

# BLIND DATE

BY **ROGELIO MARTINEZ**  
DIRECTED BY **ROBERT FALLS**

School Matinee Series **Study Guide**

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Directed by ROBERT FALLS

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# The Year Music Changed For Me: An Introduction to the Study Guide

by WILLA TAYLOR



*Whitney Houston in the 1980's – a still from the music video for "I Wanna Dance With Soembody," courtesy of BOOMSbeat.*

As 1985 begins, millions of Africans are dying of starvation, Nelson Mandela is still in prison, and Ronald Wilson Reagan is inaugurated for his second term as the 40th US president.

I had been living in Greece and Turkey, serving in the US Navy, and while I certainly tried keeping up with what little news we got from America, I was mostly into films, food and music. And in 1985, I was in love with two women – Madonna and Whitney Houston.

I always loved music. I grew up in a house filled with it. My parents had a terrific record collection and my friends and I spent most of our limited allowances on 45's. While my parents enjoyed all kinds of music – jazz, blues, R&B, classical, even some country, Funk was my mistress and

my muse. I had been a devotee of James Brown since I snuck into the Forest Avenue Theater in Dallas at age 11 to see him. And his musical descendants kept me sane through the horrid disco craze. Sly and Family Stone, Parliament-Funkadelic, Chaka Khan, Labelle, Mother's Finest – these were the groups and artists that had been the soundtrack of my college years, and were the sounds that Europe was dancing to when I was stationed overseas in the Navy.

But by the 80's, when I rotated stateside, I was hungry for a new sound. And I found Madonna and Whitney.

The two of them owned the radio that year. I don't think Madonna was ever out of the top 20, well on her way to her record 12 number one songs and eight number one albums. Whitney, a baby just com-

ing on the scene, produced one of the greatest soul albums ever – and certainly one of, if not the best albums she ever made.

Madonna was saturating the radio with "[Like a Virgin](#)," and selling out arenas across the country with her Virgin Tour. But it was her supporting turn as the title character in *Desperately Seeking Susan*, her first major film role – and it's imminently danceable title song "Into The Groove" – that changed the game and had me out of breath and wanting more. Her first number one of the Billboard Top 100 chart, I couldn't get enough of it. Or her.

Directed by Susan Seidelman, *Susan* starred Rosanna Arquette and Aiden Quinn and introduced audiences to Madonna the actress. Her character, Susan, is

a bohemian drifter punk being chased by a mob hitman who, through some typical rom-com mistaken identity episodes, is being impersonated by the uptight amnesiac New Jersey housewife Arquette plays. The movie was light fluff but its energy was infectious. And the hit song was terrific.

[“Into The Groove.”](#) the movie’s single musical sensation, shot to the top of the charts around the world and was her first truly great single. Its sexual innuendos, synthesized bass line and doubled vocals combined to push you off your seat and on to your feet. It was THE dance song in gay clubs around the country that summer and was the start of her catapult to the best selling and richest female recording star of all time.

The video for it, a compilation of clips from the film, played incessantly on the three-year-old MTV channel, helping it become, by the end of the 80s, Billboard’s Dance Song of the Decade.

While Madonna was all New York downtown chic, Whitney was hometown innocence with an unparalleled musical pedigree. The daughter of Cissy Houston, a gospel and blues singer, niece of Dionne Warwick (who made Bert Bacharach famous), and godchild of Darlene Love (still one of greatest backup singers of all time); she was pre-ordained for stardom although her first brush with it was as one of the first African-American models on the cover of *Seventeen* magazine.

Groomed by her mother from childhood, she was discovered



*Madonna in the 1980's, courtesy of NME.*

singing with her mother in a New York club when uber-producer Clive Davis caught her act and offered her a contract with Arista Records.

Her debut, the eponymous *Whitney Houston*, dropped in February just in time for Valentine’s Day, with the soulful, ballad [“You Give Good Love”](#) chosen as the first release. A searing plaintive slow dance, it notified the world that Whitney was someone to be reckoned with.

It was a masterwork. She was 22 and exuded a youthful Romantic innocence that the world hadn’t seen before. Tall, beautiful, and just a little awkward when she danced, she was every woman. Except for one vital difference: that voice.

Listen to the second release from her debut album: [“Saving All My Love for You.”](#) Sublime.

But Clive Davis, a genius at recognizing and nurturing artists (Janis Joplin, Santana, Pink Floyd, Aretha Franklin, Gil Scot-Heron, Lou Reed, Faith Evans, Toni Braxton), knew

she could belt a dance hit as well. So the first release from her second album became [“I Wanna Dance With Somebody.”](#) Not only did it cement her place on R&B stations but also introduced her to the MTV generation, blowing up charts, and starting her meteoric climb.

She was incandescent. With crystalline clarity and a powerful vocal precision that could punch a hole in a wall, she captured my heart. I played those first two records until the grooves wore out.

Of course there was lots of other music that year – Prince’s [“Purple Rain”](#) was still dropping hits; Stevie Wonder had [“Part-Time Love,”](#) Tina Turner returned to the top of the charts with [“Private Dancer;”](#) and Michael Jackson was checking the [“Man In the Mirror.”](#) But it was Whitney and Madonna that had my heart, my ears, and my dancing feet.

# Reagan, Gorbachev and Me: A Conversation with Playwright Rogelio Martinez

by JONATHAN GREEN

Shortly before rehearsals began, production dramaturg Jonathan L. Green sat down with the playwright to discuss his inspiration for *Blind Date*, and the path from inception to opening night.

**Jonathan L. Green:** You grew up in Cuba not long after the Cuban Missile Crisis, and *Blind Date* is your final play in a series of works centered on international relations during the Cold War. Can you talk a bit about your enduring fascination with this subject?

**Rogelio Martinez:** I wasn't alive

during the Missile Crisis, but obviously the aftershocks affected many families, including my own. My interest in the Cold War is, in some ways, my desire to understand who I was before arriving here, and who I became after. I was born under communism. I was taught one way of life, only to be told at the age of nine that everything I had learned up to that point was false. The Cold War had two opposing ideologies. Both sides believed they were doing right for their people and the world at large. When you reduce it to two people—Ronald Reagan

and Mikhail Gorbachev—you not only have competing ideologies on stage, but two very real human beings with very strong beliefs. To get a little more philosophical, I am a divided self. Even at my age, I still have conversations with that other boy who stayed behind. What are plays, after all, but conversations between people who need something from one another?

**JLG:** When did you decide on the 1985 Geneva Summit as your point of focus?



*Playwright Rogelio Martinez*

**RM:** At the time, I wanted to write about the Reagan years. It was simply instinct. At first, I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to say, or even the specific topic. Originally, I started to write about the whole of Reagan's life, but a few months into the process I realized I made a mistake and didn't need to look at his entire life. In the lead-up to Geneva and the time he spent there, one could understand where this man came from while also witnessing his transformation. I also realized that two background characters—former Secretary of State George Shultz and Eduard Shevardnadze, former Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Soviet Union—had to be, in fact, moved forward to lead the play.

**JLG:** While working on this production, I found the number of primary resources you used in your research harrowing, frankly; there are so many declassified documents—transcriptions, eyewitness accounts, diary entries and shorthand summaries—that are now publicly available through the Reagan Library and other national study centers. Was it a challenge to boil down all the real facts and create a dramatically viable narrative?

**RM:** The research is part of the thrill for me. Yes, it's difficult to boil it all down—so many delicious details you must let go of!—but you soon realize that even the various “official” accounts of certain events differ in the telling of it. This fact alone gives you the permission to fold multiple characters into one, change when events really took place, and play with the facts. The moment

writers—of fiction or non-fiction—choose to put pen to paper, they are already betraying history. Late in the process, I discovered that many of these events were not recorded. All we have left are the memoranda of what took place—no recordings. This, along with access to declassified material, was the last push I needed.

**JLG:** Although the events depicted in the play happened only a little more than 30 years ago, so many of the major players have passed away; only Gorbachev, Shultz and Morris are living. That is true of several of your other plays, as well: you find yourself writing about a time that feels both present and historical. How have you tried to negotiate between any sense of obligation to portray the real history-makers on stage, their true characters, versus a more fictive version of your own creation?

**RM:** I do feel some moral obligation to the audience. They are there to watch a play, not necessarily a documentary. It would be wrong to say I don't feel some obligation to history—to those who are still alive, as well as those who have passed

on—but in their own lives, they also molded the truth to serve their own purposes and pursuits. They created a narrative that served their needs. So I don't believe they would have any problem with me creating a narrative that serves my needs (and the needs of the audience). To be clear, this is not speculative fiction. This is not a “what if” story. The events in the play did occur. But maybe not exactly in the same way they occur on stage.

**JLG:** After this play was announced as part of the Goodman's season, but well before rehearsals began, you almost by accident crossed paths with George Shultz.

**RM:** I was at Penn Station waiting for a train and found myself talking to another passenger. We got to chatting about what we each did, and I talked a little about this play. Before long, he was asking me if I was interested in meeting George Shultz. I don't think I need to tell you my reply. Sure enough, here I was talking to a total stranger who was one

“I like to think I am not partisan when I write—but whether it's Reagan, Gorbachev, Shultz or Shevardnadze, you ultimately end up seeing the world from their point of view.”

degree away from Shultz. A few weeks later, I traveled to San Francisco and sat down with Dr. Shultz. We had scheduled a half-hour-long conversation that ended up lasting over an hour. Did it influence the play? Absolutely. The word Dr. Shultz kept emphasizing was “trust.” How does one go about creating trust? The word “trust” appears quite a few times in the play and this is directly linked to our conversation. As an aside, his dog, Stanford, was present for some of the conversation and he can attest to some of the facts I share with the audience.

**JLG:** In conversation with some of my colleagues about this play, we’ve been circling around the difference between being political and being partisan as an artist. Our hope is that this play finds a welcome home with audience members of many different political

views and standpoints—but still, the play is necessarily political, especially in its investigation of Russian/American relations, a topic even more sensitive right now than when we first announced the play 10 months ago. How do you try to navigate that place as you write?

**RM:** My playwriting professor would often quote Anton Chekhov. I paraphrase: “Don’t tell me the horse thief is bad; just show me the horse thief.” It’s my job to present a set of characters and let you arrive at a conclusion all your own. I like to think I am not partisan when I write—but whether it’s Reagan, Gorbachev, Shultz or Shevardnadze, you ultimately end up seeing the world from their point of view. While writing a play, it’s as if a spell has been cast and the world they see is the same one you see. Once rehears-

als start and you’re no longer alone on the journey, the spell is broken.

**JLG:** I first saw a reading of this play in Denver in February 2017—a very raw and difficult time in our divided nation’s psyche— and left feeling both emotionally on-edge and also strangely hopeful. Is that where you want to leave us at the end of the play?

**RM:** I am an optimist. The world could be ending in front of my eyes, and I would search desperately for hope. Yes, I do want to leave the audience with some hope. Not just hope. Agency. They as individuals can do something about today’s problems. If a man—President Reagan—who was an ardent anti-communist can change course, then I am certain we can, too.



*Blind Date in rehearsal.*

# Political Theater

by ANNA GELMAN



*Julius Caesar, courtesy of The Public Theater*

*Blind Date* is a “political play” – but what does that mean? Politics and Theater have long been linked together, with some of the earliest plays in the western canon focusing on rulers, kings and power, but what does it mean for a piece of theater to be political or about politics in a modern context?

## Theater About Politics

Rogelio Martinez’s *Blind Date* joins a legacy of other plays about politics and historical figures, ranging from dramas to musicals. Politics are the perfect backdrop for theater: full of sacrifice, deception, and drama – and playwrights have taken notice. Peter Morgan’s *Frost/Nixon* dramatizes the 1977 interviews between David Frost and President Nixon, revealing the administration’s part in the Watergate Scandal. More recently, Lisa Loomer’s *Roe* details the 1973 supreme court case that legalized abortion, and Robert Schenkkan’s *Building*

*the Wall* looks into the future of politics in Trump’s administration. Even Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Tony-award winning musical *Hamilton* finds its place as political piece of theater, fashioning cabinet meetings into rap battles. These pieces of theater that dramatize past or future politics take political events and reveal the humans behind what seems like a massive political machine, creating a greater sense of critical understanding of both the politicians, and the events themselves.

## Theater about “Politics”

This past summer, The Public’s *Julius Caesar* made waves as audiences grappled with the production’s allusions to Trump’s administration. Although the text of the play is over 400 years old, there was something striking to some, and offensive to others, in seeing the famous Roman Emperor dressed as Donald

Trump. The production was picked up by national news networks, and saw a huge spike in attendance, both from audience members fascinated by the parallels, and Trump supporters who came as an act of protest. The Public’s production isn’t an out of the ordinary occurrence: many of Shakespeare’s plays were written with a political aim in mind (for instance, *Macbeth* was written to please the King James, who was thought to be a descendant of Banquo, one of the play’s heroes), and have since been twisted to fit a modern political interpretation. Other classical plays with themes of power and politics have been performed with a modern lens as well. This past year Chicago alone saw several takes on Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*, a 200 year old play about an evil idiot rising to power, and various productions of Brecht’s *The Last Days of the Commune* and *Fear and Misery*



*in the Third Reich* have explored political oppression of the early to mid-1900's with new relevance. These productions of classic plays put a new spin on current events, which breaks down big political concepts onto a human level, but in a different way than plays like *Frost/Nixon*. Instead, by introducing entirely new, fictional, and sometimes well-known characters, productions comment on political events rather than directly dramatizing them. "What's so powerful about touching on moments in our history in contemporary settings," says Diane Paulus, theater director, "is you're able to reflect on it in a way [that's removed from] the heat of living it." To read more about *Julius Caesar*, as well as Diane Paulus, and playwrights Brandon Jacob-Jenkins and Robert Shenkkan's thoughts on political theater, [click here](#).

### Protest Theater

Protest Theater, says Pushpa Sundar author and philanthropist, "is often used as a synonym for political theater, though it has a wider scope." In her essay about the Indian experience of protest theater, she goes on to praise theater as a form of activism: "Theater not only makes an audience conscious of the wrongs being protested against, but it also arouses it to immediate action." This meeting of art and activism, known sometimes as "Artivism" has been prevalent around the world as a way of raising awareness and engaging in direct action. In 1965, the United Farm Workers created "the farmworkers theater," – El Teatro Campesino. Performing on the flat beds of trucks, farmers found their voices as actors depicting their lives and

raising awareness of their working conditions. During his exile in Brazil in the 1970s, theorist and educator Augusto Boal continued elaborating on Theater of the Oppressed, a technique using theater and direct interaction with audiences to address power inequities and oppression, that he had been developing since the 1950's. Using Theater of the Oppressed, Boal engaged with both those performing and those watching to explore ways to transform their reality.

