

All the World Should Be a Stage

Category: Diversity

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | April 2, 2025

I live a very insulated life. Although my co-op building welcomes a diversity of residents, I tend to remain in my apartment, rarely interacting with neighbors. The friends I do have are reflections of me: older white single (divorced, widowed, or never married) women. Only when I go to the theater—a setting where everyone is accepted based on talent, not on ethnicity, racial background or sexual orientation—do I enter a world of diversity.

Several years ago, one theater did an all-Black version of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Another had a play about gay men, starring real-life gay men. I recently saw *Becoming Eve*, in which a transgender actress played a transgender woman. The revival of *Our Town* cast a Black man and White woman as the lead couple. The theater has become a model for the larger world: one that reminds us that diversity defines us. A diverse world is a fulfilling, intellectually and creatively stimulating one.

Initially, this theatrical diversity made me uncomfortable. Why is the theater, my happy place, making me confront the reality that the world is a diverse one that should be admired for that diversity? Why does the theater go from entertaining me to also educating me that all people need to be acknowledged and respected?

However, the more productions I see—and, as an avid theater goer, I see many—the more comfortable I have become with diverse casts. More often than not, I no longer think about the skin color or other superficial characteristics of the performers, but instead focus on the acting; my biases and judgments fade as I lose myself in the performance. And this is how it should be for everyone, not just on the stage but also in real life. All people should be allowed to play their role, regardless of who they are. All people should be permitted to have a voice, not to be silenced by the disease of prejudice.

Maybe I will attend the next social event my co-op sponsors. Maybe I will start reading books by a wide-range of writers who explore a diversity of cultures. After all, all the world should be a stage. What occurs under the spotlight should not end when the curtain falls. Black or White. Straight or gay. Believer or agnostic. Everyone deserves a starring role in the play that is life.

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