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WE'RE JUST SOLDIERS

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Bard College

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WE'RE JUST SOLDIERS

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
Adrian Sebastian Costa

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2021

“One thing alone I charge you. As you live, believe in life!
Al- ways human beings will live and progress to greater, broader and fuller life.
The only possible death is to lose belief in this truth simply because the great end comes slowly,
because time is long. Good-bye.”
-*The Last Message of Dr. W. E. B. DuBois to the World.*
On his deathbed, August, 27th 1963.

“One always ends up paying for simplifications,
all simplistic thinking, or making other people pay for it...
Slogans and anathemas lead to every form of terrorism”
- Pierre Bourdieu, *Racisme*

“For it is only then, when we stand in brotherhood and mutual understanding
with one another, can we lead each other to a future of love and camaraderie.
It is only when we learn to care about one another,
and it started when I learned to care about white people.”
-*The Burden of Whiteness & The Misery of Antiracism,*
Or How I Learned to Care about White People.
Adrian Costa

“You effeminate boys of the Theater,
What do you know about war?”
-Ernest Hemingway to Orson Welles

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WE'RE JUST SOLDIERS

Written & Directed by Adrian Costa

SOLDIER 1 Ian Edlund
SOLDIER 2 Nat Currey
SOLDIER 3 Nick Miaoulis
SOLDIER 4 Andrew Roberge

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And finally,
this play is dedicated to my stepfather, James,
for teaching me to always choose love, in a world filled with hate.



WE'RE JUST SOLDIERS

A Play
By Adrian Costa

CHARACTERS

SOLDIER 1 - White, Early 20's, and Angry. Trying to do right in the world with a gun. It is always loaded. He is the only one of them that has held a gun in real life.

SOLDIER 2 - White, Early 20's, and Bright. His Femme energy gets interpreted as innocuous optimism. Trying to do right in the world, but gay men rarely can.

SOLDIER 3 - White, Early 20's, and Still. He is indifferent, to everything. Except for this game, he's the best at this game. Is older than the rest. Not trying to do anything.

SOLDIER 4 - White, Early 20's, and Conscious. Unsteady and yet still assured in his newly found path. Capable, Considerate, reflective, but still wrong. Trying.

PLAYWRIGHTS NOTE

I am not white.
I am black.
Therefore, you should be black too.
Or, at least not white.

This play was developed in fulfillment of my Undergraduate Studies
At Bard College,
A stifling pigeon hole.
It was developed alongside a white collaborator,
And in this way, this transcendental partnership needs to be replicated in the
Staging and direction of the piece.
Ideally, the only four white men involved in the making of the play should be the actors.

The violence needs to be real, sudden, and yet, needs to not be the most disturbing part of this play.

When I first staged the play, I asked my actors what wisdom they would give to those who would eventually take on
the play.

They all unanimously agreed on this piece of advice:
Don't underestimate the play.
So, don't underestimate the play.

Read [this](#).

And, remember, to love, fully and without remorse, in this play.
It is the only way to survive.

At the edge of the entrance of a jungle, there sits a couch overgrown with weeds and rubble.

The piercing yet fading sound of a console rings throughout the arena, and the world around us starts to develop.

As the world continues to code itself into place, the environment begins to coalesce as a deep and dense forest, much like the one fought in during the Vietnam War, and yet not quite that. We hear the echoing sounds of a firefight, drawing closer and closer. Finally, the fight is materialized as we see our soldiers appear from offstage right, retreating ground to a horde of enemy soldiers.

Soldier 4

If we don't do something, we're going to die!

Soldier 1

Just keep shooting you pussy!

Soldier 2 (*gleefully sliding across the floor*)

Faggots! You're all just a bunch of faggots!

Soldier 3 (*precisely and viciously shooting at the horde*)

Shut up.

Soldier 3 grabs a hand grenade from Soldier 2's holster and throws it offstage. They all brace for an explosion, sans Soldier 3, who apathetically watches as the bodies explode, and the battle ends. The Soldiers, wary but exhilarated by their survival, rejoice in their victory.

Soldier 4

Nice throw.

Soldier 1

It was a lucky shot.

Soldier 3 (*reloading*)

Okay. (*to SOLDIER 4*) Thanks.

Soldier 2

It wasn't luck, he saw me grabbing for my grenade, you stole all my kills!

Soldier 1

Oh shut up. Those were my kills.

And I told you to stay as back up, and look, we made it out this time. See what happens when you guys listen to me?

Soldier 4

Ahahah, well, I wasn't planning on not shooting them.

Soldier 3

Right.

Soldier 2

Friends don't steal other friends KILLS!

Soldier 1

Yeah, like you could've killed them all, the way you handle that gun is a little

Delicate (*LOL.*).

Soldier 2

Your mom was delicate with my balls in her mouth (*BAHAHA.*)

Soldier 3

(*Chuckles.*)

Soldier 1

What, you mean those two frozen grapes between your legs you call nuts?

Soldier 4

You're such an asshole, dude.

Besides, I've been in your bathroom and it's not like your aim is any better than his (*XD.*)

Soldier 1

HA. What are you talking about, I'm like Robin Hood out here, hitting headshots POW POW

And taking names later.

Soldier 3

(*Calling S1 out on his bluff*)

Really? Who was that last girl, the one you took to watch that Adam Driver movie, what was her name again?

There is an err of silence, and it really isn't clear as to whether or not Soldier 1 actually remembers her name, but they all still laugh their asses off regardless.

Soldier 1

I'm not sure, I couldn't hear her name over all the slurping noises.

They all break out into laughter again.

Soldier 2

Are you guys done being gross?

Soldier 1

(Joking) Oh, loosen up, dude.

You were probably too busy playing slip and slide, looking pretty, than to actually hit something.

Soldier 2

Hahaha no! I kept pressing but my shit must be jammed or something

. But no yeah I get it I was either sucking a dick or doing my makeup or checking Grindr...

Soldier 1

What the fuck is Grindr?

Soldier 2

But before I get into how not only wrong but fucking ((homophobic)) what you said was-

Soldier 4

(towards Soldier 1) Yeah, man.

Soldier 1

(To Soldier 4) What's got you so touchy?

Soldier 2

(Calling everyone's attention to him)

My main point is that those were MY kills and I swear to god when I don't get the top kills at the end of this mission I am going to lose it and you guys said you weren't gonna replace me with Derek.

Soldier 1

Fuck, okay, we get it. your shootings not shit.

Soldier 4

We are not replacing you. And whoever kills the most doesn't matter. What does matter is that we work together because we almost got our asses handed to us.

Soldier 2

You fuckers owe me the credit I deserve.

SOLDIER 3 *brings up the scoreboard.* SOLDIER 2 *is at the bottom.*

Soldier 3

What credit?

