

THE SANDRA FEINSTEIN-GAMM THEATRE

# THE RANT

BY **ANDREW CASE**  
DIRECTED BY **TYLER DOBROWSKY**

**STUDY  
GUIDE**

**GAMM**  
EDUCATION

sandra feinstein-

**GAM**  
theatre

SEASON  
**THIRTY-ONE**  
2015 - 2016

**401.723.4266**  
**GAMMTHEATRE.ORG**  
172 EXCHANGE STREET  
PAWTUCKET, RI



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

2.....	<b>ACT I: WELCOME</b>
	• Theater Etiquette / pg 3
	• Guide to Common Core Standards / pg 3
4.....	<b>ACT II: PLAY &amp; PLAYWRIGHT</b>
	• About Andrew Case / pg 4
	• About <i>The Rant</i> / pg 4
5.....	<b>ACT III: OUR PRODUCTION</b>
	• Who Made It Happen? / pg 5
	• Director's Notes, Tyler Dobrowsky / pg 6
	• From The Playwright / pg 7
9.....	<b>ACT IV: TOOLS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION &amp; WRITING</b>
	• Questions for Discussion / pg 9
	• Activities for the Classroom / pg 11
12.....	<b>ACT V: SUPPORTING MATERIALS</b>
	• Links to Online Articles & Videos / pg 12
13.....	<b>EPILOGUE: THANK YOU!</b>
	• Student Matinee Information / pg 13
	• A Look at The Gamm's 31st Season / pg 14

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*This study guide was prepared by Kate Hanson, Susie Schutt, Steve Kidd, Tracy Morreo and Courtney Martin.*

**ACT  
I**

# WELCOME

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Dear Educator,

The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre is pleased to offer you this study guide to prepare you and your students for our production of *The Rant* written by Andrew Case. In this guide you will find background information about the play and playwright, an inside look at our production, as well as activities for your classroom and questions for discussion. We recommend using this study guide before your visit to The Gamm, as well as after to debrief with your students.

We would like to offer a workshop with your classroom/school before your visit to help prepare your students for the play. These workshops will get students out of their seats and up on their feet engaging in the themes, motifs and the language of the play. Kinesthetic engagement with language and literature ensures students deep comprehension and text-to-self connection that encourages students to invest in reading and literacy-learning. Much of this work was discovered, developed and inspired by the ArtsLiteracy Project at Brown University. Their strategies and models for learning continue to serve as a foundational pedagogical tool for all Gamm Education programming, including our PLAY (Pawtucket Literacy and Arts for Youth) in-school residencies.

Attending a production addresses several Common Core Standards in Theatre Arts Standards in Aesthetic Judgment, Cultural Contexts, and Communication, as well as many of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. Below, we have included a list of standards that align with attending a performance and using our study guide.

We would love to hear from you about your experiences using this study guide. It is a great help to us as we build our education program from year to year. We look forward to seeing you at The Gamm!

**Susie Schutt**

Education Director, [susie@gammtheatre.org](mailto:susie@gammtheatre.org)

**Kate Hanson**

Education and Outreach Coordinator, [kate@gammtheatre.org](mailto:kate@gammtheatre.org)



## THEATER AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

What is so exciting about attending the theater - especially in a smaller space such as The Gamm - is that it is live! Live theater is different from other forms of entertainment; unlike film and television you are encouraged to pay close attention and actively engage your imagination.

You, the audience, are mere feet (and sometimes inches!) away from the actors; therefore, you play an active role in the experience. **The actors can see and hear any distracting behavior such as talking, text messaging, unwrapping candy, the ringing of cell phones, etc.** This can affect the actor's concentration, disrupt the performance, and ruin the experience for other audience members. So we ask that you refrain from talking or making any noise during a performance. *Thank you!*

Discuss with your students the particular demands and benefits of attending a live performance. Perhaps have them brainstorm how theater is different from film, television and sporting events.

