

QUIET STREETS

An Agitate Play experience for wee-ones and not-so-wee-ones

By: Brendon Allen

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Note to the reader/performer & talking points for families

Let me start off by saying that I am a 40 (+) year old white man. I engage in these topics as an effort to spark anti-racist action in myself and to use whatever platforms I have to encourage shifts away from racism. I am not a specialist in this field. I am an artist, an educator and a father, which gives me three avenues in my life that require anti-racism work. These plays are ways towards doing this. The performance is meant to inspire discussions, activities and possibly some fun.

If you do not have access to a laptop or tablet that all the actors can read from, you can print as many copies of the script as you may need. This play works best with a cast of three or four, but can be done in any way you choose. The casting is flexible to allow for name changes, gender flexibility and ways to personalize to match your household. It is up to you. Each scene does not go beyond four characters speaking, so you can share all the parts, including reading stage directions.

This play presents the opportunity for the actors to engage in exploring discussions on Black Lives Matter, Protesting, Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches, the civil rights movement, Chadwick Boseman's passing, the protests surrounding the deaths of George Floyd and Jacob Blake.

If you are engaging with this with your wee-ones, here some talking points and videos to help:

How to discuss slavery with kids

Slavery is a complex topic and some parents shy away from discussing it; however, this complicates your position and can make a household complacent to the atrocities of slavery and the roots of racism there. Slavery is not just an American problem or one that affects the past. Here are some articles and resources that allow you to use discussion and picturebooks to help discuss it at home or at school. [What age is a good age to start discussing slavery? Picturebooks about resistance and slavery](#). A great resource to read is [Stamped](#) to help reinforce the context for the issues surrounding these tensions.

Getting to know Black Lives Matter alongside your kids

Since you are engaging with this play, I imagine you are looking for ways to actively look at protest and agitation in ways that help your kids or students understand. There is no better and relevant example than Black Lives Matter. [Here is a video specific to Canadians about the BLM Movement](#). Here is a helpful article for [parents trying to navigate the conversations](#). Here are some [resources](#) that were created to help teach about the foundations of this movement. Here are also some resources on [Indigenous sovereignty](#), which is essential in this discussion as well.

Martin Luther King Jr. & "I have a dream"

Here are [4 videos](#) that engage with the speech in kid friendly ways. If you want to expand your exploration, here is a list of [activities based on the speech](#). Here are also some impressive info about [the life of MLK](#).

The Black Panther Movement & the film The Black Panther

There are many ways to engage with the topic of this movement. Here is a video with [kids interviewing former members of the Black Panthers](#). Here is a link to a [mini biography of the movement's founder](#). The film also carries a great deal of significance, [this article](#) discusses it further. To build some significance to those who are brought to activism due to their love of the Marvel film, [this article](#) offers some context.

Quiet Streets in Toronto

This initiative to try to control traffic movement in residential areas has brought up many feelings in Toronto. This website describes the initiative's [intentions](#). Here is an article about how [people keep moving the pylons](#) as a way of slowing the movement of traffic of their own streets or for other reasons. The initiative has had mixed reviews, so can be seen [here](#).

I hope you enjoy this Agitate Play experience. Break a leg!

CASTING

Adult Chorus: A mixture of voices and ages. Will be either an adult, a pedestrian or a motorist. Gender and age are flexible.

Link: A young kid from the neighbourhood. Enjoys scootering. Can be cast as any gender.

Marquis: A young kid from the neighbourhood. Has a flare for the dramatic. Can be cast as any gender. Marquis is Black.

Madz: Short for Madison. A young black kid from the neighbourhood who has been very active with the Black Lives Matter movement with support from their parents. Can be cast as any gender. Madz is Black.

Scoops: The local ice cream man, who keeps a regular schedule for his stops throughout the summer. Has made some good connections with neighbourhood kids. Came to Canada from Greece when he was 18 years old. He is not 68 years old.

Reporter: Works for the local news channel. Twenty something. Can be cast as any gender.

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SCENE 1:

The scene opens with a vocal collage. This is a collection of voices from the Adult Chorus. If you are listening just feel free to close your eyes and imagine the different characters who are playing these voices. If you are performing the voices, have fun playing different roles, as each voice should be different.

Adult #1: Please stop slamming the door, you're so loud!

Adult #2: Is it necessary to stomp so much in the house?!

Adult #3: How many lights do you need on in the house?...Hello?! Can you answer me?

