



GOOD PEOPLE

By **David Lindsay-Abaire**

Directed by **Kate Buckley**

Executive Producers **John & Connie Kordsmeier**

Associate Producers **Warren & Wendy Blumenthal,**
Catherine & Buddy Robinson

Laura Gordon's performance is sponsored by
Anthony & Donna Meyer

MILWAUKEE REPERTORY THEATER

MARK CLEMENTS **CHAD BAUMAN**

Artistic Director *Managing Director*

Presents...



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The Quadracci Powerhouse Season is Sponsored
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In Memory Of Harry And Betty Quadracci

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Act 1

Good People opens in contemporary South Boston. Native Southie, Margaret “Margie” Walsh, and her much younger boss, Stevie, argue about Margie’s tendency to show up to her job consistently late. Despite offering excuses about her daughter, Joyce, who has a developmental disability, Stevie tells Margie that he is getting pressured by his district manager. He has to fire her.

The next morning Margie, her friend, Jean, and her landlady, Dottie, talk about Margie’s unemployment over coffee. Dottie cracks down on Margie about the rent, while Jean suggests various jobs for her, including working at the Gillette factory. After tossing around ideas, Jean mentions that she ran into their old friend—and Margie’s old flame—Mike Dillon, who is now a doctor. Jean suggests that Margie go to him for a job, and though she is initially hesitant, Margie decides to give it a try, as she always remembered Mike as “good people.”

Later that week Margie goes to Mike’s office. She comes in as he gets off the phone with the caterers for his upcoming birthday party. The two discuss what has happened since they last saw each other. Margaret is awed and overwhelmed by Mike’s successes, though Mike tries to downplay them, insisting he is still a Southie boy. When Margie asks if he has been back to the area, though, he has to admit he has not. Margie asks him about job openings, but Mike has nothing to offer her. She shrugs it off, claiming she would not be able to fit into the environment anyway, as Mike has become too “lace curtain” for her. To reclaim his connections to Southie, as well as prove to Margie that he is not “lace curtain,” he invites her to his birthday party that weekend, with the implication that she can talk to his friends about job opportunities.

Afterward, Margie, Dottie, and Jean sit in a church basement, playing bingo and talking about Mike. Jean thinks that Margie should say that Joyce is Mike’s daughter so that Margie can claim child support. Stevie comes in and, with nowhere else to sit, joins the women at their table. Jean antagonizes him about firing Margie. Dottie mentions that her daughter-in-law also lost her job, and she and Dottie’s son may need to move into Dottie’s building, taking over Margie’s apartment if she cannot pay her rent. Margie gets a phone call from Mike. His daughter is sick, and they have to cancel the birthday party. She believes he is lying, and decides to go to the party anyway.

Act 2

That night Mike and his wife, Kate, sit in their living room, trying to plan their next couples’ counseling session. Mike goes upstairs to check on their daughter, Ally, who is sick. Margie shows up at the house, and is embarrassed that Mike was not lying about the cancelled party. She

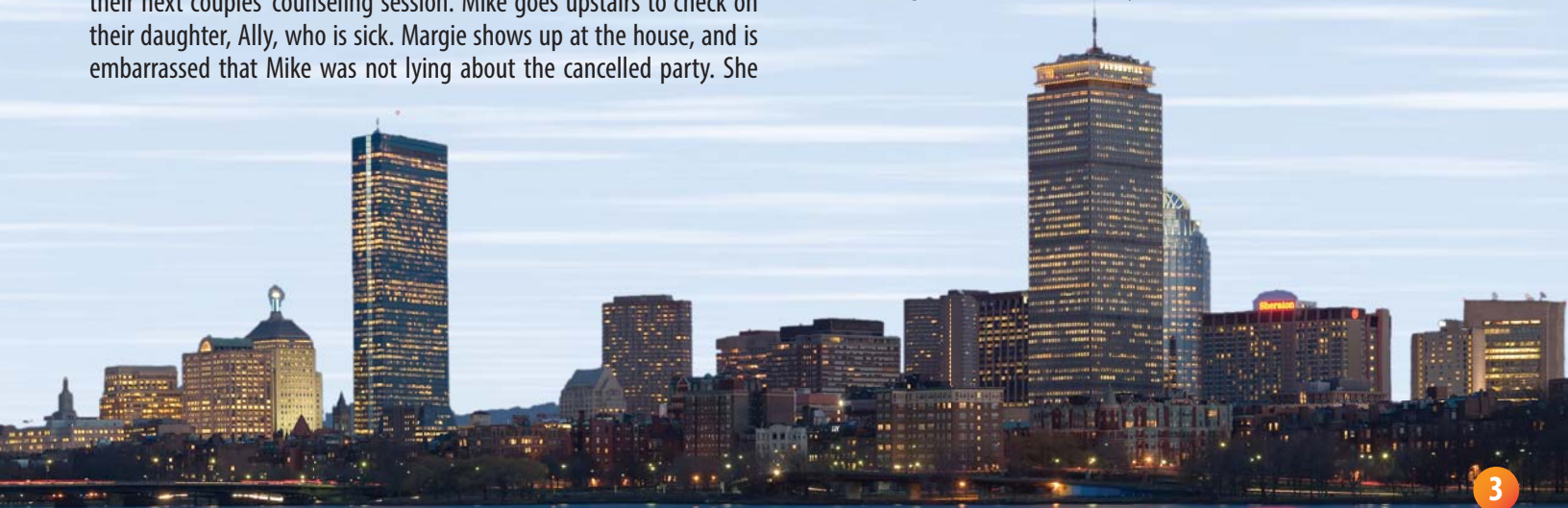
SYNOPSIS

WARNING! THIS SYNOPSIS CONTAINS SPOILERS!

