

Scars & Stripes

by Thomas Cadwaleder Jones

Winner of the 1994 AATE Distinguished Play Award

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Two teenagers, an African-American urban girl and a white rural boy, confront their racial prejudices when they meet at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Looking for clues into their fathers' pasts, they discover more about themselves and each other and are changed forever.

About 60 minutes.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Scars & Stripes was originally produced by Stage One: The Louisville Children's Theatre. Producing Director was Moses Goldberg. The play opened at Louisville Gardens on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 18, 1993.

The cast was as follows:

GIRL — Yetunde Adeyinka-De'Leon

BOY — Jeremy Tow

Ronal Stepney stage managed the production. Chuck Schmidt designed set and lights, Christopher Gilbert designed costumes, Greg Karaba was technical director, and Kelly Weigant was Properties Master. The director was Thomas Cadwaleder Jones.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

GIRL: (*African-American*) Teenager.

BOY: (*Caucasian*) Teenager.

THE SCENE

The action takes place at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. It's the late 1980s or early '90s.

PRODUCTION NOTES

In the original production at Stage One, the play was presented with "the wall" located upstage. The action of the play took place between the audience and "the wall" and, to facilitate staging in this configuration, a small bench was added down left. This type of arrangement worked well for the three-quarters style of the Stage One production. The wall itself was represented simply and tastefully with four black panels.

In a proscenium production, staging, as indicated in the script with the audience looking through an invisible, unseen wall, would offer different possibilities and would remove the need for any set at all.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Very early morning. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The invisible wall of names faces upstage. Small bouquets of flowers, small U.S. flags, photographs and other mementos indicate the base of the wall. There's no other set. It's as if we're looking through the wall, as we observe the characters. A GIRL enters stage left. She goes to the "wall," touches it.)

GIRL: Oh, Daddy... Why did you have to go away...

(SHE stands facing the wall. A BOY enters stage right. He carries a backpack, other gear. His shoes are tied together and hang around his neck. He stares at the wall.)

BOY: Wow. Oh, wow

(THEY acknowledge the other's presence. He's aware of their racial difference. She is too, but is beyond that. He isn't. He stands looking at the wall. After awhile, she speaks, tentatively, almost to herself.)

GIRL: This is some place, isn't it?

BOY: *(Pause. Then, he replies, and a bit of the ice is broken.)* ...Are you talkin' to me?

GIRL: You're about the only one here this time of morning, so I suppose I am.

BOY: Yeah, it's some place all right.

(Pause, but BOTH are now acknowledging the other's presence.)

GIRL: You're not from around here, are you?

BOY: No.

GIRL: Didn't think so. I mean... *(SHE gestures, indicating the gear. They lapse into silence, stare at the wall.)*

...Where are you from?

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BOY: I come here from Arkansas, if you have to know.

(Pause.) Where you from?

GIRL: New York.

BOY: *(He's impressed. It's his first trip outside his state.)*

New York City?

GIRL: Uh-huh.

BOY: That's a big place, too, huh — like this Washington?

GIRL: Yes, it's a very big place.

BOY: Already had my fill of big places, and I just got here.

(Silence. HE sits, massages his bare feet.)

GIRL: What happened to your shoes?

BOY: Wore 'em out walkin' here. *(HE'S proud of the fact and wants to impress HER.)*

GIRL: You walked here — from Arkansas. Come on.

BOY: I did.

GIRL: How far is that?

BOY: Don't know exactly, but it's over a thousand miles, I bet.

GIRL: And you walked?

BOY: Took me about forty days.

GIRL: Don't y'all have buses?

BOY: Sure, we got buses.

GIRL: Couldn't you afford a ticket?

BOY: 'Course I could.

GIRL: *(Silence, as SHE ponders this.)* Why did you walk then?

BOY: *(HE feels the answer is too personal to share with a stranger.)* You wouldn't understand.

GIRL: *(For the first time, she takes what he says as a possible reflection on her color.)* Why wouldn't I understand?

(In HER voice, there's an edge of warning. HE picks up on it.)

BOY: I'm on a kind of pilgrimage — I guess that's what you'd call it.

GIRL: Oh.

BOY: My dad's name's supposed to be up there somewhere.

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GIRL: *(SHE might have suspected this, him being at the wall; but knowing it was his father is particularly significant to her.)* He got killed, huh?

BOY: Something like that.

GIRL: I see.

BOY: He's gone 'fore I's born. So I walked here. You know, so it'd mean something, to him and to me, something special.

GIRL: *(Pause.)* ...What's your name anyway?

BOY: P.T. Flagg....

GIRL: I'm Jewel Robinson.

(SHE goes to HIM, holds out her hand. He tentatively takes her hand, then releases it instantly. It's an awkward moment for them both. Silence.)

BOY: ...This place sure is something, ain't it?

GIRL: Yes.

BOY: I mean I've seen pictures, but bein' here, seein' this for real, sure is different.

(SHE has moved away slightly. The role she's been playing is getting away from her. Reality is coming to the fore. She holds herself. HE notices this.)

BOY: *(Continued.)* Is something wrong?

GIRL: No. No. It's just ... I just never saw my father...

BOY: Are you all right?

GIRL: No, I think I'm gonna be sick.

BOY: Sick? You mean like throw-up sick?

GIRL: Yes — sick.

BOY: You're not.

GIRL: I am.

BOY: *(Now HE'S in a dilemma. He ends up saying the first thing that comes into his mind.)* Look — have you had anything to eat?

GIRL: What?

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