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TONY AWARD WINNER

★ JOHN LEGUIZAMO ★

LATIN HISTORY
FOR MORONS

Directed by TONY TACCONE

DIRECT FROM BROADWAY

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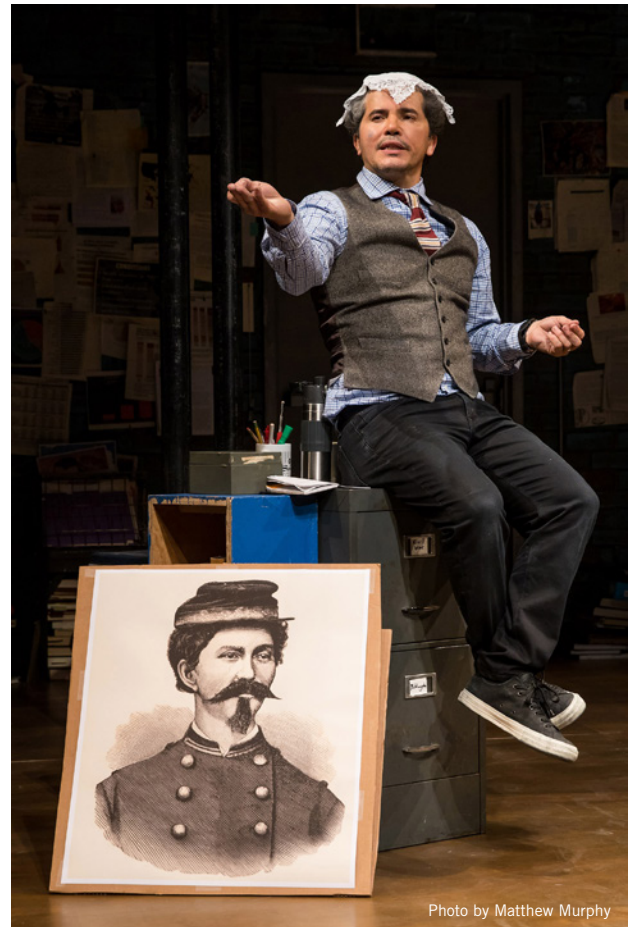
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**“So, yo ever since
my son got bullied,
yo, I went on a
intellectual jihad
So now I’m a self-
professed ghetto
scholar holla!”**

—*Latin History for Morons*

SYNOPSIS

John Leguizamo is furious to discover his son is being bullied by a racist classmate—the same “racial rite of passage” John himself experienced back in the day. He wants to teach his son how to stand up for himself and be proud of his heritage. But John quickly realizes he can’t help his son until he learns more about his own history. *Latin History for Morons* invites us along as John takes a deep dive into the past, determined to discover the heroes that represent the best of Latinx culture.

Along the way, he discovers the reason he doesn’t know his history: it’s because his history isn’t taught. With humor, heart, and fury, this “self-professed ghetto scholar” is on a quest to entertain and enlighten.

“It makes me feel like I’m doing a public service by giving people hope that we can overcome all this, and that unity is better than division.”

—John Leguizamo



Photo by Matthew Murphy

ARTISTS BIOS



Photo ©Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

JOHN LEGUIZAMO

John Leguizamo is the writer and performer of *Latin History for Morons*. He has become well-known for his theatrical solo shows that address issues dealing with Latin

life in America and beyond.

Born in Bogotá, Colombia, John was brought to the United States when he was 4 years old. He was raised in the Jackson Heights neighborhood of Queens in New York City. As a young person, John “experimented with milder forms of delinquency.” His parents sent him back to Colombia for a year hoping this would remedy the situation. Upon his return, John’s “penchant for mischief” caused his teachers to recommend that he join an acting class—which eventually led him to New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. His time there was brief and, afterward, he joined a Manhattan comedy troupe called Off Center Theater. He also performed stand-up in the mid-to-late 1980s.

He began to find success in film and television. In 1989 he was cast in his first film, Brian De Palma’s *Casualties of War*. He went on to appear in movies including *Die Hard II*, *Regarding Henry*, *Super Mario Brothers*, and *To Wong Fu, Thanks For Everything! Julie Newmar*.

John became frustrated with the way Latin characters were portrayed in film and television—mostly as criminals, thugs, and drug dealers. He turned to theatre to break those stereotypes. He began to create solo shows that contained

material from his real-life experiences. Through these performances, he presented a variety of character portraits and offered perspectives that transcended the entertainment industry’s limited views.

His first solo show, *Mambo Mouth*, opened Off-Broadway in 1991 and was eventually picked up by HBO’s Comedy Theater Series. He won numerous awards for this piece including an Obie, an Outer Critics Circle Award, a Vanguard Award, and a CableACE Award.

John went on to create a series of solo shows that addressed personal and cultural issues, including *Spic-O-Rama*, *Freaks*, *Sexaholix...A Love Story*, and *Ghetto Clown*.

In 2017, John premiered *Latin History for Morons* at The Public Theater in New York City. In 2018, it was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Play. That same year, John received a Special Tony Award honoring the artistic contributions he has made throughout his career with his solo work. He has also received many other awards and honors, including *Smithsonian Magazine’s* 2018 American Ingenuity Award in the history category.

John considers himself an artist, not an entertainer. He wants to open eyes with his work and change minds and hearts. He finds theatre to be the only place where he is allowed to tell his stories the way he wants to, without having to grapple with the “gatekeepers” of film and television. It’s a place where he can take risks and fully express himself, unfiltered. John also appreciates the visceral connection that theatre creates with the audience.

