

**studio
180**

ACTING UP
STAGE COMPANY

PARADE

Study Guide

2010/11

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A. Notes for Teachers

Thank you for choosing to bring your class to see Studio 180 Theatre and Acting Up Stage's production of *Parade*. This Study Guide is intended to help make your class's experience as enjoyable and memorable as possible.

Parade addresses some potentially polarizing and emotionally charged topics including racism, anti-Semitism, class structure, violence, personal loss and issues of justice. Because Studio 180's productions often tackle such potentially personal subject matter, we have developed the following guidelines to help you lead productive pre- and post-show sessions in which all students feel safe, respected and able to contribute openly and honestly to discussion.

- Class members should agree on a set of ground rules that will steer the discussion. Ask for student input on what those principles should be. Examples of ground rules might include a commitment to confidentiality within the classroom and to respecting others, a ban on the use of slurs, and an agreement that only one person will speak at a time.
- Your class may include students from a wide variety of cultural, racial, religious and national backgrounds. Students may hold a range of political beliefs, and some of these may be strong. Teachers and students must resist the urge to place members of certain racial or religious groups in the spotlight. Students will enter into the conversation as they feel comfortable.
- It is the moderator's role to establish as safe a setting as possible. Special care must be taken to ensure that students holding a majority opinion do not vilify those "on the other side" who hold a minority view. The moderator should also pose questions to the class to help keep the conversation on track.
- The point of a classroom discussion of the issues addressed in *Parade* should not be to reach a class consensus. The goal should be to establish a forum for a free and respectful exchange of ideas.
- Please keep in mind that the better students are prepared prior to attending the play, the more they will get out of the experience. An awareness of what they are about to see will provide students with greater access to the ideas presented onstage. For this reason, this Study Guide is filled with background information and suggestions for classroom discussions and activities. We also offer a free pre-show chat in the theatre lobby that you are welcome to attend, beginning 30 minutes prior to each Wednesday matinee.

Your students' experiences of the play will be similarly heightened by effective follow-up class discussion. We offer post-show Q&A sessions after every Wednesday matinee to assist in the follow-up process, but it is important to note that students will continue to process their experiences long after they leave the theatre. If time permits, a follow-up discussion a few days later will likely be helpful and productive.

If you are interested in finding out about Studio 180's production-based workshops, please contact **Jessica** at **416-962-1800** or jessica@studio180theatre.com.

C. Introduction to the Companies and the Play

Studio 180 Theatre

Inspired by the belief that people can engage more fully in the world through the experience of live performance, Studio 180 strives to produce socially relevant theatre that provokes public discourse and promotes community engagement. By producing Canadian premieres, fostering new works by local playwrights and engaging in community-building and education initiatives, the company creates theatre that speaks to the world beyond the confines of the stage and moves directly into the world of action.

Studio 180's inaugural production was the critically acclaimed *The Laramie Project*, which played to sold-out houses at Artword Theatre in 2003. The success of this production led to a 2004 remount at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, earning two Dora Award nominations and selling out public and student performances. More recently, in October 2009, the company produced a one-night-only benefit performance of *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later*, Tectonic Theater Project's epilogue to the original play based on interviews conducted 10 years after the murder of Matthew Shepard.

In 2006, Studio 180 produced the Canadian premiere of British playwright Robin Soans' *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* at the Berkeley Street Theatre Upstairs (named "One of the Top 10 Shows of the Year!" by the *Toronto Star* and Best Ensemble of the year by the *Globe and Mail*) and in March 2008 staged *Stuff Happens* at the Berkeley Street Theatre Downstairs. As a result of the show's success with critics and audiences alike, Mirvish Productions programmed a remount in their subscription season and *Stuff Happens* enjoyed a second run in the fall of 2009 at Toronto's historic Royal Alexandra Theatre.

In October 2008, *Offensive Shadows*, by Toronto playwright Paul Dunn, ran at the Tarragon Theatre Extra Space, marking Studio 180's first world premiere of a Canadian play. The *National Post* named *Offensive Shadows* one of the best new Canadian plays of the year, and shortly thereafter Studio 180 was named "Toronto's Best Independent Theatre Company of 2008" by *NOW Magazine*.

The March 2009 production of David Harrower's *Blackbird* was another first for the company: its first production as part of the Berkeley Street Project – an ongoing partnership with Canadian Stage. The success of *Blackbird* guaranteed Studio 180's return to Canadian Stage last season with the Canadian premiere of *The Overwhelming* in March 2010. The company's next production with the Berkeley Street Project will be the April 2011 North American premiere of Polish playwright Tadeusz Slobodzianek's chilling drama *Our Class*.

Studio 180 is also dedicated to fostering Canadian voices through support of local playwrights. For several years the company has been developing *Conviction* with Emil Sher (*Hana's Suitcase*, *Mourning Dove*) and it has recently begun work with award-winning playwright Hannah Moscovitch (*East of Berlin*, *In This World*, *The Russian Play*) on a play about honour killings, inspired by the tragic murder of Mississauga teen Aqsa Parvez.

With *Parade*, Studio 180 is thrilled to be producing its very first musical, partnering for the first time with the acclaimed Acting Up Stage Company.

Acting Up Stage Company

Since incorporating in March 2004, Acting Up Stage has filled a unique niche in the Toronto performing arts landscape. The company is dedicated to producing intimate musical theatre, while cultivating a new generation of audiences through thought-provoking, contemporary works. Acting Up Stage aspires to be the premier interpreters of musical theatre in Toronto, challenging artists and audiences with provocative work that uses music to heighten emotion.

At the core of the company's season is one major show – a contemporary, thought-provoking musical presented in an intimate, acoustic setting with a stellar artistic team. Critically acclaimed productions have included *tick, tick...BOOM!* (2005), *John & Jen* (2006), *Elegies: A Song Cycle* (2007), *A Man of No Importance* (2008), *A New Brain* (2009) and *The Light in the Piazza* (2010). Recently, the *Toronto Star* referred to *Piazza* as a “glorious achievement in style and class,” with the *National Post* calling it, “Uncommonly beautiful and peculiarly moving.” According to *CBC Radio*, “Acting Up Stage produces musicals with depth, substance and does them beautifully. The artistic producer is Mitchell Marcus and he assembles the best talent with stellar results.” In addition to boasting rave reviews and sold-out houses, in six short years Acting Up Stage has received 13 Dora Mavor Moore Award nominations.

Acting Up Stage continually strives to engage young audiences. In addition to production-related education activities, the company's most significant youth outreach initiative is the annual *One Song Glory* program. Created in 2006 in order to take a leading role in developing artists and audiences of the future, *One Song Glory* brings together 50 young people each year, aged 13–19, to participate in a musical theatre training program, offered free of charge. Participants work for four weekends with professional artists, appear in a public performance and receive feedback from leading directors, producers and agents. The program has been tremendously popular, bringing to Toronto artistically minded students from across Southern Ontario. For more information about *One Song Glory* please contact Acting Up Stage at **416-927-7880** or info@actingupstage.com.

Long term, Acting Up Stage is committed to developing new musical works in Toronto and is investing in artists who can help fulfill this vision. In 2008, in partnership with Canadian Stage, the company presented public “readings” of the songs of three promising composers. In 2009, it brought award-winning composer/lyricist William Finn to Toronto to give a master class to 15 emerging composers and lyricists. Since 2007, Acting Up Stage has produced a number of solo cabarets, helping young artists to create solo performance pieces, and currently the company is launching its latest development initiative: SPARK – a program that pairs composers with local playwrights.

Acting Up Stage has felt passionate about *Parade* for many years, but the sheer scope of the piece caused a conundrum: Though a perfect fit for the company artistically, the size of the cast and orchestra, coupled with a desire to present the highest quality theatre, made producing it alone an impossibility. Artistic Producer Mitchell Marcus met with Studio 180 Artistic Director Joel Greenberg to propose a collaboration, and they discovered an immediate compatibility of artistic sensibilities, and a mutual desire to pool human and financial resources and share ideas and expertise in order to bring this work to life.

The Studio 180/Acting Up Stage Partnership

Mounting a professional independent production in Toronto is no small feat. *Parade*, with its 15 performers, four musicians, team of designers, directors, technicians, producers and administrators, is one of the most ambitious independent productions you will see in this city. In addition to the expense of hiring personnel, there are the costs of sets, props, costumes, sound and lighting equipment, rehearsal and performance venue rentals, marketing and publicity, and so on and so on, reaching a budget of nearly \$300,000.

The members of Acting Up Stage and Studio 180 have long been fans of *Parade*, and when Acting Up Stage Artistic Producer Mitchell Marcus travelled to LA to see the Mark Taper Forum production in 2009, his passion for the material was reignited. Knowing that the scope of the piece was too enormous to tackle alone, he approached Studio 180 to propose a partnership.

While Studio 180 as a company has not previously produced musical theatre, Artistic Director Joel Greenberg is no stranger to the genre with a resume boasting 40 years of experience directing and choreographing musicals. And *Parade*, with its poignant look at issues of race, class and justice, is squarely on mandate for Studio 180, with its history of provocative issue-based work.

By pooling human and financial resources, sharing expertise and exchanging creative ideas, Studio 180 and Acting Up Stage are together able to accomplish what no other Canadian producers have attempted. We are thrilled to be premiering this bold and exciting piece of theatre, and are delighted that *Parade* has given birth to a wonderful new creative partnership.

To learn more about this partnership, see [Appendix A. Producing *Parade*](#).

Parade

The real-life events of *Parade* are set in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1913, against the backdrop of a town still reeling from the American Civil War. After a local teenaged factory worker is raped and murdered, Leo Frank, the Brooklyn-born Jewish factory manager, is charged with the crime. By manipulating witnesses and tampering with evidence, the prosecution convinces the jury that Frank is guilty.

Considered one of the most sensational trials of the early 20th century, the Frank case pressed every hot-button issue of the time: North vs. South, black vs. white, Jewish vs. Christian, industrial vs. agrarian. The musical recounts the press frenzy and public outrage surrounding Frank's trial and conviction, as well as his crusade for justice amid religious intolerance, political corruption and racial tensions.

The winner of two Tony Awards for best book and score, and the Drama Desk and New York Drama Critics' Circle awards for best musical, *Parade* had its world premiere at Lincoln Center Theater in 1998 and quickly built a loyal following for its haunting score and powerful narrative. Despite the musical's popularity and critical success, the grand scope of the show made it unfeasible for most other major theatres to produce until 2007, when the prestigious Donmar Warehouse in London, UK, mounted an intimate, scaled-down version of the piece. Two years later, the Mark Taper Forum in LA produced the same version, and now Studio 180 and Acting Up Stage are proud to co-present its Canadian premiere.

