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James Patrick Walsh

Affiliate Faculty, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Regis University, jwalsh@regis.edu

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Dreams from the Podium

James Patrick Walsh
Affiliate Faculty, School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Regis University
(jwalsh@regis.edu)

Abstract

This article tells a story about teaching as an act of love, about an instructor who discovered theater as a teaching tool and combined it with working class values and rituals in order to remake the culture of higher education in a classroom of adult learners. The story speaks to the intersection of the arts, Jesuit values of higher education and the person/background of the teacher at just the right time. The story is one of humility.

Introduction

In an address given at Georgetown University in 1989 on the 200th anniversary of Jesuit education in the U.S., Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach declared,

The Society of Jesus has always sought to imbue students with values that transcend the goals of money, fame, and success. We want graduates who will be leaders concerned about society and the world in which we live. We want graduates who desire to eliminate hunger and conflict in the world and who are sensitive to the need for more equitable distribution of the world's goods. We want graduates who seek to end sexual and social discrimination and who are eager to share their faith with others. In short, we want our graduates to be leaders-in-service. That has been the goal of Jesuit education since the 16th century. It remains so today.¹

I read this quotation on a bus on the way to the Jesuit *Heartlands* conference at Creighton University in Omaha in the summer of 2000. These words still occupy my thoughts. It was the first time that I realized that my personal beliefs about teaching and learning aligned nearly perfectly with the Jesuit philosophy of education. This knowledge gave me the

strength I needed at the time to be bold in my teaching.

I was born and raised in a working class Irish Catholic family. My father managed to feed nine mouths by selling encyclopedias door-to-door and selling furniture to mom and pop stores across Pennsylvania and West Virginia. I come from the social milieu of a steel town in western Pennsylvania, a place where people understand struggle on an intimate basis. Rust. I come from rust. Corner taverns, high school football, bowling alleys, military service, and deep family and church ties were all a part of my family's reality. I excelled at the blue-collar sport of wrestling, which landed me an athletic scholarship at Duke University, a world of privilege and wealth that I had only previously witnessed on television. At the age of eighteen, I took my first airplane ride to Durham, North Carolina. At Duke, my vocabulary expanded. I learned words such as "brunch" and "comforter." Seriously, Duke was an intense culture shock. Slowly, I adapted and developed a kind of class consciousness, which has never left me.

Today, I exist in the privileged world of higher education and scholarly etiquette, but I have never been fully comfortable in that milieu. "Finding God in all things" for me began with realizing that my own life and my own story carried validity and importance. I understand intimately why the culture of higher education is so difficult to navigate for

the sons and daughters of poverty. This background defines me as a scholar, a teacher, and an activist. All of my teaching, research, and writing deal with the struggles of marginalized communities and the labor and social movements that define them. This is a story of my journey into teaching as an act of love. It is a story of how I was able to use working class values and rituals to remake the culture of higher education in my classroom. It is the story of a journey toward a new kind of classroom experience. It is a story of how the art of theater and my own background intersected with Jesuit values of education at just the right time. It is a story of humility.

Cura Personalis

I lectured to the students for seventy-five minutes. They took notes. I wrote the facts on the chalkboard. Dates. Names. Events. They wrote in their notebooks. And so it went for my first year of teaching. For an entire year of teaching, this was the drill. Lecture. Note-taking. Lecture. Note-taking. Reading my note cards. Writing on the board. Any questions? The looks on the faces of my students after class said everything.

Theater saved my career. After nearly walking away from teaching, I decided that I would figure out a bold approach to the teaching of history, one that liberated my students from the notes, the multiple choice test, the passive surrender. Theater. Why not? I always wanted to do it in high school and college, but never had the courage to try. Wrestlers and thespians never hung out together.

“There won’t be any final exam for this class. Instead, I am going to assign you to a small group. Each group will be given a topic. Your assignment is to research the topic and to create a fifteen minute play that communicates the central themes and ideas related to that topic.”

This is what I told them at the beginning of the next semester. To my surprise, no one dropped the course. The plays changed everything. Quiet students found their voices. Laughter massaged the room. There were some tears. Live music and poetry. Most

importantly, the students seized the room and made it their own. They took possession of American history, took it away from the captains of industry, military strategists in the War of 1812, and the grand march of westward expansion. Discussions after each play could have continued for hours. Students sat in different seats, met different people, and leaned into the discipline. The final exam has never returned to my classroom. Theater has never left it. I carry manual lamps to class that are usually used to work on car engines—makeshift stage lighting— and clamp onto the front row of chairs. My bag usually has some kind of wig, and a billy club or boiler cap or picket sign have been known to fall out at random times.

