

HOW WE GOT ON – by Idris Goodwin

Hank, Julian, and Luann are three talented, determined suburban teens coming of age in the 1980s. Dreaming of fame and fortune in the new Hip-Hop music scene, they must overcome cultural isolation, familial dysfunction, and ruthless rivalries to make the music that defines their lives. A sultry DJ spins their stories with her own meta-theatrical perspective in this contemporary ode to the roots of rap.

JULIAN – 15, bi /poly-racial boy

JULIAN: I don't take L's, I hand 'em out! I should've won that. Those were some weird rhymes you gave me. What the hell is a "Can-tor." Nobody know what a "Can-tor" is. Losing? Hells no. Not to no Steel and Dan. It's NOT okay. Losing is not allowed in my house!

My father was like, All-American in football, basketball, track. He was the number one sales rep for the whole Midwest for like 5 years in a row. All my half-brothers are top-ranked in whatever they do. Nobody loses in my family, Hank! You might be satisfied to just be okay. But not me—not me!

Steel and Dan? Hells no. That rock stuff is wack. A lot of that stuff—that heavy metal, you can't even understand what they say. Not like you're missing anything. (*Imitating a metal lead singer.*) "Bat heads, swords, the end of the world!" And they say rap is bad. Least it ain't a horror movie.

You'll write me some fresher rhymes. I'm gonna go back and show The Hill what's up. Show everybody.

HOW WE GOT ON – by Idris Goodwin

Hank, Julian, and Luann are three talented, determined suburban teens coming of age in the 1980s. Dreaming of fame and fortune in the new Hip-Hop music scene, they must overcome cultural isolation, familial dysfunction, and ruthless rivalries to make the music that defines their lives. A sultry DJ spins their stories with her own meta-theatrical perspective in this contemporary ode to the roots of rap.

HANK: 15, black boy

HANK: So I guess you wanna know what happened?

The parking lot of the new mall on Fisher Road was packed—even some of the stuck-up black kids who say rap is ghetto. I never knew so many people liked rap.

I got there before him. He came like fifteen minutes late. He had on the new Jordans. He was actin' like he didn't remember me from basketball camp. I caught him eyeballin' my bike. Which is nice, but his is even niver. So I start thinking:

I am gonna crush this kid, lyrically, and take his bike as my prize.

He went first. And off he went. He didn't say anything about how bad I was at basketball last summer. Nothing about my shoes. And they were lookin' busted. He was just rippin' it. Line after line—crystal clean like a recording. On top of that... he looked very cool the whole time—like *it ain't no thing*. My mouth was like (*opens mouth*) when he drops the last line. The crowd, even the stuck-up black kids who say rap is ghetto—they erupt!

Now, most people would be like, "How am I supposed to follow that?" But I thought: Yo, my verse is solid. I was gonna say my rap. They couldn't hear me. They were already patting Vic on the back. Even people from my own school! And then he took off on my bike!

JUST TAKING UP SPACE, by Nancy Gall Clayton

a juvenile

offender whose future is in question.

FRANK

Let's see. I was telling you about my dad's birthday. I was nine or ten.

It was about a year before my dad disappeared on us. I got every fishing pole out of the cellar and managed to get them down to the riverbank. I laid those poles out on the big rock where we fished and put little rocks on top of them so the poles wouldn't roll in. Then I just waited. Figured I'd have a mess of catfish for my dad. Surprise him real good. Only guess what? I fell asleep and while I was asleep a breeze came up and those lines got all tangled up and not one of them with a fish on it.

I woke up with my dad standing over me hollering at me. He said my mother was worried about me and no one knew where I was and why did I think I could take other people's fishing poles. Then he tells me "Franklin" he always called me "Franklin" when he was mad. "I'm going back for my birthday supper but you, you stay right here until you untangle those fishing lines." And he left in a big huff. It was hard to do...real hard. And by the time I finished my stomach was growling, my fingers were bleeding and it was almost dark.

When I got home no one was there. I found out later they'd gone to a movie. The cellar door was open so I put the poles down there and then I went in the kitchen. The cake plate was sitting next to the sink but there wasn't a single piece left. I scraped some frosting off with my finger but the dirt and the blood got mixed up with it. I had to spit it out. Then I went to bed in that empty house: (pause)

I've never told anybody that story. I never even told my dad what I was trying to do, that it was all meant for a birthday gift.