ARTISTS BIOS

TONY TACCONE

Tony Taccone is the director of *Latin History for Morons*. For the past 21 years, he served as Artistic Director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre, one of the most prestigious regional theatres in the United States.

Before coming to Berkeley Rep, he was Artistic Director of the Eureka Theatre in San Francisco, where he commissioned a short chamber piece by Tony Kushner. This eventually evolved into the epic American drama, *Angels in America*. Taccone co-directed (with Oskar Eustis) the World premiere of *Angels in America* at the Mark Taper Forum in 1992.

John Leguizamo asked Taccone to direct *Latin History for Morons*, and they collaborated on the show for more than five years. “He’s one of the great storytellers, artistic directors, of our time,” said Leguizamo of Taccone, “and we’ve had such a blast. We’re like Laurel and Hardy and Abbott and Costello when we get into a room.”

Taccone has teamed up with Leguizamo for another stage piece, a new musical entitled *Kiss My Aztec!*, which blends salsa and hip-hop to tell the story of a 16th-century revolt against the Spanish.

REQUIRED READING LIST

JOHN LEGUIZAMO'S

*Required Reading List***BALLER BIOGRAPHIES**

Study the lives of famous Latin figures, including the woman who dressed as a man to help her husband fight the Civil War, the monk who wrote the first history of Latin America, and many, many more.

Bartolomé de Las Casas: His Life, Aposolate, and Writings
by Francis Augustus Macnutt

Bolívar: American Liberator
by Marie Arana

Bolívar: Liberator of a Continent
by Bill Boyd

Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life
by Jon Lee Anderson

Death of a Revolutionary: Che Guevara's Last Mission
by Richard L. Harris

Hell to Eternity
by Edward S. Aarons

The Woman in Battle: The Civil War Narrative of Loreta Janeta Velázquez, Cuban Woman and Confederate Soldier
by Loreta Janeta Velázquez

Simon Bolívar, the Liberator
by Guillermo A. Sherwell

OUR INDIGENOUS ANCESTORS

From Aztecs to Atahualpa, these books teach about the epic empires and proud people that flourished in the Americas before any explorer ever “discovered” the New World.

1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus
by Charles C. Mann

1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created
by Charles C. Mann

500 Nations: An Illustrated History of North American Indians
by Alvin M. Josephy, Jr.

A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya
by David Freidel & Linda Schele

Ancient Civilizations of the Americas
by Antony Mason

Aztec
by Gary Jennings

Aztecs: An Interpretation
by Inga Clendinnen

Incans Aztecs Mayans
by John Holzmman

Indian America: A Traveler's Companion
by Eagle/Walking Turtle

Lost Cities of the Maya
by Claude Baudez, Sydney Picasso, and Caroline Palmer

Maya: The Riddle and Rediscovery of a Lost Civilization
by Charles Gallenkamp

ONLINE VERSION*(Continued on page 7)*

REQUIRED READING LIST

Exploring Mesoamerica

by John M.D. Pohl

Pre-Colombian Cities

by Jorge E. Hardoy

The Ancient Sun Kingdoms of the Americans

by Victor W. von Hagen

The Aztec Treasure House: New and Selected Essays

by Evan S. Connell

The Maya

by Michael D. Coe and Stephen D. Houston

The New Archaeology and the Ancient Maya

by Jeremy A. Sabloff

Warlords of the Ancient Americas: Central America

by Peter G. Tsouras

Yurupari: Studies of an Amazonian Foundation Myth

by Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff

by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble

Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence Against Mexicans in the United States 1848-1928

by William D. Gerrigan and Clive Webb

Guns, Germs, and Steel

by Jared Diamond, Ph.D.

Latin America in a New World

edited by Abraham F. Lowenthal and Gregory F. Treverton

Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race

by Laura E. Gomez

Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent

by Eduardo Galeano

Powers of the Orishas: Santería and the Worship of Saints

by Migene González-Wippler

Santería: The Religion by Migene González-Wippler Spain

by Jan Morris

The Apologetic History of the Indies

by Bartolomé de las Casas

The History of Latin America: Collision of Cultures

by Marshall C. Eakin

Viva La Raza: A History of Chicano Identity and Resistance

by Yolanda Alaniz & Megan Cornish

Zapata and the Mexican Revolution

by John Womack

THE REAL LATIN HISTORY

These books trace the unique history of Latin Americans in the US and explore the ways American and European peoples and cultures intersected after 1492.

A People's History of the United States

by Howard Zinn

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States

by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America

by John Charles Chasteen

Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement

by F. Arturo Rosales

Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil

by James Lockhart & Stuart B. Schwartz

Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain

by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, translated and illustrated

WE WRITE TOO, COÑO!

What, you thought this list would be complete without giving props to Latin literary masters? These powerful works from Latin writers run the gamut from short stories to plays to poetry.

