



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

presents

AUGUST WILSON'S
RADIO
GOLF

January 10-29, 2011 • OneAmerica Stage

TEACHER PACKET

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AUGUST WILSON'S

RADIO★ GOLF

August Wilson's final work, *Radio Golf* is the culmination of his play cycle examining the Black experience in each decade of the twentieth century. Harmond Wilks, real estate developer and mayoral candidate, decides to redevelop the Hill District; however his plan for

gentrification runs against the people who live there and have lived there for generations. As he learns more about the area and his family's connection to it, he begins to question what progress means and what it costs the many African Americans that it leaves behind. He struggles to find a way to be true to himself and his people and still move forward in the larger social arena. (*Contains adult language*)

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Legacy

by Janet Allen, Artistic Director

Dipping into the deep well which is August Wilson's ten-play, mythic retelling of African American life decade by decade through the twentieth century is a thrilling and revelatory experience. Our production of *Radio Golf* is the fifth foray we've made into this amazing body of work: we've done them completely out of order, as the story of each has risen to form a dialogue with other plays in a given season. To recall these towering plays for you, here is a list of titles, the decade they are set in, and years when we produced them: *Fences* (1950s/1996), *Jitney* (1970s/2004), *Gem of the Ocean* (1900s/2007), *The Piano Lesson* (1930s/2008).

Radio Golf is the last play of the cycle—the play that chronicles the 1990s—and the last that Wilson wrote before his early death in 2005. One of the most striking things about the play is its prescience about the future of America. Raging in the play are so many of today's ideological and emotional debates concerning race, privilege, economics, politics, and the power of history and legacy, that the play feels utterly contemporary, even in its look back at a time through which we've recently come. And as quickly as the world seems to change these days, Wilson's insights feel like prophetic warnings, calling us—at the expense of our souls—to remember our cultural pasts.

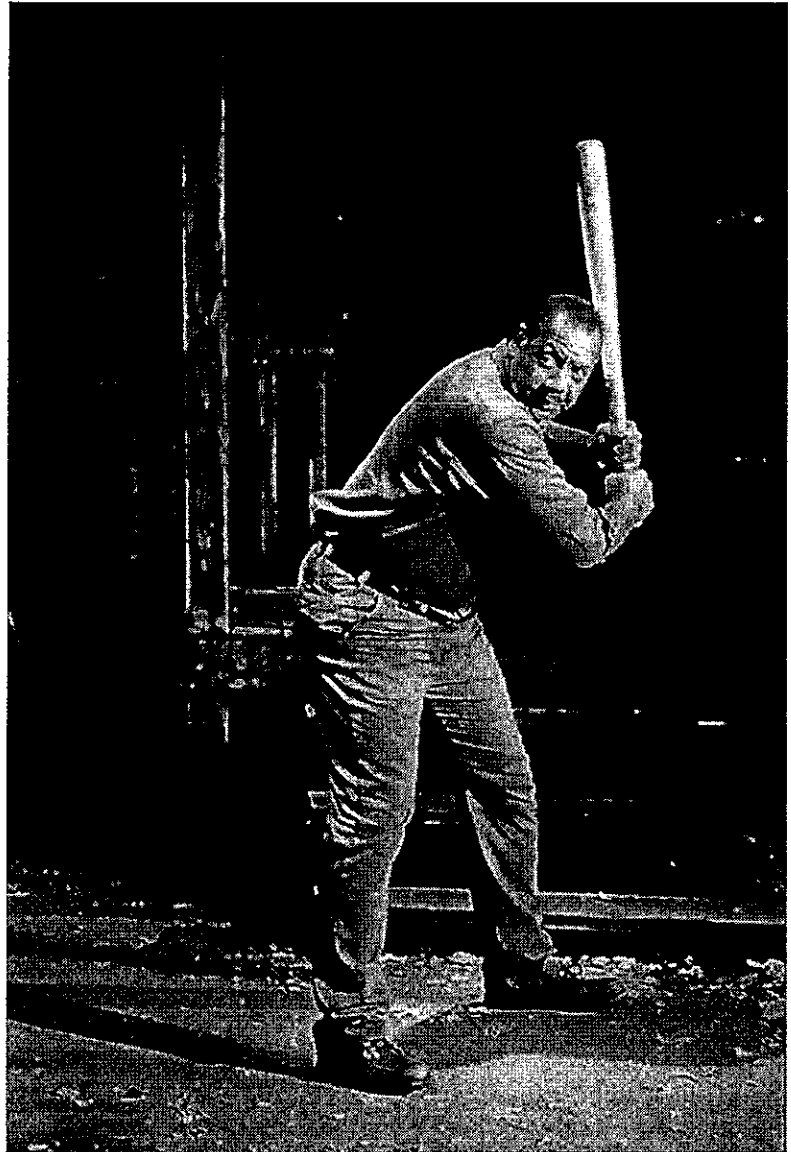
All of Wilson's plays sing the song of Pittsburgh, his home city, and the Hill District, the historically black neighborhood in which virtually all of the ten-play cycle is set. In this, he celebrates the cradle of his own birth and history, using it as a not-so-silent character in his exploration of the conflicting forces of progress and personal history. In *Radio Golf*, the characters' conflicting views of the Hill is what makes us instantly know them; outside the windows of the campaign storefront the past literally looms, the empty buildings standing as silent sentinels of African American sacrifice and loss. In its specificity, Wilson creates a palette that allows us to recognize ourselves and our own city. While the geographic history of the "progress" of Indianapolis is unique, the play recalls to us similar civic conversations concerning some of Indianapolis's historically black downtown neighborhoods, and how those places have been or will be remembered or decimated.



Glenn
Turner,
Carl
Cofield,
Chuck
Patterson,
& Warner
Miller
in the
IRT's 2008
production
of August
Wilson's
*The Piano
Lesson*.

John Henry Redwood
in the IRT's 1996 production of
August Wilson's *Fences*.

But with all of Wilson's work, it isn't so much the location or the themes of the play that we come away with; what we remember are the plight of the characters, the truth of their voices, the heartache of their inner conflicts. In this play particularly we feel those heartaches very personally, not only because they are so much our heartaches, but also because in this play Wilson dared to step out from behind the storyteller's cloak of metaphor and mysticism to create a brashly realistic drama. And just to connect some dots back into the characters of the cycle for you: Harmond Wilks, the real estate developer and mayoral candidate in *Radio Golf*, is the grandson of Caesar Wilks, the ruthless rent collector whom everyone fears in *Gem of the Ocean*. Harmond's "education" regarding his own family's relationship to the house at 1839 Wylie Avenue (and to Elder Barlow) constitutes one of the primary dramatic tensions in *Radio Golf*. And Aunt Ester, the spiritual heart and healer of *Gem of the Ocean*, casts a long and imposing shadow into *Radio Golf*. Her help and guidance is still needed nine decades later, and fullness comes to those who can still hear her legacy over the cacophony of the intervening century.



The legacy of these ten plays in turn demands a respect all its own. We are particularly delighted to welcome, with *Radio Golf* director Lou Bellamy, one of the foremost interpreters of Wilson's work. His own theatre, Penumbra Theatre Company in Saint Paul, Minnesota, holds a unique relationship to Wilson's work: they produced Wilson's first professional production, and have produced more of Wilson's work than any theatre in the world. Lou's relationship to these plays is both long-standing and deep, and we are grateful to welcome his insights to our Indianapolis production of *Radio Golf*. He brings with him a powerful ensemble of actors with whom he has worked repeatedly—including Indianapolis's own David Alan Anderson, who is a company member at Penumbra and has been a frequent performer there over the past two decades. Ensemble acting is one of the demands of Wilson's work—virtuoso actors performing in close harmony in order to capture the assonances and dissonances of Wilson's conflicts—and we are the very grateful beneficiaries of the longevity of the onstage relationships of these five actors.

We are grateful also to Penumbra's staff and their generous sharing of contextual essays, interviews, and the extensive mind-trust they hold as preeminent interpreters of Wilson's canon.

Century's End

by Lou Bellamy, Director

August Wilson set out on a trek that included chronicling African American achievements and the evolution of black intellectual thought throughout the twentieth century. To finish his life's work precisely at the end of his life is dramatic beyond imagination.

Mr. Wilson wrote the first and last plays of his cycle last. This strategy allowed him to give particular weight and meaning to the significance his characters would win over the course of 100 years. We have the early development of the Aunt Ester legacy in the first play of the cycle, *Gem of the Ocean*, and her contemporary manifestation in *Radio Golf*—the last play of the cycle. It's wonderful to see the lives and legacies of the families borne in *Gem of the Ocean* all grown up and grappling with the problems and opportunities of the twenty-first century in *Radio Golf*. The inference is, of course, that Africans living in the United States were, and are, integral to the creation and continuation of the American ethos.

Wilson imagined his lead character, Harmond Wilks, Pittsburgh's first serious black mayoral candidate, long before Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States. Yet the text of *Radio Golf* feels and sounds as though it was ripped from yesterday's headlines. The result is an eerie prescience with which Wilson develops the issues in *Radio Golf*. It's possible that his play might provide a more objective snapshot of today's political climate than our own first-hand observation.

*Lizan Mitchell as Aunt Ester with Chris Chalk as Citizen Barlow
in the IRT's 2007 production of August Wilson's Gem of the Ocean.
Chris Chalk recently appeared on Broadway with Denzel Washington in August Wilson's Fences
and currently appears in the Showtime series Homeland.*



The Company

Lou Bellamy *DIRECTOR*

Lou is founder and artistic director of Penumbra Theatre in Saint Paul, Minnesota. During his 36-year tenure, Penumbra has evolved into one of America's premier theatres dedicated to dramatic exploration of the African American experience. Under his leadership, Penumbra has produced 24 world premieres, including August Wilson's first professional production, and is proud to have produced more of Wilson's plays than any other theatre in the world. Lou is an Obie Award-winning director, an accomplished actor, and a sought after scholar.