Jason Robert Brown (Composer/Lyricist)

Critically acclaimed, award-winning composer and lyricist Jason Robert Brown has been described by the *New York Times* as “a leading member of a new generation of composers who embody high hopes for the American musical.” His first musical, the theatrical song cycle *Songs for a New World* (1995) has become a cult hit among musical theatre aficionados and has been produced over 200 times worldwide. Jason Robert Brown was the recipient of the 1999 Tony Award for his score to *Parade*, which also received Best New Musical awards from both the Drama Desk and New York Drama Critics’ Circle. In 2001 he wrote *The Last Five Years*, which was cited as one of *Time Magazine’s* 10 Best of 2001 and won Drama Desk Awards for Best Music and Best Lyrics. His latest musical, *13*, opened on Broadway in 2008.

Jason Robert Brown is also a noted conductor and arranger and has composed incidental music for numerous plays including David Lindsay-Abaire’s *Kimberly Akimbo* and *Fuddy Meers*, Marsha Norman’s *Last Dance*, David Marshall Grant’s *Current Events*, Kenneth Lonergan’s *The Waverly Gallery* and the Irish Repertory Theater’s production of *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*. He received a Tony Award nomination for his original songs in the 2003 Broadway production of *Urban Cowboy the Musical*.

In addition to the above-mentioned awards, Jason Robert Brown is the recipient of the 2002 Kleban Award for Outstanding Lyrics and the 1996 Gilman & Gonzalez-Falla Foundation Award for Musical Theatre. He currently teaches musical theatre performance and composition at the University of Southern California.

Alfred Uhry (Playwright)

Playwright, lyricist and screenwriter Alfred Uhry was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1936 to a family of German-Jewish descent. As an artist, he has drawn upon his Southern Jewish background for much of his work (including, of course, *Parade*, set in his home town a mere 23 years prior to his birth). He is probably best known for his Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Driving Miss Daisy* (1987), which he adapted into the Academy Award-winning film of the same name.

Other plays of note include *Swing* (1980), *Little Johnny Jones* (1982), *America’s Sweetheart* (1985) and *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* (1997), winner of a Tony Award and Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Play.

In addition to *Driving Miss Daisy*, his screenplays include the Julia Roberts film *Mystic Pizza* (1988) and *Rich in Love* (1993).

Alfred Uhry is the only writer to have won a Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award and Academy Award.

D. Attending the Performance

Prior to the day of the performance, please ensure that your students are well prepared. The better prepared they are, the more they will get out of the experience. The following guidelines should help you and your students get the most out of attending *Parade*:

- **Please arrive early.** When travelling in the city, whether by school bus or TTC, it is always best to leave extra time in case of traffic or transit delays. All Wednesday matinee performances will begin promptly at 1:30PM. To avoid disruption, we maintain a strict **NO LATECOMERS** policy. If your group arrives late you will not be permitted in the theatre until the second act of the show (after the intermission).
- Depending upon where you are coming from, your students may not be familiar with downtown Toronto and the experience of being in the city may be exciting and even overwhelming or distracting for some. We ask that you kindly advise your students to remain at the theatre during intermission. If possible, you may want to consider allowing time prior to the performance for students to explore the area. The Berkeley Street Theatre is located near Toronto's unique Distillery District and is a 10-minute walk to the St. Lawrence Market.
- **Food and beverages are not permitted in the auditorium.** Please prepare your students by informing them of this policy prior to visiting the theatre so they can finish any snacks they bring before the play begins, or save them for the intermission. Please note that the concession stand will not be open during Wednesday matinee performances.
- Cell phones, pagers, headphones and video games are disruptive and distracting for actors and audience members alike. **All photography and recording equipment is strictly prohibited in the theatre.** Ideally, all electronic devices should be left at home; however, we realize this is an unrealistic request. Please take the time during your class preparation to impress upon your students the importance of theatre etiquette. Rather than simply telling students that phones, iPods, etc. are not allowed, explain why they are inappropriate in the theatre setting. Some students may never have attended live theatre before and most will be far more familiar with movie theatres where the use of electronic devices in the audience has become commonplace. **Remind students that they will be seeing people performing live** and, as a rule, if you can see and hear the actors, the actors can see and hear you. Please be courteous.
- We encourage student responses and feedback. Please take the time to discuss appropriate audience responses. After each Wednesday matinee and Thursday evening performance, we offer a talkback (Q&A) session because we are interested in hearing what our audiences have to say, and we hope to answer questions and respond to concerns. It may be helpful for students to think of some questions prior to attending the performance. As well, if students are aware of the post-show talkback they will be better prepared to formulate questions during the performance. Following the performance, kindly take a moment to complete **Section B. Teacher Response Form**. Your feedback is valuable to us.

E. Topics for Discussion and Classroom Activities

1. Theatrical Presentation

a) ISSUE-BASED THEATRE

Studio 180 is unique in that it produces plays that speak to socially and politically relevant issues. With your class, examine the company's Vision and Mission statements.

Studio 180's Vision

The experience of live performance inspires people to engage more fully in the world

Studio 180's Mission

To produce socially relevant theatre that provokes public discourse and promotes community engagement

- i) What do these statements mean to you? Does Studio 180's Vision resonate and have meaning? How effectively do you think the company's Mission serves its Vision? How does this production of *Parade* work toward fulfilling the Mission?
- ii) Why live theatre? What makes theatre an effective art form through which to explore social and political issues? Why not a film, novel or magazine article? What is unique about live theatre? Consider what is unique about your intellectual, emotional and communal responses to attending live theatre, compared to engaging in other forms of art, communication and media.

Hint: How does live theatre HUMANIZE issues and why is the humanization of social and political issues important?

- iii) Brainstorm issues that you would like to see turned into a piece of theatre. If you were going to see another play, or write a play yourself, what would you want it to be about? This question may serve as a jumping off point for **drama students** to begin their own issue-based theatre projects around stories and topics of particular relevance to them.

b) MUSICAL THEATRE

Acting Up Stage fills a unique niche in Toronto's theatre community by producing intimate musical theatre productions. The company aims to cultivate a new generation of audiences through thought-provoking, contemporary works.

- i) When most people hear the term "musical" they think BIG: huge stage, huge theatre, huge orchestra, huge cast, huge sets, etc. Shows like *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Lion King* or *Cats* in 2,000-plus-seat theatres come to mind. What is the value of presenting musical works on a smaller scale, in an intimate setting? What is gained in terms of the audience's experience?

- ii) Why a musical? Why would a playwright choose to use songs to tell a story? In *Parade*, how do the characters' songs further the plot, enrich the character development and provide insight into the themes of the story?

Hint: How do musicals heighten the EMOTIONAL experience of both the characters and the audience? How does the music achieve emotional depth beyond that of spoken words?

- iii) Songs are composed of both music and lyrics. What is the purpose of each? How do the music and lyrics serve one another? As an audience member, how do they make you feel?

c) POINTS OF VIEW

One way we hope theatre will be an effective tool to explore important issues is through the portrayal of multiple perspectives or points of view.

How effective is *Parade* in exploring different sides of a story? Was the play even-handed? Did you feel that a multitude of opinions and points of view were expressed? Were the characters portrayed fairly? Which characters and stories were the most memorable? Which voices remained with you longest and why? Which moments had the greatest impact? Were there any surprises for you? Did the play create questions for you regarding the characters or their circumstances? Did you form an emotional attachment to any of the characters? Who did you want to see more of? Did you disagree with what some of the characters were saying? What would you ask those characters, given the opportunity?

d) ORCHESTRATION

Our version of *Parade* features a significantly pared-down orchestration insofar as a small number of musical instruments are played, compared to the original Broadway production. On Broadway, they used a full orchestra. In our production, music director Paul Sportelli has created an orchestration for the show using only four musicians playing the following instruments: **piano, percussion, guitar/banjo** and **cello**.

What is the effect of this smaller-scale sound? How do the music and voices balance each other out? **Music and drama students** wishing to engage in further discussion around this topic should consider the following quote from Paul Sportelli:

“There are challenges in reducing the orchestration to four players, but exciting challenges. With *Parade*, Jason Robert Brown suggests so much in the composition itself that one doesn't necessarily need an orchestration to suggest the same thing. For instance, if Brown writes a march – and he does – you can hear that march stripped down to a few players, but the composition will suggest a marching band to your ears and you will supply that information with your imagination. A stripped-down orchestration can be like a stripped-down, non-naturalistic set that suggests part of the whole rather than giving you the whole, and then the audience unconsciously fills in the blanks. At its best, a stripped-down orchestration can be more successful than a full-blown orchestration, because it invites the listener to be a more active participant in the art experience.”

e) ACOUSTIC SOUND

These days when you see a musical it is most common for the voices to be **amplified** by microphones. In our production of *Parade*, we have chosen not to use microphones. The result is a purely acoustic sound coming directly from the performers.

Students who have experience attending amplified shows and who have a point of comparison might want to discuss the difference between amplified and acoustic sound. What is the effect of each? How does each sound make you feel? Do you have a preference? Why do you think we chose not to use microphones in this production and how effective was that choice? Use the following excerpt from an interview with music director Paul Sportelli to help guide your class discussion:

“There are always challenges to acoustic theatre without microphones, but when it is done properly, there are great joys to be had. There is a warmth, honesty and vulnerability in the unamplified human voice. The challenges for the actor: enough volume and diction without losing a certain naturalism. The challenges for the musicians: to support the singers with as much colour and nuance as possible without overpowering them.”

f) DESIGN

How did the design of the production affect the presentation of the piece? How effective was the set in defining the space? What mood or ambience was created? How did colour, texture and space add to the theatrical experience? How was lighting used to create mood or ambience? How did lighting work to define space and setting? How did the set and the lights work in combination with one another? How was sound used to affect the presentation? How were costumes used to define characters? How did the costume designer make use of colour, texture and style?

How were the set, costumes, lighting, sound and props used to evoke the early 20th century **period** in which the story was set? Was the design **naturalistic** (a literal and accurate representation) or **abstract** (meant to evoke time and place)? **Drama students** should discuss the difference between the two approaches to design, focusing on the techniques used in this particular production.

g) CAST DOUBLING

Some actors in *Parade* portray a single character while others play multiple roles. In addition to the practical and financial benefits of cast **doubling**, consider the artistic impetus behind casting one actor in several roles. How does this affect the storytelling?

In our production of *Parade*, the following doubling occurs:

Luther Rosser/Officer Ivey/Guard
Mary Phagan/Lila
Angela/Minnie McKnight
Frankie Epps/Young Soldier/Guard
Judge Roan/Old Soldier/Guard
Governor Slaton/Britt Craig/Mr. Peavy
Tom Watson/Officer Starnes
Newt Lee/Jim Conley/Riley

Were the actors successful in portraying multiple characters? What were some of the ways in which they accomplished this? **Drama students** may wish to discuss various techniques for creating distinct characters (e.g., physical, vocal, gestural, use of costumes and props).

FURTHER STUDY: The following character exercise can be used by both **drama and social science students** to explore **a) creating a character** and **b) social history**.

Have students select one of the characters from *Parade*. Combining independent research with their imaginations, have students create lists of all the objects their characters would touch throughout the course of one day. Items will range from the mundane (e.g., hair brush, spoon, button) to the unique (e.g., handcuffs, judge's gavel, corset) and students will need to consider factors such as class, occupation, age, race and gender within the context of life in 1913 Atlanta. Encourage students to be as specific as possible.

h) “ART IS THE LIE THAT TELLS THE TRUTH” – Pablo Picasso

Discuss the meaning of this quotation and how it pertains to a musical like *Parade*.