This has come to define my fourteen years of work at Regis University and the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver), where I have led thousands of students through this ritual. When I see former students in the community or on campus, instead of recalling their names, I remember the characters that they played in my classroom.

“Hey, Professor Walsh, remember me, I was the leader of the Attica Prison Uprising.”

“Yes, I remember.”

Men and Women in Service to Others

In an address given at Santa Clara University in 2000, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach described Jesuit education as a place where,

solidarity is learned through 'contact' rather than through 'concepts,'... When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection.²

A few years after introducing theater to my classrooms, I decided to follow Kolvenbach’s

words and lead my students into the suffering that exists in the community. At Regis, I was introduced to the concept of service learning, which is community-based learning that takes the students out of the classroom where they encounter people with whom they would not normally spend time. Service learning is not about charity or pity. It is about the encounter. Those who might live in a shelter have something important to teach those who do not and this encounter carries transformative potential.

I developed a relationship with a local shelter that serves single women and their children. Sacred Heart is a small shelter; only seven or eight women with their children can live there at any given time. For the past ten years, my classes have met at Sacred Heart and brought dinner to the residents. The experience as always been rewarding, but any chance for authentic interaction and dialogue is very limited when all we are doing is sharing a meal together. The students tend to sit with each other. Fear.

Several years ago, the director of the shelter invited me to work with my students to contribute some kind of educational presentation for the residents, something that would take place for an hour after dinner, something that would engage them in a college-level environment. This was the beginning of a new kind of service learning experience. My students create short plays and perform them in the living room of the shelter after dinner. The plays deal directly with subject matter that is central to the themes of the course. We rearrange the couches and chairs, create our very own mini-theater at Sacred Heart—we refer to it as the *Sacred Heart Dinner Theater*—and my students make themselves vulnerable.

Theater has transformed the experience for the students and the residents. While the plays themselves carry their own kind of unique visceral experience, the dialogue that follows each performance is the real value of the evening. This dialogue leads to understanding and to “finding God in all things,” challenging any caricatures about

homelessness that the students may have brought to the encounter, and creating a situation where the students are engaging with the residents on an even level, rather than from a position of privilege or expertise. Here is where my students come face-to-face with solidarity, where their plays trigger stories from the residents, which elicits even more dialogue. The residents form connections between their own lives and the human experiences highlighted in the plays. The students find that the stories of people without homes challenge them to see the homeless in a new light.

Frequently, the residents and their children join in the performances. One play about the Irish potato famine involved five children from the shelter playing the roles of hungry Irish emigrants, just off the boat. The children made up lines, steered the scene in new directions, and brought tears to the eyes of their parents. Playing the role of their unemployed father, I explained to them that no one in this city would hire the Irish: “Children, we have to keep going, until we can find some food.”

A five year old girl who was playing one of my daughters responded to this line by taking me by the hand and walking me toward the kitchen: “There is food back here, don’t worry. I’ll show you.” The “audience” broke out in laughter, and we were all left with the lesson that the adults and children in Sacred Heart know much more about hunger than we could ever hope to know.

Another recent performance about Dolores Huerta, the great organizer of farm workers during the days of César Chávez, brought one of the residents to tears. She had spent several years in her youth as a migrant worker, which she shared with us at the end of the performance:

“I did that when I was young. I picked strawberries in California. The children had to sleep under the trucks while the adults picked the fruit. We didn’t have bathrooms or anything.”

For my students, the residents in this moment are no longer homeless people. Instead, they are teachers with rich life experiences. Everyone becomes a storyteller with all of the grace and human capital that narrative can offer. The theater and dialogue build a web of human interconnectedness that a meal or a power point presentation cannot. This dialogue is the reward for avoiding the tendency to want to teach the residents of a homeless shelter instead of learn from them. Paulo Freire writes of his experiences in Brazil with illiterate farmers, teaching them literacy by inviting them to share their own narratives and to take ownership of the classroom. For Freire, teachers are learners who must cede control of the classroom to the students.³

“This was different. Most of the presentations that we get here are people lecturing to us, telling us how we should be living, talking down to us.”