Adult #4: Stop yelling!

Adult #5: Answer me.

Adult #6: Watch your tone with me, please...

Adult #7: Can you turn that down?

Adult #5: Answer me, please.

Adult #8: Can you play a bit quieter?

Adult #9: I think this is an outdoor kind of game. Take it outside!

Adult #10: Indoor voices, please.

Adult #5: Why aren't you answering me?! *(Pause)* Are you even inside? I think you're outside *(Pause)* And...I am talking to myself.

SCENE 2:

The sounds of the outdoors in the city can be heard. This scene is also a vocal collage, but it is outside. Imagine car noises, other kids, birds and the breeze overlapping these statements from motorists in cars and pedestrians on foot. There is the sound of gathering scooters as kids start to take to the streets.

Motorist #1: Hey, kid! Get that thing off the road!

Pedestrian #1: Sidewalks are for walking!

Pedestrian #2: Scooters should be on the road.

Motorist #2: Slow down on that thing, you're gonna get hit!

The sound of a car horn blaring

Motorist #3: Kids these days!

Pedestrian #3: Would you take that to the park?!

Motorist #4: These streets are for cars only!

Pedestrian #4: You're gonna get yourself killed on that thing!

Pedestrian #5: At least you have a helmet on.

Pedestrian #6: Slow down!

Pedestrian #7: Keep to the right hand side.

Adult #5: Answer me!

Motorist #4: Hey look! It's a scooter gang!

Adult #5: Hey kids!

Pedestrians #8: Those things cause such a racket.

Pedestrian #1: Sidewalks are for walking!

Pedestrian #2: Scooters should be on the road.

Adult #5: Kids!!

Motorist #5: Go to the park or somethin'!

SCENE 3:

Link is talking to the ice cream man, who they call Scoops. Scoops comes to the neighbourhood every day at the same time. Scoops has established a strong connection to all the kids in the community. Usually, Scoops just listens to the kids, mostly as they enjoy a soft serve cone or something equally sugary and delicious. Link chats with Scoops every day. Scoops is a pretty quiet person and a great listener.

Link: I swear it's the creaky floors and my neighbours on the other side of the wall...but they just get so fiery, you know. It's like the house was ok when I was deep into school stuff, but now with the summer, and the heat, and we don't have a pool or anything and....agh, don't get me started on the city pool! *(eats some ice cream)* Mmm, I like your new raspberry dip...it's like cotton candy. It makes me think of the Ex. Huh, the Ex. Well, that'll be ex'ed this year. Come on Scoops, that was a joke! But like, as I was saying, I just feel like there's no space for kids. Even when we come out on the street, it's all shouts and honks. The sidewalk isn't ours, the parks are getting taken over by huge distanced groups of people doing some sort of exercise torture in the sun, the pool is closed all the time for fuses and litter and just junk, we can't be at the malls for long because they don't want people "congregating." We know how to distance, you know! We even called our gang...The Distancers! Cool, right? Maybe you can name a dessert after us. *(selling the idea)* "The Distancers Blue Raspberry Dip!" You like it? *(Pause)* It'll grow on you, I'm sure. Scoops, thanks for the chat. Same time tomorrow?

The sound of the ice cream truck firing up and the music playing is heard, as Scoops drives away.

SCENE 4:

The sound of Scoops pulling into the next neighbourhood is heard. Marquis runs up to Scoops' truck.

Marquis: *(exasperated, but speaking in a bad Southern accent stolen from television)* Thank heavens you are here! Finally this traffic slows for a moment. *(Pause, loses the accent)* Yes, I said "thank heavens," it's my new character, I call her Tumbleweed. You like her? *(Looks for a reaction from Scoops)* You probably like her more than *Captain Knuckles*, right?

Scoops nods

Yeah, he was a bit intense. But fun to play. He also was helpful at yelling at all the cars that use our street as a shortcut. They go so fast and sometimes even go the wrong way on the street. *(Taking on Captain Knuckles' militant voice)* Are you aware that this is a one way residential street!!! *(switching back)* They never are, and the drivers, even though they're breaking several laws, make it look like the kids are making the mistake. I hate the looks they give as they drive down my street, going the wrong way, and speeding. They sass me for wearing my pants low....at least I can read "One Way." Besides there is more than one way to wear pants! *(back in Captain Knuckles' voice)* It just makes me angry! *(Pause, still in Captain Knuckles' voice)* Could I also

have a watermelon slush with some chocolate soft serve in it...Maybe you could call that the Captain Knuckles Float....just saying.