What does it mean for a piece of art to be “based on a true story”? Is Jason Robert Brown and Alfred Uhry’s depiction of the Leo Frank trial **true**? What is the relationship between reality and truth? How do the writers use their imaginations to uncover truth in this play? How does the use of music serve to mine the emotional truth of the characters?

2. Racism, Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia

a) UNDERSTANDING PREJUDICE

Many forms of bigotry and prejudice come to light in *Parade*. Before launching into a class discussion specific to the show, it is important for students to have a firm understanding of different forms of discrimination. Begin with the following definitions (focusing on the major forms of prejudice highlighted by the Leo Frank case) and be sure to keep in mind the guidelines set out in [Section A. Notes for Teachers](#).

RACISM: 1. The prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races; 2. Discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards members of another race

ANTI-SEMITISM: The intense dislike for and prejudice against Jewish people

XENOPHOBIA: A fear of foreigners or strangers

After attending *Parade*, discuss the different ways in which racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia came into play during the story. Which characters exhibited bigoted behaviour and in what ways? Who were the victims of prejudice and how were they affected? Who perpetrated prejudice and in what ways? Were there characters that were both victims *and* perpetrators of prejudice?

For an excellent, in-depth look into the different forms of racial and religious bigotry at play during the Leo Frank case, please refer to [Appendix B. Further Reading](#). The articles included there, courtesy of the Anti-Defamation League, will enhance your exploration of this topic and significantly deepen students' understanding of the Leo Frank case.

FURTHER STUDY: Your discussion need not be limited to the above-mentioned forms of bigotry. And it need not be limited to the subject of Leo Frank and *Parade*. We believe that theatre can provide a springboard to class discussion of topics that resonate for students in their daily lives. Your class may be interested in talking about forms of prejudice and discrimination they witness and experience in their own lives, including racism, religious intolerance, ageism, sexism, homophobia, class discrimination and others.

b) STEREOTYPES

One of the ways in which prejudices are perpetuated in our society is through the use of stereotypes. When we stereotype someone we apply a generalized assumption we have about a group to an individual. These assumptions may be based on things we've learned from our family or peers or from the various media sources that surround us. They are not based on fact and they do not take into account a person's individuality. When we discount someone's individuality we begin to strip them of their humanity.

Stereotypes are not always based on *negative* generalizations (e.g., Jewish people are cheap, Black people are lazy, Asian people are poor drivers). Sometimes a generalization about a group of people can, on the surface, appear to be positive (e.g., Jewish people are rich, Black people are great athletes, Asian people are smart).

It shouldn't be difficult to determine how ascribing a trait such as "laziness" to an entire group of people is harmful and wrong. But what are the dangers of assuming that every member of a certain group shares a positive attribute such as intelligence, financial wealth or athletic prowess?

Begin your discussion by looking at *Parade* and the Leo Frank case. How were people like Leo Frank and Jim Conley stereotyped and how did this affect the outcome of the trial? You may use the following excerpt from *Parade* to launch your class discussion:

"And Hugh Dorsey was not fooled by the slippery Jew's oily demeanour. He took one look at Leo Frank's bulging satyr eyes and protruding sensual lips and nailed him for the pervert sodomite he is." – Thomas Watson

To enhance your class discussion, check out this excellent online historical resource about stereotypes. The website includes numerous examples of historical cartoons and caricatures: www.authentichistory.com/diversity.

Continue the discussion by comparing common stereotypes of the period of *Parade* to those prevalent in society today. What has changed and what remains the same? What stereotypes are prevalent in your community? In the media? At your school? Have you ever felt like you were stereotyped? Can you identify a time when you stereotyped someone else? How does it feel to be stereotyped and what are the individual and societal consequences of stereotyping?

c) BIGOTRY IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

In small groups or as a class, discuss some of the differences between contemporary North American society compared to the social norms of the post-Civil War American South as illustrated in *Parade* and discussed in the articles.

How has society improved in terms of prejudice and discrimination? Despite the many years that have passed, what forms of discrimination and bigotry presented in *Parade* are familiar to you? Can you identify new forms of discrimination not present in 1913? What do you see as the most severe forms of prejudice and discrimination in your world today?

FURTHER STUDY: Students wishing to pursue this line of thinking may wish to conduct independent research into local and contemporary instances of xenophobia, racism and prejudice. Have students collect articles on contemporary incidents. Findings can be shared in small groups, with the class as a whole, or through individual written reports. Some suggested topics include Islamophobia, homophobia and the racial profiling of Black youth in Toronto.

Drama students can take this work further and create characters based on the stories and incidents they find. Create a character description and "back story" (character history), followed by a monologue for one of the people in the news article. Or, imagine a character who might be involved or affected by the incident and create a character description and monologue for him/her. A class that shares an interest in one particular story may wish to create scenes or a short play dramatizing the events. This exercise will humanize issues of discrimination and foster empathy among students.

3. The Role of the Outsider

a) THE CHARACTER OF THE “OUTSIDER”

When we meet Leo Frank in *Parade*, he quickly lets us know in his song “How Can I Call This Home?” that he does not quite fit in to his new home of Atlanta, Georgia:

I go to bed at night
Hoping when I wake
This will all be gone
Like it was just a dream
And I’ll be home again,
Back again in Brooklyn.

Back with people who look like I do,
And talk like I do,
And think like I do,
But then...
The sun rises in Atlanta again...

What are some of the ways Leo lets us know he is somewhat of an “outsider” here? How do other characters let us know they perceive Leo as an “outsider”? What do you think most attributed to Leo Frank being perceived as an outsider in 1913 Atlanta society? Was it his religion? The fact that he was a “Yankee” from the North? As he is portrayed in the musical, how much does Leo alienate himself and how much is he alienated by others? After seeing the show and reading the articles (see [Appendix B. Further Reading](#)), how much of Leo’s “outsider” status do you think contributed to his murder conviction?

FURTHER STUDY: Students may wish to learn more about Leo Frank through independent research. Once they have done so, have students compare their findings to the way the character is portrayed in the musical. Why do you think the writers made the choices they did in creating the “character” of Leo Frank? Discuss the choices made by actor Michael Therriault in his portrayal of the role – how did his acting choices contribute to making Leo an “outsider”? Was he a sympathetic character? Why or why not?

The same activity can be done for other characters based on real-life figures. Some examples include **Lucille Selig Frank, Thomas E. Watson, Hugh Dorsey, Jim Conley, Luther Z. Rosser, Britt Craig** and **John Slaton**. How did the portrayals of these characters onstage compare to what you learned in independent research?

Drama students should attempt their own portrayals of these characters. After conducting independent research into the real-life figures, assign scenes and/or songs to students and encourage them to develop their characters with “clues” they find not only in the text of the script or score, but in the facts they uncover in their research.

b) ASSIMILATION

“Outsiders” or immigrants arriving in a new place must make complex decisions about how much they wish to **assimilate** or blend in with the majority population of their chosen home. How much of your language, customs, religious practice, etc. do you hold onto and how many of the new norms, trends and beliefs do you embrace? Using Leo and Lucille as examples from the musical, compare how these two characters each struggle with issues of assimilation.

The following lyric, sung by Leo Frank, can serve as a jumping off point:

I'm trapped inside this life
And trapped beside a wife
Who would prefer that I'd say
"Howdy!" not "Shalom!"

What challenges for immigrants can you identify in your own school and community? What kinds of pressures are there to assimilate or "fit in" (e.g., wearing certain kinds of clothes, listening to certain music)? What pressures exist to resist assimilation (e.g., parental pressure to stick to the "old ways," wearing culturally or religiously specific garments, attending specific places of worship)? Where do all of these pressures come from and how can they be in conflict with one another? Brainstorm ways in which these conflicts may be resolved.

c) POWER ON THE INSIDE

When we are on the "outside" of a community, we experience powerlessness. Our voices are not heard, our sense of self is diminished and our rights are not upheld and may even be violated. As an outsider it is easy to feel alone, worthless and helpless, lacking a community, a voice and a means to advocate for our needs.

In addition to Leo Frank, who are some other "outsider" characters in *Parade* and why would you identify them as having outsider status? Consider how factors such as race, gender and class contribute to defining people as outsiders in the story and identify the challenges posed to each character as a result of their outsider status.

FURTHER STUDY: Students wishing to bring the discussion into a contemporary context and consider the ways in which *Parade's* theme of the "outsider" resonates within our community should expand the conversation to identify individuals or groups of people in their school, city, country and world who could be considered "outsiders." Consider factors such as economic status, gender, race, religion, nationality and political affiliation and see how many other factors you can come up with. What are the personal, social, political, judicial and economic implications of being on the "outside" of a society? How might one's needs be neglected and one's rights violated? What is the responsibility of those on the "inside" to those on the "outside" and what are some steps we can take to raise awareness of these issues and work towards change?

4. The Power of the Media

“You just scribble it down and it covers the town like Molasses or mud!”

– Britt Craig, Journalist, *Parade*

To enhance class discussion on this topic, refer to the article **“Media Sensationalism and the Case against Leo Frank”** in Appendix B for an excellent analysis.

a) MEDIA SENSATIONALISM

Lyrics to “Real Big News” – Britt Craig, Journalist, *Parade*

Big news! My saviour has arrived!
My intuition’s never been so strong!
Big news! My career has been revived –
All I needed was a snippy, pissy Yankee, all along!
Take this superstitious city, add one little Jew from Brooklyn
Plus a college education and a mousy little wife,
And big news! Real big news!
That poor sucker saved my life!

So give ‘im fangs, give ‘im horns,
Give ‘im scaly, hairy palms!
Have ‘im droolin’ out the corner of his mouth!
He’s a master of disguise!
Check them bug-out, creepy eyes!
Sure, that fella’s here to rape the whole damned South!
They’ll be bangin’ down my door,
Yellin’ “More, Craig! More!”
“Call for Justice!” “We need Justice!”
“Beat the bastard!” “Kill the bum!”
Big news! Real big news! My saviour has finally come!

Use the character of Britt Craig and the lyrics above to begin exploring media sensationalism in *Parade*. As the discussion progresses, expand your conversation to include contemporary examples of sensationalistic journalism and its effects.

- i) What are some tactics Craig uses in his reporting that could be considered sensationalistic? When looking at contemporary examples of sensational journalism, what strategies can you identify (e.g., fear mongering, distorting facts and manipulating statistics, exploiting prejudices)?
- ii) What does Craig suggest is his motivation for reporting in such sensational terms? Why might journalists and media outlets be compelled to report news in this fashion (e.g., competition for sales and ratings, career advancement, personal ego, societal pressure)?
- iii) Considering the issues of stereotyping and anti-Semitism discussed in Section E2 (**Racism, Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia**), how does Craig exploit the beliefs and prejudices of the people of Atlanta for his personal gain? Can you find contemporary examples of media outlets exploiting societal prejudices?

b) FEAR MONGERING

How did journalists and politicians use newspapers to exploit the fears of the public during the Frank trial? What stereotypes and prejudices did both sides use to their advantage? Can you come up with other historical examples of journalists, media outlets, politicians and leaders playing on people’s fears to forward their own agendas?

