes required for performance arts educators in the future. I believe it to be a vital and valuable part of our work.

Now equipped with a basic understanding of the foundation of intimacy direction, it was time now to take it a step further. To create an approach that integrates TO and the 5 pillars. A path not originally planned for this process of experimentation, but a necessary one.

Thursday, March 7, 2019.
Intimacy Choreography and TO
Image Theatre

Image Theatre, in my experience, has been an excellent practice to help encourage discussions of complicated and controversial matters during workshops with Green Dot. It engages individuals by having them work together to create physical images (or tableaux) with their bodies, while naturally encouraging communication between the partners or group as they begin to work through and critically think about a given social issue. Additionally, the added benefit of this group work has allowed them control of their comfortability with the work. Imagine that: Comfortability with vulnerability. The technique is often used to engage non-performers within a community. It is a perfect example of “a practice for life,” as UCF professor Sybil St. Claire often states when facilitating TO work.

I felt that Image Theatre would be the best facet for staging intimacy. The work itself guides specactors through a step by step process while requiring constant communication between the partners involved; perfect for what was required of us during intimacy choreography. It would allow us to engage with one another, discuss the content, communicate consent (or lack thereof) and communicate with all creatives involved where our personal boundaries stand, and help to create set choreography with safety cues and target points. The practice allows the actors to control

what they are doing with guidance from the director to ensure everyone's safety, healthy mentality, and again comfortability.

I first worked with Steven (in the role of Brock Turner) and Daniella (filling for the role of victim.) We first started with a discussion of the events leading up to the moment of the assault based from the script and everyone's individual research. We additionally discussed each character's circumstances in the moments before, during, and after, as reflected by the people the characters were based from. Once we were all agreed and ready to proceed, I directed the actors to create three images depicting the moment before, and the moment of (creating an action signifying the moment of, without fully enacting the assault, and the moment after. This direction is much different than how we normally facilitate the practice. We usually instruct specactors to create the moment before, during, and after, before having them bring the images to life to create one cohesive scene. In this case I had to monitor for possible personal triggers the actors may face during the process. I wanted to go slow, create a step by step guide with the actors of how each moment would look. Additionally, the script is written to show the assaults right before the moment of penetration, so it was important for them to understand that we would not be simulating this action, but rather we would very brashly allude to the moment of.

During the process the actors freely discussed what they were comfortable with and what they consented to when interacting with each other. They created their three tableaux: An embrace, him standing over her unconscious body on the ground, and his arm arched, elbow up, fingers pointing, threatening penetration. We used the images as an outline that I then guided them through step by step.

In the final choreography, Steven and Daniella's first position is standing in an embrace, Daniella slightly limp. When ready to activate, Daniella swayed to the left, and Steven gently pulled her back into the embrace. Daniella then guided herself to the ground with Steven keeping his arms around her, but allowing Daniella to lead. Once she safely reached her target, Steven released and stood over her to create a menacing image for the audience. We allowed time for Daniella, in character, to adjust herself into the next position. Once she was ready for the next step, she brushed her hair back, signifying to Steven that she was ready and consenting to proceed. He got down on the ground with her, and began lifting her oversized sweater above her knees. Daniella then stopped his hands with one of hers, and put another hand on his chest. Once they made eye contact and she shook her head, it again signified to Steven she was ready to continue. He took her by the wrists and once again allowed Daniella to lead as they simulated him holding her down. Daniella then goes limp, simulating her character becoming unconscious. She allows one leg to go limp as another cue for Steven to proceed.

*It is important to note that the scene takes place behind a lit scrim, Daniella is able to stay fully clothed for the simulation. She wears tight black leggings the entire scene, dark gray costume panties over them, hidden by the oversized sweater. *

Steven lifts up the sweater before removing the panties, throwing them off to the side. He is then placed just to the side of Daniella so that the shadows look as though he is on top of her without having him actually being so. He arcs his elbow back with his fingers directed between

her legs as he comes down, we gave Kristen the visual cue of his elbow meeting Daniella's knees, so that Kristen cuts the light, signifying the end of the scene.

When creating these scenes, I made sure that all actors agreed upon targets we need to hit (i.e. - Sway left and back, ground, elbow to knee,) and consent cues (i.e.- Fingers through hair, eye contact and head shake, leg gone limp.) We also discussed cues as a precaution to give each other if uncomfortable or triggered so that we may readjust. For example, Daniella (in the role of Jane Doe) and Scott (in the role of Weinstein) have a scene where Scott's character is massaging Daniella's uncomfortable character. In the choreography, Scott slowly lowers his grip along her arms and towards her side. If Daniella at all feels uncomfortable or triggered during the scene, we agreed her cue would be to triple tap Scott's right hand, letting Scott know to readjust and place and his hands on her shoulder, releasing any simulated pressure.

In preparing for the intimacy choreography with Pablo (in the role of John Doe,) Jean-Michel (acting as Daniels's partner,) and Carlos (in the role of Daniels) I was frankly slightly more nervous as it was an assault scene between three males, potentially adding a whole other layer of discomfort and awkwardness between the actors. However the gentlemen were completely professional and very enthusiastic about the task. For them, as well as the entire cast for the matter], it's about doing these stories justice. The biggest challenge was reigning them in. They were so comfortable and open with each other, they tended to get ahead of themselves and began activating an entire string of choreography verses taking it one image at a time. It was my job to remind them to take pause and focus on one image at a time so that we were sure to hit our targets and cues safely.

Overall, I found the practice of Image Theatre to be an excellent tool in helping actors, especially those who may not be as comfortable with or trained in simulated intimacy and choreography. Everyone was comfortable, safe, and maintained consistent and open communication with one another throughout.

Sunday, March 17, 2019
Connections Abroad

Spring break allowed us a brief mental vacation from the work. Although we enjoy each other's company and appreciate the purge of emotions and cathartic therapy, all of us needed time to destress and focus on anything other than sexual violence. At least that's what we thought would be in store for our "break." Instead we were fed numerous articles reporting rapists going free with little to no punishment, while their victims stood in the wake of their attackers' destruction with little protection or support from the criminal justice system.

Every day at least one cast member posted an article in distress of the news.. We were all growing more exasperated and fearful by the day. I spent the majority of the break creating rewrites based from cast discussions, requests, and updates of the play's content based on current events. The task was daunting, but so was the news that week.

As the week was drawing closer to a close, I felt more mentally exhausted than relaxed. I think the majority of us had a sense of defeat for a moment. We were truly fighting against a whole culture set to ignore, allow, and fuel harm to others. How is a small cast of college students and recent graduates from the swamps and orange groves of Central Florida going to rally up against a beast as terrifying as that? To be fair, the thoughts and fear were more the exhaustion and confusion speaking. At our very core we were ready to fight. Then one of my actors posted to our group page detailing several isolated conversations had with other students while abroad. Some

knew or were from the some town as Brock Turner and felt disturbed seeing him roaming freely at a local Starbucks knowing what he had done and gotten away with. Others lived in fear even in another country because the issue of rape culture was ongoing yet heavily ignored. They were desperate for justice. They thanked us for the work we were doing and reminded us of the importance of it all.

I will be quite honest, I bawled my eyes out for a good 15 minutes after reading the post. It's difficult not to feel completely helpless during these times, but it was the validation we needed to tell us that what we were doing is and will continue to have an impact on the culture. There were people beyond and within our borders living in fear. Victims who had been silenced. We have an opportunity to change that.

Thursday, March 21, 2019
Practicing Intimacy Calls

You've heard of fight calls, but have you ever heard of intimacy calls? I hadn't until my recent ventures down the intimacy choreography path. It was our first week back, and we had to hit the ground running with only a few short weeks leading to tech. However, it was important to not skip over the safety of properly guided intimacy simulation in the hustle and bustle of these remaining rehearsals. During the workshop, the facilitator heeded the importance of intimacy calls to ensure the actors maintain the exact agreed upon choreography, maintain muscle memory, and recognize all cues and targets throughout the process. As we have been apart for the majority of the spring break, it was important to revisit Image Theatre, and begin our calls with our three tableaux. This allowed the actors and carefully and slowly recall the choreography with the assistance of myself and our stage manager. We were then able to run the choreography at slow,

half, and full speeds. During this week, we continued to work with the calls as such. Once the actors become more comfortable, we will be able to facilitate the pre-rehearsal and pre-show calls with half and full speed runs of the choreography.

Tuesday was additionally everyone's first time seeing the intimacy choreography. During the run-through, I narrated the choreography and had the actors work at half speed to help guide them through the motions. I continued this process for the first few rehearsals until the actors developed their muscle memory. The room was filled with excitement. The visuals of the choreographies impacted us all, and we became excited to share this work with our audiences. Most importantly, everyone felt safe and supported throughout the process.

At the end of each rehearsal we try to have a closing activity, whether it be meditation, check-ins, one minute dance parties, or getting together for post-rehearsal meals to help shake off the heaviness of the night's work. I am extremely proud of the work these individuals have put forth thus far and I am excited to see the life they breathe into this show in the coming weeks.

April 2-11, 2019
Tech Week

Tech week. Endearingly nicknamed "hell week" and with good reason. This is the week where most everything falls apart right before the planets suddenly align and Dionysus and Thespis smile upon us. But only after a large amount of sweat, tears, hair pulling, a pocket full of cough drops.

We were able to move into space two days sooner than originally anticipated. This allowed us to get a leg up on preparations for tech such as spiking the studio, setting up bars to mark audience seating, and experimenting with the sheet that we were using as a makeshift scrim. It also

allowed us time for spacing and an extra run so that our stage management can focus on refocusing lights and programming the board. Our first bump in the road was communication with the department's production management for assistance and permission to utilize the space's amenities. It had been a frustrating two months of trying to contact someone for help with no reply, and now all technical design and production staff was off-sight for a show in downtown. It was looking like we would have no lighting, and we quickly began contingency planning until we finally had an answer. Originally, we were permitted to use the lighting board, but to not touch the orientation of the lighting plot. We attempted to make a strong case in assisting the department by rearranging the focus (and not the fixtures) to create a general plot that would be more accessible for other student projects to utilize without needing to touch the plot in the future. Our pitch was successful, and with the permission of our production management, we were able to achieve creating a more user friendly and versatile plot for ourselves and future studio shows. Our first hurdle jumped!

On our first official day of tech, we received notice that we would be losing our actor playing the roles of Weinstein and Father. **Panic.** We would have to continue tech, skipping over the scenes until we could find a last-minute stand-in that would then have to be guided through intimacy work with Daniella. By Wednesday, despite numerous emails, pulling actors from classes, and sending the script to interested candidates, we were still left with no one available to stand in for the weekend. **Absolute panic.** The cast was doing wonderfully, but all were growing incredibly nervous, as was I. It was then on my drive home that an idea came to mind.