At the same time, but half a world away, the Soviet Union was utilizing *agitprop*, or communist propaganda through art. Rather than being about protesting a greater or oppressive power, agitprop came directly from the government, and was an artistic way to spread the communist agenda. However, the Soviet Union's tool evolved into agitprop theater, which was the early versions of a more straightforward political theater, including the works of Bertolt Brecht, whose plays took on a subversive political agenda.

The United States has seen a resurgence of protest theater since the late 1990's, with the formation of Billionaires for Bush, a protest theater group that would later become Billionaires for Wealthcare, that created highly theatrical protests posing as billionaires and opposing economic benefits for major corporations. Some even argue that the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011 was, in its own way, a version of protest theater.

### What does it mean?

All forms of political theater aim to create engagement with political events and political process, at

least in some form. But what happens when the world of politics itself becomes too much about theater and entertainment? "If there ever was a need for proof that politics and entertainment were now conflated, this election cycle proves it conclusively." says Jeff Schechtman of *Who. What. Why*, commenting on the 2016 Presidential Election. In his article on what he calls "entertainment politics," he continues to question many people's assumption that Trump's antics were pure performance, and what that means for the future of the political arena. Nelson Pressley, theater critic for The Washington Post, weighs in: "Our addition to political theater did us in." His article, "The Perils of Spectacle," breaks down the difference between political theater as it defines the world of politics, and political theater as it applies to art. He refers to political theater in elections as "an empty show," and in the theater as "exemplary citizenship," but discovers that their common ground is entertainment. He asks: "After a year and a half of high-ratings, low-content TV debates and drama-packed stadium rallies, who's to say the 2020 sequel won't be bigger? More spectacular? Altogether more gripping and worse?"

# Who's Who in *Blind Date*

by JONATHAN GREEN

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## **RONALD WILSON REAGAN (1911 – 2004)**

Born in northern Illinois in the second decade of a new century, Ronald Reagan grew up in a poor family, his father an Irish Catholic traveling salesman. At age 11, he chose to be baptized a Protestant, his mother's faith. Attending Eureka College, "Dutch" (as his father nicknamed him) was a great athlete, actor and student body president, but an average student. He graduated with a degree in sociology and economics. In the early 1930s, Reagan became a sports radio announcer and then a screen actor in Los Angeles, where he would go on to act in nearly 50 films. He enlisted in the Army Reserves in 1937 and, in 1942, was called into active duty, serving domestically in California and New York.

After World War II, Reagan moved from film to television and became the president of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG). Though he grew up with fairly liberal values, Reagan's political stances shifted toward conservative as he worked at SAG to root out communist sympathizers in Hollywood. He and his first wife, actress Jane Wyman, testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee, accusing many filmmakers in Hollywood of communist sympathies. He was divorced in 1949 and, three years later, married actress Nancy Davis.

In 1966, and then again in 1970, Reagan was elected Governor



*Ronald Reagan*

of California by a wide margin. He vied unsuccessfully for the Republican presidential nomination twice: first in 1968 (losing to Richard Nixon) and again in 1976 (losing to Gerald Ford). On his third attempt, four years later, he was successful, winning the party's nomination and eventually the presidency. Sixty-nine days into his first term, Reagan survived an assassination attempt. Soaring popularity and a recovering economy ushered him into a second term.

## **MIKHAIL SERGEYEVICH GORBACHEV (1931 – )**

Mikhail Gorbachev was born to

peasants in southwestern Russia, where, as a toddler, he survived a great famine and drought that claimed many in his family and community. He grew up helping his father with farming. In his teens, when his father left for World War II to fight for the Soviet Army, he assumed greater responsibility on the collective farm, and became the youngest person to be awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor. Gorbachev was a strong student and graduated with a degree in law from Moscow State University, where he became involved in the Communist Party.



*Mikhail Gorbachev*

For two decades, Gorbachev rose through the ranks of the party, moving back and forth between Stavropol and Moscow. His work focused on technological modernization and the economy which, at times, involved extensive international travel and first-time exposure to people and ways of living outside of the Soviet Union. Finally in 1980, he was made a full voting member of the Politburo, the party's executive committee. In General Secretary Yuri Andropov, Gorbachev found a dear friend, mentor and supporter who, in declining health, planned for Gorbachev to succeed him. Yet when Andropov passed away in 1984, the position was given to Konstantin Chernenko—who was in ill health himself. Chernenko passed away the following year,

and Gorbachev was finally elected to the post—becoming the youngest man to hold the position. A uniquely modern leader, at least in Soviet terms, Gorbachev was the first (and last) general secretary to have been born after the formation of the Soviet Union. Compared to his predecessors, he was much less isolationist and, through his policies, desired to see the Soviet Union advance into modernity.

#### **GEORGE PRATT SHULTZ (1920 – )**

A lifelong economist, George Shultz grew up in New York and studied at Princeton University before joining the Marines to fight in World War II. Following the war, he taught and received his PhD in industrial economics at MIT before decamping for the University of Chicago, where he served as dean of the graduate

school for business. In 1969, Shultz, a specialist in industrial labor, was first appointed Secretary of Labor in the Nixon administration, then Director of the Office of Management and Budget, followed by Secretary of the Treasury. At the treasury, Shultz gained international relations experience writing and negotiating trade protocols and founding the Group of Seven (G7)—the forum of leaders of the world's most industrialized countries. Following his term with Nixon, Shultz became a longtime member of the faculty of Stanford University and the CEO of Bechtel, where he furthered his network of international contacts.

The departure of Secretary of State Alexander Haig only a year and a half into his appointment prompted President Reagan to call upon Shultz, though he lacked the foreign policy experience of his predecessors. The 1970s were cruel to the U.S. economy—but they were worse for that of the Soviets. Shultz knew that a stressed economy meant a more desperate administration. He entered office with ideas and hopes of outreach to the Soviets to encourage economic reforms that would help ease financial tensions in the communist union, and curtail some of the aggression in Soviet foreign policy. In contrast to many of Reagan's more isolationist appointees, Shultz as Secretary of State saw the benefits of a more global mindset.

#### **EDUARD AMBROSIYEVICH SHEVARDNADZE (1928 – 2014)**

Born in a small, rural village in Georgia near the Black Sea,

Eduard Shevardnadze learned his Communist Party loyalty from his father, a teacher and party official. In his 20s, he joined and eventually became leader of the Komsomol, a Georgian communist youth group, which provided him the opportunity to meet the rising apparatchik Mikhail Gorbachev. Shevardnadze went on to serve in several low positions in the Georgian Communist Party in Tbilisi; there, he pushed for small economic reforms, and worked his way up to become Minister of Internal Affairs. He spent much of his efforts in Georgia on anti-corruption initiatives, which caused some interpersonal friction in his professional life—but also attracted party leaders in Moscow,

who eventually appointed him First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party.

Georgia experienced modest growth under Shevardnadze's economic leadership in the 1970s, a time when much of the Soviet Union was in stagnation or economic recession. A quick learner and critical thinker, he led dozens of economic experiments and quickly implemented new plans to empower the populace and share gains.

Following the death of Konstantin Chernenko, Shevardnadze was a strong supporter of Gorbachev's candidacy for General Secretary of the Soviet Union. And when

Andrei Gromyko left the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Soviet Union in 1985, Gorbachev surprised everyone—including Shevardnadze—by asking the Georgian leader to fill the position. Shevardnadze warned that he knew practically nothing about foreign policy, but Gorbachev insisted on his admired friend: "Eduard Ambrosiyevich has shown himself as an experienced, resilient person, capable of finding needed approaches to solving problems."

### **ANNE "NANCY" DAVIS REAGAN (1921 – 2016)**

Born Anne Frances Robbins in Queens, New York, Nancy moved to Maryland when her parents divorced, and later to Chicago, where she assumed her new stepfather's surname, Davis. At the Latin School, and later at Smith College, she followed her mother's path and studied theater, eventually landing a minor role on Broadway. At 28, she moved to Los Angeles and signed a contract at MGM. That year, though, she found herself blacklisted in Hollywood as a suspected communist sympathizer—when, in fact, the target was another actor named Nancy Davis. Her career stalled, and in 1949, she contacted the head of the Screen Actors Guild, Ronald Reagan, to see if he could clear her name.

The couple began dating (Nancy had somewhat recently ended a relationship with another actor, Clark Gable), and hastily married when they learned Nancy was pregnant. Though she continued to act occasionally after the birth of her first daughter, Nancy



*George Shultz*



*Eduard Shevardnadze*

busied herself taking care of her eventual four children. Concerned about her own privacy and that of her family, especially after her husband's election as the Governor of California, Nancy was criticized by the press and the public for being snobbish and aloof. It took much adjustment to fit into the role of a politician's wife—something she struggled with all her life.

Even after her husband's presidential election (and particularly following the assassination attempt on her beloved "Ronnie"), Nancy still felt and acted on a sense that she needed to be her family's greatest

protector. Behind the scenes, she was kept up to date on her husband's plans and policies, to the frustration of many of her husband's aides, and frequently voiced her own opinions on political issues and the administration.

#### **RAISA MAXIMOVNA GORBACHEV (1932 - 1999)**

Raisa Titarenko was born in a town in southwestern Siberia where her father worked as a railway engineer. Due to the nature of his work, Raisa's family moved frequently and she often transferred schools; still, her fierce intelligence carried her

through and she studied philosophy in Moscow as young adult. At Moscow State University, she met her husband-to-be, Mikhail Gorbachev, and after graduation they were sent to Stavropol, where he was to work as a lawyer. In Stavropol, Raisa taught Marxist-Leninist philosophy and earned her doctorate. She also completed extensive sociological research in the area of communal living among the farming peasantry, talking with and listening to hundreds of the Soviet Union's most disadvantaged citizens.

With Mikhail's movement in political circles in Stavropol came new power and access; when he was granted an office in the Communist Party, they moved back to Moscow where Raisa continued to teach at Moscow State. When her husband was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party in early 1985, she stopped teaching to focus on the Union's cultural preservation. She was adored by some and fiercely criticized by others as she entered the national and international stages; unlike many first ladies who preceded her, Raisa remained present and engaged with the party and the Union; she was forward-thinking, compassionate and had a strong aesthetic style. Following an attempted coup against Mikhail in 1991, Raisa's health began to decline slowly over the next eight years. She kept up her altruistic, educational and philanthropic work until finally succumbing to leukemia.

**EDMUND MORRIS (1940 - )**  
Presidential biographer Edmund Morris was born in Kenya to white South African parents. In his 20s,

he worked as a copy writer for a South African department store, and then moved to London where he worked for an American advertising firm. He eventually moved to America with his wife and became a U.S. citizen. His first book, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, won him the Pulitzer Prize at age 40. In 1981, President Reagan read Morris' Roosevelt tome, and began a several-year courtship to convince Morris to write his authorized biography. In 1985, the deal was made. The biography, later titled *Dutch*, was scheduled to be published by Random House in 1991—but was repeatedly delayed. The literary rumor mill churned, and Morris was reported to have said to peer historians in frustration that

Reagan was “a man of benign remoteness and no psychological curiosity, either about himself or others.”

Eight years later—and five years after Reagan's public diagnosis with Alzheimer's disease—the book was finally published with a near-unheard-of level of secrecy and security. Yet, The New York Times somehow found an excerpt and published an exposé: “Random House is guarding copies zealously, partly for fear of a controversy around Mr. Morris's writing style... [T]he author, 59, has essentially transformed his own life...revised his age, birthplace, identity and résumé to become a Zeligesque narrator who is Reagan's contemporary.” Many critics

roared that Dutch strained the definition of non-fiction. The Washington Post's review read, “What Morris has done, in my opinion, is a scandal and a travesty.” The New York Times' review was kinder: “It's difficult to approve the technique in theory; in less skilled hands it will doubtless prove a disaster. But it certainly succeeds in this case.”



*Ronald Reagan, Raisa Gorbachev, Nancy Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in the White House diplomatic reception room in December, 1987. Photo courtesy of the Ronald Reagan Library.*

# Blind Date Glossary

Created by Goodman Theatre's Literary Management and Dramaturgy Department  
edited by ELIZABETH RICE



*Mikhail Baryshnikov with Lil Buck in an advertisement for Rag and Bone in 2015*

## DANILOFF, NICHOLAS

Daniloff was an American journalist known for his reporting on the Soviet Union. He was arrested on September 2, 1986 by the KGB on charges of espionage; he was reported to have sensitive government documents on him at the time of his arrest. The US government negotiated his release and return on September 23 the same year. Daniloff claimed—and still claims—that his arrest was based on false claims, as a part of KGB retaliation for the arrest of Soviet spy Gennadi F. Zakharov several days earlier in the Bronx.

## DEFECTORS FROM THE USSR

**Rudolf Nureyev** had reached prominence in Soviet Union during the late 1950s with the Mariinsky Ballet in St. Petersburg. Late in the decade, he prepared to tour Paris

and London, but his rebellious nature made him an unlikely candidate for travel to the West. He was eventually allowed to travel and was caught breaking rules by the KGB and was threatened with permanent travel bans. Aided by French police, Nureyev asked for asylum and defected from the Soviet Union to the West in 1961, despite KGB efforts to stop him. This was the first defection of a Soviet artist during the Cold War, and it created an international sensation.

**Mikhail Baryshnikov** was a member of the Kirov Ballet before defecting to Canada in 1974 while on tour there. “I just got the message from my closest friends, that if I have any doubts and if I want to stay, they will help me...” the dancer revealed in an

interview with Larry King in 2002. “They put me together with young Canadian lawyer whom I met and discussed briefly all options. And I asked him to delay decision until – I wanted to finish, this was last performance in Toronto, I danced actually last performance, and after performance I joined him in the hideaway car...” Baryshnikov went on to become a real star in the United States – he was the principal dancer with the American Ballet Theater, later becoming the troupe’s artistic director and ballet master. Mikhail Baryshnikov has never returned to Russia since his defection.

## HIV/AIDS IN THE USSR

The first case of HIV was recorded in 1986 contracted by a Russian soldier serving in Africa. It was then transmitted to 15 other

soldiers through sexual intercourse. Homosexuality was illegal during this time in the USSR and discussion on prevention was considered taboo. Testing centers opened up between 1987 and 1989. By 1996, there were 1150 reported cases but scientists predicted the number was closer to 10,000. The cause for the high number was a result of a non-existent information campaign. The Institute for Preventive Medicine stopped translating foreign literature about the issue in 1991. The low priority given to HIV at the level of the central government, compounded by the fact that the Soviet system left in its wake a strong feeling of dependence on the opinions and priorities of the central government, leaves organizations and institutions which deal with the HIV issue very little information and little financial support for HIV educational and prevention activities. A lack of “networking” among Russian organizations which deal with HIV/AIDS issues severely limits the flow of information.