The following dialogue from *Parade* is but one example. Students should discuss the following text within the context of the play and then seek comparable contemporary examples:

“And Hugh Dorsey was not fooled by the slippery Jew’s oily demeanour. He took one look at Leo Frank’s bulging satyr eyes and protruding sensual lips and nailed him for the pervert sodomite he is.” – Thomas Watson (quoting his own publication to Hugh Dorsey)

FURTHER STUDY: Students wishing to pursue this line of exploration should seek contemporary examples of “fear mongering” as a sensational journalistic tool. Consider both local and global examples. Have students collect articles on an issue or incident from a variety of sources and identify the ways in which writers exploit the fears of the reader. How are both individuals and society as a whole affected by this type of reporting? Suggested topics of exploration include **the H1N1 pandemic, the war on terror** and **Toronto’s gang violence**.

c) WHO GETS A VOICE IN THE MEDIA?

Sometimes the information we receive through the media is not only biased in the way the stories are told – sometimes bias is present when determining which stories get told at all. The stories that appear on the covers of mainstream newspapers and on television and mainstream radio news reports tell us a lot about the values we as a society hold. Which stories are worthy of being reported and which are not? Whose voices are commonly heard and whose remain silent?

Keeping these questions in mind, consider the meaning of the following lyric from the opening number of *Parade*’s second act, “A Rumblin’ and a Rollin’,” sung by the African-American character Riley:

I can tell you this, as a matter of fact,
That the local hotels wouldn’t be so packed
If a little black girl had gotten attacked.

They comin’, they comin’ now, yessiree!
'Cause a white man gonna get hung, you see.
There’s a black man swingin’ in every tree
But they don’t never pay attention!

After seeing *Parade* and reading the article **“Media Sensationalism and the Case against Leo Frank”** in Appendix B, how does this lyric reflect on the media bias that prevailed surrounding the Leo Frank case?

Students should be encouraged to examine the voices that dominate mainstream media in their own community. What points of view, opinions and issues are written about and discussed in newspapers, on television, radio and online? Are there groups of people who seem to receive more media attention than others? Can you identify common biases in the media that you consume? As a class, come up with contemporary examples that mirror the sensational media frenzy surrounding Mary Phagan's murder. One example might be to examine media response to the tragic murder of Jane Creba.

FURTHER STUDY: What power do members of the general public have to make their voices heard in the media? What are some ways in which individuals and groups can influence public discourse? After seeing the play and reading the articles, identify the different interest groups that took part in the public dialogue surrounding the Frank case. Discuss the tools and methods available to people in 1913 Atlanta, Georgia. What tools do we, as concerned citizens have today to enable us to respond to mainstream news reporting and to enter into public dialogue and debate? How has technology changed since 1913 and what are the effects of new technologies in terms of expanding participation in the media (e.g., radio and television call-in shows, online forums for mainstream media outlets, blogs, alternative websites and magazines, social networking sites)?

F. Background Information

The following account of the real-life story Leo Frank's trial is generously provided by the Anti-Defamation League in collaboration with Ben Loeterman Productions, producers of the documentary film *The People v. Leo Frank*. For an excellent, in-depth look at this historical case, we recommend a class screening of the film prior to attending *Parade*.

THE MURDER

Early in the morning on April 27, 1913, the night watchman at an Atlanta pencil factory discovered the murdered body of 13-year-old Mary Phagan, a white worker at the factory. She had apparently been robbed and possibly raped. The case made headlines and several arrests were made, including Jim Conley, a black janitor at the factory who was seen three days later washing red stains out of his work shirt. Also arrested was Leo Frank, the factory's superintendent and the last person to admit to seeing Mary alive.

Suspicion of Frank soon mounted, based largely on his nervous behavior. A Jew raised in Brooklyn, Frank quickly became prosecutor Hugh Dorsey's prime suspect. On the fourth try, Dorsey coaxed Jim Conley to confess that he had helped hide Mary's body, but the janitor insisted that Frank, his boss, was the killer. "POLICE HAVE THE STRANGLER," blared a local headline, effectively convicting him in the public mind before he ever faced the jury.

THE TRIAL

Frank's trial lasted a month. Each day spectators packed the sweltering courtroom, with hundreds more waiting outside to catch the latest news. The proceedings descended into a free-for-all of hearsay testimony, lurid details, shoddy police work and mind-boggling contradictions on the witness stand. Frank's nervous and rambling testimony did nothing to help his case. Despite Conley's conflicting statements and the lack of any physical evidence linking Frank to the murder, the all-white jurors accepted the word of the Southern black janitor over that of the Northern Jewish factory superintendent. Leo Frank was pronounced guilty and sentenced to death.

THE LYNCHING

Most Atlantans celebrated the verdict, but observers around the country grew enraged at what they considered to be a mockery of justice. Editorials from New York to San Francisco decried the verdict and called for a new trial. But the meddling of outsiders only further steeled Southern pride and Frank's detractors. The most vocal of these was Tom Watson, a populist newspaper editor who inflamed public sentiment with vicious anti-Semitic articles. In issue after issue of his paper, *The Jeffersonian*, Watson painted Mary Phagan as a "pure little Gentile victim" defiled by a money-grubbing, sexually perverted New York Jew.

Frank's lawyers appealed the conviction, but were rebuffed at every step, all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Their last hope was to petition Georgia's outgoing governor, John Slaton. Slaton weighed the evidence and concluded that Frank had not in fact received a fair trial. In an astounding turn of events and after some personal agonizing, Slaton commuted Frank's sentence from death to life in prison. A mob, enraged by the governor's actions and whipped into frenzy by Watson's *Jeffersonian*, descended on the Governor's mansion, hanging him in effigy with signs labelling him "King of the Jews."

Meanwhile, out of the public eye, an elite group of influential Georgians – including a former governor and judge – made plans to quietly carry out their own sentence on Frank. On a hot August afternoon, 25 men walked into the prison where Frank was being held and – without breaking a lock or firing a shot – abducted the prisoner from his cell. They drove Frank to an oak grove near Mary Phagan's childhood home. A noose was placed around his neck. The judge read the charges and proclaimed the sentence. Then the small table on which Leo Frank stood was kicked out from under him.

THE LEGACY

The most famous lynching of a white man in the U.S. inspired two conflicting legacies. Some of Frank's lynchers joined members of the original Ku Klux Klan, which had all but faded out after Reconstruction. On Stone Mountain outside Atlanta, they formed the modern Ku Klux Klan, partly in Mary Phagan's honor. Its mission would expand from just intimidating Southern blacks to spreading hate against Jews, Catholics and others across the country.

Meanwhile, a fledgling organization found its mission in the Frank case. The Anti-Defamation League would become a powerful defender of civil rights and social justice for all in the United States, and continues to this day.

G. Timeline of Events

The following timeline detailing the Leo Frank trial is generously provided by the Anti-Defamation League in collaboration with Ben Loeterman Productions, producers of the documentary film *The People v. Leo Frank*.

1913

- Apr 26* Mary Phagan is murdered; her body is found in the National Pencil Company basement.
- Apr 27* Newt Lee, the factory night watchman who discovered the body, is arrested on suspicion of murder.
- May 1* Jim Conley, an African-American sweeper at the factory, is arrested after being found in the basement rinsing out a blood-stained shirt.
- May 23* Leo Frank is indicted for the murder of Mary Phagan.
- July 28* The trial of Leo Frank begins.
Mary Phagan's mother and Newt Lee testify.
- Aug 4–5* Jim Conley testifies as the chief prosecution witness against Leo Frank.
- Aug 18* Leo Frank takes the stand in his own defense.
- Aug 25* The trial concludes and it takes less than two hours for the jury to find Frank guilty. The next day the judge sentences Frank to hang, and an execution date is set for October 10, 1913.

Over the next year and a half, more than a dozen appeals are filed by Frank's defense team; all are denied.

1914

- Feb 24* Jim Conley is sentenced to a year on a chain gang for his part in the murder. He would serve 10 months and get out early for good behaviour.

1915

- Apr 9* After the U.S. Supreme Court rejects the final appeal, Frank's execution is set for June 22, 1915.
- June 20* Governor John Slaton commutes Frank's sentence from death to life in prison.
- July 18* Leo Frank's throat is slashed by fellow prisoner William Creen.
Frank survives the attack.
- Aug 16–17* Leo Frank is kidnapped from prison by 25 armed men and driven over 100 miles to Marietta (Mary's hometown), where he is lynched.

1982

- Mar 4* Alonzo Mann, a former office boy at the National Pencil Company, signs an affidavit claiming that he saw Jim Conley carrying Mary Phagan's body the day of the murder.

1986

Mar 11

The Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles grants Leo Frank a posthumous pardon based on the State's failure to ensure his safety, but the pardon does not officially clear Frank of the murder.

*For more information about **The People v. Leo Frank**, and the work of the **Anti-Defamation League**, please visit the following websites:*

www.leofrankfilm.com

www.adl.org

*For a thorough account of Mary Phagan's murder and Leo Frank's trial and lynching, we highly recommend the book **And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank** by Steve Oney.*

H. Characters Appearing in *Parade*

The following is a list of the major characters appearing in *Parade*. Students may wish to conduct independent research into the lives of these people to learn more about who they were and the ways in which they impacted and were affected by Mary Phagan's murder and Leo Frank's trial.

Luther Rosser
Mary Phagan
Angela
Minnie McKnight
Frankie Epps
Young/Old Soldier
Mrs. Phagan
Judge Roan
Hugh Dorsey
Lucille Frank
Iola Stover
Leo Frank
Governor Slaton
Thomas Watson
Officer Starnes
Newt Lee
Jim Conley
Riley
Monteen & Essie

Students should select one person each and consider the following: In your research, how many “sides” or versions of the truth can you uncover? Compare your findings to the portrayal of your character in the musical. What are the similarities and differences? How did the writers, actors and director bring important historically accurate character traits to life onstage? When did the writers, actors or director take “artistic license” to invent character traits and why do you think they did so? What was the effect on the story? Is your character an actual **historical figure**, a **composite character** or an **invented character**?

***Hint:** The following definitions will assist students in determining what type of character they are researching.*

HISTORICAL FIGURE: A character based on an actual person of the same name, whose relationship to the murder and trial is based on factual recorded information.

COMPOSITE CHARACTER: Based on two or more historical figures yet portrayed as one character in the script for the purpose of efficiently introducing plot points or portraying a group of people (e.g., all the young women who worked in the factory).

INVENTED CHARACTER: A character imagined by the writers and included in the script for the purpose of portraying a particular point of view, conveying information or espousing a set of beliefs (e.g., Young/Old Soldier, Angela, Riley).

Appendix A. Producing *Parade*

In 2007, Alfred Uhry and Jason Robert Brown returned to their award-winning Broadway musical *Parade*, crafting a startlingly intimate revision that debuted at London's Donmar Warehouse. In 2010/11, Studio 180 and Acting Up Stage will present its much-anticipated Canadian premiere.

