

Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers



Written and Performed By Makambe K. Simamba
Directed by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard
Based on the world premiere production produced by b current

Study Guide Prepared by Christine Rodriguez



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Curriculum connections

Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers connects directly to many curriculum expectations.

THE ARTS

Drama – Analyzes a dramatic work; interprets the meaning of the work; shares their appreciation experience; makes critical and aesthetic judgments.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Competency 1 – Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn; communicating and learning in specific context.

Competency 2 – Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts; talks about own response to a text; interprets the relationship between reader, text and context in light of own response.

Competency 3 – Produces texts for personal and social purposes; extends repertoire of resources for producing texts; constructs relationship between writer/producer, text and context; adapts a process to produce texts in specific contexts.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Contemporary World – interprets a contemporary world problem; takes a position on a contemporary world issue.

World Connections – Model activities and processes of responsible citizenship

Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers

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Production Team

Lighting Design by: Andrea Lundy

Sound Design by: Diana Reyes

Video Design by: Trevor Schwellnus

Choreography by: Shakeil Rollock

The Playwright

Makambe K Simamba is a Dora Award winning playwright and actor for her solo work, *Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers* (b current performing arts). She recently co-directed *inVISIBLE (Too)* at the University of Lethbridge. Selected acting credits include *Blacktop Sky* (Obsidian Theatre), *A Chitenge Story* (Handsome Alice), *GIANT* (Ghost River Theatre), *Bea* (Sage Theatre), *SIA* (Pyretic Productions), *inVISIBLE* (Handsome Alice), *Burn Your Maps* (Cinelou Films), *Grand Army* (Netflix), and *Young Drunk Punk* (Citytv). Makambe is a national award winning playwright whose work includes *Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers*, *A Chitenge Story*, *Makambe Speaks*, *MUD* and *The Drum Major Instinct*. She is 2020/21 Urjo Kareda Artist in Residence at the Tarragon Theatre. Makambe is a proud Zambian whose intention is to be of service through her ability to tell stories.



The Director

Donna-Michelle St. Bernard is an emcee, playwright, and arts administrator. Her work has been recognized with a Siminovitch Prize nomination, SATAward nomination, the Herman Voaden Playwriting Award, the Enbridge playRites Award, a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding New Play, and two nominations for the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama. She is the current artistic director of New Harlem Productions. She is based in Toronto.



The Story

February 26, 2012, Florida. A 17-year-old Black boy wearing a hoodie leaves a 7/11 carrying a bag of Skittles and an iced tea. He never makes it home. *Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers* invites us into the infamous world of one teen, into his last moments, and into his intricate dance to the afterlife.



Pre-Show Activity and Discussion:

Usually, the glossary for a study guide goes at the end, but for this guide it is placed at the beginning so that some concepts are understood before delving into the issues of racial profiling and systemic racism in the justice system that impact the victims of police or vigilante shootings and their surviving family members.

Our Fathers, Sons, Husbands and Lovers relates to the stories of victims of shootings and how the victims and families don't get justice. We need to understand the social framework that exists to allow such things to happen. It will allow for more informed discussions.

These concepts should be reviewed before the play and discussed using any examples the students can relate from personal experience.

Glossary and Concepts¹:

Dignity

Recognition of a person's inherent worth and right to be valued and respected.

Q: What instances have you experienced where you felt your dignity was not respected?

Ethnic groups

Refers to a person's ethnic or cultural origins. Ethnic groups have a common identity, heritage, ancestry, or historical past, often with identifiable cultural, linguistic, and/or religious characteristics.

Q: What comments have you heard about an ethnic group you are a part of that have made you uncomfortable? And why?

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the way in which people's lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations, which, together, can produce a unique and distinct experience for that individual or group, for example, creating additional barriers, opportunities, and/or power imbalances.

In the context of race and Black identity, this means recognizing the ways in which people's experiences of racism or privilege, including within any one group, may vary depending on the individual's or group's relationship to additional overlapping or intersecting social identities, like religion, ethnic origin, gender, age, disabilities or citizenship and immigration status.

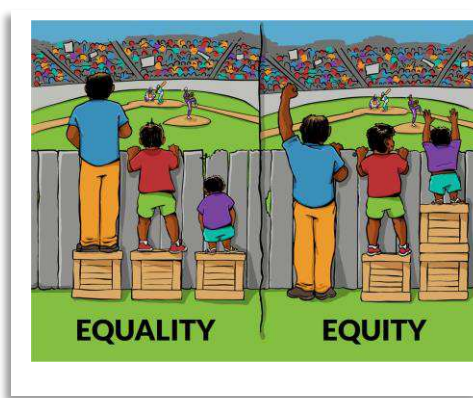
Q: Does intersectionality relate to you or anyone you know and how? What would be some examples of intersectionality?