James Craven

as **HARMOND WILKS**,
real estate developer & candidate for mayor of Pittsburgh

James makes his IRT debut. He is a longtime member of Penumbra Theatre Company and has performed nationwide in many other major theatres, as well as on Broadway in *The Gospel at Colonus*. He was recognized for artistic excellence by the Spenser-Chereshore Fellowship in 2005, by the McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship in 2007, and by the Ten Chimneys/Lunt-Fontanne Fellowship in 2011.

David Alan Anderson as **ROOSEVELT HICKS**,

bank vice president & Harmond's college roommate & business partner

IRT audiences have seen David in *Julius Caesar* (2011 and 2002), *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Heavens Are Hung in Black*, *Interpreting William*, *Looking Over the President's Shoulder*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *The Gentleman from Indiana*, *Searching for Eden*, *Jitney*, *Fences*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *A Christmas Carol*, and others. He is a company member with the highly acclaimed Penumbra Theatre in Saint Paul, Minnesota.



Austene Van

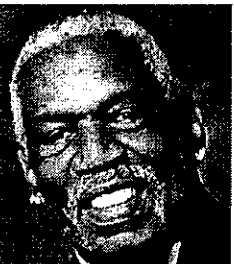
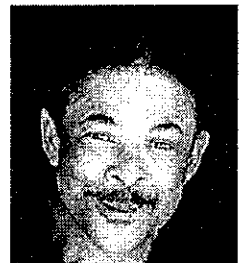
as **MAME WILKS**,
Harmond's Wife, a professional public relations representative

Austene is happy to make her IRT debut. A Penumbra Theatre Company member since 1997 and associate artistic director of the History Theatre in Saint Paul, Minnesota, her recent credits as a director include *Black Nativity* at Penumbra Theatre. As an actor her credits include *Gem of the Ocean*, *Blue*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Dinah Was*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, and *Seven Guitars* at Penumbra Theatre.

Terry Bellamy as **STERLING JOHNSON**,

self-employed contractor and neighborhood handyman

Terry is an actor, director, playwright, educator, and script surgeon. He is a founding member of Penumbra Theatre and received the William Griffen Award for Outstanding Contribution to Penumbra, as well as two Drama Critics' Circle Awards for his accomplishments as an actor. He was just granted a Many Voices Fellowship from Playwrights' Center.



Abdul Salaam El Razzac

as **ELDER JOSEPH BARLOW**,
recently returned to the Hill district where he was born in 1918

Abdul is a founding member of Penumbra Theatre in Saint, Paul, Minnesota and an alumnus of Karamu House Theatre in Cleveland. He received the N.A.A.C.P. Image Award and the L.A. Drama Critics Award for his performance as Toledo in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and the Image Award for his role as Spencer in *Etta Jenks*. He is also an award-winning theatrical director.

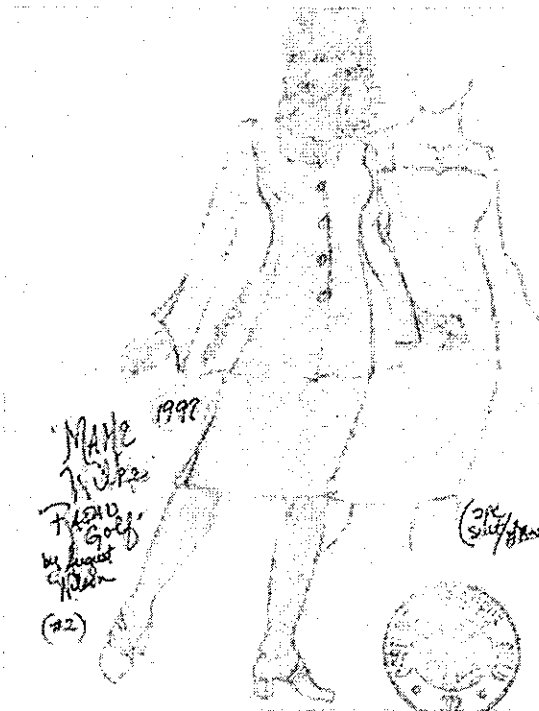
The Neighborhood

Vicki Smith Scenic Designer

Radio Golf takes place in the Pittsburgh Hill District, August Wilson's childhood home. The building is an old commercial building, maybe a hardware store or corner grocery, now used as a redevelopment office. Redevelopment began in the 1960s. By the late nineties, when this play takes place, most of the people have left; the old buildings have been razed or boarded up. There is a photography book which shows what this neighborhood once was: alive, pleasant, small shops, people on the streets. When I researched the neighborhood using Google street view, I saw empty lots overgrown with weeds, an occasional boarded-up building, some new construction, but the original character of the area was completely gone. We decided on a corner building with big windows so the audience could see what's happened to the neighborhood. The boarded-up buildings are (or were) real buildings; I've tried to reproduce them as accurately as I could.



Preliminary scenic model by designer Vicki Smith.



Karen Perry Costume Designer

In my costume design process, I do a great deal of research and try to "psychologically" dress my characters from many points of view: the times they are living in, the characters' education, their upbringing, the region of the country, and their objectives within the story at hand. August Wilson's *Radio Golf* focuses on the mid-to-late 1990s, a time of a lot of "under"-stirring across the country, but particularly in the cities—very much as it still is today. In the 1980s, American governors and mayors decided to "warehouse" and "take back" the areas of their cities that suffered from so-called "urban blight": neighborhoods of poor and underpaid citizens whose landlords walked away from their property with large tax incentives. By the 1990s, these very same neighborhoods were sold off at auction to the highest bidders (with even more tax incentives) to be gentrified and profited from—all with very little regard for the families who were still barely affording to maintain a life there. *Radio Golf* is the story of the people on both sides of this issue. And it is my job to convey this through my costumes.

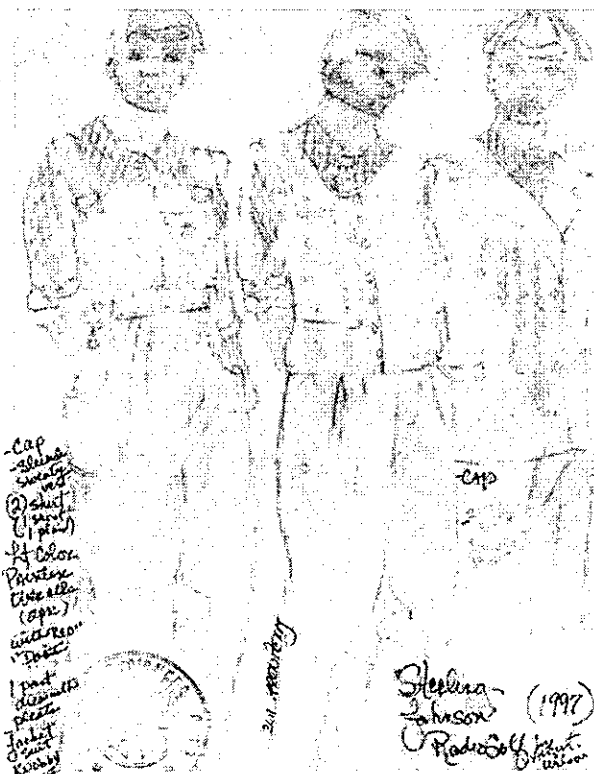
Preliminary costume renderings

by designer Karen Perry:

(above) Mame Wilks,

(right) Roosevelt Hicks,

(below) Sterling Johnson.



August Wilson

Playwright

August Wilson was born Frederick August Kittel in 1945 in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which would later be the setting for most of his plays. His father was a white German immigrant; his mother was black. Wilson later stated that the "nurturing, the learning" of his life were "all black ideas about the world that I learned from my mother. My mother's a very strong woman. My female characters come in large part from my mother."

In the late 1950s, August's family moved to Hazelwood, a predominantly white suburb of Pittsburgh. Wilson attended Gladstone High School until 1961, when he dropped out at age fifteen. Unlike most dropouts, Wilson did not leave school because he couldn't read. "I was bored," he later said. "I was confused, I was disappointed in myself, and I didn't do any work until my history teacher assigned us to write a paper on a historical personage." Wilson chose Napoleon because he had always been fascinated with the "self-made emperor." It was a twenty-page paper, and Wilson's sister typed it up on a rented typewriter.

Since Wilson had previously done no work in class, his instructor found it hard to believe that it was his own work. He wrote both an A+ and then an F on the paper. If Wilson couldn't prove that the paper was his own, he would receive the failing grade. "Unless you call everybody in here and have all the people prove they wrote them, even the ones that went and copied out of the encyclopedia word for word, I don't feel I should have to prove anything," replied Wilson. He took the failing grade, tore up the paper, threw it in his teacher's wastebasket, and walked out of school.

"The next morning, I got up and played basketball right underneath the principal's window. As I look back on it, I see I wanted him to come and say, 'Why aren't you in school?' so I could tell someone. And he never came out." Rather than tell his mother he had dropped out, Wilson spent every school day at the public library, reading some 300 books over the next four years. His reading eventually led him to pursue a career as a writer.



Wilson spent years "hanging out on street corners, following old men around, working odd jobs." Then he discovered a place called Pat's Cigar Store in Pittsburgh. "It was the same place that Claude McKay mentioned in his book *Home to Harlem*. When I found out about that, I said, 'This is part of history,' and I ran down there to where all the old men in the community would congregate."