Studio 180 Co-founder and Core Artistic Member Mark McGrinder sat down with Studio 180 Artistic Director Joel Greenberg (JG), Acting Up Stage Artistic Producer Mitchell Marcus (MM) and Parade's Musical Director Paul Sportelli (PS) to talk about the challenges of the show and why they took on the project.

PS: I've been wanting to do this piece for quite some time. It's an ambitious project but those are my favourite kind. It's a really good musical and a story that needs to be told.

JG: I love the power of the story – told through adult, no nonsense lyrics.

MM: Acting Up Stage looks for work that's balanced in its musical and dramatic complexity, and uses music to enhance the storytelling. *Parade* accomplishes just that, offering tremendously important and moving subject matter in a way that's theatrically exciting and provocative.

JG: We're really thrilled to be staying strictly within Studio 180's mandate at the same time that we're moving into an entirely new style of presentation. Issue-based work of social and political weight is not typically found in musical theatre.

MM: And Acting Up Stage has never tackled a true story or attempted a piece that is quite as epic as *Parade*.

JG: Personally, I adore the piece and it's been 20 years since I last directed a musical.

PS: So it seems a Toronto production of *Parade* and Joel's return to the musical stage are both long overdue!

Did your desire to work on *Parade* lead to a collaboration or did an interest in working together lead you to choose such an ambitious show?

MM: I approached Joel with a desire to collaborate on a musical...

JG: And I said that if there was one within our mandate, absolutely.

MM: I've wanted to do *Parade* for a long time, but knew that Acting Up Stage couldn't afford it on our own. I've admired the work of Studio 180, and I've been fascinated for a long time with the concept of the "co-production."

JG: It's our first ever co-production, and a very exciting new direction for us. We are really walking through this hand in metaphorical hand.

MM: We are so strapped for resources in the Toronto arts community that this idea of sharing financial, administrative and creative support felt really exciting! When I was speaking to Joel about shows, he immediately gravitated to *Parade*. I couldn't be happier to finally get to do the show, and to get to do it with a like-minded producing partner.

JG: In the very best way the material is the engine and, in this case, the matchmaker too.

Can you talk a little about how the Donmar Warehouse version differs from the Broadway production?

MM: I had the chance to see the Donmar production when it transferred to LA last year and what struck me was how well this epic story played as an ensemble piece.

PS: The device of actors playing multiple roles creates a specific kind of interest for both actors and audience. The opportunity and challenge we have with this version, and with the intimate space we're performing in, is to put the story front and centre in a way that engages the audience most fully.

JG: That challenge has been aided in large part by the rewriting.

PS: I'm always interested in working on projects where writers have had the opportunity to revisit their material.

JG: There's less flab, virtually no decorative numbers or set pieces. The Donmar version is rougher and less slick but, more importantly, places its full focus on the story.

Berkeley Street Upstairs is a small space for such a big show. Can you speak to the challenges of producing a musical without amplification in such an intimate space?

PS: There are always challenges to acoustic theatre, but when it's done properly, there are great joys to be had. There is definitely a warmth, honesty and vulnerability in the unamplified human voice.

MM: Until two years ago we were producing all of our work in the Upstairs space and we always produce our shows unamplified. I find that the connection between audience and performer is the most important part of a show. It's just too hard to properly connect with someone when you are hearing their voice coming through a speaker system.

JG: I'm also fascinated by the relationship between stage and audience – the Upstairs venue allows for the most intimate exchange of ideas and responses.

PS: There are challenges in reducing the orchestration in a way that allows the musicians to support the singers with as much colour and nuance as possible without overpowering them. A stripped-down orchestration can be like a stripped-down, non-naturalistic set that *suggests* part of the whole rather than giving you the whole. The audience unconsciously fills in the blanks. At its best, a stripped-down orchestration can be more successful than a full-blown orchestration, because it invites the listener to be a more active participant in the art experience.

JG: Stripped down seems apt. Simplicity is a hallmark of Studio 180 productions. We're interested in story and ideas being at the fore. The notion of an ensemble coming together to tell a powerful story in the simplest, most direct way possible is exhilarating and one of the keys to the success of shows like *Laramie* and *Stuff Happens*.

MM: I think that's why Acting Up Stage's production of *The Light in the Piazza* was a huge hit amongst our audiences. They were really moved by this powerful, sweeping story that we told on such an intimate, personal scale.

JG: Actually, I just got back from the Upstairs space where they've installed a new stage floor, which seems, metaphorically speaking, pretty appropriate. It's all about the foundation. Brown and Uhry have given us such a powerful tale. With that as our basis, the fabulous cast we've assembled and a grand partnering company to share the joy and the pain it's impossible to not be excited about what's to come.

Appendix B. Further Reading

*For a more in-depth look at the Leo Frank case and some of the themes surrounding the inspiration for *Parade*, teachers and students may wish to read the following articles by the Anti-Defamation League from the Teacher's Guide to the film *The People v. Leo Frank*. Whether or not you read the articles in conjunction with a screening of the film, they will provide teachers and students with significant background knowledge prior to attending *Parade*, and will also serve as an excellent springboard to class discussion around the themes presented by the play and explored in this Study Guide.*

Before assigning the articles, make sure students are familiar with the accompanying lists of terms for each reading.

1. "The Oldest Hatred" – Anti-Semitism and the Leo Frank Case

LIST OF TERMS

anti-Semitism	defamation	persecute
bias	Gentile	prejudice
bigotry	ghetto	slur
blood libel	immigrant	solidarity
B'nai Brith	indict	stereotype
Boycott	industrialization	white supremacy
capitalist	lynch/lynch law	Yankee
commute/commutation	pardon	
Confederacy	perjury	

INTRODUCTION

An old Jewish expression states that when the beard of a Jew in Moscow is pulled, a Jew in New York feels the pain. This was literally the case for Leo Frank, a Jew from New York who was charged with the murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan on May 24, 1913.

At that same moment in time, Mendel Beilis, a 39-year-old Jew in Russia, sat in a prison cell awaiting trial after being wrongly accused of murdering a 13-year-old Ukrainian boy. When the boy's mutilated body was found in a cave near the brick factory where Beilis worked, a lamplighter testified that the boy had been kidnapped by a Jew. Following a vicious, anti-Semitic campaign in which the Jewish community was accused of sacrificing Christians for their blood, the jury split six to six and Beilis was set free.

Leo Frank would not be as fortunate, which was an ironic twist of fate. The harsh anti-Semitic prejudice and violence sweeping across Europe at this time was unknown in the United States, and American Jews never imagined that one of their own could become the target of a campaign of intense hatred.

JEWISH LIFE IN EARLY ATLANTA

Jews were a part of Atlanta from its establishment as a railroad depot in 1837, moving there for business opportunities and to set up Jewish institutions. In 1880, the city was home to 600 Jews, mostly of German origin.

The Jews of early Atlanta blended easily into Southern society and experienced little prejudice. Many fought for the South during the Civil War and some owned or employed slaves. David Mayer, a prominent member of the Jewish community and supporter of the Confederacy, was on the governor's staff and was a founding member of the Atlanta school board. Though Jews were excluded from some of the elite social clubs, they held seats on the city council and in the state legislature.

Beginning in the 1880s, large numbers of Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe were drawn to Atlanta. The city's German Jews – many whose families had lived comfortably in Georgia for generations – were troubled by these “Old World” Jews, who were poor and reminded them of the ghettos of Europe. They feared that the newcomers might arouse anti-Semitic feelings and threaten their place in society.

These concerns may have been unfair, but they were not unfounded. As Atlanta's Jewish population swelled from 600 in 1880 to 4,000 in 1910, Jews increasingly encountered anti-immigrant and anti-foreign attitudes that were beginning to take hold across the nation. Jews, who owned some of Atlanta's largest stores and factories, and ran a number of pawn shops and saloons in town, became associated with the evils of industrialization and were blamed by some for the economic problems of the city's poor.

By early 1913, anti-Semitic stereotypes had become enough of a concern that Leo Frank, as local president of the Jewish organization, B'nai B'rith, appointed a committee “to investigate the complaints against Jewish caricatures that are becoming so frequent on the local stage.” It was against this backdrop that Frank – only weeks later – was accused of murdering a Christian girl who worked at the pencil factory he managed.

LEO FRANK: THE “OTHER”

“You could tell that Frank is a lascivious pervert, guilty of the crime... by a study of [his] picture: look at those bulging, satyr eyes, the protruding sensual lips; and also the animal jaw.” – Tom Watson, Publisher of *The Jeffersonian*

At five feet six inches and 120 pounds, Leo Frank was not a model of Southern manhood. From the moment he was named as a suspect in the Mary Phagan case, people saw something suspicious in his angular jaw, full lips and bulging eyes. His personality was off-putting as well. A business associate said of Frank that he had a “nervous... temperament which at first repels rather than attracts.” Formal, high-strung and intellectual, Frank was different from the “typical” Atlantan of 1913.

Did the detectives who arrested Frank see in his manner a “scheming Jew”? Did the members of the jury see in his “Jewish features” dishonesty and wickedness? The answers to these questions are uncertain, but it is clear that Frank's “otherness” caused him to be widely disliked and mistrusted. Frank was a Yankee in the South, a rich man in a city of rising poverty and a factory boss managing low-paid labourers, many of them children. Frank's ethnic and religious “otherness” was compounded by all these factors, making it difficult to single out anti-Semitism as a driving force behind his conviction. A look at the trial and its aftermath, however, reveals that age-old Jewish stereotypes would play a role in Leo Frank's fate.

ARREST AND PROSECUTION

During the initial stages of the investigation, Frank's religious background did not arise as an issue. Five Jews sat on the grand jury that indicted Frank, and the Jewish community – while uneasy – maintained faith in the law, which they expected would set the record straight. As the trial progressed, however, Frank's character would be challenged in ways that may have played upon anti-Jewish stereotypes.

The prosecution charged that Leo Frank murdered Mary Phagan after she rejected his sexual advances. Jim Conley, a sweeper at the factory and the prosecution's star witness, backed up this accusation. He claimed that Frank admitted he wasn't, "built like other men," and suggested that Frank therefore engaged with girls in ways considered immoral at the time.

"I believe," suggested defense attorney William Schley Howard, "that someone undertook to graft [onto] Conley's story the very commonplace idea that as a Jew Frank has been circumcised and he was in that respect 'unlike other men.'" According to Howard, this twisting of the Jewish ritual of circumcision cast Frank as a deviant in the eyes of the public.

To support Conley's damning testimony, the prosecution paraded numerous witnesses into court – many of them young factory girls – who claimed to observe or to be the victims of Frank's sexual come-ons, who swore that Frank frequented houses of prostitution, and charged that he molested young boys as well as girls. Many of these statements were later taken back, but the damage had been done.