BASKETBALL THERAPY

Gabriel Davis

Seriocomic

RYAN, 15

RYAN is in the office of a therapist. He tells the therapist that he doesn't need him to help him deal with losing his father, because he has basketball.

RYAN I don't need therapy! I don't need to be here. I'm not insane, I'm Linsane. As in, I've got a condition called "Linsanity!" And anyone in their right mind who has seen point guard Jeremy Lin do his thing on the basketball court would have it, too! That's what my mom and sister don't get. That's why they wanted me to come talk to you. But I don't need to be here. I'm only here because my mom caught me talking about Jeremy Lin at my father's wake. I never would have said anything, but out of the blue my cousin Arnie is like, "Jeremy Lin's a passing fad." If my dad had heard that, he'd have jumped out of that coffin and whopped Arnie. I actually looked over at Dad, lying there in our living room, wearin' his Sunday best. I half expected to see him get up. Of course he didn't, so I had to tell Arnie myself how Lin's got this low dribble that throws the defense, how his pick and rolls and combinations driv- ing to the net are sick. Arnie tells me the only reason he's getting any attention is because he's like one of the first few Asians in basketball. Oh boy, I thought. Dad would have kicked Arnie out of the house by now. But I didn't, I just got into I guess a slightly, ah, heated debate with him where I like dared him to a game of air basketball in the mudroom. That's around the time some of the relatives said it seemed insensitive of me to go and play air basketball

in the mudroom with everyone else trying to mourn and pay their respects and honestly I don't even care. It was my dad. I'm the most relative to the situation, if you know what I mean. So then, for the next two weeks Lin just continued to kick major ass and I couldn't pull myself away to do all these family activities. Lin was on fire and you know, my dad would have been pumped. Mom had this dinner in honor of him and I... I said I felt sick so I could stay home and watch the game. Dad would never have gone to some dinner with this game going on. Before Lin even made it to the NBA, my dad saw him back in the day. Dad followed college ball too, and knew how good Lin was at Harvard. When Lin first made it to the NBA and was struggling a bit, Dad would talk about how Lin just hadn't found his stride yet but he had greatness inside. Dad and I could talk about basket- ball for hours. So I guess that's why I... I just don't want to stop talking about basketball you know? To be honest, as long as I'm shootin' air hoops in the mud room and cuttin' up with Arnie, and watching the games like a religion... it doesn't even feel like he's gone. That's what they all can't understand. I'm not insensitive... I'm... They all want to be sad he's gone, see? But he's not. I'm with him, I'm keep- ing him with me. So... if they sent me here so I'd stop, well... I'm not going to stop talking about or watching basket- ball. They think I need this... talk therapy, but I already got it, you know. So, um... you follow basketball at all?

BENJAMIN

Deanna Alisa Ableser

Dramatic

BENJAMIN, 12 to 14

BENJAMIN is average looking. He dresses nicely, his hair is nicely done, and he takes good care of his appearance. He is speaking to a psychiatrist who his parents forced him to go see, thinking that he is simply being a "moody" teenager."

BENJAMIN You think boys aren't affected by it, you know. You think that we're strong and manly and nothing really gets to us. If only you really knew . . . I mean, really knew. Sure, the girls cry and then head off to the school counselor and bawl their eyes out there, but we're just as messed up as they are. You know, we're human too. I remember when they first told me about it. They took me out to dinner and we were going to have a "special family meal." Yeah, right. It was special . . . super special. "Benny dear, you know your father and I will always love you no matter what, right?" What type of talk is this during our special family meal? Great, yeah, you both love me, no matter what . . . now where is my ultimate burger with extra sauce? Loaded chili french fries? Megasized soda? "Benny honey, let's be serious here. You're a big boy . . . I mean, a teenager, almost an adult." [Beat.] I shut my mouth. I knew I wasn't going to like what was going to come out of my mom's mouth . . . and my dad, well, he was just sitting there . . . well, just looking sad. Look, I didn't break anything or ruin anything that can't be replaced, my grades will go up by next semester, I swear I didn't . . . "Benny sweetheart, it's not about you. You're just great. Your daddy and I will always love you, no matter what." [Beat.] Okay, so I couldn't help it then . . . the tears