Back on the Road: A Journey Through Latin America

by Ernesto "Che" Guevara

(Continued on page 8)

REQUIRED READING LIST

Cuentos: Stories by Latinas
edited by Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga,
and Mariana Romo-Carmona

Growing Up Chicana/o: An Anthology
by Tiffany Ana Lopez

Guerilla Warfare
by Ernesto “Che” Guevara

La Publicidad Que Me Parió
by Gabriel Dreyfus

The Labyrinth of Solitude
by Octavio Paz

Nuestra América
by Jose Martí

Selected Writings
by Jose Martí, translated by Esther Allen

Short Eyes
by Miguel Piñero

The Comeback
by Ed Vega

*Walking the Red Road on Chicanismo: Including Chicano
Identity Teatro Plays*
by Ysidro Roman-Macias

*War Cry on a Prayer Feather: Prose and Poetry
of The Ute Indians*
by Nancy Wood

*Pimps, Hos, Playa Hatas, and All the Rest of My Hollywood
Friends: My Life*
by John Leguizamo

*Politics & Privilege in a Mexican City
(Study in Comparative Policy)*

by Richard R. Fagen and William S. Tuohy

The Ghost of Che Guevara
by Jason Webb

*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age
of Colorblindness*
by Michelle Alexander

*The New York Young Lords and the Struggle
for Liberation*
by Darrel Wanzer-Serrano

*The Works of John Leguizamo: Freak, Spic-o-rama, Mambo
Mouth, and Sexaholix*
by John Leguizamo

EXTRACURRICULAR READING

A statistical exploration of Latino life in the US. A novel about a Colombian guerilla. A “Semi-Demi-Quasi-Pseudo Autobiography.” These texts go beyond any single genre or theme, and include works from our ghetto scholar!

Freak: A Semi-Demi-Quasi-Pseudo Autobiography
by John Leguizamo

Latino Stats
by Idelisse Malavé & Esti Giordani

Mambo Mouth
by John Leguizamo

**“And I didn’t know to
how deal...So I ran
away. And my drug
of choice...Books.”**

—*Latin History for Morons*

THE STORY

HOW THE STORY BEGAN...

“My son was in middle school, and he was being bullied—racially profiled—and instead of having him beat the bullies up, I wanted him to fight them with words and information and facts. So I started doing a lot of research, and the thing that happened was I was the one being un-moronized and de-stupified and un-dummified. And I was the one who felt more empowered. It was incredible because it was just a domino effect. The amount of information I started to find started to double and triple and quadruple, to grow and grow. I couldn’t believe the incredible amount of Latin contributions to America and the world, it was just so huge. I always felt so othered and second-class, and all of a sudden I was like, wait a minute, how is this possible with all these contributions from Latin people?” —John Leguizamo

HOW THE STORY IS TOLD...

John Leguizamo’s *Latin History for Morons* is a solo show. Even though there is only one actor onstage during the almost two-hour performance, audience members experience close to 50 different characters. John transforms himself into a multitude of personas using costume pieces (wigs, crowns, helmets, jackets, shirts), props (pieces of chalk, pencils, handkerchiefs), vocal work (accents, lisps, deep voices), and very specific physical aspects (being bowlegged, signing, sewing).

DURING THE PLAY YOU’LL MEET...

1. Teeny (John’s wife)
2. Boo (John’s daughter)
3. Buddy (John’s son)
4. Billy Jackson (bully at school, lisp)
5. Mr. Jackson (dad of bully, lisp, deep voice)
6. Teacher (high school, Mr. Flynn, piece of chalk)
7. Crazy Legs (student)
8. Lil John (self as teen)
9. Momma (John’s mom)
10. Uncle Sammy (has hearing impairment; signs)
11. George Santayana (20th century philosopher; Spanish accent)
12. Hindu
13. Spaniards (conquistador helmet)
14. Bob Ross (cool white guy with a fro from cable television)
15. Long Island Mom (buying art)
16. King Philip of Spain (crown)
17. Cholo Carib (Taino in the Carribean)
18. Columbus (Guido, lifts up collar)
19. Tyson (Mike Tyson, boxer)
20. Scottish Guy
21. Lamb
22. Moctezuma
23. Cortes (with pencil)
24. Aztec General
25. Conquistador
26. Dr. T. (therapist)
27. Sigmund Freud (wears glasses)
28. Pizzaro
29. Friar Valverde (wears jacket as hood)
30. Atahualpa (King of the Incas)
31. Inca #2
32. Darren (John’s best friend)
33. Guido (with a nasal voice)
34. Headmaster (at Buddy’s school)
35. Alabaman Moderator (with a Clinton stammer)
36. De Tocqueville (French philosopher from the 1800s; with a French accent)
37. Andrew Jackson (President of the United States; bowlegged and tough)
38. Native (American)
39. Aunt (of Loreta Velazquez; hanky on head, sews)
40. Husband (of Loretta Velazquez)
41. Loreta (Velazquez: Cuban-born woman who disguised herself as a male soldier during the American Civil War; puts on wig, pulls out shirt like a dress)
42. Cuban Honey
43. Buford/Loreta (Loreta as Harry T. Buford, Lieutenant of the Confederate Army)

COMPREHENSION

This section includes background information about the setting and subject matter of the play. This information can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.

“Hispanic, Latin American, Latina/o, Latino@, Latinx...Oh My!”

The following contains excerpts from [“An Overview of Latino and Latin American Identity”](#) from *The Iris: Behind the Scenes at the Getty*. The article was written by Emma Turner-Trujillo, Marissa Del Toro, and April Ramos. It was originally published in September 2017 to accompany *Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA*, a “far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles.” Arts institutions from all over Southern California participated in this collaboration from September 2017 – January 2018.

Latinx: The terms Latino and Latina are gender-identified. So a male-identifying individual with direct or ancestral origins from Latin America may identify as Latino, while a female-identifying individual would be Latina. However, for individuals who fall outside the gender binary of male/female, Latino/Latina, the term **Latinx** is an additional option to express gender identity that exist outside the constraints of the binary.