Skipping the Weinstein scene was nothing new. We had to skip the scene at least once a week to accommodate the original actor's scheduling conflicts. The more we ran the show, the

more we realized that yes, while the scene is important and would be terribly missed, removing it from the run would not diminish the story. At this point, especially with the use of audio news reels, we were able to perform the play with removal of the scene without skipping a beat. It additionally provided an opportunity for the rule of threes: Prior to the scene, and at the beginning of Act II, we see Emily Doe and John Doe each waking from the aftermath of their assault. In the Weinstein scene, we see the moment before Jane's assault. A minor change would have the scene become the third image of seeing a victim wake the morning after. The audio reporting Weinstein's developing case would play during the silhouette intimacy choreography between Pablo, Jean-Michel, and Carlos. When the silhouette ends, Daniella would wake as her role of Jane, and run off stage, followed by a blackout to signify the end of Act I going into intermission. It eliminates the need for a last minute stand in and having to either teach the choreography or change the blocking to eliminate the scene's choreography altogether.

That still left the role of Father, whose monologue is composed of large portions of Dan A. Turner's statement of character written and read aloud in court on his son's behalf. Scott, who was originally playing the role, worked with me the week prior to add and eliminate portions of the monologue he felt would be important to a father coming to the defense of his son.

It couldn't be eliminated. It was the voice of the opposing perspective, and it needed to be heard to maintain the attempt of a multi-perspective play. From the driveway of my house, I sent a desperate Facebook message to a friend, another Theatre UCF alumnus who recently moved to Texas. Tyler was an amazing actor, but moreover, he had a voice for voice over work. I explained the situation and asked if he would have the time to review the monologue and send a recording we could use as audio for the show, with the promise to provide him credit in the program. We

would have the lights change to focus on the actors playing Turner and Emily Doe to allow the audience to listen to the words of Dan A. Turner, while watching the characters' reactions. Tyler agreed, and after a 24 hour period of reviewing the piece, answering questions and exchanging directing notes for the voice over, an mp3 was emailed and downloaded. Hurtle two jumped!

Be, my thesis chair, came to view the first dress rehearsal. Her notes were positive, insightful, and incredibly helpful. She pointed out something I had been struggling to resolve. The last scene is an incredibly difficult one, line-wise. The lines are news reports, article updates, and a call for change. Because they read like news clippings, there was a disconnect between the lines, the actors, and the characters. We had all chopped it up to be a matter of a mouthful of words and paragraphs, out of character, that were hard to digest and memorize. We had even created notecards to help them. Be liked the idea of note cards but pointed out that the actors seemed like they were squeezing out the last ounce of energy they had from the rest of the show, and were struggling to get the words out. It was a matter of connection. Of course! She suggested revisiting character work and asking questions about the content of the lines and the script prior. You know what that means: Forum theatre!

The biggest struggle of this process was just that. To focus more on the *process* and not the product. Too easily we forget that, and half way through we begin running the show like robots on autopilot. That's where the product falters. Too often our training is about perfecting every detail, and while there will always be a level of perfection to achieve, we cannot lose ourselves in it. Discoveries and choices are made when mistakes are had, or we investigate things not previously thought of. Being perfect prevents us from seeking those things, and traps us out of our individuality as artists and the uniqueness of our work. It was time to bring us back to our roots.

As our rehearsal time was drawing to a close, I decided lightning forum would be a great tool, especially for creating moments before each show. That night, we gathered as a cast and first checked in with each other about how we were feeling as our human selves, and then how we were feeling as performers. Connection was definitely what we felt was missing for the end of the show, as well as pressure to do right by the people whose stories we were telling. We then asked ourselves what we could do to change that and become more comfortable. That's when we began our lightning forum.

There we sat in a circle, center stage of the studio with the lights focused and changing above us, the rest of the room dark and silent. The only other sound to be heard was the clicking of buttons and switches on the lighting board our stage manager was programming. It was just us, filling a small space in a big room together.

We asked ourselves the same questions we posed during the first half of the process: Why does this keep happening? Why are we letting it happen? Where are these perspectives coming from? What intrigues us? What worries us? What can we do? What are we going to do? How does this relate to what we are doing? How is what we are doing going to make an impact?

Tears began flowing. Tears of anger, of fear, of concern, of love, of hope. We asked ourselves why we are here: We're here to tell victims' stories. We're here to bring justice, to protect those who have been hurt, and prevent further harm from happening. We are here for ourselves and for each other. As we drew to an end with a check out to help bring us back into ourselves, I looked at my cast. Every night this week I have cried during or after each rehearsal because I had felt so much pride for them. They had each been through their own challenges and trauma. They had each spent so much time before and during this process overcoming their own

inner battles and challenges, and here they were putting themselves out there on behalf of others. Performers truly do not receive enough credit for the sacrifices, the heart, and the vulnerability they bleed into their work. They sometimes go thankless, simply expected to give their all.

The human beings in front of me have been beaten and bruised mentally and emotionally at some point or another in their lives, whether by life itself or even our own art. They are an incredible group of artists and beings, strong and courageous in their vulnerability. For me, this process, and my motivation for fighting for female rights and all human rights, has always been about protecting my loved ones and students. There was a time in my life I was helpless in protecting them. Even if I did not know them at the time of the hurt, it pains me to know they were in a place without protection and support. It is everyone's responsibility to take care of each other, and we have been failing as a community and a nation to do better. I want to protect the victims who have gone through this and prevent more from being victimized. I want to protect the people I love. I want to protect the people sitting in front of me, with tears in their eyes and fire in their hearts. This is how. With my art. With this piece. With them. And with that, tech week draws to a close. Opening night is tomorrow. And the real fight begins.

April 12-14, 2019
Performance Run
Talk Back

Performances involving scripts such as this are incredibly demanding. We forget that as audience members. Many who attend are ignorant to the fact. I have watched these performers give their all throughout this process. Every run is powered by bravery, emotion, and vulnerability. Some days you can see their energy drain from them with every passing scene. You can see them

battling defeat over their character's circumstances. They want to keep fighting, but they have grown tired. Practicing forum theatre, even if it is just an abridged form such as lightning forum, has helped the actors not only stay connected to their characters and the story, but it has helped to remind them what they are fighting for in doing this. When their passion is sparked, they do not lose energy. They stay connected throughout and do not falter. Thus, just as it has helped us throughout our rehearsal process, we continued to practice forum before each show.

Every night, 15 minutes to places after everyone is in costumes and ready, we circled up for lightning forum. We asked ourselves those same questions from day one: Why does this happen? Why don't we take or hold others responsible? Why does this keep happening? What can we do about it? Why are we here today? These performances were more than telling stories. The whole process was about giving voice to those whose voices were taken from them by social narratives and criminal injustices. It was about giving power to those victimized and holding our society and criminal justice system responsible for the continuing rape culture. It's about education on a complex subject that many are too afraid of or threatened by to be educated. Lightning forum as a warm up helped the actors once again reconnect with their characters and relationships in the room and to each new audience. It sparked passion and reminded them of the gravity of the task at hand. It helped to build community among the cast so that they knew that no matter what happened on stage, they would have each other's support.

They each took to the stage with a strong power that captivated their audiences. Every night my stage manager and I watched the audiences' reactions from the back of the studio. Many shed tears while others watched with clenched jaws, balled fists, and tense postures. On opening night, a young woman RAN out, bursting through the doors. Our stage manager was able to find her

during intermission to check on her. She had a panic attack while listening to Emily Doe's monologue recounting the events after her assault. Through tears and a forced smile she told our stage manager that she was going to return after the intermission and would try to stay as long as possible. We told the young woman we understood if she needed to leave for the rest of the performance and to take care of herself. She shook her head insisting to come stay for the rest of the performance, and that she did. On closing night, a male audience member, a friend, stormed out of the back of the studio, quietly exiting the back door during Dan A. Turner's monologue. I slipped out to check on him. He was pacing the alcove with a fist held to his lips, shaking his head. I asked if he was okay and replied with a "NO" trying to maintain the volume of his voice. I asked if a hug would help. As we embraced, he held on tight and whispered "How are you all doing this? How have you been doing this? I'm livid! How are you guys getting through this?" The answer was truly the combination of TO practice and intimacy choreography. He asked for a moment alone and returned back to his seat after a few minutes.

The talk back sessions after each show displayed the true impact of our work. We first allowed the audience to ask us questions about our character development, writing and rehearsal process, etc. We then turned the talk back on them. We asked the audience what moments were most impactful, what interested them, what worked well, and what might not have worked well. In all of the talkback sessions it seemed the moments educating audience members on what they may not have previously known struck a chord with them most, such as Emily's detailed description of a rape kit process including the length time of 4 hours. Or hearing Perskie's verdict in line with Emily's victim statement in court and how he seemed to be using her words against

her to deliver his final decision. All were disturbed by the images of the silhouettes, but those who commented were excited about the use of shadows to convey violence on stage.

After the show, before each talkback, we asked the audience to participate in an online pole, voting upon five counts as a jury:

1. Do you the Jury believe that clothing worn by the victim is a viable defense in the court system?

Results: The majority of participants voted no.

2. Do you the Jury believe the consumption of alcohol, of either party, is a viable of a given perpetrator's actions?

Results: The majority of participants voted no.

3. Do you the Jury believe that personal attacks on either the victim or the plaintiff are acceptable methods of prosecution and defense?

Results: The majority of participants voted no.

4. Do you believe there should be laws instated to ensure better treatment of victims during trials?

Results: Those who participated unanimously voted yes.

5. Do you the Jury know someone who has been, or have you personally been, victimized by sexual violence in your lifetime?

Results: The majority of participants voted no.

After delivering the final verdict of the poles each night, we then asked the audience what we had asked ourselves many times during forum theatre practice: What worries you?

Some nights there was silence before members would raise their hands tentatively. Closing night many audience members without hesitation or raised hands shouted responses out. Every night the following was stated:

- There's not enough education on the traumatization of the victims and the process.
- There are many others like Brock A. Turner walking around freely.
- Toxic masculinity contributing to criminal justice proceedings of sexual assault and rape.
- Power continuing to be abused.
- There will never be change.

We then asked how we can create change. It came down to our biggest message: Education. We need it. We need a better understanding of consent and sexual violence and what it entails. We need to know what fuels toxicity in our society and how it shapes our views. We need to listen and discuss. We need to continue creating work like this.

It was humbling at the end of each night to converse with members of the audience. Some were still processing what they had just witnessed while making connections to the world around them. Others were incredibly passionate and ready to hit the ground running. It was a relief to speak to those who have worked in the criminal justice system and to be told what was staged was accurate and true to the court system process. Most humbling of all, were the genuine thanks given to us for creating and presenting the piece. It was validation that we gave justice to the stories being told, and we truly made an impact on our audiences the way we had intended. While we were all looking forward to the mental

break from such a personal and emotionally demanding show, we were sad that the run had come to a close. We grew close during the process, as theatre does. We mended old disputes and formed new bonds. Most of all and truly, at least for myself speaking, this process was a life changing one. For the better.

April 28, 2019
Skype Discussion
With Samuel Shultz

Following closing night, I had reached out to Samuel Schultz, explaining to him the show we had just closed and my thesis project. I requested permission to use his story and expressed an interest in speaking with him. He responded back in two short days, having watched part of the video link of opening night, and pleased to answer any questions I had. When I told the cast, they all excitedly requested to be a part of the conversation. Samuel kindly obliged, and a week later a Skype call meeting in the place we performed *Time's Up* was arranged.

