

Censorship in Theatre Part 2

- Kathleen Alexandrou

Every time a school committee makes the decision to censor a school performance, they simultaneously hold students back from their passion and teach them that there are certain topics that are taboo. If we're told that we can't put on a production of *Cabaret* because it deals with anti-Semitism and sex, isn't that teaching us that it is not okay to discuss topics like these? Should shows that reach out to the darker, more mature side of theatre really be banned to protect our innocence? In 2013, 47% of high school students reported that they are sexually active; adults cannot pretend that students don't know what "sex" is. So is the argument "there's sex in it, it's too racy for high schoolers" really even valid? I speak to fellow high school students in particular: if you claim the answer to that question is a vehement yes, or any kind of yes for that matter, then you must not have an issue being treated like a young child - because that's what's happening. First they'll say we aren't old enough to handle sex, what will they say next, we're too young to form our own opinions? Too young to swear?

The answer, unsurprisingly, is yes. That is exactly what they said next. In Connecticut, Enfield High School's production of *American Idiot* was cancelled for the language and the intense themes of the show. I can tell you from experience, even just walking down the hallway between classes I hear (and read, profane language is used just as much in texting if not more) almost as many swears as are used in the entire show. Last summer, Marblehead Little Theatre put on a production of *American Idiot*; I helped with it and had friends in the show, and I saw it quite a few times. I have to say, the loud music and flashing lights in the opening number shocked me far more than the language. As for the themes being too intense and mature for us to handle? *American Idiot* focuses on three teenagers who are each trying to discover themselves, with varying degrees of success. If this content isn't okay for us to show in high school, does that mean we shouldn't try to find ourselves until we're more grown up? It seems to me that banning *American Idiot* for that reason would be akin to telling us that we shouldn't try to learn about ourselves.

I've said this before and I'll say it again: censorship in theatre is inappropriate. It destroys creativity. Censorship plants seeds of racism, sexism, and homophobia and shelters adolescents from exploring basic parts of life. If we censor theatre, we shut off the fountain of imagination.