## COMMON CORE GUIDE

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*Here is a list of College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards that align to the information and activities in our guide:*

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2] *See Themes and Questions for Discussion*
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3] *See Themes and Questions for Discussion*
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4] *See our Activity for the Classroom*
- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7] *See examples throughout our study guide.*
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9] *See the Playwright's Note.*
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3] *See our Activity for the Classroom*
- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1] *See Themes and Questions for Discussion*
- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2] *See examples throughout our study guide.*

## ABOUT ANDREW CASE:

by Jennifer Madden, Gamm Resident Scholar

Andrew Case is an award-winning playwright and novelist. His plays have been produced by the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, New Theatre in Miami, InterAct Theatre in Philadelphia, and many more across the country. His work has been commissioned and developed by the Manhattan Theatre Club, the Atlantic Theatre, Primary Stages, the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, and many more. He is a member of the Primary Stages Writers Group and PEN America Center, and a winner of the Samuel Goldwyn Award. Additionally, he is an expert in civilian oversight of police misconduct. His scholarship on police oversight has been published in the Columbia Human Rights Law Review and he has been quoted on police oversight and reform in the New York Times and many other media outlets. He is married to the extraordinary dramaturg and professor Claudia Case (@TheatreHistory) and is the father of two spirited children. His first novel, the urban thriller *The Big Fear*, will be published by Thomas and Mercer in February 2016.



**Andrew Case**  
Photo: Trevor

## ABOUT *THE RANT*:

One summer night in Brooklyn, an unarmed black teenage boy is gunned down by the police. When the department closes ranks around the accused officer, an investigator assigned to the shooting takes what she knows to a tabloid reporter. But she quickly learns that the story she fed to the press is still only part of the truth. Alone, she must wade through prejudice, deceit, and a volley of anonymous threats to find where culpability and truth really lie. Based on playwright Andrew Case's eight years' experience working on police misconduct issues for New York City, *The Rant* is a gripping, timely drama exploring racial bias and police ethics on the perilous path to justice.

*The Rant* was written in 2008 by Andrew Case. It was first produced by InterAct Theatre in Philadelphia, and then moved on to other theatres such as New Theatre in Miami, New Jersey Repertory Theatre, Mary-Arrchie Theatre in Chicago, and now The Gamm Theatre in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The play is based on Case's ten years of experience as an investigator and director of the Civilian Complaint Review Board, during which he investigated allegations of misconduct against police officers in New York City.

# ACT III

## OUR PRODUCTION

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### WHO MADE IT HAPPEN:

#### ON STAGE:

Amos Hamrick  
Kym Gomes  
Nikki Massoud  
Tony Estrella

Charles Simmons  
Denise Reeves  
Lila Mahnaz  
Alexander Stern

#### BEHIND THE SCENES:

Tyler Dobrowsky  
Patrick Lynch  
Marilyn Salvatore  
Meg Tracy Leddy

Director  
Set Design  
Costume Design  
Stage Management



*The Rant* at New Jersey Repertory Company, Bob Senkewicz, Rahaleh Nassri | Photo by Suzanne Barabas

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On the surface *The Rant* is a gripping, fast-paced “Law & Order” style procedural, with a story seemingly ripped from the headlines, featuring familiar archetypes like the cynical reporter and the young, headstrong investigator. We know this world; we know this story. While that is certainly true up to a point, playwright Andrew Case is after something much more sophisticated and complex than a mere television drama. Case wants to expose the way bureaucratic systems in the courts and in the media can actually stifle the pursuit of justice (as well as its execution) and the way those bureaucracies, when threatened, work to preserve their own survival over the wants and needs of individuals, and in some cases over the law itself.

Perhaps more profoundly, Case also manages to depict the illusory nature of truth. *The Rant* unfolds like Akira Kurosawa’s classic film *Rashomon*, where characters provide different and at times self-serving depictions of the same event. To the chagrin of the investigator, a young Persian woman named Mahnaz, the truth becomes less and less a series of solid facts and increasingly more slippery and subjective. As the newspaper reporter eventually explains, “You have a tiny little corner of a picture and you decide you’ve got it all figured out. Then you get another scrap and you throw out the whole thing, you decide you were wrong. But you will never be right, because you will never get all the pieces. You’ll never see the whole picture.” That’s *The Rant* in a nutshell: The truth is frustratingly elusive and almost impossible to grasp.