The notion of a perverted Jewish man lusting after innocent Christian children was planted in the minds of jurors, and carried to the public through sensational newspaper editorials. The most extreme of these included this attack by Tom Watson in *The Jeffersonian*: "Mary Phagan, pursued and tempted, and entrapped, and then killed when she would not do what so many other girls had done for this Jewish hunter of Gentile girls."

The pointed questioning of Leo Frank's sexual morality so upset Frank's mother, Rae, that at one point in the trial she leapt from her seat and lashed out at Hugh Dorsey, the lead prosecutor. The uproar caused so much confusion that her exact words are uncertain, but it was widely reported that she called Dorsey a "Gentile dog" or a "Christian dog." For those who may have already considered Leo Frank an "outsider," this supposed attack on the attorney's faith may have deepened the divide.

When it was Rae Frank's turn to appear on the witness stand, Hugh Dorsey was forceful in his questioning: "Do you have any rich relatives in Brooklyn?" "What is the value of your estate?" "In what business is your husband?" Though the Franks weren't especially wealthy, Dorsey cast them as "rich capitalists," and set them apart from the mostly middle and working class jurors. Earlier in the trial, Jim Conley had testified that, after the murder, Leo Frank had said, "Why should I hang, I have wealthy people in Brooklyn?" Taken together, the statements about the Franks' financial status injected suspicion in the minds of jurors and may have called up old myths of "rich, greedy Jews."

THE DEFENSE

While the prosecution's strategy may have indirectly stirred some anti-Jewish feelings, it was the defense that openly made an issue of Frank's religious background, declaring that the "twin P's – prejudice and perjury," had been used to frame Frank. "Away with your miserable lies about perversion," one of Frank's attorneys roared at the prosecutors. "... Away with your Jew-lynching witnesses... Let us follow the law and not follow prejudice."

Later, the defense would claim that a key witness had been overheard making comments, such as, "The damn Jew, they ought to hang him." Accusations were also made against a juror, who had allegedly exclaimed before the trial began, "I am glad they indicted the God damn Jew. They ought to take him out and lynch him, and if I get on that jury I'll hang that Jew, sure."

Frank's attorneys later charged that an unruly mob chanting anti-Semitic threats outside the courthouse had created a climate of prejudice that influenced the jury. *The New York Times* – which undertook a campaign of support for Frank after his conviction – published an article in February 1915 subtitled, "Jurors Menaced by Mob," suggesting that, "The crowd... jeered and laughed throughout the trial... Officials were the recipients of threatening letters and messages: 'Hang the Jew or we'll hang you.' On the last day of the trial, the voices of the mob outside could be clearly heard in the courtroom."

Despite the shocking nature of these claims, the defense's forceful charges of anti-Semitism may have backfired by opening a door for the prosecution to respond: "Gentlemen, do you think that I, or that these detectives, are actuated by prejudice? Would we as sworn officers of the law have sought to hang Leo Frank on account of his race and religion and passed up Jim Conley, a negro? Prejudice?"

The prosecution suggested that it was Frank's lawyers who inserted religion into the trial in order to rescue a failed defense. "Not a word emanated from this side," Dorsey asserted. "We didn't feel it. We would despise ourselves if we had."

THE AFTERMATH

A month after Leo Frank was found guilty, the Macon Telegraph reported: "The long case and its bitterness... has opened a seemingly impassable chasm between the people of the Jewish race and the Gentiles... The friends who rallied to the defense of Leo Frank feel that racial prejudice has much to do with the verdict. They are convinced that Frank was not prosecuted but persecuted."

Leo Frank's supporters, who for the most part kept a low profile throughout the court proceedings, began to speak out more forcefully in his defense and to campaign for a new trial. Frank's allies included both Jews and Gentiles. The majority of Christian ministers in Atlanta, for example, signed a petition in favour of a new trial.

Frank's opponents, however, took greatest notice of the prominent Jews who had begun to organize on his behalf, such as Albert Lasker, a Chicago-based advertising tycoon; Adolph Ochs, publisher of *The New York Times*; and Nathan Straus, chairman of R.H. Macy and Company. Other members of the Jewish community, such as Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee, cautioned against "Jewish

involvement,” out of concern that it would “arouse the very forces which we are seeking to destroy.” Marshall’s worst fears would unfortunately come to pass.

Among those who believed in Frank’s guilt, anger built over what was perceived to be a massive show of Jewish money and power to sway public opinion and save one of their own. Fred Morris, a respected lawyer from Cobb County, summed up the feelings of the majority of locals: “Mary Phagan was a poor factory girl. What show would she have against Jew money? When they found they couldn’t fool the people of Georgia, they got people from Massachusetts, New York and California to try and raise trouble...”

A *New York Sun* article, entitled “Jews Fight to Save Leo Frank,” argued that, “prejudice did finally develop against Frank and... the Jews,” but that “Frank’s friends” were responsible: “The anti-Semitic feeling was the natural result of the belief that the Jews had banded to free Frank, innocent or guilty. The supposed solidarity of the Jews for Frank... caused a Gentile solidarity against him.”

Resentment over “Jewish interference” became so strong that a reporter from the *Kansas City Star* described the following: “The managing editor, associate editor, city editor, assistant city editor and court reporter of an Atlanta newspaper said to me they know Frank was entitled to a new trial; his trial was not fair. ‘Then why don’t you say so?’ I asked. ‘We dare not; we would be accused of being bought by Jew money,’ they answered.”

TOM WATSON

Perhaps no one did more to fan the flames of anti-Semitic hatred than writer and politician, Tom Watson, whose venomous attacks against Leo Frank in his publication, *The Jeffersonian*, inflamed the masses and encouraged lynch law. Though known as a liberal early in his career, Watson – a legendary politician and highly popular public figure – had emerged as a force for white supremacy by the time of Mary Phagan’s murder. He was drawn to the Frank case less by anti-Semitism than by his firm belief that the rich were using their influence to literally get away with murder. Watson kept quiet during the trial, but after the verdict he made use of vicious anti-Jewish slurs that played upon the fears of common people, such as the following:

“Jew money has debased us, bought us, and sold us – and laughs at us. Bought and sold! Cried off at the auction block, and knocked down to Big Money! ONE LAW FOR THE RICH, AND ANOTHER FOR THE POOR!... with their Unlimited Money and Invisible Power, they have established the precedent in Georgia that no Jew shall suffer capital punishment for a crime committed on a Gentile.

“Let the rich Jews beware! THE NEXT JEW WHO DOES WHAT FRANK DID IS GOING TO GET EXACTLY THE SAME THING THAT WE GIVE TO NEGRO RAPISTS!”

EPILOGUE

If Tom Watson is the scoundrel in the story of Leo Frank, John Slaton is the hero. Against intense public pressure, intimidation and threats, Georgia’s governor made the extraordinarily courageous decision to commute Leo Frank’s sentence from death to life in prison. “Feeling as I do about this case,” declared Slaton, “I would be a murderer if I allowed that man to hang.”

Thousands of enraged people stormed the governor's mansion, causing Slaton to declare martial law and mobilize the state militia to control the riots (and save his own life). In Marietta – Mary Phagan's home town – a dummy of the governor labelled, "John M. Slaton, King of the Jews and Traitor Governor of Georgia," was hung and then torched on the courthouse square.

In Marietta and Atlanta, boycotts of Jewish owned businesses were organized. A group calling itself the Marietta Vigilance Committee posted threatening notices on the doors of Jewish merchants, such as this one:

"You are hereby notified to close up this business and quit Marietta by Saturday night, June 26, 1915, or else stand the consequences. We mean to rid Marietta of all Jews by the above date. You can heed this warning or stand the punishment the committee may see fit to deal out to you."

Less than two months later, Frank was kidnapped from the Georgia State Penitentiary in the dead of night by 25 armed men and lynched in an oak grove near Marietta. The attack was well planned and involved prominent members of Georgia society, including a state legislator, judge and former governor. "In putting the Sodomite murderer to death," commented Tom Watson, "the Vigilance Committee has done what the Sheriff should have done, if Slaton had not been in the mold of Benedict Arnold. LET JEW LIBERTINES TAKE NOTICE! Georgia is not for sale to rich criminals."

2. “As Separate As the Fingers” – Race, Racism and the Leo Frank Case

NOTE: This reading includes racially explicit language that is considered offensive today, but was widely used at the time of the Leo Frank case. These words are used here to educate you about the history of racism in the U.S. and are not appropriate outside of this particular educational discussion.

LIST OF TERMS

atonement	discrimination	remorse
bias	hypocrisy	segregation
bigotry	Jim Crow	Stereotype
colonialism	Ku Klux Klan	submissive
corrupt	literate/illiterate	white supremacy
degraded	lynch	
diabolical	NAACP	

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE “NEW SOUTH”

“The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly...”

In what would later be known as the “Atlanta Compromise” speech, famed black leader, Booker T. Washington, delivered these words in 1895 at an international fair designed to promote the South to the rest of the world. Washington believed that racial progress would come through industry, and appealed to African-Americans to focus on hard work rather than the struggle for equal rights. “In all things purely social we can be as separate as the fingers,” he asserted, “yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.”

Washington’s speech was music to the ears of the white organizers of the fair, but it masked the strict system of segregation and discrimination under which African-Americans in the South were forced to live. The “separate fingers,” in actual fact, were kept apart by a cruel and punishing fist of bigotry.

During the 1870s and 1880s the African-American population of Atlanta nearly tripled as former slaves arrived in search of jobs and educational opportunities. By 1910, a third of Atlanta’s 150,000 residents were black and the city was home to many successful African-American business owners. Much of the white establishment felt threatened by the freedom, growth and prosperity of African-Americans, and set about to keep black people in their place through a combination of lawful regulation and lawless violence.

Georgia was among the first states to enact “Jim Crow” laws, which required segregation in all areas of public life. The Separate Park Law of 1905 limited the use of public parks to one race only, and soon after everything from schools to hospitals to streetcars to rest rooms became segregated.

Despite efforts to isolate African-Americans, racial tensions in Atlanta grew and in 1906 – after a series of news stories blaming “black fiends” for increasing crime and attacks on white women – a violent race riot broke out. Over the course of two days, thousands of well-armed rioters destroyed African-American owned shops and terrorized

Atlanta's black community, killing more than 20 people and wounding over 100. "Bewildered we are," wrote the civil rights activist W.E.B. DuBois in his poem about the riot, *A Litany of Atlanta*, "and mad with the madness of a mobbed and mocked and murdered people."

THE "BLACKSPIDER"

The stereotype of the "black fiend" that fuelled the 1906 race riots would factor into the investigation of Mary Phagan's death seven years later. It was widely believed at the time that the "lazy, drunken blacks" who hung around the city's saloons were to blame for rising crime in Atlanta. Jim Conley – a black janitor at the National Pencil Company – quickly emerged as a primary suspect in Mary's murder. The crime seemed "characteristic of a drunken ignorant negro," *The Washington Post* later reported. "... No intelligent white man would do such a thing."