Frequently, the residents of the shelter outshine my students in these discussions, making extraordinary connections to complex issues and historical events. Through the theater and the dialogue that follows, my students learn that people without homes carry the same human potential and capacities and gifts of those with homes; that they dream and hope and carry stories and ideas that would nourish any college classroom. The plays break down barriers that deny us authentic engagement in any other setting. I have since used the theater approach to service learning in nursing homes, treatment centers and day labor facilities, with similar results.

Augusto Boal taught the value of acting for the marginalized and dispossessed. In his, *Theater of the Oppressed*, he explores the idea that whatever a person can act out on stage, they can act out in life; theater plants seeds of empowerment.⁴ I believe that this empowerment is what my students take away from Sacred Heart, the sense that the residents of a homeless shelter are not victims, but agents of the coming tide, a

glimpse of the change that will surely come to be.

One evening years ago, as we were leaving the shelter, I noticed that a young woman from the class was very tense and anxious. All evening, she was clutching her purse and didn't seem to engage in any conversation with the residents. I turned to her.

“Jennifer, is everything ok? You seem a bit anxious.”

“I'm fine.”

“Are you sure?”

Tears filled her eyes.

“It's just that I work for a property management company. My job is to evict tenants; I serve them notices and process the evictions.”

Finding God in All Things

The idea came to me gradually. If theater worked so well in my classrooms, and even in a homeless shelter, could I create a group with the mission of bringing non-traditional history to the general public? This was a dream: introduce the ideas of Howard Zinn,⁵ Augusto Boal, and Paulo Freire to working class audiences who cannot afford to pay \$50 to see professional theater. Zinn taught me that the stories from my working class background are also a part of American history, that the poor in American history did not passively accept their situations, but actively resisted oppressive conditions and created communal networks among themselves to deal with the systems of control that existed in their everyday lives.⁶

I began contacting former students, people who had tremendous potential and a desire to engage in community activism. In the spring of 2005, seven of us performed our first play: a short biography of the life of Oscar Romero. His story captured us, a tale of transformation and courage. We decided to borrow his name and his story, a guiding light into our uncertain future.

Our second play was a feature-length performance about the struggles of

immigrants and the dangers of nativism. *Speak American* was performed three times and remarkably, we sold out the Oriental Theater with over three hundred people for the first two performances. Seventeen of us poured out our passion on stage and the people cheered and sang and whistled and carried us from scene to scene. The play follows the story of a working class Irish family facing difficult economic times. One brother reacts to his unemployment by blaming immigrants and joining a vigilante organization. Another befriends an immigrant woman and learns about the terrible human tragedy of the U.S. immigration system. In the end, the latter brother travels to the border to find his brother and bring him home.

“Jim, I’m going to throw up. I can’t act if I throw up.”

Rafaela is a former student of mine from Venezuela. She had never been on stage in her life. Here she was playing the lead role in *Speak American*. She wanted to take this on, but when opening night came, she was terrified. In the opening scene, she could not come out on stage. Those of us on stage could see her there just behind the curtain, frozen in fear. We stalled and made up lines, until finally, she appeared. The performance was amazing, bringing many in the audience to tears. At the end of the show, just as I finished loading my car with materials and was driving away, I heard a noise from a truck parked on the street. It was Rafaela. She was vomiting from the passenger’s window into the street.

Seven years later, Rafaela showed up at a recent presentation of our *People’s History of Colorado*. We honor her every year with an award given to a member of the troupe whose stage work embodies the courage that she showed that night. It is named the “Rosa Award,” after the real life character that she played. The Romero Troupe is a collective of volunteers, an oral tradition with dozens of people and thousands of stories.

Brighton is from a working class family in Denver. Her father, a Native American,

returned from Vietnam with severe post-traumatic stress disorder and took his own life. I add this information because it defines Brighton and the spirit and strength that she embodies. We performed a play called, *Which Side Are You On?*, about the history of workers’ rights in the U.S. The eleven performances took us from Denver to Greeley and Boulder and all the way to Pittsburgh. Nearly 3,000 people saw this show which portrayed struggles such as the CIO sit down strike in Flint, Michigan, Colorado’s Ludlow Massacre, the sanitation workers strike in Memphis and the death of MLK Jr., and the United Farm Workers movement with Dolores Huerta.