Wilson channeled his early literary efforts into poetry, saving his nickels for a \$20 used typewriter when he was 19. Around that same time, he bought a recording of blues singer Bessie Smith, and hearing this music for the first time changed his life. Later he wrote that hearing Smith's voice led to an "awakening." He began to see himself as a messenger, a link in the chain of African American culture, and he assumed the responsibility of passing stories and ideas from the past to the future. The idea of the



blues as a vessel for the African American experience is one that appears frequently in Wilson's work, along with a given character's search for his song—his own personal legacy and his path in life.

In 1968, Wilson co-founded Pittsburgh's Black Horizon Theatre Company. He began writing one-act plays during the height of the Black Power Movement as a way "to politicize the community and raise consciousness." He always maintained that the "one thing that has best served me as a playwright is my background in poetry." His move to Minnesota in the early 1970s served as a catalyst, permitting both the colloquial voices of his youth and his burgeoning skills as a dramatist to flourish at a remove from their geographical source.

Wilson did not think of himself as a playwright, however, until he received his first writing grant in the late 1970s. "I walked in," he remembered of his first encounter at the Playwright's Center, "and there were sixteen playwrights. It was the first time I had dinner with other playwrights. It was the first time I began to think of myself as one."

It was this grant that allowed Wilson to rework a one-act about a blues recording session into what became the full-length *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. The play caught the attention of Lloyd Richards, artistic director of the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center and dean of the Yale School of Drama. Richards directed *Ma Rainey* and many of Wilson's subsequent dramas. When *Ma Rainey* ran on Broadway for ten months in 1984, it was the first successful Broadway play by a black writer since Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* in 1959. Wilson's successful career opened doors for many other talented writers.

Around this time, Wilson conceived of a truly grand-scale project: He would write ten plays, one for each decade of the twentieth century, each focusing on a particular issue that challenged the African American community at that time. Over the next 20 years, Wilson faced this challenge at the stand-up desk in his basement, where he wrote and rewrote each play in longhand on legal pads. Along the way he won two Pulitzer Prizes, for *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*. Wilson finished his cycle with two plays focused on the beginning of the century—*Gem of the Ocean*—and the end of the century—*Radio Golf*.

Wilson died of liver cancer in 2005. Two weeks after his death, Broadway's Virginia Theatre in New York City was renamed the August Wilson Theatre, becoming the first Broadway theatre to be named for an African American. Today August Wilson is considered not only one of the greatest African American playwrights, but also one of the greatest American playwrights of our time.

August Wilson's Twentieth Century

set in 1904 • ***Gem of the Ocean*** (premiered 2003, IRT 2007)

A haunting, ghostlike play, conjuring tales of slave ships and the black man's world after slavery.

set in 1911 • ***Joe Turner's Come and Gone*** (premiered 1986)

The children and grandchildren of slavery grapple with a world that won't let them forget the past.

set in 1927 • ***Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*** (premiered 1984)

A volatile trumpet player rebels against racism in a Chicago recording studio.

set in 1936 • ***The Piano Lesson*** (premiered 1987, IRT 2008)

A brother and sister battle over a family heirloom, a link to their past. Pulitzer Prize winner.

set in 1948 • ***Seven Guitars*** (premiered 1995)

The final days of a Pittsburgh blues guitarist, as remembered by his circle of friends.

set in 1957 • ***Fences*** (premiered 1985, IRT 1996)

A father-son drama of dreams denied. Pulitzer Prize & Tony Award winner.

set in 1968 • ***Two Trains Running*** (premiered 1990)

The displaced and the dreamers congregate in a dilapidated restaurant scheduled for demolition.

set in 1977 • ***Jitney*** (premiered 1979, revised 1996, IRT 2004)

The owner of a jitney cab company squares off against his son, newly released from prison.

set in 1985 • ***King Hedley II*** (premiered 1999)

An ex-con attempts to get his life back on track despite the despair that surrounds him.

set in 1997 • ***Radio Golf*** (premiered 2005, IRT 2012)

A successful middle-class entrepreneur tries to reconcile the present with the past.

*August Wilson
photographed in 1999
at his childhood home
in the Hill District.*

Circle of Life: August Wilson's Century Cycle

Growing up in Pittsburgh's Hill District gave playwright August Wilson 100 years of stories. His cycle of ten plays examining the African American experience in each decade of the twentieth century is one of the great achievements of dramatic literature. Set in 1997, *Radio Golf* brings the cycle to a close. But rather than an end, Wilson offers a link to the past, and the seeds for a new beginning.



The heart of the play—both figuratively and geographically (*see map on the next page*)—is an abandoned house at 1839 Wylie Avenue. This was once the home of Wilson's character Aunt Ester, who acts as a connecting thread through the cycle. Ester is mentioned in several plays, but only appears on stage in the first, *Gem of the Ocean* [produced at the IRT in 2007]. For Wilson, Aunt Ester is both a real and mythical figure, an embodiment of racial memory, history, and wisdom. The name Aunt Ester evokes the word "ancestor," and Wilson uses her, and her house, to underscore the importance of honoring one's ancestry and cultural heritage.

Radio Golf asks, can you build the future without bulldozing the past? The play punctuates the question with the symbolic home at 1839 Wylie Avenue. Even the play's title addresses the question: Wilson chose golf—a traditionally upper-class, non-team sport once inaccessible to blacks—to examine the shifting of African American cultural values in pursuit of financial success, playing by rules made by a majority white society.

August Wilson has called his cycle "a 400-year autobiography." He knew that for African Americans personal identity is intertwined with cultural history, and in his 100 years of stories for the stage, he attempts to bring together the past and the present—via us, his audience—to remember, to honor, to celebrate. He said, "People look at black American history and they say, 'Oh, you poor people, what you were subjected to, that's such a horrendous thing. I'm sure you want to forget that.' And I say no, no, I don't want to forget that, because it's a triumph. Black America is a tremendous triumph."

—Corey Atkins, Artistic Associate, Cleveland Play House

The Light in August

Suzan-Lori Parks Interviews August Wilson

excerpted from *American Theater*

In this article from the November 2005 issue of American Theatre, playwright Suzan-Lori Parks (Topdog/Underdog, Venus) interviews August Wilson about his play cycle, his process, and his politics. The article was printed one month after Wilson's death.

Seeing Radio Golf was such a pleasure because we were seeing the end of your great ten-play cycle, but also a whole new beginning. It's like a brand-new day at the end of the play.

Hey, you have to go forward into the 21st century. I figure we could go forward united.

You say "we." Who's "we"?

I'm talking about the black Americans who share that 400-year history of being here in America. One of the things with *Radio Golf* is that I realized I had to in some way deal with the black middle class, which for the most part is not in the other nine plays. My idea was that the black middle class seems to be divorcing themselves from that community, making their fortune on their own without recognizing or acknowledging their connection to the larger community. And I thought: We have gained a lot of sophistication and expertise and resources, and we should be helping that community, which is completely devastated by drugs and crime and the social practices of the past hundred years of the country. I thought: How do I show that you can go back and that you can't—nobody wants to be poor, nobody wants to live in substandard housing. No one is asking them to do that. But I think that here again we have resources.

Is there resistance to going forward together because some black middle class people define themselves as "successful" by the distance between where they are and where their not-so-fortunate brothers and sisters are?

Yeah. Because that's the way society defines success now. In other words, they have adopted the values of the dominant society and have in the process given up some of their cultural values, so in essence they have different cultural clothing. Some people make that choice; it's



certainly not only black people—a lot of ethnic Europeans have made that choice completely. They have been so anxious to become Americans that they've changed their names, forgotten the old ways and don't want to be reminded of them. Other people go, "No, I want to go live in Little Italy. I'm Italian and I'm an American too." You can be both. It's as simple as that.

Suzan-Lori Parks

August Wilson

Why do you think that in our society success is defined by how much you can leave behind while you climb the ladder?

I think we're all trying to imitate the British to become lords and aristocrats, have a bunch of servants and a gardener, all that kind of stuff. We were founded as a British colony—that's a large part of it. We've managed to be immensely successful in

pulling the energy and the brilliance of all those European immigrants that came here and worked hard. Their imagination—Carnegie coming up with the new way to make steel, all that stuff—and we've become the most powerful and the richest country in the world. So we've adopted those materialistic values at the expense of some more human values. There are ways to live life on this planet without being a consumer, without being concerned with acquiring hundreds of millions of dollars. I think, God, you have \$100 million; don't you think that's enough? But a guy that has \$100 million is trying to get \$200 million.



So, 1839 Wylie Avenue, is it always going to be standing?

