



AUGUST WILSON'S

# RADIO GOLF

This study guide is researched and designed by the Education Department at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater and is intended to prepare you for your visit. It contains information that will deepen your understanding of, and appreciation for, the production.

We've also included questions and activities for you to explore before and after our performance of **RADIO GOLF**.



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# SYNOPSIS

Set in Pittsburgh in the 1997, RADIO GOLF is the final play in August Wilson's 10-play cycle. The story follows a successful real estate developer, Harmond Wilks, who is hoping to become the city's first black mayor. While Wilks is getting ready to declare his candidacy, he and his friends are also trying to redevelop a crumbling neighborhood only to realize that the house to be torn down has an important history. As the past is revealed, secrets are unleashed that could either bring Wilks' future down or mean a new beginning.

*"I'm not trying to save the house. I'm trying to save Bedford Hills. Everybody involved in this project wants to see it happen."*

*- Harmond*

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

August Wilson is one of the most renowned and inspirational African American playwrights of the twentieth century. Wilson was born in Pittsburgh on April 27, 1945, the fourth of six children. His father, Frederick August Kittel, was a white baker and his mother, Daisy Wilson, was an African American cleaning woman. Wilson grew up with his mother and siblings in Pittsburgh's Hill district, an impoverished neighborhood. The family saw very little of Frederick; Daisy divorced him and re-married. After moving to a new, white working class neighborhood in the 1950s, Wilson encountered extreme racial hostility including threats and abuse from peers at his high school and teachers accusing him of plagiarizing papers. These events caused Wilson to officially drop out of high school in 1960, when he was only a sophomore. Instead of telling his mother that he dropped out, Wilson continued to leave every morning and instead went to the local library where he read and educated himself. By the time he was 16 years old Wilson had also begun working small jobs which allowed him to meet a wide variety of people, many of whom influenced his future characters.



After realizing that he wanted to become a writer, Wilson moved out of his mother's house in 1965, found a job as a short order cook and eventually purchased his first typewriter. Wilson pursued writing for many years and in 1968 co-founded the Black Horizon Theater in his hometown with his friend Rob Penny and Wilson's first play, RECYCLING, was performed shortly after. During this time, Wilson also became interested in Malcolm X and the Black Power Movement. He was inspired by this movement and used much of what he learned to write his plays.

In 1978 Wilson moved to Saint Paul, Minnesota to further his career as a playwright. He began writing educational scripts for the Science Museum of Minnesota and later received a fellowship for The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis after writing JITNEY. It was produced by the Allegheny Repertory Theatre in Pittsburgh in 1982. This same year, the artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theater, Lloyd Richards, discovered Wilson's MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM among the hundreds of scripts sent to him each year. While he noticed a few structural problems, Richards found it to be exceptional and realized that it could have only come from a gifted writer. Richards' discovery was what launched Wilson's career as a



playwright. Richards and Wilson formed a close alliance, working together for the next eight years and collaborating on four of Wilson's plays: *FENCES*, *JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE*, *THE PIANO LESSON* and *TWO TRAINS RUNNING*.

Wilson left Saint Paul in 1994 and moved to Seattle to continue writing plays. While in Seattle, Wilson did little other than writing, sometimes working on plays for over 12 hours a day. Wilson also developed a relationship with the Seattle Repertory Theatre which produced many of his plays. He continued to write until 2005, when Wilson was diagnosed with liver cancer. Wilson died October 8, 2005, but his achievements continue to open doors to other African American playwrights. Many have been moved by his journey and his legacy lives on as theaters continue to produce his works and be inspired by his words.



*August Wilson with Lloyd Richards on the set of THE PIANO LESSON. Photo courtesy of the American Academy of Achievement.*