SOLDIER 1 *laughs at this*. SOLDIER 2 *shoots him a dirty look*.

Soldier 2

BET.

There is a PAUSE. There is a slight twang of another worldly force. It almost sounds like pots banging in the distance. The SOLDIERS, although disrupted by the distraction, find it all too familiar. SOLDIER 3 indulges the moment, taking the initiative just this once.

Soldier 3

I can hear your Mom.

Soldier 2

Agh! I'll be right back guys...

SOLDIER 2 *goes AFK*.

Soldier 1

(Pause, recognizing that SOLDIER 2 is no longer present)

So annoying.

Soldier 3

I guess. I don't really care.

Soldier 1

He's been this way forever.

Soldier 3

You should learn to live with him.

Soldier 1

I mean, yeah.

Soldier 4

(to SOLDIER 1) Yeah...Yeah, and maybe lighten up on him a bit. Even if you don't mean it.

Soldier 1

(Like a reflex,) Fuck you.

Soldier 4

Dude.

Soldier 1

(Slowing it down)

Ugh...Look...I don't and it doesn't even matter, he knows I don't care that he's, y'know ...

Soldier 4

(Pause.) Yeah....

Soldier 1

What, you think because you went away for the year you're suddenly like Ariana Grande or something.

Soldier 4

No, but *(noticing rustling in the distance)*

Can you hear that?

They all put their guard up, somehow warding off the attack. Noticing the noise to have subsided, they suspiciously drop their guards.

Soldier 1

That was too close.

Soldier 4

Yes, exactly. Which is why we should regroup before going into the next objective. Moving into the forest we should rethink our approach considering the guerrilla style warfare of the -

Soldier 1

Who made you captain ?

Soldier 4

You just said it yourself. It was too close.

And don't you think it would be best if we see how these people are thinking of trying to kill us.

Soldier 1

You mean The enemy?

Soldier 4

Yes, the enemy. The enemy.

Soldier 1

(A Stubborn Surrender.) Whatever kills these Chinese fuckers the fastest.

Soldier 3

They're not Chinese.

Soldier 1

Yeah, well I can't tell the difference, can you?

Soldier 3 swipes Soldier 1's ammo pack and walks away, unconcerned with Soldier 1's threat.

Soldier 2 returns from his stasis to spring back into the conversation.

Soldier 2

Lasagna!

Sorry, dudes. She says hi, by the way.
But what's the T E A on our next mission?

Soldier 1

Nothing. We were just about to figure that out. Let me pull up the map.

Soldier 3

(Referring to the bodies from before.) I'm searching for supplies.

Soldier 2

Okay! And *(pointing at 4.)* you and I can be on lookout!

Soldier 4

Yeah, well, keep your head up, we don't know who could pop up at any moment.

SOLDIER 2 crouches down.

Soldier 2

So we should be really sneaky, like this -

SOLDIER 2 gasps.

Soldier 2

Guys! *(They all look at him.)* I'm Colin Kaepernick.

SOLDIER 3 and 1 scoff at this. SOLDIER 4, however

Soldier 4

Ahah. woah, dude.

Soldier 1

(teasing.)

Yeah, stop being such an asshole, 2. We don't know what liberal shit they infected him with back at school.

Soldier 4

No, but you really shouldn't-

Soldier 2

That's right! College!!! How's it been? What's it like?

Soldier 4

Dude, I -

Soldier 2

Come on, it's been a while! What like, 11 months? How is everything?

Soldier 1

(Looking over the map.)

So if we make it out here and we go through here, that means that we need to go through the marsh here -

Soldier 4

Yeah, it's been a while, I mean... I've been good. College is good.

Soldier 2

Yeah, how's Wesleyan?

Soldier 4

It's ... good. It's not what I expected.

It's nothing like back home,

here.

Soldier 2

Yeah, I bet.

I bet there were a lot of guys that...

Soldier 1

Hey, focus!

Soldier 4

Yeah, I actually had a friend, his name was Jack, He was cool. I think you would've liked him.
Not as funny as you though.

Soldier 3

What classes did you take?

Soldier 4

What?

Soldier 3

What classes did you take?

Soldier 4

Oh well, I had to get some GenEd courses out of the way so I went ahead and took a Political Theory class.

Soldier 3

Did you read social contract theory? Or did you start on 19th century French Political Thought?

Soldier 4

Erm, I think it was Rousseau...

Soldier 1

Well, Rousseau is not gonna help us get out of this jungle, can one of you set a waypoint towards the northeast?

Soldier 3

(Ignore.) Rousseau is fun.

Soldier 4

I mean, the college part was fine, the classes, but I don't know.

Sometimes things felt so small back home

,here,

and mundane, and relentless.

So to go away,

very far away,

it just put the whole world into perspective for me.

And you know, Im not perfect none of us are

And I know that

But when you come from

Bumblefuck nowhere

There just isn't a catalyst. For anything.

But over there it's the people, the people you meet.

And the things they say

to you and about them and about you.

Yeah

You just realize that there are so many people

in the world, who are different from you.
And they deserve your attention. You know.

Especially us.

Soldier 2

Yeah. Sometimes I wish I had gone. To College, I mean. *(signaling to the others.)* Right?

Soldier 3

I don't know.

No. Yes, I guess.

Soldier 1

No. Did you mark the map?

(There is a Pause that almost buds into judgement.

But they have a mission.)

Soldier 4

You can just set the waypoint.
and it'll just mark the path for all of us.

Again, SOLDIER 1 refuses to surrender.

Soldier 4

Okay,

Done. You happy now?

(No.)

Soldier 1

(cutting the tension with instruction.) Well, I'm glad you found what you were looking for when you left.
I don't got nothing to do there.

Soldier 2

(To SOLDIER 1.) Oh come on, lighten up. It would've been fun. We could've been roommates again!
And gone to parties, and ate hot wings, and tripped on acid and played Mario Kart, Double Dash
obviously.

Soldier 4

You can't believe that. Didn't your parents go to college?

Soldier 3

Cornell.

Soldier 1

Yeah, and they came out radical buddhists communists.

Soldier 4

Well, actually you could stand to learn something from them.

Soldier 1

Hmph, okay. There's nothing they could teach me.

Soldier 4

Well, when I met them they seemed really self-aware. Maybe they could teach you some of that.

Soldier 1

Self-awareness? I'm too self-aware.

Soldier 4

In what way? I've never heard you admit a mistake,

or acknowledge any of the privileges that you have.

Soldier 1

Okay, here we go. privileges?

Soldier 4

Well, for starters, you're white.

Soldier 1

And?

Soldier 4

And that means that you're born with privilege.\

Soldier 1

Against who? There are no black people here!