Hispanic: The term Hispanic was first introduced by the US Census Bureau in 1970, after groups such as the National Council of La Raza advocated for the category as an alternative to classifying Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican immigrants as “white.” Today **Hispanic** covers people of a variety of ethnic identities who have origins in Spanish-speaking countries—basically Spain and all of Latin America (minus Brazil, where the official language is Portuguese). The US Census Bureau now counts both Hispanics and Latinos in the same category.

What’s the difference between Latinx and Hispanic?

Primarily, the reference to Spain. Hispanic refers to *linguistic* origins from a Spanish-speaking country, in particular Spain. Latin[x] refers to people living in the USA who have *ethnic* and *cultural* origins from a country in Latin America.

Hispanic, Latin American, Latino/a, and Latinx are not considered racial terms or descriptors of race; these terms are used only to describe ethnic and cultural origins.

To sum up, the heritage of Latin America blends indigenous, European, African, and Asian peoples, languages, and cultural traditions. There is no *one* Latin America, or Latino or Latin American culture—rather, it is *all* these things.

“Alright, so let’s start by looking at Latin DNA. So I found out that we Latin people, are all at least 40% Indian...And we are also 25% black cause when after the conquistadores had enslaved all the Indians and they died off, they imported black people to fill in their vacancies. And we’re also 25% white, 25% Jewish, 25% Lebanese, and 40% IDKWTF...For a grand total of 180%. And that’s us Latino people.”

—*Latin History for Morons*

PLACE

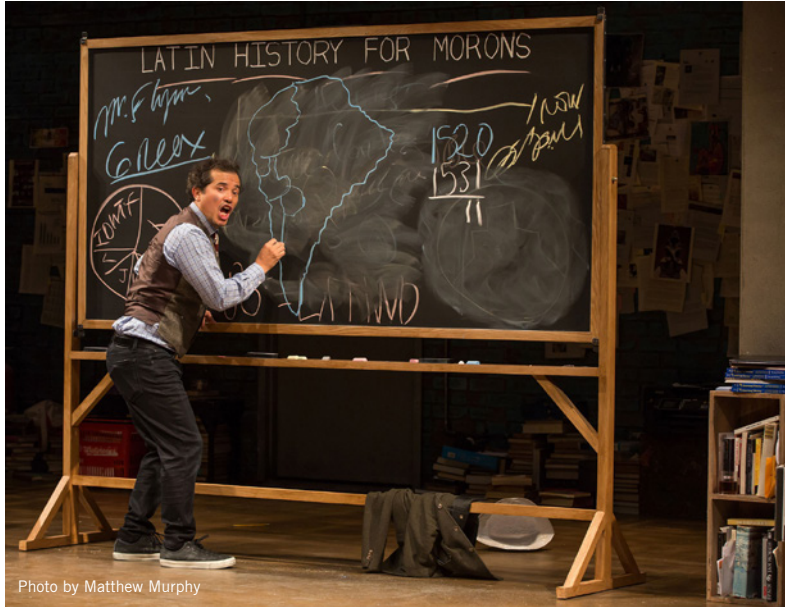


Photo by Matthew Murphy

“OK, extra credit for anybody here who can name the five countries that made up the Incan empire? Anybody?”

—*Latin History for Morons*

Throughout his history lesson, John mentions many geographical locations that are involved in the story of Latinx history.

In “An Overview of Latin and Latino Identity,” Turner-Trujillo, Del Toro, and Ramos go on to further clarify what is meant by Latin America, and how that definition has changed over time.

The first use of the term “Latin America” can be traced back to the 1850s in the writings of Michel Chevalier (1806–1879), who employed the term as a way to differentiate the ‘Latin’ peoples from the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ peoples of the Americas, using language to create a geographic distinction.

By Chevalier’s definition, all American nations that speak a language of ‘Latin’ origin should be defined as ‘Latin American.’ However, the United States, where Spanish is and was one of the dominant languages, is not technically considered part of Latin America, even though in 1847, Mexico encompassed

territories as far north as Oregon and as far east as Utah.

‘Latin America’ came into wide use only in the middle of the twentieth century. Indigenous peoples inhabited the Americas for thousands of years before the European conquest, and likely did not think of themselves as part of a single geographic entity.

What we consider today as Latin America has been shaped by hundreds of years of European imperialist rule, battles for independence from colonial powers, civil and world wars, and both voluntary and involuntary migration.

You can offer your students a mini-lesson in geography. Find out what they know about the location of these countries by having them fill in the blank map templates we have provided. Afterward, as a class, review exactly where all of this history took place.



LATIN AMERICA



LATIN AMERICA



PLACE



[Map](#) labeled “America with those known parts in that unknowne worlde both people and manner of buildings,” 1631, John Speed, Abraham Goos, and George Humble. London: Are to be sold in Pops-head Alley against the Exchange by G. Humble. Digital image courtesy of Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center Collection, via [Digital Commonwealth](#). Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported license ([CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#))



[Mapa de los Estados Unidos de México](#): según lo organizado y definido por las varias actas del congreso de dicha república y construido por las mejores autoridades, John Disturnell. New York: J. Disturnell, 1847. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. 20540-4650

PEOPLE

John expresses his extreme outrage at the atrocities committed against the native people of the Americas. The number of people exterminated by the European invaders is difficult to wrap one's mind around. Below are brief descriptions of some of these key groups and the reasons for their demise.