### AUGUST WILSON'S AWARDS

#### MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM

New York Drama Critics Circle Award  
for Best Play

#### JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE

New York Drama Critics Circle Award  
for Best Play

#### FENCES

Drama Desk Award for Outstanding  
New Play

New York Drama Critics Circle Award  
for Best Play

Pulitzer Prize for Drama

Tony Award for Best Play

#### TWO TRAINS RUNNING

American Theatre Critics' Association  
Award

New York Drama Critics Circle Citation  
for Best American Play

#### SEVEN GUITARS

New York Drama Critics Circle Award  
for Best Play

#### JITNEY

New York Drama Critics Circle Award  
for Best Play

Outer Critics Circle Award for  
Outstanding Off-Broadway Play

Olivier Award for Best new Play

#### THE PIANO LESSON

Drama Desk Award for Outstanding  
New Play

New York Drama Critics Circle Award  
for Best Play

Pulitzer Prize for Drama

#### VARIOUS OTHERS

The 10th Annual Heinz Award in Arts  
and Humanities

The U.S. Comedy Arts Festival  
Freedom of Speech Award

Make Shift Award at the U.S.  
Confederation of Play Writers

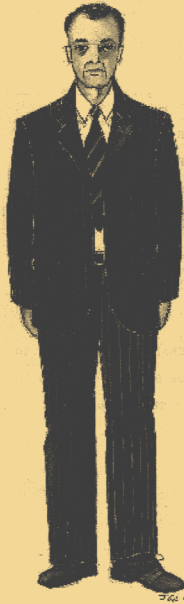
National Humanities Medal

Literary Lion Award from the New York  
Public Library

*August Wilson has won many awards and is considered to be among the most important of African American playwrights. Do some more research on August Wilson and his plays. Why do you think his works are so renowned? Do you think that theater would be different if Wilson had chosen to not publish plays? How so? Discuss your answers with your classmates.*



# THE CHARACTERS



HARMOND WILKS is running to be the first black mayor of Pittsburgh. He wants to improve the Hill District by building apartments, bringing in retail shops and restaurants. His passion for rejuvenating the neighborhood is high and unstoppable, or so he thinks.

MAME WILKS is Harmond's wife. She is running his mayoral campaign while trying to get a major public relations position as well. While Mame loves her husband very much, she begins to question his intentions towards the end of the play.



ROOSEVELT HICKS is the vice-president of a bank and an avid golfer. Harmond and Roosevelt went to college together and are currently business partners. He is set on furthering himself in the money world and getting the new development up as fast as possible.



ELDER JOSEPH BARLOW (Old Joe) was born in the Hill District and has recently returned to fix up his old house for his daughter. Old Joe leads a very simple life and tells it like it is. He questions Harmond's motives for the Hill District.



STERLING JOHNSON is the neighborhood handyman. While he made some bad decisions in the past, he is trying to make up for it now. Sterling also is unsure of Harmond's ideas and wants things set right for Old Joe.

AUNT ESTER is an unseen character in RADIO GOLF (and many other plays). Her house has much history and creates controversy between Harmond and Roosevelt. Despite the fact she is not a real character, she is very important to the story. She is said to be born in 1619, the year the first shipment of black slaves arrived to the US and is to have died in 1985, when she was 366 years old. Aunt Ester is considered the embodiment of the African American experience.

*Costume Renderings  
drawn by Junghyun  
Georgia Lee,  
Costume Designer for  
RADIO GOLF*



# THE HILL DISTRICT

*This article, which describes the Hill District in Pittsburgh, is taken from the Seattle Repertory Theatre's study guide for RADIO GOLF. It was written by Andrea Allen, Director of Education and Audience Development.*

## BUILDING AND RE-BUILDING THE HILL DISTRICT

Covering about 650 acres in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh, the Hill District was created in the 1840s as the city's first residential neighborhood. Seen as a place to get away from the urban center, the first occupants were wealthy professionals and their families.

By the 1870s and through the First World War, a wide variety of European immigrants and African Americans were attracted to the area and the nearby steel industry's well-paying factory jobs. In the 1930s, the Hill District established its reputation on the national jazz circuit.



*August Wilson's birthplace (red building) on Bedford Avenue in the Hill District.*

The desire to “redevelop” the Hill District started more than 60 years ago. In 1943, a city councilman claimed that the Hill was “one of the most outstanding examples in Pittsburgh of neighborhood deterioration.” In 1955 the first official “Urban Renewal” program was approved to replace existing housing mainly inhabited by African Americans with luxury hotels, offices and arts establishments.

Over the next five years, the redevelopment plan displaced more than 8,000 residents including nearly 1,300 black families. The federal government offered no compensation to any of the residents. Sadly, the city government's dream of an urban cultural center failed, and the play to redevelop the now-demolished area lost momentum.

## ACTIVISM ON THE HILL

Riots broke out on the Hill in 1968 following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. After seven days, the businesses in the area suffered great damages and ultimately looked for safer locations for their investments. Soon there were only 10 grocery stores instead of 40. With 80% of the 43,700 residents of the Hill on a fixed income, the Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal was formed in 1963, in hopes of kick-starting the redevelopment programs begun in the '50s.