wants to leave, but Kate insists Margie stay for wine and cheese. Mike says that Kate wanted to meet Margie so she could hear stories of his childhood in Southie. Margie wants to know if Mike told Kate that he used to date her, but Mike asks Margie not to mention that. Kate relates Mike’s stories about his rough childhood, and Margie scoffs. She says that Mike did not have it very bad, that he had a lot of opportunities that many kids in the area did not. Mike claims that he only got out of Southie because he worked hard, but Margie insists that he had advantages. Hearing this, Kate decides that she is going to help find Margie a job if, in return, Margie tells stories about Mike’s childhood. However, when Margie relates a story about a childhood fight, Kate is less than impressed. A few moments later she heads off to talk to the caterers who have arrived to pick up tables, leaving Mike and Margie.

Alone with Mike, Margie wonders if the two of them would have stayed together had Mike not gone off to U-Penn. Mike insists it was just a summer fling. When Kate returns, she suggests that Margie work as Ally’s babysitter. Margie is interested, but Mike is skeptical. Margie calls Mike out, saying that he thinks she is not responsible or smart enough to watch his daughter. In anger, she reveals that she and Mike used to date. Mike insists that Margie leave, saying that it is not his fault that she cannot find a job, and that she has made bad choices in life. Margie says she never had choices, that life just happened, leading her to where she is now. She then claims that Joyce is actually Mike’s daughter, and she never told him because she wanted him to have a good life. After arguing about it, Kate asks Margie if her story about Joyce’s paternity is true, and Margie says that it is not.

Back in the church basement, Margie, Jean, Dottie, and Stevie are playing bingo. They talk about the mysterious donation given to Dottie: an envelope of cash labeled “Margaret’s Rent.” Margie believes it is from Mike or Kate, and wants to return it, but Dottie says it is hers now since it is rent. The women pester Margie about why they would do this for her, when finally Stevie interrupts their conversation, telling them that it was he who donated the money. Margie wants to give it back, but Stevie says that she can eventually pay him back for it. Margie says that she is going to try to get a job at Gillette later in the week. The women maintain that even if Gillette does not work out, something else will come her way.



PRODUCTION HISTORY

Good People premiered on Broadway at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on March 3, 2011. Directed by Daniel J. Sullivan, it starred Frances McDormand as Margie and Tate Donovan as Mike. Frances McDormand won a Tony Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play. The show closed after a run of 101 performances. Since then it has been performed at multiple theaters all over the globe, including in Los Angeles, St. Louis, Germany, England, and again in New York.



L to R: Laura Gordon as Margie, Tami Workentin as Jean, and Laura T. Fisher as Dottie in the 2015 Milwaukee Rep production of *Good People*
Photo credit: Michael Brosilow



L to R: Becky Ann Baker as Jean, Frances McDormand as Margie, and Estelle Parsons as Dottie in the 2011 Broadway production of *Good People*
Photo credit: Sara Krulwich

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM



Bernard Balbot
Stevie Grimes



Michael Elich
Mike Dillion



Laura T. Fisher
Dottie Gillis



Laura Gordon
Margie



Jennifer Latimore
Kate



Tami Workentin
Jean

Ensemble: **Josiah Laubenstein, Kristina Loy, Nick Narcisi, Chris O'Reilly and Leeanna Rubin**

Directed by **Kate Buckley**

Scenic Designer
Kevin Depinet

Original Music & Sound Design
Joe Cerqua

Assistant Director
Hannah Greene

Stage Management Intern
Audra Kuchling

Lighting & Video Director
Sean Nicholl

Properties Director
James Guy

Costume Designer
Rachel Healy

Dialect Coach
Jill Walmsley Zager

Stage Manager
Rebecca Lindsey

Sound Director
Erin Paige

Production Manager
Jared Clarkin

Charge Scenic Artist
Jim Medved

Lighting Designer
Jason Fassl

Casting Director
JC Clementz

Assistant Stage Manager
Jennifer Anderson

Technical Director
Tyler Smith

David Lindsay-Abair is best known for his Pulitzer-prize winning play *Rabbit Hole* and the Tony-nominated and widely-produced *Good People*. He is also a Southie boy who has “done good.” Although Lindsay-Abair now calls Brooklyn home, he was South Boston born and raised, in the section known as the Lower End. *Good People* explores the South Boston in which Lindsay-Abair grew up, and the world which he knows still exists in parts of that area of Boston.