But what is the inciting event of the play, the engine that fuels *The Rant* and the crime that Investigator Mahnaz so fervently wants to solve? The case itself will feel frighteningly and distressingly relevant: An unarmed black teenager is shot and killed by a cop. This obviously adds another dimension to the story. Over the past year, America has seen a number of high-profile cases where young, unarmed black men were gunned down by police for reasons that are specious at best and, at worst, motivated by racial fear and bias. You might think this play was written in response to some of those shootings, but it was actually written in 2008 before we knew about Michael Brown in Ferguson, or Eric Garner in New York, or Walter Scott in South Carolina. Before Freddie Grey or Tamir Rice. Before each week seemingly brought a new, ugly example of America’s relationship with race, and with the black community in particular, to the forefront of our consciousness.

Even though it wasn’t written in response to those shootings, it’s impossible to watch *The Rant* without thinking of the young men who died this past year. You can’t watch it without thinking of the police officers who shot them, and why they acted the way they did. For my own part, the play makes me think about my own relationship to race, and how my perspective (my “truth”) might be different than someone else’s – how I might perceive an event one way and someone else might observe the exact same thing completely differently. That my own biases and background influence the way I see the world; that being white doesn’t mean I have the “neutral” or “universal” perspective. It makes me think about how deeply ingrained racism really is. It makes me think about how we train our police officers. It makes me think about guns. It makes me think about how our society has changed since the civil rights movement. It makes me think about how it hasn’t.

*The Rant* is a fast, high-energy piece of drama that isn’t afraid to tackle huge, challenging ideas. It will no doubt leave you mulling over these ideas, and many more, in the days to come. Buckle up.

Tyler Dobrowsky

## FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

For eight years, I worked at New York City's official agency for investigating police misconduct. I began as an investigator, looking into allegations as minor as casual rudeness and as serious as death in custody. Later I conducted outreach, speaking at precincts, schools, community boards, housing projects, churches, and juvenile detention centers about civilian-police relations. Eventually I served as the director of communications and intergovernmental affairs, managing press issues, sitting on panels alongside city council members, and addressing the entire graduating class of the police academy. All the while I continued writing plays, and while I never wrote a play without thinking about the people and the lessons I learned at work, I resisted writing specifically about police abuse. As much as I had learned, the subject seemed too much in flux to capture - no matter what I wrote or thought about the NYPD, the opposite, I knew, was also probably true.

When I first sat down to write about my experience, I ended up with half a play mainly about political bickering and clever one-liners delivered by government staffers. I had become entranced with the status struggles between city agencies and the peculiar jargon of government work (the use of "out-years" instead of "future" remains a personal favorite), and had neglected to include anything about what all these people were actually working on. A colleague in a writers group read what I had written and told me that we needed to hear another voice - we needed to hear from an outsider. That night I sat down and wrote the opening monologue of *The Rant*.

I wrote the first draft of the play in eight weeks. The result was raw and scattered but I was much happier with it. I had learned in my job that every police encounter is racially charged in some degree - even the most innocuous, and even those in which the officer and the civilian are the same race. I felt that by giving full voice to each of the four characters, and by making the play more overtly about race, I had written something that was truer to my experience and to the world. The same person who told me to include the outsider's voice blanched when she saw what I had ended up with, warning me to be "very, very, careful" with the result. I hope I succeeded in ignoring that advice.

Three days after I completed the first ragged draft, a reporter called me at the break of dawn to ask what I knew about an unarmed man who had been shot by the police a few hours before as he left his bachelor party. I have answered more times than I can remember that the Sean Bell shooting was not the source material for this play. However, there were a dozen or more other shootings, and many more cases of ordinary human cruelty, from which I have borrowed details or drawn inspiration. Most of these events were not major news stories, appearing somewhere in the thick middle pages of a newspaper if they were covered at all. I will never forget the true and deep human suffering that surrounds every police shooting, and hope that I have not trivialized these tragedies by using them as the basis for a play.