### “NUCLEAR FOOTBALL”

The “nuclear football” is a briefcase containing the tools necessary for the POTUS to launch a nuclear attack while away from fixed command centers (ie: White House Situation Room). The football dates back to Dwight D. Eisenhower and the modern version resulted out of the Cuban Missile Crisis when JFK was concerned that a Soviet commander in Cuba might launch missiles without authorization from Moscow. JFK asked a series of questions which lead to the development of the current process used for POTUS

issuing a strike. The line of succession for authorizing nuclear weapons; POTUS, VP, Defense Secretary, Deputy Defense Secretary, General, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The card carried by the sitting president, containing nuclear codes necessary to launch a nuclear strike, is called the “biscuit.”

### POLITBURO

Also called the Presidium from 1952-66, the Politburo was the executive committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

A fairly small group of individuals the Politburo elected the general secretary of the party (and had the power to depose the same) from among its ranks.

**REGAN, DONALD T.**  
(December 21, 1918 -  
June 10, 2003)

From Cambridge, Massachusetts, Don Regan served first as Reagan’s secretary of the treasury from 1981-85, and then as Reagan’s chief of staff from 1985-87. The CEO of Merrill Lynch before



*Ronald Reagan and a secret service agent with the “nuclear football.”  
Courtesy of History.Com*





*Former President Obama sitting at the Resolute Desk. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.*

joining Reagan's team, Regan is credited as being one of the chief architects of "Reaganomics." He left the administration in 1987 following the Iran-Contra scandal and repeated, sometimes heated, disagreements with Nancy Reagan. He revealed her interest in astrology a year later in his memoir, as an attempt to defame the first lady: "Virtually every major move and decision the Reagans made during my time as White House Chief of Staff was cleared in advance with a woman in San Francisco who drew up horoscopes to make certain that the planets were in a favorable alignment for the enterprise."

### **RESOLUTE DESK**

The Resolute desk is one of six

official presidential desks used in the Oval Office. The others are the Theodore Roosevelt Desk, Hoover Desk, Johnson Desk, Wilson Desk, and C&O Desk. The Resolute desk was created with wood salvaged from HMS Resolute and given to President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1879. The desk lived in various rooms in the White House until Jacqueline Kennedy found it in the broadcasting room and formally moved it into the Oval Office. The desk toured from 1964-1965 and then lived in the Smithsonian Institution from 1966-1977 until President Jimmy Carter requested it again for the Oval Office. It had been used by every sitting POTUS since Carter (except George H. W. Bush).

### **RUSSIAN "PROHIBITION"**

Gorbachev carried out an anti-alcoholism campaign with partial prohibition known as "dry law." Prices on vodka, wine, and beer were raised and sales were restricted to particular time of day. People caught intoxicated were prosecuted. Despite statistics showing a decline in criminality and rise in life expectancy, the Soviet Union state budget took a major blow with an estimated loss of 100 billion rubles when alcohol production migrated to the black market.

### **SPEAKES, LARRY**

(September 13, 1939 -  
January 10, 2014)

Served as a press secretary for the White House during the Reagan administration from 1981-1987.



*A Soviet propaganda poster proclaiming the world "No!" from a man being offered vodka. Courtesy of Lazer Horse.*

Originally from Mississippi, he received a BA in journalism in 1961 and moved up the ranks of print journalism in his home state for the next seven years before moving to D.C. in 1968 to become press secretary for Mississippi Democratic Senator James Eastland. The White House selected Speakes to serve as a staff assistant in 1974, and he

soon became press secretary to the special counsel investigating President Nixon at the height of the Watergate scandal. Speakes stayed on after Nixon's resignation when President Ford appointed him as assistant press secretary. He eventually joined the Reagan-Bush transition team in 1981 and became deputy spokesman for the President-elect. Speakes assumed

the role of press secretary after James Brady was shot during Reagan's assassination attempt. Speakes was known for his hot temper and quickness to talk back, earning him the nickname Mississippi Catfish-- "a fish known to sting when mishandled." Speakes became the subject of a controversy when he mocked gay men dying from the AIDS epidemic. Speakes lack of professionalism has been attributed to the Reagan Administration's slow response to the crisis.

### **ZAKHAROV, GENNADI F.**

Zakharov was a Soviet physicist employed by the Soviet U.N. Secretariat. He started mentoring a Guyanese student in 1983 who then went on to work for a contractor for the Air Force, building jet engines. In 1986, Zakharov's mentee offered to sell him classified documents for \$1000. Zakharov agreed to the deal on August 23, 1986, and was immediately arrested; the mentee was working undercover for the FBI. The KGB retaliated by arresting Nicholas Daniloff. After his arrest, Zakharov named three other Soviet intelligence officers to the FBI. He was released on September 30 and sent back to the Moscow as a part of an expulsion of 25 Soviets from the Secretariat in New York.

# A History of The USSR

by ANNA GELMAN

Adapted from the Encyclopedia Britannica.

In less than 100 years, the political landscape of Russia changed from a monarchy to a communist republic, to an attempted democracy. The Russian revolution of 1917 would forever change the world, introducing Marxist ideas as a legitimate economic and political system, and challenging the capitalist structure of most of the Western world. What would follow would be an experiment in communism and the search to discover if it could really create equality.

## Tsarism and Monarchy

In the late 1800's, Russia was in the midst of a governmental crisis, facing public resistance

to the centuries-old monarchical governing system, tsarism. The Tsar and royal family were reluctant to give up any ruling power to the people. This, combined with a growing divide between the educated population, known as the intelligentsia, and the roughly 80% of the population classified as peasants, led to perpetual unrest between the ruling government and the people. The liberal, and sometimes radical, intelligentsia instigated uprisings amongst the peasants, which led to an assassination attempt of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. The Union of Liberation, a revolutionary group, presented reforms to lessen the power of the Tsar, which quickly turned into a

bloody rebellion that would reach its climax in October of 1905. As a result, Tsar Nicholas II acquiesced and granted the people a small amount of legislative power, creating the Duma, a congress that had a minimal ability to veto actions from the monarchy. The new constitution, that had instituted the Duma, was frequently ignored or pushed aside by the monarchy, and rising tension from the people continued to weaken the Tsar.

## A Brewing Revolution

In the midst of World War I, a particularly harsh winter swept over Russia and living conditions continued to deteriorate, anger



*The Romanov family, the last Tsarist family of The Russian Empire, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*



*Vladimir Ilych Lenin. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.*

rose. By February of 1917, yet another revolt forced Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate. The country quickly fell into turmoil. The Duma found a rival in the Petrograd Soviet, or Petersburg Council, which claimed to be a representative body comprised of workers rather than intelligentsia. The anarchy created by the conflict between the two governing bodies allowed Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and his socialist political party, the Bolsheviks, to seize power. In October 1917, a coup formed by Lenin overthrew the provisional government and the Duma. The resulting new government created a Bolshevik cabinet, the Council of People's Commissars, which

Lenin himself chaired. Immediately, a new culture of censorship enveloped the country. All non-Bolshevik news sources closed, and the cheka, a secret police, was formed and given permission to arrest and kill counterrevolutionaries. By 1918, the Bolsheviks renamed themselves the Russian Communist Party and controlled the country.

### **Institution of Communism**

One of the first actions of the new communist government was to rid people of extraneous personal property. As Marxists, they believed private ownership created political power, and began to seize land and other resources to equalize the Soviet citizenry. Simultaneously,

Lenin ordered peasants to surrender any "surplus" crops, the crops they usually lived on, to the newly-formed Red Army. Those who refused were labeled kulaks, opposing the new regime. Lenin used fear to gain power, ordering the execution of the abdicated Tsar's family, and sparking a wave of executions of political prisoners. Over 140,000 people died, and the country was once again restless.

### **The Civil War**

The Bolsheviks soon faced pushback from the White Army, a volunteer army supported by European countries eager to fight the spread of communism. Meanwhile, Cossacks, an ethnic group from eastern Russia, in support of the White Army carried out a series of pogroms attacking Jewish towns and neighborhoods in Ukraine, killing over 100,000 people. Between various battles, the resulting famine, and an overwhelming lack of resources, a minimum of 10 million people died in the Russian Civil War between 1918 and 1920. The Communist Red Army eventually destroyed the White Army, due more to the lack resources than military might. Once they destroyed the opposition, the Red Army reestablished order where it had lost power, and conquered new lands, forming The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – the USSR.

### **Lenin and Stalin**

By 1921, Lenin's failing health instigated a massive power struggle within the party and two of its biggest players: Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. When Lenin died in 1924, his will revealed he wanted Stalin removed from his

current position. Two politicians, Kamenev and Zinoviev, aligned with Stalin and saw to it that the document wasn't formally released. When Stalin gained power, they began to feel undermined and switched sides to support Trotsky, naming themselves the New Opposition. After several years of political strife, Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev were ousted from the Communist Party and banished to Siberia. Trotsky was later deported from the USSR and spent the remainder of his life organizing anti-Stalinist groups in Europe and South America until he was assassinated in 1940.

Stalin, meanwhile, found a majority in the Politburo, the policy-making committee of the Communist

Party, and became the General Secretary. Facing more economic difficulties while trying to create a fully communist market, Stalin seized what little privately-owned land remained, completing collectivization, the governmental consolidation of all personal lands. An unpopular move, Stalin responded to his critics by cracking down on freedom of speech. Members of the intelligentsia found themselves vulnerable to charges of treason for expressing their opinions.

The country underwent a period of industrialization in the 1930's; over 12 million soviet citizens joined the urban workforce. However, workers were treated badly and wages consistently

decreased. At the same time, the government decreed unemployment no longer existed, and unemployment assistance disappeared.

Sergey Kirov, a politician and Bolshevik leader, was rumored to replace Stalin as General Secretary until he was mysteriously assassinated in 1934. The Soviet government used the investigation of Kirov's death as a tool to terrorize the public, tightening government control once more. Arrests and executions of Russian citizens and ranking officials ran rampant.



*A map of The Soviet Union, with the famous hammer and sickle and red color of the flag. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*



Joseph Stalin. Courtesy of Biography.com

## Foreign Policy and World War II

Outside of turmoil pervading the USSR, Stalin faced a potential foreign enemy as Hitler and the Nazi party rose to power in Germany in the 1930s. Russia fought two fronts with the Allied forces in World War II, as the Nazi army encroached upon Leningrad, and the Japanese attacked the Baltic Sea. Ultimately, Russia suffered more casualties than either the United States or Britain, totaling over 20 million deaths, of which only eight or nine million were soldiers.

Following the war, the Soviet Union seized many eastern Eu-

ropean territories and countries previously controlled by Nazi Germany. At the same time, the country grew increasingly nationalist and anti-Semitic; many Jews were suspected of Zionist leanings and therefore anti-Soviet, and treasonous.

Stalin's rule of the USSR included victory in World War II and economic improvements, but also massive political hardships for the Russian people: prison camps, random arrests and violent treatment of civilians. Stalin's reign came to an end in 1953 with his death, and the Soviet Union faced an entirely new era.

## The Khrushchev Era

Stalin left no instructions for who should succeed him as General Secretary or leader of the Communist Party. After a power struggle within the party, Nikita Khrushchev was named General Secretary in September of 1953. Khrushchev improved relations with China and Yugoslavia, met with President Eisenhower, and attempted to rebuild relations with the West, signing the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty in 1963. Cultural stringencies also loosened under Khrushchev, allowing Russian artists to once again release critical work without fear of imprisonment.

Still, his time was limited, and amidst plans for democratization, Khrushchev, who some believe to be the last believer in communism, was removed from office in 1964, and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, and a new attempt at collective government, where power would be shared between the General Secretary, Prime Minister and President.

### The Brezhnev Era

Under the new regime, Leonid Brezhnev was the General Secretary, flanked by Aleksey Kosygin as Prime Minister and Nikolai Podgorny as President. Despite agricultural problems that forced the USSR to import grain from the U.S., the Brezhnev era was marked by population and economic growth, especially through oil trading. This, however, was coupled with a backslide in freedom of artistic expression; the government jailed multiple artists that critiqued the Soviet State or communism. Thus, a new counterculture formed, including samizdat (radical materials that were circulated as transcripts) and tamizdat (materials that were sent abroad for publication since they would be banned inside the Soviet Union).

During Brezhnev's time in power, the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan in 1979 (for more on the Proxy Wars, read the article on page \*\*\*), which resulted in massive backlash from the western world, and forced President Carter to place trade embargoes on the USSR. When Ronald Reagan was elected, he was determined to strengthen the United States' defense and security. The Soviet Union was forced to

do the same, which, due to lack of resources, had negative economic ramifications on the country.

### Andropov and Chernenko

Brezhnev was succeeded by Yuri Andropov, who previously headed the KGB, the governmental police. Passionate about reform, Andropov led an anti-alcohol campaign to fight growing alcoholism issues in the USSR. After only two years, Andropov died and was succeeded in 1984 by the elderly and sickly Konstantin Chernenko. Unable to perform his duties for much of his time in power, Chernenko's second-in-command, Mikhail Gorbachev, stepped in to take his place. After Chernenko's death in 1985, Gorbachev became the country's leader.

### Gorbachev Era

Gorbachev's era was defined by perestroika (restructuring of the economy) and glasnost (transparency). In 1985, he appointed Eduard Shevardnadze as his foreign minister.

After the meltdown at the Chernobyl power plant, the largest nuclear disaster in history, the regime heightened its transparency, loosening constraints on public and artistic speech and allowing the return of thinkers considered dissidents. By 1988, Gorbachev's reforms and pushes for democratization forced the communist party to diversify and lose power. Gorbachev was heavily criticized for these reforms, as well as perestroika's lack of economic success. By early 1990, he faced bitter rivalries within the political system and contradicted many of the motions of Boris Yeltsin, the chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, the post-

USSR governing body.

Despite criticism at home, Gorbachev gained popularity abroad, especially as he and Eduard Shevardnadze set out to end the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. He famously attended a summit with US President Ronald Reagan in Geneva in 1987, which was later followed by a summit in Washington DC and a summit in Moscow. Gorbachev continued his relationship with the United States after the election of President George H. W. Bush.

In 1991, a delegation attempted to force Gorbachev out of office. Indecisiveness on the delegation's part, coupled with the public's confusion, resulted in a failure. However, it damaged the government's reputation, and many Soviet states seized the opportunity to secede and gain independence. By the end of 1991, Gorbachev resigned, and soviet enterprises began to be renamed "Russian." The Soviet Union came apart. The great communist experiment ended, more than anything, due to party in-fighting and the struggle to create a pure communist economy. Through the 1990's and early 2000's, Russia attempted to create a democracy, reintroducing many capitalist principals and a more transparent voting system. Whether that has been successful, however, remains to be seen.