¹ Sources of definitions from Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre and Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate

Racial equity

Racial equity is the systemic fair treatment of all people. It results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. It contrasts with formal equality where people are treated the same without regard for racial differences. Racial equity is a process such as meaningfully engaging with Indigenous, Black, and racialized citizens regarding policies, directives, practices and procedures that affect them and an outcome such as equitable treatment of Indigenous, Black, and racialized citizens within society.

Q: What is the difference between things being equal for everyone (equality) and things being equitable for everyone (equity)?



Racial profiling

Racial profiling is any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin, or on a combination of those traits, rather than on a reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment.

Q: What instances of racial profiling are you familiar with? What makes these instances cases of racial profiling?

Racialization

Racialization is a process of delineating group boundaries (races) and allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics. In this process, societies construct races as 'real,' different, and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political, and social life.

Q: Why would commenting on someone's facial features or hair be examples of racialization? Whose role is it to stake out one's own identity? The individual or society? Explain your rationale.

Racialized (person or group)

Racialized persons and/or groups can have racial meanings attributed to them in ways that negatively impact their social, political, and economic life. This includes but is not necessarily limited to people classified as “visible minorities” under the Canadian census and may include people impacted by antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Q: What could be the effects of racializing people within our communities?

Racism

Racism includes ideas or practices that establish, maintain or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another.

Individual Racism refers to an individual's racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviours and is "a form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious and unconscious, personal prejudice" (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 329). Individual Racism is connected to/learned from broader socio-economic histories and processes and is supported and reinforced by systemic racism.

Systemic Racism includes the policies and practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups. It differs from overt discrimination in that no individual intent is necessary. (Toronto Mayor's Committee on Community and Race Relations. *Race Relations: Myths and Facts*)

It manifests itself in two ways:

1. *Institutional Racism*: racial discrimination that derives from individuals carrying out the dictates of others who are prejudiced or of a prejudiced society;

Q: Can you think of examples of institutional racism?

2. *Structural Racism*: inequalities rooted in the system-wide operation of a society that excludes substantial numbers of members of particular groups from significant participation in major social institutions. (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 352)

Q: Read the text box on the next page and try to think of how structural racism in the examples below might impact the people affected by it. What examples can you think of that haven't been mentioned? Are there any that relate to the people close to you or your peers?

Examples of Systemic Racism:

Some forms of systemic racism may be more explicit or easier (for some) to identify than others: the [Indian Residential School System](#) in Canada; [Jim Crow Laws](#) in the US; the exclusion of African-American golfers from elite, private golf courses in the US; the way that "universal suffrage" did not include Indigenous North American women (nor did Indigenous men receive the vote until 1960, unless they gave up their status/identity as Indigenous).

Some Canadian examples of systemic racism include: the [1885 Head Tax](#), the [1923 Exclusion Act](#), the [1897 Female Refugee Act](#), passed in Ontario, which criminalized 'immoral' and 'incorrigible' acts conducted by women if they were found to be pregnant out of wedlock or drunk in public.

Education

School curricula claims to be 'inclusive' and 'representative', and there have been some significant improvements in curricula development and delivery in recent decades. However, these shifts towards 'inclusiveness' are often problematic, resulting in a lack of engagement/participation of Indigenous students and students of colour because:

The foundational perspective from which the curricula is developed is still white, middle-class, Western. For example, the story of 'Canada' remains a white peoples' story-but now, with Indigenous people and people of colour 'added' in. The voices/perspectives of marginalized communities-their own experiences of this place--are not heard directly, because the story is still told by predominantly white curriculum developers, speaking 'for' these communities. This applies most 'obviously' to Social Studies, History, and so on, but also to Math and Science, which are "Western/European" based. The curriculum/teachers do not recognize that every culture in the world has its own history of 'mathematics' and 'science,' even if not articulated in Western terms.

Teacher education does not involve anti-racism education in any way that is meaningful for the students and teachers who experience racism daily, or for white students and teachers who want to participate in anti-racism/social justice. What work is done is at the surface level, and ignores historical and current power imbalances-including, in the classroom.