The NYPD Rant is an actual message board, run by a former NYPD officer to allow cops to vent anger, express approval, or debate with each other about the city, the police department, crime, politics, and baseball. While the posters are all anonymous, the webmaster confirms that they are NYPD officers before giving them a username. When I worked at the CCRB, I read the site daily - oftentimes it was the best place to get advance information on new policies and programs, or the truly unvarnished view of current events from the line officer perspective.

Sometimes that view was more unvarnished than people would like. The day that Michael Oliver was indicted for shooting Sean Bell, there was a "Letter to the People of New York" posted on the Rant. It began:

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

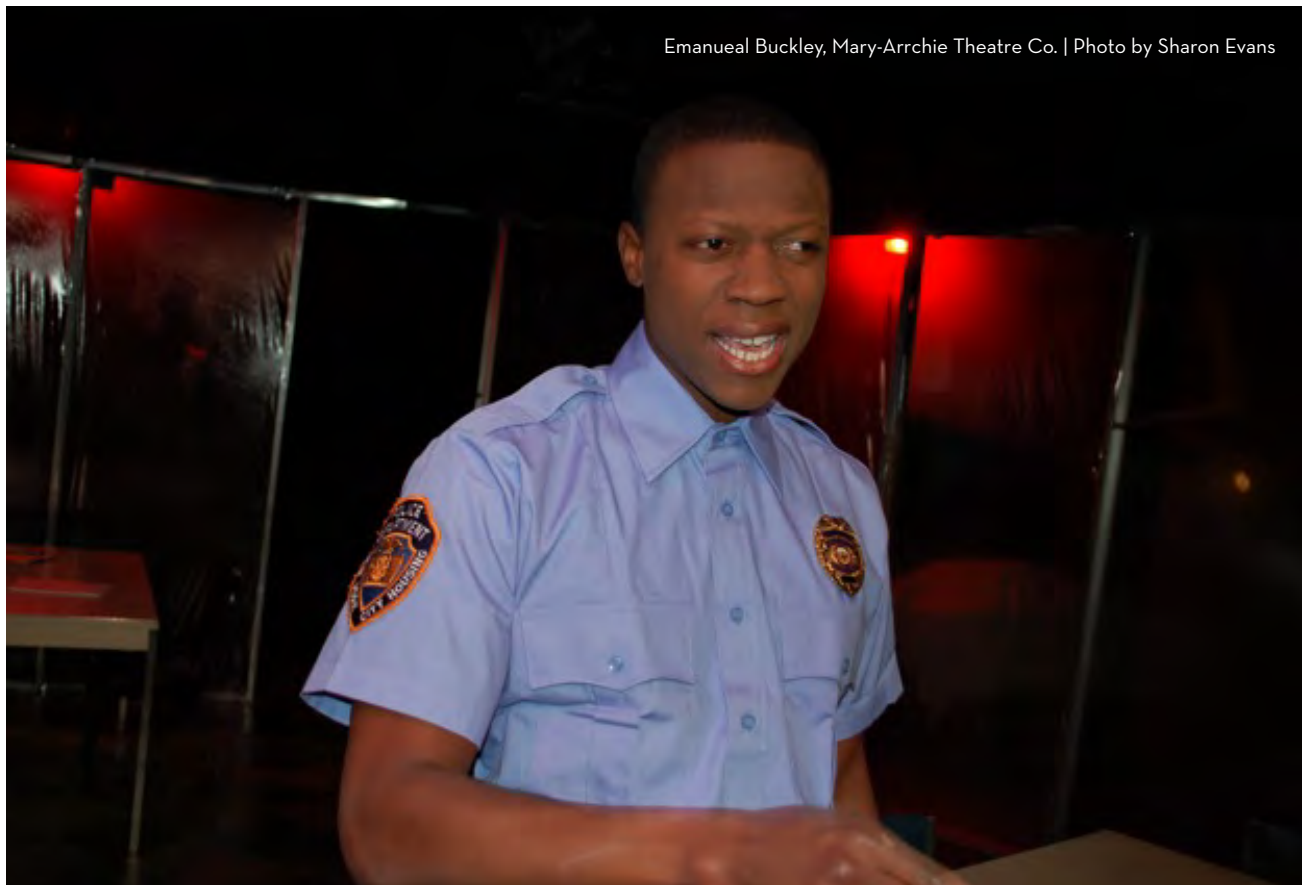
The N.Y.P.D. is officially closed for business. Arm yourselves with whatever weapons you deem morally acceptable. Fend for yourselves. This was the parting shot. We are done." The letter went on to say that New York was "a city of politically correct, elitist, cop hating liberals," and told its residents to "set up



