

ON
CLOVER
ROAD

A THRILLER

STEVEN
DIETZ



BACKSTAGE GUIDE

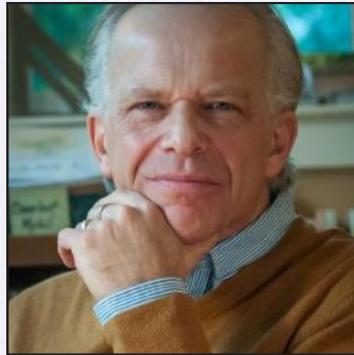
A publication of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** at
AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

BACKSTAGE CALLBOARD

ON CLOVER ROAD

Written by Steven Dietz

Directed by Halena Kays



Playwright Steven Dietz

At an abandoned motel on a desolate American road, a mother meets with a cult deprogrammer, believing she will be reunited with her runaway daughter. Featuring Joseph Jefferson Award winners Gwendolyn Whiteside* and Philip Earl Johnson*. *DC Metro Arts* says this smart, harrowing, edge-of-your-seat thriller will “consume your attention for its full 90 minutes, and you’ll leave the theatre fully entertained.”

** Ensemble member of American Blues Theater*

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BACKSTAGE Contributors

Elyse Dolan
Associate Producer
American Blues Theater

with Gwendolyn Whiteside, Halena Kays,
and Philip Earl Johnson



NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **GWENDOLYN WHITESIDE**



Artistic Director
Gwendolyn Whiteside

Welcome to American Blues Theater's Season 33 "Home Sweet Home". We proudly present the Chicago premiere of Steven Dietz's *On Clover Road*, directed by Halena Kays.

Thrillers are one of America's most popular genres, expressed through many art forms such as books, films, tv shows, video games, podcasts, and theater. Psychological and emotional stress are its engine. The revving you feel is your raised pulse and increased adrenaline. It's the tingle of kinesthetic empathy while paradoxically knowing you are safe from harm. It's like a roller coaster for your mind.

Psychology Today calls thrillers a kind of escapism, "Brains release neurotransmitters like dopamine and oxytocin when we are intensely emotional (happy, as well as scared or horrified) to consolidate memories,

and strengthen bonds between us and others sharing the same experience." Put another way - scary movies equal some great dates!

The genre has recognizable techniques including, but not limited to - plot twists, unreliable narrators, and a device to move along the plot that Alfred Hitchcock drolly called "the MacGuffin". Audience members anticipate these calling cards and respect the genre's rules of engagement by suspending their disbelief.

Playwright Steven Dietz created incredible suspense by utilizing these techniques paired with an extreme emotional setting – a mother trying to reunify with her runaway, estranged daughter. Purposefully, Dietz uses a fictionalized group "The Farm" rather than name any active communes operating in the United States today. One need only do a cursory internet search to find numerous examples of utopian communes gone wrong. Dietz states "the story is predicated on the promise of this group and not the judgment of it." During our rehearsals, director Halena Kays, with special visits from Dietz, cared for each moment of this ride.

Hitchcock said, "There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it."•



Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside addresses the crowd at the 2015 *Ripped: The Living Newspaper Festival*

ABOUT PLAYWRIGHT STEVEN DIETZ

Steven Dietz's thirty-plus plays and adaptations have been seen at over one hundred regional theatres in the United States, as well as Off-Broadway. International productions have been seen in over twenty countries, including recently in Brazil, Thailand, South Africa, Estonia, and Iran. Recent world premieres include *Bloomsday* (Steinberg New Play Award Citation), and *This Random World* (Humana Festival of New American Plays). His interlocking plays for adult and youth audiences (*The Great Beyond* and *The Ghost of Splinter Cove*) will premiere in Charlotte, North Carolina this spring.

Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, Dietz graduated in 1980 with a B.A. in Theatre Arts from the University of Northern Colorado, after which he moved to Minneapolis and began his career as a director of new plays at The Playwrights' Center and other local theaters. During these years he also formed a small theatre company and began to write plays of his own. A commission from ACT Theatre to write *God's Country*

brought him to Seattle, Washington in 1988, and he lived and worked in Seattle from 1991 to 2006. In 2006, Dietz began teaching in the MFA Playwriting and Directing programs at the University of Texas at Austin.

Dietz was awarded the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays Award for *Fiction* and *Still Life with Iris*; the PEN USA Award in Drama for *Lonely Planet*; and the Edgar Award® for *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*. Dietz's plays range from the political (*Last of the Boys*, *God's Country*, *Halcyon Days*, *Lonely Planet*) to the comedic (*Becky's New Car*, *More Fun than Bowling*, *Over the Moon*). The majority of the plays are published (in acting editions) by either Dramatists Play Service or Samuel French, Inc. An anthology of Dietz's work for young audiences was published by UT Press in 2015. Many of the short plays are also anthologized.

In 2010, Dietz was once again named one of the most produced playwrights in America (excluding Shakespeare), placing eighth on the list of the Top Ten Most Produced Playwrights in America, tied with Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee for number of productions.

Currently a Dramatists Guild "Traveling Master", Dietz teaches workshops in playwriting and story-making across the United States. He and his wife, playwright Allison Gregory, divide their time between Seattle and Austin. •



Playwright Steven Dietz



The cast of American Blues Theater's production of *Yankee Tavern* by Steven Dietz in 2015. From left to right: Darci Nalepa, Ian Paul Custer, Steve Key, and Richard Cotovsky

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR **HALENA KAYS**

Associate Producer Elyse Dolan discusses *On Clover Road* with Director Halena Kays.

What excites you about this project?

I've never worked a piece that is so clearly playing with and inspire by the thriller genre. I love thrillers. I love reading and watching them. This play has allowed me to ask artistic questions around what it means to be thrilled as an audience member and challenges me to create a space where our collaborators can play within this heightened sensibility. Steven is also a friend and a mentor so it is a thrill (no pun intended) to work alongside him and bring this play to life. It is also just a patently fun language, the fights and the mysteries are so much fun to play - the actors have amazing material and gorgeous scenes, it is a master class everyday in rehearsal.

What do you admire about Steven Dietz's writing?

The craftsmanship is outrageously good; at the same time he drops these beautiful truths in the midst of the chaos of the genre. He surprises us. I am moved by the beauty of the language and challenged by literal blood, sweat and tears of the plot.

Why is it important to tell this story now?

This is two-fold for me. First, theater often pays lip service to wanting to keep an audience engaged and on the edge of their seats, but I'm not sure we really do that all that often - this play is an invitation to thrill an audience and we have accepted.

Second, this play has landed on my lap at a moment when I'm contemplating who my daughter will become, she is six now and being a parent can be terrifying and thrilling; imagining being a parent of a teenage girl contains the most unknowns. Most of our creative team are parents. We are each at a different moment in that journey - this play asks me to ponder, in four years, will I recognize the daughter I now know, and asks others, can you still see the 13 year old behind the 17 year olds blazing eyes? This play has me exploring some complicated and universal questions: what is the real horror beneath the horror in a great genre piece, what it is speaking to in our society now and does it hit a nerve?

What will you be working on next?

