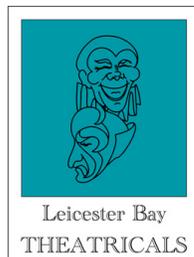


**PERUSAL SCRIPT**

**American Dreams:**  
Immigration Stories

by

Linda Britt



Newport, Maine

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**AMERICAN DREAMS: Immigration Stories**

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## CAST of CHARACTERS and the monologues

18Female, 12Male

1. Dreaming – **Marie**, 24, *U.S.A.*
2. The Bridge – **Selma**, 48, *Bosnia*
3. This is What Americans Look Like – **Katie**, 24, *China*
4. Shaking Hands – **Wilson**, 33, *Sudan*
5. Why I Serve – **Ariana**, 33, *Guatemala*
6. Citizenship for Sale – **Sergei**, 58, *Russia*
7. Eternal Return – **Jaime**, 45, *Mexico*
8. Boatpeople – **Manuela**, 42, *Cuba*
9. Fear – **Rafiq**, 40s, *Syria*
10. Legal – **Yasin**, 26, *Egypt*
11. Nowhere to Go – **Victor**, 18, *Honduras*
12. Two Tours – **Marco**, 30, *México*
13. Home – **Nora**, 53, *Albania*
14. Be the Change – **Bilan (f)**, 22, *(in hijab), Somalia*
15. Denaturalized – **Marta**, 29, *Argentina*
16. Lucky – **Patrick**, 65, *Northern Ireland (Not In The Perusal Script)*
17. The Message – **Isabel**, 12, *Honduras*
18. Lost in Translation – **Isaad**, 44, *Afghanistan*
19. Invisible – **Carol**, 25, *Canada*
20. American Dreams – **Alicia**, 31, *Nicaragua*
21. Thirty-one Years – **Jakub**, 50, *Poland*
22. Taco Truck on Every Corner – **Amanda**, 29, *Cuba*
23. Out of Status – **Jazmin**, 22, *Iran*
24. Miami Mama – **Natasha**, 27, *Russia*
25. Asylum – **Hala**, 38, *Jordan*
26. Diversity Lottery – **Sophie**, 34, *France*
27. Citizens – **Javier**, 20s, *Puerto Rico*
28. A “Good” Immigrant – **Emily**, 42, *England*
29. Changing Rules – **Isabel**, 23, *El Salvador*
30. I Will Tell You This – **Joseph**, 79, *Germany*

It has been found best to cast age appropriately and as close to true ethnicity as possible. Each voice is so unique, with its own stories inherent, that this principle should be followed rigorously. There may be a monologue whose gender may not fit the actors you have available. It may be all right to assign that monologue to a performer of another gender. Age, however, may prove understandably impossible for producers in the Educational Theatre arena. These monologues may, of course be performed by the age of the performer available for your production.

ALSO — there are 30 monologues in this play. You may also decide to not use a monologue for any of the above reasons. But no monologue should be edited in any way, unless there is a gender change.

NOTE: The order of the monologues has proven beneficial to a through-line of content and theme. We ask that you not re-arrange the order of the monologues.

**AMERICAN DREAMS: Immigration Stories** by Linda Britt. 18Female 12 Males. Doubling possible, but not recommended. About 90 minutes. Simple set, costumes. (*Ideal for Professional, Amateur and Educational theatrical productions groups.*) A powerful, moving, and timely monologue play about immigration, with stories that are sometimes funny, occasionally ironic, and too often heartbreaking. The Iranian student afraid to return to her country, the mother who misses her homeland, the Afghan translator who fears for his comrades, the migrant worker who hasn't known any other life, the Canadian who just wanted to get away from the cold, the Russian mother of a newborn American citizen, the Polish scientist who thought he had done everything right... each a unique perspective, and together they make up America's immigration story. 30 monologues, adapted with permission from interviews with immigrants to the U.S., are ordered in a fluid construct, easily adaptable to available performers as far as age, gender and ethnicity. Visit the website for very flexible royalty terms. **ORDER #3331**

**LINDA BRITT** is a Maine playwright who has had plays produced on both coasts, her recent works include "What If...", "I Smile, Of Course, and Go On Drinking Tea," "Mirrors and Memories," and "Chosen: Adoption Stories," along with her ten-minute play "If Only in My Dreams". She has also written two musicals for students in Elementary Grades, "The Skeleton In The School" and "Who's Running The School?" Her latest project has been "American Dreams: Immigration Stories."