In fact, Jim Conley had a history of drunkenness and disorderly conduct, and was arrested only after he was discovered rinsing red stains from a shirt in the basement of the pencil factory. Even so, the depictions of Conley as a "black monster" in *The New York Times* and elsewhere went far beyond his personal history and played into stereotypes of the "new Negro," who – unlike the "obedient Negro" of slave plantation days – was dangerous and degraded, just the type to attack an innocent white girl. One article in *The Times* described Conley as "heartless, brutal, greedy, literally a black monster, drunken, lowlived, utterly worthless."

Even Leo Frank and his defense team resorted to racial typecasting, suggesting that Mary Phagan's murderer was a primitive brute, typical of blacks but totally out of character for a Jew. "After Mary got her pay," Reuben Arnold told the jury, "there was a black spider waiting for her down there near the elevator shaft, a great, passionate, lustful animal..." The attorney continued:

"... Here was a drunken, crazed negro, hard up for money. Why go further than this black wretch there by the elevator shaft, fired with liquor, fired with lust and crazy for money? Why, negroes rob and ravish every day in the most peculiar and shocking way..."

Leo Frank himself, in leaflets written from his prison cell, called Conley a "low type of negro," "Monster Liar" and "drunken, lustful negro." "Jim Conley," he avowed, "negro, perjurer, liar drunkard always hard up for money, and of lascivious habits, committed the crime charged to Frank."

THE TIDES TURN

Looking back, it seems incredible that in such an atmosphere of extreme anti-black bigotry, the tables would turn against Leo Frank and Jim Conley would become the star witness against him.

"Jim Conley has upset traditions of the South," read a commentary in *The Georgian*. "A white man is on trial. His life hangs on the words of a negro. And the South listens to the negro's words. But the South has not thus suddenly forgotten the fact that negro evidence is as slight as tissue paper. The South has not forgotten that when a white man's word is brought against a negro's word, there is no question as to the winner."

It seems that there were questions, however, both about Leo Frank's innocence and Jim Conley's ability to mastermind what was seen as the most vicious crime of the day. Across Atlanta and throughout the South, people compared the two suspects and drew conclusions clouded by assumptions about race and driven by the passions and prejudices of the times.

AN "IGNORANT NEGRO"

The notion of African-Americans as "Monster Liars" worked hand in hand with the stereotype of blacks as simple-minded to cast doubt away from Jim Conley and onto Leo Frank. Conley provided three different statements to attorneys before he settled on the story that he would tell in court. While it was taken for granted that Conley would try to lie his way out of trouble, it was also assumed that he would not be able to keep up the deceit under cross-examination by Atlanta's most elite, white lawyers. "It was a constitutional habit of a negro to keep on lying until he finally lit on the truth," observed prosecutor Hugh Dorsey. "... The oftener the negro changed his story, the more reliable it was likely to be."

Jim Conley, in what may have been a convincing bit of play-acting, admitted on the witness stand that he often lied, but it was easy to tell because he would hold his head at a certain angle. When asked why he finally decided to tell the truth, Conley explained, "Finally, the thing got to workin' in my head so much that I just couldn't t hold it any longer. I couldn't sleep and it worried me mightily. I just decided it was time for me to come out with it and I did. I ...told the truth, and I feel like a clean nigger."

This type of submissive talk was mistaken by many for stupidity. Conley's story – which held up under 16 hours of intense questioning – was filled with intricate facts and graphic details. Most whites refused to believe that an "ignorant negro" could concoct and keep up such a complicated story, no matter how well he had been coached. Conley's story, they reasoned, must be true.

It was never considered that Jim Conley might have possessed natural instincts and intelligence as sharp as any white man. The prosecution's case relied on the notion that Conley was barely literate and too uneducated to have written the murder notes found at the scene of the crime by himself. As it turns out, Jim Conley was quite literate. He had attended Atlanta's best black public school in the late 1890s and, during the trial, would be seen reading countless newspaper articles with great interest.

Far from being dim-witted, it is likely that Jim Conley played the role of "ignorant negro" because that was what was expected of him and he reasoned he could use the public's belief in his inferiority to his advantage. At a time when black literacy was considered dangerous, Conley played the part of an illiterate to save himself. "We thought he was densely ignorant," Conley's lawyer would later write, "when in fact he is shrewdly cunning."

A VICTIM WORTHY TO PAY FOR THE CRIME

Some historians have suggested that the image of black men as dim-witted and low-class did not measure up to the viciousness of the crime as perceived by members of the public. At a time when poor, white families felt tremendous conflict and guilt over sending their daughters off to work in urban factories, the brutal murder of an innocent

girl demanded a more devious villain than Jim Conley (or Newt Lee, the black night watchman at the factory and first suspect in the investigation).

“My feelings, upon the arrest of the old negro watchman,” remarked the pastor of Mary Phagan’s church, “were to the effect that this one old negro would be poor atonement for the life of this innocent girl. But, when on the next day, the police arrested a Jew, and a Yankee Jew at that, all of the inborn prejudice against Jews rose up in a feeling of satisfaction, that here would be a victim worthy to pay for the crime.”

Even Leo Frank, in an interview with *The Georgian*, allowed that “... there is not much glory in convicting a negro of a sensational crime.”

Though it was “against the law of the land,” in the words of a *Philadelphia Tribune* reporter, for a white man to be convicted of a crime on the testimony of a black man, it seems that at this moment in time Leo Frank represented the greater threat in the minds of Southerners. “Frank and Conley were weighed against each other, and weighed against the enormity of the horror visited upon Phagan,” explains author Jeffrey Melnick. “Conley profited from the particular negative images that attached to him as an African-American, while Frank suffered from those racial attributes assigned to him.”

IS THE JEW A WHITE MAN?

The idea that negative “racial attributes” were assigned to Leo Frank because he was a Jew is significant. Historically, anti-Jewish prejudice was tied to the religious beliefs and practices of Jews, not to their supposed inborn qualities. During the mid to late 1800s, however, a new so-called “science” developed, based on false theories of racial superiority and inferiority. The idea of a superior white race, which was used to defend slavery and colonialism, was also used to set apart Jews as different and alien. The word “anti-Semitism” was first used in Germany during the 1870s to support the idea of a superior “Aryan race” and a lesser “Semitic” or “Jewish race.” The replacing of traditional religious bigotry with a new anti-Jewish racism may have shaped public perception of Leo Frank.

Many people falsely believed, for example, that Jews were naturally sly and cunning. In the local newspapers, Leo Frank was branded as “shrewd,” “egotistical” and a “fluent talker.” Throughout the trial, Leo Frank’s “superior mental powers” as a Jew were set against Jim Conley’s “ignorance” as a black man. Frank’s intellect came to be understood as a corrupting quality rather than a positive trait, and he was cast as a diabolical criminal by the media and in the minds of much of the public.

While Frank may have never questioned his own identity as a white man, others probably saw him differently. Jews in general were perceived as belonging to the white side of the black–white racial divide that defined the South. However, Christian whites saw Jewish people as a “different kind of white” in the same way that Italians, Irish and Slavs were made “racially other” at the time. The arrival of large numbers of immigrants, including many Eastern European Jews – who were so unlike the more “Americanized” German Jewish community of Leo Frank – served to racially mark the Jews of Atlanta in the early 1900s.

While on the surface Leo Frank was being judged on the facts of a murder case, it also seems that his whiteness was on trial. In an article in the black-owned *Chicago Defender*, editor Robert Abbott wondered, “Is the Jew a white man? ... This case proves beyond the question of a doubt that an Afro-American’s word is nearly as good as a Jew’s when the third party is a white man...”

GROWING AFRICAN-AMERICAN RESENTMENT

As the characters of both Jim Conley and Leo Frank were assailed in court and in the press, there was a feeling that blacks and Jews were competing for status within a hostile white society. While there was some history of black-Jewish cooperation to combat prejudice – for example, the NAACP was created in 1909 by blacks, Jews and white liberals – the Frank trial seemed to further divide rather than strengthen the bonds between these two groups.

Many African-Americans resented the hypocrisy of those in the Jewish community who condemned anti-Jewish attacks with one breath and resorted to anti-black slurs with the next in order to shift guilt away from Frank. Though most African-Americans did not view Conley as a model citizen, many thought that he was telling the truth, and grew frustrated by the wealth and power being mobilized to save Frank. “Jews Raise Millions to Free Frank and Put Blame on Innocent Man,” read the headline of *The Chicago Defender* on December 12, 1914.

LYNCHING: A WEAPON OF WHITE SUPREMACY

The lynching of Leo Frank may have served to widen the divide between blacks and Jews. The massive attention paid to the murder of Leo Frank intensified anger among many African-Americans, whose community members were routinely lynched with little public outcry. “Do you... reckon the life of one white man,” asked an article in the black-owned *Chicago Defender*, “this single ‘murdered’ Hebrew, with the millions for defense behind him, of more importance... than those of the thousands of murdered black men?”

Between 1882 and 1930, over 2,800 lynchings were recorded in the South – nearly 500 in Georgia alone – and almost 90% of the victims were black. On average, an African-American was lynched more than once each week during this period. Anti-lynching activist, Walter White, observed that lynchings and mob violence against blacks had become so commonplace that an “uncomfortably large percentage of Americans can read in their newspapers of the slow roasting alive of a human being in Mississippi and turn, promptly and with little thought, to the comic strip or sporting page.”

While some lynchings were spontaneous acts of mob violence, many others – including the execution of Leo Frank – were the result of coordinated plans by prominent members of the community intent upon preserving white supremacy and social control. In choosing to murder Frank by lynching, white Southerners inflicted a distinctly racial punishment on him, and sent a message to Jews and other “outsiders” that they had better remember their place in society or suffer the fate of the Negro.

EPILOGUE

In the September 2, 1915 edition of *The Jeffersonian*, the writer and politician, Tom Watson, called for a revival of the Ku Klux Klan, which had disbanded in 1869. His call was answered two months later, when a group calling itself the “Knights of Mary

Phagan” met atop Stone Mountain outside of Atlanta and set a giant wooden cross ablaze. Vowing to protect the “Southern way of life,” the new Klan targeted not just blacks, but Jews, Catholics and immigrants as well.

Leo Frank’s lynching and the rise of the new Klan inspired the growth of organizations dedicated to combating racism and hate. The Anti-Defamation League, formed in the wake of Leo Frank’s conviction in 1913 to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all,” promoted an anti-mask bill to prohibit Klan members from wearing hoods in public and a law forbidding intimidation by symbols and signs, such as cross burnings. And the NAACP, which grew to 90,000 members by 1920, worked to overturn Jim Crow laws and to pass federal anti-lynching legislation.

Though seven presidents have lobbied Congress for an anti-lynching law, the United States has never passed one. In 2005, the U.S. Senate approved Resolution 39, apologizing for its failure to enact federal anti-lynching legislation, marking the first time the U.S. government has officially apologized for the nation’s treatment of African-Americans. 90 years after the lynching of Leo Frank, Senator George Allen of Virginia said the vote finally put the Senate “on the record condemning the brutal atrocity that plagued our great nation.”

3. “Media Sensationalism and the Case against Leo Frank”

NOTE: This reading includes racially explicit language that is considered offensive today, but was widely used at the time of the Leo Frank case. These words are used here to educate you about the history of racism in the U.S. and are not appropriate outside of this particular educational discussion.

