

The Laramie Project Moises Kaufman

There are moments in history when a particular event brings the various ideologies and beliefs prevailing in a culture into sharp focus.

At these junctures, the event becomes a lightning rod of sorts, attracting and distilling the essence of these philosophies and convictions. By paying careful attention in moments like this to people's words, one is able to hear the way these prevailing ideas affect not only individual lives, but also the culture at large.

The brutal murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student, was an event of this kind. In its immediate aftermath, the nation launched into a dialogue that brought to the surface how we think and talk about education, class, violence, privileges, and rights, and the difference between tolerance and acceptance.

In November 1998, four weeks after the murder of Matthew Shepard, the members of the Tectonic Theatre Project traveled to Laramie, Wyoming and conducted interviews with the people in the town. During the next year, they traveled to Laramie several times, and conducted over 200 interviews. The play is edited from those interviews, as well as journal entries from members of the company.