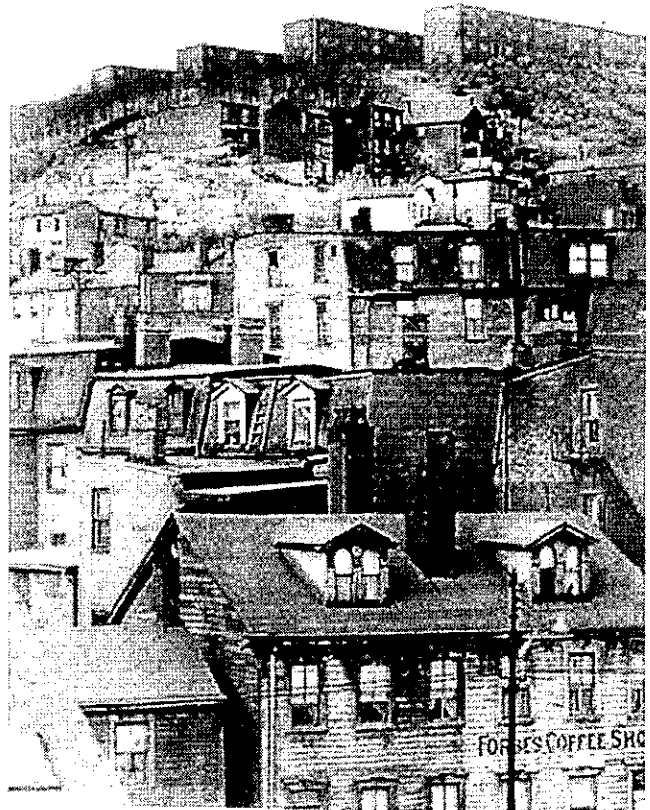
Probably not. Matter of fact, I'm not even sure what's going to happen with it by the end of the play. I think that the bulldozer might come and the police will come to move all the people that are painting the house and tear it down. That's usually the way it goes. It's sort of a can't-win situation. Like the cat pissing on the sofa: he pisses on the sofa because he doesn't want you to sit there, but what happens is he gets snatched up and taken to the vet. Life goes on as usual, and the couch gets fumigated, and the cat has lost the battle. I figure it'll pretty much end up like that.

But, symbolically, 1839 will always be standing, as part of our repository of all our wisdom and knowledge that we as an African people have collected over the hundreds of years that we've been on the planet Earth. We haven't lost all of that stuff, because when we came here we did have a history, we did have customs, we did have a culture. And all that would have been lost, except they made a mistake by extending the slave trade over those hundreds of years. They were always bringing in fresh, new Africans who managed to keep that stuff alive.

—excerpted from American Theater magazine, November 2005

The Hill District

The Hill District is a sprawling 650 acres that looks across Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; it was the first district in the city to develop outside the walls of the original Fort Pitt. Originally farmland owned by William Penn's grandson, the area became the first planned residential neighborhood in Pittsburgh in 1840, attracting wealthy professionals. In the 1870s, African Americans and European immigrants began to settle in the Hill District, attracted by job opportunities in the steel industry. By the 1930s, the residents of the Hill District were mostly African American, Jewish, and Italian American. From the 1930s to the 1950s, the Hill District was one of the most energetic and powerful African American neighborhoods in the nation, flourishing as a center for business, art, and music, overflowing with clubs, businesses, and churches, and bustling with crowds both day and night. At the same time, the district's infrastructure was crumbling. In the 1950s and 1960s, homes were razed but not replaced. More recent housing, retail, and restoration developments bring hope to this historic area, but today the Hill District still struggles.



(above) The Hill District in 1951; note the new housing project at the top of the hill.



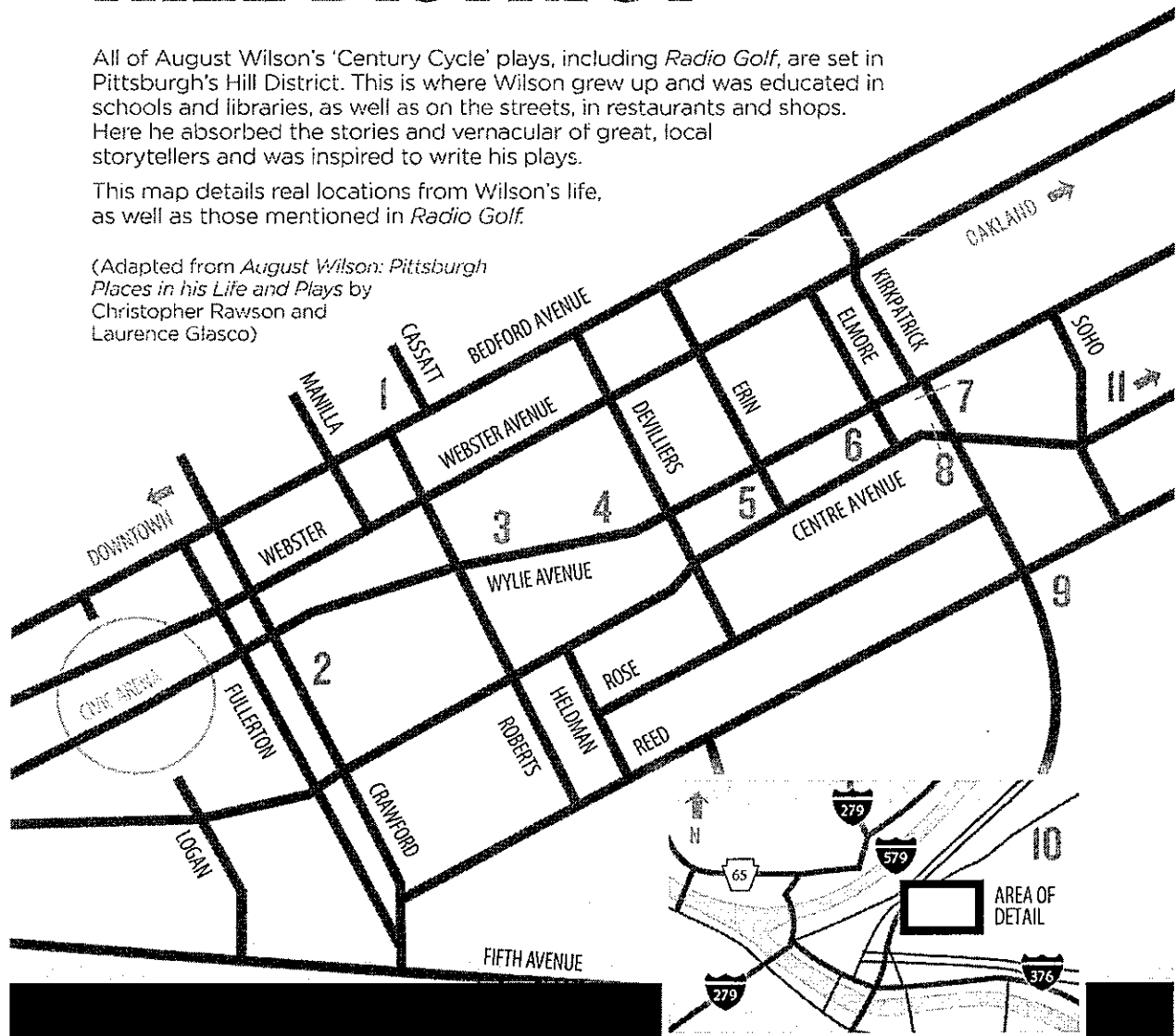
(left) The Hill District today.

WILSON'S (AND WILKS') HILL DISTRICT

All of August Wilson's 'Century Cycle' plays, including *Radio Golf*, are set in Pittsburgh's Hill District. This is where Wilson grew up and was educated in schools and libraries, as well as on the streets, in restaurants and shops. Here he absorbed the stories and vernacular of great, local storytellers and was inspired to write his plays.

This map details real locations from Wilson's life, as well as those mentioned in *Radio Golf*.

(Adapted from *August Wilson: Pittsburgh Places in his Life and Plays* by Christopher Rawson and Laurence Glasco)



- 1** 1727 Bedford Ave. - Wilson's childhood home and setting of his 1940s play, *Seven Guitars*. His *Fences* (1950s) is set in a nearby backyard.
- 2** Crawford St. Residence - Where Freddie August Kittel renamed himself August Wilson.
- 3** 1839 Wylie - Location of Aunt Ester's house, and Harmond's proposed development.
- 4** Camegle Library - Where Wilson got his first library card.
- 5** Westbrook Jitney Station - Setting of Wilson's 1970s play, *Jitney*.
- 6** Pat's Place - Newsstand and pool hall where Wilson was influenced by conversations with community elders.
- 7** Eddie's Restaurant - August Wilson's favorite haunt.
- 8** Campaign Headquarters - Former storefront where Harmond plans to locate his campaign office.
- 9** Kennard Field - Old Joe says this field is the only football field in the city without nighttime lights. Harmond wants to turn it into a golf course.
- 10** St. Richard School - Wilson attended from 3rd - 7th grade. Characters Harmond and Sterling also went here.
- 11** Centre and Herron - Location of Wilks Realty. Not part of the Hill district.

Map courtesy of Cleveland Play House

Why Radio Golf ?

by Heather Helinsky, dramaturg, Pittsburgh Public Theatre

For the last play of his cycle, August Wilson took some advice from his then 7-year old daughter, Azula Carmen. "She asked, 'Daddy, what's the title?' Wilson recalled in an interview with USA Today. "I said I didn't have one, and she said, 'Call it *Secrets of the Radio Sisters*.' And I said, 'Well, I don't have any radio sisters in there. It's about a guy and he has a radio station, and they're playing golf.' So she said, 'Call it *Radio Golf*.' And I said, 'That's a good idea.' Then she said, 'I'll write *Secrets of the Radio Sisters*.'"

While the concept of a radio golf program might sound odd for a play set in the 1990s, historically, the sport of golf has always used the current media not only to broadcast tournaments, but to intrigue listeners with tips for their own game. Leading amateur golfer Charles E. "Chick" Evans had a radio program called "Golf Secrets" in the 1920s. Joe Novak, a golf course architect, broadcast radio golf lessons on KGO in Oakland, California. In 1938 radio station WBRY in Waterbury, Connecticut had a sustaining series of golf instruction called "The Golf Secrets of the Air." Even golf greats Sam Snead and Byron Nelson had their own radio programs broadcast as late as 1950.

Just as baseball is a central metaphor in *Fences*, Wilson used golf for his treatise on the black middle class. Although Wilson was not a golfer, he was struck by a comment made by an African-American guest at a fundraiser who admitted "I carry golf clubs in the trunk of my car" to be eternally vigilant for his next encounter with a client. For Wilson, it raised the question: "Do you have to adopt the games of the dominant culture to achieve success?"