Soldier 2

I mean, there were no gay people here and -

(SOLDIER 3 notices a rustling in the distance.)

Soldier 4

Just because you think that -- that doesn't matter because racism is institutional.

Soldier 3

Guys.

Soldier 2

I mean, racism does exist in an institutional way -

Soldier 1

Are you calling me racist?

Soldier 3

Guys.

Soldier 4

No, but -

Soldier 1

So you leave for a couple months, and suddenly you've got it all figured out. Man, who do you think you are ?

Soldier 3

Stop fighting and listen -

Soldier 4

At least I fucking try! If you wanna stay a racist piece of shit that's your prerogative -

Soldier 1

Who am I racist to? You ? Or to the imaginary black people in this town?

Soldier 4

That's not the point, the point is-

Soldier 1

People like you just wanna feel good about themselves. And so you make someone like me the bad guy - you wanna make me feel like shit - and why? Why? Because I don't care about this shit in the same way you do? I'm the one with problems, right? But you're the problem! Have you ever thought about that? You are the -

Soldier 3

Watch out! Bomb!

A grenade is thrown onto the stage.

The four boys jump and duck into cover.

The grenade explodes and we hear yelling and laughing.

Soldier 1, furious, stands up, cocks his gun, and marches offstage towards the noise. The three others remain in cover and we hear gunfire and screaming offstage.

The noise stops and there is a moment of silence before Soldier 1 walks back onto stage, covered in blood and carrying a bloody backpack. The three others, slowly stand and turn to face him. Soldier 1 walks towards them and throws the pack onto the floor.

Soldier 1

Take what you want.

SOLDIERS 2 and 3 reluctantly begin to loot the pack. SOLDIER 4 steps away from them, staring at his friend, SOLDIER 1. He looks away for a moment, gathers himself, and returns.

Soldier 4

Dude 1-

Soldier 1

(post nut clarity.) What else you gotta say

(Pause.)

Huh.

Soldier 4

(Maybe right now is not the best time to bring this up again.)

How many were there?

Soldier 1

What?

Soldier 4

Of the soldiers, of the enemies.

Soldier 1

(Bluntly.) I don't know, I didn't count.

37.

Soldier 4

Oh.

Soldier 1
Yeah, well, while you were here, fighting for the fifth wave of feminism, I was protecting all you faggots.

Soldier 3 Soldier 4 Soldier 2
Enough. Dude, what the fuck

Soldier 4
I fucking get it, dude. You don't like talking about these, this.

But fuck, not even for your own friends?

Soldier 1
I swear to god if you keep trying to talk to me about this shit I'm going to shoot you.

Soldier 2
We are just trying to talk. We shouldn't get angry at each other just because we're trying to talk.

Soldier 1
(Scoffs.)
Of course you're taking his side.

Soldier 2
What is that supposed to mean?

SOLDIER 1 doesn't answer. He just smiles to himself and shakes his head.

Soldier 1
Ever since I met you, I've been saving your ass. When we were in the seventh grade and those kids were messing with you, I stood up to them, for you -I was your friend before you even knew this motherfucker *(pointing at SOLDIER 4)* and now you're gonna take his side?

Soldier 2
I-I-no. I just want us all to be chill.

Soldier 1
No you just wanna be

You know something, I really don't fuck with any of you.

I don't even like you.

I only kept you for a full roster, but none of you except maybe 3 is worth your weight.

Soldier 4

You don't have to like us, you just gotta be a decent human being. And being decent means not taking your white boy anger out on some NPC's and saying some fucked shit to your friend.

Soldier 1

Oh, so now I can't kill these motherfuckers or I'm racist.

THEY are ROBOTS. They DON'T EXIST. They don't exist in this swamp, they don't exist in this game. and they don't exist in any of our lives. Not really. And they DON'T MATTER

That's not a crazy thing to say!

(Teasing.)

Their lives do not matter.

How are you showing more sympathy to

A bunch of coding than to

Any human being.

(SOLDIER 1 curses, says fuck, without really saying it. There is restraint, aversion, disgust, and trigger.)

You're all just a bunch of hypocrites.

Soldier 2

Shut the fuck up.

Soldier 1

(gets in his face.) Or what.

Soldier 2

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

SOLDIER 2 Pushes SOLDIER 1 off of him. Like they had just had sex.

Soldier 2

You think I wanted this ?

I didn't want any of it, I wanted to be normal and I couldn't

I did everything I could, everything you guys did

I talked to girls, I played video games

Call of Duty

And I never, ever picked the girl characters,

I always picked the boys.

But those kids in seventh grade, they knew before I did

And they were relentless.
And they
I would be in the bathroom and

Yeah.
So I hated it. Since the beginning.
Even before,
I hated it. I still do. And
And None of you can understand. Any of it !

Soldier 1

To be honest, I didn't ever give a fuck about you the most. I knew what you were the second I looked at you. Years ago.

(Looks at Soldier 2)

Why would I play with a faggot like you.

Soldier 4
Woah dude!

Soldier 3
We said Chill.

Soldier 2

You fucking asshole you lied to me!

Soldier 1

I Lied ? I never liked you. Ever. I used you. You got used and that was it. And isn't that what you asked for? That's what you wanted, when you told us what a homo you were. You wanted this, and I gave it to you and now you're nothing to me.

Soldier 2

Yeah. You just don't give a shit, huh.
About anybody else.
Anybody that you can stick your dick into and say, "This belongs to me".

Soldier 1

You're gross.

Soldier 2

You just don't give a fuck. You think you can hurt people, your friends, and walk away from them, like you know everything, like you got it all figured out.

Soldier 1

You let yourself get into it, I didn't do anything. Getting hurt is part of life, you better get used to that.

Soldier 2

(Breaking again.)

I am used to it! I'm too used to it because people like you are so fucking oppressive!

Soldier 1

Calm down, you are not oppressed.

Soldier 4

It is though. Just by denying the pain he's gone through you're contributing to its continuation-

Soldier 1

Don't act like you're so woke, 4. You're not. Look at him.

What do you see? What Do You See?

He's white! He can walk into any room, anywhere, anytime he wants to and be perfectly fine!

Soldier 4

You can't deny what he's been through just to prove a point.

Soldier 1

You know that what I'm saying is right!

He is no victim. You all just like to be a part of that game.

You just want to be on top.

That's all that anyone ever wants to do: you want people to be afraid of you, because they don't understand you,

and then you want them to cater to your every need like you're some kind of princess or puppy. Well, you're not.

You're a liar! You lie!

You haven't even been gay for like two weeks and already you're complaining.

Do you really expect us to believe you, after all that?

Soldier 4

Holy shit, bro! What is it going to fucking take to stop you from being a racist piece of shit!