barbed wire and trained dogs around your residences. Build a moat. Learn how to protect yourselves. We will no longer be jailed in order to quell racial riots or anti-police sentiment.” The writer said he would no longer race to calls, because if something went wrong, then “Some young, do-gooder, John Lennon listening, Green Peace card carrying, pot smoking, bird watching, tree hugging, sandal wearing, anti-government amateur protester A.D.A. will be thrilled to prosecute me and use me as a feather in his cap.” He concluded by saying he would show up at any dispute only after it was over “when neither I nor my pension is in danger.”

The letter received hundreds of responses, every one of them positive. I marveled both at the anger in the letter, the vitriol towards a city that, after all, was responding to the fact that officers had fired fifty bullets into a carful of unarmed men. But I also marveled at the writer’s humor, his wry imagery (so many New Yorkers have, of course, built moats of some sort or another around their brownstones and high rises), and his greater understanding of the carnival and pageantry of New York than most allegedly sophisticated residents. As I read the letter again, I could not help thinking that the cop who wrote it was somehow channeling Tom Wolfe, reminding us that despite the graffiti-free subway cars and the sex-free Times Square and the murder-free city, New York can still be a sprawling, uncontrollable, wonderful stew of hate, hope, and humor. I hope to have captured some hint of that city in my play.

Andrew Case



# ACT IV

# TOOLS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

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1. What sort of atmosphere was created with the lighting, sound, and live music?
2. What does the Gamm poster (also the cover of this study guide) tell you about the play? What sort of poster would you design for this play and why?

## **Black Lives Matter and Ferguson, Missouri**

Black Lives Matter is an activist movement in the United States that formed in July 2013 as a result of the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the Florida man who shot African-American teen, Trayvon Martin. The Black Lives Matter movement fights police brutality and injustice against African-Americans.

In August of 2014, 18 year old Michael Brown was shot by a white police officer named Darren Wilson. This resulted in protests, riots, and unrest amongst the Ferguson community.

### **Questions for Free Write or Discussion:**

- Why do you think it is important to write and produce plays that are so current and relevant to what is happening in the world today?
- How, if at all, have the recent events and the Black Lives Matter movement affected your life?

## **Play Structure**

Even though there are 4 characters in this play, there are never more than 2 people sharing the stage at the same time. The entire play is comprised of monologues/soliloquies or 2 person dialogue that transition seamlessly into the next setting without designated scene breaks. Traditionally, plays are broken down into acts, which are then broken down into scenes and may vary in the number of actors on stage.

### **Questions for Free Write or Discussion:**

- The set designer, Patrick Lynch, explains that the play is constructed tightly and efficiently, with a small cast and only 2 person scenes. This served as an inspiration for his set. How could this play structure influence how the set looks? How would you design the set with this in mind?
- How does only having 2 people in a scene affect how a story is told?

## **Truth**

The Rant focuses on one crime, but we hear about it through many different perspectives. Each character has his or her own opinion on what happened and believes a different truth. Each perspective can be valid, yet at the same time can leave something out. Alexander Stern, the reporter who covers the story explains, "You have a tiny little corner of a picture under a magnifying glass and you decided you've got it all figured out. Then you get another scrap and you throw out the whole thing, you decide you were wrong. But you will never be right, because you will never see the whole picture."

