Why Use *You. Me. We.*

“Why are we talking about this? Do we even have these problems on our campus?” The questions, posed by a male student during a performance of *You. Me. We.,* was a valid one. Why were we talking about this? Was our discussion about racism, sexism, transphobia, and homophobia even relevant? The question was turned back on the audience. A female student responded with stories of how her opinions and achievements were belittled or ignored on a daily basis. The initial questioner replied that the female student “was being too sensitive,” precisely illustrating her point and underscoring the need for the performance.

Some say we live in a post-racial society, but is that really true? Current social movements would argue otherwise. Hate groups are on the rise. Stigmatization of select ethnicities is rampant. New laws are pitting the rights of GLBTQ people against those of people of faith. For most of us, it’s easy to distance ourselves from events like these and say, “That’s not me. I wouldn’t do that.” But what about the subtler prejudices that each of us carries? Do we make assumptions about others based on appearance, race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation? How do these assumptions affect our ability to really get to know another individual? More importantly, how can we overcome our preconceptions and begin to bridge the gaps that continue to keep people apart?

*You. Me. We.* uses theatre and discussion to expose those unresolved issues. Scenes and talk-back material shine a provocative light on behaviors that often go unchallenged. Students may get angry with the characters, or they may see their own experience reflected back at them. Whichever it is, they are drawn into a discussion in which they express their own views and hear those of their peers. Long-held beliefs are challenged as students listen to the often unspoken experiences of others. Where minds are changed is hard to say, but students definitely leave with a better understanding of the issues that remain and a sense that resolving those issues is their personal responsibility.