Soldier 1

I'm the racist? He's the one being racist!

You are a queer. They are black.

They were slaves for four hundred years, killed for like eighty more, and you, you are oppressed because you wanna wear pink. This is not the same. You are not the same.

Soldier 4

Oh, so now you can understand strife?

Soldier 1

Doesn't mean that it's my problem. I don't owe anyone anything. You (*Looking at Soldier 2*) are no victim. You are just a leech. A-

Soldier 3

A leech?

Soldier 1

What?

Soldier 3

A leech. I think it's funny.

Soldier 1

What's so funny?

Soldier 3

Fuck, I just think it's funny.

Soldier 1

What are you saying?

You can barely muster up two breaths to speak this entire time but now

Soldier 3

Hph. I know my place. I don't know shit. I'm not a fucking racist.

Soldier 1

So now everyone has something t-

So, if you can't fight, and you can't talk, then what are you doing?

Soldier 3

I am not choosing to actively be a racist fuck like you.

Soldier 1

What, do you think that if everyone acted like you, racism would just solve itself?

Soldier 3

Cut the shit. I'm not doing this.

Soldier 1

So what are you doing,
Like actively
Black people are getting killed in the streets everyday.

Soldier 4

Wait, hold on

Soldier 1

You *(pointing at SOLDIER 4.)* Shut up.

(Back to SOLDIER 3.)

Black people are getting shot by cops, right, 'unfairly' right.

Soldier 4

Mmm.

Soldier 1

So, then, if that's the case, why aren't you a cop?
Why aren't you in the precinct everyday, demanding change?

Let's walk over to the precinct in town and let's yell at the top of our lungs and demand that we don't support the unarmed deaths of black men .

Why don't we organize a sit in, a protest, a riot and burn everything to the ground

Right?

That's what you want?

"Burn it down"!

"Whose Streets?" "Huh?"

"Our Streets!" "Our Streets!"

You wanna yell like an animal?

Soldier 3

Man, fuck you. I'm not out saying shit, I'm just-

Soldier 1

But you know the crazy thing about you is that at least they give a fuck about something other than playing video games and jerking off.

You fucking prick. Soldier 3

I mean, Soldier 2

What? Soldier 4

Well, you know, *(pointing at SOLDIER 1.)* Fuck you, at school, I mean. Soldier 2

But you know, y'all never had my back,

SOLDIER 4 *and* SOLDIER 3 *share in having no answer.*

All for one, right? Soldier 1

Hey, wait, that's not the same, that was before- Soldier 4

Before what? Soldier 1

Before ----- Soldier 4

(to SOLDIER 2.) You fucking Prick. Soldier 3

You didn't do anything. Soldier 2

That's Different! Soldier 3

No - No! He just - Soldier 4

What happened to the right thing, you fucking retards. Soldier 1

Soldier 2

Well, I mean I didn't see any of you at that... that protest the other day, on the strip.

Soldier 1

Did you go?

Soldier 2

No, but I reposted it on my insta story-

Soldier 3

(towards SOLDIER 1.) Listen, you can sit there and curse and hiss and yell all the slurs in the world, but none of it is gonna make you feel better about the fucking ignorant and spiteful piece of shit you are.

Soldier 1

Why do you keep pa-

Soldier 3

(splitting.) You have no clue what I am talking about! About what I am!

You have no idea.

Soldier 1

(Leaning back.)

About what?

Soldier 3 *(busying himself with his words.)*

I-

I'm not

I'm not a monster.

Gonna be a monster .

I'm not.

I don't do anything because-

I don't owe you an explanation, I don't owe you shit.

Not shit.

I'm just tryna do me.

That's it.

I don't -

I'm not trying to hurt anyone im just

Trying to do me.

Soldier 1

(Revel.) It is not enough to not be a monster.

(Rugged Pause.)

(to SOLDIER 4.) Do you see that?
Again.

Soldier 4

Huh?

Soldier 1

(Exasperated, pointing at the right thing.) You gotta be kidding me.

You know what, I get it. I really do.

I get it.

Unlike them, I know you don't care about being a good liberal cuck,

I know there's a voice in your head that tells you there's something wrong,

In this country, this world

For a lot of folks that look nothing like us, act nothing like us, are nothing like us.

At least that's what they deserved, to be heard, and believed.

But I know there's another voice, deeper inside you

In your bones,

In your bones

And it says

Fuck It.

Fuck them.

I need to look out for myself, be out for myself

Because we know how fucked up it is,

For them, yes, but for us, too. For everyone. But, for us.

And you know what maybe

Maybe

We're just too scared to be standing up for things like

Justice and peace

And I think for a lot of people, it makes sense

To live life.

Just to breathe and eat and shit

In Peace!

But everyday you choose to wipe your ass and eat ding dongs is everyday you choose ignorance that kills people

It kills people, and you don't do anything about it.

Right ?

You don't even blink.

And the worst part about that is that after all that

After knowing all that

You still don't give a fuck.

You don't give a fuck!

Soldier 4

Oh my god.

Soldier 1

You know, you guys were right

Maybe I am a racist.

A monster. Right, that's what you called it. A monster

But i'll take that over being the limp piece of shit that you are

Because

At least I own my shit

The violence of it all.

Cowards like you kill with no respect. With cheetos.

Pause.

SOLDIER 3 breaks. Lunges at SOLDIER 1.

They tussle.

SOLDIER 2 struggles to break up the fight

SOLDIER 4 is horrified by the scene going on but is immobilized.

They are separated. SOLDIER 3 tries to shoot his gun at him, realizing it cannot work on allies, resorts to just shooting growls at SOLDIER 1. SOLDIER 1 bathes in the screams. Eventually, SOLDIER 2 is able to soothe SOLDIER 3 into a lull. SOLDIER 3, recovering, grabs his things as he readies to leave.

Soldier 3

(starts to leave offstage.) I'm leaving.

Soldier 2

No, wait hol-

Soldier 3

I'm finishing this fucking level, then i'm going to Taco Bell, so fuck whoever isn't coming

Dude, hold up we gotta sti-

Soldier 2

(at SOLDIER 2.)

Let's
Go.

Soldier 3

Go ahead. Be a coward.

Soldier 1

I'm not -
(Looking towards SOLDIER 4.)

Soldier 2

Go. I got this.

Soldier 4

(Scared, but reassured by the promise of safety and quesadillas; directing at SOLDIER 1.)
I just think Chris Evans is kinda hot.
I don't think I'm racist for that, right?

Soldier 2

I don't think.

Soldier 1

(Pleasantly reassured.)

Okay.

(to SOLDIER 3, who is leaving.)

Wait, can you spot me a couple bucks so I can get a Quesarito, or
Do they not do that anymore?