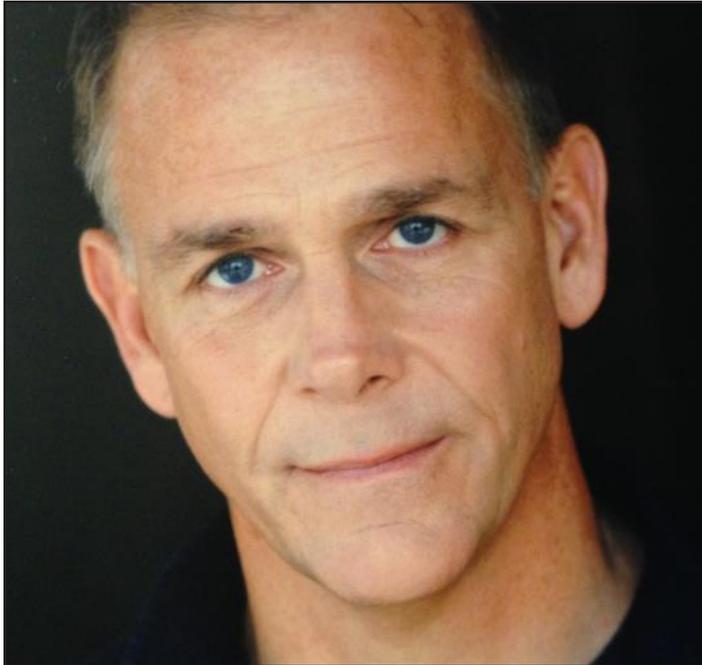
I'm thrilled to head back to The Neo-Futurists for more work on the world premiere of Ida Cutler's *Comfortable Shoes* and then off to the West Coast for the premiere of *Communion*, an evening of magic. •



Director Halena Kays in rehearsal at Steppenwolf Theatre in 2013

"THE BACKSTORY" WITH PHILIP EARL JOHNSON

American Blues Theater Ensemble member Philip Earl Johnson plays "Stine" in *On Clover Road*. We asked Phil to share some lesser-known facts about himself in "The Backstory."



Actor Philip Earl Johnson



Actor Philip Earl Johnson in American Blues Theater's *The Columnist* in 2017

If I weren't an actor:

I would be home more.

Childhood nickname:

Doobie. Not what you might think. I was a big Romper Room fan.

Best career advice I've received:

"You're talented. It's not enough. You still have to work at it." -Dan Wilhelm, ISU Professor of Theatre in costume design, not my major, but I had him for a make up class.

Favorite part of the job:

Getting to see what other awesome artists I get to work with this time, and creating something with them.

Worst part of the job:

Asking myself why I am still doing this. The answers aren't easy to come by, which makes asking the question all the more challenging.

How I made my first dollar:

An after school paper route on Wednesdays in the sixth grade. Mrs. Dinklenburg ran a tight ship.

What I'd want for my last meal:

Moist, thick vanilla birthday cake, not necessarily my own, with plenty of white buttercream frosting and a large cup of black tea, sweetened, with cream, eaten with my family.

Favorite item of clothing:

A blue hoodie. I like to blend. I have three: each one for a different temperature.

If I could invent one thing:

It would be a new letter in the alphabet. Imagine the royalties.

One of my hidden talents:

I'm a very fast walker because I have loose hips. •

“WHAT ARE WE SAYING WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CULTS?”

On Clover Road is about a family affected by a fringe religious movement that some may call a cult. However, the word “cult” carries plenty of its own baggage. The below article by author Laura Woollett—which originally appeared in *The Guardian* in November 2018—examines this problematic term and what we’re implying when we use it. It has been edited here for length.

Cults are hot right now, or so it would seem. One of the bestselling literary debuts of recent years, Emma Cline’s *The Girls*, tells of a teenage girl’s flirtation with a Manson-like cult in the summer of 1969. *American Horror Story*’s seventh season, subtitled *Cult*, delivers a political horror story that references the Manson family and Jonestown alongside Trump and creepy clowns. Netflix viewers binged on the 2018 documentary series *Wild Wild Country*, with its deliriously cool soundtrack and archival footage of the Rajneeshes — followers of controversial guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

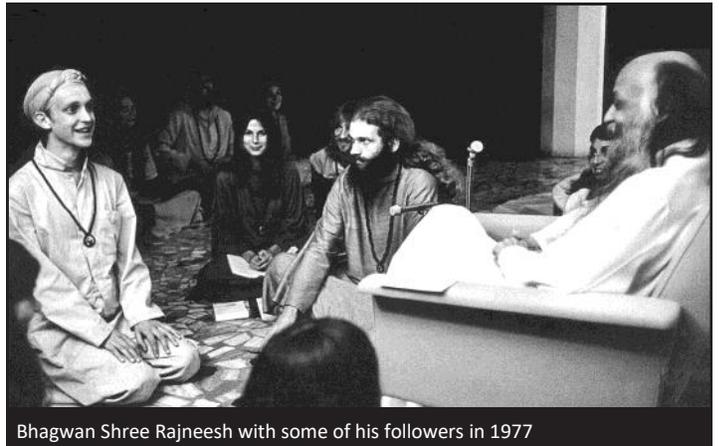
The trend shows signs of continuing, with Quentin Tarantino’s star-studded treatment of the Manson family murders scheduled for release in the summer of 2019, and *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan rumored to be developing a HBO series based on the Reverend Jim Jones, of Jonestown infamy.

As an author whose latest novel, *Beautiful Revolutionary*, deals with similar subject matter, it’s tempting – even commercially advisable – to ride the cult wave. As a person who has spent time with Jonestown survivors and their families, I’m more ambivalent. What are we really talking about when we talk about cults?

Most people have heard of Jonestown and Jim Jones, in some form. Even if the names don’t ring a bell, if you’ve ever seen a fictional depiction of a cult, certain details are likely to be familiar: jungle commune, poisoned fruit punch, paranoid preacher in sunglasses, dead bodies. Tellingly, fewer people have heard of Peoples Temple, the group best known for that 1978 mass murder-suicide of more than 900 of its members in the remote settlement of Jonestown, Guyana. Even fewer have an understanding of what Peoples Temple actually believed in.

“Drinking the Kool-Aid” is an idiom that derives from the Jonestown tragedy, commonly used to refer to blind obedience or belief in a flawed idea. Despite this, the fundamental belief of Peoples Temple was equality – hardly a kooky concept. Jonestown wasn’t supposed to be a place of death, but a place where members (the majority of whom were racial minorities) could live free of discrimination.

In 2015, I spent two months in the U.S. researching Peoples Temple. I visited Richmond, Indiana, where Jim



Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh with some of his followers in 1977

Jones met his wife, Marceline, in the 1950s, and where her grave is located. I visited Redwood Valley, California, where the Peoples Temple church constructed in the late 1960s still stands. I sat in kitchens and coffee shops, talking to people who had lost friends and family in Jonestown, and who could have easily been lost themselves. Some of these conversations continued months later, over email or Skype. Not one of them used the word “cult” in earnest. “We weren’t a cult, we were a social movement,” one survivor made a point of telling me. “We were revolutionaries.”

Earlier, the same man had told me about his wife and child dying in his arms. He had told me of his contempt for Jim Jones, the man who ordered their deaths, and who had fostered an atmosphere of such fear and desperation that these orders seemed almost justifiable. As far as I could tell, he seemed like a reasonable person, albeit one who had lost a lot.

Originally, the word “cult” simply meant “to worship”. Deriving from the same root as “culture” and “cultivation”, it described rituals and offerings intended to cultivate the favor of gods, saints, and other holy figures. The term later took on negative connotations, and by the mid-20th century was mostly associated with charlatans and violent or otherwise bizarre fringe groups.

Today, a cult might loosely be defined as any group exhibiting a combination of qualities including (but not limited to): a charismatic leader; mind-altering practices; sexual and economic control and exploitation of members; us-versus-them attitudes towards outsiders; and an ends-



justify-the-means philosophy.