The son of a factory worker and a fruit vendor, Lindsay-Abair came from solid working-class roots, but was reminded at a young age of the social stratification in his hometown. At the age of eleven, he began attending the prestigious Milton Academy with a scholarship from his local Boys and Girls Club. While Lindsay-Abair was incredibly successful at the school, even writing a play for his class to produce, he could not help but notice the differences in his life versus those of the other students. This issue of class differences forms the core of *Good People*.

With the success of *Good People*, many have asked Lindsay-Abair about his South Boston roots and the connection to the play. In an interview with *The Huffington Post*, he said of the play:

I'm a Southie, from the neighborhood -- those are the people that I know and love, and respect and grew up with. I've been wanting to write about [them] for a long, long time. But I felt resistant to do it, I felt like I had to mature as a person, as a writer, and I felt like I needed to have a pretty clear point of view about the neighborhood and class.

Lindsay-Abair feels strongly connected to the neighborhood in which he grew up, even years after he left to pursue his education and career. After graduating from Milton Academy, he attended Sarah Lawrence College and then Julliard, where he studied under playwrights Christopher Durang and Marsha Norman. In more recent years, he has found a theatrical home at the Manhattan Theatre Club, which has produced several of his plays.

Although Lindsay-Abair has had his plays produced in theaters across the country, a production of *Good People* at Huntington Theatre Company in Boston brought together a “poignant intersection of his two lives,” as he described in an interview with NPR:

The Huntington happens to be across the street from the very corner where my father sold fruit out of the back of the truck . . . And so I would sit with my dad in the back of that truck over the summer and sell plums and peaches to these kids from [Boston University]. And I would look across the street and say, 'What's that over there?' 'Oh, they're doing something called The Piano Lesson by August Wilson.'

And it felt impenetrable to me as a person that there was a real, this very solid, blocky building, and I was the poor kid selling fruit on the street with my dad. And so for many years later to be at that theater and to have my play done in that theater, thinking, 'Oh my Lord I sat across and looked at this theater.'

In the portrayal of Margie, Mike, and the other characters in *Good People*, Lindsay-Abair writes an engaging story of the South Boston he once knew and a tribute to the people of the community he proudly claims as his childhood home.



David Lindsay-Abair
Photo credit: Joe Cohen

Works by DAVID LINDSAY-ABAIRE

PLAYS

A Devil Inside
L'il Plays
Dotting and Dashing
Snow Angel
Fuddy Meers
Wonder of the World
Kimberly Akimbo
Rabbit Hole
Good People
Ripcord (upcoming)

MUSICALS (Books and Lyrics)

High Fidelity
Shrek the Musical

FILMS

Robots
Inkheart
Rabbit Hole
Rise of the Guardians
Oz the Great and Powerful
Poltergeist (upcoming)

MAP OF BOSTON

Columbia Point: current population of approx. 14,000 people; current racial demographics (approx.): 50% white, 16% African-American; home of the Columbia Heights Housing Projects which were built in the 1950s for working middle-class families, but by the 1960s they mostly housed urban poor; serious neglect by the Boston Housing Authority led to the physical and social breakdown of the community, and by the 1970s crime was severely high.

Old Harbor Housing Projects: originally known as the Mary Ellen McCormack Project, located across from Carson Beach, this is the housing project where Mike grew up; opened in 1938, it is the oldest and one of the largest projects in New England; originally they were developed for those on the high end of the low-income spectrum, looking for better employed, higher educated residents; by the 1950s more welfare families began to reside there; in 1968, an amendment required housing authorities to charge no more than 25% of a household's income, allowing low-income families to move in; as the years passed, the projects became overwhelmed with violence and crime, gaining notoriety as the childhood home and old stomping grounds of mobster Whitey Bulger; almost entirely a white neighborhood, the first African-American family moved in to the projects in July of 1988, marking a huge change in the community, especially after the busing issues of the 1970s.

The Sugar Bowl

Chestnut Hill: located in eastern MA; population of approx. 11,000; predominately white (82%); home of Mike in *Good People*.

Brookline: population of approx. 59,000, predominately white (73%).

Lower End: nickname for the West Side of South Boston, centered on Broadway and the T line; lower Dorchester Street down to A Street; home of Margie in *Good People*.

Dorchester: largest neighborhood in Boston, founded in the early 1600s; located on the harbor; contains Columbia Heights; large Vietnamese population.

David Lindsay-Abaire infused his play, *Good People*, with local references, exploring the South Boston of Margie and Mike's childhood, as well as Southie today. What the play truly reflects is the changing face of a community that for many decades had a strong cultural identity. The area was originally formed by Irish immigrants. Ostracized by other Boston communities, they removed themselves to the physically isolated isthmus of South Boston, and developed a highly insular community. Up until recently, the majority of South Boston's residents were the descendants of these founders: largely Catholic Irish working class people. Starting predominately in the 1980s and growing stronger with the passing decades, South Boston has rapidly gentrified. With renovations of the harbor area as well as the explosion of upscale dining venues, chic cafes and bars, artisanal markets, and condominium housing, South Boston appears vastly removed from the version of Southie in which both Lindsay-Abaire and his characters grew up.