Samuel was very kind. He asked us what questions we might have had. We all looked to each other, then back to the laptop screen smiling. We wanted to know about him, as a person. His career, interests, personality, etc. He chuckled, and with a smile he replied, “When I was little, I watched Dumbo for the first time and couldn’t get through it without crying. I couldn’t watch Dumbo because I was so sensitive to how badly bullied he was throughout the film... That little kid is the kind of person I grew up to be.”

We talked to him about Broadway shows, people he sees on the subway, and trips to New York. We discussed the play, why we chose the stories we told and what our process was like. For an hour and half we simply got to know one another. We laughed and expressed our support for

each other. He was truly kind and generous. One of the things that impacted us most was this statement: “I will not be sensationalized.” Samuel didn’t want his story to be used as a thing anyone could apply a narrative to. He wasn’t someone after fame or fortune, or did anything he regretted, as most victims are accused of. He simply wanted the truth to be told, and to protect others from being victimized the way he was. We felt that deeply. We wanted nothing more than to support that message for Sam. He later said, “I could have been one of those gays who grew old and cynical over what happened to me... But I just had to choose happiness. You never know what someone is going through. We have to choose kindness.”

The hardest task of writing these characters was capturing the true nature and humanity of people I have never met. I only got to know them through character statements, articles, reports, and interviews if available. It was a relief to know we had done Samuel’s likeness justice, and helpful to have a more personal knowledge of who he is as a person to include in John Doe’s character description. Samuel’s words were encouraging, kind, and gave us hope. It’s an approach we could all take more. To use love to fuel our passion instead of hate or anger. It was a pleasure and an inspiration to meet this man. We only hope we continue to give these stories justice as we move forward.

CHAPTER 4: REFLECTION OF A LIVING HASHTAG PLAY

To determine the inciting purpose for writing this thesis is the equivalent of posing the question, “What came first, the chicken or the egg?” in that I don’t quite know what drove me to this work: The impingement a piece can impress upon the audience or the initiative to take care of our creatives. I knew I wanted to create a social change piece that would influence the impact and take-aways of audiences attending a theatrical presentation. On the same hand, I wanted to create a method of developing pieces for social change, and for theatre in general, that would provide safer approaches and healthier work environments for theatre makers and practitioners across the industry. Launching myself into the work, I had my main objectives in hand, I just needed to find the means in which to accomplish them. First was through the reimagining of a modern Living Newspaper Drama, as the creative vessel and model for the work. Our version, however, would better engage and educate audiences, raise social awareness, and call for change. The second was our approach. It was quickly determined that for this project to succeed, Theatre of the Oppressed Pedagogy would best be applied to our play development, from the writing process to the rehearsals. This would ensure that the written form would improve upon the original, to help serve both audiences and performers. Performers would become socially conscious within a supportive process that would foster community and a safe environment for vulnerability to thrive and be cared for. Our mission became clear. It wasn’t just about changing the way we develop and present theatre for social change. It was also about reimagine how we approach theatre across the board from the development, to the rehearsal process, the audience engagement, and across all scopes and genres of the art form. This was, and is, just the start.

Throughout the process, we utilized TO's Newspaper Theatre, Forum Theatre, and Image Theatre as our approaches to the development and rehearsal processes. The idea was to implement a pedagogy that would encourage critical thinking, social consciousness, and foster a sense of community. It is to my understanding that regardless of the genre of a piece, when a piece tackles difficult and potentially triggering content these dealings can not be taken lightly. TO gifts us with the ability to navigate the complexities of social issues and oppression present in our world. The exercises implemented in our practice allowed us to relate to one another, to our characters, the text, the stories and people involved in the piece, and to the world outside the rehearsal and playing spaces. TO encourages the practices of communication and consent within the work. It respects boundaries as much as it challenges them, while additionally helping us to understand those boundaries and social barriers between ourselves, the world around us, and between each other. Implementing TO provided us a safe place to feel emotions, encouraged us to question and challenge social structures and legislations in place, and the freedom to say, "No" or "I am not comfortable" without fear of being condescended, shamed, or fired. It allowed us to be understanding, kinder, and gentler people without sacrificing an ounce of time. TO gave us a healthier working environment in a world of harsh realities, cruelties, and heartbreak. It encouraged us to be brave instead of forcing or pushing us past boundaries, and helped to take care of ourselves and each other, and helped us to work through past or triggered traumas. TO creates a sense of understanding, reclaims control, and produces an outcry and motivation toward action when control is withdrawn. TO is an effective and viable tool that should be used as often as possible within a rehearsal space. The practice makes for more informed and connected artists, and for creating better human beings and game changers.

I felt that I should have utilized TO more often throughout our rehearsal process. We utilized the exercises only once a week to once every two weeks. This was the result of falling into an old and potentially hindering habit: I was focusing on product, not process. The cast was so hyper-focused on honoring the victims' stories and the characters that they forgot to feel for themselves and connect. As we drew closer to the show I began increasing our weekly forums. By the end of tech week, we forumed every night. The change was instant. The cast was reconnecting with their characters and circumstances, and to each other. They were additionally connecting to the story as human beings again, not just performers. The change was evident both on and off stage.

The challenges of using TO in the rehearsal room is measuring its effectiveness among the audience. TO is traditionally practiced using the audience as spec-actors, allowing them to engage and participate in action themselves. While our rehearsal process was utilized TO, our performance did not. We had to rely on the benefits and effects of TO in the rehearsal room carrying through the performance. Would all of our strength, tears, forums, heart to hearts, and overcome obstacles enhance the performance of the show? To estimate the impact of our performance, we held a post show talkback session each night. We allowed the audience to ask us questions to help them build an understanding of our work while allowing them to speak upon thoughts and emotions felt during the performance. Additionally, we were able to turn the tables on the audience and ask them questions regarding the content of the show. The talkbacks would often lead to conversations among a room of people. We talked about the issues, what worried us, and what could be done to change the standing system. It soon became a town hall meeting every night, rather than a clarification of audience understanding. Ultimately, the objectives of

the practicum were achieved, and my expectations repeatedly exceeded by both my cast and the audience response.

I was pleasantly surprised by the audience reaction. A few of my cast members had heeded the warning that some patrons coming to see the production possessed politically conservative views that could have hindered their experience and may arise during the talk back. I reminded my cast that in doing a social change piece we are not seeking validation or approval necessarily. We are dealing with complex political content that often raises emotionally charged conversations and opinions. Not everyone will agree or like what we do. We do this not to change minds, but to educate those minds and feed them perspectives they may not have heard or understood prior to experiencing our work. Those same audience members my cast warned us about attended every show and participated in the talkback every night. Their presence and participation throughout the run acted as a small piece of evidence of just how powerful education is. *Time's Up* detailed multiple perspectives, stories, news lines, excluded information from the media, and an education on criminal justice courtroom and prosecution procedures related to sexual violence. This information is vital to formulating opinions, and disarming defenses during conflicting arguments. Some members left with a new outlook on the social issue, while others simply learned to listen and speak without aggression.

While the audience did not receive the opportunity to forum as the performers did during rehearsal, though I would highly recommend adding a workshop for future productions, we devised circumstances to help engage the audience as part of the show. We staged the show in a thrust to create a courtroom feel to the playing space. Railings were then added to the front rows to set up sections of the jury. All marketing, posters, curtain speeches, and ushering directed

toward patrons were designed to make them feel as though they were a part of a courtroom, from jury selection (doors opening to studio space for audience seating) to a recess (intermission.) We additionally added an interactive experience by adding a pole for patrons to participate in. All questions were structured in a way that would be presented to a voting jury, but formulated to address the social and criminal justice constructs discussed in the show. Final verdicts became a call for change as well as a gage of social change among the audience. The results were then shared with the audience for further discussion. These final verdicts would either stir worry among the audience or stand as evidence that social change was imminent. All tactics were researched prior to enactment to help create an experience as close to that of being in a courtroom. One audience member who worked in a prosecution office confirmed the accuracy of the show's performance and environmental elements. I believe that the implementation of these tactics helped to further support the overall objectives of the practicum and set the mood of the show.

Despite the success of *Time's Up* and the practicum portion of the thesis, one of the biggest challenges was single-handedly developing script. During the heyday of the Federal Theatre Project, artists and newspapermen worked together to create Living Newspapers. The form was not designed to be created by a single soul. Based on this experience, it is my professional opinion that any future Living Hashtag script and pre-production process should be developed with a creative team of both theatre makers and researchers. This is not just for the sake of the operation of a production, but for the sake of the mental health of the artists involved as well. The writing process alone involved four months of research entailing newspaper articles, news reports, courtroom coverage and audio recordings, victim statements, a criminal justice

course for a full understanding of courtroom proceedings, and interviews with victims and members of the defense. It is crucial to note that in-depth research into any given social issue for a project of this caliber can take a tremendous mental toll on a person. Our work was most effective during the rehearsal process because it was a group effort. As a group, we were able to provide each other with support and insight, rather than journeying through the process alone. That camaraderie is extremely beneficial to the human spirit and the mission of projects such as these.

As this chapter draw to a close, I realize I am also closing the chapter that was *Time's Up*, a production that possessed so much of my heart for the nine month process it took to bring it to life, from the research and writing stage, to this very sentence. I had the astounding opportunity to work with extraordinary artists who braves their vulnerability for the sake of speaking victims' truths and bringing justice to the issue of sexual violence. I am humbled by the entirety of this experience and the courage of those who helped to make this all possible. My life will forever be impacted by this work and by the talent and humanity of the cast and crew. We sincerely hope that *Time's Up*, and future productions like it, will continue to reach artists and audiences alike, and begin a chain reaction of change desperately needed in our world. To those artists, the audiences of this run, and to all the game changers and social justice fighters, I leave you with this: Don't give into the hopeless. Always exceed the expected. Our voices will be heard, and our impact felt. This chapter ends here, but our journey and work are far from over.

CHAPTER 5: THE FIRST LIVING HASHTAG PLAY

TIMES UP: A #MeToo Play

Written by Elizabeth Fay

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Play Packet

Synopsis

You have been summoned. Step into our courtroom and serve as a member of the jury as we follow the sexual assault trials of Brock A. Turner, David Daniels, and Harvey Weinstein. Go beyond the inconsistencies and biases of the media in this victim-centralized recount of the events that led to the sexual assaults of Emily, John, and Jane Doe. "Time's Up" explores and challenges social and criminal justice perspectives of the rape culture that has impacted our education institutes, work places, and even our entertainment industry, while attempting to build an understanding of the complexities of sexual assault, harassment, and misconduct.

Character List

EMILY DOE: (F) Early to mid 20s. A working university graduate temporarily living at home. An intellectual and hardworking young woman. She is very calm, light hearted, and leads a quiet routine; very different from her undergraduate days. She is a victim of sexual assault by a male Stanford University freshman student. She has no recollection of the events that happened to her and was only left with memories in the form of gashes, bruises, dirt, and pine needles on her body. She is traumatized and heartbroken by the event, but maintains a well-grounded demeanor throughout the majority of the trial. She often disguises her fear and sometimes anguish with humor to protect the ones she loves around her. Even at her most vulnerable, she is a strong and resilient young woman.