Hiring and Advancement Practices

While many businesses and corporations have 'diversity' policies, and many individuals in these workplaces do want a more representative work force, many businesses and corporations are still predominantly white. (One need only to look at the photos in any Business Section of a city newspaper to see this.) Why is this the case?

People tend to feel more comfortable with people who talk and act most like themselves, and because of this institutions and systems tend to reproduce themselves in ways that perpetuate the status quo.

Currently, many companies are using the concept of "fit" in hiring practices. "Fit" refers to how a person is perceived as 'fitting in to' and 'contributing to' an existing workplace. It is discouraging, but perhaps not surprising, then, that white employers will, generally, see white applicants (with white, middle-class perspectives), as a better fit than a person of colour whose first language is not English.

Access to Sports/Recreation

Organized hockey, from Minor Hockey to the NHL, is predominantly white (and still male). There is no explicit policy that excludes people of colour and Indigenous people from participating in organized hockey, yet there are few players of colour/Indigenous players. What is it that keeps organized hockey 'white'?

Playing hockey is expensive (fees and gear), time consuming for families, requires transportation and an accommodating work schedule, and in Alberta, for example, is conducted in English. While there is no 'intent' to exclude non-English speaking, lower-income, shift-working, single-parent families from playing organized hockey, the system is designed by and for middle-class, professional white families.

Stereotypes

Qualities ascribed to individuals or groups that are based on misconceptions, false generalizations, and/or oversimplifications that potentially result in stigmatization. A race-based stereotype is a quality ascribed to individuals/groups related to race. Stereotypes can perpetuate racism and racial discrimination and give rise to racial inequalities.

Q: What stereotypes do you believe must be shattered? Try to find out where these stereotypes originate from? What historical context instilled the stereotypes you came up with and what strategies could be used to counter these stereotypical ideas?

Post-Show Activities:

Discussion questions for *Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers*:

Theatre:

1. What was your overall impression of the aesthetics of the play with regards to the story the playwright is trying to tell?
2. What might be the artistic intent of a black woman playing the role of Slimm?
3. What was your impression of the way the story was told, as a one person show?
4. What, if anything, would you have done differently? Can you make a proposal to the class to explain how you would tell this story whether it be from the point of view of a playwright, director, set, costume, light or sound designer, or other?

Themes:

1. What were you expecting to see when the play began and how did that perception change by the time you reached the end?
2. What did you think and feel at the end of the play?
3. How did your view of some of the glossary concepts change or impact you as you watched the play?

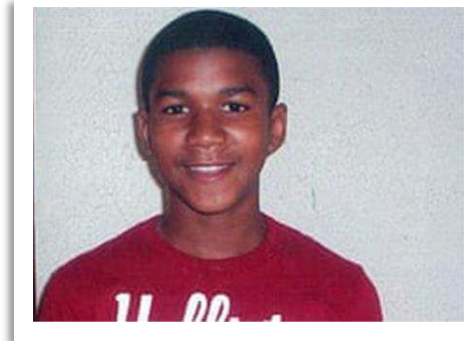
Case Studies

Below are some case studies of young people who were shot and killed with the perpetrator going free after highly publicized trials.

Students should research these cases for the facts, from trusted news sources, in order to form their own opinions. Perhaps there are other such cases they can explore. The play *Our Sons, Fathers, Husbands and Lovers* has a long list of names from which the students can choose. There are also news stories from Montreal and Toronto that have elements in common with these tragedies but with a Canadian perspective.

The Story of Trayvon Martin – shot and killed February 26th, 2012

Trayvon Martin was a 17 year old high school student who was shot and killed by George Zimmerman as he walked home from a 7/11 convenience store. He was heading back to his father's house in a gated community when Zimmerman accosted him under the pretext of being part of a neighbourhood watch. Not believing that Trayvon was part of the community but rather lurking around to rob houses, Zimmerman persisted in harassing Trayvon, against police instructions given over the 911 call he was on, to the point that an altercation occurred ending with the shooting death of the African-American teenager.