CARIBBEAN

Tainos: The Tainos were the indigenous people of the Caribbean and Florida. They were an Arawak people who were the principal inhabitants of Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola (the Dominican Republic and Haiti), and Puerto Rico. The first Spanish colonists arrived with Columbus in 1492. By 1548, the Taino population had diminished to less than 500 due to diseases and harsh treatment from the Spaniards.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Aztecs: The Aztec people were a dominant force in Mesoamerica (the south-central region of pre-Columbian Mexico) starting in the beginning of the 13th century. With the arrival of Spanish colonists in the late 1400s, European diseases such as smallpox, mumps, and measles took a toll on the Aztecs. By 1520, these illnesses had reduced the population of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, by 40%. In 1521, Spanish colonialists, led by Hernán Cortés, captured the city of Tenochtitlan and imprisoned and killed the Aztec leader, Moctezuma. The Aztec language, Nahuatl, influenced modern-day Spanish and English with words like chili, avocado, chocolate, coyote, guacamole, and ocelot.

Mayans: The Mayan Empire was located in one area that covered all of the Yucatan Peninsula and what is present-day Guatemala. It was at the height of its power in the sixth century A.D. The Mayans made great achievements in agriculture, mathematics, architecture, and symbolic artwork. By A.D. 900, most of their stone cities were abandoned. Historians still debate what caused their dramatic decline.

SOUTH AMERICA

Incas: The Incan Empire was the largest and strongest of the Americas. It was at its height from 1400–1533 AD and extended across western South America. The Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro brought conquistadors to the region in 1526, and by 1532, took control of the land from the last Incan Emperor, Atahualpa. The Spanish invaders and an epidemic of European smallpox brought the Incan empire to collapse. Today, in spite of the decimation of the Incan culture, its language, Quechua, lives on, spoken by 8 million people.

North America

American Indians: This is the term used for all indigenous people living in North America. The Indians had been living on the continent for thousands of years before European colonists arrived. The Indians engaged the colonists through trade, and their governments interacted with those of the colonists. As the years went by, tensions with the United States over land ownership began to escalate. Land-hungry Americans wanted to benefit economically from the American Indian lands and increased pressure to remove the Indian people. They justified removal by framing the Indians as uncivilized and not able to take care of their own land. In 1830, Congress passed the [Indian Removal Act](#), making American Indian removal official US policy. The Indian people continued to resist this removal, but the US government used treaties, fraud, intimidation, and violence to remove about 100,000 American Indians and relocate them to west of the Mississippi, in Oklahoma. Many thousands died during this process.

GREAT CIVILIZATIONS

The indigenous people of the Americas had many great societal and cultural achievements that are often not recognized or celebrated fully. Below are links to lessons from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian to guide you and your students through an exploration of these milestones.

[“Living Maya Time”](#)

The Maya of Mesoamerica are renowned for their precise calendars and their knowledge of astronomy. Through systematic observations conducted over thousands of years, Maya skywatchers developed complex and accurate calendars that continue to mark agricultural and ceremonial cycles today.

[“The Great Inka Road”](#)

The Inka developed a sophisticated empire during the 15th century in the challenging geographical environments of South America, spanning large parts of current-day Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. To support the empire, the Inka built a vast road system applying innovative engineering techniques to address the challenges of transportation and communication and to facilitate the integration of distant communities. One such innovation is the suspended grass bridge, an Inka engineering solution that is attuned to the natural environment and focuses on tension vs. compression forces. Only one suspended grass bridge—Q’eswachaka—remains from Inka times and is rebuilt every year by Quechua communities in the Andes using knowledge passed down through the generations for the past 600 years.

[“Native People and the Land: The A:Shiwi \(Zuni\) People”](#)

Native people understand the relationship between nature and themselves in a distinct way. Among the world’s first environmentalists, American Indians have maintained the same special connection to the natural world for thousands of years: viewing themselves as equal with all life.

The A:shiwi people of New Mexico have thrived in a semi-arid environment for thousands of years by finding ways to grow crops with very little water. Indeed, the A:shiwi people have observed their environment for many generations and developed strategies to grow food successfully. They developed a dry-farming method called Latdekwi:we, or waffle gardening, which takes maximum advantage of what little precipitation the land receives.

GREAT CIVILIZATIONS

“And the end of the Incas really broke my heart cause here was our history—the foundation of a “brown race,” of a Latin people, with our own James Joyces, our own Dostoevskys and Prousts who lived deep in the Latin past, where we authored mythology, pioneered math and astronomy, excelled in sport, built pyramids and aqueducts that put us on the same level as all other great civilizations—but now completely obliterated.”

—*Latin History for Morons*

LISTS OF CONTRIBUTIONS (FROM *LATIN HISTORY FOR MORONS*)

Contributions of the Latinx people to the Europeans:

“Cause we also gave you: tomatoes, potatoes, chocolate (try living without that), corn, peanuts, barbecue, papaya, pineapple, avocado (where would hipsters be without their avocado toast?), beans, hammocks, canoes, hot chili peppers, tobacco, rubber, anesthesia, brain surgery, (and people from Jersey and Long Island) f-ing hockey!”

Contributions of the Europeans to the Latinx people:

“They gave us: Typhus, cholera, malaria, measles, tuberculosis, black plague, the common cold, diphtheria, chicken pox, whooping cough, leprosy, and don’t forget rats, roaches, and pigeons.”

“And the Incas were three times bigger than any empire at the time. Bigger than the Ming Dynasty, Bigger than Czarist Russia. So advanced that they even pioneered Socialism before Karl Marx and successfully. And they also had used a binary code that predated computers.”

—*Latin History for Morons*

HISTORICAL FIGURES

John mentions and portrays many historical figures during the course of the show. He gives a nod to Latin America's many great leaders, as well as to their enemies.