Brighton played the lead role in a scene about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City in 1911, when over 140 young immigrant women jumped to their deaths from the ninth floor of a sweatshop. In the scene, Brighton stands at the edge of the stage, as if she is on the window ledge about to jump. She is screaming for help. *Screaming*. Brighton can scream as loud as humanly possible, and she does not hold back when she is on stage. In one outdoor rehearsal, people ran to intervene from across a park after hearing Brighton’s screams. At the University of Pittsburgh, campus security nearly interrupted the play because they heard Brighton’s screams. Her voice flies across the ceiling, into the balcony, filling every nook in the building, and straight into our own desperation for change and outrage over injustice. For that one moment, her voice becomes our hope that someone might hear the cries of the women in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, and in the fields and mines and sweatshops today.

“Brighton, you realize that if we can’t find a scene for you to scream in, the play will feel flat?”

In our play about the War on Terror, *9/12*, Brighton twice stood before 300 people and with great dignity and care told the story of her father, who went on a rampage in a Vietnamese village killing several civilians after finding his best friend’s body. Brighton

witnessed her father take his own life after battling the ghosts of that war. Helen wants to be in every scene, but it is not possible with so many people in the troupe. She dies in our Sand Creek massacre scene, marches in our Rocky Flats scene, and fights militia members in our Leadville miners' strike scene.

“I made a list of things that I want to do before I die. Acting was on my list. I am proud to be a member of the Romero Troupe.”

Helen is eighty-eight years old. She has grown into one of the most skilled actors in the troupe and enjoys being on stage with every cell in her body. The rest of us watch her, shake our heads, and sense the great grace of her years.

Bob Fuchigami was born in California to Japanese parents. During World War II, he and his family were imprisoned at Amache Concentration Camp in southeastern Colorado. As part of our current play, *A People's History of Colorado*, Bob shared with us a short scene that he wrote in the 1950s based upon his memories of the camp. The scene is about a young man approaching his father in the camp with the news that he wishes to join the U.S. military. His father does not approve because of the treatment of Japanese Americans and the death of his other son in combat. Following the scene, Bob walks onto stage to address the audience. Bob had never before shared his story publicly. He was a teenager during WWII. His voice shakes.

“They couldn't call us aliens because we were citizens, so they called us non-aliens. Know the truth...and the truth will set you free.”

Each time Bob has given his testimonial, the audience rises to their feet to thank him.

Hundreds of stories such as these make up the memory and the spirit of the Romero Troupe. There is Hyung from Cambodia whose family escaped the “killing fields” only to find great discrimination here. There is

Arnie, a Denver native, a health outreach worker to the homeless, and a peace activist. There is Phil, a retired public school teacher and a poet from Pueblo. There is Elsa, an undocumented immigrant whose husband, Felipe, stays at rehearsals until 10:00 p.m. even though he must get up at 3:00 a.m. for work. We operate without a budget. Everything that we need is donated to us by the community. The funds that we collect from our shows are donated to a community organization involved in the truly difficult work of social justice. We have contributed to *El Centro Humanitario*, the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, United with Migrants, Denver Peace and Justice Committee, Colorado Progressive Coalition, Iraq Vets Against the War, and Warren Village. Giving our proceeds away frees us from the time and effort involved in writing grant proposals and worrying about the bottom line.

We have a unique relationship with our audience. Most of the people who come to see our productions are not regular theatergoers. Many have never been to live theater before due to the cost of attending most productions. We encourage our audience to be vocal, to sing, and to take ownership of the space. In the end, our audience drives the tone of every show. Their reactions feed us and lead us toward the direction they want us to go.

Our success comes from the strong community that we have been able to build together and a mutual respect for each other's strengths. Our organization is non-hierarchical, meaning that we try to base all decisions upon a collective process. There is no director. We are never limited to any single vision of a scene or a character. Each actor is free to mold and change their character, sometimes even on stage. This is driven by the instincts of the actors and a feel for their characters. Each of our productions is focused upon the message of love and a fundamental belief in the dignity of every person. Our goal is not to leave our audiences angry or frustrated, but hopeful that the fundamental goodness of every person

will bend the “arc of the universe toward justice.”

We only rarely begin producing a scene with a written script. Instead, different members bring ideas to the table, ideas which they care about deeply. We mold these ideas together into a meta-narrative. No two productions are the same. Every scene is in a constant state of evolution. We take collective ownership of the plays and the message and characters. This is the meaning of “organic,” the productions are alive, fluid, and raw. We believe strongly that amateur actors who lack the polish found in professional theater circles actually carry an enhanced authenticity for the audience.