Soldier 2

SOLDIER 2 and SOLDIER 3 both leave Offstage.

They're gone.

Soldier 4

So? I don't care. You're wrong if you think I care.

Soldier 1

Yeah. Soldier 4

So what? You're not going to follow them? Soldier 1

I don't really like Taco Bell all that much. Soldier 4

(It almost works.)
Shut up, dude. Soldier 1

I'm worried. And I don't care if it makes me some type of bitch, but i'm worried. Soldier 4

Yeah, well, fear helps nobody. Fear is for pussies.. Soldier 1

Right, Soldier 4

Right.

Do your parents know?

Do my parents know what? Soldier 1

About... About this stuff? Soldier 4

My parents are losers, Stop talking about them. Soldier 1

Yeah,, yeah I know but
What happened? Soldier 4

What do you mean. Soldier 1

Soldier 4

Well, aren't they like die hard liberals.

Didn't they like cry after Biden won?

Soldier 1

And when Ruth Bader Ginsburg died.

And when Sandy Hook.

And then they laughed when Nancy Pelosi made that face, you know, at Donald Trump.

Soldier 4

Right.

I mean, I get it.

But what happened?

Soldier 1

(sigh.)

My folks they're

They mean well, but

(groan.)

You would think that for people who are all about equality and 'balance'

You'd think that they would find some sort of

Peace

That's what's promised

But that's not what it is

Everyday I wake up and they're like

Trembling

Vibrating because they are so deathly scared

Of being wrong.

Of I don't know

Being on the wrong side of history.

They would never admit it.

They pretend that giving to charity and chaining themselves to trees is normal

Like It's intuitive but its

Its weird

It's unnatural

I feel like we're in some sick joke where people just pretend that giving a fuck about anyone but yourself is an impulse, the only impulse

and it's not,
That's not how humans are wired.
And I-

Soldier 4

What.

Soldier 1

(addressing him the most directly he has up until this point.)
And I am not going to pretend. I am not going to be afraid.

(Pause.)

Soldier 4

That's it, huh.

Soldier 1

What?

Soldier 4

That's the charge.

Soldier 1

What are you talking about?

Soldier 4

When I was away,
At school,
I had to learn what it meant to really be
What it meant to see people suffer
Really, suffer
And have it sit in me.

And then do something about it.
In myself, in my head
In my heart.

And then I have a responsibility to spur that change in my communities.
In my family, my friends
In you.

And I know, it's not 'just a privilege', I know. Being white, I mean, I guess.
But what is that thing that they say,
"With great power comes great responsibility"

I think this is the responsibility, this is the responsibility.

Soldier 1

Did you just quote Spider-Man at me?

Soldier 4

Dude, im serious

I had to think about everything in my life,

Everything,

And I had to realize that it had all come from

Or been brought by

Or made for

Or designed by

Everything was because of this legacy

Of

Evil.

Of pure evil.

And I know you're not stupid so you know what I am talking about.

Pure evil, that's what we're contending with.

Soldier 1

How are we gonna make it out? Alive, yknow. Like with every thing of us.

Soldier 4

I don't know. I'm not sure we were even there to begin with.

But we can build something new.

Soldier 1

We're white, Rory.

Can we even do that?

Soldier 4

We can try

Soldier 1

I'm not doing that.

Soldier 4

But if we don't, we die

Soldier 1

I'm already dead!

We're already dead.
The world is out to get us. All of us, and I know you see it.
And I mean, fuck, the worst part about it
The worst part is, don't we deserve it
I mean, what are we even asking for,

I know what you're talking about, I do.
But I can't

Soldier 4

No, No, you don't have to be afraid

Soldier 1

I'm not.

Soldier 4

What I mean is is that if we just practice a little humility and-

Soldier 1

No, Rory, no. I'm not doing that.

Soldier 4

Why not?

Soldier 1

Cause nobody wants that. Not actually. White or Black.

Soldier 4

We can convince them.

Soldier 1

Of what, dude?

What is it gonna take?

Hm?

What is it gonna take for you

For my parents?

(Pointing at SOLDIER 2 and SOLDIER 3.) For them?

What else is there to say?

What else is there to do?

Things aren't changing.

Soldier 4

What else can we do ? This is the only right thing -

Soldier 1

Right thing? This isn't a Disney film, you idiot! There is no right!
There is only fucked and fucking,
And I am not going to be

Soldier 4

You- We don't have a choice

Soldier 1

We? I-

Soldier 4

Yes!
"We"!
We made our beds.
We shit our pants,
And we've been sitting in it for years
And we've been sitting in our parents' shit
And their parents, and their parents
Countless fucking generations.
And people are dying,
And we're responsible!
And we need to do something cause, what will happen in
Ten
Twenty years
When this stuff gets written down.
What will they think
We nee-

Soldier 1

(Again, like a reflex.) Fuck you.

Tense Pause.

Soldier 1

(realizing.) Ah, fuck.
You're just like -
You reek of guilt. And that's all you care about
You're pathetic. You're fucking pathetic.
This isn't about anyone but yourself
You can drown in your self loathing but that will not be me-

Soldier 4

No, you canno-

SOLDIER 1 *tries to leave, but SOLDIER 4 pushes him back.*

Soldier 1

Get the fuck out of my way.

Soldier 4

I won't
I won't let you.

Soldier 1

What the fuck are you talking about get the fuck out of my way, dude.

Soldier 4

Or what.

(As SOLDIER 4 continues to talk, SOLDIER 1 seems to be unaware, absent.)

Yes, I know

It's difficult

And painful.

But we have to stand up
against racism

Especially white people
Specifically white people

We have to make a
Concerted effort

We are so used to it
Violence and death

On our behalf

I've seen too much

Too much of it

And we are so used to just sitting back and watching people die

And we can't

Sit

and

Watch

(He looks towards the audience.)

We can't

Sit and watch anymore

Because, fuck,

If we're not human,

Then we're just soldiers.

SOLDIER 1 *hits* SOLDIER 4 *with the butt of his gun and he falls to the ground, and* SOLDIER 1 *continues to plant bullets into his body.*

Soldier 1

IT'S NOT JUST ITS NOT JUST ITS NOT JUST ITS NOT JUST ITS NOT JUST ITS NOT JUST etc.

SOLDIER 1 *breaks down over the body of his friend.*

Eventually the body respawns, disappears, and SOLDIER 1 is left to his devices. He grovels on the floor:

END OF PLAY.

PLAYWRIGHTS NOTE:

Fuck it.

This is my essay submission to the Theater & Performance Department at Bard College in one of the most tumultuous years of our collective lives, in all senses of the word.

This is written in response, in supplement, to “WE’RE JUST SOLDIERS” by Adrian Costa, collaborated on with Ryan Cason, and under the advison of Nilaja Sun. I will sometimes refer to this piece as WJS.