Scoops had already predicted the order and has it ready.

(Drops the Captain Knuckles' voice) Whoa! You're good. Here you go (hands over the money), I did some work for one of my neighbours to get a little tip for you. Thanks, Scoops. See you tomorrow.

The sound of the ice cream truck firing up and the music playing is heard, as Scoops drives away.

SCENE 5:

Scoops is handing back a clipboard to Madz.

Madz: Thanks Scoops! This means a lot. *(Madison looks to Scoops' signature)* Oh man, this is your real name, right? *(Struggles a bit to read it)* Is that a Greek name? It's kind of beautiful, like a song. *(Pause)* I'm sorry, was that offensive to you? I just really like names and where they come from and to be honest, I forgot that your name wasn't actually Scoops. *(Pause)* Thank you for signing my petition, it's due to the City Councillor today and with your signature, I have more than 400 names. This should allow us to host a Black Lives Matter Kids' March on our street next week. They have rejected my other emails and letters, but a petition means business, right. Thank you for the ice cream and your signature. See you tomorrow! *(in Greek)* Kaló apógevma! I think that's right, right? Good Afternoon in Greek?

Scoops nods with a sense of appreciation.

One of the lunch monitors at my school is Greek and she teaches me stuff.

The sound of the ice cream truck firing up and the music playing is heard, as Scoops drives away.

SCENE 6:

Two weeks have passed since the last scene. It is now in the last weeks of summer. In fact it is the day after the 57th Anniversary of Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" Speech. This was a day when many Black Lives Matter movements organized marches to connect their current efforts to the energy of that speech and to acknowledge how much work still needs to be made. Scoops is being interviewed by a local news reporter from his truck. Scoops speaks with a thick Greek accent.

Reporter: So, how did you start all of this?

Scoops: Sorry?

Reporter: The massive protest that happened yesterday, how did the local ice cream man start it?

Scoops: Oh, it was not me.

Reporter: That's not what the kids say.

Scoops: These kids and all kids are humble. They often think it is the grown ups who must give them the way, but this was them. I think they are the Distancers, right? That is what they call themselves.

Reporter: What do you mean?

Scoops: They are a group. They are organized and they had a petition and everything.

Reporter: But how did you help them?

Scoops: I was like a kid with them. You know "passing notes?"

Reporter: Like in school?

Scoops: Yes, I passed notes for them, from one street to another. Then the notes became pamphlets, the pamphlets became posters and now, I have to stop selling in prime time to talk to you. Can I get you something? Maybe I can at least turn this into a sale.

Reporter: Well, there you have it folks, Ernie the ice cream man, a bit humble himself about how he brought the kids of Toronto together for such a powerful statement--

Scoops: My name is Hermes or, if you are putting words on the screen, Hermokratos. Ernie is what people call me when they aren't really listening. I hope (*looks right to the camera*) I really hope that everyone at home is listening to these kids and what they are saying--

Reporter: Back to you in the studio.

Reporter makes a cue to the camera person and leaves without thanking Scoops.

SCENE 7:

This scene happens the day before Scoops was interviewed by the reporter. This is the day of the protest, as Madz, Link & Marquis talk to a huge group of young people who have filled the street.

The three of them speak to the group through orange pylons so everyone can hear. All three of them hold scripts that they worked on with their families ahead of time.

Madz: It's a very hot day and we wanted to thank you all for being here and for respecting the rules of social distancing.

Link: Everyone looks so awesome in their black t-shirts and hats. We realize it makes it extra hot in the sun, but you look amazing.

Marquis: Seeing all the scooters is so cool and I think it kinda shows that we're here to be together, but we're also here to move.

Madz: We wanted to take a minute to thank the grown-ups in our lives. Many of them helped us get our thoughts down and got us ready for today.

Link: Things have been so wild, we appreciate our parents' perspectives.

Marquis: And sometimes they know the right word for something, when we can't find it.

Madz: Grown-ups around us sometimes have difficulty figuring out what we can know and what's too much for us. The world has been standing up, boycotting, cancelling events and kneeling in honour of Black lives. These lives have been wrongfully taken from this world, most often at the hands of police. I can understand why our parents struggle to know what to tell us. Maybe to them, it seems complicated, and we seem young. But we're old enough to know that this treatment of Black people is wrong!