Though this version of Southie is a receding culture, it is not gone entirely. Many locals are holding on tightly to the neighborhood loyalty that has been one of Southie's defining characteristics. This puts them at odds, sometimes, with others who very much wish to shake off the more infamous reputation South Boston has garnered. Recently locals all over the area have been up in arms as one neighborhood wants to rename itself Fort Point, distinguishing it from the rest of South Boston. For those loyal to Southie's close-knit heritage, not to feel the legacy of neighborhood pride dishonors the history through which the area formed.

This conflict of class and allegiance stands as a major theme in Lindsay-Abaire's play. Margie, still residing in Southie, reconnects with her childhood friend, Mike, who has left the neighborhood—and has no desire to return. The Southie loyalty—or lack thereof—in the play reflects real world conflicts going on in the city as South Boston looks ahead at even more revitalizations in the coming years. Mayor Thomas M. Menino's "Innovation District" and the renovated Seaport District represent drastic changes in the city's physical and cultural world. A few of the localisms that Lindsay-Abaire mentions in the script already have disappeared from the area. Will Sully's and its clam rolls be added the list? Despite the changes taking place, Lindsay-Abaire's play shows that the hard-working, fiercely loyal Southie citizens are still there, and they are not going anywhere anytime soon.

MARGARET: You ever get back there at all? Walk the Sugar Bowl? Grab a clam roll at Sully's?

MIKE: Not really.

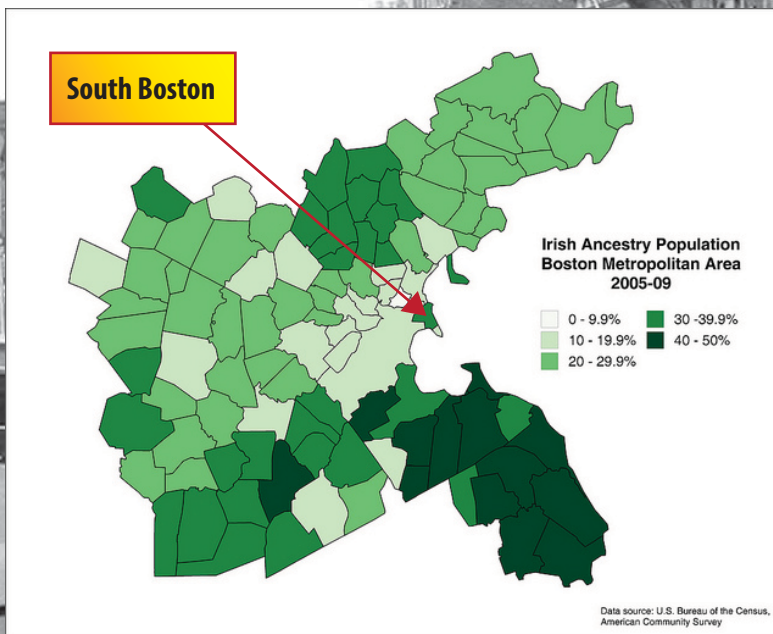
MARGARET: How come?

MIKE: *(Beat)* My parents moved to Florida, so there was never a reason to...

MARGARET: Go back?



"Seaport District", Then and Now
Photos credit: *The Boston Globe*



AUNT CLARA: from the show *Bewitched*, played by Marion Lorne; Aunt Clara was an aging, often forgetful witch whose spells usually had disastrous results.

BOWERY BOYS: characters from a series of films released from 1946–1958; originally started as crime-drama films laced with humor but eventually devolved into slapstick comedies—many of their later films were based on Abbott and Costello plotlines.

CLAM ROLLS: deep fried clams served on a hot dog bun, usually with tartar sauce.

GONE WITH THE WIND / TARA: a 1939 film based on the 1936 novel; takes place in the American South during the Civil War; Tara is the family plantation of protagonist Scarlett O'Hara.

"GOOD PEOPLE": according to the *New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (2008), refers to someone who can be trusted and counted on; first recorded in *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in association with New York slang terminology.

JORDAN MARSH: Jordan Marsh & Co. is a department store that has grown to a regional chain in New England.

LACE-CURTAIN IRISH: poor immigrants who had designs on rising above their social station; were considered social climbers by other Irish.

MAURY POVICH: American television presenter best known for his tabloid talk show, *Maury*; often considered "trash TV" which deals with issues of infidelity and paternity between couples.

POLITOS: Italian family name from D'Ippolito or Ippolito.

REPRODUCTIVE ENDORCHRINOLOGIST: a doctor certified in obstetrics and gynecology, who deals with issues of infertility, but also disorders related to hormone imbalance.

TASTE CORKED: wine that has become contaminated with cork taint (a chemical compound created when natural fungi interact with sanitization products in a winery); corked wine will taste like damp/wet cardboard.

THE ROTARY: a road junction formed around a central circle about which traffic moves in one direction only (a roundabout).

THE T: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, known as MBTA or just The T (after its logo); public operator of bus, subway, commuter rail, and ferry routes in the Greater Boston Area.

UPTON SINCLAIR: American author writing from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s; most well-known for his novel, *The Jungle*, about the meat-packing industry in Chicago in the early 1900s.