Pennsylvania's governor declared the area an “Opportunities Disaster Area” in 1972, and throughout that decade “We will rebuild the Hill District” was the rallying cry for the community. Power struggles within the community in the 1980s, however, made progress slow to a near stand-still once again.

## LESSONS LEARNED IN THE 1990s

In the early 1990s, a consortium of neighborhood social services agencies was established as the Hill District Consensus Group. In stark contrast to the urban renewal program of the mid-50s, the commitment to “bottom-up planning” allowed residents to be part of rebuilding their neighborhoods.

Hoping to give Hill residents access to a better standard of living without leaving their neighborhood, the massive redevelopment program of the 90s combined residential and commercial projects, spending more than \$300 million over the decade. The focus on community economic development included creating new jobs as well as new places to live.



# THE PITTSBURGH CYCLE

August Wilson is best known for his Pittsburgh Cycle, also referred to as his Century Cycle. This cycle consists of ten plays covering ten decades in the lives of African Americans. RADIO GOLF is the last in the cycle, looking at life in the late 1990s. All but one take place in the Hill District, Wilson's hometown, and while many of them are not connected by means of a serial story, many characters appear in more than one play. This explanation of Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle allows us to see the African American experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## GEM OF THE OCEAN ● Set in 1904

A young African American, Citizen Barlow, travels north in search of a purpose. He visits Aunt Ester, a woman rumored to be 285 years old and possessing healing powers, in hopes that she will help him on his path. (Written in 2003)

## MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM ● Set in 1927

The tension builds as a group of musicians wait for (real blues legend) Ma Rainey to arrive at the recording studio. Exploited by the white-run music industry, they are pushed to the breaking point. This is the only play set outside of Pittsburgh. (Written in 1984)

## SEVEN GUITARS ● Set in 1948

This play begins with the death of guitarist Floyd Barton and then flashes back to the final week of his life. (Written in 1995)

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING ● Set in 1969

As a group hangs out at a café, romance grows between a waitress and an ex-convict trying to salvage his life; however, many of the characters are too hooked on the past to realize the potential for the future. (Written in 1991)

## KING HEDLEY II ● Set in 1985

After being in jail for seven years, the main character hopes to open a video store in the Hill District. Despite his good intentions, he ends up becoming an armed robber and wrecks any chance he has at redemption. (Written in 1999)

## Set in 1911 ●

### JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE

While a man searches for his wife he arrives at a boarding house that offers room and nourishment to those who have been mistreated or abused by white society. He sets out to rediscover his identity. (Written in 1988)

## Set in 1936 ●

### THE PIANO LESSON

A piano that has been passed down through the generations becomes the source of conflict as members of the Charles family argue whether to keep it or sell it, despite its significance and historical background. (Written in 1990)

## Set in 1957 ●

### FENCES

A former baseball hero now turned trash collector holds a grudge against his son for winning an athletic scholarship. It focuses on the struggle for justice and fair treatment for African Americans in the 1950s. (Written in 1987)

## Set in 1977 ●

### JITNEY

Set in a cab driver's station, the owner of the station and his son, who has been recently released from prison, try to rekindle their relationship. (Written in 1982)

## Set in 1997 ●

### RADIO GOLF

The final play tells the story of real estate developer Harmond Wilks, his quest to become the first black mayor of Pittsburgh and his plan to rejuvenate the Hill District, which would require tearing down Aunt Ester's house. (Written in 2005)

*Aunt Ester is a constant throughout the Pittsburgh Cycle. Why do you think Wilson chose to include Aunt Ester's presence throughout the cycle of plays? Do some research on the other plays to see if there are any other constants. Discuss your answers and findings with a group.*



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATER

By Zoë Cohen

While August Wilson has been perhaps the most prolific, influential, comprehensive and well-received African American playwright of his generation, he was by no means the only one writing about the unique experiences of Black America. What follows is a very brief history of this tradition, merely touching upon a few important playwrights, from the 1950s to the present.

Many see Lorraine Hansberry's play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, which debuted on Broadway in 1959, as the work which first opened the door for a genuine and far-reaching discussion of race relations in the American theater. This made Hansberry the first black woman to have a play produced on Broadway, as well as the first black playwright, and youngest playwright to win a New York Drama Critics Circle Award. The production was also significant in that the playwright, the cast (aside from one character), the director, and many of the investors backing the play were black, something uncommon at the time. Off-Broadway, playwrights like Alice Childress, and her 1955 work *Trouble in Mind* (which you may have seen at The Rep in the 2008-2009 season) paved the way for Hansberry and countless others.