Currently, we are closing out the first year of our play, *A People's History of Colorado*. We have performed this play five times for a total of over 1,200 people. We will perform it until the people no longer ask for it.

Magis

The Romero Theater Troupe is a collection of volunteers nearly fifty in number. Some contribute once a month, some once a year, some once a week. There are no expectations or parameters, everyone does what they can. Our motto is “social justice through organic theater.” Our mission is to bring unknown stories with historical meaning to the general public and to make non-traditional history accessible to the masses in a way that is engaging and empowering. Our mission is also to grow together in community, to push each other to the other side. We have no formal or financial attachments. We are free to create our work, to build an organic community, to occupy higher education.

In my classrooms at Regis and CU Denver, my students continue to pour their voices, their spirits, their intellects, their spit and guts and hope and grace, into telling each other stories through theater. They sit in different parts of the classroom each week, rearranging the desks and the dialogue. Through their plays, overhead projectors become early twentieth century fruit vendor carts. The

arms of electronic document cameras become the tap handles in a saloon. The phone for tech assistance becomes a 1970s old-school phone in a working class kitchen. The periodic table of the elements becomes the periodic table of the human experience. The classroom belongs to them. Theater resurrected my classroom. My students resurrected my career. HJE

Notes

¹ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “The Character of Jesuit Higher Education,” address presented at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, June 7, 1989, http://www.rockhurst.edu/media/filer_private/2012/01/06/je-c.pdf.

² Kolvenbach, *The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education*, address presented at the Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education conference, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA, October 6, 2000, http://www.scu.edu/ignatiancenter/events/conferences/archives/justice/upload/f07_kolvenbach_keynote.pdf.

³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

⁴ Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

⁵ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2010).

⁶ Howard Zinn's landmark work of American History, *A People's History of the United States*, had a tremendous impact on me and continues to shape my teaching and my scholarship. Zinn was also a big fan of theater as a teaching and learning tool.

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Appendix I.

Audience Responses to "People's History of Colorado"

1. I also knew nothing about the Rocky Flats demonstration. I actually sat next to a couple of older women who were invited on to the stage. During the intermission I told them how amazing it was that they were able to participate in such a movement and equally as amazing that they were able to reenact the demonstration to remind others who were not able to be around during the actual demonstration. Anyway, thank you for the opportunity to see such a great performance by the Romero Theater Troupe.
2. I just wanted to tell you that I last night I brought a girl from England to the performance and she was really moved by it. A good friend of mine is doing a Fulbright teacher exchange in London and it was her counterpart Shelley who came with me last night. She said both at half time and at the end that she could not stop crying. My friend Sobeida who is a bilingual teacher in Arvada also really enjoyed the discussion on education. And you had my roommate Warren at the words "People's History". He is a fan of Howard Zinn. I really enjoyed all of the performances and loved the spoken word poems, songs, raps. The man who spoke about Preston Porter is very talented, as are all in your troupe. I love Abby's quiet voice. You guys did a great job both in performing and in composing all of the different stories, songs, poems and images together as a whole. Congrats on a great night.
3. By far, my favorite and the most touching act of the evening was Act 9: Peace Nuns. Not only was this so recent, I was devastated to learn of the death of one of the nuns this past week! Why did the moment of silence not happen August 3 Colorado-wide? Why was this nun not cover story news? The act brought tears to my eyes and tugged at my heartstrings. I reflected on the many things I thought were good that I had done for others, and realized that nothing I have done was nearly as selfless as what those ladies had done. The scene was absolute perfection – a moment of history brought to center stage getting the recognition it deserved.
4. The second favorite moment of the evening was Act 11: Amache *Concentration* Camp. The touching moment listening to Bob Fuchigami speak again brought tears to my eyes (lots of tissues that night) and I was honored to be there in that moment with him, a survivor and forgiver. Again, the brutality that one race has shown another appalls me. The non-existent care/concern shown for these individuals shame me, and the forgiveness they possess inspires me. It was a life-changing moment to witness his emotion of seeing his experiences come to life for the public. His secret was no more. It was a freeing moment
5. I attended West High School [in Denver] from 1982-1986 and graduated in 1986. I was class president during my senior year and was involved in a program that knocked on doors to find out why Latino students were missing school. I was also highlighted and interviewed in the Denver Post on the education page for the dropout problem. I can remember Latino students talking about a walkout when I attended West High School but it was only to get out of class. When I saw the skit of the Actual walkout in 1969 I had butterflies in my stomach. I can understand what those kids went through during that time in history. It just hits so close to home because I have experienced it firsthand by the teaching of all my classes by the standards of American and European history. I think we lose valuable history if we don't learn our own culture facts and stories. I sat down one day and realized this when I had taken a class (the only one at the time) on Native American History. My instructor was James Mejia Sr. (the father of James Mejia Jr. – the gentleman who just ran for mayor of Denver) and he taught the class and it was so interesting because of my own heritage of Indian culture. I didn't think I could learn about my culture in any school because they only taught about things like how Christopher Columbus discovered America and things like that. Seeing the video and pictures of West High School was an emotional part that I am proud to be alumni of West High School.
6. I took my daughter to the show and I felt really good when we left because she was really excited because she learned a lot about Colorado history and she didn't expect to learn so much from this theatre performance. We talked on the way home about the nuns and their passion to prove their beliefs and the degree of action they took. We could not believe the human chain that encircled the 17 mile radius of the Rocky Flats compound. It is hard to believe that so many people cared about the effects of the chemicals the compound was using. The people really showed their concern and fear for the future of their kids and how plutonium could harm the people of the state of Colorado. The one that my daughter had most