# From War to War to War: U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1945-1985

by JONATHAN GREEN

Originally Printed in Onstage+

March 11, 1985

*Dear Mr. General Secretary, As you assume your new responsibilities, I would like to take the opportunity to underscore my hope that we can, in the months and years ahead, develop a more stable and constructive relationship between our two countries...*

Thus began President Ronald Reagan's first letter to Mikhail Gorbachev, the newly-appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party—and the first step towards ending the Cold War, for-

ever changing U.S.-Soviet relations.

Though the United States and the Soviet Union were united in their anti-Hitlerism during World War II, the cooperation between the world's two largest powers was somewhat begrudging. Americans were still wary of Joseph Stalin's bloody, two-plus-decades desire to end capitalism worldwide. Though the U.S.S.R. received roughly \$11 billion from the U.S. in war relief from both American coasts, the nation lost millions of troops when the Germans invaded and the U.S. delayed its entrance and commit-

ment to the war. Agreements were made in 1945 at Yalta and Potsdam regarding how to put the post-war world back together, but Stalin, in just three years, went about the occupation of Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill warned of the "Iron Curtain" being pulled across Europe. The U.S.'s aim, proposed by diplomat George F. Kennan and solidified in the Truman Plan, was to contain the Soviets and their communist expansion, both geographically and politically.







*Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.*

Tensions grew further when each nation demonstrated its ability to vaporize a city in seconds: the Soviets tested their first successful atomic bomb in 1949, followed by the U.S.'s successful test of the new hydrogen bomb three years later. These very public displays of military might yielded decades of fear.

Around the same time, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was put in place in Washington, D.C. to investigate and prosecute any forms of subversion by or propaganda for anti-American, anti-capitalist movements or governments. That committee pushed hard and far into Hollywood to root out what it viewed as communist sympathizers, creating a blacklist—and

effectively ending the careers—of more than 300 artists. In 1956, new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev announced a new point of view: unlike Stalin, he believed that capitalism and communism could co-exist without necessarily leading to war. This briefly eased tensions between the two powers, but with the Soviet Union's 1957 launch of the first man-made satellite into space, which many considered the next frontier for both exploration and militarization, Americans feared that a nuclear attack could be launched from outside Earth's atmosphere. The Americans followed suit months later with the launch of Explorer I and, in 1958, President Eisenhower announced the creation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to match the longstanding

Soviet space program (SSSR). The "space race" to control and militarize outer space would continue for decades.

The 1960s renewed fears of a nuclear war when Fidel Castro, the new leader of Cuba following the Cuban Revolution in 1959, pledged economic allegiance to the Soviets. Only 90 miles away from America, Cuba's position was a major military advantage. Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy approved a failed CIA-lead mission to the Bay of Pigs to overthrow Castro in 1961—and the following year, Kennedy announced in a televised address the discovery of Soviet nuclear missiles pointed squarely at the United States. The Cuban Missile Crisis, which lasted 13 days, was

what some consider the closest the Cold War ever came to breaking out into actual warfare. It ended when Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles in exchange for the U.S.'s promise to not invade Cuba, as well as the removal of some U.S.-owned nuclear missiles stationed in Turkey.

The 1970s brought a period of stagnation to both economies, but the Soviet Union was hit especially hard, resulting in massive famines. U.S. President Richard Nixon traveled to Moscow at the start of his term to sign two agreements with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev: the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. Throughout the decade, Brezhnev's relationships with U.S. leaders—including Presidents Nixon, Gerald Ford and James

Carter—remained relatively strong, as more and more treaties were signed to control the development and construction of nuclear weaponry. However, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December of 1979, seemingly erasing much of the goodwill that had been established between the powers over the prior decade. The Soviets entered the conflict to render “internationalist assistance to the friendly Afghan people,” said Soviet Defense Minister Dmitriy Ustinov, trying to quell the rise of an Islamic fundamentalist government in Afghanistan after the brief installation of a socialist government, but soon found that much of the country despised the socialist government. The U.S. quietly began funding the fundamentalists, hoping that a prolonged conflict would drain the already faltering Soviet coffers.

In 1981, President Reagan entered the White House, bringing with him a staff as sharply split on the topic of the Soviets as Reagan himself. He hated communism and the atheism it required; he saw that way of thinking as one of the biggest threats to the American way of life. But he also wanted, more than anything, peace—even while he invested huge amounts of money into arms stockpiles. In 1982, he welcomed George Shultz to his cabinet as Secretary of State, and the two believed that engagement with the Soviets was worthwhile, that the Soviets were capable of change. With the election of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 and the appointment of his Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, they found, for the first time in a long time, allies in the Cold War.



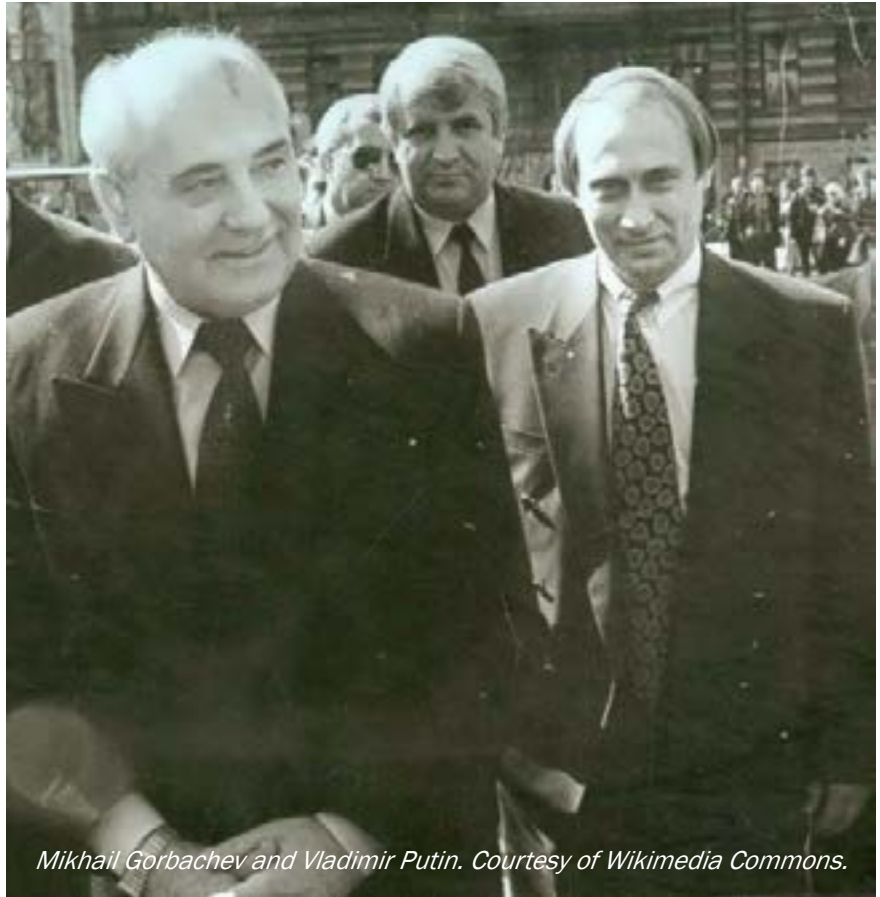
*Reagan and Gorbachev exchange pens. Courtesy of The Atlantic.*

# The United States and Russia After the Cold War

by LIAM COLLIER

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 by no means meant the end of tensions between the White House and the Kremlin. The quarter century that has passed since Gorbachev ceded power to Boris Yeltsin has been defined by a steady decline in US-Russia relations, leading some to wonder if we are in the midst of yet another Cold War. Following the September 11th Terrorist Attacks in 2001, Russian President Vladimir Putin called George W. Bush to offer his condolences and pledge Russian support to the United States in their efforts to fight terrorism abroad. Putin's call offered hope for renewed friendship between the two countries. Over the next seven years though, Bush's "War on Terror" [increased the US military's presence](#) in Poland and the Czech Republic, states that traditionally fell under Russia's sphere of influence. At the same time popular uprisings in [Ukraine](#), [Georgia](#), and [Kyrgyzstan](#) toppled corrupt leaders who had been friendly to Russia. Putin suspected that the United States was secretly behind these so-called "color revolutions," and believed they were part of larger plan to undermine Russia's influence abroad. By the time Obama took office in 2008, the relationship between the Washington and Moscow had soured.

In 2009 former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton offered the new Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, a symbolic "[Reset Button](#)" and called for a new era of cooperation between Russia and the



*Mikhail Gorbachev and Vladimir Putin. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.*

United States. Medvedev and Obama maintained an amicable relationship until 2011 when the United States supported an uprising against Libyan dictator, and former Russian ally, [Muammar Gaddafi](#). While Medvedev publicly denounced Gaddafi, Putin was vocal in his contempt for what he saw as yet another American intervention abroad. Medvedev quickly lost support in the Russian government, and, in October, [he announced he was ceding the presidency back to Vladimir Putin](#).

The announcement was met with [massive protests](#) in Russia. Many questioned the reliability of the election results when Putin's par-

ty, United Russia, won the majority of seats in Russian Parliament later that year. Others saw Putin's return to power as a return to Soviet authoritarianism. Putin believed that these demonstrations were orchestrated by the United States in order to undermine his power at home.

With Putin back in power, US-Russia relations quickly worsened. In 2012, the U.S. Congress [imposed sanctions](#) – or economic restrictions – on a number of Russian government officials accused of human rights violations, and in response Putin banned U.S. citizens from adopting children from Russia. In 2013, [Russia granted asylum to Edward Snowden](#), a for-

mer NSA worker who had illegally leaked classified US documents to the public. President Obama subsequently cancelled a state visit to Moscow. All the while, protests against Putin continued.

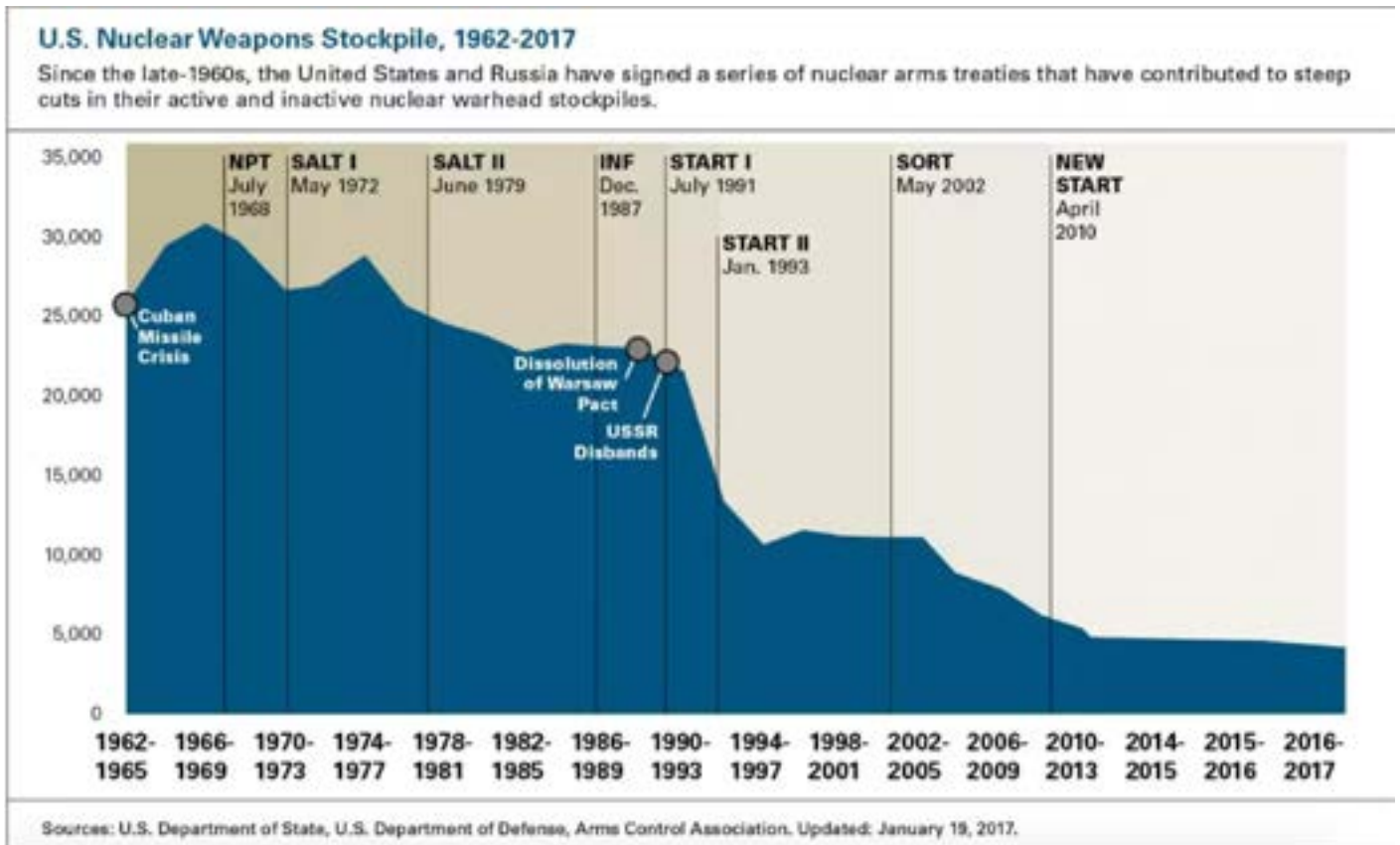
In 2014, [a revolution in Ukraine](#) overthrew the Russian-friendly regime of President Viktor Yanukovich. Putin was convinced the United States was to blame for the uprising. Months later, after a series of counter-protests, Russia violated international law and [annexed Crimea](#), a peninsula in Eastern Ukraine, allegedly in order to protect Russian expatriates living there. The United States and many other nations responded by issuing extreme sanctions against Russia, but Putin did not back down. Violence in the region escalated quickly. Although a ceasefire was officially

brokered between the Ukrainian government and Kremlin-backed militias in 2014, clashes occur daily and there is no end to the conflict in sight. Over ten-thousand civilians have died in conflict-related deaths in Eastern Ukraine since Putin's annexation.