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## Dreaming

**Marie, 24, U.S.A.**

I am not an immigrant. I was born here. But I am the child of immigrants.

There are so many ways to immigrate to this country. Legal, illegal.. Overstaying your visa, that's the most common illegal one. But lots of ways to do it legally, too. The normal application, well, say you are from Spain. You want to move to Los Angeles, to be a movie star. That can happen, right? You can be the next Penelope Cruz. The next Javier Bardem. It happens *all* the time. So you get a visa and move to Hollywood.

Or you're from Canada. You want to be the next Justin Bieber. Am I right? You get a visa and move to L.A. *(Beat)* What you do from there is your business.

So my parents didn't move to Hollywood or even California. They moved to Massachusetts. One at a time... my father came to go to college. My mother followed him, and they got married here. *(Beat)* I came along later. *(Beat)* Obviously. *(Beat)* I mean I was born here after that. *(Beat)* I should stop explaining things.

Since I was born here, lived here all my life, it's never been an issue for me. I mean why would anybody tell me, "go back where you came from"? I don't know if they said stuff like that to my parents. *(Beat)* But people like me. I have friends here. Like you do, you know. *(Beat)* If you're like me. I'm kind of a social person.

Look, I get a lot of stuff. I get that when you are having a hard time, it's tempting to blame someone else. I get that you can be scared of things that are foreign to you. I even get that some *legal* immigrants don't like the ones who came here illegally. Or you resent them, because *you* had to jump through all the hoops. I get it.

I also get that I'm probably not going to be the next Penelope Cruz. But a girl can dream, right?

That's all these people are doing: Dreaming.

## The Bridge

**Selma, 48, Bosnia**

You can't know what it's like until you are there yourself.

I am from Mostar. It is a city in Bosnia-Herzegovina, beautiful. Mostar is from the word for bridge in Bosnia. There was a beautiful bridge, very old, from 1500s, and so important the city was named for it. It was stone, limestone, I think. Not gray stone, like here. There were towers on both banks of the river. Under the bridge, lovers used to meet.

They used to drive horse carts over the bridge, but never cars. It was for walking over. For horses or people to walk over.

It was called "an exemplary piece of Islamic architecture". So beautiful. We were proud of our bridge. Our Stari Most (which means just "old bridge"). If you came to Mostar as a tourist and wanted to buy a souvenir, you could find post cards. All the post cards had our bridge in the photos.

We had many wars, over many centuries. But the war in 1993 with the Croats was when they destroyed our bridge. Not because of any reason. It was not, what is the word, strategic. No one could drive on it. No big weapons, no trucks, no tanks went over that bridge. Only people. But it was Islamic. Muslim. So they blew it up.

When my husband was freed from the concentration camp, we left our home. We came as refugees to Saint Louis, where we had family.

My husband never got over the war. Omar, he had seen... he had been through horrible things. Horrible. He was tortured. (*Beat*) He died, nine years ago now.

I am glad to be here. They tell me they rebuilt the bridge, but it will never be the same. I have friends here, family. My children are here. We are all citizens. Muslims. Proud Americans. I am glad that here, I can be both.

But I still miss my home, the home that is no more.

## **This is What Americans Look Like**

**Katie, 24, China**

I guess I am technically an immigrant?

I mean, I don't remember. I came here when I was two. I've grown up here, don't remember anything about my life before I was adopted and moved here.

My parents tried hard to maintain some connection between me and my Chinese heritage. You know, now I appreciate it, but growing up I just didn't care. I had to go to Chinese camp when I was a kid. (Beat) Chinese camp. And my friends who went to band camp thought *that* was bad.

Look, I am an American. I grew up here. This is all I remember. So, you know, "immigrant"? I don't even relate to that. I mean, yes, I know I look different, because I'm Asian. Deal with it. I don't look like you. But neither does the person sitting next to you. Why is that so important?

When I was about 11, there was this kid who used to take his fingers and make "slant eyes" at me. Like, "ooh, you're not like us, you don't belong here." I cried once. Then I got over it. His problem, not mine.

As much as I didn't like Chinese camp, I want to say... I really appreciated my parents. They raised me in a way that never made me feel like I didn't belong. I always felt safe and loved and comfortable. My parents were the best. Are the best.

I didn't choose America, but I am grateful to be here. I just had no say in that.

I'm in college now. I'm a good student. I love my life... I ski, I run, I get good grades... I suspect that my life here is far different, and, most likely, better, than it would have been. Maybe I would have gotten married at 18. Maybe I would still be living in a village outside of Beijing. I'll never really know, obviously.