*Lorraine Hansberry*

In the 1960s playwrights such as Amiri Baraka pushed the envelope, guiding the conversation in a radical new direction. He is most famous for his controversial 1964 play, *Dutchman*. Born Everett LeRoi Jones, Baraka changed his name in 1968 to reflect his African heritage. Baraka is writing to this day, challenging Americans to think more deeply about race. August Wilson cites Baraka as a major influence on his work.

1975 brought us *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf*, Ntozake Shange's Obie Award winning "choreopoem." This play, a collection of twenty poems, performed by a chorus of women and featuring extensive creative movement, revolutionized and expanded the possibilities for the forms dramatic texts could take. It also brought the concept of Black Feminism into the spotlight.

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s and on into the present, playwrights like Anna Deavere Smith and Suzan-Lori Parks have continued this tradition. Smith is best known for her "documentary theater" style. Plays such as *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles* tell the stories of a real event, told solely through interview and other archived material. In these plays, Smith is the sole performer, playing a multitude of diverse characters reflecting on the event in question. Suzan-Lori Parks' 2001 play *Topdog/Underdog* won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 2002, making Parks the first African American woman to win the prize for drama. Her plays are known for their imaginative use of fantasy and history, as well as her playful, creative use of the English language. In response to being called "an experimental playwright," Parks had this to say in 2002: "Just being an African American woman playwright on Broadway is experimental. As far as I know, there [are] four of us: Lorraine Hansberry, Ntozake Shange, Anna Deavere Smith, and now me."

This incredibly brief history only scratches the surface of all there is to know about the rich tradition of African American dramatists and playwrights. Because these writers and their colleagues have been underrepresented and marginalized in the past, it becomes all the more important to continue to study this history in all its complexity.



# THE ELECTION PROCESS



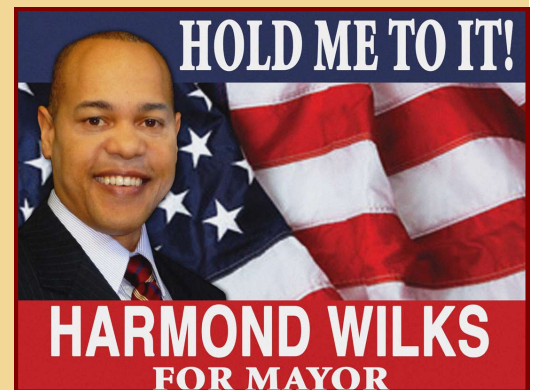
Just over a year ago, Barack Obama was elected the first black President of the United States; making RADIO GOLF even more poignant today.

While running for President, Obama used a variety of campaign strategies including his slogans that rang across America: “Change We Can Believe In” and “Yes We Can.” Obama also stressed a more unified nation. He stated “This was one of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of this campaign– to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous America.” This idea was the springboard for Obama’s campaign. He didn’t want the election to be about race, but acknowledged that race is still a very complex and fraught issue in America.

Obama’s campaign focused on change in various areas including energy, health care, education and homeland security. His plan to hold the nation more accountable and to increase options for citizens were vital to his campaign strategy to win over constituents. Obama expounded on changing America for the better by improving the standards in which we live by making new jobs, investing in new energy and providing health care for all. His well articulated ideas and charismatic charm won over much of the nation, which, in turn, won Obama the election.

In RADIO GOLF, Harmond Wilks has progressive ideas as well. We see this when Harmond and Mame are discussing possible slogans which include “Harmond Wilks: A New Start”, “It’s Time” and “Hold Me to It!” While he is only running to become mayor, not president, he realizes that there are changes that need to be made in order to revitalize Pittsburgh, specifically the Hill District. His detailed plan to improve the neighborhood with federal money and his honest attitude make him a good candidate. Even when things don’t go as planned for Harmond, he still tries to do what is best for the community and what is right, not what will guarantee him the election and further him financially. He sticks to his instincts and continues to be honest with himself and others, whether they think it is for the best or not.