In January 2017, the CIA, NSA, and FBI declassified [an intelligence report](#), which concluded that Vladimir Putin had ordered "an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election," meant to "undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency." Since this announcement, the US Congress has approved additional sanctions against Russia. Vladimir Putin, for his part, has denied the intelligence communities accusations, and Donald Trump has shown

repeated skepticism. An investigation into Russia's interference as well as any potential collusion between Putin and the Trump Campaign is currently underway.

Although the relationship between Russia and the United States over the past two decades has been contentious, both countries have successfully reduced the number of nuclear weapons in their arsenal, and helped to negotiate disarmament treaties (represented on the graph below as START I, START II, SORT, and NEW START) that have led to the development of fewer weapons around the world. However, over the past year, combative rhetoric from both Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin have threatened to restart the arms race.



*The U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile, courtesy of The Washington Post.*

# Proxy Wars

by LIAM COLLIER



*An image of the weapons of The Vietnam War, courtesy of History.com*

In 1949, President Truman announced that the Soviet Union had successfully tested an atomic bomb, making it the second nation in the world to independently develop nuclear weapons. Over the next ten years, the United States and the Soviet Union raced to build additional warheads of increasing range and destructive potential until, by the late 1960s, both countries had the capacity to completely annihilate the other at a moment's notice. If either the United States or the Soviet Union initiated an attack, their rival could immediately launch a counterattack, leading to the destruction of both nations along with the entire planet; this

condition came to be known as Mutually Assured Destruction.

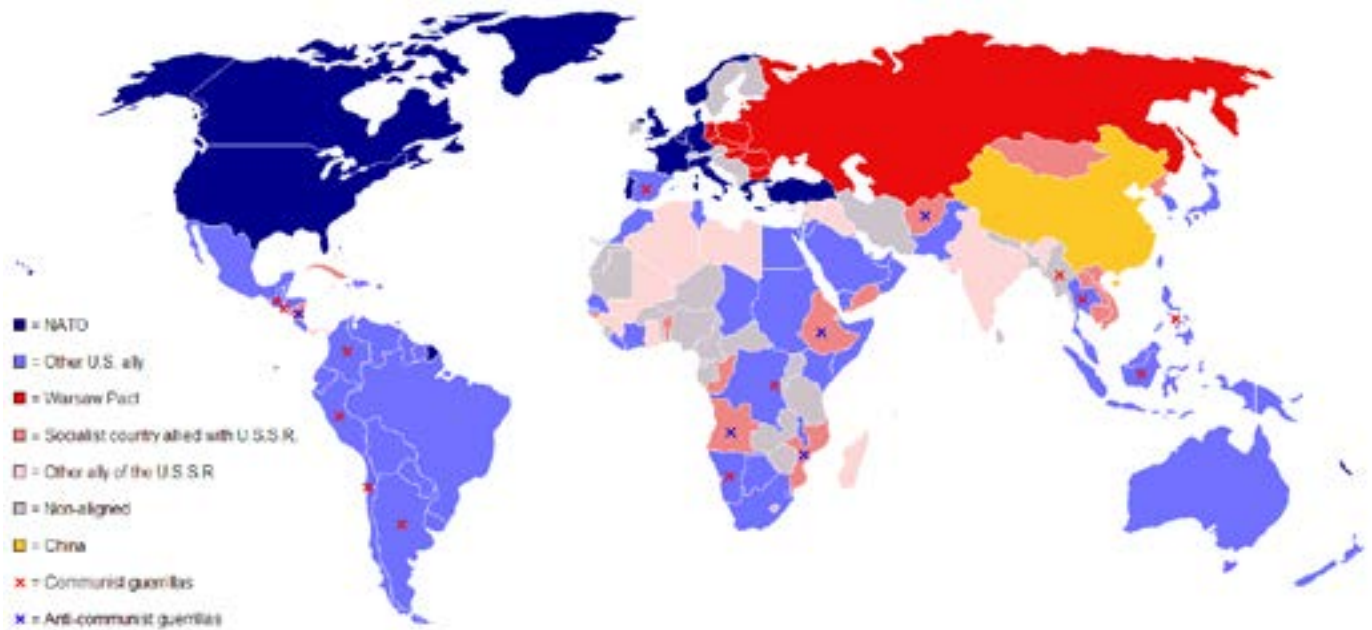
To avoid the apocalyptic potential of direct confrontation, the United States and the Soviet Union chose to fight their battles indirectly through a series of proxy wars; both superpowers provided money, weapons, and, occasionally, soldiers to opposing capitalist and communist factions in conflicts around the globe.

## **Korea, Vietnam, and the Domino Theory**

In 1949, after nearly five years of civil war, the People's Republic of China officially became a communist state. Military leaders in the

United States feared that if another Asian nation turned to communism, the Soviet Union would quickly gain control of the entire region. This principle came to be known as the Domino Theory and played a major role in American foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s.

When World War II ended in 1945, the Allied Powers divided Korea into two countries: North Korea, occupied by the Soviet Union, and South Korea occupied by the United States. In 1950, North Korea, backed by the Chinese Military and the resources of the Soviet Union, invaded South Korea. With the



*The Scope of the Cold War in 1980, a year before Ronald Reagan became President.*

UN's approval, the United States immediately sent troops to counter the communist forces. Over the course of three years, the United States carried out a relentless bombing campaign against the North, targeting cities, dams and farmland, and killing approximately twenty percent of the North Korean population. The war ended in the 1953 with a stalemate.

A year later, in 1954, communist forces led by political leader Ho Chi Minh defeated the French colonial government, which had held control of the region since 1887, in the battle of Dien Bien Phu, and established a communist state in North Vietnam. With the domino theory in mind, the United States responded by pledging their support for the fiercely anti-communist president of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem. The Eisenhower Administration helped Diem carry out a violent crack-down on communist sympathizers in the south, which

led to the arrests, torture, and execution of tens of thousands.

At the same time, China flooded North Vietnam with weapons to aid Ho Chi Minh in his defense against the ever-increasing American military presence in the region. Wary of escalating the conflict to the same heights as the Korean War, the USSR was more cautious about directly supporting to Ho Chi Minh, but they did provide military aid to the National Liberation Front, a semi-independent communist organization that carried out guerilla warfare in South Vietnam with the aim of undermining Diem's government.

American involvement in Vietnam stretched on for nearly two decades, with more troops sent overseas every year. By 1968, nearly five-hundred thousand American soldiers were deployed in Vietnam with casualties reaching fifteen thousand. Despite their military might, the United States could not gain the upper hand in what had

by 1970 become the longest war the nation had ever endured. Ultimately, after massive anti-war demonstrations in the United States, President Nixon ordered the U.S. to withdraw its troops in 1973. By then two million Vietnamese and over 58 thousand Americans had died.

### Cuba

In 1959, the Cuban Revolutionary Movement, led by Fidel Castro, overthrew the government of Fulgencio Batista, a dictator who seized power in the early 1950s. Batista had been a close ally of the United States and allowed American businesses to operate sugar plantations on Cuban soil; Castro repossessed this land and redistributed it to the Cuban people. Castro's anti-capitalist rhetoric and increasingly repressive rule alarmed many American policy makers. The Eisenhower Administration responded to Castro's actions by placing an embargo on all imports of Cuban sugar, but the Soviet Union and

China soon provided Cuba with economic aid that dampened the impact of the US ban. If the United States wanted to weaken Cuba, more direct action would be necessary.

In 1961, 1,400 Cuban exiles, armed and trained by the United States government, landed in Cuba with the aim of toppling Castro's regime. This covert operation, known today as the Bay of Pigs Invasion, failed catastrophically. President Kennedy's admission of U.S. involvement in the attack deepened the rift between Cuba and the United States and encouraged the USSR, which had until now remained relatively neutral towards Castro's government to provide Cuba with additional military support.

"The defense of Cuba became a matter of prestige for the Soviet Union... If you did not defend that small patch of land deep inside enemy territory that was allied to you, no one would believe in your willingness or, more important, your ability to defend your allies" – *Sergei Khrushchev, son of General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev*

In 1962, General Secretary Khrushchev set in motion a plan to equip Cuba with nuclear missiles capable of reaching many U.S. cities, including Washington D.C.. President Kennedy responded by establishing a military blockade around Cuba to intercept the Soviet ships carrying these weapons. Secretly, Kennedy also considered another invasion of Cuba and ordered that any Soviet ship that attempted to break the blockade should

be destroyed. For a moment, total war between the United States and the Soviet Union seemed imminent. After three days of heightened tensions, though, Khrushchev agreed to withdraw his ships, and Kennedy disbanded the U.S. blockade. Many historians consider the Cuban Missile Crisis to be the closest humanity has ever come to all-out nuclear war.

## The Cold War in the Seventies

Following the catastrophic failure of the Vietnam War, the United

States took on a less direct approach to contain the spread of communism. During the 1970s, President Nixon, Ford, and Carter provided weapons and financial support for several coups – military takeovers of the government – in countries around the world, including Bolivia and Argentina in South America; Uganda and the Central African Republic in Africa; and Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran in the Middle East. In several of these cases, the military dictators whom the United States supported overthrew democratically elected leaders whose ideologies



For more information about Operation Condor, [click here](#).

aligned too closely with communism.

Beginning in the 1960s, the United States also funded “a transnational campaign of state-sponsored terror” in South America known as Operation Condor. Pulitzer Prize winner John W. Dower describes the campaign in his 2017 book *The Violent American Century*:

“Condor involved collaborative cross-border intelligence, apprehension, abduction, rendition, interrogation, torture, assassination, and extrajudiciary execution operations among dictatorial regimes [in eight South American countries]. Upward of fifty thousand to sixty thousand individuals appear to have been killed or “disappeared” in Condor-directed actions in the 1970s and 1980s, with countless thousands imprisoned and, in many cases, tortured.”

### The Reagan Era

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. This decision on the part of the Soviet government came after a series attempted uprisings against the widely unpopular, but Soviet-friendly, People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan by a collection of local Islamic groups known as the mujahideen. By 1982, 10,000 Soviet troops were stationed permanently in Afghanistan.

In 1985, Ronald Reagan declared, “We must stand by our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every

continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth.” In short, Reagan had pledged the full support of the United States to any militia fighting against communism abroad. This sentiment came to be known as The Reagan Doctrine and was at the heart of American foreign policy throughout the 1980s.

As part of its mission to support “freedom fighters” around the world, the Reagan Administration secretly provided military aid in the form of weapons and special training to the mujahideen. This forced the war into a nine-year stalemate, and, though the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1988, the effects of the United States’ involvement are still felt today. Many of the guerilla fighters who would eventually form the backbone of the Taliban received their training in the 1980s from the CIA.

The effects of the Reagan Doctrine were not limited to the Middle East. In Nicaragua the Reagan Administration provided military aid to the contras, a group of rebels who were fighting against the soviet-aligned Sandinista government. Both super powers also funded opposing sides in civil wars in Cambodia and El Salvador. In South Africa, Reagan threw his support behind the government’s apartheid regime, which segregated the country based on race and denied black South Africans the right to vote. As massive anti-apartheid protests and demonstrations swept across the United States, Reagan continued to justify his decision by emphasizing South Africa’s role as an ally in the fight against communism in Africa. At the time, the United States was

also supporting anti-communist forces in Angola and Ethiopia. Although the Cold War officially ended in 1991, the consequences of the United States’ and Soviet Union’s widespread interference in foreign affairs remain. Decades of coups and counter-coups have weakened the foundation for strong democracies in countries around the world. This has allowed for a rise of extremism on a global scale. For years, both Cold War superpowers exacerbated conflicts between local ethnic, political, and religious groups in order to establish influence in nations around the world. In countries like Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Iraq the violence stemming from these divisions rages on.

Want more info? Check out some of these sources:

[The Washington Post on North Korea](#)

[History.com on The Vietnam War](#)

[Encyclopedia Britannica on The Korean War](#)

[History.com on The Cold War Domino Theory](#)

[History.com on The Reagan Doctrine](#)



# Reagan's First Year Vs. Trump's First Year

by JORGE SILVA



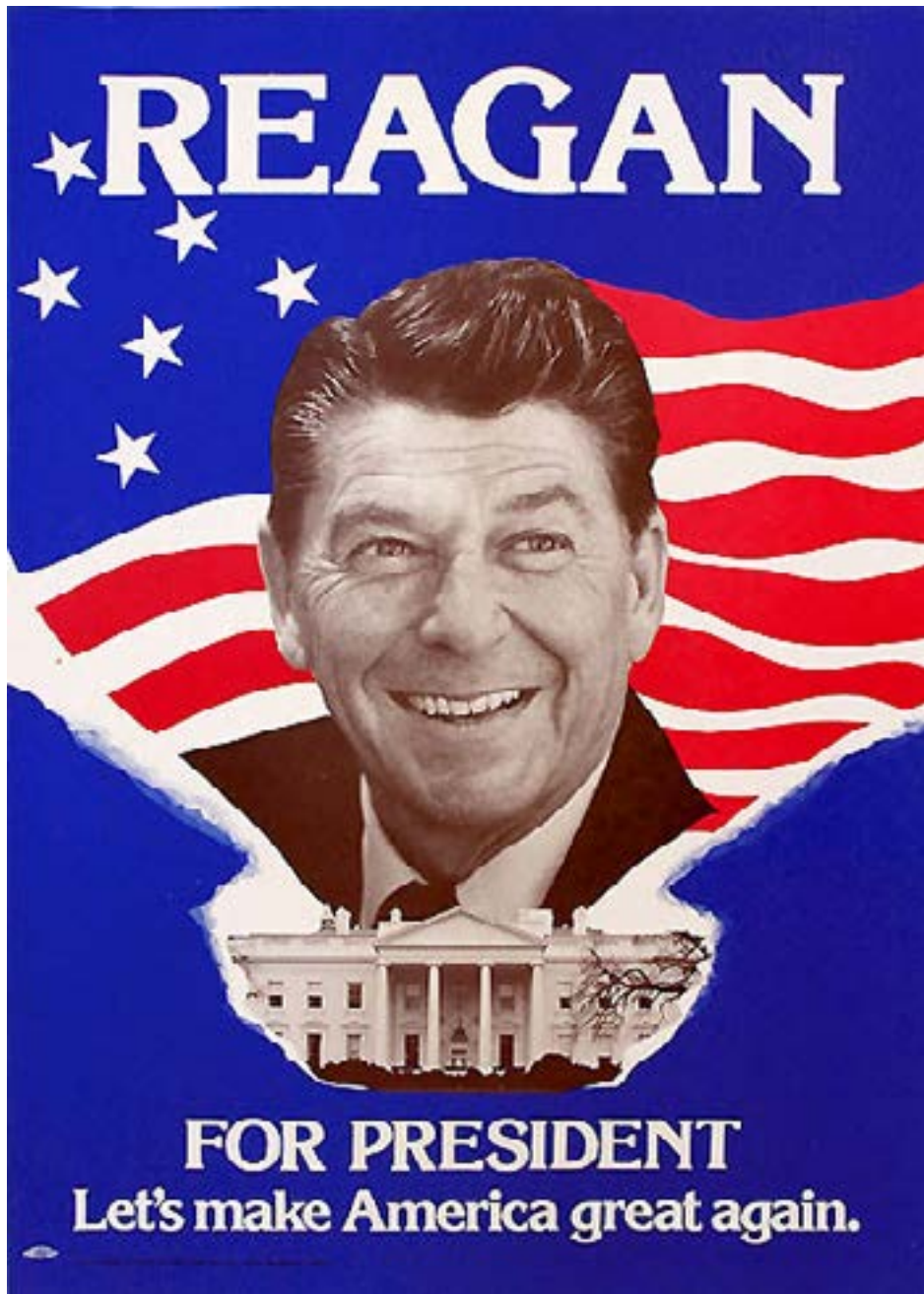
*Reagan and Trump. Courtesy of NewsMax.com.*

Many cultural commentators and writers, especially those who have witnessed several presidential administrations, often claim that the current political climate is not as terrible when compared to all of the political events of the 20th century. “Things were far worse when Reagan was elected,” is what is often overheard. If we draw genuine comparisons from one popular figure to another and look at their first year’s accomplishments and criticism, then perhaps one can gain some genuine perspective.

