

## **Definitions**

**Intersectionality** - the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

**Race** - is defined as a group that is socially constructed on the basis of physical criteria, such as skin color and facial features, for the purpose of distributing advantages and disadvantages.

**Racism** - A system of advantage based on race. Racism, like other forms of oppression, is not only a personal ideology but a system involving cultural messages based on racial prejudice. Institutional policies and practices, and the beliefs and actions of individuals.

**Antiracist** - a person who rejects the dominant social constructs of race and racism, and of White supremacy ideology, and who takes action against this construct in the belief that eliminating oppression will benefit both White people and people of color.

**Whiteness** - "Racism is based on the concept of whiteness—a powerful fiction enforced by power and violence. Whiteness is a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white" (Kivel, 1996, p.19).

**Classism** - a belief that a person's social or economic station in society determines their value in that society

## **RESOURCES**

*How Racist is Boston*|The Daily Show

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzmUjHiYn7I>

[African American History of Boston in a Tour and Timeline](#)

### **Films:**

*The Departed* (2006)

*The Boondock Saints* (1999)

*Good Will Hunting* (1997)

*Gone Baby Gone* (2007)

*Mystic River* (2003)

*Southie* (1999)

## **GOOD PEOPLE by David Lindsay-Abaire**

### **The Keegan Theatre**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This play is called GOOD PEOPLE. Though this play is not centered on race, there is an intersectionality between race and class that resonates in the play and in our current social-political environment. Geography, religion, race, politics, wealth-disparity all filter through our echo chambers to define identity and our concept of "Good People": our people.

And so the issues of class, poverty, racism, fear, gender, (dis)ability, violence, anger, feeling left behind are seen in GOOD PEOPLE and are a part of the current landscape. The questions remain:

*Are you going to engage, confront, or ignore?*

*What is an effective response?*

#### **Location - South Boston, MA**

Massachusetts schools were under court order to desegregate. Boston public schools carried out a system of compulsory busing from 1974 to 1988. The busing plan particularly affected Irish and Italian working class neighborhoods such as South Boston as well as black schools and neighborhoods. Public reactions were violent and long-lasting. In addition to riots, school enrollment dropped dramatically and the city experienced significant white flight to the suburbs, And it was evident that those in power and those who were financially able shielded themselves from participating. Senator Ted Kennedy was criticized for publicly supporting the busing plan while sending his children to private schools.

Even today, Boston is not a comfortable place for people of color. "There are places that you know about that it is very clear you don't move in certain neighborhoods. Some of it is class and some of it is race. The environment can be quite racially charged."

### Think About.....

- The title is GOOD PEOPLE. What is the playwright suggesting in this choice of title?
- What does BINGO symbolize in this play?
- Are the characters (Stevie, Margie, Kate and Mike) good people? Is a good person about actions or beliefs? If you believe you are a good person is that enough? By what standards - societal, moral?
- Stevie was born and raised in South Boston and hasn't gotten out. Is he successful? What about the way he treats Margie - does she deserve it?
- Does Margie maintain strong friendships? What is her support system like?
- Kate has been mistaken for someone else - In what circumstances have people been confused?
- How has Mike described his childhood to Kate? What are the omissions about?

### Who are good people?

Margie refers to Mike as "good people." What makes someone "good people," and why does Margie think Mike is a good person?

Act 1, Scene 3

Margaret: ...You're a good guy, Mikey. I'm just bustin' balls. You're good people. I always said that about you. - You are good people, right?

Mike: I like to think so.

Margaret: Of course you are. Helping these babies in here. The nervous parents. Volunteering at the Boy's Club, or whatever it is you do. Donate money?

Mike: A little bit.

Margaret: See, that's a good guy. Giving money to these kids who you don't even *know*. That's good people. I know you'd help me if you could. I know you would.

What do you think of Kate's reaction regarding telling Margie she is "not nice"?

### Protected Ignorance

Do you have choices? Is there a choice that you can expand? You can get to know people and reach out. Expanding and listening for

understanding and embracing others for who they are and what they can bring to the table.

Act 1, Scene 1

Margaret: " Why pay *me* when you can give minimum wage to Chow Fun?

Stevie: That doesn't help your case, you know. The racist stuff --

Margaret: What racist stuff? That's her name.

Stevie: (*Writes something down*) You know that's not her name.

Margaret: You gonna put that in my file now? How I'm a racist?

### Proximity to whiteness: Kate's father

What makes someone normal? Attractive? Desirable? How do you achieve the normal?

Race trumps Mike's class. Kate was raised to be able to marry out of blackness and proximity to whiteness.

Bias - Implicit or Explicit bias. Everyone has it - a bias that is about a marginalized group of people.

Act 1, Scene 4

Dottie: You take one look at those boys, and you *know* they're Mexican. And I said that to him too. Up at the VFW.

Margaret: No, you didn't.

Dottie: Yes, I did, I said, "Bob, those boys are Mexicans," And he said, "Shut up, Dottie. They don't look like no Mexicans." and I said "Well, you've never seen a Mexican then. Because those kids are straight off the taco truck." And then he got crazy mad, and I was asked to leave.

### The Fight - Racial incident vs. Class incident

#### **Penance - Manufactured Goodness**

Margie recounts a story about a racial incident that could have ended with a murder of a young Black boy. Mike does not remember it (or admit to remembering) this as a racial incident. What do you read or interpret from his reaction? How do you think the victim of the violence might remember this incident differently? Though they were from the same general area, and similar class, a racial slur was used in the incident.