By this definition, it's difficult to argue that Peoples Temple wasn't a cult. After all, they had a leader who was notoriously charismatic and who exerted a disproportionate level of control over his congregation. Members were often overworked and overtired, their finances and sex lives regulated by leadership. Relationships with outsiders were generally discouraged, and Jones was known to sexually abuse both male and female followers. Meanwhile, an ends-justify-the-means line of thinking was employed to justify everything from faked healings to the ultimate massacre of more than 900 individuals.

Yet I can understand the impulse of Jonestown survivors, and others, to shy away from the "cult" label. It's reductive, at best; dehumanizing, at worst. "Cult is an expression reserved for those religions of which we disapprove," states Rebecca Moore, a religious studies scholar who lost two sisters and a nephew in Jonestown. When headlines labelled the Jonestown dead "cultists" in the days immediately following the massacre, they relegated them to the sidelines of humanity.

This made it easier for the public to distance themselves from the tragedy and its victims, dismissing them as weak, gullible, unsuited to life and unworthy of postmortem respect. Bodies weren't autopsied. Families were denied the timely return of their relatives' remains. A thousand "don't drink the Kool-Aid" jokes were launched.

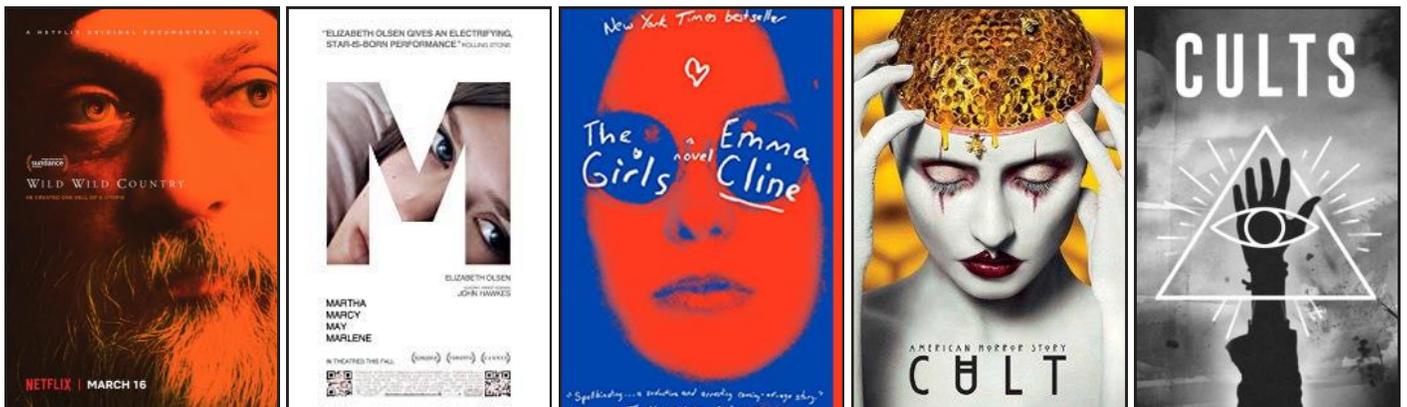
Is the violence of the group's demise, and our eagerness to distance ourselves from it, ultimately to blame for the persistence of the "cult" label? Certainly, we seldom hear

of cults that don't end catastrophically. Certainly, had Jonestown ended some other way—with Jim Jones dying of natural causes, for instance, and his followers leaving the group or carrying on without him—Peoples Temple would likely be remembered differently. As significant as the violence is, however, all kinds of violent deeds have been perpetrated in the name of religion, from wars to witch-burnings to child sex abuse cover-ups. Why isn't the C-word applied, in these cases?

The association between "cult" and "cool" is a more recent phenomenon. We talk of cult films, cult bands, cult novels, and the cult of fitness. It seems that almost anything can be called a cult, provided it has a following — a trend that feels especially meta, given the contemporary craze for cult-related media.

It's hard to know what to make of the cult craze. In some ways, it seems to be an extension of our enthusiasm for all things vintage—think "cult", and you'll likely think of long hair, folk blouses, a groovy soundtrack—combined with our enduring craving for sex and violence in media. Yet the appeal of stories about people adopting alternative lifestyles, often involving communal living and a return to nature, might be further explained by the frustrations of late-stage capitalist society and growing anxieties about climate change.

Whatever the explanation, I believe that the current popularity of cult stories presents an opportunity for these stories to be told differently — more sympathetically, with an emphasis on the humanity of followers rather than just the bloodshed and crazy-charismatic leaders. Because, ultimately, cult stories are human stories. • They're stories of community, the search for meaning and a better



Some recent examples of "cult" stories in pop culture: the documentary *Wild Wild Country* (2018), the film *Martha Marcy May Marlene* (2011), the novel *The Girls* (1996), the television show *American Horror Story: Cult* (2017), and the podcast *Cults* (2017-present)

AN OVERVIEW OF WELL-KNOWN FRINGE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS & COMMUNES

The fringe religious movement in *On Clover Road*—called “The Farm”—is fictional, but shares many aspects with real fringe movements and communes. Below is an overview of some of those groups who have made headlines over the past 50 years.

Peoples Temple

The Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ, commonly shortened to Peoples Temple, was a new religious movement founded in 1955 by Jim Jones in Indianapolis, Indiana. Jones used the Peoples Temple to spread a message that combined elements of Christianity with communist and socialist ideas, as well as an emphasis on racial equality. The group moved to California in the 1960s and established several locations throughout the state, including its headquarters in San Francisco. At its peak, the Temple boasted 20,000 members (though 3,000–5,000 are more likely). The Peoples Temple is best known for the events of November 18, 1978 in Guyana, when 918 people died in a mass murder at its remote settlement, named “Jonestown”, as well as the murders of U.S. Congressman Leo Ryan and members of his visiting delegation in nearby Port Kaituma.

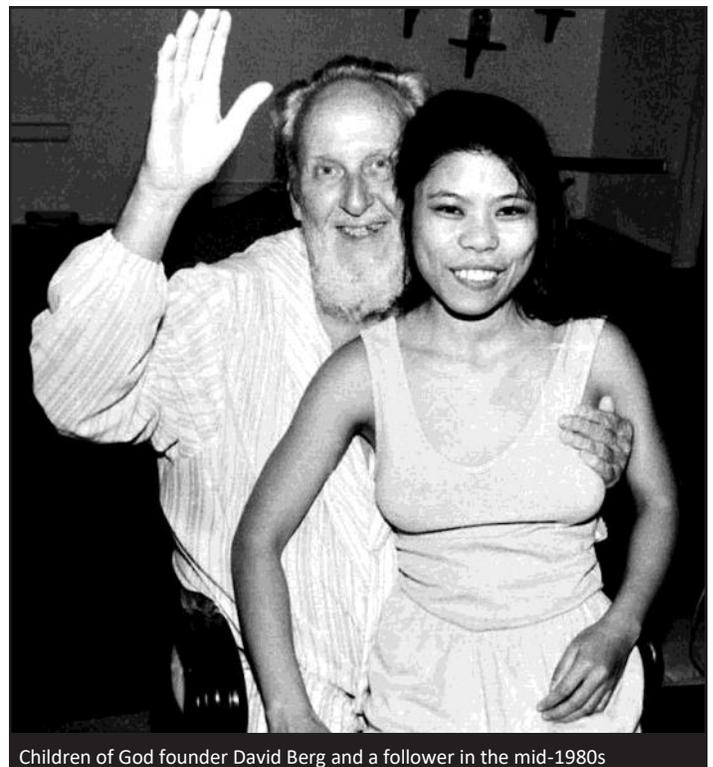
Rajneesh Movement

The Rajneesh movement comprises persons inspired by the Indian mystic Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. The movement was controversial in the 1970s and 1980s, due to the founder's hostility to traditional values, first in India and later in the United States. In Oregon, the movement's large intentional community of the early 1980s, called Rajneeshpuram, caused immediate tensions in the local community. At the peak of these tensions, leading members of the Oregon commune were arrested for crimes including attempted murder through a bio-terror attack calculated to influence the outcome of a local election in their favor, which ultimately failed. The Bhagwan, as Rajneesh was then called, was deported from the United States in 1985 as part of his plea deal following the convictions of his staff and right hand Ma Anand Sheela, who were found guilty of the attack. The movement's headquarters eventually returned to Poona (present-day Pune), India. The movement in India gradually received a more positive response from the surrounding society, especially after the founder's death in 1990. There still are a number of smaller centers of the movement in India and around the world including the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands.