JOHN DOE: (M) Mid to late 20s. A bright up and coming baritone, John earned his master's degree in music at Rice University. He spends the majority of the play residing in the strength gained during his healing process. During his graduate studies, John was raped by his idol, a well acclaimed American countertenor and University of Michigan professor. Because of the rising solidarity and validation of the #MeToo Movement, John has become more open to discussing the events as well as his healing process. He begins to reveal, accept, and overcome his assault from eight years prior.

JANE DOE(S): (M/F) May be represented by an individual or multiple individuals of the prosecution. The role represents the multiple victims and accusers of Harvey Weinstein and the developing sexual assault and sexual misconduct allegations against him.

TURNER: (M) 17-19 years of age. A Stanford University freshman athlete. He is clean cut in appearance, personable in personality, and privileged in class. He is accused of the sexual assault

of Emily Doe, and faces the charges of sexual penetration of an unconscious person, sexual penetration of an intoxicated person, and assault with intent to commit rape.

DANIELS: (M) Early to mid 50s. A celebrated countertenor in the classical music and theatre communities. A professor at the University of Michigan. He and his partner face the allegation of drugging and raping a Rice University student in his New York apartment after a party eight years ago.

THE JUDGES: (3M) The observers. They often move through the play evaluating the other characters, and often interjecting opinions or observations. They attempt to navigate the harsh realities set forth.

PROSECUTOR: (M/F) Leads the prosecution.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY (DEFENSE): (M/F) Leads the defense.

SISTER: (F) Emily's younger college aged sister. They have a very close bond.

FRIEND: (Not gender specific) A friend of John's and fellow graduate student.

FATHER: (M) Father of TURNER. He speaks upon a letter, a statement of character, submitted to the judge on his son's behalf. He loves his son, and sincerely believes he has done no wrong in terms of sexual assault, He does not wish to hurt EMILY when he makes certain statements. He is ignorant to the severity of his son's actions, focusing more on the factors of alcohol and college partying. FATHER is sincere when giving his statement.

THE JURY: The audience.

Staging

The staging may be kept minimalistic, requiring only a few portable blocks for topography and set pieces. Best performed within an intimate space, such as a black box or studio, and staged in the thrust, if possible, to better emulate the environment of a courtroom.

Upstage center may feature a white screen or scrim that can be lit from behind for utilization of any intimate (and/or possibly triggering action sequences,) creating silhouette imagery when desired. These suggestions are at the director's will or disposal.

Note From The Playwright

The following piece is based from research of current events, news, and public records following several cases of sexual assault and violence in the United States headlines within the past 10 years. Some of these events can be traced back to as early as the 1980s. Some are high profile cases, while others may still be in development, and/or are recent confessions and reports derived from the #MeToo Movement. Many of the monologues are based or directly quoted from personal statements given by the actual victims and members of the defense involved in these cases. This play will be handling sensitive content that may be found triggering to audience members and performers and should be addressed accordingly. The mission of this piece is to inform and affect change. However, it is equally important to create a safe environment for both audience and performers. Please utilize the proper resources that you see fit to assist in the rehearsal process as needed, such as: Intimacy choreographers, victim services, grief and trauma counselors, etc. While we strive to maintain artistry, we must take great care of each other as we work through this material. Most importantly, we must ensure that all crew, designers, and performers partake in self-care safely and healthily throughout the process.

May this provide healing, education, responsibility, and a call for change. Thank you for the commitment, willingness, and vulnerability provided by all as you venture forth on this journey. Let anger fuel your passion, but never let that anger turn to hate or aggression. May you always lead with love. – Elizabeth Fay

The Script

ACT I

Curtain Speech

LIGHTS UP.

JUDGES 2 and 3 enter and stand along the vomms. Judge two holds an American flag.

JUDGE 2:

At this time we ask that our audience, the jury of today's hearing, please rise.

JUDGE 3:

All rise.

(pause)

The presence of the flag of our country, emblem of our constitution, remember the principles for which they stand.

JUDGE 2:

The court is about to begin session. We, the three Honorable Judges, presiding.

JUDGE 1 takes center stage.

JUDGE 1:

Members of the jury, your duty tonight will be to determine whether the defendants are guilty or not guilty based on the retelling of past events this evening. You are about to witness a theatrical piece based from the research and testimonies of the defendants and their alleged victims. We ask that you now silence all cell phones and devices.

(pause)

You may be seated.

JUDGE 3:

Tonight's proceeding features content that may be found triggering to some jury members including graphic details and visuals of sexual violence and assault. Discretion is advised.

JUDGE 2:

If at any time you feel the need to leave the room, we understand, but please do so quietly as to not disturb the courtroom.

JUDGE 3:

Information to resources, including counseling and victim services, may be found at the table outside this room.

JUDGE 2:

Be sure the isles remain clear as performers will be entering and exiting isles.

JUDGE 3:

There will be a talk back discussion after this performance. We ask that you please fill out a brief poll that may be left with ushers during intermission and after the performance.

JUDGE 1:

Finally, In the event of an emergency, please be aware of the exits.

(point to exits)

We appreciate you all for your presence here tonight. On behalf of us all: Thank you.

ALL JUDGES:

Court is now in session.

LIGHTS HALF UP.

Act I. Scene i.

LIGHTS UP. The room is dim, and unrecognizable in the dark. The space is lonely and feels as though we are waiting in some kind of limbo. Three individual spotlights focus down on EMILY, JOHN, and JANE as they stand side by side, downstage, and spread across center. In the house left vom, stands DEFENSE

*ATTORNEY, with PROSECUTOR standing
in the house right vom.*

PROSECUTOR:

(Addressing EMILY, JOHN, and JANE)

In your own words,

(gestures to the audience)

can you tell the courtroom what happened the night you were assaulted?

(beat.)

JANE:

Hhh-he came up behind me. I was already growing uncomfortable with the situation.

PROSECUTOR:

Why was that?

JANE:

It was supposed to be a business meeting... *Just.* A business meeting.

JUDGE 3:

Debatable.

*JUDGES appear, each standing in
the shadows of the spotlights on a block,
upstage behind each individual. Their
shadows, unsettling, loom over EMILY,
JOHN, and JANE.*

DEFENSE:

A business meeting? In a personal hotel room?

JANE:

Yes... It's not unusual. Not in this industry anyway. When you're filming on location or even performing in any sort of production off site or not local, there aren't really any offices. Just found space... And plenty of times on other projects I've met with my colleagues to review script changes or rehearse for the next day's scene. It's not unlikely. I didn't think anything of it... At first.

PROSECUTOR:

What changed?

JANE:

He came to the door. Dressed in a robe. I was young, and naïve, and I felt unsettled, but he was my superior. I-I didn't want to jump to conclusions but--

JOHN:

Something didn't feel right.

DEFENSE:

But you went inside anyway, is that right?

JOHN:

Yes.

JANE:

Yes.

DEFENSE:

And are you sure you didn't have interest in anything happening that night? Don't you think that you might have been giving the defendant the impression that you yourself had intentions? Were you not asking for it?

JOHN:

No!

JANE:

No!

JUDGE 1:

Debatable.

DEFENSE:

I see... and what were you wearing?

PROSECUTOR:

Objection! Your Honor, what the victim was wearing should by no means excuse the actions of the defendant.

JUDGE 2:

Debatable.

JUDGE 3:

Answer the question.

EMILY:

An oversized beige sweater.

JOHN:

A suit and tie.

JANE:

Jeans. A button down shirt.

EMILY:

A skirt--

DEFENSE:

(To the audience.)

A skirt.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, this is veering off topic. Will you please allow the prosecution to further address the original question?

JUDGE 1:

Proceed

PROSECUTOR:

Can you please explain to the jury what happened the night of your assault?

JANE:

He led me into the hotel room... It wasn't long into the conversation that he changed the subject. He poured himself a drink. He handed me one. And then--

I don't remember.

EMILY:

You don't remember?

DEFENSE:

That's correct.

EMILY:

Then how do you know you were even--

DEFENSE:

Can you tell us what you remember from the next morning?

PROSECUTOR:

Yes, I can remember that day perfectly--

EMILY:

Debatable.

JUDGE:

(To audience)

She can recall the events of the morning after "perfectly" fine, most likely through a hangover undoubtedly from all the drinking from the night before, yet she can't recall the actual events of her so called "assault?"

DEFENSE:

Objection!

PROSECUTOR:

I will allow it. Answer the question, Miss Doe.

JUDGE 1:

No I cannot recall the events of that night. Everything I know is from news articles, witness statements and reports--

EMILY:

DEFENSE:
But not from your own personal account?

JOHN:
No—

DEFENSE:
And why is that?

EMILY:
I was unconscious!

JOHN:
I was unconscious!

DEFENSE:
And why was that?

EMILY:
I was drunk. I had too much. It had been a while and I overestimated myself—

JOHN:
I was drugged—

JANE:
It was not intentional.

JUDGE 2:
Debatable.

DEFENSE:
You accepted multiple drinks. Even poured yourself a few.

JOHN:
Yes, but I didn't know what was in *that* one.

JUDGE 3:
Debatable.

Irresponsible.

DEFENSE:

Please continue.

PROSECUTOR:

But what I do remember is every minute of that next day.

EMILY:

My own account.

JANE:

My pain.

JOHN:

EMILY:
My experience.

JOHN:
My experience.

JANE:
My experience.

Go on.

PROSECUTOR:

Soreness, bruising and blood

JOHN:

Cuts, scrapes, pieces of gravel

EMILY:

Heavy weight, constant rubbing, no escape

JANE:

Pine needles.

EMILY:

I can still feel him massaging me. Touching me.

JANE:

JOHN:

I was disoriented. I didn't know where I was,

JOHN:

what even happened.

EMILY

what even happened.

EMILY:

I hoped it was just a dream I could wake up from.

JOHN:

I thought it was a nightmare.

JANE:

It felt like a nightmare.

PROSECUTOR:

And did you consent to having any of these physical relations with the defendant?

JANE:

No.

EMILY:

I did not consent.

JOHN:

I did not consent.

JANE:

I did not consent.

JUDGE 1:

Debatable.

JUDGE 2:

Debatable.

JUDGE 3:

Debatable.

BLACK OUT.

Act I. Scene ii.

*LIGHTS UP. PROSECUTOR and
DEFENSE stand center, side by side.
(During this dialogue they may move about
the stage, addressing the audience and each
other as they please.)*

PROSECUTOR:

In 1992, a sexual assault case was brought forth for prosecution in Rome.

DEFENSE:

The defendant, a 45-year-old driving instructor, was accused of raping his 18-year-old student.

PROSECUTOR:

During her first lesson. On the side of the road. For one hour.

DEFENSE:

Allegedly. He was later convicted of *indecent exposure*.

PROSECUTOR:

This after he threatened to kill the girl if she was to tell anyone what happened.

DEFENSE:

She then told her parents and they soon after pressed charges.