### **Questions for Free Write or Discussion:**

- When is a time in your life when you have had to sort through different perspectives to find the truth? Were you able to find the truth?

- What does “truth” mean to you?
- Can multiple people have conflicting truths and not be lying?

## THE GAMM’S COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In conjunction with our production of *The Rant* by Andrew Case, The Gamm will hold 4 public forums exploring the humanities themes raised by the play. The Gamm will bring together scholars, writers, Law Enforcement officials, and activists in a series of lectures, panel discussions, and talk-backs exploring and questioning the themes of the play and addressing the increasing visibility of institutional biases and racially motivated violence plaguing American communities.

## MEDIA, IDENTITY AND POWER

**Friday, Nov. 13, following the 10am matinee of *The Rant* (approx. 11:30)**

**at The Gamm Theatre, 172 Exchange St., Pawtucket, RI**

Special guests engage our high school audience in addressing issues raised in the *The Rant*, as well as how the media’s representations of segments of our population inform power dynamics with often fatal consequences.

Special Guests: Andrew Case, playwright and author; Kendall Moore, documentary filmmaker and Associate Professor of Journalism and Film Media, URI; Sal Monteiro, Director of Training, The Institute for the Study and Practice of Non-Violence

Moderator: Tony Estrella, Gamm Artistic Director

## A CONVERSATION WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT

**Sunday, Nov. 15, following the 2 pm matinee of *The Rant* (approx. 3:30 pm)**

**at The Gamm Theatre, 172 Exchange St., Pawtucket, RI**

Case will discuss his experiences as an investigator of police misconduct in New York City, and his inspiration for writing *The Rant*.

Special Guest: Andrew Case, playwright and author

Moderator: Jennifer Madden, Gamm Resident Scholar

## LAW, ORDER, and JUSTICE

**Saturday, Nov. 21 at 2 pm at AS220, 115 Empire St., Providence**

Panelists explore the complexities of policing, street- and court-level law enforcement, racial discrimination, and institutional biases in our communities.

Panelists: Steven Paré, Commissioner of Public Safety, City of Providence; Hillary Davis, Policy Associate, RI ACLU; Dr. Yolanda M. Leott, Professor of Criminal Justice, Roger Williams University; Christopher Johnson, Performance Poet

Moderator: Marc Levitt, Filmmaker and Radio Host

## BUILDING COMMUNITIES ONSTAGE AND OFF

**Sunday, Nov. 22, following the 2pm matinee of *The Rant* (approx. 3:30 pm)**

**at The Gamm Theatre, 172 Exchange St., Pawtucket, RI**

Special guests discuss the intersection of class, race, gender and law enforcement.

Special Guests: Tina Shepard, Director of Community Initiatives, One Neighborhood Builders; and the cast of *The Rant*

Moderator: Maureen Moakley, Professor of Political Science, URI

These forums are made possible through funding support from the **Rhode Island Council for the Humanities**, an independent state affiliate of the **National Endowment for the Humanities**. The council seeds, supports, and strengthens public history, cultural heritage, civic education, and community engagement by

and for all Rhode Islanders. *The Rant* is part of the **Pell Humanities Initiative** in Rhode Island to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the **National Endowment for the Humanities**.

**Questions for Free Write or Discussion:**

- Why do you think it is important to involve the community in discussions such as these?

## ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

### WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

**DESCRIPTION:**

The truth is never as clear as you may think (see Act IV on page 9). Have your students look at the images below and have them write what they think is happening. Then open the floor for a discussion about all of the possible scenarios.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:**

- What is going on in this picture?
- What makes you think that?
- What else do you see?