The Children of God

The Children of God (originally known as Teens for Christ) was founded in 1968 in Huntington Beach, California by David Berg, a former Christian pastor. In the mid-1970s, Berg introduced a new proselytizing method called Flirty Fishing, which encouraged female members to “show God's love” through sexual relationships with potential converts. Flirty Fishing was practiced by members of Berg's inner circle starting in 1973, and was introduced to the general membership in 1976 and became common practice within the group. In some areas flirty fishers used escort agencies to meet potential converts. Researcher Bill Bainbridge obtained data from The Family International suggesting that, from 1974 until 1987, members had sexual contact with 223,989 people while practicing Flirty Fishing.

In 1978 Berg reorganized the movement amid reports of serious misconduct, financial mismanagement, and internal disagreements about the continued use of Flirty Fishing. An eighth of the total membership left the movement. Those who remained became part of a reorganized movement called the Family of Love, and later, The Family. The majority of the group's beliefs remained the same. Today the group is called The Family International.



Children of God founder David Berg and a follower in the mid-1980s

Heaven's Gate

Heaven's Gate was an American UFO religious millenarian cult based in San Diego, California, founded in 1974 and led by Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles. On March 26, 1997, police discovered the bodies of 39 members of the group, who had participated in a mass suicide in order to reach what they believed was an extraterrestrial spacecraft following Comet Hale-Bopp. Just before the suicide, the group's website was updated with the message: "Hale-Bopp brings closure to Heaven's Gate ... Our 22 years of classroom here on planet Earth is finally coming to conclusion – 'graduation' from the Human Evolutionary Level. We are happily prepared to leave 'this world' and go with Ti's crew."



Manson Family

The Manson Family was a desert commune formed in California in the late 1960s. Led by Charles Manson, the group consisted of approximately 100 of his followers who lived an unconventional lifestyle with habitual use of hallucinogenic drugs. Most of the group members were young women from middle-class backgrounds, many of whom were radicalized by Manson's teachings and drawn by hippie culture and communal living. Manson's followers began to believe, without question, Manson's claims that he was a manifestation of Jesus and his prophecies of a race war. They gained national and international notoriety after the murder of actress Sharon Tate and four others on August 9, 1969 by Tex Watson and three other members of the Family, acting under the instructions of Charles Manson. Group members were also responsible for a number of other murders, assaults, petty crimes, and thefts.

Unification Movement

The Unification movement or Unificationism, also called the Unification Church, is a worldwide new religious movement. Its members are colloquially called "Moonies". It was officially founded under the name Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) in Seoul, South Korea, in 1954, by Sun Myung Moon. In 1994 the HSA-UWC was replaced by Moon with a new organization, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU). The beliefs of the movement are based on Moon's book *Divine Principle*, which claims to incorporate Christian teachings but differs on many points including its view of Jesus and its introduction of the concept of "indemnity." The Unification movement is well known for its large-scale wedding ceremonies, known as Blessing ceremonies. One of the largest Blessing ceremonies was in 1992 when Sun Myung Moon gave the wedding blessing for 30,000 couples at the Seoul Olympic Stadium. The Unification movement has received strong criticism and



Unification movement leader Sun Myung Moon and his wife overseeing a Blessing ceremony

WHEN LEADERS ABUSE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The below article by Melissa Dittmann—originally published by the *American Psychological Association* in November 2003—examines some of the social psychology tools abused by controversial leaders, such as Jim Jones of Peoples Temple. It has been edited here for length.

On November 18, 1978, in the middle of the jungle in Guyana, South America, nearly 1,000 people drank lethal cyanide punch or were shot to death, following the orders of their leader, Jim Jones. Mothers and fathers gave the deadly drink to their children and then drank it themselves. People screamed. Bodies trembled. And within a few minutes 918 people were dead.

Decades later, social psychologists continue to examine how Jones came to command such enormous influence over his followers' thoughts and actions. Jonestown, they say, offers important lessons for psychology, such as the power of situational and social influences and the consequences of a leader using such influences to destructively manipulate others' behavior.

Most disturbingly, perhaps, leaders such as Jones appear to have derived some of their techniques from social psychologists' research, raising questions about research ethics, says Philip G. Zimbardo, PhD, APA's past-president and a psychology professor at Stanford University. In as-yet unpublished research, Zimbardo has found that Jones quite possibly learned his ability to persuade from a famous social thinker: George Orwell.

Through 25 years of research and interviews with Jonestown survivors, Zimbardo has found parallels between the mind control techniques used by Jones at Jonestown—namely sophisticated types of compliance, conformity and obedience training—and those described in Orwell's fictional book *1984*. Orwell possessed a deep understanding of influence processes from social psychology, and his depictions of mind control have been used systematically and effectively by cult leaders, Zimbardo says.

Others agree with Zimbardo that such findings raise ethical questions for social psychologists, given that the likes of Jones draw from social psychology tenets and use them for harm, says Robert Cialdini, PhD, who researches influence and is the Regents' Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University. "Sources of influence can be like dynamite—they can be used for good or used for ill," Cialdini says. "Social scientists need to pay more attention to not just the effectiveness of the strategies we study and uncover but also the ethical ramifications of the use of these principles and practices."



Jim Jones at a rally in 1977

The Mastermind

Indeed, Jonestown should serve as a warning to the social psychology community in what can happen when principles of influence are abused by leaders of an organization, Zimbardo says. Jones, who acted as the pastor of the Peoples Temple, studied Orwell's system of mind control described in *1984*, and commissioned a song that his followers were required to sing at Jonestown about the advent of the year 1984, Zimbardo has found.

Some of the mind control techniques Orwell described in *1984* that parallel methods Jones used include:

- **"Big brother is watching you."** Jones used this idea to gain the loyalty of his followers. He required followers to spy on one another and blasted messages from loudspeakers so that his voice was always present while they worked, slept and ate, Zimbardo says.
- **Self-incrimination.** Jones instructed followers to give him written statements about their fears and mistakes and then, if they disobeyed him, he used that information to humiliate them or subject them to their worst fears during public meetings.



- **Suicide drills.** Orwell's main character said that "the proper thing was to kill yourself before they get you" in a threat of war. Jones had his followers do practice suicide drills right up to the actual mass suicide event.
- **Distorting people's perceptions.** Jones blurred the relationship between words and reality, for example, by requiring his followers to give him daily thanks for good food and work—yet the people were starving and working six and a half days a week, Zimbardo says. Similarly, Orwell described such a technique, which he called "newspeak."

By mastering such mind control techniques, Jones was able to gain followers' obedience and loyalty, Zimbardo says. "Jim Jones is probably the most charismatic cult leader in modern times in terms of his personal appeal, oratory, his sexual appeal, his just sheer dynamism, and his total participation in the control of every member of his group," he explains.