PROSECUTOR:

Charges that led to a lesser than conviction.

DEFENSE:

To which the alleged victim appealed.

PROSECUTOR:

And led to the subsequent conviction of all charges.

DEFENSE:

But then the accused appealed that conviction to the Italian Supreme Court, who then overturned the conviction in 1998, due in fact that the young woman was wearing jeans during the time of her alleged rape.

PROSECUTOR:

Jean pants don't have a place for convicting a rapist unless incriminating DNA evidence would prove a rape took place.

DEFENSE:

Debatable.

PROSECUTOR:

On what grounds?

DEFENSE:

Probable cause.

PROSECUTOR:

His?

DEFENSE:

Her's.

PROSECUTOR:

Of what?

JUDGE 3:

(enters)

Consent.

PROSECUTOR:

You're not serious.

DEFENSE:

It was argued then that the tightness of the denim material would have been too difficult to be removed with ease, and thus was concluded that assistance would have been required in order for the alleged attacker to have the ability to remove the article of clothing in order to engage in sexual activity.

PROSECUTOR:

In other words...

JUDGE 3:

“Because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to remove them... and by removing the jeans... it was no longer rape but consensual sex.”

PROSECUTOR:

Objection.

DEFENSE:

“It is a fact of common experience...”

PROSECUTOR:

This cannot possibly hold up in court.

DEFENSE:

“... that it is nearly impossible to slip off jeans, even partly, without the active collaboration of the person wearing them.”

PROSECUTOR:

“Nearly.” And just because they don’t “slip off” does not mean it is not greatly in the realm of possibility that they can be forcibly removed by a person of a larger overpowering stature.

DEFENSE:

The conviction was overturned in 1998.

PROSECUTOR:

Any yet it stands: Her rapist--

DEFENSE::

Not a rapist.

PROSECUTOR:

Went free.

LIGHTS FADE

To a dim blue wash, as the characters exit and the set changes. During the set change, audio of news coverage of the Ford. vs. Kavanaugh televised hearing play as ambiance.

Act I. Scene iii.

EMILY, dressed in a beige sweater so large and cozy she is practically swimming in it, sits snug on the couch reading a book. The light from a TV glows upon her face. Her sister enters from offstage, calling out over her shoulder: "Dinner was great tonight, Dad!" Without hesitation she turns off the television and plops down next to her sister in one swift motion. EMILY is amused but remains mostly uninterrupted. SISTER lets out an over-the-top-attention-seeking sigh before staring at her unmoved sister. She playfully squirms her way closer to EMILY. She sighs once more. EMILY fights a smile. Finally, with arms wide out and stretched legs, SISTER lets out one final sigh as she gently falls onto her sister's lap

EMILY:

Are you done?

SISTER:

Nope!

(She adjusts into fetal position, her head resting on EMILY'S knee. EMILY strokes her hair)

EMILY:

So what is it you want?

SISTER:

Who says I want anything? Can't I just sit here and enjoy the company of my sister whom I love so dearly?

EMILY:

Uh-huh. And this wouldn't have anything to do with that party—

SISTER:

Nooooo.

(Pops up from EMILY'S lap.)

And by no I mean yes.

EMILY:

I'm too old for these parties you kids always go

SISTER:

Oh please, it hasn't been *that* long since you graduated and were out partying away.

EMILY:

Long enough. I bet all those undergraduate boys you hang around still have a mouth full of braces.

(SISTER laughs)

I'm serious! I'm getting too old for these things.

SISTER:

You're 26!

EMILY:

I have a bed time now. A full time job. Responsibility!

SISTER:

All the more reason to come out and let your guard down. We can dance like fools and drink too much too fast. What's one night of fun, huh? Completely harmless. C'mon, just because you're out in the real world now doesn't mean you don't get to have some fun from time to time...

Please?

EMILY:

Well... It is only 10 minutes away.

SISTER:

Exactly.

EMILY:

It's only Saturday.

SISTER:

Which means you can be hungover on Sunday.

EMILY:

No work till Monday.

SISTER:

And it's my last night home for the weekend...

EMILY:

Okayyyy I guess one night wouldn't hurt.

SISTER:

Yes! Let's go! Ah, you're gonna have so much fun, trust me. You need a night out, you deserve to treat yourself... You're gonna change before we leave, right?

EMILY:

Nope.

SISTER:

Em

EMILY:

If I'm coming to this thing, you gotta take me as I am.

SISTER:

You were just complaining that you were too old for this and now you want to go dressed like a librarian? You look like a mom.

EMILY:

Then you can call me "Big Mama" cause I'm sure I'm going to be everybody's mom tonight.

SISTER:

Nonsense. Now c'mon! Let's go have fun.

(They exit offstage.)

BLACK OUT.

Act I. Scene iv.

LIGHTS UP, *EMILY* wakes in a hospital hallway, lying on a gurney set downstage right. She is bruised with spots of dirt and dried blood covering her body in splotches. She is physically sore and uncomfortable. As she struggles to sit up through her grogginess, she feels something poking her in the back. She reaches behind her and pulls out pine needles. As she runs her fingers through her hair, examining the needles, she happens upon more in her hair. She is confused.

A deputy, played by a member of *THE PROSECUTION*, enters. News audio media begins to play as the deputy introduces herself to *EMILY* and begins to explain the events from the night before. The audio reports the assault of a young girl by Stanford student, Brock Turner.

LIGHTS UP,
Upstage center scrim. As the audio play, it narrates the action taking place behind the scrim. Actors, through movement and silhouettes, reenact the details of the news report. As the audio draws closer to the end, the deputy exits. *EMILY* changes into a hoodie and sweatpants as she crosses to center. When the audio ends, *EMILY* is left alone, center stage, standing in a spotlight. She addresses the audience, *THE JURY*.

EMILY:

Have you ever gone through a rape kit before? The term itself is more relating to what's in the box... Like bags and paper sheets, documentation forms, envelopes, instructions... It kind of sounds more like a postal package than anything else, only you know it's for something medical because of all the blood sample tools, cotton swabs, and the one random comb not necessarily intended for the hair on your head... The technical term is "Sexual Assault Evidence Kit." The process is a "Sexual Assault Forensic Exam."

The exam involves hours of poking and prodding. 2-4 hours to be exact, and in some cases, more. A specially trained nurse or healthcare professional first treats any injuries in need of immediate attention. If any. Next, your body is stripped of all articles of clothing worn the night of the assault that are then sealed in bags for evidence collection, DNA testing and processing. Then they take pictures. (*deep, bracing breath*) Lots of pictures. Pictures of every inch of your body that may be broken and bruised or tainted and abused. They swab under the nails, the lips, the nose, any scratches that might be his, or hers, or whoever did this ugly and cruel thing. A ruler is held to every single abrasion. They take hair samples, and pube samples... My case was special... Because of the painstaking time it took to remove every single menacing pine needle that mysteriously found itself in my hair, on my body, in my clothes... It took three nurses and myself to ensure that all were found and removed. All plucked from my being and sealed in their own separate bag.

Then, once the external exam is complete, an *internal* one is performed. There you are, legs spread with your feet drawn up in the stirrups with your whole self just right there in this stranger's face, the whole thing already uncomfortable and weird enough to do in front of your own doctor, let alone hanging all out for a stranger to see, and to poke, and to prod. The tissue down there is swollen, sore, and discolored, while they continue to press into you, and pull, and squish, and swab, and take more pictures. Pictures outside. Pictures *inside*. Intimate pictures. Brutally invasive and miserable pictures. You're cold, unshowered, dirty, and exposed. And then there's the unending relentless questions. You're tired, but you can't go home. And you can't shower, or go to the bathroom, or do anything to cleanse yourself of all of it. Sometimes you have someone there. A victim advocate maybe. Sometimes you're alone. Or at least, you *feel* alone. Then they clean you up. The evidence is gathered, and they hand you this sweatshirt and these pants (*indicates clothing,*) and then they send you on your way, but not before signing documents that read 'rape victim.'

I remember walking out of the hospital in a complete daze, with little to no knowledge of what had happened to me the night before. I was blacked out and unconscious when it happened. I finally get my phone back and it's my dear sweet boyfriend's voice in my voicemail box, and

EMILY (CONTINUED):

he's worried and frightened, and has no idea what happened. He was more concerned about the drunken voicemail I left him, but was completely unbeknownst to the events that would have later occurred that night. And then I see my sister, standing in the parking lot

(SISTER enters from a house right vom.)

I see it in her eyes: This feeling of fault, of responsibility, of confusion and worry of **fear**— *(calls out to SISTER)* I'M OKAY! I'm all cleaned up, I went from looking like a librarian

EMILY(CON'T):

to a P.E. teacher. Isn't that funny? Don't cry. Please don't cry, everything will be alright. I'm right here. I'm fine.

(SISTER runs into EMILY'S arms and they embrace)

And we don't have to tell mom and dad or boyfriend because everything's fine. I'm fine. It will all be... fine. And I kiss her on her head, hoping it takes away her pain. *(kisses SISTER on her head)* Then I send her off as she goes back to school. *(SISTER exits through stage right vom)* And when my boyfriend calls to see if I made it home okay, I tell him 'Yes. I did. I'm okay.' Except I wasn't okay. I hung up the phone. And I cried. I cried for days. I would go to work and pretend like nothing happened before driving to a secluded place to scream because I was absolutely horrified that this had happened to me. And my parents didn't know... How could I tell them? How could I tell them that I *may* or may not have been raped. Behind a fucking *dumpster*. I just had to pretend it wasn't real.

For one whole week I didn't know the details of what had happened to me. How it happened, when, who... I still don't understand why... I was at work when I was scrolling through the news on my phone. It was then that I happened upon this article where I learned about a girl who was found unconscious by two bystanders, foreign exchange graduate students. She was on the hard graveled ground, her hair disheveled, a necklace wrapped around her neck, bra pulled out of her dress that was pulled over her shoulders above the waist. She was naked all the way down to her boots that cold night. Her legs were spread. She had been penetrated by a foreign object. She had no protection from the cold, her sweater undone. And her hair was covered in pine needles... The two graduate students tackled the stranger and covered the girl until help arrived. When the stranger, who was caught red handed on top of her was asked about the young girl he was caught on top of, he said he didn't know. He wouldn't even know what she looked like if he bumped into her on the street. He just remembers kissing and dancing...

I was the woman in the article. I am that woman. That's how I found out the details of my assault. An internet article. I was found with my underwear six inches away from my bare stomach, lying on the ground breathing, but unresponsive in fetal position. Oh but by the way the guy's a really good swimmer with good grades, and a list of extracurricular activities, as if that

makes what he did any less sickening. That's how the article ended. Here's this horrible thing that happened to this girl we know nothing about, all wrapped up in a bow... But you know the worst and most unforgiving part I read? According to him... I liked it.

LIGHTS FADE

Act I. Scene v.

A party. Music plays. As the actors enter they bring any boxes, set pieces, and props onstage. JUDGES 1-3 stand up center stage along the scrim watching.