Link: Some of you may be old enough or lucky enough to have phones. Whether your parents have shown you or not, you may have even seen videos that you will never be able to forget. Videos of violence. If you've seen them, please don't share them. This keeps hurting Black people, to see it over and over again, all the violence. Instead, focus on standing up and stopping that violence.

Marquis: When I met Madz last week, I didn't know much about the details of what's happening in the world, I'd heard some, but not enough, and the three of us did some research together.

Madz: We picked today on purpose. We are here to honour a speech by Martin Luther King Jr.. A speech that happened 57 years ago. And we're not just here because it was amazing, or popular.

Link: It was amazing, and I'm sure some of you have heard it, because it is pretty well known. But that's not what we mean, it's not just about how amazing it was.

Marquis: We wanted to honour the speech today, because people still aren't listening.

Link: You know what it's like to be fed up?! I mean a kind of fed up that's centuries in the making. That kind of fed up. I know that I can't even imagine it. I have to admit that I can't. And the Black community does, they know. They're telling us. So the speech, it came at a time when people were so fed up they protested, they marched, they put their lives at risk. That wasn't the first or last time that happened either. And, can you imagine, after all that, 57 years later, and no real change? 57 years of being fed up and seeing the same problems get worse? I don't think I can. But here we are. It's true. And if you add to that the history of civil rights abuse, of slavery, well...that's a real deep down kind of fed up that I can't imagine.

Madz: Some of this may still be new to you if it's never affected you directly. Or if it doesn't come up much in your houses or families. When we roll out to our different neighbourhoods, you'll have group leaders that'll share some videos with you in your distanced groups and you can continue to talk and ask questions. These videos and the discussions look at the ways to understand the movements and how to make a change and be an anti-racist.

Marquis: It sounds like some of you are here because of Black Panther. Chadwick Boseman, the actor who plays Black Panther, in the Marvel movies, he lost the fight to cancer yesterday. He was so much more than an Avenger, but if that's why you're here, welcome. We hope you learn more today about what he means for the Black community, what a Black superhero means, and why the sadness about his passing is so deep. We can mourn together in his spirit and in the spirit of Martin Luther King. In the spirit of Huey P. Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, and Bobby Seale, the founders of the Black Panthers Movement, we stand. Today as a community of young people, we can move forward together.

Link: I was so sad to hear that he had died, but Madz told me that the Black Panthers were a movement too. All the fists you see raised in the air, that is a Black Panther symbol of strength and protest. So, I hope as we stand today, taking up space on our streets, making noise on our streets, with our fists crossed on our chests like the Black Panther, that we can look down to our feet and see our scooters laying on the ground pointing like an arrow forward.

Marquis: Sometimes the grown-ups struggle to understand us. I'm so happy to see some grown-ups joining our group today, and I wanted to thank you for standing at the back. We acknowledge you, but we also wanted you to take a bit of a break from the front, because right now, this isn't about you. It is about our voices, the voices of young people and what we must do. Because I'm sure you grown-ups have heard Martin Luther King's speech a few times and, like a song you've heard a bunch, it now plays around you and I don't think you really listen to the lyrics anymore. But you still swear you know them all. Martin Luther King's message, Chadwick Boseman's example as an activist and a Black man, these songs are new to us. These songs are not background noise to us. These songs are making us move forward.

Link: There are so many voices I am listening to, thanks to listening to these two recommend them: Angela Davis, John Boyega, Michelle and Barack, the players of the WNBA and the NBA. (yells) Go Raptors!

Madz: I can tell you how beautiful this image of this street filled with all of you is. As other groups gather to raise awareness for Jacob Black, Breonna Taylor & Regis Korchinski-Paquet, we too will learn about them. Because we need to know and we can understand. Yes, death and tragedy are scary, but not knowing leads to ignorance and laziness. We may be a lot of things but can't be ignorant or lazy.

Link: So, thank you to everyone who came and we hope you follow members of the Distancers back to your local park, where we will talk about some of the recent violence and what people are doing to be heard.

Marquis: Adults are welcome on the outside of these distanced circles to listen, but to let the young voices have space to learn, question and connect. It may be hard for you, but we know you can do it. If you aren't Black, maybe take some time to step back too, sometimes you need to listen and listen hard to the perspectives that are not your own. Especially if you're White.

Madz: I want to leave you with one more story. This is not about Jacob Blake, Chadwick Boseman or Martin Luther King Jr., this is a part of my story. You all know Scoops, right?

There is the sound of huge cheers.

Yes! Let's give another for Scoops!