Mindless Compliance

These mind control techniques—coupled with the creation of a new social environment—provided Jones with a powerful influence over his followers, Zimbardo says.

Quite arguably, Jones, through his natural understanding of social psychology, knew the way to obtain a strong influence over his followers was to move them from their urban American environment to a remote South American jungle, generating uncertainty in their new surroundings, Cialdini says. And when people are uncertain, they look to others for cues on what to do, research has shown. Zimbardo notes that people are particularly vulnerable when they are in new surroundings, feel lonely or disconnected.

"When you believe 'It can't happen to me,' that's when con artists or cult agents have you at their mercy because then you're not as vigilant to the little situational ploys that can get you to step across the line," Zimbardo explains.

Social psychology has shown the "power of the crowd" for decades. For example, in the 1960s, psychologists Stanley Milgram, PhD, Leonard Bickman, PhD, and Lawrence Berkowitz, EdD, demonstrated social influence by having a group of people on a busy New York City sidewalk gaze up at nothing in the sky. When one man looked up at nothing, only 4 percent of passersby joined him. When five people

stood on the sidewalk looking up at nothing, 18 percent of passersby joined them. And when a group of 15 gazed upward, 40 percent of passersby then joined, nearly stopping traffic in one minute.

As other cult leaders have done, Jim Jones used this "power of the crowd" influence in controlling others' behavior, intellect, thoughts and emotions. This includes instituting rigid rules and regulations, withholding or distorting information, using hypnotic trances, and generating guilt and fear among followers.

Building Awareness

However, since Jonestown, many social psychologists remain unaware of the psychological impact of the mind control techniques, often elucidated in social psychology research, that cults use to recruit and retain members, Zimbardo says. Many psychologists remain skeptical that behavior is intentionally controlled by these organizations at all, rather believing that people join cults of their own free will, as they do with traditional religious groups.

Those who study cults, on the other hand, maintain that psychologists need to study how cults abuse social psychology research. Psychologists are also needed to develop effective treatments for cult victims to help them break free from a cult's influence before it's too late, so that, in cases like Jonestown, history does not repeat itself. •



Houses in Jonestown, Guyana in 1979

ABOUT DEPROGRAMMING & EXIT COUNSELING

The character of “Stine” in *On Clover Road* is a “cult deprogrammer”. Below is an overview of the controversial practice of deprogramming and a look at some of the major figures in deprogramming at the height of its popularity.

Deprogramming refers to measures that claim to assist a person who holds a controversial belief system in changing those beliefs and abandoning allegiance to the religious, political, economic, or social group associated with the belief system. Some controversial methods and practices of self-identified “deprogrammers” have involved kidnapping, false imprisonment, violence, and coercion, which have sometimes resulted in criminal convictions of the deprogrammers. Deprogramming has also led to controversies over freedom of religion and civil rights.

In “Colombrito vs. Kelly”, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York accepted the definition of deprogramming by J. Le Moulton published in 1978 in the *Fordham Law Review*:

“Deprogrammers are people who, at the request of a parent or other close relative, will have a member of a religious sect seized, then hold him against his will and subject him to mental, emotional, and even physical pressures until he renounces his religious beliefs. Deprogrammers usually work for a fee, which may easily run as high as \$25,000.”

Similar actions, when done without force, have been referred to as “exit counseling”.

Procedures

There has never been a standard procedure among deprogrammers; descriptions in anecdotal reports, studies, and interviews with former deprogrammers vary greatly. Deprogrammers generally operate on the presumption that the people they are paid to extract from religious organizations are victims of mind control (or brainwashing). Books written by deprogrammers and exit counselors say that the most essential part of freeing the mind of a person is to convince the subject that he or she had been under the mental control of others.

Ted Patrick, one of the pioneers of deprogramming, used a confrontational method, enlisting psychiatrists and psychologists to assist him in the deprogramming process. Patrick was tried and convicted of multiple felonies related to kidnapping and unlawful imprisonment of deprogramming subjects.

Sylvia Buford, an associate of Ted Patrick who assisted him on many deprogrammings, described five stages of deprogramming:

1. Discredit the figure of authority (ie. the cult leader)
2. Present contradictions (ideology versus reality), such as “How can he preach love when he exploits people?”
3. The breaking point: When a subject begins to listen to the deprogrammer, and when reality begins to take precedence over ideology.
4. Self-expression: When the subject begins to open up and voice gripes against the cult.
5. Identification and transference: When the subject begins to identify with the deprogrammers, starts to think as an opponent of the cult rather than as a member.

Effectiveness and Harm

Alan W. Gomes (chairman of the department of theology at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University) in his 2009 book *Unmasking the Cults* report that while advocates of deprogramming have claimed high rates of success, studies show that natural attrition rates actually are higher than the success rate achieved through deprogramming.

The Dialog Center International (DCI) a major Christian counter-cult organization founded in 1973 by Dr. Johannes Aagaard rejects deprogramming, believing that it is counterproductive, ineffective, and can harm the relationship between a cult member and concerned family members.

Professor of psychiatry Saul Levine suggests that it is doubtful that deprogramming helps many people and believes that it actually causes harm to the victim by very nature of the deprogramming. Levine argues that deprogramming

destroys a person's identity and is likely to create permanent anxiety about freedom of choice.

The End of Involuntary Deprogramming

In the United States, from the mid-1970s and throughout the 1980s mind control was a widely accepted theory in public opinion, and the vast majority of newspaper and magazine accounts of deprogrammings assumed that recruits' relatives were well justified to seek conservatorships and to hire deprogrammers. It took nearly 20 years for public opinion to shift.