Despite both Harmond and President Obama’s efforts to move their campaigns beyond race, it is definitely still a factor in American politics. One prominent phrase that has emerged recently is “post-racial.” This means that we are in a time when race is not of concern anymore and racial discrimination is a thing of the past. Another popular phrase is “color blind.” Whether or not America is truly post-racial has sparked a lot of debate and remains to be seen. The election of President Obama, and Wilks’ candidacy in RADIO GOLF, bring these questions to the forefront.



*Do you think that it is important to always be honest when running for office? Do you think there comes a time when it may be okay to cover things up if you think it is best for the public? Why or why not? Discuss your answers with your classmates.*



## Requirements for Running for Mayor

Researched by Cheryl Ann Lisowski, Education Intern

While there is a no sure-fire road to follow if you want to run for Mayor, there are a few requirements. There are also a few things that you should do in order to become better qualified and to get you prepared for a campaign. While each city and town has their own process of becoming a Mayor, below are some steps for becoming Mayor in Milwaukee.

- You must be 18 years of age
- You must be a US resident and a resident of the city
- No felony convictions
- Be a volunteer in the community working at various locations
- Know your city and what its needs are (this would include attending city council meetings)
- Attend meetings of the political party with whom you identify
- Think about what changes you would like to make
- Get a copy of your city's charter (legal document that has regulations, laws, etc)
- Get a petition signed in order to get your name on the ballot
- Identify your platform issues
- Begin a campaign fundraising committee
- Begin your campaign

Jim Owczarski, Deputy City Clerk of Milwaukee, also gives this advice if you are interested in running for Mayor one day:

First, get involved with community groups in your neighborhood. Come to be known as a person with ideas, who is willing to work. Start now. Get involved in grassroots work within your community. Make phone calls, run a program, set up a food pantry. You will become known in your community, though not necessarily famous.

Get involved in political campaigns. Learn how to stuff envelopes, the workings of literature distribution and how to knock on doors. Volunteer to assist an alderman or a school board member. You might one day be appointed to a position.

Get used to being told "no". Others will disagree with you. Another person might get angry with you. Negative things will be said about you that you know are not true. How will you deal with that?

Learn the ropes and when your time comes, don't be in it half-way.

Owczarski also encourages getting involved in the Milwaukee City Youth Council— a group of appointed students under the age of 18 who serve and advance the interests of city youth. For more information about the Milwaukee City Youth Council visit <http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/YouthCouncil>.

*If you were to run for mayor, what would your campaign be? What changes would you want to make to the community? Come up with a list of things that you would like to do for your constituents. Prepare a speech that states your ideas and present it to your classmates.*

*Come up with a slogan that you feel would represent you and your campaign. Make a campaign poster that includes the slogan. Share what you have made with your classmates.*



# GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification is the process of putting money into a low-income location and turning it into a better place. This may mean taking an older neighborhood with run down houses and updating them. It could also mean putting large corporate franchises in the city to bring in more money in. Gentrification changes an area in order to try to improve it, although it may mean displacing people that already live there.

Gentrification is by no means a new concept. It has happened since ancient times with large villas replacing small shops in villages all over Europe, especially in England. Despite its history, the term gentrification did not come along until 1964 when British sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term to denote the influx of middle class citizens which displaced the lower class citizens.

While there have been many theories as to why gentrification occurs, there are two that stick out. First is the production-side theory. This theory states that we use gentrification in order to produce more buildings, houses, businesses, etcetera in order to bring money and jobs to a certain location. Theorists hope that by doing this, the economic gap between various neighborhoods will become closer and closer. The other theory is the consumption-side theory. This theory states that gentrification occurs in order to make a location more beautiful and stand out more. It is not necessarily about trying to better the neighborhood, but just make it more convenient for the wealthy that travel to the neighborhood.

In most cases, gentrification occurs at the neighborhood level, with investors purchasing houses in rundown areas and fixing them up to sell to people who might not otherwise have considered the neighborhood. After this is completed, more businesses will begin to build in the area until the neighborhood is completely different. While there are many advantages for residents, there can also be some disadvantages. These include:

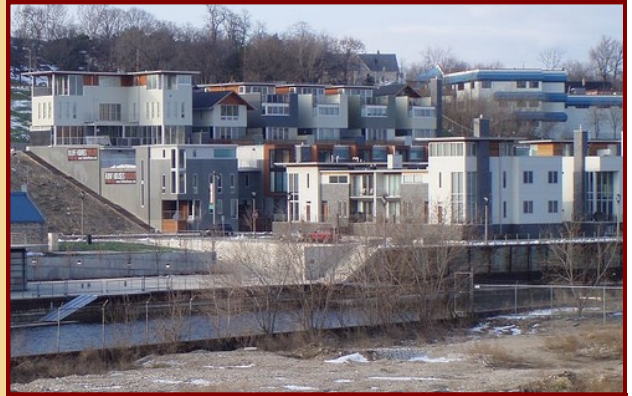
## Advantages

- Unique and better housing
- More money brought to the community
- Less crime and vandalism