concern about was the KKK and the involvement of two of the past political leaders of our city. This has opened my daughter's eyes and now she wants to read more history because she wants answers. I was swarmed with so many questions on the drive home and it felt good for her desire, for me to feed her more history education. She loves to read and she will learn so much from my own experience from this play about things public schools don't teach in the classrooms. She will read books and hopefully educate those around her about the real history no one taught us in school.

7. I thoroughly enjoyed the play last night! I was moved to tears during several scenes. It was a very powerful portrayal of a history that many of us had been previously unaware of. It struck a particularly personal chord with me as I begin my teaching career dealing with the same subject matter as portrayed in the play. I struggle with how to balance teaching to CSAP while still maintaining a successful path to global citizenship for my students. If I do not teach an adequate amount of material contained on the test, there is a probability that I will lose my job due to poor test scores. If I lose my job, there is absolutely no way I can help students achieve their personal best. The most challenging part of all is that there are few other ways to teach names and dates as they appear on the test other than through rote memorization and lecture.
8. Thank you for the performance last night. I hope you could pass along a thank you to all of the performers as well. I was impressed with the passion that all of the actors had and used in their performance. I appreciated the fact that all of these acts were in the city I was born and raised in, Denver. The most touching moment to me was when the gentleman got up to speak after the Amache Internment Camp scene. The scenes were powerful enough on their own, when the gentleman stood up and spoke the emotion could be heard from his voice and it was that much more touching.
9. I found the scenes dealing with Latino struggles to be very inspiring and I left being thankful for the students at West High and all the other high schools that participated in the walk out. Those students made it possible for people like me to further their education in a setting where they are judged as equally as their white classmates. Being a person that has an issue with the word Chicano, I found a new appreciation for the term and consider it to be something other than what it has been to me most of my life. For the majority of my life, the word Chicano has been a condescending word to me. The scenes made me take a step back and reconsider that stance. While I'm not ready to embrace the term, I am more willing to accept it

and take it as less of an insult. The play showed me the plight and effort they put into my people made me realize that maybe I was being too close minded. I was at the immigration rally in 2006 and seeing the scene brought back good memories. I remember being amazed at how many people showed up to support the cause and especially surprised that different nationalities came out to support the cause. The Martial Law on New Mexico Border also exposed me to another incident that I had not known anything about before.

10. I found the play performed by Romero's Theater Troupe to be a unique way to present historical events of Colorado. It was refreshing to hear a historical perspective of Colorado that I was unaware of or had forgotten about. I was shocked to learn the amount of Ku Klux Klan presence in the Denver metro area and Colorado as a whole. Prior to the play I thought the "KKK" only existed in the southern United States. I never understood why the mascot of my High School (Arvada High School Redskins) was forced to change in 1993 and the cultural impact of that. My favorite acts were about the Leadville miners' strike and the immigration rally. I found these to be powerful for the audience. I have lived in Denver during the immigration rally; however, I had no idea the Leadville miners occurred. Their plight affected me in ways that were unexpected. Well done, regarding all of the volunteers performances.