Moctezuma (or Montezuma II): ninth Aztec emperor, who defended the empire against Spanish explorer Hernán Cortéz

Hernán Cortéz: Spanish conquistador who overthrew the Aztec empire for the crown of Spain

Atahualpa: 13th, and last, emperor of the Incas

Francisco Pizarro: Spanish explorer who invaded the Incan Empire

Christopher Columbus: an Italian explorer and navigator, hired by Spain to find a western trade route to Asia. He is credited and blamed for opening up the Americas to European colonization.

- **“Columbus was the Donald Trump of the new world.”** —*Latin History for Morons*
- Today, Columbus is a controversial figure. He has long been honored for discovering the “New World” of the Western Hemisphere. However, historians have brought to light the ramifications of his explorations. The indigenous people of the Americas were opened up to extreme exploitation and annihilation through European colonization. Many states in the US that used to recognize [Columbus Day](#) are no longer doing so. Instead, they are passing legislation to recognize [Indigenous Peoples' Day](#).

Bloody Andrew Jackson: seventh President of the United States, who instituted policies that resulted in the forced migration of Native Americans

- **“So after Andrew Jackson passes the [Indian Removal Act of 1830](#) a third of the Cherokee people die that winter as they walk the Trail of Tears”** —Latin History for Morons
- [Link to Trail of Tears lesson](#) in the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian website.

Herbert Hoover: 31st President of the United States, who was in office during the stock market crash of 1929 and the early years of the Great Depression. He scapegoated Mexican and Mexican American people by blaming them for the poor economy. Hoover instituted the Mexican Repatriation Program of the 1930s, which expelled between 500,000 and 2 million people to Mexico, most of them United States citizens.

- **“And then they go and do it to us again with the ‘repatriation act’ of the 1930s when they blamed Mexican Americans for taking jobs during the depression. (Sound familiar?) So Herbert Hoover ‘repatriates’/deports 500,000/2 million Latin people who were born here. And those that didn’t leave were lynched. And from 1830 – 1930, 600 of us were lynched.”**
—*Latin History for Morons*

HISTORICAL FIGURES

Loreta Valazquez (aka Harry T. Buford, Lieutenant of the Confederate States Army): Cuban-born woman who eloped with a Texas army officer during the Civil War. She wanted to join her husband in the war, so she disguised herself as a Confederate soldier. She wrote a book about her experiences: *The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army*.

Che Guevara: Argentinian-born Cuban revolutionary leader. While traveling through South and Central America, he witnessed devastating oppression and poverty. This, along with his interest in Marxism, drove him to fight what he saw as capitalist exploitation of Latin America by the United States. He played a prominent role in the Cuban Revolution.

- **“I’ve got one more hero for you. A Latin rebel. Che Guevara, who said, “If you can feel the pain of injustice inflicted on anyone anywhere you are a comrade of mine!”**

—*Latin History for Morons*

Note: The Americas are named for **Amerigo Vespucci**, a historical figure who is not mentioned in *Latin History for Morons*. He was an Italian explorer/navigator who made several voyages to the Western Hemisphere from 1497–1504 and wrote letters to his friends in Italy about his adventures. In a letter from 1504, he referred to South America as “Mundus Novus,” or New World. This term was picked up by German mapmaker Martin Waldseemuller, who was not aware of Christopher Columbus’ 1498 voyage to South America. Waldseemuller mistakenly gave Vespucci credit for discovering South America and suggested the new land be called America to honor him.

Other historical figures mentioned in the play...

- King Philip of Spain
- Charles Mann
- General Bernardo Galvez
- Karl Marx
- Spanish Friar Bernardino de Sahagún
- Friar Vicente de Valverde
- Simón Bolívar
- Frida Kahlo
- Cesar Chavez
- Sonia Sotomayor
- Gandhi
- Howard Zinn
- Quetzalcoatl: ancient Aztec god
- Horace Greeley
- Frederick Douglas
- Shakespeare
- Sigmund Freud

Modern Figures

- Spalding Gray
- Harvey Weinstein
- Mark Zuckerberg
- Steve Jobs
- Billy Joel
- Marc Anthony
- Matt Lauer
- Betsy DeVos
- Alex Verdugo
- Donald Trump
- Menudo
- Ted Cruz
- Stephen Hawking
- Jared Diamond

CONNECTIONS

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, students' lives, and the world we live in. Each section contains quotations and questions that may be used for reflection, discussion, and/or writing prompts both before and after the performance.

HISTORY (PERSONAL, CULTURAL, RECENT, ANCIENT)

“Now I don’t know about you, but I’ve always felt like my history was being kept from me: in history textbooks, movies, television, everywhere.”

—*Latin History for Morons*

John covers 3,000 years of Latin history in under two hours. He is on a mission to fill our heads with information about Latinx culture that has been left out of the history books. Everything the indigenous cultures of the Americas achieved over centuries was wiped out in a relatively short amount of time. To add insult to injury, their cultural and societal achievements were erased and forgotten.

- **Who writes history?**
- **Who gets to decide what information is important, and what information can be ignored or forgotten?**
- **How can the history of ALL cultures and civilizations be protected and preserved? Why is it important to do so?**
- **How can protecting and preserving all cultures and societies affect how we live in the present day?**

“But at least my uncle did teach me about our ‘Latin Time Line.’ Which I’m going to share with you. Mayans at 1000 B.C.— And then we have NOW: And what is this? The age of Pit Bull. (sings) *Dame culo get it get it!* But what happened to us in those 3000 years between our great Indigenous civilization and us?”