## Disadvantages

- Higher taxes for those already living there
- A change in the neighborhood identity
- A sense of invasion

Gentrification can trigger a variety of reactions and opinions. While some see it as a means of improving an area for the community, others see it as a way to push a community out of an area for financial gain.



*An example of gentrification in Milwaukee— condos built along the Milwaukee River downtown.*

*What other advantages and disadvantages can you think of for gentrification? Make a list with a small group and then share with the whole class. Overall, do you think gentrification is a good thing or a bad thing? Why? Discuss your answer with your classmates.*

*Where do you see gentrification happening in Milwaukee? Do you think that this will help or hinder Milwaukee's community? Find someone who lives in a neighborhood that has been improved and see what their take is on it. Share your findings with your class.*



# SELF-IDENTITY



Everyone has a self-identity, or, the way they see themselves. As our world changes on a day to day basis, so does self-identity. This is especially true of teenagers, whose self-identity is changing all the time. Our lives are made up of many different aspects, they are multifaceted, and so are our identities. Between our occupations, relationships, affiliations and beliefs, we may have many identities.

Our sense of self influences self-esteem and how we view ourselves as a person in society or school. Identities evolve over time and may change with age, location or relationships. You may feel self-confident and accepted at home but not around your peers at school, or vice versa. Even though your identity is what

you make it, it is valued in society. People may question their identity depending on the situation and how they feel. It's okay to not know who you are at any given time, as it is always changing. Sometimes we need the help of others to learn about ourselves often it is others who make us question our identity.

*Pair up with classmate. Write down three words that describe yourself. Then, have your partner tell you three words that describe you. Are your words similar or different? Why do you think there are discrepancies? Why do you think others may view you differently than you view yourself? Do you think that what other people think makes you question who you are as a person? Discuss your ideas and answers with your partner and with other classmates.*

The characters in RADIO GOLF all experience changes in their self-identity over the course of the play. For example, Mame, Harmond's wife, also questions her identity in the play. In the beginning she fully supports and encourages Harmond. However, towards the end of the play, Mame realizes that she may have gone too far. She states: "I tied myself so tight to you that there is no me. It's time to cut loose. I don't know what's ahead but I have to become my own person." Sterling also questions who he is when he tells Harmond "Every time somebody come to adopt me they say, 'Well, Sterling's a little slow.' That stuck with me. I started to believe it myself. Maybe they knew something I didn't know." Despite the fact that Sterling is a grown man, he still remembers this time in his life when his self-identity was affected by what other's said. Each character goes through their own journey, each realizing different things in order to become different people.

*After you see RADIO GOLF think about the following things. How did the characters question who they were? What happened that changed each character? Do you think each character changed for the better or for the worse? Why? Discuss your thoughts and feelings with your classmates.*

*Think about who you are and why you are the way you are. What influences have affected your self-identity? What people or events have made you a better person? Have any of these things have a negative effect on you? Do you change identities depending on who you are with and where you are? Jot down your answers to these questions. Compare and contrast what you have written down with a small group and discuss your experiences.*



# COMMUNITY

We all belong to a community and, most likely, belong to more than one. Communities are very important in our lives. They support us and provide us with a safe place. It is a sense of community that also helps mold who we are. Communities can be found all over and differ depending on who's in it, where it is located and what values the members have. There are communities in neighborhoods, at school, at work and at home. Each community is unique and important in its own way. They can be large or small, have a wide variety of members and can be either very exclusive or not.

A community may contain as few as two people or grow in excess of hundreds of people. They can be created around a religion, a common interest, a school or shared beliefs. Some examples of communities are a sports team, an after school youth group, a neighborhood of families and a group of co-workers.

They are each are very different in terms of demeanor and participants; however, they each provide the members with the same things. Friendships are formed, support is given and the individual identity is shaped by the community.

Studies have shown that there are four elements when feeling a sense of community. They are: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs and shared emotional connection. Usually members do not feel all these elements when they first join a community. It takes time to connect to the other members and to fully immerse oneself in the group. However, after being fully accepted, individuals in the community may feel all of these elements.