But I am grateful for the life I have. With this family. In this country.

## Shaking Hands

**Wilson, 33, Sudan**

*(Wilson, smiling, has his hands in his pockets).* Americans, they like to shake hands. They come up to you, say “Hey, man, how you doing?” and they want to shake your hand. They say “Dude, what’s up?” and want to shake your hand. They always want to shake hands.

I don’t like the handshake.

*(Still smiling)* They always say to me, “hey, Wilson, you always so happy. Why you so happy? You always smiling.” Why not be happy? I am here, I am student, I get good grades, mostly. Not in one class, or two, but mostly.

I eat in the cafeteria. Some students say no, they don’t like the food here. But you can eat as much as you want! I eat so much food. It’s like I am rich man, I eat until I am full.

How can you not be happy when you are never hungry? I am happy here. But I am too sad. *(Beat, shaking his head)* No, I mean, I am sad, too.

I don’t like the handshake. *(Takes hand from pocket)* Someone shakes my hand, they feel the hand, they look, they say “what happened to your hand?” I don’t want to talk about it. I don’t want them to look. *(Puts hand back in pocket)* I don’t want to think about the what happened. I don’t want to think about my little brother or my father or my uncles.

I don’t want to think about my hands.

I am here now many years. Eight? Nine? America is my country now. I don’t have another country. *(Beat)* I did. But not any more. We live here now. My sisters, my mother, they are happy here. I go to college. I graduate, I get a job, I take care of them.

Maybe I need to shake hands in my job. *(Beat)* Okay. *(Beat)* Okay. I can do that. To be here, to be American, I shake hands.

## Why I Serve

*Ariana, 33, Guatemala*

As soon as I was old enough, I signed up. So I was seventeen, even though I couldn't go to boot camp until I was eighteen. But I knew. I knew that if I could be in the army, I could become a citizen.

That's why I signed up *when* I did. But that's not *why* I did.

I have felt so lucky to be living here, in the United States. My parents fled their country when I was little. I don't remember anything about it. But I know they could have died if they had stayed. My uncles did. Two of them, dragged out of their houses and shot.

So we left. I don't remember the journey, and my parents do not talk about it. I think it must have been very hard. But they made it, and I grew up here. Where we came from, I would not have gone beyond 6<sup>th</sup> grade in school. Only the rich people got to go to high school. But here I went to school, learned English, and helped my parents learn it. I graduated from high school. I joined the army.

Why did I join? I joined because I am so happy to be in this country, to have gone to school, to not be afraid in my home. I did it because I want everyone to know how grateful I am to be here, to have my parents with me. I did it because I want to give back, however I can, to my adopted country, the only country I know.

My parents are still here. Undocumented, they are called, but still here, still working, because there will always be jobs for people who are willing to be paid less. And they are still grateful; after all, they are not dead or in prison in Guatemala.

They were so proud when I enlisted.

Prouder still that I am now an American citizen.

## **Citizenship for Sale**

**Sergei, 58, *Russia***

It is not so hard.

You want to move to New York? You have half a million dollars? I tell you what to do. You can invest your half a million dollars in a hotel in Manhattan, and the government will give you a green card. There's a special visa, the EB-5, for foreign investors. Give your money to the developer.

Or give your money to Burger King. Really. Fast food can be your ticket to citizenship. You can buy 120,000 Whoppers with your half a million dollars, or you can invest in a franchise. Investing in the franchise will get you a green card. Eating 120,000 Whoppers will not.

It is not for me to know why America needs more Burger Kings.

## Eternal Return

**Jaime, 45, Mexico**

They caught me again.

I am here in my cell, waiting for them to send me back home. There was a raid, they caught me, they locked me up, they will deport me.

And I will come back. I've crossed the border now five or six times, always to go back. I have a family. My wife and three children live in Mexico.

When your family is hungry, you will do many things to help them. You will find work, you will even do things that are not legal. It is not legal for me to work in this country. It is not legal for me to *be* in this country now. So I am doing an illegal thing. More than one illegal thing.

I do not think I will tell you how I cross the border. Every time. You do not need to know this.

But I am feeding my family. I come here, I find a job on a farm, I get paid, I send money to my family. I get paid cash. If I do not work for the farmer, his crops rot in the fields. It is a hard job, very hot, for little money. But it is more money than I can make in my town. It is enough money for my family to eat.

They do not want to keep me in jail here. It costs them money if I sit here. They will send me back there soon.

But I will return.

## Boatpeople

**Manuela, 42, Cuba**

I was a Marielita.