LIST OF TERMS

anti-Semitism	incite	stereotype
backlash	Ku Klux Klan	tabloid
bias	lynch/lynch law	tirade
caricature	populist	tycoon
child labourer	prejudice	yellow journalist
commute/commutation	privilege	Yankee
crusade	sensationalism	
“Extra”	solidarity	

BACKGROUND

The murder of Mary Phagan and trial of Leo Frank became a media sensation in its day. Before television and the Internet, the news was carried by local and national papers and magazines. In Atlanta, a race to win the most readers drew the city’s two older dailies, *The Constitution* and *The Journal*, into a heated competition with a new upstart, *The Georgian*.

The coverage of the case began the morning after Phagan’s murder, when a reporter from *The Constitution* accompanied police on a 3:00AM report that a girl had been found brutally murdered in the basement of the National Pencil Company. By dawn the newspaper had an “Extra” on the streets. Soon after, *The Journal* got hold of a mysterious note discovered near the victim’s body and immediately printed it on the front page.

From that point on, reporters and editors fanned interest in the story using tabloid techniques that are still common today. Much of the coverage began as “yellow journalism,” a sensational style of reporting that downplays accuracy in favour of eye-catching headlines and exaggerated accounts. Newspapers took sides and slanted their coverage to make Leo Frank look innocent or guilty. The media coverage did more than just report the story; it shaped the course of events and ultimately changed the course of history.

THE GEORGIAN SETS OFF TABLOID FRENZY

“Police Have the Strangler,” read the headline of *The Georgian* on April 29, 1913, following the arrest of Frank, but long before the investigation was complete. Publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst had purchased *The Georgian* about a year before the Phagan story broke, and he staffed the paper with hard-hitting reporters from New York and Chicago. According to Herbert Asbury, a writer for *The Georgian*, they had been sitting around Atlanta bored out of their minds, waiting for something to happen. Word that a child labourer had been found murdered in a factory thrilled them. “We played the case harder than any Hearst paper had ever played such a case anywhere,” Asbury later wrote.

The Georgian's coverage of the Phagan murder was sensational from the start. The paper's first front page devoted to the story included a photo of Phagan's body snapped at the morgue and a headline offering a \$1,500 reward for information leading to the murderer's arrest. Despite the fact that the weather was dry, a feature story quoted the victim's grandfather demanding revenge while standing in the pouring rain. "It wasn't raining, but it might have been," the reporter who wrote the article confessed years later.

Nearly every hour, an "Extra" edition of *The Georgian* rolled off the presses with shocking new details. "Our paper... burst upon Atlanta like a bomb," recalled Herbert Asbury, "and upon *The Constitution* and *The Journal* like the crack of doom." Readers fell in love with *The Georgian* – on the day of Frank's conviction, the paper printed over 130,000 copies, more than triple the number it sold just a year earlier.

As the investigation progressed, *The Constitution* and *The Journal* competed with *The Georgian* for readers. "Frank Tried to Flirt with Murdered Girl, Says Boy Chum," declared *The Constitution* in a front-page headline. "Was Factory Used as Secret Rendezvous?" asked *The Journal*.

The flood of headlines linking Frank to the crime convinced many Atlantans of his guilt before the trial even began. As the case wore on, the media bias was mostly in Frank's favour. However, the sensational tactics of the media had taken their toll, giving expression to the prejudices of the time and stirring the passions of a captivated audience.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY RESPONDS

The morning after the "Police Have the Strangler" headline hit the newsstands, members of Atlanta's Jewish community showed up at *The Georgian's* newsroom to protest. There was a feeling that Frank was being singled out because he was a Jew, and judged in the media before a trial had even begun. Frank's immediate release was demanded and, the next day, a petition was circulated declaring that *The Georgian's* coverage had "aroused the community to a dangerous degree."

The Jewish community was divided about how best to respond to the arrest of Frank and, later, to his conviction. Some, including Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee, cautioned against "Jewish involvement" in the wake of the trial. "They can do no good... they can only accentuate the mischief," said Marshall about the involvement of Jewish members of the press. "Any action that is taken must emanate from non-Jewish sources."

Many members of the Jewish press disagreed with Marshall's strategy, and ran stories arguing that anti-Semitism was a key factor in Frank's conviction. "Frank's religion precluded a fair trial," pronounced Cincinnati's *American Israelite* on September 26, 1913. "The man was convicted at the dictates of a mob, the jury and the judge fearing for their lives."

Stirring statements like these caused exactly the backlash that Marshall feared. A *New York Sun* article, entitled "Jews Fight to Save Leo Frank" (October 12, 1913) argued that "prejudice did finally develop against Frank and... the Jews," but that "Frank's friends" were responsible: "The anti-Semitic feeling was the natural result of the belief that the Jews had banded to free Frank, innocent or guilty. The supposed solidarity of the Jews for Frank, even if he was guilty, caused a Gentile solidarity against him."

RESENTMENT IN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESS

Ironically, the fact that prejudice was used against Frank did not stop Jewish members of the press from employing the use of bias to protect him. Drawing upon the same tactics as Frank's defense team, the press played on African-American stereotypes and caricatures to shift blame on to Jim Conley, a sweeper at the factory and the prosecution's star witness.

In a March 1914 article in the Jewish-owned *New York Times*, Conley was described as "emotionless," "a brute in human form" and a "hungry dog." "That [the highly educated and respected] Leo Frank... should be doomed to die," the article proclaimed, "is not more astonishing than that this black human animal... should be alive to tell his dreadful tale for readers... to shudder at."

Racism and anti-Semitism in the press mirrored the tensions that surfaced during the case, and fed a hostile climate in which Jews and African-Americans were pitted against one another. The African-American press of the time responded defensively to the racist portrayals of Conley and turned the blame back onto Frank.

"Atlanta tried to lynch a Negro for the alleged murder of a young white girl and the police inquisition nearly killed the man," read an article in the NAACP's *The Crisis* (September 1913). "A white degenerate has now been indicted for the crime, which he committed under the most revolting circumstances."

After Frank's death, many African-American journalists expressed anger over the public outrage and extensive media coverage of the lynching of a white, Jewish man when hundreds of black men were lynched every year with little outcry. An article published in the August 21, 1915 issue of *The Philadelphia Tribune* put it this way: "And while we as a race sympathize with Mrs. Frank and other relatives, we also feel that they are now in a better position to extend sympathies to the relatives of the hundreds of families of the many colored victims of mob violence in Georgia."

ADOLPH OCHS AND THE NEW YORK TIMES

The resentment that grew against Frank in the aftermath of his trial was unintentionally fueled by fellow Jew and publisher of *The New York Times*, Adolph Ochs. During the trial, *The Times* only printed three brief pieces about the case because Ochs didn't want it to be seen as "a Jewish newspaper." After Frank was sentenced to death, however, Ochs reversed his earlier decision and took up the case up as a crusade.

Over the next 18 months, *The Times* published hundreds of articles and editorials about the case. While some of the pieces were balanced, many more were one-sided, quoting defense lawyers at length while failing to seek comment from anyone connected with the prosecution. "Frank Convicted by Public Clamor," read *The Times'* headline on March 2, 1914, voicing the opinion that Frank did not receive a fair trial. Other articles included, "Friends Plea for Frank," "Georgians Urged to Plead for Frank" and "Atlanta's Mob Spirit."

Unfortunately for Frank, *The Times* coverage provoked hostility against him in Atlanta. Most Georgians believed in Frank's guilt. Additionally, the general anti-Yankee sentiment (a lingering result of the Civil War) created resentment in what was viewed as a Northern paper challenging the Southern court system.

THOMAS WATSON AND THE JEFFERSONIAN

Future U.S. Senator, Thomas Watson, who published an influential paper, *The Jeffersonian*, voiced the opinion of many Georgians, who viewed Northern journalists as outsiders representing those with money and privilege. Beneath the banner headline, “Does the State of Georgia Deserve this Nation-Wide Abuse?,” Watson declared:

“Mr. Adolph Ochs, a most useful servant of the Wall Street Interests, runs a Tory paper in New York whose chief end in life seems to be to uphold all the atrocities of special interest and all the monstrous demands of Big Money.”
(*The Jeffersonian*, April 9, 1914)

Watson used his newspaper to counter the claims of Ochs and *The New York Times*. A populist who argued for the rights of the common people, Watson used the case against Frank as a platform to criticize corporate greed, the use of child labour and to play upon the tensions between Southerners and “outsiders.” Eventually, Watson’s reporting became openly anti-Semitic.

“Do the rich Jews want to create among the Gentiles of this country, the same deep dislike which they have created everywhere else?... [The U.S. has] freely welcomed the immigrant Hebrew, and given him a National House of Refuge... [but] If they continue... villainous abuse of the people who wanted Leo Frank punished for his awful crime, they will raise a tempest which they cannot control.”
(*The Jeffersonian*, July 9, 1915)

As he fanned the flames of hatred, Watson also issued a call to arms. Furious that Governor John Slaton was considering commuting Frank’s sentence from death to life in prison, Watson lashed out:

“... if the Prison Commission or the Governor undertake to undo – in whole or in part – what has legally been done by the courts that were established for that purpose, there will inevitably be the bloodiest riot ever known in the history of the South.” (*The Jeffersonian*, May 27, 1914)

After the Governor announced his decision to commute Frank’s sentence, Watson raged:

“Our grand old Empire State HAS BEEN RAPED... Jew money has debased us, bought us, and sold us – and laughs at us... Hereafter, let no man reproach the South with Lynch law: let him remember the unendurable provocation and let him say whether Lynch law is not better than no law at all.”
(*The Jeffersonian*, June 20, 1915)

A day after Watson’s piece appeared, reports began to circulate that a group calling itself the Knights of Mary Phagan gathered at her grave to plan its revenge. Watson’s inflammatory editorials incited the community to take justice into its own hands and lynch Frank. Even after Frank’s death, Watson did not let up, and his hateful tirades contributed to the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in the fall of 1915.

“The North can rail itself hoarse, if it chooses to do so, but if [it] doesn’t quit meddling with our business and getting commutations for assassins and rapists who have pull, another Ku Klux Klan may be organized to restore HOME RULE.”
(*The Jeffersonian*, September 2, 1915)

CONCLUSION

As time went on, the Frank case was eclipsed by other news stories and faded from the headlines, but not before it gripped the nation for over two years with sensational headlines, photos and a full-blown media circus. Some viewed the story as an opportunity to grab readers' attention; others saw it as a continuation of the conflict between North and South; and still others used the story to play upon the fears and prejudices of a community, and to incite hateful actions.

The press coverage and sensationalism surrounding the Leo Frank case offers both a fascinating look back at history and a lens through which we can examine the role of media in today's era of Twitter, Facebook and instant messaging. News stories from Frank's time provide present-day readers an opportunity to better understand the prejudices and tensions of the time period in which he lived. They also remind us that even as time and technology evolve, we must be alert to the media's enduring power to shape public opinion and to intensify feelings of bias and hate.

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