Communities have a positive effect on the quality of life by providing social and emotional support. In a community, you are able to be with people who have the same tastes as you, the same morals as you and the same interests as you. You are able to be yourself with these people and are able to realize your strengths and weaknesses. With all of this support you are able to become a better person at home, school, work and with your friends.



*Why do you think community is important to an individual? How does community affect self-identity? Discuss your answers with your classmates.*

*The picture above shows someone nurturing all the communities they belong to. Make a list of all the communities that you are a part of. Which are the most important to you? Why? What things do you look for when becoming a member of a new community? How important are it's values and morals to you? Do you have a deciding factor when it comes to becoming a member in a community? Compare and contrast your list and answers with a small group.*

*Talk to your peers about the communities at your school. Take a poll to see which communities seem to be the most popular and most important. Why do you think your results turned out the way they did? What other communities do you see in your school? Are some more exclusive than others? Why? Do you think your school would be the same without these communities? How so? Discuss your findings and answers with your class.*



# INTERVIEWS WITH THE CAST

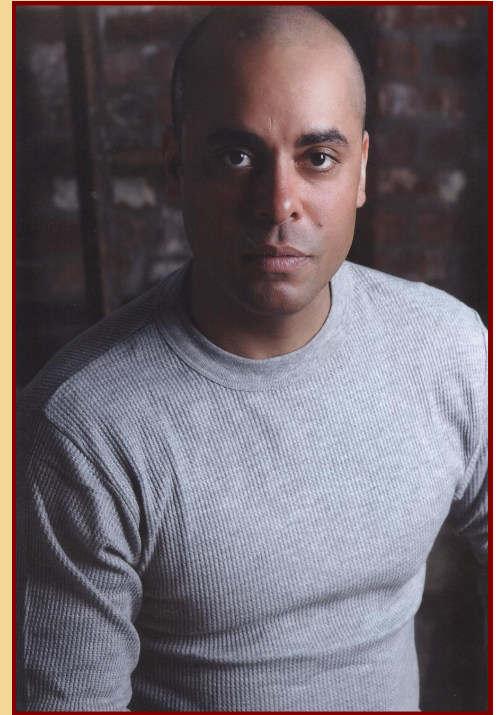
*This first interview is with Howard M. Overshown who is playing Roosevelt in RADIO GOLF.*

## **How did you get into acting?**

I first was interested in acting in middle or high school. I took a drama class because I had to and fell in love with it. When I was in high school I acted for a while, but then got more into sports and the two didn't mix well in the '80s. I went to college to be a lawyer and after two years of changing my major, I just decided to become a theater major and started from there.

## **How do you relate to your character?**

I feel like Roosevelt is someone who wants to succeed by any means necessary and in this play he'll give up a friendship, a marriage; and it's all about improving himself no matter what. It's something that he's always wanted to do. And when I was younger, I wanted to be a lawyer and retire when I was 40 and then be a high school track coach and have all this money. When I went to college, I went to the University of Virginia, I had to take a class called Law and Society. I loved the law but it taught you how to manipulate society to your benefit. Like how to pick jurors based on socio-economic conditions, or what have you, that will be better for your client. At the time I wrote a paper and my professor gave me an A+ on it and he said "I loved your paper and you're going to be a great lawyer." And I said, "No, I'm not going to law school." He asked why and I answered "Because I'm going to make Johnny Cochran look like a choir boy." The desire to win in the business world would have taken over everything else. And I didn't want to look at myself and not like what I see. I'm not like that now, but that's what Roosevelt is about.



## **Why is RADIO GOLF pertinent to today's issues?**

Gentrification. I live in Manhattan and there are so many areas in Manhattan that have changed names. In fact the neighborhood that I live in is called Washington Heights, but they've renamed a section to Hudson Heights, and that's where I live. It's the nicer part; it's where the Starbucks is and so on. You can basically draw a line and once you cross a certain street, it's predominately Dominican. There's less English spoken, it's all private owned places. I've been in the neighborhood for about 10 years now and I've seen it change. But it's happening everywhere; both in the declining of neighborhoods and building up of neighborhoods.