—*Latin History for Morons*

LATIN HISTORY FOR MORONS

K-W-L CHART

KNOW What do I know about Latin History?	WHAT What do I want to learn about Latin History?	LEARN What did I learn about Latin History?

BEING A MORON/OWNING YOUR OWN EDUCATION

“Look, we’ve got a lot of work to do here—and very little time. Cause I gotta undo your whole education and the entire way you think. And it’s not gonna be easy cause [it’s] in there deep.”

—*Latin History for Morons*

Even though John’s delivery is extremely irreverent, the “classroom” he creates is a safe space. It’s captivating, too. He utilizes comedy to entertain AND to dive into some harsh truths about Latin history. He uses personal narrative to connect himself (and us) to the material. He also admits to his own lack of knowledge. He goes on to model taking responsibility for his own education and revels in the process.

- **Why learn history?**
- **How does history get told? Why does it get told in certain ways?**
- **If stories are connected to history, does it make it easier to learn? Why or why not?**
- **How do you go about owning your own education? Do you think it is your responsibility?**

“But where are our contributions? Where are they listed—or mentioned, honored, or even celebrated? Can you imagine if our contributions were written back into history? Written into textbooks. Can you imagine how America would see us? More importantly, can you imagine how we would see ourselves?”

—*Latin History for Morons*

HEROES

“And that’s why I felt extra guilty because I didn’t have a good comeback to defend my son with. But how could I? I didn’t have any heroes like captains, or generals from the Civil War growing up. No Latin ones anyway.”

—*Latin History for Morons*

John is on a quest to help his son with a school project about heroes. In the process, he realizes he has no good advice to offer. He then catapults himself deep into Latinx history to unearth heroes of his own.

- **Who are your heroes?**
- **Why do you look up to them?**
- **If they fail, are they still heroic? What does it mean to “heroically fail?”**

“We are all our own heroes, and we can be our own heroes. Especially with people of color, when we see so few of our heroes celebrated, we do kind of have to find that within ourselves.”

—*Latin History for Morons*

PARENTS/CHILDREN

“So how is it that he’s going through the same racial rite of passage as I did?”

—*Latin History for Morons*

John is dismayed to discover that his son is going through racist bullying—partly because it’s a reminder of how he felt when he was growing up. He is determined to teach his son how to advocate for himself, but John also ends up learning from the situation and from his children.

John is a good role model for his kids; he walks his talk. He admits to his own ignorance and goes on a journey to remedy that situation.

- **How have your parents/guardians helped you to grow? How have you helped them to grow?**
- **What is one thing your parents/guardians have learned from you?**
- **How have your parents/guardians “walked their talk”? Has that helped you walk your own talk?**

“...because as a wise, Puerto Rican-Colombian-Jewish-Aztec-Incan kid once told me, ‘Violence is the lowest form of communication.’”

—*Latin History for Morons*

BEING SEEN/BEING HEARD

“I grew up without seeing people who looked like me on screen, onstage, or in textbooks. Latinx people have been kept outta the conversation for centuries, and it’s ’bout time ya’ll hear what we gotta say!”

—John Leguizamo

- Do you feel you or your community have been kept “outta the conversation”? If so, what would you like to say? What do you need to say?
- What’s the first thing the world sees when they look at you?
- What is one thing the world cannot see until they take some time to get to know you?

GHETTO RAGE

“Urban Dictionary definition time: For those of you who don’t know what “ghetto rage” is: it’s when the whole world’s telling you that you’re worthless and you fight these microaggressions daily, but when you start drowning in this self-loathing burning rage...But you can’t even get mad angry as a Latin man cause Homeland Security, or the INS, or even the police could decide you’re a threat, and the next person to get shot or deported could be you, or me, ’cause Latin life is cheap in America!”

—Latin History for Morons

- Are familiar with the term “ghetto rage,” or is this a new idea to you? Why do you think this is so?
- Do you, or someone you know, experience ghetto rage? If so, what types of life experiences have caused this feeling to arise for you/him/her?
- What do you think is the most productive way to deal with ghetto rage?

“Cause what I should’ve said calmly, coolly and collectedly to Mr. Moderator, Mr. Texas is, ‘Sir, I’m not an outsider, we are not foreigners, sir, we’re a vast network of tribes that comingled, co-habitated, and freely migrated... We were so interconnected that when I had my DNA done, they couldn’t tell which tribe I was from, no, cause when I got my results back, all it said was Native American.”

—John Leguizamo

BULLYING

“My son was in middle school, and he was being bullied—racially profiled—and instead of having him beat the bullies up, I wanted him to fight them with words and information and facts.”

—John Leguizamo

John’s son was being bullied by a racist. The bully insulted him, belittled him, and called him racial slurs. He even enlisted the other students in his campaign to humiliate Buddy.

- **What do you think drives a bully?**
- **Why do we find reasons to hate each other?**
- **Why do others join in with the bully’s behavior? Or fail to advocate for the victim?**
- **How do you defend yourself? (With ideas? Witty comebacks? Physical violence? Ignoring the behavior?)**
- **How would you defend others?**

“And, Buddy, you know what, if you really think of the bully as sandpaper—sure of course he’s gonna scratch you and hurt you, but in the end, he’s gonna end up useless and you’re gonna end up polished.”

—Latin History for Morons

QUESTIONS ASKED BY PROFESSOR LEGUIZAMO

“So how is it that he’s going through the same racial rite of passage as I did?”