VARIETY STORE: sometimes refers to a dollar store; retail shop that sells inexpensive household items.

WELLY CHEESE: "Welfare Cheese," cheap American cheese given to very poor families who collected welfare.

WHITEY BULGER: a Southie native extensively involved in Boston's organized crime from the 70s–90s; on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List; arrested in 2011, he got two life sentences for federal racketeering, extortion, conspiracy, and 11 murders.

ZOTZED: literal slang definition means "killed," though Mike's use is more metaphorical.



The Bowery Boys
Photo credit: Monogram Pictures



Traditional clam roll
Photo credit: Food Network



Whitey Bulger in a prisoner transfer photo from the U.S. Penitentiary at Alcatraz, in San Francisco



A train on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
Photo credit: Getty Images

Sometimes a city can be a character in and of itself. These are just a sample of the films, books, and television shows that have explored the world of contemporary Boston.

FILMS

The Friends of Eddie Coyle (Peter Yates, 1973)

The Verdict (Sidney Lumet, 1982)

Good Will Hunting (Gus Van Sant, 1997)

Boondock Saints (Troy Duffy, 1999)

Southie (John Shea, 1999)

The Departed (Martin Scorsese, 2006)

What Doesn't Kill You (Brian Goodman, 2008)

BOOKS → FILMS

Mystic River (Clint Eastwood, 2003; Dennis Lehane novel, 2001)

Gone Baby Gone (Ben Affleck, 2007; Dennis Lehane novel, 1998)

Shutter Island (Martin Scorsese, 2010; Dennis Lehane novel, 2003)

The Town (Ben Affleck, 2010; Chuck Hogan novel, 2004)

Prince of Thieves, 2004)

BOOKS

All Souls: A Family Story from Southie

(Michael Patrick MacDonald, 1999)

The Namesake (Jhumpa Lahiri, 2003)

On Beauty (Zadie Smith, 2005)

Cell (Stephen King, 2006)

Run (Ann Patchett, 2007)

TELEVISION SHOWS

Cheers (1982–1993)

Ally McBeal (1997–2002)

The Practice / Boston Legal (1997–2004; 2004–2008)

Crossing Jordan (2001–2007)

Fringe (2008–2013)

Being Human (2011–2014)

The racist, the low-life, the Irish drunk, the drug addict, the welfare mom, the mobster working for Whitey Bulger. These are the stereotypical characters playwright David Lindsay-Abaire notes most often crop up in stories about South Boston. In some cultures, reputation means everything. South Boston has certainly garnered a reputation over the years, one that has provided significant fodder for film and television writers and directors. For those outside of Southie, access to this close-knit community has come through film. Some have become cult classics—such as the vigilante action film, *Boondock Saints*—while others are award winners—including Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* and Gus Van Sant's *Good Will Hunting*. They have featured Boston actors who today are synonymous with the area, including Ben and Casey Affleck, Matt Damon, and Mark Wahlberg. If a genre had to be assigned to Boston-inspired films, "crime drama" would certainly come to the forefront. Filmmakers have time and again turned to the area's Irish and Italian Mafia history, exclusively internalized community, and distinctive accents.

Lindsay-Abaire wanted to avoid these tropes in his play, *Good People*. Recalling his memories growing up in Southie, he says:

They were salt of the earth people, and lots of us were struggling, but no one I knew really fit the Southie stereotypes that people seem to have. Part of writing the play was my responding to those stereotypes — most of which are thirty years old and weren't even accurate thirty years ago.

The play's plot is devoid of crime, drugs, and violence, and the characters' discussions both acknowledge and challenge these topics' prevalence in Southie culture. He turns to the average South Boston citizens, following them in their everyday struggles to maintain work, support their families, and find happiness. In Lindsay-Abaire's narrative, South Boston becomes its own character, infused with a history and personality defined by the amalgamation of cultures, traditions, trades, and people that have formed and continued to define the area.



Tim Robbins, Kevin Bacon, and Laurence Fishburne in Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River* (2003)
Photo credit: Warner Brothers Ent.



Southie author Michael Patrick MacDonald
Photo credit: Phillip Martin/WGBH News



Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Casey Affleck, and Cole Hauser in Gus Van Sant's *Good Will Hunting* (1997)
Photo credit: Miramax Pictures

In June of 1974, Federal Judge Arthur W. Garrity ruled that Boston Public Schools were illegally segregated by race due to neighborhood divisions, and the practice would come to an end through court-ordered busing. The NAACP and black parents in Boston had fought a ten-year battle against the school system about the inequities in school quality and lack of opportunities for students of color. Many felt the ruling was the step towards equality that Boston schools needed, but others opposed the busing mandate. In South Boston, the anti-busing sentiment was high; for some it was a matter of race, but many said that they simply wanted their children to remain in the neighborhood schools they knew.

Regardless of public sentiment, the first phase of busing began in September of that year. South Boston and the predominately African-American neighborhood of Roxbury were chosen for the first phase of busing. Many families from South Boston boycotted the busing order, and empty buses arrived at Roxbury schools. The African-American students who got on buses to head to South Boston were met with crowds throwing rocks and bricks, shouting racial slurs, and threatening them. At South Boston High School, only 124 of the 1300 enrolled students came on that first day.