When August Wilson's dramaturg, Todd Kriedler, was asked if the play was an indictment of golf, he quickly responded, "Absolutely not. But the game is used metaphorically. Do you have to give up everything you are to play this game, to play in society? It doesn't mean you can't claim the sport as your own, but does it cost you anything?"

"Theater, as a powerful conveyer of human values, has often led us through the impossible landscape of American class, regional and racial conflicts, providing fresh insights and fragile but enduring bridges of fruitful dialogue. It has provided us with a mirror that forces us to face personal truths and enables us to discover within ourselves an indomitable spirit that recognizes, sometimes across wide social barriers, those common concerns that make possible genuine cultural fusion."

The cycle of plays I have been writing since 1979 is my attempt to represent [black] culture in dramatic art. From the beginning, I decided not to write about historical events or the pathologies of the black community. The details of our struggle to survive and prosper, in what has been a difficult and sometimes bitter relationship with a system of laws and practices that deny us access to the tools necessary for productive and industrious life, are available to any serious student of history or sociology.

Instead, I wanted to present the unique particulars of black American culture as the transformation of impulse and sensibility into codes of conduct and response, into cultural rituals that defined and celebrated ourselves as men and women of high purpose. I wanted to place this culture on stage in all its richness and fullness and to demonstrate its ability to sustain us in all areas of human life and endeavor and through profound moments of our history in which the larger society has thought less of us than we have thought of ourselves.

—August Wilson, *New York Times*, April 2000



Stepping Up to the Tee

*by Douglas Langworthy,
McCarter Theatre*

With roots that stretch back five centuries into the royal courts of England, golf has been open only to the upper echelons of society for most of its history. And though the sport has undergone a partial democratization over the past century, African Americans have found it particularly difficult to

earn their place on the course. Today, a large number of the country's best courses are run by private clubs, many of which only recently offered membership to blacks, Jews, and women.

In the early 1900s, most African-American golfers became interested in golfing while working as caddies, since some clubs allowed them to play one day a week when the courses were closed for routine maintenance. One such player was Dewey Brown, who became a well known club designer. It has been estimated that in 1939, out of 5,000 courses in the U.S., fewer than 20 were open to black players. While black golfers began to gain limited access to courses, there was another huge barrier to playing professionally: the membership of the P.G.A. (Professional Golfers Association) was expressly limited to the "European races."

One way for African Americans to circumvent the barriers of racism was to open their own golf courses and form their own golf associations. Shady West Golf Club in Westfield, NJ, was one such black-owned club. In 1922, its membership included prosperous African-American merchants, lawyers, doctors, Pullman porters, waiters and janitors. In 1928, black players formed the U.G.A. (United Golfers Association) which held its own separate tournaments. Black women wanted access to golf courses as well, and so women's clubs sprang up in Washington D.C. and Chicago.

Through the 1930s and 40s, African Americans continued to demand access to the courses, and even took them to court. In 1947, a black dentist, P.O. Sweeny, won his case against the Louisville, Kentucky Parks Department. But it continued to be a struggle, and there was little interaction between black-owned clubs and the white ones. It wasn't until 1959 that an African American, Bill Wright, won the U.S.G.A. championship.

Eventually, under great pressure, the P.G.A. removed the "Caucasian only" clause in 1961. Throughout the 1970s, Lee Elder tried and eventually succeeded in being allowed to play in the Masters Tournament. Over the years, a number of African-American players have risen to prominence in the sport: Dewey Brown, Robert Hawkins, Pete Brown, Renee Powell, Robert "Pat" Ball, Howard Wheeler, Calvin Peete, Charles Sifford and, of course, Tiger Woods. However, despite some gains, African Americans are still denied membership in many private country clubs across the country, and golf continues to be viewed by many as an elitist sport.

Urban Planning

As indicated by the preceding article, the concept of redevelopment is central to the legacy of the Hill District. It is similarly significant to the story of *Radio Golf*. A closer look at some of the characteristics of redevelopment will illuminate the complexities of the situation facing *Radio Golf*'s Harmond Wilks and Roosevelt Hicks.

Defined as the rebuilding and renewal of inner-city neighborhoods, **redevelopment** is in many ways a cyclical process in which portions of cities are renovated according to contemporary standards of healthy and productive urban life. Across the years, these standards have changed: principles of urban renewal of the 1950s-1970s, such as freeways slicing through large swaths of once-whole neighborhoods and the dense concentration of low-income housing projects, were viewed in their time as sensible solutions to urban problems. Today they are regarded as deeply flawed. Modern-day efforts toward renewal (often addressing the same problem-plagued areas of earlier decades) have been rephrased in terms of "community redevelopment," and frequently attempt to revitalize neighborhoods with special attention paid to existing social and economic networks.

As in *Radio Golf*, permission for redevelopment is often granted by a city's government once an area has been declared "**blighted**." Such declarations in Pittsburgh are governed by Pennsylvania's 1945 Urban Redevelopment Act, which associates these conditions with blight:

- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded living conditions
- Inadequate planning of the area or excessive coverage of buildings on the land
- Lack of proper light, air and open space
- Defective design or arrangement of buildings
- Faulty layout of streets or lots
- Economically or socially undesirable land uses.

In 1978, revisions to the law expanded the definition of blight to include properties that have become derelict, abandoned or unfit for human habitation, create fire and health hazards, are used for illegal or immoral purposes or depreciate adjoining property values (source: *The Pittsburgh-Tribune Review*, June 30, 2002).

Another component of the redevelopment of blighted areas is **gentrification**, which refers to the renovation of deteriorated property by middle- or upper-class people. Gentrification is usually initiated by businesses or individuals in the private sector, although in some cities, government policies also encourage gentrification by providing financial incentives to real estate developers attempting to revitalize downtown areas or replace decrepit low-income housing with new, mixed-income housing. Some of the most obvious signs of gentrification are signaled in *Radio Golf*: the arrival of national chains like Barnes & Noble and Starbucks. While gentrification has positive effects like improved municipal services, the rising property values (and rising rents) associated with gentrification often result in the displacement of lower-income residents who may have lived in the neighborhood for generations.

A final component of redevelopment addressed in *Radio Golf* is **eminent domain**, the power of the state to appropriate private property for its own use. Eminent domain is most commonly evoked when the acquisition of private land is required to complete large-scale projects like razing neighborhoods or building roads. The law requires that property owners be compensated, as Harmond attempts to compensate Old Joe for Aunt Ester's house, but does not stipulate that the owner consent to his or her removal.

—courtesy of the McCarter Theatre

Themes in *Radio Golf*

The individual's challenge to discern and do what is right over what is wrong

The struggle to hold onto one's identity and integrity in a changing world

The call to honor the past over personal ambition or, more specifically, the test of the upwardly mobile black middle class to honor their history

The conflicting demands of honorable leadership over personal success

The notion that true virtue comes with understanding the sacrifices of one's ancestors and then paying them homage accordingly

—www.mccarter.org

A Word in Controversy

The word *nigger* is used frequently in August Wilson's *Radio Golf*, and indeed, throughout his cycle of plays covering the twentieth century.

The word was not originally used for verbal assault. It first appears in historical documents in 1587 as *negar*, an alternate spelling of *Negro*. *Nigger* was a common word in both England and America by the seventeenth century; it was considered nothing more than an alternate pronunciation of *Negro*. By 1825, however, both abolitionists and Blacks found the word offensive and began to object to its use.

It is often the case, however, that when a word is used as a slur against a certain group, members of the group will begin to use that word among themselves in order to rob the word of its negative power. Wilson's use of *nigger* in his plays reflects the way it was often used in conversation among some African Americans during the twentieth century.

Today, the use of the word is still controversial. While it may be heard frequently in rap songs and in conversation among younger African Americans, many older African Americans are deeply offended by this use. Even within generations, not everyone agrees on whether or not the word should be used within the African American community. Society at large, however, has condemned the word as a racial slur; its use by other races against Blacks demonstrates an ignorance and hatred that should not be imitated.

Radio Golf Text Glossary

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8 Centre and Kirkpatrick

Centre and Kirkpatrick are two streets in the Pittsburgh Hill District.

Shadyside

Shadyside is a neighborhood on the East End of Pittsburgh, evoking the name of a 19th century Pennsylvania Railroad station named for its shady lanes. Shadyside contains upscale stores and boutiques as well as a residential area dating from the 1920s with Victorian mansions, modern apartments, and condominiums. A mix of residents live there, including affluent families, young professionals, artists, musicians, and students.

Ellsworth

Ellsworth Ave. is a corridor of the Shadyside neighborhood with small locally-owned businesses.

Hill District

The Hill District is a sprawling 650 acres that faces Pittsburgh and was the first district in the city to develop outside the walls of the original Fort Pitt. It was originally farmland owned by William Penn's grandson. When Thomas Mellon bought the land in 1840, he divided it into individual plots and began the first planned residential neighborhood in Pittsburgh. The first occupants of the hill were mostly wealthy professionals. The ethnic makeup of the community began to change in 1870 when African Americans and European immigrants began to settle down in the Hill District, attracted by job opportunities in the steel industry. By the 1930s, the residents of the Hill District were mostly African American, Jewish, and Italian American. From the 1930s to the 1950s, the Hill District became one of the most energetic and powerful African American neighborhoods in the country. Sometimes called "the Crossroads of the World" or "Fun City," the Hill District flourished as a center for business, art, and music, and drew bustling crowds both day and night. The intersection of Wylie and Fullerton Avenues, overflowing with clubs, businesses, and churches, was the center of the community.