It has been a hard year. Our work has shifted, and our expectations destroyed. That being said, Extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary ingenuity. It’s reassuring, to know you’re coming into this blind, and scared, and unsure. I hope that you get that that is the point.

in that way, this ‘essay’ will not be what you expect. In fact, it is not an essay at all.

It is a play.

It’s a play because we are Theater majors, and that’s what we do.

It’s a play because if you want to read the essay, you have to catch it at the Senior Project Festival 2021.

It is a play because I tried writing it in the normal way, the way with indentations and paragraphs, and I got a little nauseous.

It’s a play because I’ve written an essay already. It is my Political Studies Paper, and I highly suggest you read it. I would put it in my stage directions before my essay if I could. I’m still considering doing that.

Don’t worry, you will get everything you need from these words, this is a closet drama. Although, I dare you to put this up, maybe next year? I’m not sure anyone would, could...

Regardless, you will get my process

My frustrations

My breakthroughs, and

You will understand my work, if you haven’t already. (I know you haven’t, not fully, which is okay. This essay is a conversation, not a sprint.)

I will cite five sources, more than five sources, countless sources, in this paper, but there will be no footnotes. There will be a bibliography, but there will be no footnotes.

I will cite academics, and scholarly sources. But I will also cite my ancestors, and feelings, and my instincts.

Because this is my play and my project, and they matter too. And they will help to talk about those things that don't yet have words. They matter too.

Finally, in order to put on this play, you’re going to need the following:

To have read AND watched WJS. Or at least have heard about it.

An open, yet well guarded, heart.

The ghost of Maya Angelou brewing tea for herself in the kitchen, and the ghost of Chekhov peering over your shoulder as you read the words aloud.

And a sense of wonder, joy, love, admiration, and humor.

I will also be using “THEATRE” and not “THEATER” ending in “er” because I hate it, although I do acknowledge that it is the name of the program.

THE PREAMBLE

I went to go see Slave Play one evening in early January, one of the last nights that it would be open on Broadway, in this gorgeous playhouse smack daddy in the middle of the THEATRE district, although I don't remember what the theatre was called.

I was only able to go because my exorbitantly rich friend who was not white but was not black bought my ticket for me, and I was only able to go that weekend because my other friend who was white but not black had driven me there. We got there early so as to not worry about wading through the crowds to get to our assigned seats. We all sat together, mostly, with nosebleeds.

We watched the play. It was good. I was a little disappointed, for all that I had avoided hearing about the show, I inadvertently spoiled it for myself, although I don't know if that is my fault or the fault of the play. To be honest,

I enjoyed it. I did. It taught me a lot about writing, and watching.

To be very honest with you, I'm bored. I'm fucking bored. Theatre, today, bores me. And I am a little disgusted, frankly.

And it wasn't even the show, frankly.

It was what happened afterwards.

She had just been assaulted, and she thanked us, really, for listening. It was a multitude of a response.

And then I got up, because the show had ended. But it had only ended for me.

I turned around and I gathered my things, I picked up the peels of my plantains, and my friends were busy collecting their limbs when I realized that people were watching us from afar.

And they weren't watching with their eyes, they were watching with their white gaze, clouded by the milky mildew of their robot tears.

It was only then, when the house lights went up and I could see the thread of their vision catching my heart did I realize that for the entire performance, for the entire two hours that there were black people on Broadway, performing for me, was I really watching the white people around me, guarding them, anticipating them. And it was during those moments that they shifted in their seats, they cackled loudly, and failed to sip their wine surreptitiously, only then did I feel the immense pain that I was promised in coming to see the show.

It was such an honor, I must've thought, to sit in the front row, to impress upon the seat of this Broadway stage the indent of a heavy wallet in your back pocket. To taste the blood and cantaloupe of an enslaved world, and be able to leave feeling like you had accomplished some white liberal pilgrimage, that you had endured the essential quality of pain and discomfort that tenured almost every moment for me.

You came out of Slave Play saying you were satisfied, you were full, you had witnessed the artificial spectacle that Theatre allows, only to gorge on the real life spectacle of my pain as soon as my brown skin became visible again.

THE IDEA

This annoyed the shit out of me.

And it annoyed the shit out of me because of the minstrelsy that was just inherently baked into any piece that explored racism by the nature of the industry that it was maneuvering. White people were the shop clerks, and the landlords, and the producers, and the heads of state, and the artists, and the slave owners, sometimes all at once, and they would come and watch and listen and say they had learned when they did nothing but sleep. Sleep soundly.

Instead of a machine that assuaged the guilts of white people, I wanted create a space of intimacy for black people, to process their pain, to rehearse in an imagination that entertained their abolition, but I realized that by the nature of the theatre world, riddled with sticky, white fingers, that it would never come to pass.

This was until I realized that I could build a machine, a racistoid machine, that took advantage of the audience that whiteness often occupied in the theatres that I maneuvered. They would sit and expect to enjoy an evening mulling on the wine of racism, only to be greeted with the bitter and pale stout that met their sensitive palates.

In this way, I attempted to utilize the white theatre industry to my advantage, and in doing so, invented a project, a circumstance in which it was white folks who would be exercising their pain on stage, and it was ultimately white folks who would have to intimately grapple with the lived circumstances of the play.

I wanted to ask the question, “How do white people solve racism?
And if they can, should they?”

I knew that the play would contain all the usual suspects. The judge, the sharecropper, the master, and the cadaver. Everyone would be there. Except black people. Because this was a meditation that wholly invested itself in the question of race, without needing to utilize the resources of black mutilation and suffering to get to its point. I wanted to exercise white bodies, white psyches, to confront white audiences about, what I believed, were white problems.

That being said, I also didn't want to treat my audience like babies. I've always felt that people knew too well what we were talking about, so much so that they would convince themselves that they knew the play while having just witnessed the first five minutes. In this way, I knew that I wanted to make a compelling case for the contrary, trusting in the fact that because I was not white, that the play would be a testament to the fact that someone could create a play like WJS, convincingly scary, and still remain in complete devotion to fight against racism, that it was the point. And that the infallibility of those who could not get to the point of trusting the play to that extent, were themselves the problem.

Therefore, when I began developing the play, it started with a process that initiated an outward facing modality of empathy in its main source of power. This play was not about me, because I was not white, and therefore, needed somewhat of an expert on white people, to guide me the harsh and reproachingly beautiful landscape of whiteness.

