

ORLEANNE THE REFUGEE
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First Place, One-Act Play/Scripts

ROLES: WORDSMITH
LEXICONER
DEFINER
IG = INDIVIDUALS/GROUPS
IG 1 - REFUGEE
IG 2 - EVACUEE
IG 3 - VICTIM
IG 4 - SURVIVOR
IG 5 - INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON
HYPHENATED AMERICANS
OTR (ORLEANNE THE REFUGEE)

Start with 5 individuals or groups of people in the aisles of the theater.

INDIVIDUALS/GROUPS (IG) start from left to right in turn walking angrily up the aisles to the stage shouting in an accusatory tone. (In the style of Row row row your boat)

Meanwhile, OtR sits on the stage with one small bag of belongings, a bottle of water, a bag of chips, dressed ratty, combing wild hair and reciting Amazing Grace as a poem.

Each IG walks past and shouts its particular word. The groups cross each other and the stage and they move into the wings.

OtR looks into the face of the people as they shout at her and continues reciting the poem until they have all moved into the wings.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see.

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.
Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come.
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far
And Grace will lead us home.

When we've been here ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
then when we've first begun.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see.

OTR: *Refugee*, that's me, spinning, spinning, trapped in the eyewall of a category five governmental nightmare. No land to claim, no home of the free, land of the brave for me. I am a refugee, third world New Orleanian, hopeless, hungry, jobless, homeless, that me, refugee but not really because honest-to-goodness refugees aren't stranded on American soil. They get a hand-up. I, on the other hand, am left empty-handed. Wonder if I'll get repatriated, resettled into my homeland. Yeah, refugee, that's me and mine, exiled to all fifty states and still not safe.

From the wings three other voices speak in resounding voices:

WORDSMITH: Refugee.

LEXICONER: As defined by Webster's New World Order Handbook for the *Humanization of Humans Living on the Verge of Annihilation*.

DEFINER: The Immigration and Nationality Act defines refugee as: Any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

OTR: *Evacuee*, that's me. Running from the threat of impending doom, from hell and high water. It's un-presidential—I mean, unprecedented—in my lifetime. Genocide, or is it ethnic cleansing or is it—hell, don't ask me to label it, I'm too busy trying to keep my head above water, making my quick but orderly stroll to my appointed place in case that alarm ringing in my ears isn't a false one. Fire drill, bomb threat homeland security preparedness test for evacuees, yeah, that's me.

WORDSMITH: Evacuee

LEXICONER: As defined by Webster's New World Order Handbook for the *Humanization of Humans Living on the Verge of Annihilation*.

DEFINER: Is a person who has been evacuated from a dangerous place, usually ahead of the disaster, not five days after.

OTR: Helpless *victim*, yeah. That's me. Bushwhacked, bamboozled, beat back, reneged upon. Pushed down, foot on my neck, calling itself disaster relief. (*OTR laughs*) What an oxymoron. Shame me, on the pretense of helping me. Categorize me, on the pretense of helping me. Victimize me and call it Katrina, or Rita, or Wilma or an Act of God or

retribution. Call it anything but it's name. Shame on you for bringing shame on me. I guess I should have been a republican.

WORDSMITH: Victim.

LEXICONER: As defined by Webster's New World Order Handbook for the Humanization of Humans Living on the Verge of Annihilation.

DEFINER: Is an unfortunate person who suffers from some adverse circumstance, one who is harmed by or made to suffer from an act, circumstance, agency, or condition. Such people, generally, are tricked, swindled, or taken advantage. They are readily deceived or victimized, particularly as a result of their confidence in and blind loyalty to others whose duty it is to protect them against enemies and natural disasters both foreign and domestic.

WORDSMITH: And let us not forget the unforgettable victim-blaming.

LEXICONER: As defined by Webster's New World Order Handbook for the Humanization of Humans Living on the Verge of Annihilation.