LIGHTS UP. TURNER enters with SISTER upstage. He attempts physical contact but SISTER flinches away. He attempts to pull her in and kiss her, but she pushes him off, storming offstage. TURNER, disgruntled and offended, crosses to a drink table to pour himself a drink. EMILY enters stumbling, a drink in one hand, phone in the other.

EMILY:

Hey baaaaabe. You know that party I said I was going to with my sister? Well, I mayyyy have a had a tiny bit much. Too much too fast. I guess I can't hold my liquor like I used to. Anyway... Everything's fine. I'm fine. I just wanted to see if you were up. I'm in a really good mood, ya know?

(TURNER'S focus turns to EMILY. He begins to watch her.)

I deserved this. I deserved a night off with my sister, I'm having so much fun. But. I miss youuu. Ugh, I miss you so much. I just. Anyway. I love you. I'll call you tomorrow. Bye...

(Without hesitation, TURNER approaches her.)

TURNER:

Can I refill your drink?

EMILY:

I don't think so, I've had too much already.

TURNER:

C'mon, you're at a party. Have a drink with me.

EMILY:

Who—

(He pulls her towards the drink table and begins pouring liquor into her cup.)

Umm, thanks but I—

TURNER:

This is a good song, would you like to dance with me?

EMILY:

Sure—

They begin dancing. EMILY does not drink what is in her cup. She enjoys herself at first, but grows progressively more inebriated and lethargic. TURNER, holds her close, almost holding her up as they dance. He nudges and kisses her neck and cheek. He attempts her lips but she turns her head away. She seems as though she is having fun, debatably, however it becomes quite apparent she is losing awareness of her surroundings or what is even happening, debatably. Her actions seem very muddled by the alcohol. She does not speak. Even when she tries to create space between herself and TURNER, she is too physically weak to do so effectively. TURNER perceives any pulling or pushing as flirtation as they dance. During this, the lights fade dim as they continue to dance stage right.

JOHN enters with FRIEND from upstage left. They are more well dressed for a party. The scene becomes split between two parties, utilizing the lights to differentiate between the two realities

JOHN:

I can't believe I'm here!

FRIEND:

Okay try not to act like a complete fangirl when he gets here please?

JOHN:

I won't, I won't- but this is David Daniels! *The David Daniels*. "Acclaimed American countertenor."

FRIEND:

I know his credentials John, he is my professor after all.

JOHN:

I can't believe you get to work with him.

FRIEND:

Under him.

JOHN:

Do you know how much I have idolized this man growing up? I own just about every single recording of his performances and records. He is my reason for studying classical music and opera. I want to be him. And we are literally standing here in the middle of an after party waiting for him to arrive.

FRIEND:

I get that, but if you're going to meet him you need to calm down and start playing it cool.

JOHN:

Okay I'm cool, I'm cool.

FRIEND:

Okay. Oh! There he is. Professor!

Enter DANIELS from house right vom.

What an amazing show tonight, really.

DANIELS:

Thank you, it's always a pleasure to see my students admiring the arts.

FRIEND:

Professor, this is the friend I was telling you about.

DANIELS:

Ah yes, the baritone, am I correct?

FRIEND:

Yes that's right.

JOHN:

(Extends hand. They shake hands)

It's an honor.

DANIELS:

Well pleasure. I've heard much about you. And how did you enjoy the show?

JOHN:

It was excellent! Magnificent really. Visually stunning, the music in time, and the vocals--

FRIEND:

Excuse his excitement, he is quite a fan of yours, sir

DANIEL:

Is he now? Always nice to meet a fan and coming artist.

JOHN:

Thank you, sir.

FRIEND:

Why don't I get us all a round of drinks? This is a celebration after all.

DANIELS:

Well I'm not going to say no to that. Thank you.

FRIEND:

I'll be right back then.

(FRIEND turns JOHN for an encouraging exchange. FRIEND exits upstage left.)

I was told you are studying at Rice University, is that right?

JOHN:

Yes sir, graduate studies in music.

DANIEL:

How long have you wanted to be a classical vocalist.

JOHN:

As long as I could remember. If I'm being honest and may be so bold, you have always been one of my biggest inspirations.

DANIEL:

Is that so?

JOHN:

Truly sir. I have always grown up listening to your voice and... Your work is just extraordinary.

DANIEL:

I'm flattered... Well young man, I would love to hear more about you. About your plans, your goals, your work... Why don't we continue this conversation in a more low-key atmosphere. You can come over to my apartment and meet my partner. The three of us can get more acquainted and we can talk more of your promising future.

(Pulls a pen and card from his pocket and begins to scribble something)

JOHN:

That would be amazing.

DANIEL:

Excellent.

(Hands JOHN the card.)

Here's our address. Meet us there in let's say? An hour.

JOHN:

Thank you so much sir, I can't express enough my appreciation for this.

DANIEL:

Let's just keep this invitation between ourselves, shall we? We wouldn't want anyone here to feel snubbed or offended in any way.

JOHN:

Of course.

DANIEL:

Good. We'll be seeing you in an hour then.

DANIELS exits house right vom JOHN, after a moment of excitement, scurries upstage left and exits to find FRIEND. JUDGE 2 exits. The lights fade on stage left while coming back up on EMILY and TURNER on downstage right.

EMILY:

I should find my sister and see where she—

TURNER:

Hey, you wanna go outside? Get some air maybe? Continue this away from the party?

EMILY'S head bobs. She does not reply and stumbles slightly. TURNER, with his arms around her and an eager smile says "Let's go" as he guides her offstage through the house left vom. JUDGE 1 exits up stage. Everyone on stage at this point has exited the playing space, taking all set pieces and props with them offstage. JUDGE 3 remains.

Act I. Scene vi.

Enter JANE, standing in the stage left vom. She is holding a script and a small piece of paper with a room number on it.

She seems nervous. As she enters the stage she is slightly startled to find WEINSTEIN, dressed in a robe with two drinks in his hand, he has already entered the playing space from upstage right. He stands center. Down stage right, a box has been placed. Uneasy, she backs herself into the vom.

JANE:

Oh, I beg your pardon, sir. Is now not a good time?

WEINSTEIN:

You're just on time. Come in, come in. Have a seat.

(Gestures to the box.)

JANE enters and crosses to the box, clutching the script in her hand. She sits. She does not make eye contact with WEINSTEIN. He approaches from behind her, which gives her more unease. She stands up, ready to leave.

JANE:

I can come back later. We can do this another time when you're—

WEINSTEIN:

Nonsense, have a drink.

(He extends a glass. She does not take it. She sits and keeps looking forward.)

You seem a bit tense my dear.

(Places both glasses behind box)

JANE:

I really feel, slightly... uncomfortable. Maybe you should—

WEINSTEIN:

Just relax.

(Begins massaging her shoulders)

It's just us now.

JANE:

(Squirming under his hands)

Sir I--

WEINSTEIN:

Now, now. I'm sure this isn't your first time, is it?

JANE:

First time?

WEINSTEIN:

There's nothing to worry about.

JANE:

(Jumping up)

This really seems inappropriate, and unprof--

WEINSTEIN:

(Forcefully pushes her back down, overpowering her.)

Just relax! You want to work in Hollywood, don't you?

JANE:

Y-yes, but--

WEINSTEIN:

This is just business my dear... Everything will be fine.

JUDGE 3 exits upstage. The lights dim. Upstage center, LIGHTS UP behind scrim. As different news media clippings play, reporting multiple sexual assault and misconduct allegations against WEINSTEIN, behind the scrim we see PARTNER, JOHN, AND DANIELS' silhouettes. DANIEL hands JOHN a glass, in which JOHN drinks from. He becomes dizzy. DANIEL takes the glass and puts it down as JOHN begins to feel faint. PARTNER holds JOHN, and begins to ease

him down to the floor. JOHN'S upper body rests in PARTNER'S arms and lap. PARTNER looks up to DANIEL, who nods. They flip JOHN over onto his stomach, his head now face down in PARTNER'S lap, as DANIEL begins to unbuckle his belt. The audio ceases.

WEINSTEIN:

Everything will be just fine.

BLACK OUT.

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Act II. Scene i.

LIGHTS UP. As audience members reenter, JOHN is found lying unconscious center stage. He is covered by only a sheet, assumed to be naked. His clothes are in a pile tossed off to the side. There is no pillow to protect his head. As news audio plays reporting the rape and sexual assault allegations against DANIELS, JOHN begins to regain consciousness. He wakes. Deafening silence. He is startled at first, as he takes in his surroundings. As he attempts to sit up, he realizes there is pain in his body. He initially has a difficult time sitting up as he is still dizzy and nauseated. When he is able to sit up enough, he slowly begins examining himself, then realizes he is naked. He reaches for his shirt but feels another sharp pain. He carefully reaches his hand behind his lower back. As he brings his hand back forward there is blood on the fingertips. His breathing becomes heavy. He tries desperately not to panic. He wipes the blood onto the sheet, struggles but manages to gather his belongings, and stumbles to his feet, ready to exit or find a place to redress. He is still covered by the sheet, now wrapped around his body for temporary protection. Enter DEFENSE who stands in the house right vom.

DEFENSE:

Why now?

JOHN:

Excuse me?

DEFENSE:

These charges you accuse my client of... The events of that night took place years ago. Eight to be exact, and yet you choose now to come forward?

JOHN:

I...

(enter JANE, stage right. EMILY enters and stands quietly, upstage center)

DEFENSE:

Can you please explain to the jury, why it is that you failed to report the events that took place between you and my client?

JANE:

I was scared.

JOHN:

I was scared.

DEFENSE:

Scared?

JANE:

Of what might happen.

JOHN:

Of what might not happen.

JANE:

I was just starting out.

JOHN:

Making a name for myself.

JANE:

Would I be finished before I started

JOHN:

Would he ruin my career?

JANE:
He threatened me.

JOHN:
He assured no one would believe me.

JANE:
What would people think?

JOHN:
What would people think?

JANE:
He tried to get me drunk.

JOHN:
I was drugged.

JANE:
I touched him back hoping it would appease him enough to leave me alone.

JOHN:
I don't remember what happened then. I just remember waking up like this.

(Holds up the part of the sheet with blood.)

JANE:
I didn't want to do it but he made me.

JOHN:
I didn't want to do it but they made me.

JANE:
He yelled at me. Held me down. Held my legs spread. I couldn't fight him off.

JOHN:
I was unconscious. I couldn't fight them off.

JANE:
He made me feel as though no one would help me. I couldn't be helped.

JOHN:

Because I was a man, and stuff like that doesn't happen to men.

JANE:

Because I was a nobody. And who would believe or want to help a nobody?

JOHN:

I wouldn't be seen.

JANE:

I wouldn't be heard.

JOHN:

I was afraid for my career.

JANE:

I was afraid for reputation.

JANE:

I was afraid for my life.

JOHN:

I was afraid for my life.

(beat)

DEFENSE:

No further questions, your honor.

(exits)

Beat. JANE and JOHN about to exit, turn to each other.

JANE:

I believe you.

JOHN:

I believe you.

EMILY:

Me too.

(They exit)

Act II. Sc. iv.