Zimmerman was eventually charged with manslaughter and second degree murder, however he claimed it was in self-defence. His lawyer used the Stand Your Ground Law enacted by the Florida legislature as a legal argument for the murder of Trayvon Martin. Ultimately, Zimmerman was acquitted. Trayvon and his family didn't get any type of justice. Zimmerman had some brushes with the law prior to shooting Trayvon, including an arrest for shoving a state alcohol officer and a restraining order for domestic violence. Since his acquittal, he has been arrested for some other violent behavior for which he was never charged.²

Who was Trayvon Martin:

- His favourite subject is said to be math.
- He studied aviation through a school part-time program and wished to become a pilot or an engineer.
- He played youth football.
- He's described as funny and very creative.³

The Story of Fredy Villanueva – shot and killed August 9th, 2008

Fredy Villanueva was a young man from Montréal-Nord who was playing dice in a parking lot in Henri-Bourassa Park with his older brother Dany and a group of friends. A police officer, Constable Jean-Loup Lapointe, and his partner approached the group and identified two individuals, including Dany Villanueva, as gang members and decided to issue tickets for violating a city by-law against gambling.



² Bort, Ryan. "A Timeline of George Zimmerman's Bizarre Life After Killing Trayvon Martin." Newsweek. May 12, 2016. <https://www.newsweek.com/george-zimmerman-timeline-trayvon-martin-459300>

³ "Profiles: Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman." BBC Online. July 12, 2013. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-17682245>

An altercation occurred between Constable Lapointe and Dany Villanueva. The young people became alarmed by the altercation, along with Fredy who wanted to protect his brother. Constable Lapointe claimed he feared for his life when he fired four shots into the crowd, killing Fredy and injuring two other people. Bystanders stated that the police was not in any imminent danger at the time of the shooting.

A coroner's inquest was held to find out what happened. A judge found that an aggressive police officer combined with the belligerent behaviour of Dany Villanueva "led to a legally justified but preventable shooting. Justice André Perreault found Fredy Villaneuva 'just had the bad reflex or lousy judgment to try to end the altercation by getting between the two.'"⁴ Despite the fact that many errors in the police officers' actions were cited, Constable Lapointe was cleared of any wrongdoing and, in fact, has gone on to serve as a member of the SWAT team.

«Fredy n'est pas mort. Qu'est-ce que je dois faire pour que mon fils revienne à la vie? Pourquoi est-ce qu'un maniaque et un assassin a fait irruption dans nos vies? Pourquoi s'en prendre à mes fils? Seulement parce que nous sommes des immigrants. Je suis sûre que si Fredy et Dany avaient été blancs ou Québécois, cette tragédie ne se serait pas produite. C'est à cause du profilage racial que mon fils est mort», a déclaré Lillian Villanueva, la mère de Fredy, en espagnol, avec l'aide d'une interprète.⁵

Who was Fredy Villanueva:

- He was 18 years old when he died.
- He immigrated to Canada in 1998 with his brother Dany and four sisters,
- His parents are Lilian Villanueva and Gilberto Villanueva Madrid. Mr. Villanueva fled Honduras after two attempts on his life over land claims in his native country and subsequently claimed refugee status in Canada.
- His favourite activity was playing video games.⁶
- He was really smart, kind and caring.
- He wanted to become an electrical mechanic like his father.

The Story of Colten Boushie – shot and killed August 9th, 2016

Colten Boushie was a 22 year old Cree man who was shot by farmer Gerald Stanley when Boushie and his four friends from Red Pheasant Cree Nation pulled into Stanley's rural



⁴ Perraux, Les. "A decade after Fredy Villanueva's death in Montreal North, what has changed?" The Globe and Mail. August 5, 2018.

⁵ Myles, Brian. « Témoignage déchirant de la mère de Fredy Villanueva. » Le Devoir. 24 février 2011.

⁶ Kilpatrick, Julia, Luft, Amy, Maughan, Christopher. "August 2018: Family Mourns Fredy Villanueva." The Montreal Gazette. August 11, 2018.

<http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/2008+Family+mourns+Fredy+Villanueva/4963907/story.html>

Saskatchewan property. The young Cree people said they were looking for help as their SUV had a flat tire. Stanley claims his gun went off by accident although, at his trial for second-degree murder, it was stated that the gun was in good working condition.

Eventually, Stanley was acquitted by the jury leaving many feeling that justice for Colten was not served and that the system failed to protect the victim, their family and their community. The events surrounding Colten Boushie's death brought to the surface a lot of racism towards the Indigenous community in Saskatchewan and raised a lot of questions about how the family was treated by police.

Who was Colten Boushie:⁷

- He was the baby of the family.
- He was a ceremonial fire keeper.
- He had earned certificates of good citizenship.
- His mother described him as gentle and an optimist.
- He had a pet Chihuahua named Chico.