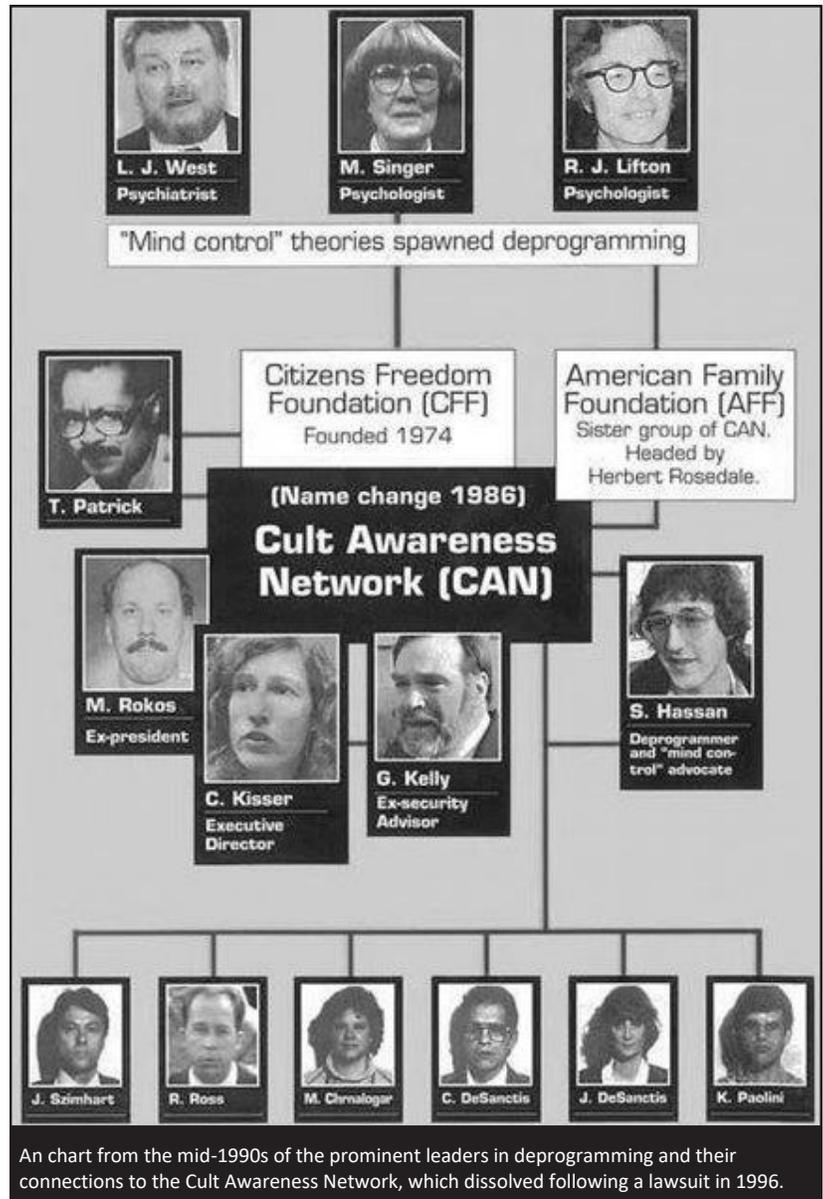
During the 1990s, deprogrammer Rick Ross was sued by Jason Scott, a former member of a Pentecostal group called the Life Tabernacle Church, after an unsuccessful deprogramming attempt. In 1995, the jury awarded Scott \$875,000 in compensatory damages and \$2,500,000 in punitive damages against Ross, which were later settled for \$5,000 and 200 hours of services. More significantly, the jury also found that the leading anti-cult group known as the Cult Awareness Network was a co-conspirator in the crime and fined CAN \$1,000,000 in punitive damages, forcing the group into bankruptcy. This case is often seen as effectively closing the door on the practice of involuntary deprogramming in the United States.

Exit Counseling

Deprogramming and exit counseling are sometimes seen as one and the same.

Proponents of the distinction, however, state that deprogramming entails coercion and confinement, while exit counseling assures the subject of the freedom to leave at any time. Deprogramming typically costs \$10,000 or more, mainly because of the expense of a security team. Exit counseling typically costs \$2,000 to \$4,000, including expenses, for a three- to five-day intervention, although cases requiring extensive research of little-known groups can cost much more (estimated in 1993).

Deprogramming, especially when it fails, entails considerable legal and psychological risk (for example, a permanent alienation of the subject from his or her family). The psychological and legal risks in exit counseling are significantly reduced. Although deprogrammers do prepare families for the process, exit counselors tend to work with them directly, expecting those requesting the intervention to contribute more to the process; that is, exit counseling requires that families establish a reasonable and respectful level of communication with their loved one before the program itself can begin. •



A FILMMAKER'S ACCOUNT OF TED PATRICK "THE FATHER OF DEPROGRAMMING"

Filmmaker Mia Donovan's stepbrother, Matthew, was deprogrammed at the age of 14. It was the early 1990s, Satanic Panic had spread across North America, and Matthew's father was worried that his son was involved in Satanism. So he hired famed deprogrammer Ted Patrick to reverse-brainwash Matthew—to free his mind from the grip of an alleged cult. The below is a 2015 interview with Mia—whose documentary, *Deprogrammed*, is about Ted Patrick—conducted by Regan Reid at *VICE*. It has been edited here for length.

VICE: What was it about your stepbrother's experience that made you decide you had to make a film about deprogramming and Ted Patrick?

Mia: I guess me and Matthew were both about 14 when he was deprogrammed. If you can imagine, you're 14 and this is going on—I thought my mom and her boyfriend were crazy. It just seemed really surreal. I didn't really understand what was going on. I didn't know if [Matthew] was in a cult or not. He was a heavy metal kid. There were rumors at school that him and his friends were sacrificing cats. The whole thing was just very bizarre.

The most bizarre thing was meeting Ted after the deprogramming. I still didn't really understand what this all meant then. But then Ted came home and they wanted to rid the whole house of any Satanic triggers, so he took away a lot of my books and records, but in a really dumb—like in a way that I remember thinking this made it even more ridiculous. They took away my INXS album, because there was a song called, "Devil Inside." Things like that.

It just always stuck with me all these years, this whole phenomenon.

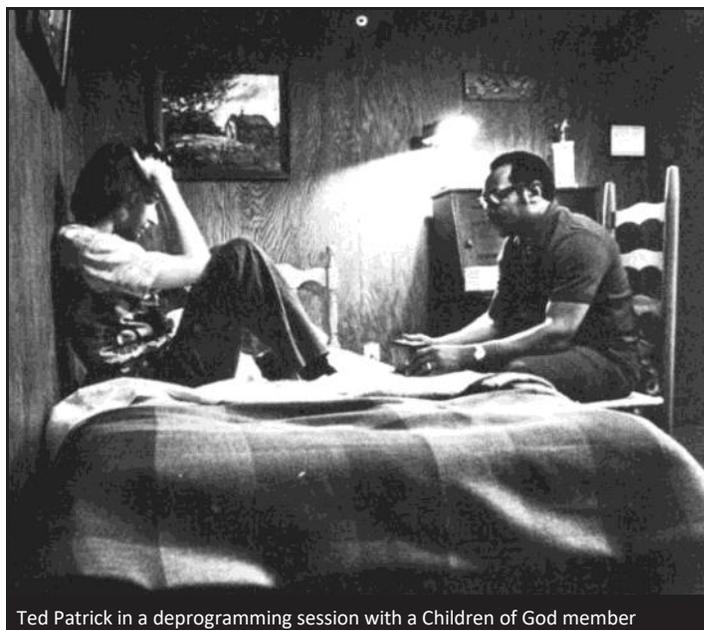
How did you get Ted to agree to the film? And then, what was it like spending time with him?

Matthew's [second] cousin was deprogrammed very successfully by Ted in the mid-'70s. [He was in] a Hare Krishna cult...So two of his second-cousins ended up working for Ted for about a decade on all these Canadian deprogrammings. So I had that sort of in.

That really helped, because [Ted] doesn't remember Matthew. His estimation is that he deprogrammed about 3,500 people, which I think is kind of crazy. I don't know if that's possible, but maybe indirectly, because at the peak of his career he had a lot of people working for him.

Anyways, it started off just like, "Okay, I'm going to go and meet Ted in San Diego, I'm not sure what's going to happen." And I wasn't sure how I was going to feel about him. But right away, he's just very gentle. He's also 85 now so he's at a very different stage in his life.

I just feel that he was the first person to recognize there was something happening with a lot of these radical



Ted Patrick in a deprogramming session with a Children of God member

groups and to recognize there was a potential danger there, but I don't think he understood how to assess groups later on.

Like, Matthew was hanging out with a bunch of high school kids and listening to Slayer, definitely dabbling with drugs and some violent behavior, but there wasn't really like a charismatic leader in that sense. It wasn't like a cult in that way. But I think Ted just believed he could help. I think he really thinks he can help.

But in the early days, I think, [Ted] did have some success with Bible-based groups. Because he knows the Bible inside out. The first cases, it was usually [The] Children of God, and he would just expose how these leaders twisted Bible scripture.

But then all these different alternative religions appeared, people adopted different lifestyles...

Yeah, it's like, how do you assess when a group is actually potentially dangerous or if it's just like something different?