The lights fade as JANE and JOHN exit. A Facebook notification sounds. Simultaneous with the sound cue, a spotlight pops on, over the house left vom. There stands REPORTER, delivering a breaking news headline.

REPORTER:

June 26, 2018. The New York Post reports: “Woman Forces Ex to Have Sex Holding a Machete To His Face”

"A Montana woman broke into a man’s house with a machete, ordered him to take off his clothes and forced him to have sex with her, police said. Samantha Ray Mears, 19, was charged Friday with two felonies — aggravated burglary and assault with a weapon — as well as several misdemeanors for the incident at her ex-boyfriend’s Great Falls home, according to the Great Falls Tribune.

Mears reportedly broke into her ex of seven years’ house Friday while he was away. When he returned, she confronted him with the large knife, demanded that he take off all his clothes and ordered him to lie on his bed. Fearing bodily harm, the victim complied and she proceeded to remove her pants and climb on top of him. Mears then began to engage him in sexual intercourse — all while still holding the machete. When he tried to get her to stop, Mears refused and bit him on the arm, according to KFBB.

After she finished, she sat naked on the bed, brandishing the weapon. At that point, the victim was able to take several photos of her, which he turned over to the police as evidence. When an argument ensued soon after, an enraged Mears ripped a piece of trim from the victim’s wall and deliberately urinated in his bed, according to KFBB. The ex-boyfriend was able to alert the authorities after claiming he needed to call a friend, then escaping from the room to dial 911.

According to the Tribune, Mears was also arrested in April after a previous argument at the victim’s home where she grabbed his hair, hit him in the face and attempted to strangle him. The state has also filed a restraining order against the defendant, according to KFBB.”

Members of the COMMENTS SECTION, enter the playing space from different entrance points including the vomms and sections of the audience. A Facebook notification sounds with each entry.

COMMENT 1:

(Written by a woman)

“Please tell me she was punished”

COMMENT 2:

(Written by a male)

“She probably coulda just asked nicely.”

COMMENT 3:

(Written by a male)

“Ohh mnooooo someone please savee mee from this horrible fate”

COMMENT 4:

(Written by a woman)

“I bet he enjoyed the free pussy without having to try.”

COMMENT 5:

(Written by a woman)

“Bad writing. It’s rape. End of story. Forcing sexual contact without consent is rape. Coercion is rape. This shit? FOR SURE RAPE.”

COMMENT 6:

(Written by a woman)

“His socks were probably not high enough. Too revealing. Were his ankles showing?”

COMMENT 7:

(Written by a male)

“I bet he didn’t even complain lol wish a sexy woman would break into my house and do that to me”

COMMENT 8:

(Written by a male)

“So many guys dream of sex like that. Who wouldn’t want to be forced sexually by a machete wielding maniac? I mean, she’s no wife, but the sex would be fantastic.”

COMMENT 9:

I can’t tell if some of these comments are sarcastic or for real...

COMMENT 10:

(Written by a woman)

“I think it’s funny how many women in here making jokes in the middle of women’s month, shining examples.”

COMMENT 11:

(Written by a male)

If it was the other way around you guys wouldn’t be joking about it

COMMENT 12:

(Written by a woman)

“Its rape and y’all commenting ‘he must been wearing something to make him a target’ I get your point, we receive these comments constantly but it’s honestly disgusting nonetheless. This man didn’t deserve it and neither do we.”

COMMENT 13:

(Written by a woman)

“I have quite a few friends who don’t believe that male rape statistics are even a thing... Like they don’t believe it happens to men. Period.”

FACEBOOK POST:

"Rape. She raped him."

LIGHTS FADE as actors exit.

Act II Scene iii.

Upstage center, JUDGE 1 stands, prepared to give his verdict. EMILY stands stage left, while TURNER stands in front of a box, stage right, with his FATHER, by his side

JUDGE 1:

“As I indicated, I will announce a tentative, or indicated, sentence and then give counsel a chance to respond. And as I’m sure everyone in the court can appreciate and as was stated several times today, it is a difficult decision. And I just want to, before I give my tentative decision, read something from [Emily’s] statement, which I think is appropriate – actually, two things from her statement.”

EMILY:

“I thought there’s no way this is going to trial; there were witnesses, there was dirt in my body, he ran but was caught ... Instead, I was told he hired a powerful attorney, expert witnesses, private investigators ... That he was going to go to any length to convince the world he had simply been confused...”

JUDGE 1:

“She gave a very eloquent statement today on the record, which was a briefer version of what was submitted to the Court.”

“Let me just say for the record that I have reviewed everything, including the sentencing memorandum, the probation report, the attachments to the probation report, and the respective sentencing memoranda. And so [she] wrote in her written statement, [as read]”

EMILY:

“Ruin a life, one life, yours. You forgot about mine. Let me rephrase for you. ‘I want to show people that one night of drinking can ruin two lives’ – you and me. You are the cause; I am the effect. You have dragged me through this hell with you, dipped me back into that night again and again. You knocked down both our towers. I collapsed at the same time you did. Your damage was concrete: Stripped of titles, degrees, enrollment. My damage was internal, unseen. I carry it with me. You took away my worth, my privacy, my energy, my time, my safety, my intimacy, my confidence, my own voice, until today... If you think I was spared, came out unscathed, that today I ride off into the sunset while you suffer the greatest blow, you are mistaken. Nobody

wins. We have all been devastated. We have all been trying to find some meaning in all of this suffering.”

JUDGE 1:

“And here – I think this is relevant to the sentencing decision –”

EMILY:

“You should have never done this to me. Secondly, you should never have made me fight so long to tell you that you should never have done this to me. But here we are. The damage is done. No one can undo it. And now we both have a choice. We can let this destroy us. I can remain angry and hurt, and you can be in denial. Or we can face it head on: I accept the pain; you accept the punishment; and we move on.”

JUDGE 1:

“So, as she writes, the damage is done. The role of the Court at sentencing is to essentially follow the roadmap that our system of criminal justice sets out for the Court in sentencing decisions. It’s not completely an unbridled discretion. It is constrained by factors that are contained in the Rules of Court. And so I’ve tried to do that to the best of my ability. And my tentative decision is to grant probation, as recommended by the Adult Probation Department, with the defendant to serve six months in county jail and to comply with the recommendations of probation as contained in the report, as will be slightly modified. I understand that – as I read – that [Emily’s] life has been devastated by these events, by – not only the incidents that happened, but the criminal process has had such a debilitating impact on people’s lives, most notably [she] and her sister.”

EMILY:

“I was pummeled with narrowed, pointed questions that dissected my personal life, love life, past life, family life, inane questions, accumulating trivial details to try and find an excuse for this guy who had me half naked before even bothering to ask for my name.”

JUDGE 1:

“And, also, the – one other factor, of course, is the media attention that has been given to this case, which compounds the difficulties that participants in the criminal process face. So I acknowledge that devastation. And to me, not only the incident, but the criminal proceedings – preliminary hearing, trial, and the media attention given to this case has in a way sort of poisoned the lives of the people that have been affected by the defendant’s actions. And in my decision to

JUDGE 1(CON):

grant probation, the question that I have to ask myself, again, consistent with those Rules of Court, is: Is state prison for this defendant an antidote to that poison? Is incarceration in state prison the right answer for the poisoning of [Emily's] life? And trying to balance the factors in the Rules of Court, I conclude that it is not and that justice would best be served, ultimately, with a grant of probation.”

LIGHTS FADE. Center spot on FATHER who speaks to the audience.

FATHER:

“As it stands now, Brock’s life has been deeply altered forever by the events of Jan 17th and 18th. He will never be his happy go lucky self with that easy going personality and welcoming smile. His every waking minute is consumed with worry, anxiety, fear, and depression. You can see this in his face, the way he walks, his weakened voice, his lack of appetite. Brock always enjoyed certain types of food and is a very good cook himself. I was always excited to buy him a big ribeye steak to grill or to get his favorite snack for him. I had to make sure to hide some of my favorite pretzels or chips because I knew they wouldn’t be around long after Brock walked in from a long swim practice. Now he barely consumes any food and eats only to exist. These verdicts have broken and shattered him and our family in so many ways. His life will never be the one that he dreamed about and worked so hard to achieve. That is a steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action out of his 20 plus years of life. The fact that he now has to register as a sexual offender for the rest of his life forever alters where he can live, visit, work, and how he will be able to interact with people and organizations. What I know as his father is that incarceration is not the appropriate punishment for Brock. He has no prior criminal history and has never been violent to anyone including his actions on the night of Jan 17th 2015. Brock can do so many positive things as a contributor to society and is totally committed to educating other college age students about the dangers of alcohol consumption and sexual promiscuity. By having people like Brock educate others on college campuses is how society can begin to break the cycle of binge drinking and its unfortunate results. Probation is the best answer for Brock in this situation and allows him to give back to society in a net positive way.

Very Respectfully,

Dan A. Turner

LIGHTS OUT

Act II, Sc. iv

LIGHTS UP. Enter DEFENSE in the house right vom, and PROSECUTOR in the stage left vom.

PROSECUTOR:

After two Swedish graduate students intervened on the assault of a young woman, and after further witness statements and an investigation, on January 28, 2015, Brock Turner was indicted for five charges: Two for rape, two for felony sexual assault, and one for attempted rape.

DEFENSE:

All of which my client pled not guilty.

PROSECUTOR:

And after the reviewing of the DNA results,

DEFENSE:

The prosecution dropped the rape charges in October. A two week trial began and concluded in the month of March the following year.

PROSECUTOR:

The convictions of three remaining felony charges carried the potential sentencing of 14 years in prison. We the prosecution suggested at least 6 years of prison.

DEFENSE:

While probation officials recommended a more moderate sentencing for the young man.

PROSECUTOR:

On June 2, 2016, Brock A. Turner was sentenced to 6 months in county jail, with three years probation.

DEFENSE:

For which he only served 3 months.

PROSECUTOR:

With the obligation to lawfully register as a sex offender.

DEFENSE:

For life.

PROSECUTOR:

In addition to the completion of a state approved rehabilitation program for sex offenders.

DEFENSE:

Ask for the judge...

PROSECUTOR:

There was a widespread national debate by the public that raised questions and accusations of judicial bias in favor of male white privilege. Some twitter statements even proclaiming that if this was a case against a black man the sentencing would have been worse. Not to mention the injustice of sexual assault and rape victims everywhere.

DEFENSE:

Persky's verdict included a breakdown of several factors derived from The Rules of Court, Penal Code, and probation report that affected the ultimate decision of the case's proceeding that ranged from intent to rape, whether or not the defendant was armed with a deadly weapon, and the involvement of alcohol consumption on both parties' fault.. Yet the public still campaigned for the justice official's recall or resignation from his position.

PROSECUTOR:

On June 5, 2018, the county voters recalled Aaron Persky.

DEFENSE:

Two years after the trial of The People of the State of California vs. Brock Allen Turner.

PROSECUTOR:

The case and the victim's story were said to have launched a national conversation about sexual assault on college campuses, as well as rape culture, and perspectives on rape within the judicial system.

DEFENSE:

And the momentum that would send the Me Too Movement rampant for years to come.

LIGHTS OUT.

