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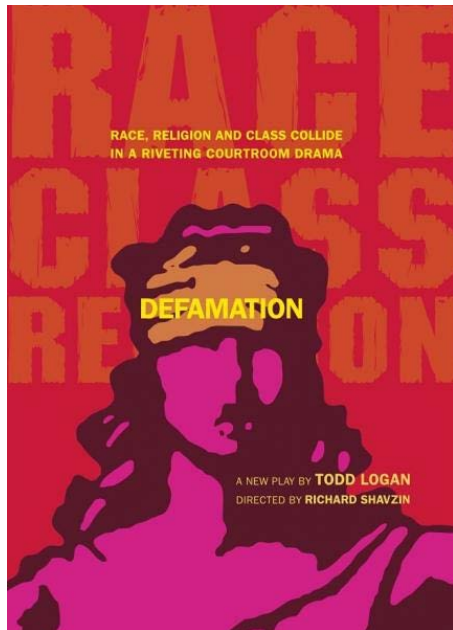
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November 16, 2016

Deborah Johnson's Post

Now "Defamation" Matters More Than Ever

Posted by Deborah Johnson on 11/16/2016 at 04:15 PM



Last week – just hours after the next President of the United States of America was announced – RWU Law students, faculty and staff (joined by undergraduates and University faculty and staff) attended a performance of DEFAMATION - THE PLAY. This is the second year that the play has been performed on campus and it was as compelling as ever – if not more so, given the timing.

DEFAMATION is a gripping courtroom drama written by playwright Todd Logan, and focuses on how the issues of gender, race, class and religion intersect with the law. The play is also a powerful teaching tool for law students as they prepare to serve as effective lawyers in today's society. It raises the types of issues, provokes the types of emotions, and prompts the type of critical thinking that our students will inevitably confront as lawyers. In fact, students will discuss the play when they study the tort of defamation next semester.

I am very happy that we were able to bring the play back to campus with the additional support of an Inclusive Excellence Mini-Grant from the President's Council on Inclusive Excellence – and was incredibly

pleased by the turnout of over 250 attendees. I am also grateful for the fact that DEFAMATION compels us to be introspective, to have the difficult conversations we often try to avoid, and to try to understand the complexities of the differences (and similarities) that we face in this country.

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It is easy to reflect on Todd Logan's seemingly prophetic words about the divides in our country and the need for the dialogue he hoped to prompt when he wrote the play. But with that reflection also comes a need for us as a law school filled with lawyers and future lawyers to determine what our individual and collective roles are in protecting the rights of all human beings living in this country and how we can and must go about fulfilling those roles.

I've been trying to write something profound in connection with the power and impact and role of DEFAMATION at RWU Law, and why it is important for our students to see it, because the play is deeply profound. But I keep finding myself wanting to write much of what I wrote in [my blog shortly after seeing the play last year](#).

Suffice it to say, DEFAMATION continues to underscore the importance of what our students need to learn in order to lawyer effectively in an increasingly diverse society. In light of where we are as a country, it also underscores the work that still lies ahead for America's current and future lawyers. It shines a light on what lawyers are needed to do: to fight for and protect the rights of our country's most vulnerable citizens and residents. Lawyers must be on the front lines of this battle for freedom, equality and justice for all – and we will continue to prepare our students to have the skills they need to fight it.