The tensions escalated in the coming days, weeks, months, and years. Protests continued all over Boston, and the controversy of the busing plan led to violence in other neighborhoods and schools. Over 400 court orders were required to carry out the busing plan over the next decade. Margie and Mike would have grown up in these tumultuous times in Boston's history and would have experienced it first-hand as South Boston residents. The discussion about the disparity in Boston's educational opportunities for students of color continues today, and the controversy over busing still stands as a blight on Boston's rich history.

Southie author Michael Patrick MacDonald wrote of the anti-busing riots in his memoir *All Souls*:

"Smash! A burst of flying glass and all that rage exploded. We'd all been waiting for it, and so had the police in riot gear. . . . More bricks, sticks, and bottles smashed against the buses, as police pulled out their billy clubs and charged with their riot shields in a line formation through the crowds. Teenagers were chased into the project and beaten to the cement wherever they were caught. I raced away about a block from the fray, to a spot where everyone was chanting 'Here We Go Southie, Here We Go,' like a battle cry."



An African-American student is escorted off a bus by police officers outside South Boston High School (1974)
Photo: *Boston Globe*

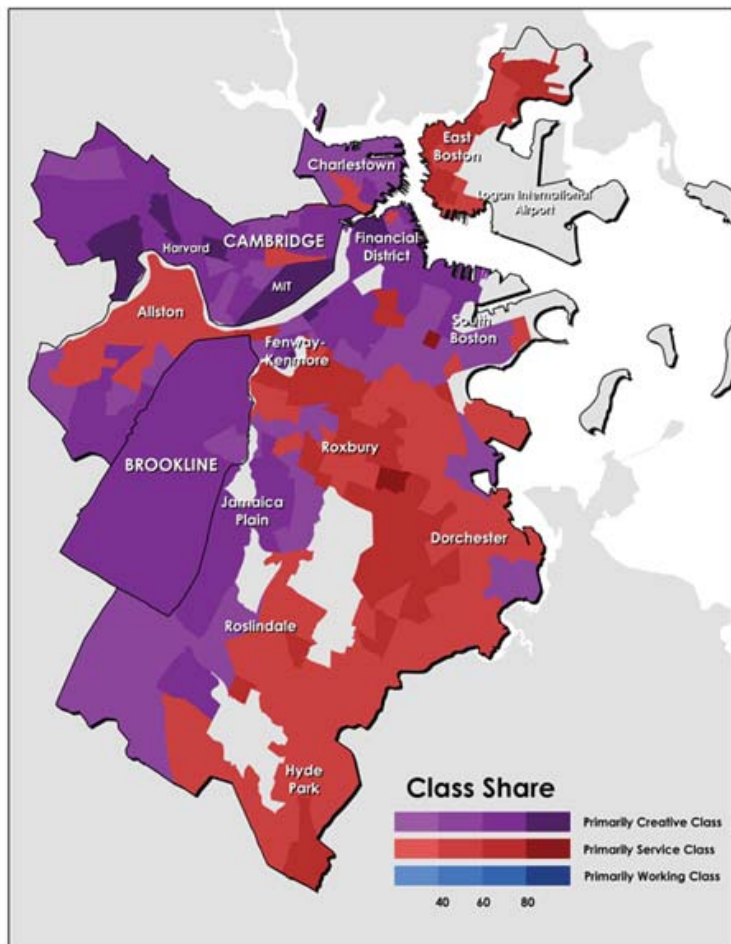


Police hold back crowds as students are bused through South Boston (1974)
Photo: *Boston Globe*