DEFINER: Is holding victims wholly or partly responsible for misfortunes. The theory is that a prospective victim *should* know and acknowledge either human nature or other facts of life when making decisions. Victim-blaming does not simply imply that the perpetrator behaved recklessly, but that the victim should take responsibility *for* the perpetrator of the crime (a.k.a. disgrace). It also applies to people who become victims of accidents, natural disasters, or other personal misfortunes. Commentators blame the victims of these misfortunes for not succeeding in preventing or overcoming their misfortune.

OTR: *Survivor*, ah yes. That's me. I bet it makes you think we somehow magically became empowered after Katrina, huh? As though we had no inkling of our own strength, no instinct for survival until someone labeled us. Truth is, we know how to fend for ourselves because we have long been in the trenches of poverty, fighting an indefatigable foe—our own Uncle Sam, who would rather see us starve to death than teach us to fish. Who would watch us drown and pretend he didn't know we couldn't swim in these rapids. Women on the left; men on the right. Hmmm! Sounds oddly reminiscent of...no, let's not play the race card. What children? Missing, exploited? How could that be? Where did that wild dog come from? Nah man, that's not a body. He's just sleeping. You know they can sleep anywhere, even in 90-degree heat. Survivor. Yeah, that's me.

WORDSMITH: Survivor.

LEXICONER: As defined by Webster's New World Order Handbook for the Humanization of Humans Living on the Verge of Annihilation.

DEFINER: Is one who lives through affliction, survives in spite of adversity, outlives another.

OTR: Internally displaced person. Oh, that must be me. Unlike a full-fledged refugee, my protection is tenuous at best. Internally displaced. Replaced by someone who may soon become me. Their less-than-prevailing-wage lifestyle affords them a full-size tent and only two tent mates (they are W.O.P., without papers, you see? Shh! Don't tell them I told you; they could lose their jobs.) Those living even higher on the hog's hoof manage to rent the few livable places left for three times the national average. They furnish their new residences with what remains of my life—clothes, books, family picture frames. Things the landlord threw out and the trash collector has yet to pick up. IDP. That must be me.

WORDSMITH: Internally displaced person.

LEXICONER: As defined by Webster's New World Order Handbook for the Humanization of Humans Living on the Verge of Annihilation.

DEFINER: The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights defines internally displaced persons as "those who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border."

OTR: American? Not me! Maybe that's you. Taking in my children, bypassing the red tape of ignorance to house me, feed me, cry with me, attempt to understand my misery. Claiming me as one of your own, not letting me stand alone against insurmountable odds. Maybe, someday, I can be like you.

WORDSMITH: American citizen.

LEXICONER: As defined by Webster's New World Order Handbook for the Humanization of Humans Living on the Verge of Annihilation.

DEFINER: Is a native or naturalized individual who owes allegiance to a government (as of a state or nation) and is entitled to the enjoyment of governmental protection and to the exercise of civil rights. Under the Fourteenth Amendment, "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside."

Next, a HYPHENATED AMERICAN walks onto the stage behind OTR, holding the American flag vertically so that the blue field is in his or her left hand. This person states his "name," i.e. American Italian.

The second HYPHENATED AMERICAN walks onto the stage and rotates the flag so it is right side up and states his or her name. The third HYPHENATED AMERICAN walks up and holds the flag in the center top and states his or her name. One by one HYPHENATED AMERICANS all come to stand behind the flag, holding a piece of it if they can, until everyone is on the stage.

People should “name” themselves something other than their true culture, i.e., an Asian-American could name his or herself American Latino.

Some names to choose from:

American Hispanic

American French

American African

American Canadian

American Irish

American Cajun Latino

American German Creole

American Native

American Haitian

American Chinese

American Japanese

American Italian

After the last person comes and states his or her name, OTR stands, puts her right hand over her chest. HYPHENATED AMERICANS (shout in unison): “American.”

OTR states: “Period.”