## ONLINE ARTICLES

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A COP IN AMERICA | Time.com  
<http://time.com/3996100/cops-policing-america-ferguson/>

THE MYTH OF POLICE REFORM | TheAtlantic.com  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/the-myth-of-police-reform/390057/>

POLICE RACISM: A SEARCH FOR ANSWERS | BluePrint.ucla.edu  
<http://blueprint.ucla.edu/feature/police-racism-search-for-answers/>

WHAT THE COPS SAY | Economist.com  
<http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2015/04/policing-america>

THE RANT: DEFT AND SOPHISTICATED SOCIO-POLITICAL THEATER | TalkinBroadway.com  
<http://www.talkinbroadway.com/regional/nj/nj373.html>

## RADIO

3 GENERATIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT SPEAK OUT ABOUT POLICING IN AMERICA  
 NPR.org | Listen here: <http://tinyurl.com/p7qpkjf>

## GAMM INSIDER MAGAZINE: SPOTLIGHT ON “THE RANT”

An email-based collection of reviews and articles gathered from across the web.  
 Email [susie@gammtheatre.org](mailto:susie@gammtheatre.org) to request it be sent to your email address.

**MORE  
TO  
COME**

# EPILOGUE

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**THANK YOU** for joining us for *The Rant* and for working with this Study Guide to ensure the best, most comprehensive theatrical and educational experience. Please be in touch if you would like us to visit your classroom before or after you attend *The Rant*.

Our Education Department provides classes for students of various grade levels, as well as a month-long Gamm Summer Intensive for summer time theatre fun. We hope you will join us for more student matinees at The Gamm!

## **MATINEES STILL TO COME:**

### **GRIZZLY MAMA**

by George Brant

• Friday, Jan. 8, 2016

### **A SKULL IN CONNEMARA**

by Martin McDonagh

• Friday, Feb 26, 2016

### **THE WINTER'S TALE**

by William Shakespeare

• Friday, April 22, 2016

• Thursday, May 5, 2016

• Thursday, May 12, 2016

• Friday, May 20, 2016

• Thursday, May 26, 2016

## **TO BOOK A MATINEE**

contact Tracy at [tracy@gammtheatre.org](mailto:tracy@gammtheatre.org)  
or 401-723-4266 ext. 12.

# **GAMM EDUCATION**

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT  
GAMM EDUCATION

find us on the web at [gammtheatre.org](http://gammtheatre.org) or  
reach Susie Schutt at 401 723 4266 ext. 17.

# A LOOK AT THE GAMM'S 31ST SEASON

This promises to be another unique, surprising, and remarkable year at The Gamm, with provocative, bold, stylistically varied works and the best writing old and new that the theatre has to offer. You'll see the greatest of American dramas, one of Shakespeare's most moving and magical plays, two up-to-the-minute works about how we live publicly and privately today (both new to our audience!), and the dark comic genius of Martin McDonagh with our final production of his award winning "Leeane Trilogy" –Tony Estrella, Artistic Director

sandra feinstein-

**GAM**  
theatre

Just in time for primary season, 2016 gets underway with George Brant's new blackly comic political satire *Grizzly Mama*. Then, aptly surrounding St. Patrick's Day, Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's *A Skull in Connemara* unravels the unsolved killing of the local gravedigger's wife with dark hilarity. The season closes with William Shakespeare, marking the 400-year anniversary of his death in April 2016 with *The Winter's Tale*, an uplifting story of jealousy and redemption.



◀ COMING NEXT

SEASON  
**THIRTY-ONE**  
2015 - 2016

JAN 07  
THRU  
FEB 07  
2016

TUES - THURS  
7:00 PM  
FRI - SAT  
8:00 PM  
SUN  
2:00 & 7:00 PM

From the author of *Grounded*, *Grizzly Mama* is a pitch-black comedy about motherhood, feminism and the shallowness of sound-bite politics, eliciting shocks and laughs in equal measure.

TICKETS:  
401.723.4266  
GAMMTHEATRE.ORG  
173 EXCHANGE STREET  
PAWBUCKET, RI

SEASON  
THIRTY-ONE  
2015 - 2016

SMALL THEATER, BIG IMPACT.

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