THE NOTES

POLITICAL THEORY LESSON

- Why I'm a Double Major
 - Political Theory is the exploration of the articulatory mind; it is political in the sense that it deals with what it means to live in relation to other people, but it is so much more about thinking about life. The most interesting political theories are personal essays, accounts, and the letters of monumental figures or people who had the cojones to just say shit.
 - Political Theory also really functions in terms of articulating psychological and social phenomena, yes, but talking about feeling, how the air of society feels around you. And there is a certain impermeability or staying power about writing/reading political theory. This is because Political Theory generates language, GIVING a name to the POLITICAL Phenomenon that we are trying to understand. In that way, it makes it easier to talk about.
 - Ex: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
 - And so, that is what I am trying to do here, articulate for you all with Political Theory. But in this way, for me, for the scope of the work that I am interested in, Theory is always leaning forward towards the future.
 - On the contrary, Theatre feels like the practice or the mimicry of real life. It is about building circumstance and tension and, in a way, necessitates some conscious understanding in order to build and launch the infrastructure of mechanisms. In this way, it is inherently retrospective. If I could approximate it to the essential lived experience, it is in a way three steps behind life, and the eternal mission of theatre is always trying to step closer to reach that essential quality of life. That is what the best theatre does.
 - It is political facing, in a way, as well. Greek Theatre was seen as a super pivotal way of communicating political ideals. It deals with the image of life, of lived experience, but unlike Political Theory, it exercises circumstance and the imaginative and theoretical qualities of theatre as opposed to the rhetorical tactics of political theory.
 - Why am I speaking about this?
 - Because what I am trying to do, in this project, and in all my work, is push theatre to the revelatory point that my political theory is existing in. In this way, it completely requires a different set of skills to engage with, and also, a completely different type of work in order to succeed its goals. And one of these skills is that we need to at least try and grapple with the modern questions, the conflicts pressing onto us today; the ones that we don't have answers for. And so that is what today is for.
 - More specifically, I wanted to talk about this for this project specifically largely for one reason;
 - This play is about white people. That means a lot of things, it is still a play about race, yes, but it is about white people.
 - In that way, it is already subverting so many theatrical traditions, that in and of themselves we can understand theoretically and politically, but

have a lot of artistic ramifications. Because when we bring questions that even questions that political thought leaders are grappling with, we have to confront the fully realized nature of crafting theatrical circumstances; **we can't just say what we mean, we have to enact it.**

- And for the theatrical mind, it brings up so many questions, that span a variety of contexts or presuppositions: they are social and psychological, but they are also personal and intimate and come with real lived political consequences. Questions like What is whiteness? What does it actually mean to be white? Who is white? Does that change? And how it interacts with all the other questions that we ask in our world. These are questions that we are asking in Political Theory, but they are very well questions that we have to be courageous enough to ask in the Theatre, and oftentimes, will reveal some immutable human quality about them, something lived and fully realized.
 - Now, to be fair, Political Theory has a history of not even confronting whiteness, so we are even making our job a little more difficult. But, regardless, I think we need to confront the theory that is out there, that does reach toward the ledge of our understanding, so that we are able to have the language that we need to confront the social and psychological phenomenon we are dealing with in this play
- And for that, I am going to use this book, Pierre-Andre Taguieff's "The Force of Prejudice"
 - It is one of the hardest books I have ever read -- It is grad level work, but the way that the truth in the book has echoed into the future feels really significant. BTW, this was published in 2001.
 - Now, I can try and explain what the book is about, but I'm just going to read the back as a way to have you all understand what this book is talking about
 - READ BLURB
 - ESSENTIALLY, This book is about diagnosing racism as a social and political phenomenon
 - If you are not aware, racism started in the 17th century with the advent of the trans atlantic slave trade. So that when people started to be enslaved, there needed to be a distinction between those who were free and those who were to be captured, and come from this was the concept of race and racism. And there was an impulse from this SOCIAL invention of race, was finding a darwinian or scientific justification for the racial distinction, and ultimately supremacy of white people, in the mechanisms of racism and slavery.
 - These efforts did not work out, clearly.
- In the face of racism, there came out of this ANTIRACISM?
 - SO what is anti racism
 - Antiracism is an ideology, just like liberalism, socialism, communism, capitalism, etc
 - **Antiracism is an ideology of a complete NEGATION of racism, and in this interest, adopts the same rhetorical and political tactics that RACISM attempted to ADOPT**

- Heterophilia and Heterophobia
 - Antiracism as the negation of difference
- **These concepts are CONTRADICTORY, and present inherent problems that require some sort of nuance and idiosyncratic application, BUT being SPECIFIC is NOT Politically Expedient**
- This is because Anti Racism needs to be the force that drives Humans or Humanity into the WARMTH of a Self Actualized society. This is what was promised during the enlightenment, pulling man from the wilderness into the beauty of the intellect and proper society.
 - “For ethical antiracism, the central prescription is to favor in man the dominance of the angelic portion over the beastly portion. Albert Memmi bases antiracist morality on a Manichaean conception of human nature: ‘Humans being what they are , the job can and should be undertaken. People are both angels and beasts; the angel must be assisted in prevailing over the beast’¹. Angelicize man and/or denature him: this is the antiracist task. For racism is postulated as the most natural and spontaneous behavior in the human world, while also the least human of human behaviors. And for the same reasons: racism is both the most natural and the least human behavior because it is the way of ease, of greatest comfort; in short, the behavior ‘ready at hand’. To be anti racist is to the contrary to opt for the difficult way, to choose respect for others, which is the ‘essence of morality’. At stake is ‘our honor as humans’.
 - What is interesting to note, however, is that historically, the ideas of the Enlightenment are what bred the ideas of imperialism and logicism that JUSTIFIED racism initially.
 - **So when Antiracism begins to adopt and occupy this space of logic, and science, and truth. It grants itself an objective legitimacy that warrants moral judgement, an objective sense of ethics that THEN PROJECTS a hierarchy that JUSTIFIES prejudice and tyranny.**
- Ethical aristocracy is thus shrouded in well conceived antiracism: if the racist is the first to come, the commoner of humanity is barely human, the antiracist is the nobility of humanity, the salt of the human earth. The implicit conclusion of such a self-grounding argument is never stated, and with good reason: for antiracism presupposes a hierarchical conception of the human world, with the superior beings (the individuals endowed with a higher degree of humanity) represented by the antiracists, and the inferior beings by the racists, endowed with the least humanity, close to the animal kingdom. Hence antiracism implies an internal contradiction: it presupposes an inegalitarian doctrine of humanity, which ends up contradicting the proclaimed inegalitarian ideals”(58)
 - Antiracism claims to want to destroy hierarchy, chooses to justify the hierarchy of antiracism over racists, which is built upon prejudice and tyranny