Students enter South Boston High School (1974)
Photo credit: *Boston Globe*

SCHOOL BUS



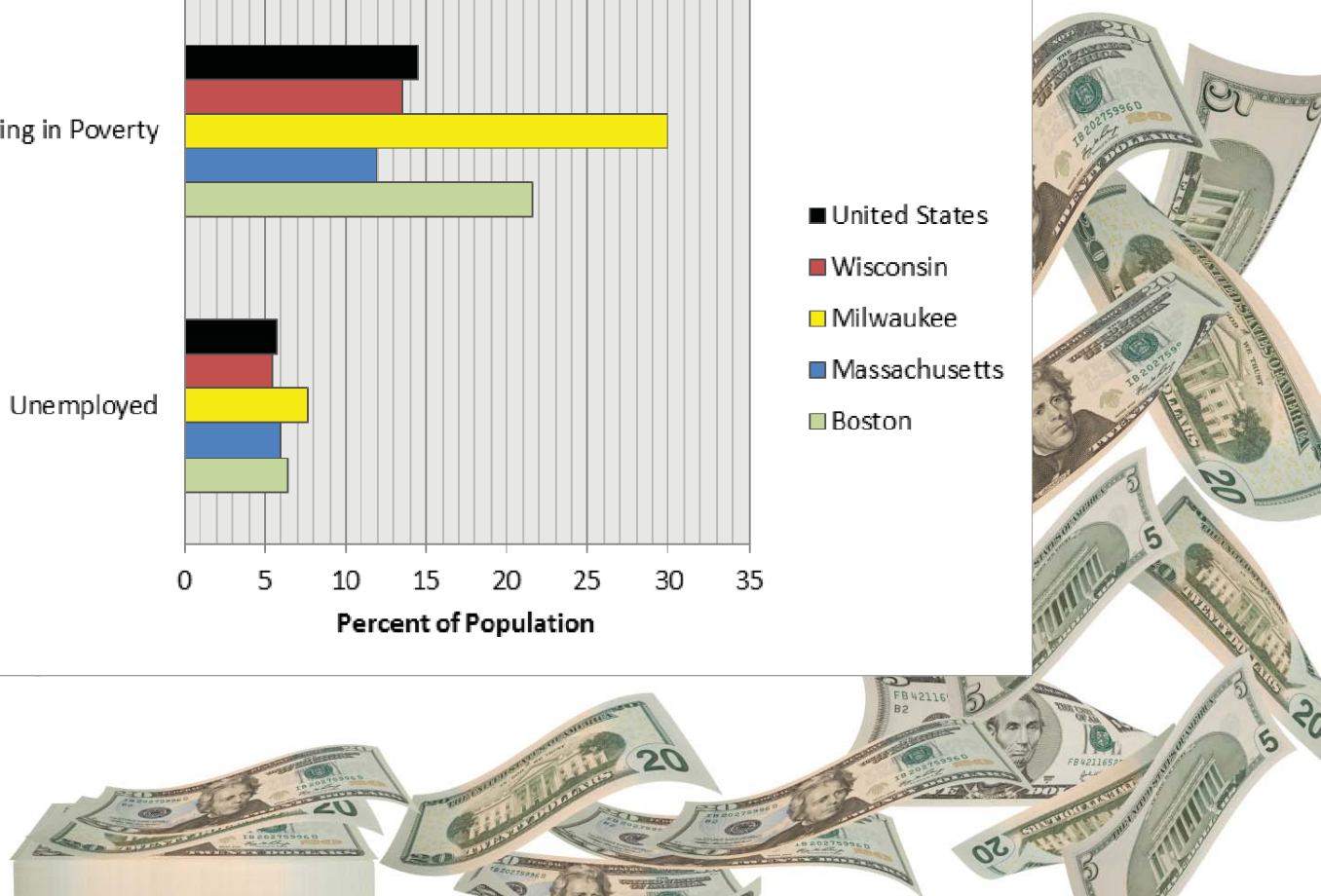
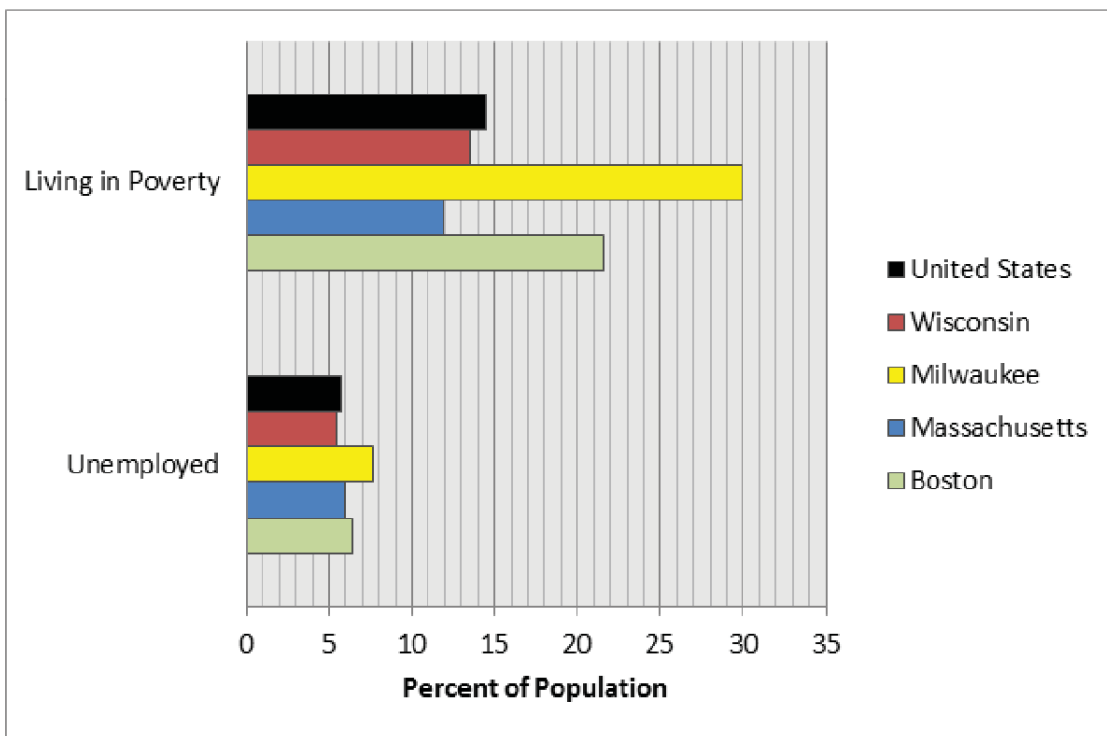
Map of South Boston's social class divisions by census tract
Map credit: "City Lab: Boston," *The Atlantic*

The economic struggles Margie faces are all too common for many people in Boston, Milwaukee, and the United States as a whole. Like many cities in America, Boston is greatly divided by social class, an issue that is central to *Good People*.