Do you know what that means? (*Beat*) There is a port in Cuba called Mariel. A Marielito is someone who comes from there.

I wasn't born there. I was born in Havana. But in 1980, when I was four years old, 10,000 Cubans showed up at the Peruvian embassy one day and knocked on the doors. They were looking for political asylum. And Fidel Castro, he had a temper tantrum or something when he found out about it, and he said anyone who wanted to leave Cuba could leave. And not just the asylum seekers. Others, who wanted to reunite with family who had left when Fidel came to power, or people who thought there were more opportunities in Florida. More than 100,000 of us. Fidel, well, then he decided to open the prison doors, and there were bad people, criminals, who came too, and gave us a bad name for a while. But I think most everyone just hoped for something better in the U.S. than their lives in Cuba.

And so my family, like thousands and thousands of others, ended up in Mariel, getting onto shrimp boats and other fishing boats and heading to Florida.

Not everyone made it. There were rough seas, and a lot of the boats were small and meant only to stay close to the coast. Waves were high, breaking over the bow. I got very wet, and also very seasick. That is mostly all I remember about the trip, how sick I was the whole time.

Hundreds of Cubans died in the crossing. I didn't know any of them, but I do know this is true. Some of the boats were not strong enough to make it, and sank. Some people were rescued by the U.S. Navy. Some were not so lucky.

They were not ready for so many new immigrants at once. They set up temporary camps for us, a lot of them on military bases. They had to interview everyone (or at least all the adults). We ended up in a camp in Florida. We were lucky, and didn't have to stay in the camp for very much time. We had cousins near Miami and they sponsored us. And because we were refugees, we were all eligible to become citizens. Being a Cuban immigrant in Miami is maybe the best situation, when you look at other immigrants and how they are treated. You can speak Spanish, you can eat Cuban food, you can listen to Cuban music.

But you can be American too.

I grew up, went to school, to college. I became a real estate agent. It's a good business to be in when you live in the sunshine state. I got married. We have two children. We are part of the community. We give back.

Just don't ever ask me to get into a boat again.

## Fear

**Rafiq, 40s, Syria**

People tell me how lucky I am. I am lucky. I know I am lucky.

But I walk down the street here, and I look at you. I see you. I was taught here, “be a man, look people in the eye. It is what Americans do.”

But you do not look at me. You do not see me.

I think it is because you are afraid. You only see that I do not look like you. You are afraid of those who are different.

I will tell you, you do not know what it is like to be afraid. You wake up here, you make your coffee, you drink your coffee. You don’t wonder if someone is coming for you today. You get dressed, go about your day, school, work, whatever it is. Every day here, I, too wake up. I open my eyes, and I think, here, I am not afraid. Where I come from, I was afraid every day, every minute.

But you see me, and you do not see me. You see something, someone you have been taught to fear. Different. Foreign. You see me as dangerous, don’t you? Because I do not look like you. Maybe I do not talk like you. So you are afraid.

I will tell you, and it is almost funny, but then not funny at all: You are more likely to be killed by a toddler than by me. I read somewhere, once a week in America, on average, a toddler shoots someone. I don’t shoot anyone. I don’t have a gun. I don’t want a gun, ever. Where I come from, guns on the street, guns shooting people, it happens every day to people on the street.

I did not come to America to make you fear me. I came to America to get away from fear.

## Legal

**Yasin, 26, Egypt**

Do you know what your name means? My name is Yasin, which means rich (and maybe famous). My father in Egypt, who gave me this name, had big dreams for his son.

I am not rich. I am not famous. But, on the other hand, I am not in Egypt any longer, and it's not like anyone here knows the meaning.

In Egypt, I did not dream of being rich or famous. I dreamed of being free.

What do you think of when you think of Egypt? *(Beat)* Pyramids, right? King Tut? Now *he* was rich. *(Beat)* I thought of getting away.

As soon as I was 18, I applied to immigrate to this country. I have a cousin here, he said I could find a job, maybe driving a cab, maybe something else. My English was pretty good. That helps.

I couldn't stay in Egypt. In Egypt, if you are a man who loves a man, you can go to prison. They call it "debauchery" or "prostitution", even if you are with only one man. Most people think you are evil and against God, just because you love a man.

I know in this country, too, there are people who think you are evil and against God if you are a man who loves a man. But there are also laws. And I finally got my visa to come here two years ago, after the Supreme Court ruling. Here, I can love a man. Here, I can even marry that man.

His name is Miguel.