Act II Scene v.

LIGHTS UP,

JOHN stands center stage.

JOHN:

“In 2010, I was a graduate student studying to earn my master’s degree. The start of my path to start this career, to become the performer I knew I could be. All my life I had looked up to this one man. My idol. The art he produced touched me so profoundly throughout my life as I grew to be this person. This art that inspired me to study and work and to create my own that I could someday put out into the world.

In 2010. I was raped. Let that sink it for a moment. I, an adult man, was raped. I never even considered the concept let alone the possibility of this happening to me... Have you? Have you ever thought about men out there, having endured this trauma, live with this trauma, be shamed or deemed lesser of a male because of this trauma?

I was raped by another singer, an acclaimed singer and his boyfriend. When I woke up the next day I was alone, naked, physically and mentally hurt. I had no memory of what had happened the night before... He said to me, “Don’t worry about the bareback thing, I’m totally clean.” I called a clinic. I was too ashamed to say what for so an appointment wasn’t made until three weeks later... By then all evidence of what happened to me would be washed away. But I was ashamed. I was scared. I was just starting out, my career could be over before it started, my life’s work. I used this anger and this passion to fuel my determination and my work, but my being would not be able to recover for some time... It’s a process and there is no deadline. And here we are in the room, in this place and we have no idea how many are out their still recovering. How many have been silenced or are grieving. There is no best way to deal with this violation, this emotional turmoil, this traumatization of our mental and physical being. And our

JOHN (CON’T):

oppressors, our abusers, assailants, and antagonists hold are held in these positions of power, or at least perceived power, and are often not held accountable for their actions, no matter how harmful or toxic. So victims do not speak. They do not seek help. They remain silenced for fear of not being believed, for fear of threats and constant scrutiny, for fear of retraumatization. While those who did this to us continue to do this to others. They are abusing their power and inflicting it on others without reservations, hesitation, or consequences.

I was raped in 2010, it is now 2019. I did not come report to this until last year. First, because I was not ready to tell my story. *My* story. Second, because I was not educated. “Education is paramount. Yes, men are raped. I did not know that the word “rape” applied to

what happened to me until I lethargically went to tell a friend, and told her through tears and emptiness, what happened to me. In fact, I was so naïve that I didn't know that I should have gone to the hospital or even what a "rape kit" is. We must do better in educating each person about the realities and tragedy of rape.

At the end of the day I believe in hope and in the power of kindness and love. Our voices, our stories, our choices, and our hope to create a shared strength that is more powerful than the dehumanizing tactics of those for whom the truth is inconvenient and who wish for our silence. I hope this inspires others to come forward and say #MeToo."

Enter JANE from upstage. She crosses to center to join JOHN. She too is wearing denim.

JANE:

In 2017, with the Me Too Movement in explosive momentum, *The New York Times* reported dozens of women within the television and film industry had been sexually assaulted or raped by American film producer, Harvey Weinstein. Women actors, producers, and writers of all ages began stepping forward with #MeToo statements detailing their assaults and further accusing the Hollywood mogul of these heinous crimes. Even some of today's biggest and most beloved movie stars such as Gwyneth Paltrow, Uma Thurman, and Angelina Jolie gave statements to the public, and Hollywood media reports cases of assault and sexual misconduct performed by Weinstein that date back as far as the late 80s and early 90s. There are over 100 allegations of sexual abuse and 18 allegations of rape against him in counting. Some having taken place overseas in different countries.

PROSECUTOR enters, wearing denim.

PROSECUTOR:

While the case has had many setbacks due to incriminating "warm" email exchanges between Weinstein and a few of his victims, as of August 2018 there is now a new case that is set to move forward to trial that would hold Weinstein liable for damages categorized as sex trafficking, as he has lured many of his victims into his hotel room under the false pretense of offering them a performing role with the intention of performing non consensual sexual acts upon the victims. By law, lying for sexual purposes is conscious behavior and fraudulent intent. British actress, Kadian Nobel after having been lured into his hotel room in France with the promise of a film role that later led to her assault, sued Weinstein under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act which is designed to combat sex trafficking in the United States and involving Americans

overseas. The case is now being moved forward. In federal court. But the battle for justice is not yet won and far from over.

JOHN:

On August 22, 2018, a news story breaks reporting that acclaimed American countertenor and university professor, David Daniels, sexually assaulted Samuel Schultz back in 2010 when Shultz was a graduate student. Shultz revealed in a #MeToo statement posted on social media the details of his assault. He filed a report to the University of Michigan Police Department Special Victims Unit in July of 2018. The complaint was then passed to the Houston Police Department. The University of Michigan has since launched an investigation. No arrests have been made.

DEFENSE enters wearing denim.

DEFENDER:

On October 22, 2018, Andrew Lipian filed a civil suit against Daniels and the university, accusing Daniels of assaulting him in March of 2017.

JOHN:

He was also a graduate student. Drugged and assaulted.

JANE:

After being given Ambien, a sleep medication, having been told originally it was a Tylenol PM to help him rest for a performance the following day, Daniels then reportedly removed Lipian's clothing and groped his genitals and face. He then told Lipian he was most likely to receive a fellowship for the remainder of his graduate program. Lipian reports a series of text messages after the night of the assault requesting pictures and videos of Lipian, among other graphic content sent to Lipian's phone without consent or warrant.

JOHN:

Lipian claims he did not respond to Daniels in kind, but tried not to anger him for fear of his position of power.

DEFENDER:

The suit further alleges that the university knew about the assault, and neglected numerous complaints of sexual misconduct committed by Daniels. Daniels is also accused of soliciting sex acts on the social dating app Grindr back in February of 2017. The list of accusations go on.

JOHN:

Since Shultz's allegations came out, Daniels has been dropped from The San Francisco Opera from their production of Handel's "Orlando." He additionally took a paid leave of absence from the University of Michigan during the investigation of allegations against him, which eventually led to his and his husband Scott Walter's arrest on January 29th on charges for sexual assault. For which later their lawyer released a statement to NPR stating—

DEFENSE:

"David and Scott are innocent of any wrongdoing. Sam Schultz is not a victim. He never would have gotten this much attention from his singing, and he knows and resents that fact. He waited eight years to complain about adult, consensual sex to ride the MeToo movement to unearned celebrity. We will fight this."

EMILY:

In 2016 the People of the State of California vs. Brock Allen Turner was said to be the trial that would change how our culture perceived sexual violence. It was said to be the case that would change the way the justice system handles court proceedings involving sexual assault and rape. However, as the year 2018 drew to a close, several cases of sexual assault were excused on the basis of what the victim was wearing.

JANE:

Including a case in Ireland where the defense held up the victim's panties in front of the entire court, claiming the sheerness and design of the fabric, though unseen beneath clothing, surely signified that the victim wanted to have sex, and thus her assault was in fact consensual sex later regretted.

EMILY:

The involvement of alcohol, the amount of time passed between the time of the assault to the police report being filed, and many times the social privilege of the accused, all affected the negative, ignorant, and neglectance of the justice system's handling of these cases.

DEFENSE:

In many of these cases, the jury found the defendants guilty of their actions, but the convictions and punishments were either overturned, lessened, or appealed because of the final verdict of the judge. Just one person versus an entire jury, prosecution team, witnesses, and evidence.

PROSECUTOR:

Victims are often re-victimized, traumatized, or condemned in our court system when they come forward with their stories. They are often not believed or heard.

EMILY:

The People of the State of California vs. Brock Allen Turner was said to be the trial that would change all of this. But change how? For the better? In December of 2018, Jacob Walter Anderson, an ex-Baylor fraternity president, accepted a plea agreement where he pleaded no contest to a lesser charge of unlawful restraint. He was originally indicted on 4 counts of sexual assault. He will not see a single day of prison. Instead he will undergo drug, alcohol, and psychological treatment. He will pay a mere \$400 fine, and complete three years of probation. In exchange, upon completion, he will not have to register as a sex offender in the state of Texas. So little for a man responsible for drugging and repeatedly raping a young woman, orally, vaginally, taking her virginity, and leaving her for dead. He is free with a clean record, back into a society where any woman who crosses his path is at risk for being stalked, assaulted, and rape without even knowing it. What lesson was learned? What justice served? Shall we go on?

JOHN:

Do you grow tired of us yet?

JANE:

Did you think you came to see a play but instead were fed news and facts halfway through?

PROSECUTOR:

Do you think this is fake news?

DEFENSE:

Or do you *choose* to remain ignorant. Oblivious to the pain of others and the hard truths that surround you.

EMILY:

Is it too much to hear?

JANE:

Do you just not believe us? Hear us?

JOHN:

Because if it was you or a loved one, it might be different, wouldn't it?

JANE:

We assume the worst in our victims. That they are lying. That they are after something for themselves or attention seeking.

JOHN:

It may happen sometimes, but it's quite rare.

EMILY:

Defendants are innocent until proven guilty.

JOHN:

That's fair.

JANE:

But victims are guilty until proven innocent?

EMILY:

Or so, that's how it feels.

JOHN:

That's not fair.

EMILY:

Our society, so quick to judge, to label, and to condemn, makes it hard for people to sometimes hear when their friends and loved ones come forward to tell them someone did something bad to them.

JOHN:

Hurt them.

JANE:

Traumatized them.

EMILY:

And society further shames them.

JOHN:

It does not matter if someone is nice, charming,

EMILY:

Has good grades, is an athlete, has excellent swim times,

JANE:

Or is famous or prestigious in any way

ALL:

They can still cause harm to others.

EMILY:

Yet any time someone is accused of something so inhumane, the newspapers end their reports with a list of the accused's awards and achievements while the victims are characterized by the harm done to them or the fact that they are accusing someone of hurting them. Characterized by the assumption that they are lying. Hey! I'm an excellent cook. Throw that in your news stories too while you're at it. If you're going to humanize my attacker, than humanize me too!

DEFENSE:

Remember the 18-year old victim in Italy raped by her instructor?

PROSECUTOR:

The overturned conviction caused so much outrage, it sparked a widespread protest.

DEFENSE:

Women in the Italian Parliament protested by wearing denim jeans and holding placards that read "Jeans" An Alibi for Rape" in support of the victim.

PROSECUTOR:

The message was clear.

DEFENSE:

Articles of clothing were no longer an acceptable defense for rape.

PROSECUTOR:

And yet it remains to be one used quite often.

DEFENSE:

Thereafter, Denim Day became an annual event to continue carrying the message.

PROSECUTOR:

As of 2011, 20 states recognize Denim Day as an annual event in the United States.

JOHN:

As do we today.

JANE:

We continue to fight for change.

EMILY:

We demand change.

JOHN:

We need change.

EMILY:

For the sake of integrity.

JANE:

For the sake of justice.

JOHN:

For the sake of condemning sexual violence in our country.

JANE:

For the sake of prevention.

EMILY:

For the sake of protection.

PROSECUTOR:

For the sake of education.

DEFENSE:

For the sake of education.

JOHN:

We asked to be heard.

We asked to be believed.

JANE:

We will be heard.

EMILY:

Times Up America!

ALL:

BLACK OUT.

CURTAIN.

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