

“Your Choice - A Reproductive Rights Process Drama”

Central Question: Who controls access to reproductive health care and how does that impact gender roles and norms?

Actor-teachers: Julia, Sage, Max, Channie

Set up: ~12 chairs in audience formation; table as bed in front of room with blanket and pillow; photos posted on back wall of room.

Music plays as students enter classroom.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Actor teachers enter the stage and introduce selves and the process: We are: Sage, Julia, Channie, and Max. What you're going to participate in today is theater that is inspired by actual events, and also fictional story. We ask you to work with us to experience and create the story as it unfolds. We'll be playing a variety of characters, so we'll use these signifiers to distinguish between the characters.

2. SCENE - Angela and Brandon in Angela's bedroom

Wilmette, Suburban Chicago, 1973, After the passing of Roe v. Wade

Angela (18), African-American, is in her bedroom listening to music. Brandon (18), white, her boyfriend, enters, having just been running. Brandon and Angela chit chat about their days, and then the scene includes the following beats:

- possibility of going to different colleges*
- Angela's idol is black female journalist*
- rally - Brandon invites Angela; Angela can go and do an interview with protesters*
- mock interview with Brandon, who is anti abortion/clinic*

3. ROLE IN THE BAG

Debrief scene:

- who are these characters?
- what's happening?
- what Points of View did they express in their scene? About what?

Sage: It looks like Angela forgot her bag here today. Let's take a look inside before she gets back so we can learn a little bit more about her.

Actor-teacher invites students to one-by-one select objects from the bag and take a guess at what they might tell us about our character Angela. Actor-teacher supports hearing ideas from multiple participants, and helps synthesize and problematize ideas. Objects are all props which have been created for this drama. Objects in the bag include:

Object	Possible interpretation
Note passed with a friend saying that she has missed her period	Angela is pregnant, or thinks she might be
Acceptance letter from Northwestern University	Angela was accepted to college, hasn't told Brandon, doesn't know if she'll go or not
Cassette tapes and books	She is a high school student, young, relatable to participants, even if from a different time period
Flier for school newspaper	Interested in journalism, current events

Sage: What have we learned so far about these characters and the situation they're in?
Facilitate discussion with students.

Max and Channie strike bedroom scene

5. CONTEXT

Julia: We're going to take a step back to explore the world that Angela and Brandon are living in. What is going on in the world in the early 1970s?

Brainstorm as a group what we know about the early 1970s. Take a variety of responses, if there are any.

I invite you to come up and look at the photos and notice what else you can gather about the times.

Photos to fill in gaps and give us context of 1973 and the issue of women's sexual & reproductive health. Images include photographs and newspaper clippings:



A New York Times article with headline "High Court Rules Abortions Legal the First 3 Months"

As students view images and articles, actor-teacher asks:

What additional information do you have about the times?

What do you notice about what's happening in the world? Locally?

What do you notice about gender roles at this time?

There are lots of pictures of rallies. Who might the people be at the rallies? Why do you think they might be there?

6. TABLEAUX - A rally against the opening of the clinic

Sage: Brandon and Angela spoke about how they're going to a rally against the opening of a clinic in town. Who else do you think might live in this town? What do they do for a living? What might some of their opinions about the clinic opening be?

Brainstorm as a group.

There Brandon and Angela are now. Let's join them at the rally. Remember what a tableaux is? We're going to create a tableaux of the rally, joining in with Brandon and Angela, imagining ourselves as a person in this town, who might have any kind of opinion about the opening of the clinic.

In a moment I'm going to go around and tap you on the shoulder. When I do, you'll speak a word or phrase of what you're thinking or feeling being a person in this town at the rally. Take a moment to imagine what this person might think or feel.

Thought-track, tapping each person on the shoulder, inviting to speak a line of inner monologue.

And Relax.

7. GETTING INTO ROLE

Julia: We're now going to fully step into role as the people in this town. Get into groups of 2-3 people around you. These are your families or friends. Figure out who you are in relationship to each other. We're not asking you to "act like" this person, but imagine yourself in their role - what might their opinions be, their connection to these other people, etc. We encourage you to try out opinions and perspectives that might be totally different than your own. That's ok!