Discussion questions:

1. How do you feel about living in a society where people can die for making an error in judgement – to quote the judge in the case of Fredy Villanueva: “bad reflex or lousy judgment?” Think about what kind of people are allowed to make mistakes versus the kind of people that can die for making a simple mistake. Is the logic that a victim made a mistake not another way to blame the victim rather than resting responsibility on the person who committed the harm? Can you cite examples where this tactic is used?
2. Is it appropriate for the justice system to excuse police officers or citizens who shoot unarmed people without facing any legal or other consequences? Why does the justice system slant towards protecting the shooters rather than justice for the victims? Who are the victims and who are the shooters? How does that influence the perception of certain groups towards these outcomes – if you are a visible minority? If you are from the same ethnic group as the shooters? How does perception of visible minorities, particularly young men, affect their safety and interaction with authorities?
3. How do you think it feels to be in the victim's shoes? To be in the shoes of the victim's family?
4. How do you think these shootings could have been avoided? What responsibilities did the shooters have towards the victims as human beings?
5. What actions do you think, as an individual, you can take to change things around you to minimize racism and stereotyping? What can a person do to be a good ally?

A Closer Look at Racial Profiling From the Canadian Perspective:

Recall, racial profiling is:

⁷ Friesen, Joe. “The Night Colten Boushie Died: What Family and Police Files Say About His Last Day, and What Came After.” The Globe and Mail. Updated February 14, 2018.
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/colten-boushie/article32451940/>

“... any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin, or on a combination of those traits, rather than on a reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment.”

With this in mind, watch the CBC documentary *The Skin We're In* featuring journalist and activist Desmond Cole and reflect upon the issues brought up in the film. Listen for interesting catch-phrases that summarize the Black experience you view in the documentary.



<https://gem.cbc.ca/media/firsthand/season-2/episode-14/38e815a-00be178daef>

After watching the documentary:

1. What concepts from the glossary did you pick up on in the documentary?
2. What elements of the documentary did you find corresponded to the topics in the play that you saw?
3. When Desmond Cole visits the Maritimes, the site of Canada's first Black communities dating back to the 1700s, what was the purpose of juxtaposing present day discussions of racism with black and white excerpts from the 1960s?
4. Similarly, what is Desmond Cole trying to show when he visits Red Deer, Alberta decades after he has left that community?
5. Can you relate to any experiences you have witnessed or experienced from the documentary? How does it impact your perception of stories you've heard about in the media about racial profiling and police shootings?

Here is a link to another documentary in French, from Racio-Canada's Télé-journal, that outlines the issue of racial profiling in Montréal-Nord – Le profilage raciale : une réalité quotidienne à Montréal-Nord :

https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=6-hl_HKLUMQ

Additional discussion questions :

1. Should one make fashion choices based on whether or not they will be stopped by police? How does a liberal democracy justify judging people by what they wear? Can you think of other instances where fashion or clothing choices are used against a person?
2. Can you outline some of the concepts learned earlier to dissect the points of view of police officers and people who aren't Black? How about the point of view of the media? What role does the media play with relation to the concepts you learned? Identify examples of how the media depicts people of colour compared to white people.

3. Can you discuss the issue of people of colour who adopt some of the practices and beliefs of the white majority as it relates to what you saw in the video or what you see around you? Is anti-Blackness something limited only to people of European descent? Discuss.
4. What could be the advantages of having more Black people in positions of power such as judges or social workers or even teachers? Who is Juanita Westmorland-Traoré?

Wrap Up

Now that students have seen the play and talked about the issues around it and in the real world, return to the pre-show discussion questions. How has the material changed or impacted the students' perceptions of the concepts learned?

Tell a Story – Challenging Stereotypes One Story at a Time

An important process to changing stereotypes is getting to know people; getting to know individuals. Every student should identify a Black Canadian and present a biography of that individual to the class. It cannot be an athlete or a musician – those stereotypes are too easy and prevalent. Dig deeper. Discover people you may not have heard of at all, politicians, academics, scientists, doctors, teachers, business people, entrepreneurs, neighbours. Talk about who they are, what they do, what they like, what their hobbies are. Make them real to the class.

Positive Stereotypes in the Media

Students can identify and present to the class a Black person who is a main character on a TV show or film and discuss what is positive about that character, why that is important to see and how it has impacted them personally.

Resources

Google document with extensive resources to learn about racism and to take action.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1loo_jm5t2jiMDVQOccuFMaP6G1UYyeGLkxwcCDIiwLY/e/dit?usp=sharing

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