Exactly. One of the questions your film asks is who has the right to determine what constitutes personal expression and what constitutes undue influence? Do



you think there's a good answer to this?

No...It's just a very complicated situation because you never know. I don't think anybody could have foreseen Jonestown happening.

Aaron, who's in the film, whose parents tried to deprogram him three times from the Christ Family, [which was] considered a very dangerous, high-controlled cult in the '70s and '80s, but now [the members are] in their 60s and they're all living quite happily together. I think it would be kind of sad to pull them away from that family.

I have conversations with them, I can hang out with them, and they believe this man Lightning Amen is the second coming of Jesus. They believe it so much, but it doesn't seem to really harm them.

[But in the 1970s] there was this moral panic. And then because of Manson and Jonestown, this fed into this paranoia, because deprogramming became very popular right after Jonestown. Parents were just like, "Oh my god, we have to save [our kids]." In some cases people say that [deprogramming] really was helpful. Like Steve Capellini in the documentary, he's so thankful that his parents hired Ted.

Ted's methods were pretty controversial though. He kidnapped people, held them against their will and then harassed them with questions for sometimes months at a time. One of the things the film shows is that some people were so worn down by the process that they just acquiesced, said whatever they needed to say to make it end. It made me wonder, does this guy have any clue what he's doing? Or is he just persistent?

I think there are so many approaches...

I just think that it worked some times so he kept doing it. And when it didn't work, it didn't work, but he didn't necessarily adapt. But other people after him adapted. A lot of people he deprogrammed out of different groups became deprogrammers themselves and really refined it and changed the method a lot. So Ted is not—I mean, he is sort of like the extreme version of deprogramming, the sensational version.

It's really hard because there are no real statistics and I can only go by the people I met. I think a lot of people did just talk their way out of [deprogramming] and then [went] back to the cults. But back then, Ted and his secretary didn't keep records, they didn't follow up with people. So a lot of people, maybe left for a few months to

make their parents happy and then who knows?

I've heard of other stories where people wanted to leave and the deprogramming was just a really good way for them to get out. It's so complicated.

How does Ted distinguish between a cult and what we think of as traditional religions?

Ted today, he doesn't explain himself very clearly, but from the archives he always described the difference being personal autonomy and how [these groups] ... through sleep deprivation and repetition and a form of hypnotism, would interfere with your ability to think critically. Then you become sort of enslaved by it, the will of the leader.

[For the people who felt their deprogramming worked] is it possible to say if deprogramming was actually necessary? Can you say the ends justified the means?

I personally think that most of the people he deprogrammed probably would have left the group on their own eventually. I think it was just part of that era. I've met so many people who had spent a lot of time, months or years, in different communes or groups in the '70s and then eventually left. Without the moral panic I think that some people may have stayed, some people may have left. But like I said, it's so difficult to tell.

Steve Capellini told me he really believes he could've still been a [Unification Church member] today if he had not been deprogrammed. Even Cheryl, whose deprogramming she described as not being perfect, she thinks she would've still been in a cult had her parents not hired Ted.

I think the question is... I guess it's like would they be better off?

Do you think Ted ever questioned the parents who were hiring him? Like, did he ever think these parents just didn't understand their kids?

No...[And] I think that's where he sort of discredited himself in this history... Rick Ross said that he declines half of the calls he gets. He'll say, "This is not a cult situation. This is a family issue."

How do you think [Ted] will react to the film?

I don't know how he's going to react. I think he'll be fine because I've told him who I was interviewing. I've always told him. He understands the controversy. But he loves it. He's like "Anybody wants to debate me, they can debate me." He likes the controversy. •

ABOUT RUNAWAY YOUTH

In *On Clover Road* “Kate’s” daughter has run away from home. The below outlines some statistics about runaway youth and addresses some of the myths surrounding runaways.

When a stranger abducts a child, the media follow the story closely because they know the child is in very grave danger. However, less than 1% of all missing children have been abducted by strangers. In fact, the NISMART-2 study indicated that each year in the United States 115 children were victims of a stranger kidnapping and 90% of these children who were abducted by strangers are located and returned home safely.

By far, the most prevalent type of reported missing children in the United States are runaway children. According to the National Runaway Safeline, between 1.6 - 2.8 million youth runaway each year in the United States.

Unfortunately, all too often runaway youth are often considered a family problem, rather than a child welfare and societal concern. Polly Klaas Foundation Caseworkers have heard runaway youth referred to as “unruly kids who choose not to follow rules,” or as “troublemakers,” “voluntarily missing,” or “just a runaway.” However, the truth is that runaways are children in danger. They need to be searched for immediately and helped.

There is a very strong Runaway Myth that goes like this: “Children who runaway make their own decisions to go. Let them be, they’ve made their own choice and must deal with the consequences. If they want to come home they will.” The Runaway Myth makes several false assumptions:

False Assumption #1: Teenagers are rational decision-makers, they make decisions and plan their actions with care.

There are certainly teens who make considered decisions. But, we all know that the teen years are a time of life when children are learning emotion and decision management. The National Runaway Safeline tells us that more than 70% of teen runaways interviewed “described their leaving home as occurring on the spur of the moment.” Many kids didn’t even pack a bag, make sure they had money for food and shelter, or figure out where they were going to spend the night.

False Assumption #2: All homeless children have a home to return to.

Nearly half of the homeless kids surveyed by the National Runaway Safeline described situations where they were thrown out of their homes by their families or caregivers. These children literally have no place to go. They are called throwaway children. Additionally, a good number of runaways come from abusive homes where it was dangerous for them to live.

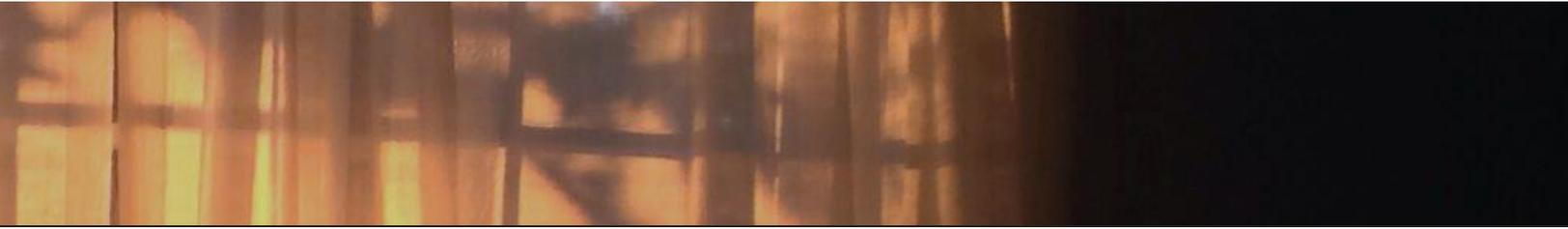
If homeless children do not find a reputable shelter, they may panhandle and sleep in parks or abandoned buildings. Survival requires more money than panhandling can provide. Many young people find themselves selling drugs or sex, not by choice, but through necessity.

It is estimated that many young people, especially girls, begin engaging in survival sex within 48 hours of leaving home. Sex for food and a place to stay can quickly escalate into formalized prostitution. This is one of the reasons why parents need to contact their local police the moment they realize their child has runaway.

False Assumption #3: Runaway children are capable of getting themselves out of whatever they were doing to survive and returning home safely on their own.

It is true that some of the more independently minded runaway young people are capable of caring for themselves for years. Many could return home if they chose.

But, for children who have begun surviving through illegal activity, they can quickly find themselves in a web of forced labor making money for others. For them there is no easy way home.