Post-Gazette

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* is the largest daily newspaper for metropolitan Pittsburgh.

9 "They quit making hubcaps in 1962."

The first hubcaps were snap-on style center caps on the middle of wire, steel, or wooden wheels. In 1935 the first full wheel covers were produced to fit over the entire wheel except for a small bit of the outer lip. When pressed steel wheels became common by the 1940s, these were often painted the same color as the car body. Hubcaps expanded in size to cover the lug nuts that were used to mount these steel wheels. These hubcaps were typically made from chrome-plated or stainless steel. Eventually came the full chrome wheel cover. Plastic wheel covers appeared in the 1970s and became mainstream in the 1980s. On modern automobiles, full-wheel hubcaps are most commonly seen on budget models, while upscale and performance-oriented models use alloy wheels. Modern aluminum alloy wheels generally use small removable center caps, similar in size to the earliest hubcaps.

10 Sarah Degree

Though Harmond cites Sarah Degree as "the first black registered nurse" in Pittsburgh, the real-life Sarah Degree was actually a devout Catholic African American woman who looked out for the neighborhood children, including a young August Wilson. The use of Sarah Degree's name in *Radio Golf* is Wilson's way of honoring her and her role in his life. Pittsburgh's first black nurse was Katherine Christopher.

- 10 Tiger Woods**
Eldrick Tont "Tiger" Woods (b. 1975) is an American professional golfer and the highest-paid professional athlete in the world, earning \$90.5 mil in 2010. He has won 14 professional major golf competitions, the second highest total for male players. In the mid-1990s, Woods became a professional golfer, signing a \$40-million endorsement deal with Nike. In 1996 he was named *Sports Illustrated's* PGA Tour Rookie of the Year. Woods won the Masters in 1997, the year *Radio Golf* is set, and he rose to #1 in the Official World Golf Rankings, the fastest ever to rise to that rank.

- 11 Chamber of commerce**
A chamber of commerce is a business network that meets and collaborates to further the interests of all the participating businesses. It advocates for the businesses in the community. These chambers can be made up of local businesses, state, national, or bilateral networks.

Mellon Bank

Mellon Financial Corporation was one of the world's largest money management firms, based in Pittsburgh, PA. In 1997, it finalized a merger with the Bank of New York to become the Bank of New York Mellon.

Three Rivers

Three Rivers Stadium was a multi-purpose stadium in Pittsburgh, and the former home of the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Pittsburgh Steelers. The stadium was demolished in 2001 with the opening of new stadiums for the Pirates and the Steelers.

Al Frank

Al Frank is a fictional baseball star. The character's name is taken from August Wilson's close friend, a book dealer.

"Cohibas ... in Costa Rica"

Cohiba is a brand of premium cigars from Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

blight

"Urban decay" is the process of a city or part of a city falling into extreme disrepair. Buildings are abandoned, citizens face unemployment, crime skyrockets, etc. "Blight" is the visual, psychological, and physical effects on citizens who have to live around these empty lots and buildings. Abandoned buildings often attract crime and street gangs and are detrimental to community morale.

- 12 minority redevelopment**
Minority redevelopment is the process of rebuilding and revitalizing communities composed of minority citizens, particularly in urban areas.

Saab

A luxury vehicle company, owned by General Motors during the 1990s. In 1997, the Saab company celebrated its 50th anniversary and released the model Saab 9-5.

Lexus

A luxury vehicle from the Japanese company Toyota.

City councilmen

The city council is the legislative body of a city, town, municipality or local government.

Groundbreaking ceremony

Traditional ceremony to celebrate the first day of construction for a building or project.

13 Driving range

A driving range is a practice area for golfers to practice their swing.

14 Saint Richard's school

St. Richard School was a small Catholic school in the Pittsburgh Hill District, with six classrooms. It was renamed Hill District Catholic School in 1973. It eventually merged with several area parishes and is now known as St. Benedict the Moor School.

Vietnam

The Vietnam War (1955-1975) was fought between North Vietnam (communist) and South Vietnam (anti-communist). The United States supported the South in an attempt to stem the spread of communism throughout the world. As U.S. troop levels in Vietnam increased drastically, the war grew more and more controversial, and the U.S. withdrew in 1973. The use of guerilla warfare by the North Vietnamese and chemical warfare by the U.S. led to massive injury and casualties on both sides. A total of approximately two to four million civilians and soldiers died during the war.

15 Grambling

Grambling State University in Louisiana is a historically black public coed university and home of the Tigers collegiate football team. Eddie Robinson, a College Football Hall of Fame inductee, coached at Grambling for 56 years (1941-1997) and 45 winning seasons, with many of his players going on to the Pro Hall of Fame and NFL.

Wylie, 1839 Wylie

Wylie Avenue in Pittsburgh's Hill District was a jazz mecca during the 1920s. The iconic musician Duke Ellington played there at its height. 1893 Wylie Ave. is the fictional property that for decades housed August Wilson's mystical character, Aunt Ester (see p. 44).

16 Connelly Trade

Clifford B. Connelly Trade School is located in the Pittsburgh Hill District and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

18 deed

A legal document that affirms a person's ownership of a property.

caddie

A caddie (caddy) is a person who carries a golf player's bag and clubs.

19 Hill House

The Hill House Association is an independent nonprofit organization created to service the Pittsburgh Hill District community through early learning and child development, youth services, family and workforce development, senior services and neighborhood services.

20 Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali (b. 1942) is an American professional boxer, philanthropist, and social activist. He coined his nickname, "The Greatest," and is known for his unorthodox fighting styles, as well as several famous fights with George Foreman and Joe Frazier, among others. Ali retired in 1979, one year before Elder Joe claims to have seen him in Louisville, where Ali was born.

22 Kennard Field

Kennard Field is a city park in Pittsburgh with a play area, tennis court, baseball field, and basketball court.

CitiParks

CitiParks is the Parks and Recreation Department of Pittsburgh, PA.

24 Fifth Amendment

The Fifth Amendment protects witnesses from being forced to incriminate themselves in court. To "plead the fifth" is to refuse to answer a question that would imply one is guilty of something.

28 Duquesne Light

Duquesne Light is a utility/energy company in Pittsburgh, PA, providing power to the downtown area. It has a long history of deals and joint ventures with related companies.

"Blue skies ... going so right"

"Blue Skies" is a pop song composed by Irving Berlin in 1926.

30 PF Flyers

PF Flyers are a brand of shoe manufactured by New Balance. The phrase "wearing his PF Flyers" has come to mean someone is running very fast.

34 property taxes

Property tax is a percentage of money collected from land owners based on the value of their land or personal property. The tax money goes to the government in order to finance education, police/fire protection, local government, some medical care, and other local infrastructure.

Sheriff's auction

A sheriff's auction takes place when a homeowner's house is foreclosed for not keeping up with mortgage payments. The property moves to the hands of the sheriff, who auctions it to the highest bidder. Lawyers, investors, consumers, and lenders all attend the public auction.

35 birdies

In golf, a "birdie" is scoring one below par (-1), i.e. taking one less stroke to hit the ball into the hole than the hole's par number.

Back nine

The back nine refers to the final nine holes of the eighteen-hole golf course.

"give him some strokes"

In golf, "giving him strokes" means to lower the standard of how many strokes a player needs to take in order to get a good score on a given course, more formally known as a handicap. Usually this expression is used as a joke in a friendly game when one player is considerably more skilled than his opponent.

Greens fee

A greens fee is what a golf course charges for golfers to play there.

"nineteenth hole"

Nineteenth hole is a slang term in golf for the social gathering at a bar/restaurant that often follows an 18-hole golf game.

Junk bond investor

A junk bond investor primarily invests in high-risk bonds. Bonds are financial loans that, once issued, will eventually be paid back with interest to the person who invests in the bond, making the investment more valuable over time. Usually, the issuer of the junk bond has bad credit, and so they must pay a higher percentage of the loan back to the investor. One drawback of junk bonds is that there is no guarantee the investor will ever get his/her money back from the bond issuer. As a result, junk bond investors are often already wealthy, have great analytical skills and insider investment knowledge.

36

silent partner

A silent partner is a business investor who invests money (capital) into a business, but does not participate in the active management of the business.

tax incentive

A tax incentive is part of the tax code that allows for an individual or business to be exempt from paying taxes if that individual/business agrees to engage in a certain behavior, such as saving up for a child's college, or investing in renewable energy sources.

FCC

FCC stands for Federal Communications Commission, an independent agency of the United States which oversees wire and radio transmissions across the country, working to allow all citizens access to these forms of communication.

Minority Tax Certificate

The Minority Tax Certificate was a tax break offered by the FCC for owners of communication services who either 1) sold their broadcast/cable property to a minority purchaser or 2) contributed start-up money to a minority owner's broadcast/cable property. The tax break allowed the investor to hold off on paying federal income taxes, while the minority owner contributed to the overall diversity of the airwaves. It was similar to affirmative action in that it allowed minorities to diversify the working environment and created opportunities for those who might be unfairly disadvantaged in the hiring process. The Minority Tax Certificate was actually repealed in 1995, but it is still in effect in playwright August Wilson's 1997 setting.

37

"bought and traded ... railroads"

In the late 1800s, at a time when essentially no laws existed to regulate the business practices of the wealthy and powerful, bankers and traders like J. P. Morgan organized and reorganized United States railroad companies for greater efficiency and profit. The speculation on these mergers and consolidation required a great deal of ruthlessness, and while many failed, the companies that survived engaged in fierce market competition.

Tax break

Tax break is a slang term referring to the reduction of taxes for an individual.