President Trump is revered by his base as infallible, a man beyond reproach with divine destiny; the only other figured that has earned the same reverence is former President Ronald Reagan. He is immortalized as the acme of conservative values and is the basis of comparison for every politician who rises to stardom amongst the Republican Party’s ranks. So, what were Reagan’s year one accomplishments? How do they compare to Donald Trump’s?

## **Who Was Ronald W. Reagan?**

Ronald Wilson Reagan’s early years were not unlike a typical Midwest upbringing. Born February 6th, 1911, he grew up in rural northern Illinois where in high school, he played football, basketball, track, and also performed in school plays. He attended Eureka College where he studied economics and sociology, but also indulged his interest in drama. A few years after graduating from college, Reagan en-



*A Reagan campaign poster. Courtesy of iagreeetosee.com.*

listed in the Army Reserve, where he intermittently continued his interest in television in film. After the conclusion of World War II in 1945, he began a 20-year career as an actor in major motion pictures. His most remembered film is *Knute Rockne, All American*, a movie about the legendary Notre Dame football player George Gipp, which in turn provided Reagan with his lifelong nickname 'the Gipper.' Slowly, Reagan made his way to

the presidency of the Screen Actors Guild, where he first interacted with politics when he testified for the House Committee on Un-American Activities; that testimony led to the blacklisting of many writers, directors, and performers for their alleged association with the Communist Party. Later, Reagan utilized his popularity as an actor to campaign for several political bids including senate and gubernatorial races in California before aiding in the

presidential election of Richard Nixon. Initially, Reagan affiliated politically as a Democrat, but as he continued to aid in campaigns he eventually changed his party registration to Republican. In 1966, Reagan moved from campaign aid to major politician when he was elected the Governor of California, winning in a landslide victory over incumbent Edmund Brown. Governor Reagan remained in office until 1975, at which point he set his sights on the presidency.

### **Who is Donald J. Trump?**

Before his notoriety as a presidential candidate, Donald John Trump's fame centered on his reality TV stardom. Many supporters reference his involvement in the New York City real estate market as the basis for his success and ultimately his qualification for the Oval Office. Trump was born June 14th, 1964 into wealth and privilege, very different from his predecessor Reagan, the son of an established real estate developer, Fred Trump. A native New Yorker, Trump's family business focused on apartment complexes in the Queens and Brooklyn boroughs. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in Economics, he joined his father's business as it expanded into Manhattan. Fred Trump gave Donald a \$1 million loan to begin an investment portfolio. By today's standards, that loan would equate to \$6.8 million. Between 1983 and 1999, Trump committed to business ventures with wildly varying degrees of success, many of which led him to file for bankruptcy in 2009. His star-

dom reached a new peak when, in 2004, he featured on NBC's new reality TV show, "The Apprentice." For many years, Trump's involvement in politics was limited to campaign contributions to both Democratic and Republican parties and the occasional off-the-cuff opinion during interviews. One of his more unfortunate contributions to the national political discourse: his obsession with former President Barack Obama's birth certificate. He began what is now known as 'the Birther Movement,' an absurd narrative meant to undermine Obama's legitimacy as president by questioning his place of birth. In 2015, Trump left "The Apprentice" to do what he had been threatening to do for years – run for president.

### Different Contexts

Reagan's lifetime was dominated and ultimately defined by the Cold War – a period in the second half of the 20th century where interventionist strategies and tactical espionage replaced outright warfare between nations. Reagan's political career preceded the internet and the 24 hour news cycle, meaning his relationship with the public was far more controlled and determined by his rapport with major newspapers of the time. And although the Cold War meant that the U.S. was not directly in conflict with governments with opposing ideologies (like the Soviet Union's communist government), many military campaigns still ensued abroad. (SEE LIAM'S ARTICLE) If every political era is defined in terms of 'Us Versus Them', Reagan already had a 'them' in communism. Trump faces a very different socio-political landscape than Reagan. With more media outlets than during the late 70's and early 80's, Trump has

plenty of opportunities to express his viewpoints and spread his rhetoric. By 2016, US involvement in foreign conflicts had lessened leaving the role of 'them' vacant. As a replacement, he used economics and the promise of domestic job growth to create a base of support and borrowed a slogan used by Reagan's presidential campaign, "Make America Great Again."

### One Year In

If nothing else, Trump and Reagan have one thing in common as they entered the office: a Democrat predecessor. Ronald Reagan had defeated incumbent Jimmy Carter for the presidency. Though Carter's presidency was seen more favorably in retrospect, at the time of his reelection, President Carter's uncompromising peace policies were seen less as diplomatic and more as unreasonable and ineffective. Combined with a struggling economy, Reagan's call for a bolstered military and economic deregulation made him the favored candidate in the 1980 presidential election. Also during this time, a diplomatic standoff between Iran and the United States, known as the Iran Hostage Crisis, reached its peak. Demonstrators opposing U.S. policies in Iran kidnapped 52 diplomats; their captivity lasted 444 days before concluding in agreements just as President Reagan took the Oath of Office. Reagan was credited for resolving the international dispute despite Carter having presided over the majority of the conflict and the negotiation. At the start of his presidency, Reagan was already perceived as a hero.

Donald Trump had a very different battle to deal with upon arriving at the White House: the war against facts. Immediately following his inauguration, President Trump sent then Press Secretary Sean Spicer to dispute the occasion's crowd size: "This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period." Soon senior advisor Kellyanne Conway coined the term "alternative facts" when upholding the questionable claims made by the White House. During his campaign, Trump cited his experience in real estate and as a businessman as qualifications for presidency; he promised to grow the economy and claimed that Obama era policies were a disaster. Since taking office, he has credited himself with improving the economy. However, economists often cite that any significant economic change is not immediate and that any growth in the last year is a result of policies implemented during the Obama Administration. Trump actually inherited one of the strongest economies of any president with GDP (gross domestic product) at a high and an already steadily declining unemployment rate. Outside of his dispute with facts, Trump's staff has experienced an immense turnover since January 2017; although not unprecedented, the number of staff members hired and fired in a single year is highly unusual.

Both administrations had promised to cut taxes. Trump's additional promise to build a wall to keep out "illegal immigrants" has currently stalled and his bans of immigrants arriving from seven primarily Muslim countries were

found unconstitutional. Thus, the December 2017 tax bill was his first and only big legislative win. Compared to Reagan, who promised a revolution in his first year, the American public saw more of the same foreign policy, with no moves to curb Moscow's influence in other countries or their potential for nuclear war. However, Reagan did manage to follow through with his commitments to cut government spending by \$35 billion, however this mostly affected social programs. At the same time, he faced opposition from both Democrats and Republicans who warned Reagan to implement a plan to deal with increasing debt – a warning he did not heed.

### In Retrospect

With Trump's every utterance recorded by news outlets and social media, there has been an immeasurable amount of con-

trovery emanating from the White House. This has managed to shift the public's focus from major governmental and legislative changes at the federal level and caused increasingly divisive national discourse. It is difficult to determine what Trump will leave behind at the end of his first term as president, but certainly Reagan, at least in this particular assessment, has the benefit of hindsight. Reagan went on to serve a second term in office and his overall accomplishments are a continually debated even to this day. Some see his economic policies as the reason for the reduction in inflation and his foreign policies as the catalyst for Soviet Union dissolving. Others would say his rhetoric on social issues managed to divide conservatives and progressives more and his economic policies created greater income inequality. As a cultural

figure, Reagan is mythicized - a champion of financial austerity, a proponent of smaller government, and a conservative culture warrior – you can see it in the artwork across the nation. The idea that he was unstoppable was further cemented when he survived a 1981 assassination attempt, declaring "God had spared him." These assessments, like everything else about Ronald Reagan, are questionable, but no doubt that Trump is seeking to gain the same level of remembrance and more. Though he is by no means a common man, his campaign was described as a populist, a term usually reserved for those who are considered antithetical to elitism. Reagan at the very least had experience as a public official, whereas Trump is still what he was before January 2017: a reality TV star.



Street art of Donald Trump. Courtesy of Business Insider.

# Writing About The President

by LIAM COLLIER

Alongside the world leaders, powerful women, and behind-the-scenes advisors who appear in *Blind Date*, Rogelio Martinez chose to include Edmund Morris, an author who was handpicked by the Reagans in 1985 to write the President's official biography. Morris found it so difficult to write about Reagan that it took him 14 years to finish his book, *Dutch*. When it was finally published in 1999, the autobiography stirred immediate controversy largely due to Morris' decision to include fictional characters in this non-fiction account of the president's life. While some praised Morris' ability to liven up duller moments in Reagan's life using fictional elements, others found the approach irresponsible.

The narrator and the events discussed in the passage below are fictional. Do these fictional elements help or hurt the writing? What could Morris be trying to communicate about Reagan? "Ronald Reagan remained all his life an actor, a man of exits and entrances, whether the "production" that engaged him was as short as a conversation or as long as the Presidency. When he stepped onto the set, he knew exactly what to do and how to fill the space allotted him. And when he left it, it was with the word CUT sounding in his ears. On to the next cast of characters!

"I remember greeting him one morning having entertained him at home the night before. Not only did he fail to mention our dinner, it was obvious from his smiling yet

distant demeanor that he did not recall it.

"To those readers who will seize on this as evidence of incipient dementia in the White House, I reply: You do not understand that actors remember forward, not backward. Yesterday's take is in the can; today is already rolling; tomorrow's lines must be got by heart" (Morris, 181).

Author and journalist Jodi Kantor received similar backlash in 2009 when she published her book, *The Obamas*, which examines President Obama's first term through the lens of his marriage. Throughout the book, Kantor discusses the internal thoughts

and feelings of Michelle Obama, a move which some reviewers at the time saw as dishonest. White House spokesperson, Eric Shultz, pushed back against these passages, saying, "The emotions, thoughts and private moments described in the book, though often seemingly ascribed to the president and first lady, reflect little more than the author's own thoughts." Kantor based her account on interviews with several members of the cabinet and White House staff but never interviewed the Obamas themselves, leading others to question the veracity of her writing, especially after Michelle Obama accused Kantor of portraying her as an "angry black woman."



Edmund Morris. Courtesy of Penguin Random House Publishers.



*Copies of Fire and Fury. Courtesy of Rolling Stone.*

In January of 2018, Henry Holt and Company published perhaps the most controversial book about a sitting US President to date, *Fire and Fury* by Michael Wolff. Since its publication, Wolff's exposé on Donald Trump's first year in the White House has become a bestseller on Amazon with over a million copies sold. Current White House Press Secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, has called Wolff's account "complete fantasy and just full of tabloid gossip," and the President tweeted that the book was "full of lies, misrepresentations and sources that don't exist." Given the multiple verifiable falsehoods in Wolff's account, it is difficult to dismiss Sanders and Trump's frustration. As with *The Obamas* and *Dutch* though, there is a larger question at play: can a story full of fiction

still communicate something true? Or, as PolitiFact reporter Angie Drobnic Holan put it: "Many details are simply wrong. Whether the larger narrative is true is a different question."

The events described in the passage below may or may not have happened exactly as written. Is Wolff's account helpful or hurtful to those who oppose President Trump? What about those who support him?

"Shortly after 8 p.m. on Election Night, when the unexpected trend — Trump might actually win — seemed confirmed, Don Jr. told a friend that his father, or DJT, as he calls him, looked as if he had seen a ghost. Melania was in tears — and not of joy.

"There was, in the space of little more than an hour, in Steve Bannon's not unamused observation, a befuddled Trump morphing into a disbelieving Trump and then into a horrified Trump. But still to come was the final transformation: Suddenly, Donald Trump became a man who believed that he deserved to be, and was wholly capable of being, the president of the United States"

Rogelio Martinez was not present for the talks between Ronald Reagan and Mikael Gorbachev, yet he has written a play that deals with this very moment. What does his inclusion of Edmund Morris say about his view on his relationship to these historical events?