More cheers.

When I got my proposal for a permit to hold a street march was rejected, even though I had a petition full of signatures, I was sad. And angry. Probably the worst email I've ever received. I went out for a walk. Scoops was the first person I saw as I wandered around, because everybody knows you can set your clock by Scoops' truck. He knew right away that something was up. Now the chocolate dipped in butterscotch with sprinkles, which I call Madz-Skillz, did help a bit, but it meant a lot that Scoops asked me about my petition. He had signed it and he was curious. I told him about the email. Now you all know that Scoops is a man of few words.

Sounds of agreement from the crowd.

But Scoops asked me to step back from the ice cream truck. He took off his mask and he said. Now I'm paraphrasing, but you know. He told me that no one had ever treated him like a citizen in the city until the day that I asked him to sign my petition. On that day he looked down at his signature, Hermakratos Angelos. He realized that this was the first time that he shared his name with anyone other than his family or the government. He was so well known as Scoops, that no one knew him as that, and when he drives a cab, which is his other job, he always goes by the name Ernie, because it's "easier" for Torontonians to pronounce. He said...

Madz continues to tell the story but now the voice of Scoops has taken over telling it. Madz continues to gesture for the story but we only hear Scoops.

Scoops: I gave you my name on that petition because I believe in you, not the city. The city lets me down all the time with potholes, construction, tickets and the stupid TTC. I feel like Toronto talks so much about what it is trying to be, but it is still a city where people can't find a home they can afford, jobs are still very hard to find, we could do so much better at celebrating all the cultures that call this place home and don't let me forget the stupid TTC! I'm sorry, I should watch my language. You were trying to play by the rules and I still believe in you. The city thinks you are some kid who does not know what they are about, but I gave you my name. You were trying to play by the rules and sometimes the rules are...I'm sorry, but sometimes the rules are stupid. If the rules are not ready you need to break the rules.

You may not know, as I am sure your Greek is not where it should be (*he gives a joking smile*) but my name has a meaning. Herma means Hermes, who is the messenger of the Gods. Kratos means power. Now, this name has always treated me well, but now I have given my name to you. You, not that telephone in your hand, you. You have my name, you are the messenger of power.

And, well, actually... there is one more thing I can do for you. I can introduce you to a few of my other loyal customers in the neighbourhood.

Madz: In meeting Link with their Scooter Gang and Marquis with a mind for making a scene and planning scripts for our conversation circles, we hope that we have done Scoop's name justice. Hermakratos Angelos. We have tried to honour every name on the petition. Thank you for being here and thank you for standing with us this whole time. You know the drill, follow your Distancer and keep talking and sharing.

There is a great cheer from the crowd with the sound of tonnes of scooters being picked up.

SCENE 8:

The play closes with a vocal collage. This is a collection of voices from the Adult Chorus. If you are listening just feel free to close your eyes and imagine the different characters who are playing these voices. If you are performing the voices, have fun playing different roles, as each voice should be different.

Adult 1: Look at that huge group of scooters!

Adult 2: Is it a race? Maybe for charity or something.

Adult 1: They're all dressed in black.

Motorist #1: (*honking*) Hey kids, what are you doing?!

Passenger: *(hitting the driver)* That's a protest, stop honking!

Pedestrian #1: Watch out for traffic! This is a busy road!

Pedestrian #2: Why don't you just help, it's pretty easy to get traffic to stop? Come on.

Motorist #2: I'm calling the cops!!

Passenger #2: Why would you call the cops?

Motorist #2: They're disturbing the peace!!

Passenger #2: They're scooting peacefully down the street in their own town. They're engaging in civil disobedience.

Motorist #2: Well, I'm calling the cops! *(picks up his phone and dials)*

Passenger #2: The truth of this moment is that you're the only one breaking the law right now. Put the phone away, you're driving. Maybe slowly, but you're still driving.

Motorist #2: Well, who's gonna deal with this?!

Passenger #2: You mean a group of young citizens engaging in their civil right to speech? In fact, I think based on the evident reality, the police are the last people we should call. Now, phone away!

Adult #3: You should be at home!

Adult #4: They're getting involved! Maybe they feel like they've been at home enough.

Adult #3: Well, they should keep it to themselves.

Adult #4: They're quietly scooting down the street with signs and it looks like they have a plan for where they're going. Maybe you should keep your noise to yourself.

The quiet sound of the Scoop's ice cream truck can be heard.

The End