

# The laramie project critique assignment

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The Laramie Project Critique On Sunday, September 26, I saw The Laramie Project written by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project, presented by the Missouri State Department of Theatre and Dance at the Balcony Theatre. This brilliant work is about Matthew Shepard, a 21 year-old student at the University of Wyoming who was tortured and murdered near Laramie, Wyoming. This play is a reaction to the 1998 hate crime motivated by homophobia. The play was derived from hundreds of interviews made by members of the theatre company with the citizens of Laramie, Wyoming, as well as published news reports.

There were many moments in the play that really grabbed my attention, and I believe these moments were special due to the characters that were in the scenes: Russell Henderson, Dennis Shepard, and Matt Galloway. The scene where Russell Henderson, one of Matthew Shepard's murderers, is on trial is very memorable because this scene draws so many different emotions from the audience. As an audience member, I became angry with Henderson, but almost felt sorry for him at the same time due to his ignorance.

Kumpost portrayed the character of Henderson very honestly in my opinion, to the point where I questioned myself from my original decision that the death penalty was in order with his case. I believe, in reality, that Russell Henderson did not know the extent of what he truly did to Matthew Shepard, and to the citizens of Laramie. Kumpost captured this ignorance very well in my assessment. During Dennis Shepard's testimony, I was brought to tears by the sincere truthfulness in every word. This I thought to believe the most emotional point in the production for me.

I was brought to tears by the words that Matthew Shepard's father said, and began to imagine him standing on the stage instead of an actress. One of the worst things in the world is losing a child, and the understandable grief and anger was very present in this scene, making it very memorable. When Matt Galloway spoke of his impression of Matthew Shepard, I felt like I had a better understanding of what kind of a person Matthew really was. Through the entire play, you come in counter with people shrugging the situation off, trying to justify it, and even denying it was a hate crime.

But with Galloway's interview, you could tell he wasn't ashamed to call Matthew a friend. The fact that he respected Matthew was especially memorable to me. After I left the theatre, the scene recalling the parade kept going through my mind. It was simply beautiful. It was such a big switch from the dialogue of the interviews. It was more artistic and set a different mood for that scene. There was a beauty of having so many bodies on such a small stage, that it recreated, in my mind, hundreds of people carrying the banner in honor of Matthew Shepard.

The main parallel I drew to Voice and Movement class was the use of special relationship that was used during this production. When a large cast first entered, I was intrigued to see if the stage would look cluttered. I figured it would be very challenging due to having so many cast members, but the use of special relationship was exceptional. I enjoyed this production and its cast immensely. This play inspired me to go home and research the story of Matthew Shepard, and I gained more knowledge of just how serious this case was, and what impact it had on the entire world. When a play can inspire, it is successful.

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