# Fashion's Role in Politics

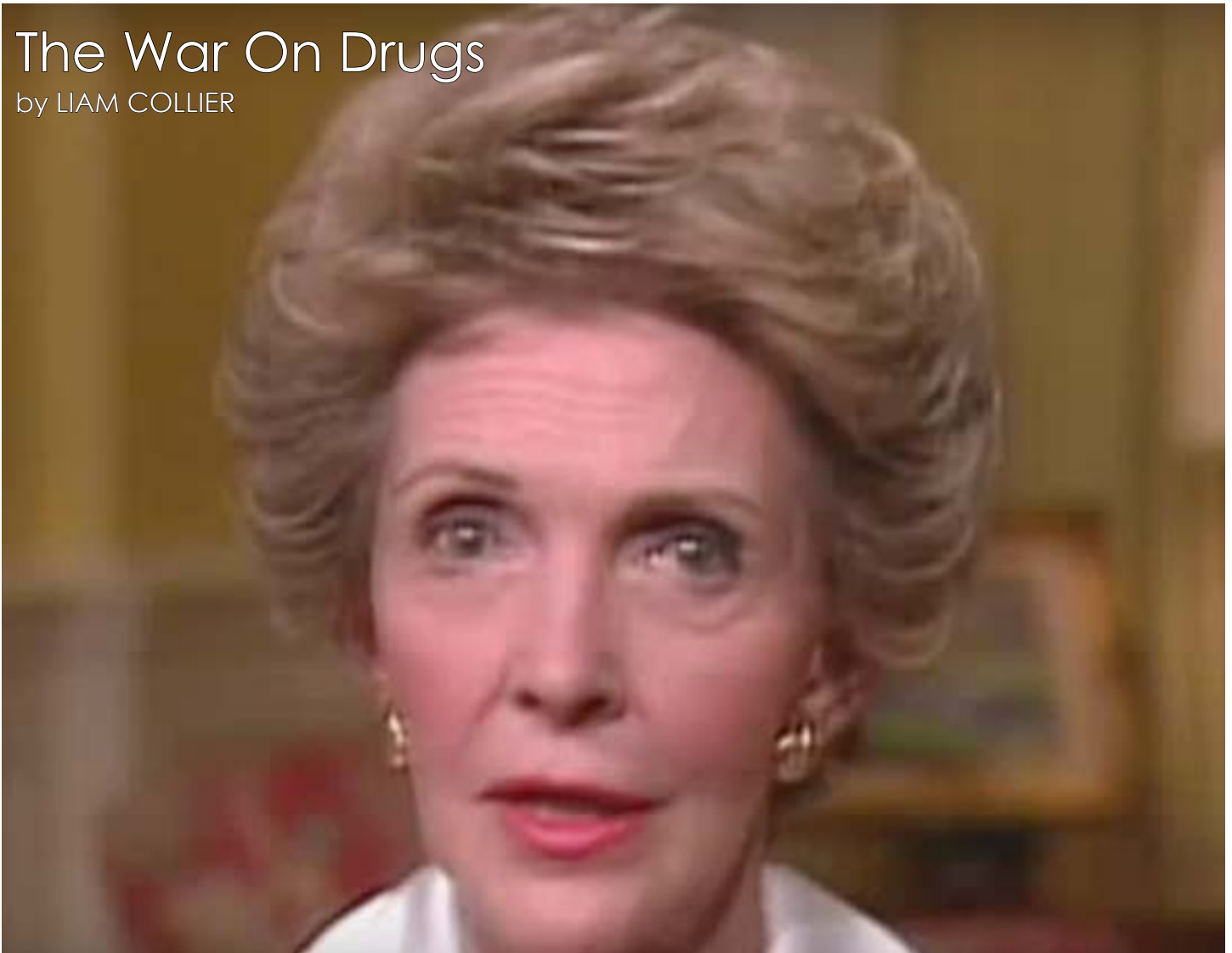
by IAN MARTIN

The following photo essay examines the relationship between politics and fashion by considering both historical and contemporary political figures. What is the role of fashion in politics? [Click here](#), download, and read more to find out!



# The War On Drugs

by LIAM COLLIER



*Nancy Reagan addresses the nation in 1986 about the dangers of drugs, advocating for an abstinence only approach to drug education and casting drug dealers as enemies of the American people.*

In the early 1980s, as the United States and Russia considered deescalating a decades-long Cold War, the Reagan administration was opening a new front in different war at home. The so-called “War on Drugs” was a series of anti-crime policies that began during the Nixon Administration and intensified under Reagan. While the President and his administration passed laws that established mandatory minimums for drug-related crimes, Nancy Reagan began her “Just Say No” campaign to inform the public, especially children, about the supposed dangers of drugs

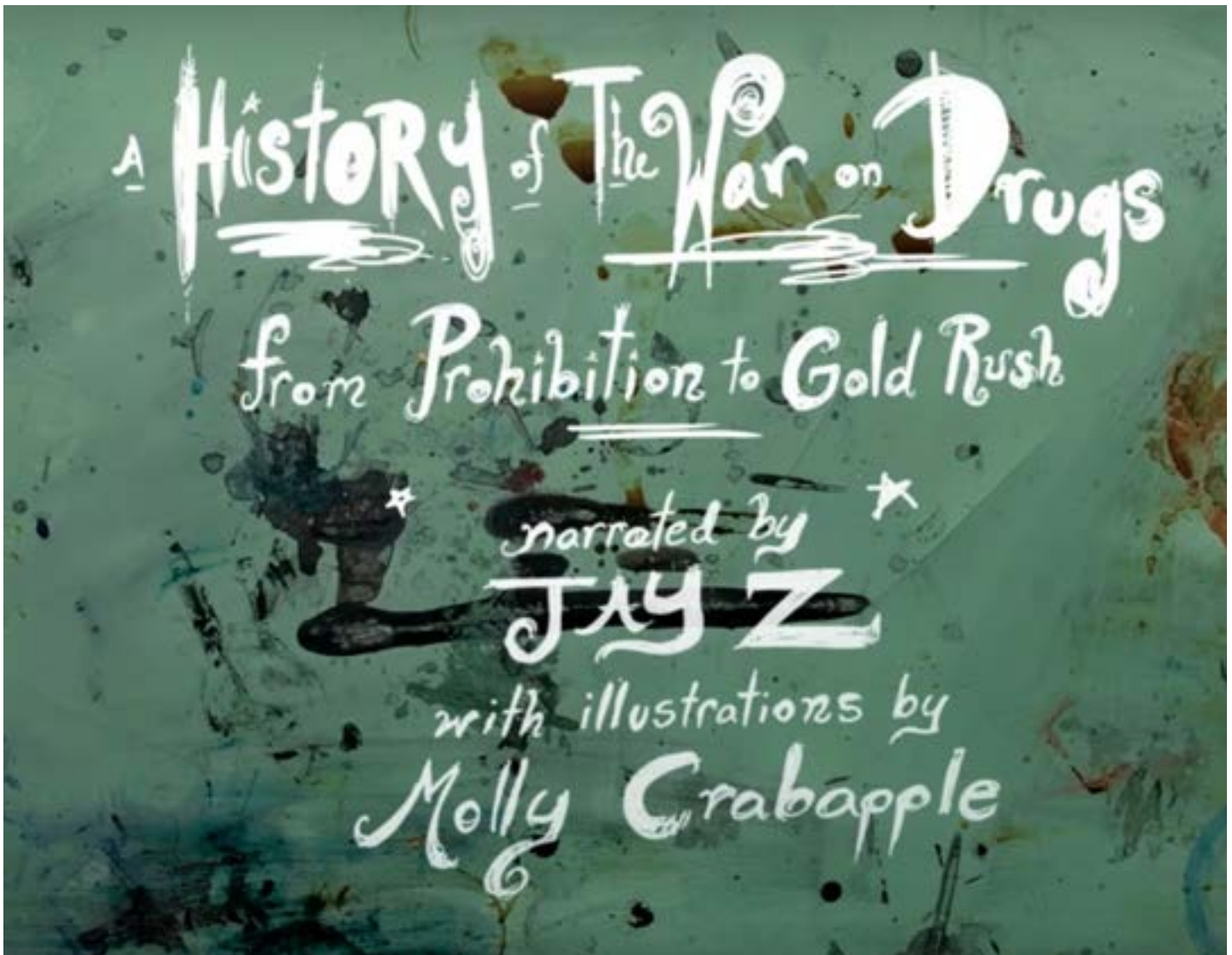
like cocaine and marijuana.

Critics of these initiatives have pointed out the disproportionate effect that the Reagans’ efforts have had on communities of color, including the mass incarceration of black and brown individuals. Between 1970 and 2005, the prison population in the United States increased by 700%. A huge portion of this increase is tied to the “War on Drugs.” In 2014, 50 percent of incarcerated people in the United States were imprisoned on drug charges. The majority of these prisoners were people of color.

For more information about the relationship between the “War on Drugs” and Mass Incarceration, watch Ava DuVernay’s award winning documentary, [Thirteenth \(2016\)](#), which is available on [Netflix](#).

While spending on drug control has skyrocketed since the 1980s, [the “War on Drugs” has done little to reduce drug addiction in America](#). The effects of this ongoing conflict though are still felt today. In 2016, hip-hop artist Jay Z and renowned illustrator Molly Crabapple collaborated on *The War on Drugs* is an Epic Fail, a short film outlining the





history of the “War on Drugs” and its effect on black communities in the United States.

[As more and more states consider legalizing marijuana](#) for medical and recreation use, conversations about the “War on Drugs” have become more prevalent than ever. In an attempt to combat the long lasting effects of this war, [Senator Cory Booker introduced legislation](#) in August that would deny criminal justice funding from states that have not legalized marijuana. On the other side of this issue, Attorney General Jeff Sessions [recently reversed](#) Obama-era policies that had paved the way for legaliza-

tion. The ACLU has [condemned Sessions’](#) decision stating, “Jeff Sessions has a history of endorsing ineffective policies and positions based on political rhetoric. He wants to put as many people as possible behind bars. And not just anyone – the War on Drugs policies Sessions is rolling out target and harm Black and brown people and communities.”

Looking for more resources? Check out any of these links:

- [“Drug Statistics” from the Drug Policy Alliance](#)

- [“The Drug War And Mass Incarceration By The Numbers” by Matt Sledge, featured in The Atlantic.](#)

- [“Just How Much The War On Drugs Impacts Our Overcrowded Prisons, In One Chart,” by Kathleen Miles. HuffPost.](#)

- [The War On Drugs, from History.com](#)

# The Great Communicator's Big Silence

by WILLA TAYLOR



*Vanity Fair Video, Reagan Administration's Chilling Response to the AIDS Crisis*

As we consider Ronald Reagan and his statesmanship in Rogelio Martinez's funny, charming *Blind Date*, and as we reminisce about the former president who, whether from your party or the opposition, governed with dignity and thoughtfulness, we must never forget Reagan's shameful, deadly abdication of leadership in the fight against AIDS and HIV. Thousands of people – initially all gay men – died before he even acknowledged the disease, and audiotapes of his press secretary's briefings shows a homophobic, callous disregard for the havoc it was wrecking.

By the time the President acknowledged AIDS publicly in 1987, more than 36,000 people had died.

Reagan became the 40th President of the United States in January 1981, the same year that five previously healthy young gay men in Los Angeles presented with unusual opportunistic infections that indicated their immune systems were not working. By the time the Centers for Disease Control published a report about the cases in June, two of the men had already died. Within days of news coverage of the report, doctors from across the US flooded the CDC with reports of similar cases. The CDC established a task force to identify risk factors and a protocol for reporting similar cases.

By the end of 1981, 270 cases had been reported, and 121 individuals had died.

With each passing month, the number of deaths and suffering increased at a frightening rate. Scientists, researchers and health care professionals at every level expressed the need for funding. Congress held hearings on AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome - in April 1982, as the CDC estimated that tens of thousands of people may have been infected, including women and children. The response of the Reagan administration was silent indifference.

By February 1983, more than 1,025 AIDS cases were reported in the United States, and the disease has been identified in Haiti and Africa. Congress finally passed legislation that included \$12 million specifically targeted for AIDS research and treatment in the

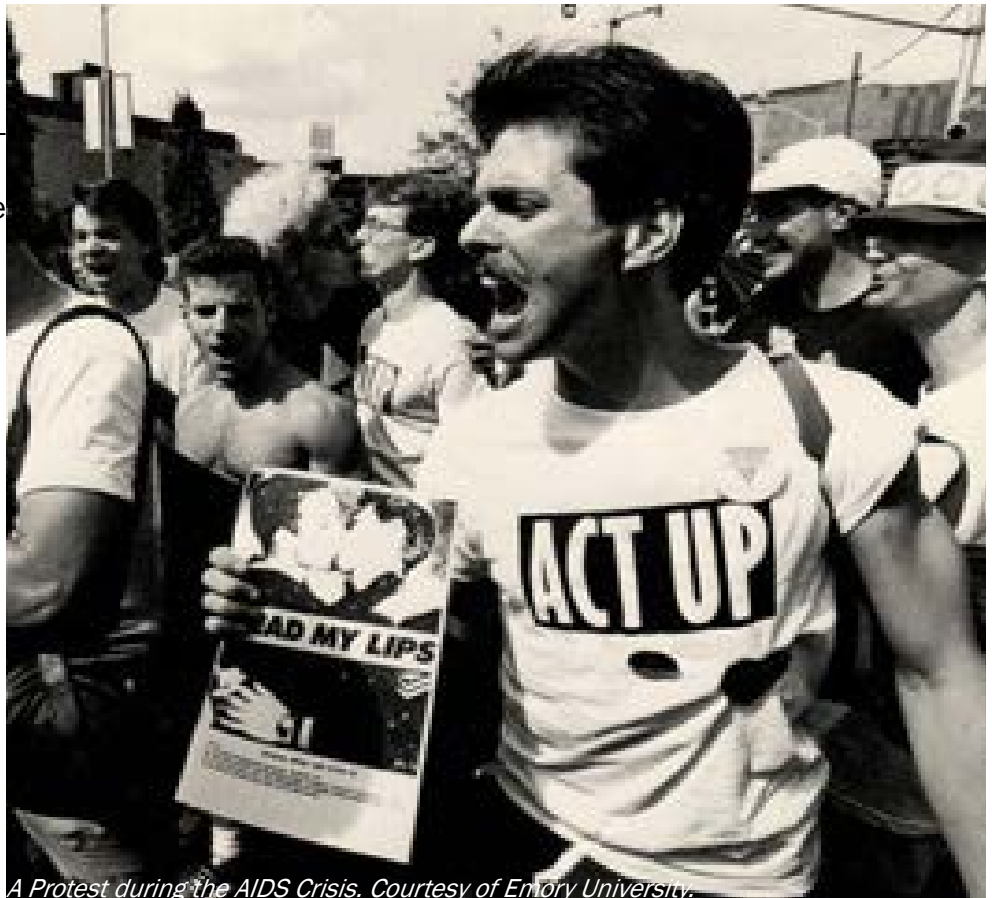
US. Clinics for treatment opened across the country. AIDS Action, a national organization, advocated for increased funding and expanded services, and educated the Federal government to help shape policy and legislation.

And still the President was silent.

Reagan was re-elected in 1984, with heavy support from the religious right and its political-action group, the Moral Majority, led by the Rev. Jerry Falwell. HIV and AIDS became the tools, and gay men the target, for a politics of fear, hate and discrimination. Falwell said "AIDS is the wrath of God upon homosexuals." Reagan's communications director, Patrick Buchanan argued that AIDS was "nature's revenge on gay men."

But at a state dinner shortly after his inauguration, Nancy Reagan, the First Lady, noted that one of their guests, the actor Rock Hudson, who the Reagans had known from their Hollywood days, looked unhealthy and thin. Three weeks later, Hudson, a top Hollywood leading man, announced that he had AIDS. His disclosure shocked America from its apathy, and provoked discussions on both his homosexuality and his diagnosis. Still, the White House was silent.