Ownership allowance

Ownership allowance refers to the percentage of revenue the primary partner gives to the other partners in an investment. Over time, depending on factors like an increase in revenue (profit), the ownership allowance for a partner also increases.

38

"Hail! Hail! The gang's all here"

This phrase can be heard in the chorus of the 1915 song "Alabama Jubilee" made popular by Fred Astaire. In 1917 the same words were used in new lyrics by D. A. Esweire set to a section of "With Cat-Like Tread" from the 1879 operetta *The Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert and Sullivan. A third version of the song is well known as "The Celtic Song" sung by the fans of Glasgow Celtic, a soccer team in Scotland.

39

Tin Angel

The Tin Angel is a restaurant in Pittsburgh, PA, serving fine American cuisine.

41 Malcolm X

Malcolm X (1925-1965) was an African American Muslim minister and human rights activist, widely viewed as one of the most influential African Americans in history. Malcolm X's philosophy and tactics polarized the country: some saw him as a brave advocate for African American rights, while others accused him of championing black supremacy and violence. For a number of years he was a member of the Nation of Islam, an organization for African American Muslims, where he advocated for separation of black and white Americans. This put him at odds with the civil rights movement's stance on integration. Shortly before his death, he broke with the Nation of Islam and announced he intended to work more closely with civil rights leaders. He was assassinated in 1965. The phrase "by any means necessary" comes from a speech Malcolm X gave in 1965: "We declare our right on this earth to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary."

two new stadiums

"Two new stadiums" is a reference to the construction of Heinz Field and PNC Park stadiums in Pittsburgh, which together replaced the Three Rivers stadium.

44 Aunt Ester

Aunt Ester first appears on stage in August Wilson's 2003 play *Gem of the Ocean*. She is the original resident of 1839 Wylie. Aunt Ester was born in 1619, two years after the birth of slavery in North America, and she was sold into bondage when she was 12. She survived slavery and lived to be over 300 years old, outliving four husbands and seeing many generations of her descendants. For centuries she lived at Wylie and provided mystical guidance to the residents of the Hill District, who came to visit Aunt Ester "behind the red door." Her name sounds like the word *ancestor*, and for Wilson she serves as the bridge between the African past and the African American present. She is spoken of in *Two Trains Running*, and her death is reported in *King Hedley II*, the play chronologically set just before *Radio Golf*.

Company B, Fourth Battalion

Unit of the US Marine Corp, which fought in the Battle of Kwajalein, Battle of Saipan, Battle of Tinian, and the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II.

53 up by more than four strokes

To be up by more than four strokes in golf is to perform fairly well – the player has taken four fewer strokes than the opponent and therefore has a lower, winning, score.

Neville Alcorn at the '88 Masters

Though "Neville Alcorn" is fictional, Sandy Lyle's stunning victory at the 1988 Masters is not. Lyle gave up his lead on the 12th hole when he hit the ball into the water. He struggled to regain ground and was finally tied for the lead on hole 18, where he finished with a fortunate birdie. He won the tournament by one stroke.

Putting on the green jacket

At the major U.S. championship golf tournament, the Masters, the winner is awarded with both a cash prize and a distinctive green jacket that he may keep for one year, a tradition which began in 1949. The winner then has the privilege of wearing this jacket upon every visit to the Augusta National Golf Club, where the Masters is hosted.

Seven iron

A seven iron is a golf club designed to hit balls high into the air and onto the green (where the hole sits). Good for distance, but not for direction.

Pitching wedge

A pitching wedge is a golf club that hits balls higher and at a shorter distance than the seven iron. Better for direction than for distance.

- 53 fairway**
The fairway is the part of the golf course where the grass is cut shortest, between the tee-off spot and the putting green. It is the most advantageous spot from which to hit the ball.
- 54 putter**
A putter is a golf club that is designed to hit balls at a close distance from the hole.
- handicap**
A handicap is a golf system that allows less skilled players to be on an even playing field with advanced golfers. A player with a "handicap" is given free strokes on a difficult course, so that the scores best reflect how well a player is playing that day by their own standards.
- Sand traps**
Sand traps are hazards created by golf courses to make play more challenging. If a ball falls into the pit of sand, it can be very difficult to hit the ball out of the sand trap.
- 55 H-O-V lane**
An HOV lane is a high-occupancy lane reserved for vehicles with more than one passenger, or carpools.
- 56 Pitt**
The University of Pittsburgh, commonly referred to as Pitt, is a state research university located in Pittsburgh.
- 57 Mayview**
Mayview State Hospital was a psychiatric hospital in Bridgeville, PA, which closed in 2008.
- 58 bread pudding**
Bread pudding is a bread-based dessert made with stale bread, suet, egg, sugar or syrup, spices, and dried fruit.
- 61 Penn Avenue**
Penn Avenue is a street in Pittsburgh at the core of the cultural district.
- Pirates**
The Pittsburgh Pirates are Pennsylvania's Major League baseball team.
- Federalist brick**
Federalist-style architecture was popular between 1780 and 1825. It utilized columns, balustrades, and side lights. These all-brick houses appear very symmetrical and balanced, with many windows in straight rows and columns along the front.
- Double-base foundation**
although this phrase doesn't appear in major architecture glossaries, its use suggests that particular care was put into the construction of the home.
- Beveled glass**
A window of beveled glass (angled edges on thick glass) acts as a prism for sunlight into the room, creating an unusual spectrum of colors and highlighting the beauty of decorative glass.
- Brazilian wood**
The staircase may be made of a rare form of wood called brazilwood, which is orange-red with a high shine. Because of overuse, it nearly disappeared in the 18th century, and today it is considered endangered. Brazilwood is primarily used for stringed musical instruments.

61 balustrade

A balustrade is a series of spindles that hold up the handrail of a balcony or staircase.

Salvage rights

Salvage rights give the demolition contractor the right to take, or salvage, anything from a property before the demolition. These materials are sold at a salvage yard. If these rights are granted to a contractor, they often provide a reduced demolition rate because salvaging helps cover the costs of demolition.

64 surveyors

Surveyors find and mark the boundaries of people's property, so the owners have a record of what legally belongs to them.

Caesar Wilks

Caesar Wilks is the half-brother of Black Mary and appears onstage in 2003's *Gem of the Ocean* as the local constable in the Hill District area. An ex-con who found redemption in prison, he became a cruel law enforcer and valued harsh justice and punishment, reputedly shooting a man for stealing a loaf of bread. He is the grandfather of Harmond Wilks and uncle of Elder Joe Barlow.

65 Cornell

Cornell is an Ivy League school in New York.

Black Mary

Black Mary is the half-sister of Caesar Wilks, mother of Elder Joe Barlow, and Harmond Wilks' great-aunt. She appears onstage in *Gem of the Ocean* (2003) as Aunt Ester's housekeeper.

68 vagrancy

In recent years, the term "vagrancy" has evolved to mean homelessness, and it is a lesser-used charge, replaced by specific offenses like loitering or panhandling.

69 Western State Penitentiary

State Correctional Institution—Pittsburgh (historically known as the "Western Penitentiary" or the "West Pen") is a low-to-medium security correctional institution located about five miles west of downtown Pittsburgh.

Lost tribe... migrated from Arabian peninsula 500 B.C.

Wilson never specifies the name of this tribe or references it elsewhere, but this seems to be another part of his mythology: an ancient time, pre-Islam and pre-Christianity, where African tribes flourished under many long-lost traditions. The descendants of this lost tribe later became the slaves shipped across the ocean to the Americas.

City of Bones

In *Gem of the Ocean* (2003) August Wilson creates a mythical burial ground at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean which contains the bones of the slaves who died in the Middle Passage, the forced journey from Africa to America. Aunt Ester has visions of this place, which links the living to the dead and cleanses the souls of those who pass through. She sends Joe Barlow's father there in *Gem*.

70 injunction

An injunction is a court order that prohibits an individual or company from taking a specific action.

71 affidavit

An affidavit is a written sworn statement of fact, made under oath and administered by a legalized authority.

- 71 docket**
The docket is the official schedule of proceedings in lawsuits pending in court.
- 74 desperado**
A desperado is an outlaw of the American West.
- 75 Joe Frazier**
Joe Frazier (1944-2011), also known as Smokin' Joe, was an American boxer and Olympic champion who beat Muhammad Ali in a 1971 fight. Frazier lost the first few rounds but rallied for some strong blows as Ali started to slow down.
- 77 Cochise**
Cochise was the chief of a Native American Apache tribe who led an uprising against the US Army in 1861.
- 79 Nat King Cole**
Nat King Cole (1919-1965) was an American jazz musician and singer.
- Michael Jordan**
Michael Jordan (b. 1965) is an American professional basketball player who played for the Chicago Bulls in the 1990s, winning multiple MVP awards.
- buyout**
A buyout is when the ownership of a company or the majority of stock shares are acquired by another party, often contrary to the wishes of the original owner/shareholders.
- Initial charter**
The initial charter is the first statement of the scope, objectives, and participants in a project.

Discussion Questions

What do you think we as a people gain or lose from hearing the stories of those different from ourselves? Defend your reasoning.

How do the issues in this play correlate with what is happening in your neighborhood or your city at large?

Divide into groups and discuss the themes August Wilson wove into this play. Make a list of the themes your group came up with and then compare your list with the other groups. What did all or most groups list? Are there any that are unique to one group? If your class has read another of August Wilson's plays, what themes do the two plays share?

What effect did the pre-show have on you and the rest of the audience?

What is neighborhood revitalization? What is its purpose? Who benefits and who loses? Why make the effort?

What does "follow the plan" mean? If we all just "followed the plan" through history, how would our country be different from what it is now?