“Historic footnote time, yo! Why is all our art called ‘folk art’? And then all European art’s called ‘fine art’? And then ‘modern art’ is just our folk art gentrified?”

“I always felt so othered and second-class, and all of a sudden I was like, wait a minute, how is this possible with all these contributions from Latin people?”

“OK, extra credit for anybody here who can name the five countries that made up the Incan empire? Anybody?”

“But at least my uncle did teach me about our Latin timeline, which I’m going to share with you. Mayans at 1000 B.C.—and then we have NOW. And what is this? The age of Pit Bull. ‘*Dame culo get it get it!*’ But what happened to us in those 3,000 years between our great indigenous civilization and us?”

“Put us in zoos. You think I’m making this up? Fact check me!”

“Well, now, John, the question is, who’s your Latin hero? How do you expect to find a Latin hero for your son if you don’t have one for yourself?”

“Doc, you’re right, I’m brain washed, Doc. No, WORSE—I’ve been white washed! I can’t believe they got me! They got me in my own mind, in my deepest places, they got me believing that white people are better than me. Where the fuck did that shit come from? “

“We are so American it hurts. ‘Cause we’re the only minority that has fought in each and every single war this country has ever had. We have shed blood for America in each and every single one of her wars, and we are the most decorated minority in each and every single one of those wars. But where are our contributions? Where are they listed—or mentioned, honored, or even celebrated? Can you imagine if our contributions were written back into history? Written into textbooks. Can you imagine how America would see us? More importantly, can you imagine how we would see ourselves?”

CREATIVITY

This section provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express. Theatre activities are included that examine both specific artistic aspects of the production and delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by *Latin History for Morons*. The activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

Billboard Magazine: [“John Leguizamo Talks ‘Latin History for Morons’ and His Musical Heroes”](#)

BayAreaPlays.com: [“For Taccone and Leguizamo, musical farce is the thing in Berkeley Rep’s ‘Kiss My Aztec!’”](#)

L.A. Times: [“For John Leguizamo, Class Is Back in Session” \(review\)”](#)

Biography.com: [John Leguizamo](#)

@CTGLA on YouTube: John’s [shout-out video](#) to the Student Matinee audience

The Tony Awards on YouTube: John’s [Special Tony Award acceptance speech](#)

La Jolla Playhouse: [Kiss My Aztec!](#) Is onstage through October 13, 2019.

USC Center on Public Diplomacy: [Latin History for Morons: Comedy and Public Diplomacy interview with John and Tony Taccone](#)

Center Theatre Group: *Latin History for Morons* [press release](#)

Center Theatre Group blog/program: [“John Leguizamo Is Going to Rock You”](#)

Show website: [Latin History for Morons](#)

Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian: [Website](#) contains a link to [dynamic educator resources](#) for teaching and learning about the Native Americans culture and experience.

PBS’ *Great Performances*: [John Leguizamo’s Road to Broadway](#)

Small excerpts from the PBS program are available to all, but you must have a PBS subscription to access the full episode. Accessible excerpts include:

[“The Influence of Jackson Heights’ Latin Culture on John Leguizamo”](#) (1:19)

[“Working the Comedy Club Circuit”](#) (1:39) how he develops his material

[“John Leguizamo on developing his Broadway show in La Jolla”](#) (1:52)

The New York Times: [John Leguizamo Goes for Easy Laughs in ‘Latin History’](#)

Getty: [Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA](#) (Sept 2017 – January 2018)

OaklandMagazine.com: [“Tony Taccone Teams Up With John Leguizamo”](#)

The Washington Post: [“Vermont passes bill abolishing Columbus Day in favor of Indigenous Peoples’ Day”](#)

The Washington Post: [“The time a president deported 1 million Mexican Americans for supposedly stealing U.S. jobs”](#)

CREDITS

MICHAEL RITCHIE

Artistic Director

MEGHAN PRESSMAN

Managing Director

DOUGLAS C. BAKER

Producing Director

LESLIE K. JOHNSON

Director of Social Strategy,
Innovation and Impact

KATHRYN MACKENZIE

Director of Administration

TYRONE DAVIS

Audience Engagement Director

TRACI KWON

Arts Education Initiatives Director

JESUS REYES

Community Partnerships Director

CAMILLE SCHENKKAN

Next Generation Initiatives Director

JAQUELYN JOHNSON

Audience Engagement Manager

FELIPE M. SANCHEZ

Emerging Artists and Arts
Professionals Program Manager

CARLA JACKSON

Program Manager

DEBRA PIVER

Resident Teaching Artist

ESTELA GARCIA

Resident Teaching Artist

TARA NITZ

Senior Graphic Designer

LYNN CLARK

Writer

SARAH ROTHBARD

Editor

Center Theatre Group Education and Community Partnerships

Center Theatre Group's mission is to serve the diverse audiences of Los Angeles by producing and presenting theatre of the highest caliber, by nurturing new artists, by attracting new audiences, and by developing youth outreach and education programs. This mission is based on the belief that the art of theatre is a cultural force with the capacity to transform the lives of individuals and society at large.

Education and Engagement

Theatre is an enduring and powerful tool for communicating ideas, stories, emotions, and beliefs that fuel the intellect, imagination, and creative spirit. Center Theatre Group believes that stimulating awareness, creativity, dialogue, and an inquisitive mind is integral to the growth and well-being of the individual and the community, and that nurturing a life-long appreciation of the arts leads inextricably to an engaged and enlightened society.

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