started slowly. I'm not proud of losing it . . . I'll admit that. But, you see, once I started, I really couldn't stop. [Beat.] "Look, Mom, I won't fight and argue anymore. You and Dad won't have to worry about me! I'll sit and be quiet and be a great kid from this moment forward. Please, whatever you need, I'll do. I'll get an extra job so there's no money problems. I'll make you breakfast in bed every day until I'm off to college. I'll clean up the dog's stuff until . . ." "Benny, it's not about you . . . your father and I just can't live together anymore . . . we'll always love you. Remember that, no matter what, we will always love you." [Beat.] "Look, guys . . . you're adults . . . you can work it out . . . you've always fought all the time . . . just keep on fighting for another forty years and it'll work out . . . come on, you can do it. I know you can."

the weirdest thing. She asked for my help! She asked me if I could help make Todd feel okay in our house. She said she would be really grateful to me if I could do that. "Grateful?" Can you believe that?

THE LATE BUS

Peter Mercurio

Dramatic

ANDREW, 14

ANDREW is speaking with a guidance counselor after witnessing another kid get bullied.

ANDREW There was this kid who I went to middle school with. Kenny Fitzpatrick. Sort of a geek. He got teased all the time. I sat behind him in English class. Whenever Mrs. Langer had her back turned, all these wet, wadded-up spitballs came flying right in front of me, most of them hitting their target. Kenny. He'd turn red and scream, "Stop it!" That only made the rest of the class laugh. Mrs. Langer would scowl and say, "Let's behave now, class." Her standard response. And things would settle down, until the next time. Me, my standard response was, well, it was actually no response at all. After school one day, I saw Kenny waiting for the late bus. All the jocks took it after practice. You can imagine the scene. Kenny, me, and a bunch of jocks. You'd think the blockheads had just won the Super Bowl, the way they acted when they saw Kenny. "Faggot!" one shouted. Then the onslaught began. You see, if one starts it, they all have to join in—otherwise, they'd be one themselves. That's how it worked. Somehow, I always escaped. Maybe I was invisible. Better Kenny than me, I guess. "What's a little girl like you doing here all by yourself?" Nope, they didn't see me. Kenny didn't answer. He squirmed away. They followed. "You think you're getting on this bus?" "What's a matter? Huh?" For once, why couldn't the late bus be early? The driver would never have allowed the abuse to continue. Finally, the bus pulled up from around the corner. I

glanced over. They had taken Kenny's glasses off. Two took turns poking at him. He stumbled. "What's the matter, you blind or something?" "Shut Up!" Kenny screamed. "What did you say?" "Leave me alone." "No, I think you said 'shut up.' Guys, isn't that what he said?" "Kick his ass," someone else yelled. The rest happened in slow motion. One last shove and Kenny tripped off the curb. The late bus rolled over and crushed both of his legs. I'll never forget the crunch. The driver jumped out of the bus and dragged him back to the sidewalk. That's when Kenny saw me. He just stared. "Why didn't you help me?" he asked. I just stared back. I couldn't answer. All I know is I don't want to be invisible anymore.

LE MORTE D'ALEX

Brandon M. Crose

Serioticomic
Alex, 10 to 15

ALEX (*who can be played as either a male or female character*)
reads a report in class.

ALEX "Evolution," by Alex Cademon. Once the Earth was not called "Earth"—it was not called anything, because there was no one around to call it anything. The only things that were around were one-celled organisms called "amoeba," and they were not capable of speech. So there was no school, either. Or church, or anything else that was stupid and boring.

[Turns a page, gaining confidence.]

But I guess there were no books either, or uncles who would read bedtime stories when you went to live with him after your parents died in a SUV rollover accident, so these one-celled gooey things evolved (which means to "develop") into things like jellyfish and worms and stuff. And they became things like turtles and dinosaurs, then primates, then cavemen and cavewomen. Charles Darwin was a man who thought that humans evolved from monkeys, and I think that he was probably right, judging from most of you.

[Turns another page, confident now.]

But here is what I think. Mr. Gibbons says that energy must come from energy, and life is energy, which means that amoebas came from pure energy, which only could have come from an exploding star, which turned into amoebas, which turned into us a long time later. So we all have the energy of the universe within us, which is why people