## Nowhere to Go

**Victor**, 18, *Honduras*

I heard about this Dreamer program. The one where if you came here as a kid you can stay.

But they don't mean me.

I came when I was little. Like, not even a year old. Just came across the border with my parents, but we never went back. So when I heard about the program, I thought, "yeah, that's me, I came like that, I didn't know I was illegal." So great.

But then you ask more about the rules, and, like, you have to be in school. You have to graduate.

When you work in the fields, like I do, you don't go to school much. You go from place to place, from farm to farm or orchard to orchard, and you don't live anyplace long enough to be in school there. I mean I wasn't working when I was five years old, but my family was, and I moved around with them. Soon as I got old enough to be useful, like putting apples in crates, I worked too.

I wasn't good at school. It's hard, you know, if you miss a lot. I think the last time I went for more than a few weeks at a time I was about ten years old. I haven't even set foot in a school in five years.

So I may have dreams, but 'cause I don't even know what algebra looks like, I'll never graduate. *(Beat)* I keep working. I like being outside anyway, even when it gets so hot in the summer. I'm strong. I don't mind the work. *(Beat)* I'd like to be legal. You know, they have raids sometimes, just looking for people like me. Like my father. They haven't caught us yet. It's like there's too many of us. Too many fields, too many orchards. We just disappear. It's not like the farmers are gonna turn us in. *(Shrugs shoulders)*

I don't know what I'll do if they catch me. I got nowhere to go.

## Two Tours

**Marco, 30, México**

You see a lot of things you wish you hadn't over there. And hear things, too, loud bangs, pops, all day sometimes, during the night sometimes.

You know, they don't go away. For me, anyway. The noises, the things I saw. They never went away.

I always wanted to join the army. I was a kid, and I saw the guys in their uniforms, and thought, "I want to be like them." And then came 9/11, and I knew as soon as I was old enough, I would volunteer. And I did.

You have to be legal to serve in the military. I was, thanks to President Obama. I'm a Dreamer. There was this special program, where if you were a Dreamer and you served your country in the military, you could earn citizenship. But like I said, it's what I wanted to do ever since I was a kid.

It didn't work out like that, the citizenship thing. I got in some trouble after I got out of the army. Those sounds, those memories... they take a toll on you, you know. I served two tours. And in Afghanistan, you have to deal with a lot. You never know when you'll be taken out by an IED. Or a stray bullet, or an ambush. It's real hard to sleep.

I was relatively lucky. I never got shot. But I hurt my back on one of the missions. And when I got out, the back pain wouldn't go away. The pictures in my head wouldn't go away. The noises in my head wouldn't go away. And when the doctors wouldn't prescribe me any more meds, I got in some trouble. I just wanted to sleep, you know? And I ended up dealing, so I could keep getting the painkillers.

So I was arrested. Even though I had applied for that citizenship program, it hadn't come through yet. And if you have a criminal record, they won't let you become a citizen. They're going to send me to Mexico. I was last in Mexico when I was three.

*(A long beat)* Two tours of duty in a war zone. For your country, for what I thought was my country. For your freedom, for what I thought was my freedom. Two tours.  
*(Shakes head).*

## Home

*Nora, 53, Albania*

Do you know what it is like to miss your home? Miss your home so much? It is like pain. Like you think of home and you cry.

I am in this country three years now.

It is cold here. Where I am from it is warm. I like warm.

My daughter moved to this cold place many years ago to go to school. She stayed. She has a good job here. It's all right. Young people, modern people, they leave their homes, their families, they move away.

But I stayed. With my husband. We had our house, our village. Our village, it is so far from here. We did not want her to move so far. But she did. She even became a citizen of U.S. She is happy here.

When my husband died, my daughter, she wanted me to come live with her. I did not want to. It was too far from my home.

Albania is a beautiful country. Many beautiful things. And warm. It is a poor country. But it is warm.

Still, I came to visit. I said "I will come. I will visit." And she was happy, and she bought a plane ticket for me, and I came. For a visit. She said to me: you will love it here. Everything is modern. There is nothing you cannot find here.

That was not too much a reason for me to stay. But I want my daughter to be happy. She gets the green card for me. You call it, what is it, "chain migration". My daughter, she calls it "I want my mother with me." It is about family.

And then I get sick. Very sick. My daughter, she said I must go to the doctor here. And I do. He tells me I have cancer.

Okay. I must go back home. To die.

But my daughter says no, I must stay here, she must take care of me. I have no husband any more to take care of me.

I know I am not sick *because* I am not home. But I think I feel *better* if I go home.