Discuss why and how the arts provide a place where people from all walks of life can look at controversial subjects. Consider the barriers of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economics, and religious practices.

Discuss the actors' choices in building and portraying their characters.

Why do you think golf remains a symbol of a successful man? See the article about golf included in this study guide. Are there other things in this decade you see as more prominent symbols of a successful man?

Tiger Woods is presented as a hero in this play, set in 1997 and written in 2005—before Mr. Woods's recent challenges. How do you think Roosevelt Hicks might view Tiger Woods today? How has your view of Mr. Woods changed?

Why do think churches have remained at the forefront of social, civic, and political change on a local, national, and world level? Can you cite instances of the positive and negative effects of these efforts?

Does it matter how you "get in the room?" Why or why not? How would you respond to Roosevelt's radio station opportunity?

Is there still significance in having minorities in government positions? Does this issue mean more to some than others? On what grounds is there opposition to having minorities in government offices on the local, state and national level? Research those who have been elected or appointed to government positions during your lifetime who are not white males. Think not only of legislators, mayors, and governors, but also judges, cabinet officers, etc. Here is an example to get you started:
<http://www.thegrio.com/politics/karen-freeman-wilson-gary-indiana-swears-in-first-black-female-mayor.php>

Discuss the conflict between our parents' plans for our lives and the plans we develop for our own lives.

What is the significance of Aunt Esther's age?

Why do you think the director has numerous phones ringing in the scene where Harmond is alone in the office? What was your perception of how Harmond was affected by all the ringing? What tone did this beginning set for that scene?

Why do you think Elder Joseph Barlow never shuts the door when he leaves the office?

In the play Sterling Johnson tells Roosevelt Hicks his perspective on the difference between being a nigger and a Negro. To this day, African Americans wrestle with not only their feelings about these terms, but also how to define themselves beyond such vocabulary. Note the recent interchange between Grant Hill and the Fab Five: <http://sports.espn.go.com/nba/news/story?id=6224395>. Discuss your views on why, after hundreds of years, this is still a "hot topic." How do different generations feel about this issue? As your generation grows older, how relevant do you think this issue will continue to be? Why or why not?

How much of yourself would you be willing to give up and/or alter for the dreams of another person that you cared for?

Do you believe there is a right or wrong point of view about the house on Wylie Street? Whose side are you on, Roosevelt's or Harmon's? Or perhaps you see another solution. What is the reasoning behind your position?

After the events of the play, do you think Harmon has a chance of being elected mayor of Pittsburgh? Why or why not?

What were your thoughts after seeing *Radio Golf*? What in the play moved you? Was there anything you found confusing? What was it and why? How did the events of the play meet or confound the expectations you had developed earlier in the play?

Is this a play you would recommend to others? Why or why not? Create a marketing tag line or slogan that you think would sell the show to your peers. Take your idea a step further and design poster art. Remember these items should give your audience an idea of what the show is about.

Writing Prompts

What makes your neighborhood special? What would you change about your neighborhood if anything and why? If you didn't live there, where would you live and why?

As a culture, we often preserve the homes and artifacts of the rich, famous, and powerful. Write a short story showing why it is important to preserve objects belonging to "everyday people."

Why do people blame others for "holding them back"? Are there instances where this might be true? Cite them. Think of a time when you have been your own worst enemy—when you have held yourself back. What could be done to overcome these barriers from without or within?

Write a story about ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances. This can be fictional or non-fictional. If challenged for ideas, look at newspapers or online. In what ways can you help your audience to empathize with your subject and recognize their collective role in your story.

Activities

In the play you hear that Starbucks, Whole Foods and Barnes & Noble are included in the new plans for Bedford Hills. All of these businesses may be found in Indiana communities. Research their philanthropic work in their local, national, and world communities.

The work of collage artist Romaine Bearden was a strong influence in August Wilson's work. (Check out his work in the resources listed in this study guide.) Try your hand at creating a collage that symbolizes the world of the play, the characters, and/or the themes that you found most prevalent. Use mixed-media supplies for your collage such as pictures from magazines or photocopied/printed pictures of the 1990s, fabrics of all kinds, text in print, small found objects, anything you believe will bring your onlooker into the world of *Radio Golf*. You can expand into 3D or PowerPoint if you are so inspired.

Research the history of radio. What has been its greatest service to civilization? How and why has it survived the age of technology? What do you project its future to be in the coming decades?

Form your classroom into a planning commission for your school or neighborhood. Discuss what challenges your community faces and what improvements you would like to make. Try to reach a consensus in your discussion. Be sure to take into account such issues as parking, costs, population density, and access.

Actors often create soundtracks for themselves of music that helps to get them into character. They might choose music that speaks to what their character believes in, themes that run through the play that affect their character, music their character might have listened to through their life, or music of the time the play is set. Choose a character in the play and create a sound track.

Assign the following: 2 lawyers, a defendant, a plaintiff, 2 witnesses (Old Joe and Sterling). The teacher will be the judge (the facilitator to keep everyone on track). The rest of the class will be the jury. The case: 1839 Wylie Street (Harmond Wilks vs Roosevelt Hicks). Let the students get together with their lawyer and discuss how they are going to fight their case. The house on Wylie Street is a property that is *not* really owned by the owner, but not exactly owned by the government. Both sides should explain their case. Each should question witnesses who can be independent of either the plaintiff's or defendant's point of view. Conclude with the judge's thoughts (unbiased), the jury deciding on the verdict (which should be unanimous), and the announcement of the verdict. The entire activity should be mostly improvised.

Resources

Books

Conversations with August Wilson, edited by Jackson R. Bryer and Mary C. Hartig

August Wilson: Completing the Twentieth-Century Cycle, edited by Alan Nadel

May all Your Fences Have Gates: Essays on the Drama of August Wilson, edited by Alan Nadel

August Wilson: A Literary Companion by Mary Ellen Snodgrass

The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson by Harry Justin Elam

The Ground on Which I stand (Dramatic Context) by August Wilson,

August Wilson: A Research and Production Sourcebook (Modern Dramatists Research and Production Sourcebooks) by Yvonne Shafer

The Cambridge Companion to August Wilson (Cambridge Companions to Literature) by Christopher Bigsby

How I Play Golf by Tiger Woods with the editors of Golf Digest

Uneven Lies: The Heroic Story of African-Americans in Golf by Pete McDaniel, foreword by Tiger Woods

A Course of Their Own: A History of African American Golfers by John H. Kennedy

Better than the Best: Black Athletes Speak, 1920-2007 (V Ethel Willis White Books) edited by John C. Walter and Malina Iina

Say It Loud: An Illustrated History of the Black Athlete by Roxanne Jones and Jessie Paolucci, foreword by Tony Dungy

The Uneven Playing Field: A Documentary History of the African American Experience in Sport (Sport and Society)

Black Firsts: 4,000 Ground-Breaking and Pioneering Historical Events by Jessie Carney Smith

Great Negroes Past and Present: Volume Two by Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu

Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio by William Barlow

Black Radio ... Winner Takes All: America's 1st Black DJs by Marsha Washington George

Comeback Cities: A Blueprint for Urban Neighborhood Revival by Paul S. Grogan and Tony Proscio

Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood by Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar

Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight

The Audacity to Win: The Inside Story and Lessons of Barack Obama's Historic Victory by David Plouffe

Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History by Wallace Terry

The Black Soldier: 1492 to the Present by Catherine Clinton

Romare Bearden: His Life and Art by Myron Schwartzman, foreward by August Wilson

The Art of Romare Bearden by Ruth Fine

The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture, published by The University of North Carolina Press

Videos

Talk to Me with Don Cheadle

Cadillac Records with Beyoncé Knowles

The Piano Lesson (Hallmark Hall of Fame) with Charles Dutton (A play by August Wilson)

A Raisin in the Sun with Sidney Poitier (A play by Lorraine Hansberry)

The Tuskegee Airmen with Laurence Fishburne

A Soldiers Story with Denzel Washington (based on the play by Charles Fuller)

Websites

Understanding August Wilson, revised edition by Mary Bogumil

<http://www.sc.edu/uscp/press/books/2011/3979.html>

Find out more about African American History in Indiana including politics and sports:

<http://www.indianahumanities.org/pdf/ThisFarByFaith.pdf>

Blacks in politics:

<http://www.oxfordaasc.com/public/features/archive/1008/index.jsp>

1951-2001

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1355/is_22_100/ai_80162969/?tag=content;col1

A short history of the Democratic Party

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_Democratic_Party

A teacher's lesson plan on African Americans and the Democratic Party

[http://www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/African_Americans_and_the_Democratic_Party\(PrinterFriendly\).pdf](http://www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/African_Americans_and_the_Democratic_Party(PrinterFriendly).pdf)

Blacks in the Military: Photos, links to other websites, video

<http://www.history.army.mil/html/topics/afam/index.html>

<http://www.lwfaam.net/>

<http://www.history.com/shows/america-the-story-of-us/videos/blacks-in-the-military#blacks-in-the-military>

A copyrighted paper by a college professor about African Americans and Radio

<http://www.coax.net/people/lwf/AAER.HTM>

Images of August Wilson, actors, directors, production photos, his second wife and second daughter, production art, etc.

http://www.google.com/search?q=August+Wilson&hl=en&rls=com.microsoft:en-us&prmd=imvnsb&itbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=z4IDT8XTBY_UiALi1cnJDg&ved=0CEAQsAQ&biw=1067&bih=559

The American Presidency Project – archives of speeches, debates, press briefings etc.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/elections.php>

Black Theatre

<http://www.britannica.com/blackhistory/article-232365>

<http://www.britannica.com/blackhistory/article-9015516>