Writing in the Washington Post in 1985, Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles, stated: "It is surprising that the president could remain silent as 6,000 Americans died, that he could fail to acknowledge the epidemic's existence. Perhaps his staff felt he had to, since many of his New Right supporters have raised money by campaign-



*A Protest during the AIDS Crisis. Courtesy of Emory University.*

ing against homosexuals."

That year, Congress allocated \$70 million for AIDS research but fear, hate and bigotry still impacted treatment and care. Ryan White, a teenager from Indiana, became the poster child for the disease when his school refuses to re-admit him after he was diagnosed with AIDS. Although the disease still was heavily identified with gay men and IV drug users, public perception shifted after Ryan, a hemophiliac, contracted it from a contaminated blood treatment. He and his family became advocates for treatment, and spent the rest of his life educating people about AIDS.

The ugliness of the protests and hearings against re-admitting Ryan to school shone a spotlight on AIDS that forced the administration to respond.

In September 1985, President Rea-

gan mentioned AIDS in a letter to Congress, vowing to make funding research and treatment a priority. However, it would take Reagan another two years before he addressing the issue publicly.

Finally, on May 31st, 1987, President Reagan made his first public speech about AIDS, at the Third International Conference on AIDS in Washington, DC. By then, 36,058 Americans had been diagnosed, and 20, 849 people – men, women and children, had died.

Ronald Reagan was known as "a great communicator," as far back as 1976 when he was Governor of California. But his inability or unwillingness to speak up when people were dying of a horrific disease that still plagues us today, is large part of his legacy.

# The President's Astrologist

by SAYA JENKS

In his 1988 memoir *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington*, former Reagan aide Donald Regan claimed that, "Virtually every major move and decision the Reagans made during my time as White House Chief of Staff was cleared in advance with a woman in San Francisco who drew up horoscopes to make certain that the planets were in a favorable alignment for the enterprise." The disgruntled Regan was describing Joan Quigley (though he did not know her name), an astrologist whom Nancy Reagan hired as a consul-

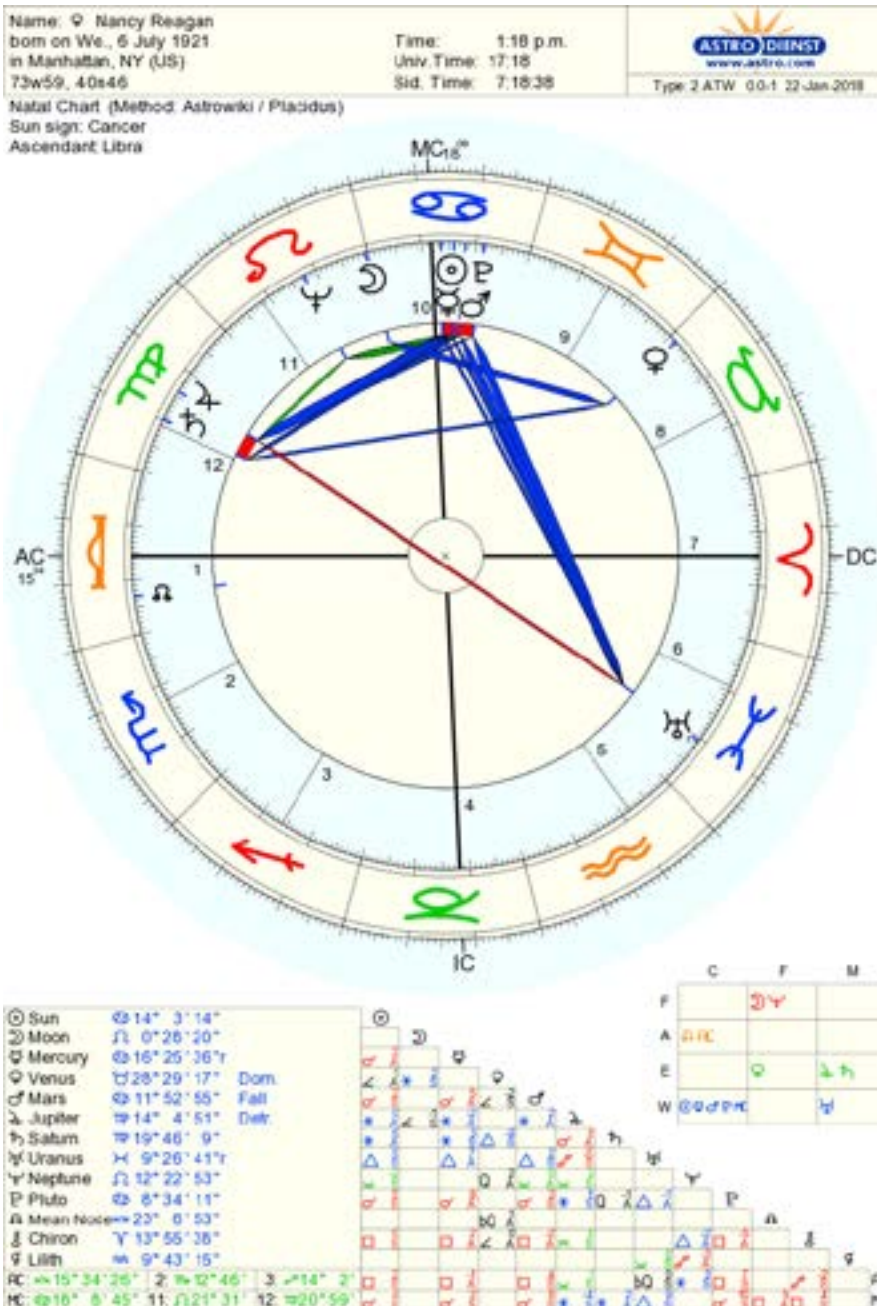
tant after the 1981 assassination attempt on her husband, President Ronald Reagan. From that point on, Mrs. Reagan would not let her husband or his aides schedule important events without consulting Quigley first.

Quigley was a practitioner of astrology, the belief that cosmic bodies such as the sun, moon, stars, and planets affect human lives. The study of the stars dates back to the Babylonians, who used observations of the sky to predict weather, likely due to new agricultural needs. The Babylonians then be-

gan to use astrology to try to understand their gods' desires and actions; at that time, divination and science were not strictly separated field like they are today. They invented the zodiac, twelve signs based on constellations such as Scorpio, Taurus, and Virgo, that present-day astrologists associate with personality traits. Today, horoscopes, or predictions about a person's future based on their zodiac signs, published in magazines or newspapers are the most popular form of astrology in American culture.



*Nancy Reagan's astologist, Joan Quigley. Image courtesy of LA Times.*



Nancy Reagan's astrological birth chart, courtesy of Astro.com

While ancient cultures considered astrology a science, today, astronomy is an accepted field in the hard sciences, whereas astrology is considered a form of divination. Scientists rigorously test hypotheses in controlled experiments and modify their ideas based on evidence in the natural world; astrologists do not. While astronomers study the scientific relationships between and motions of celestial objects outside Earth's atmosphere and do not

attach spiritual meanings to their findings, astrologists want to understand how those objects affect people's personalities, emotions, relationships, and even economic success.

Because astrology is considered unscientific, Don Regan caused a scandal when he revealed the extent of Quigley's influence on White House decisions in his book. In response, both Ronald and Nancy Reagan downplayed Quig-

ley's role: in her 1989 memoir *My Turn*, Nancy Reagan wrote that, "While astrology was a factor in determining Ronnie's schedule, it was never the only one, and no political decision was ever based on it." Quigley then fired back in her own book *What Does Joan Say?: My Seven Years As White House Astrologer* to Nancy and Ronald Reagan, published a year after Mrs. Reagan's, claiming that, "I was responsible for timing all press conferences, most speeches, the State of the Union addresses, the takeoffs and landings of Air Force One. I picked the time of Ronald Reagan's debate with [President Jimmy] Carter and the two debates with Walter Mondale; all extended trips abroad as well as the shorter trips and one-day excursions."

The tension that riddled Donald Regan's relationship with Nancy Reagan stemmed from Regan's frustration with Mrs. Reagan's dependence on astrology. From Regan's point of view, Quigley's astrology was irrelevant superstition that just caused a scheduling headache. According to Quigley, she even determined the duration of Geneva Summit that forms the climax of *Blind Date*: the Summit was scheduled to last as long as possible, because according to Quigley, Gorbachev's astrological chart showed that he would be open to working with President Reagan. Politico reported that Quigley told Nancy Reagan that, "Ronnie's 'evil empire' attitude has to go... Gorbachev's Aquarian planet is in such harmony with Ronnie's, you'll see ... They'll share a vision."

# THEATER ETIQUETTE

## What Should I Wear?

For a lot of people, going to the theater is a special event, and they like to dress up for it. Remember: even though you are on a field trip you should dress according to your school's dress code. The Goodman is air conditioned, so bring a sweater or extra layer in case you get cold.

## What if I need to leave the theatre during the show?

Only if it is an emergency. Otherwise, it's very disrespectful. Make sure to use restrooms before the show, or wait until intermission.

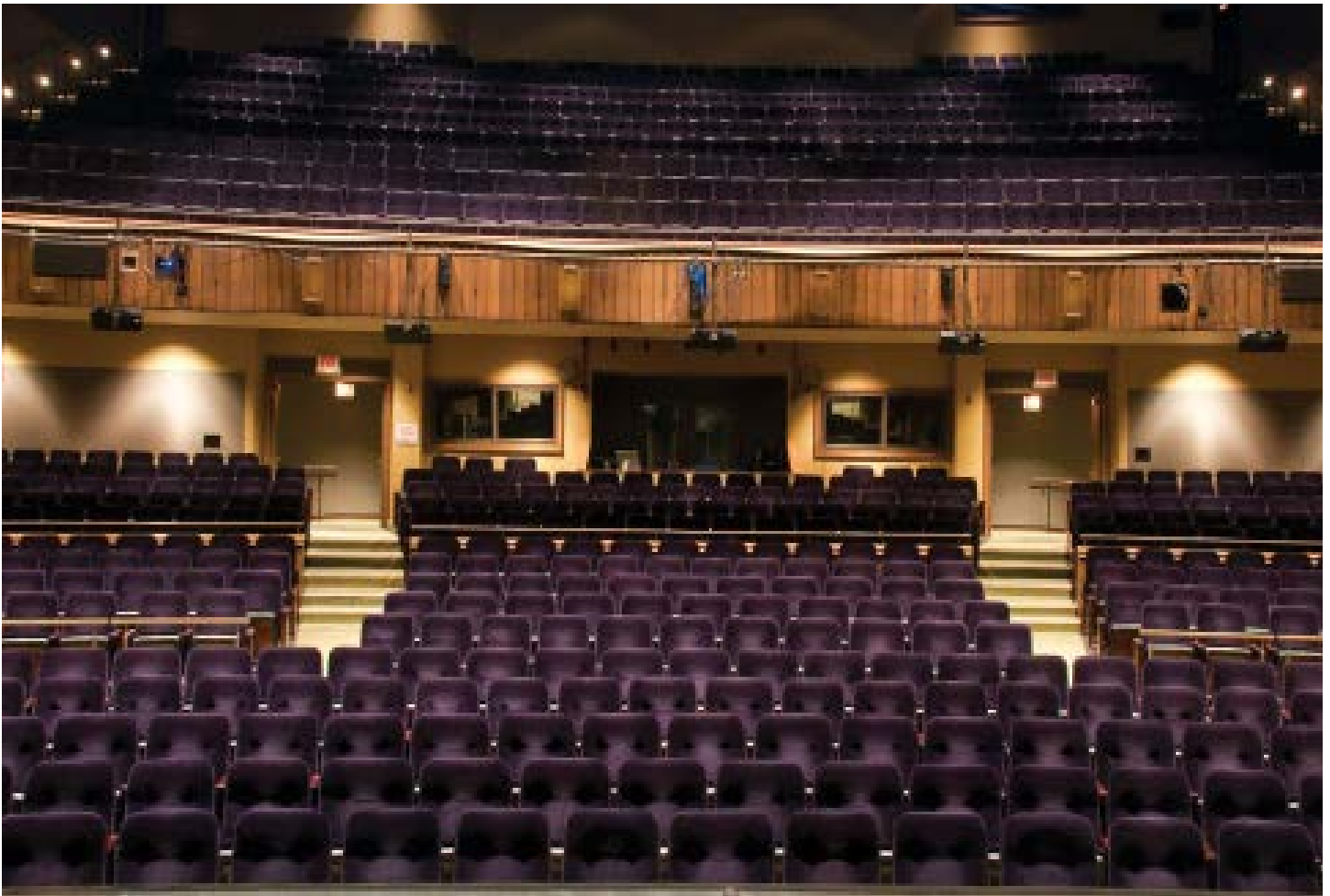
Be respectful to the artists on stage, and to your fellow audience members. No talking during the performance, no feet on seats, and no kicking. No use of phones or electronic devices – the glow from the screen is distracting to your fellow audience members and the actors (and yes, they can see it)!

## How should I respond to what's going on on the stage?

Honesty but appropriately. Theatre is very different from watching a movie at home. Always remember that you are in a room full of people who are there to watch the performance. They can hear your responses just as well as you can hear theirs. Most importantly, the actors can hear and see you. They will appreciate any appropriate feedback but might be offended if it is inappropriate. Whether you enjoy the play or not, you owe respect to the actors.

Please remember: **no smoking, and no eating or drinking** while inside the theater.





### What to do before the show:

When you arrive at the Goodman, you will be given a ticket and asked to It is a good idea to arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the performance. If you are late, often you will not be allowed to enter the show until after intermission. Once your group is called, an usher will lead you to your seats and hand you a program. Please promptly sit where you have been assigned. Remember that the show needs to begin on time and everyone needs to be seated.

### What to do during Intermission:

Most plays have a 15 minute intermission. This gives you time to stretch your legs, use the restroom, get some water, and discuss the play with your friends. We do ask that you remain on the floor where your seat is -- there are restrooms on both levels. When intermission is over, the lights in the lobby with flash several times. That is your cue to get back to your seat, because the performance is about to begin!

### What to do after the show:

There will be a post-show discussion immediately following the performance. Members of the cast will come out on stage and answer your questions. Feel free to ask anything that's on your mind about the show, but please remember to be respectful.

# READING YOUR TICKET

As a patron of the theatre, it is important to know how to read your ticket and find your seat. Generally, seats for all performances in the Goodman's Albert Theatre are assigned seating, so be sure to know how to be able to find your seat. When you come with your school, you will be ushered to a section where you and your fellow students can sit and enjoy the play together.

Below is an explanation of how to read your ticket, and all of the information that you can get from your ticket. If you have any problems, ask an usher for help. They're here for you!