## **So do you think gentrification is a good thing for a community?**

It's such a tough question. My mom always said there's no trade off; it's not black or white. In Washington Heights there are some of the neighborhood people that are benefitting from it, like restaurant owners, but at the same time there are lots of people being pushed out. There was one of my favorite hardware stores there, one that if you didn't have the money you could pay the owner next week, but then the landlords pushed him out so this grocery store



could buy it out and change the layout and make it a gourmet, upscale business. I'm torn. It's nice to have, but it has its tradeoffs. With gentrification there comes police protection, the neighborhood feels safer. I think it depends. If it can be done where you're trying to improve the neighborhood for the people in the neighborhood, and that might mean bringing in other people, then cool. But if it's completely about material things, like, oh look, great real estate, then it just becomes about the money and not the neighborhood and the community. And in this country we've learned lately that money and greed can get out of control.

### **Why is community important in today's society? Do you think it has lost its effectiveness?**

The world has gotten bigger. I feel like my generation is the last old school generation. It takes a village, ya know. Living in New York City, there's still a community there. My wife jokes with me and says that I'm running for mayor because when I walk by people I'm always saying hi, how're doing? But with the internet and Twitter and Facebook... I mean I'm on Facebook, but I'm scared as hell. Do I really want everybody, everyone I've ever met in my life to be able to find where I am? So community has extended. If you concentrate your focus on community in your neighborhood it's one thing, but if you're focusing on all these people around the world and all this stuff you may lose it [community]. With the amount of violence and everything progressing, community becomes more important. There are very few out there, and there are also some communities that are so protective that that can cause problems too.

*So community has extended. If you concentrate your focus on community in your neighborhood it's one thing, but if you're focusing on all these people around the world and all this stuff you may lose it [community].*

*This second interview is with Tyrone Henderson who is playing Harmond Wilks in RADIO GOLF.*

### **How do you relate to your character?**

I think Harmond is a very interesting man. He is very involved in his community and he always wants to do what will benefit everyone. I tend to be a people pleaser and I try to control what's happening in the spiritual environment that surrounds me. One thing that Harmond learned from his father is to uphold the value that "Family is the most important thing." I feel quite the same.



### **Why is RADIO GOLF pertinent to today's issues?**

With the recession and that lack of jobs along with the downturn in the financial support of certain communities, this play is very pertinent today. There are still parts of the Hill District



that have not been given the proper care. I also find the political conversations very poignant. The fact that Harmond is running to be the first Black Mayor of the city of Pittsburgh, harkens to our current President.

### **Why is community important in today's society?**

I've found that the proverb, "It takes a village..." will never stop being important in society. It takes a village to raise a child. It takes a village as big as the globe to support a community of people ravaged by war, tsunami, earthquake. Without people communing together, there is no society.

### **Do you think gentrification is good for a community?**

I think that that is a tricky question. In rehearsal this issue was raised and the part of the answer is whether the gentrification of a neighborhood is to help the people of the neighborhood, or to do away with the community at large. This idea is a huge part of Harmond's journey through the play.

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# VISITING THE REP

The Milwaukee Repertory Theater is housed in the Milwaukee Center at the corner of Wells and Water Streets, downtown. Our building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company. This name is still carved on the wall outside.

You'll enter on the Wells Street side into a large, open space. Our box office will be visible on your left as you come through the front doors. The large space is the main hub for the businesses that share this building: a bank, an office tower, the Pabst Theater and the Intercontinental Hotel. If you walk into the center of this area, you'll see a staircase on your left. Behind the staircase is the entrance to the Stiemke Theater.

Inside the lobby are restrooms, water fountains and a coat check. If you decide to bring a snack, please know that food and drink are NOT permitted in the theater. However, you can leave things (at your own risk) in the coat check room and enjoy them outside the theater during intermission. Most plays have one intermission that is about 20 minutes long. You might also want to look for signs in the lobby which give the full "running time" of the play.

**For more information on our education programs and our productions,  
please visit our website at [www.milwaukeeerep.com](http://www.milwaukeeerep.com)**

*You need three things in the theatre – the play, the actors and the audience,  
and each must give something.*

*– Kenneth Haigh*

Theater is described as a collaborative art form. The success of a production relies upon every member of the process: playwrights, directors, designers, technicians, actors and the audience.

Plays require audiences to give a new life to performances through their careful attention and enthusiastic reactions. The audience has an active role to play and the actors rely on you to be respectful and attentive. Through your observation of sets, costumes, lighting and the work of the actors, you'll be better able to follow the story and enjoy its live presentation. You are important in the final performance and your participation is what makes this process worthwhile.

*Programs in the Education Department receive generous funding from:*

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