According to the National Runaway Safeline, children run away because:

- 47% of runaway youth report conflict between them and a parent/guardian in the home.
- 34% of runaway youth reported sexual abuse before leaving home.
- 43% of runaway youth reported physical abuse before leaving home.
- Over 50% of youth in shelters or on the streets reported that their parents told them to leave or knew they were leaving but did not care

Teenagers may also run away due to struggles with mental health, substance abuse, or other difficulties in adolescence, such as parental separation, bullying, coming out as LGBT, or other potentially traumatic events.

Parent Tips for Dealing with a Runaway Situation

If you suspect your teenager has run away, follow these steps:

- Call your child's friends to ask about the last time they saw them.
- Visit local hangouts or possible places they may have gone.
- Check your child's room and belongings to find any clues of their whereabouts.
- Call the police to report a missing person.
- Call area shelters to check to see if your child has been in contact and ask for further information on who to call.
- Call 1-800-RUNAWAY for even more information on your plan of action.

If your teenager calls, remain as calm as possible. Show that you are genuinely concerned and care for them. Urge your child to come home, but listen as well. Many children just want the chance to be heard. Refrain from saying anything negative to them, for example, "When you get home, you're going to be grounded." Take this running away as a serious sign that something is wrong and that your child needs help.

When your teen comes home, show them that you are willing to help them work through any of the difficulties they are having and that you accept their return with open arms. Understand that this experience has been as traumatic for your child as it has been for you. Remember to listen to your teen and make a conscious effort to show that you love them.



ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

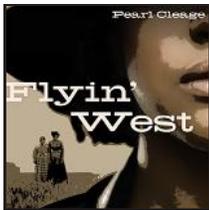
Winner of American Theatre Wing's prestigious National Theatre Company Award, American Blues Theater is a premier arts organization with an intimate environment that patrons, artists, and all Chicagoans call home. American Blues Theater explores the American identity through the plays it produces and communities it serves.

Our diverse and multi-generational 36-member Ensemble has nearly 600 combined years of collaboration on stage. As of 2018, our theater and artists have 204 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and 36 Black Theater Alliance Awards. Our artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards, and numerous other accolades.

For over thirty years, American Blues has created essential productions and live theatrical experiences for Chicagoland. Their best known production is Chicago's holiday tradition *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!* that has entertained over 50,000 patrons since 2002! Terry Teachout of *The Wall Street Journal* wrote American Blues is "exceptional" and the company "feels like home." Chris Jones of *Chicago Tribune* claimed Blues is "strikingly honest [with] deep emotional souls."

In addition to first-class theater, American Blues Theater believes it is an honor and duty to serve the community. They provide an integrated arts education program to Chicago Public Schools that serves approximately 3,000 students annually. They hold "Pediatric Previews" which donates a portion of box office sales to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. They donate thousands of complimentary tickets to underserved communities. They provide community engagement events called "Town Halls" for patrons following Sunday matinee performance, including curated discussions with Northwestern University psychologists. As a Blue Star Theater, they honor military service and first-responders through various initiatives. Former President of Illinois Labor History Society, Larry Spivak wrote, "American Blues is a dynamic force in Chicago – connecting culture, art, history, and politics into a holistic, aesthetic experience." •

SEASON 33 "Home Sweet Home"



by Pearl Cleage

Directed by
Chuck Smith*

Oct 5 - Nov 3, 2018



from Frank Capra's film

Directed by
Gwendolyn Whiteside*

Music direction by
Michael Mahler*

Nov 15, '18 - Jan 5, '19

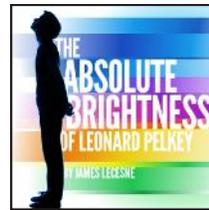


by Steven Dietz

Chicago premiere

Directed by
Halena Kays

Feb 1 - Mar 16, 2019



by James Lescene

Chicago premiere

Directed by
Kurt Johns

Mar 29 - Apr 27, 2019



by James Valeq &
Fred Alley

Directed by
Tammy Mader

Music direction by
Malcolm Ruhl

July 12 - Aug 17, 2019

*Ensemble member or Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater

ABOUT **AMERICAN BLUES THEATER**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE THEATER

PERFORMANCE VENUE

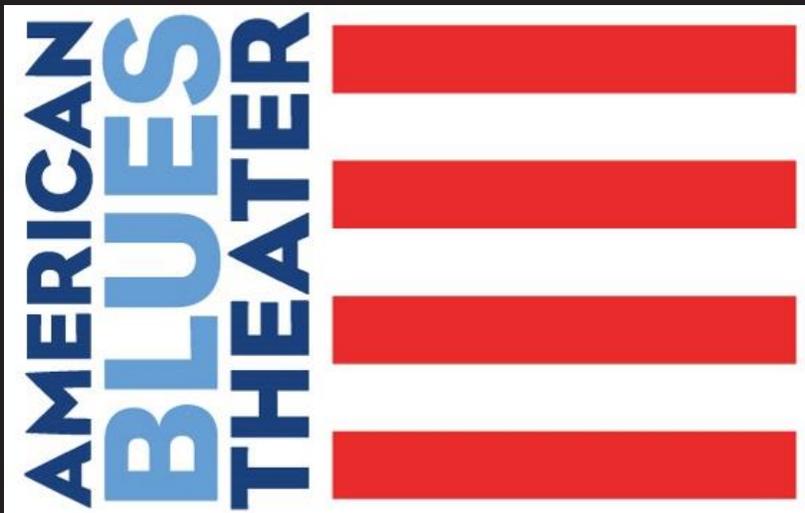
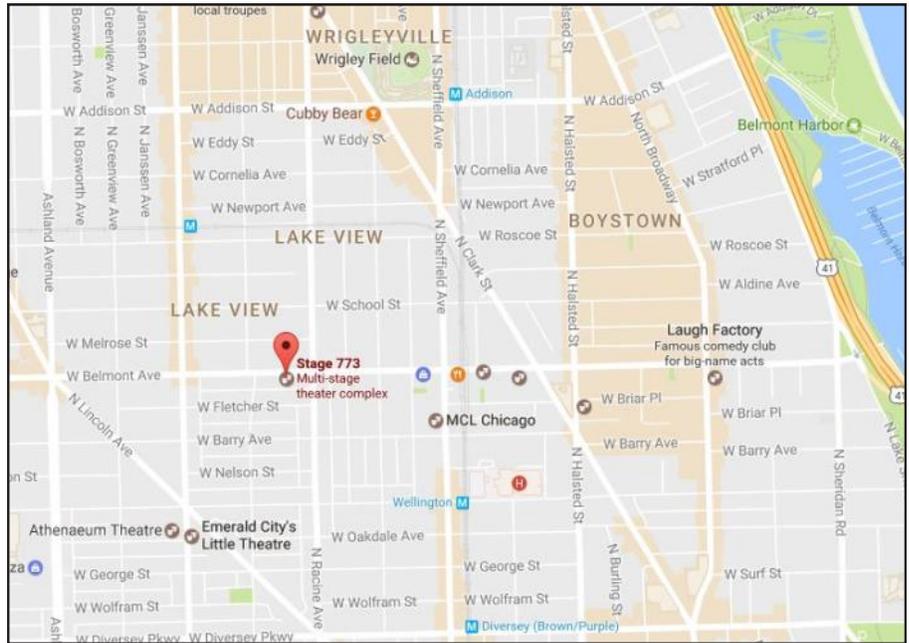
Stage 773
1225 W Belmont Ave
Chicago, IL 60657

BOX OFFICE

(773) 654-3103

FOR MORE INFORMATION

AmericanBluesTheater.com



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