I do not want to be here. But I *am* still here. Maybe next year, I can go back. To my country. (*Beat*) To my home.

## Be the Change

**Bilan** (*f*), 22, (*in hijab*), *Somalia*

I don't remember much about my life before I came here. I mean, not *here* here, but here, in the U.S. I think I was six, or about that. There was a camp. It was crowded, I remember that. And I remember there was food and water there. When they said we could go to America, we were happy. I didn't know what America was. But my mother said we had relatives in Maine, so we came here. They said it was safe and there were places to live. Lots of empty apartments in downtown Lewiston.

Let me tell you, I was happy to have some space, after the camp. So much space in the apartment!

I remember my first school here, and not knowing English at first, but it was not hard for me to learn. I was smart. Everyone said so. I liked school. And I liked being here. My mom liked it too, but English didn't come as easily for her, and of course she had to learn it to find a job. So she had to go to adult ed, for that, and to school to get a driver's license.

The first time I saw snow on the ground I thought it looked like home. It was white, you know, like the desert in the sun. But then I touched it, and it was cold! I liked to play in it with my friends once I got boots.

I have three brothers. I was oldest, so I helped my mom a lot, too. All through school I helped the little ones get dressed in the morning. And I did my homework and graduated in the top ten of my high school class. I could have gone to an elite college. But family meant, in my case, that I went to college close to my town.

And I've done well. I study hard, I get good grades, I'm active in my community. I will graduate on time and with honors.

And yet, because I look like this, because I dress like this, when I walk down the street, people look at me. Not just to say a friendly hello. Often to stare, or, on the other hand, to avert their eyes so as not to make contact.

Look, I don't really care. It's their problem, not mine. I have work to do. I have plans. There is change that needs to be made in this world. And *I'm* going to be part of it.

## Denaturalized

**Marta**, 29, *Argentina*

Were your parents married before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday?

How many total days (24 hours or longer) did you spend outside the United States during the last 5 years?

How many times have you been married (including annulled marriages, marriages to other people, and marriages to the same person)?

How many times has your current spouse been married (including annulled marriages, marriages to other people, and marriages to the same person)?

Have you EVER been a member of, involved in, or in any way associated with, any organization, association, fund, foundation, party, club, society, or similar group in the United States or in any other location in the world? If you answered “Yes,” provide all relevant information below.

Have you ever gambled illegally?

Have you EVER persecuted (either directly or indirectly) any person because of race, religion, national origin, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion?

Were you EVER involved in any way with any of the following?

Genocide? Torture? Killing, or trying to kill, someone? Badly hurting, or trying to hurt, a person on purpose?

Have you EVER committed, assisted in committing, or attempted to commit, a crime for which you were NOT arrested?

You must answer YES even if your records have been sealed, expunged, or otherwise cleared. You must disclose this information even if someone, including a judge, law enforcement officer, or attorney told you that it no longer constitutes a record or told that you do not have to disclose the information.

These are the instructions on the Application for Naturalization one must fill out to become an American citizen, and some of the questions one must answer. I said yes to some things. No to some things. I became a citizen.

Now, 8 years later, they say I lied. I do not know what lie I told. I do not think I told any. But they say I lied, and that I can no longer be a citizen. I must go back to my country.

I hope they do not come for you.

14 other monologues make up the second half of this play. Then this final monologue.

## **I Will Tell You This**

**Joseph, 79, Germany**

I was only a baby. And I was one of the few who were able to come here. My parents had fled Germany in 1938 and were living in the Netherlands, where I was born. Then they got word they had received visas to come to the United States. There were 27,000 visas available. There were 300,000 Jews who applied for them. We were lucky; six million others were not.

What can I tell you that you don't already know? Perhaps this: that our government now is doing the same things Hitler did then. Yes, I say his name. Hitler. We do not forget.

The president says immigrants are criminals. He says that Mexicans are rapists and murderers. Central Americans are gang members. Muslims are terrorists. Haiti and African countries are a word I won't say, but means toilet. Immigrants are animals, not human.

Hitler did that. He said we were animals. Less than human. And then he sent us to the gas chamber. My grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, even children.

I will tell you this, too. We have Nazis marching in our streets. Nazis running for Congress. Nazis shouting about Jews. And the president said that some of those Nazis are very fine people.

Nazis are not fine people.

I will tell you one more thing. Not all Germans were Nazis. But most of those Germans did nothing to stop what became the Holocaust.

And if we do nothing to stop what is happening now, we will be as complicit as they were.

## **Lights Out**