¹ *Ibid*, 163

- THE MISERY OF ANTIRACISM
 - Its Pessimism and Suspicion
 - “Thus speaks the pessimist antiracist as a matter of course, she who postulates that ‘we are all racists’, that this racism belonging to human nature results from an innate genetic nucleus (phylogenetically acquired or not) or from the inheritance of an original flaw -- with versions from Christian theology or from neoreligious psychoanalysis: ‘Racism is anchored in the unconscious’. This pessimism, linked to a conception of racism as a fateful attitude or behavior, results in the corruption of the principle of antiracist wakefulness or vigilance in permanent guilt, in generalized suspicion, as much with respect to oneself as to others. One’s neighbor is the potential racist: suspicion establishes a nightmare world by making racism into a destiny that, in the best of cases, is a matter of individual therapeutics. (The irresponsible victims, those sick persons incapable of controlling their racist drives as normal subjects do, must go to see someone)”(47)
 - “On the basis of a hypothesis of Darwinian style, that a survival value is attached to the fear of the unknown or to the rejection of the different, one tends to set up as a functional mechanism the universal hostility in the face of the Other, the unknown, the stranger, whose appearance would necessarily entail flight or aggression”(50)
 - In the face of this pessimism, it sacrifices the means to justify the ends
- “The sophism of abusive generalization quite often appears in the form of the sophism of the accident, which especially consists of moving from what is relatively true to what is absolutely true in order to form the conclusion”(59)
- “The half-truths of common sense thereby simply become truths; the all-purpose explanations that are converted, by the accommodating echo of the text, into scientific truths”(50)
- ‘If a loss of ethnic identity has created a void among many of my respondents, and if identity politics has made whiteness a visible racial category, then the perception that being white is now a social liability has most certainly raised white consciousness’²

QUESTION SEMINAR

- This is a really odd project; it moves against the impulse to chronicle these suprastructures of oppression into reductive moralistically digestible narrative bites. It is also a project that is about looking towards the interior of one’s own experience and justifying them within the limits of a time based narrative.
 - This project is the opposite. Into it we built a dynamic of interplay, it requires communication, discovery, and questions.
- This project is drawing on a tradition of whiteness as dominion, as the normative standards, as well as the experience of people of color of having to intimately observe and understand white people

² Charles Gallagher, “Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror” pp10

- That being said, within this project there is a really important need to bridge this gap that we share.
- The script is the platform, the stage in which we
 - Adrian has an intimate knowledge about white behavior surrounding things like
 - Adrian as writer builds the character and the circumstance
 - Actors have intimate lived experience about being white
 - Actors will be living in this world, and therefore, should understand the contexts that shift the psychology on the page.

WITH ALL THAT, Questions play a pivotal role in this process of dissemination of knowledge and experience. This is what Ryan and I have been doing for the past year, and this is what we need to do during this process.

BREAK DOWN QUESTIONS INTO THREE MODES:

- FORM
 - Grammar/Punctuation
 - Vocabulary/Word Choice
 - Dramatic Structure
 - Repetition
- CONTENT
 - Background Knowledge
 - History
 - Pop Culture References
 - Narrative
 - Imaginary World/Space
- POLITICAL
 - Social Politics
 - Personal Politics
 - Psychology
 - Sociology
 - Linguistics
- DRAMATIC
 - Staging
 - Tech
 - Etc

And there's probably gonna be three answers that I will give to you:

1. This is the fact of the play
2. A conversation about the psychology of the scene; no clear answer
3. I don't know, you decide

With all of this, take an example from the play

It's weird to have a conversation about race with guys that i don't know

I don't need to be in a clique to talk about race

I don't know if i am allowed to care about how I look in this situation, in this conversation

IS IT WORTH IT?

You're asking me why.

Why do I think the play is good?

Well, I think for a couple of reasons:

1. The play subverts the systemic extraction of emotional capital from black playwrights and their work by confronting the cathartic process of the theatre as it functions to relieve white theatregoers from their racial anxieties.
2. The play centralizes one of the most essential maneuvers to theatre making, that of which is to exercise the imagination in all of its wondrous specificity and unlimited power to guide the human condition of empathy.
3. The play exercises the banality of evil within its genetic material, being that whiteness is often monotonous with the violence they perpetuate, these soldiers too are literally, metaphorically, and virtually unaware of the violence that they are capable of.
4. The play is not easy to listen to, not easy to perform, and not easy to watch, much like the real world.
5. The play inverts the white gaze, for so long white people have been writing in bad faith about black people. I wanted to meet that challenge and offer the opposite, knowing that god would be on my side and my true goals would be met by the end of the piece.
6. The play explores the wide range of ways that white people situate themselves around the question of race, and does so in good faith, building tension by allowing us to care about characters that we are analytically understanding to be in bad standing.
7. The play and its form unfold in very much in the same vein as a video game, and in the same manner that we witness racism manifest.
8. The play set within the video game reminds us of the intangibility of the actual consequences of confronting racism. When Soldier 4 dies at the end, we question if this is a legitimate sacrifice, we don't know whether or not to grieve this death both because of the form of the video game, but also because we question if he as a white person actually had no other choice but to lose his life.
9. The play occupies such a white and male dominated space, and draws
10. The play is set in the aesthetic of the first officially desegregated war in America, in which the enemy, the enemy, is another globally marginalized community of color.
11. The play takes these characters seriously, condemns them and pities them, resents them and adores them, shames them and celebrates them; the play, and the playwright, loves them, deeply.
12. The play forces white people to directly relate themselves to the circumstances in the play, without condemning the white actors in the question of race, it doesn't allow the psychic space that white theatregoers are used to having between themselves and the racist evil onstage.
13. The play, for people of color, confronts them with the relative fallibility of their rigid conceptions around race, manifested by the fickle arguments of Soldier 4. It ultimately forces them to concede that the ways that they have dogmatized antiracist doctrine is susceptible to great criticism and destruction. Hopefully, in the void that is left behind by this animation of fickle antiracist argumentation, what can finally move in is a reformed dedication to the tenets of fighting against racism in a manner that potentially recognizes the tragedy of the characters in WJS. It opens up folks to explore sincere empathy and understanding as a mode to justify confronting racism.

I have to go soon, because I have to do it all. Which is sudden, but its okay. Its okay.

Would I have changed anything about the play? No.

Will I, like later? Yeah, probably.

It should be longer

It should be more specific

It should inhale more space and love, so that the chemical reaction that is the ensuing conflict can ripple in the heart more profoundly.

Finally,

If we are to meet this play in disagreement, in bad faith, and in revolt,
Consider the following;

When we inundate ourselves with the same accepted canon of racial violence

When we tell ourselves the same, easy story

When we focus on the evil of the world

When we practice suspicion to the highest degree

When we are willing to kill people, to deliver the justice we so adamantly believe we deserve

Then aren't

We Just Soldiers?

In love and Solidarity,

Adrian Costa