Participants get into family groups. AT's support this process, floating around to talk to different groups and see who they are.

Actor teacher: You're going to discuss this new clinic - what do you, as a person in this town think about it? Can a volunteer from each group please raise your hand? You will start the conversation. You'll begin with the line: "I came to this rally today because...."

Groups discuss. Actor-teachers float through to problematize, ask questions, listen to dialogues. If need be, spotlight groups to hear conversations.

News caster: announces being at rally and wanting to hear from different people about why they're there. Asks questions of a few townspeople about why they're there. Encourages people to attend that evening's town hall meeting to vote on the proposed opening of this new clinic.

8. TOWN HALL MEETING

Mayor announces town hall meeting. Invites people to mingle with their neighbors, meet some new people, and enjoy some coffee and donuts!

Mayor: announces beginning of town hall meeting, encourages people to find their seats. Introduces agenda (learn more information about the clinic and then have a vote) and first two presenters: the clinic director and the head of Right to Life.

Clinic Director: Hello everyone. Welcome. Thank you Mr. Mayor for opening up this platform. Thank you for coming out tonight to hear from your fellow community members about this important opportunity we have before us. My name is Herb Johnson and I am the Director of the Family First Community Health Center. My colleagues and I are aiming to open a new clinic here in Wilmette and we need your support. I don't want to take too much of your time tonight. I just want to make it clear: the clinic will offer comprehensive health services for men, women, and their families. This includes sexual health education, contraceptive care, and family planning.

additional points to use to problematize:

-will offer abortions, yes. high medical standard. protect patients and doctors.

-women take control of their own health

-another local business in this community - no need to go into Chicago to get services

Catholic Priest (Father Josefs): Ladies and gentleman, thank you all for being here today. I speak to you all today as a religious leader in this community for many years, yet what I have to say is not only for the Catholic community in the room, but for all of us who respect and value human life.

The decision of the Supreme Court earlier this year is already having devastating effects on the fabric of our families and our society. The law is an educator. If it allows the destruction of unwanted life, it unavoidably teaches us and our children that life is cheap.

As a religious leader, I am involved daily with people in situations of distress. I recognize the complex difficulties facing so many women and families. But abortion not only fails to solve the underlying causes; it raises even deeper problems. Once we sanction the taking of an innocent human life at it's beginnings, how can we logically protect it at any other point? While Mr. Johnson claims to be providing many compelling services, we are being distracted from the

issue at hand; do we as a community want to support the taking of innocent human life? Or will we stand together for those that are both voiceless and voteless?

Mayor: Opens the floor for questions, comments, discussion, including hearing from Angela

Angela: speaks on behalf of women who want control to their own bodies/lives/decisions and want access to resources

Mayor encourages community members to break into small groups to further discuss - what will you do?

Participants discuss in small groups. AT's problematize with groups/individuals

Mayor asks for report back from small groups to big group

Mayor: Calls for the vote.

Mayor facilitates the voting. One side of the room is "Yes" and one side of the room is "No." Mayor invites townspeople to stand at one side of the room or the other to cast their vote. Vote is cast and recorded.

Mayor: Decision. Thanks everyone for attending and making this decision.

FREEZE. End of drama.

9. DEROLE

Actor teacher: These roles that you stepped into may have been very similar to yourselves, or may have been quite different. But either way, we will all leave these roles here today, and step back into the real world of our classroom. I invite you to take three breaths with me now, and in doing so, hold onto the aspects of your role you learned from, and let go – exhale – the rest. 1-2-3.

10. DEBRIEF

Actor teachers lead debrief discussion, including the following questions:

- How did it feel to make that decision? Why did you vote the way you did?
- What are the parallels to today? Who is controlling access to reproductive healthcare today?
- Who has the power to make decisions about one's body? How do these decisions impact gender roles?

END.