

SEATTLE  
**REP**

# APPROPRIATE



BY **BRANDEN  
JACOBS-JENKINS**

## Youth Guide

## Welcome to *Appropriate* at Seattle Rep.

We're so glad you're here.

This play explores family, memory, and the complicated stories we inherit. It's funny, uncomfortable, and deeply human. You might find yourself laughing one moment, then sitting with something that feels a little harder the next. That's part of what makes live theater so powerful: it invites us to experience big ideas together and to stay curious about them.

One of the most exciting things about this production is that it features artists who started right where you are now. Two members of the cast are alumni of Seattle Rep's youth programs, including *The Outsiders* Production Intensive and the August Wilson Monologue Competition. Not long ago, they were students in rehearsal rooms, taking risks and finding their voices. Today, they are professional actors on this very stage. That journey is real, and it starts with showing up.

If you're feeling inspired, this is your reminder that there's a place for you here. Young Rep classes are a chance to build your skills, grow your confidence, and be part of a creative community. You can explore acting, theater design, or stage management, and discover new ways to tell stories and collaborate with others.

So as you watch *Appropriate*, lean in. Notice what surprises you. Pay attention to what sticks with you after a scene ends. Talk about it with your friends, your teachers, and each other.

And maybe imagine yourself up here on stage one day.

With excitement,



**Deanna Martinez**  
Education & Community  
Programs Director

# Appropriate versus Kindred



**Octavia Butler**

Photo by UC Riverside



**Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**

Photo by Lia Chang

## By Nicole Bearden

Seattle Rep Communications Manager

There is no shortage of literature about the various legacies of slavery left in the U.S., especially antebellum-era (approximately 1815–1861) slavery in the American South. Today, let's take a quick look at two very different stories about this legacy: ***Kindred***, a science fiction story by **Octavia Butler** about a Black woman, and ***Appropriate***, a play by **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins** about a white family whose ancestors owned a plantation.

Both *Kindred* and *Appropriate* are by Black writers, but their approaches to the material were very different. In a 2015 interview with *LA Times*, Jacobs-Jenkins said about *Appropriate* that, "Part of it was thinking through how invisible can I make something like blackness and still have it charge the room..."

When asked about the character of Dana losing an arm in *Kindred*, Butler stated in a 2004 radio interview with KCRW's Bookworm that: "...she [Dana] couldn't really come back from that experience whole, unmarked, and say, 'Boy, glad that's over,' and get on with her life. That experience marked her as slavery marked Black people in this country. And that was what I was thinking about."

In Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate*, the large, contemporary Lafayette family gathers in their ancestral home—a former plantation in Arkansas—after their father's death. Each member of the family is focused on what the possibilities of their inheritance might be: the legacy of objects and/or money.

In Butler's *Kindred*, the story begins very differently. The main character, Dana, is a Black woman in a relationship with a white man, and lives in 1976-era Los Angeles. Dana is repeatedly transported back in time to the antebellum South, where she

saves the life, and takes care of a white boy, Rufus. Rufus is obsessed with a Black girl named Alice, and when they both grow up, he enslaves Alice (now a free Black woman) and forces her to become his "mistress" and bear his children—including the daughter that becomes Dana's ancestor.

These two stories show very different experiences for the characters, illustrated by how the legacies of slavery affect them differently, depending on their identities.

In Dana's case, she is forced to confront the realities of slavery firsthand, the violence, power inequalities, and lack of control, being jerked back in time and space at random, while she is trying to live her day-to-day life in the 1970s. At one point, Dana loses a limb as her white ancestor attempts to hold her in the past while she is phasing back to her present time. Her inheritance from slavery is her life, born of the forced relationship between Rufus and Alice, but also literal physical loss, and mental anguish at the witness she is forced to bear to the pain of antebellum slavery.

On the other hand, the Lafayette family is largely removed from real consequences. While going through the family home, they find objects from their father's past that point to his own complicity in racism, as well as how they benefitted financially from the ancestral ownership of the plantation. These objects lead to bitter arguments amongst one another, but while their worlds may rock a bit from some delayed realizations, do they actually lose anything?

Unlike Dana, as a white family, the Lafayettes can choose whether to truly "see" these objects and gain new understandings of their own family's past, or refuse to acknowledge the role that their ancestors, including their father, played in perpetuating racism.

Will the Lafayettes hold on to the objects? Throw them away? Dig deeper? Attempt to excuse them? Their identity assures that they have many choices in how to address their birthright.

Both pieces of literature—one written in the 1970s by a queer Black woman, and one written in the 21st century by a queer Black man—deal with our nation's history of racial violence, but while Jacobs-Jenkins' illustrates the choice that white Americans have when they are faced with evidence of this history in objects or words, Butler's work shows us how much of that past is still present for Black Americans within themselves.

## EXCERPT FROM

### STAGE LESSONS:

# Teaching the next generation of theater artists

By **Seattle Rep**, originally published in *The Seattle Times*, March 11, 2026

When Sophie Kelly-Hedrick attended her first theater performances, she found pure inspiration. Pursuing theater classes made an even bigger impression on the then-teen, shaping her interest in acting.

"Youth arts education is important for so many reasons," says Hedrick. "It can be a safe place for kids to be themselves, promote public speaking skills, boost confidence, increase social and emotional intelligence and promote team building. Through these skills, I found the confidence and ability to audition and eventually pursue professional theater."

At Seattle Rep, the path to performing in a mainstage production often begins long before the first rehearsal.

For some artists, it starts with a monologue competition, like the August Wilson Monologue Competition, or Seattle Rep's current offering, the Next Narrative Monologue Competition, that drew Hedrick in shortly after her introduction to Seattle Rep. For others, it begins in a classroom

setting, a rehearsal or even on one of Seattle Rep's stages. What unites them is the theater's education program, designed not just to teach acting skills, but to cultivate confident, collaborative artists ready for professional stages.

### Discovering your voice

Though the program has evolved over the years, it has impacted students from across the region, including Hedrick, who returns this spring for her third production at the organization, playing River in Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate*. Sharing the stage is high school student Ellie Getman making her mainstage debut as Cassie Kramer-Lafayette. Like Hedrick, Getman began her journey through Seattle Rep's education programming.

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INARA SHELDON / SEATTLE REP



The cast and creative team of Young Rep's 2025 Production Intensive, *The Outsiders*.

# Curtain Call

The things people leave behind can give us clues about their interests, values, and the way that they lived. In *Appropriate*, the Lafayette family is shocked and confused by the things that their father/grandfather left in his old house. For this lesson, we will think about how we might reflect ourselves in our possessions.

**What is something you're interested in?**

*For example, you could think about hobbies, sports, or favorite pieces of media.*

→ **What possession might reflect this interest?**

*For example, if you like soccer, you might think about your favorite pair of cleats.*

**What is a value that's important to you?**

*For example, you could think about causes like the environment or gender equality.*

→ **What possession might reflect this interest?** *For example, you could include a letter you wrote to a friend or something that you brought with you to an event related to your value.*

**What's another possession that's important to you?**

**What might this possession tell people about you?**

## REFLECTION

- Do you have possessions passed down to you from people in your life? What do these possessions tell you about that person?
- What are things you want to be remembered for by the people who care about you?