While Boston has traditionally working class roots, the city proper has changed so that all of the census tracts contained therein are largely either creative class (people who work primarily in science and technology, business, healthcare, arts, law, and media) or service class (people who work in jobs such as food service, retail, and clerical or administrative positions). The creative class dominates parts of the city as well as the more affluent suburbs, like Chestnut Hill, where Mike lives. The communities with a higher percentage of those considered working class (factory jobs, as well as those in transportation, maintenance, and construction) lie in a few suburbs. This does not mean that all Bostonians are thriving economically, as both rates of poverty and unemployment are higher than the state and national averages.

While Boston is a city with a high percentage of creative class jobs, two of the tracts with the highest rates of service class workers are in South Boston, with 77.2% and 93.6%. Margie is considered service class, with her former low-wage job at a retail store. Margie's struggles are not unheard of in this community, regardless of its ever-increasing gentrification.

This economic struggle is all too familiar for many Milwaukeeans, as this community shares in the above average rates of poverty and unemployment.



ABOUT OUR PRODUCTION

The sofa and chair in Mike's house have been used in two previous Rep productions: *Born Yesterday* and *State of the Union*. They were reupholstered for each show by Soft Props Artisan Margaret Hasek-Guy.

All of the lighting practicals (sconces, can lights, bulletin board light) are wirelessly controlled and powered by batteries.



Three of the actresses in *Good People* wear wigs created or added to here at The Rep.

Set design by Kevin Depinet

FEATURED ARTIST: JILL WALMSLEY ZAGER VOICE AND DIALECT COACH



"I'm kind of a chameleon," says Jill Walmsley Zager. "My job is extremely successful when the audience does not see it."

As Milwaukee Rep's Voice and Dialect Coach, Walmsley Zager's work, though seamlessly integrated, remains at the forefront of every production on which she assists. That work "includes everything that comes out of an actor's mouth, whether that is spoken text or screaming or crying or singing. Any kind of sound they make would be something that would be in my wheelhouse and jurisdiction." She cites her varied background as an opera singer and actor for 25 years as the starting point for her interest in the field. As a singer she worked in a variety of different languages, and gained an ear for accents and dialects. "Once I decided I no longer wanted to be on that side of the stage," says Walmsley Zager, "I really considered where I wanted to place my interest, so I found an incredible program between Northwestern University and the Central School of Speech and Drama in London." It was there that she earned her MA in Vocal Performance with a Dialect Concentration.

Having worked with Milwaukee Rep since 2010, Walmsley

The fireplace wall for Mike's house has to fold to fit offstage. The piece follows a guide track that automatically folds and unfolds the piece as it travels.

Rep artisans printed the wallpaper in the kitchen on the in-house plotter printer.

The andirons in the fireplace at Mike's home and the desk in Mike's office are handcrafted by Props Carpenter Erik Lindquist.

The cell phone ring coming from Margie's purse is created using a wireless speaker so the sound board operator can control the cue.

Props artisans created the blocks of cheese served in Mike's house modeled after real cheese varieties, but the slices that they eat are real.

Zager is particularly excited about collaborating on *Good People*. As a native of Massachusetts—though, “certainly not a Southie girl, by any means”—she looks forward to bringing this specific world to life. “Whenever you create a dialect in a show,” she says, “it is really creating the world of the play. It should set us in a place, not just the geography, but it tells us so much about the economy of the people, the education of the people, the way they feel about themselves, the way they feel about where they live and their place in the world, where they are and where they think they want to be going.”

Approaching storytelling in this manner works differently for each individual actor. “I work in whatever way an actor needs me to work,” she says. “I always find a hook, a way in.” This might require a kinesthetic approach (learning how to position one’s face when speaking), an academic approach (studying phonetic transcriptions of the words), or an oral approach (listening to natives speak the dialect). The key, though, is making the dialect an integral, yet seamless part of a show. “It is sensitive work. It can totally turn an actor’s performance one way or another.”

The South Boston accent offers its own challenges since “there are so many sounds that can take you to Brooklyn if you are not careful.” The accent, “it is very antique U.S. A lot of the East Midlands sounds from the Pilgrims coming over and settling right there, Plymouth Rock, you still have some of those East Midlands sounds of England in a New England dialect, and the Southie [dialect] was influenced then with a lot of the Irish. You get this real interesting smorgasbord of sounds.” Smorgasbord work for a chameleon artist: sounds about right to us.



Visiting The Rep

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. In the central rotunda is a large staircase which leads to The Rep's Quadracci Powerhouse theater and lobby.

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www.cityofboston.gov/neighborhoods/

www.citylab.com/housing/2013/03/class-divided-cities-boston-edition/5017/

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