



EDUCATOR RESOURCES

# ACTUALLY

BY **ANNA ZIEGLER**

ConocoPhillips

RBC  
Emerging Artists  
Project

# ACTUALLY

BY ANNA ZIEGLER  
DIRECTED BY JENNA ROGERS

## Contents

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS .....	3
CREATIVE TEAM .....	4
CAST .....	4
Interview with Playwright Anna Ziegler .....	5
A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR.....	7
SYNOPSIS.....	8
SETTING.....	8
STYLE .....	8
CHARACTERS .....	9
THEMES AND TOPICS.....	10
Themes.....	10
Post Show Discussion Topics .....	10
ADDITIONAL READING .....	12
TITLE IX.....	12
Understanding Consent .....	13
Ground Rules.....	13
Understanding Consent: What it means for you .....	13
Continuing with more complex issues surrounding sexual consent .....	14
Community Resources:.....	16
CCASA.....	16
COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM.....	16

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS****YOUth Belong at ATP!**

Our Youth Engagement programs aim to deepen the theatre experience for young audiences and emerging artists through our plays, varied practical learning opportunities, and professional mentorship. These programs foster community, engage the inquisitive mind, and bring young audiences and artists together in an exchange around our work.

**FREE PROGRAMS**

Our free programs bring the excitement of live theatre, professional artists and the youth of Calgary together. These programs are stand-alone but can also be paired together with our Student Matinees to provide a totally immersive experience in live theatre.

The following Youth Engagement Programs are provided by Alberta Theatre Projects **FREE** of charge to youth, students, emerging artists, youth groups, educational institutes and organizations.

**Conversations with Artists**

Capture your students' imaginations through an in-classroom conversation with an ATP Season Artist about the artistry and skills that go into making live theatre.\*

*\*Visits are based on the availability of artists involved in our productions and are subject to change due to illness or show requirements.*

[Conversations with Artists – Request Form](#)

**Backstage Tours**

Discover backstage secrets with an educational and interactive, behind-the-scenes tour of the Martha Cohen Theatre. Learn how math, science, language, technology and art are brought together to create new works of theatre in our scenic carpentry shop, costume shop, fly gallery, lighting grid and on stage.\* *Tours are open to all ages and abilities.*

[ATP Backstage Tour Request Form Fillable](#)

For More Information about all of our Youth Engagement Programs Contact:

**TALORE PETERSON [TPETETRSON@ATPLIVE.COM](mailto:TPETETRSON@ATPLIVE.COM)**

Artistic Associate Community & Youth Engagement

**[WWW.ALBERTATHEATREPROJECTS.COM](http://WWW.ALBERTATHEATREPROJECTS.COM)**

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STUDENT MATINEE: MARCH 19 2020 | 11:30 AM

**GRADE RECOMMENDATION:** GRADE 10+ Trigger warning for discussion of sexual assault. Mature subject matter, sexuality and language.

**RUNNING TIME:** 90 MINUTES, PLUS A 20 MIN POST SHOW DISCUSSION.

**BUS PICKUP:** 1:20PM

## **CREATIVE TEAM**

Director- Jenna Rogers

Set & Costume Coordinator- Sarah Uwadiae

Light Design – Beth Kates

Sound Design – Arvin Siegfried

Stage Manager – Emma Brager

Apprentice Stage Manager – Sadaf Ganji

## **CAST**

*Amber*- Emma Houghton

*Tom* – Diego Stredel

**INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT ANNA ZIEGLER**BY **LEEAD ILITE FELDMAN**Source: <https://www.americantheatre.org/2017/05/05/in-actually-anna-ziegler-has-more-questions-than-answers/>

Could you tell me a little bit about your background and how you decided to become a playwright?

I wrote a lot growing up, mostly poems, and even through college [at Yale] I felt that was the writing I was most interested in. But I did still take a couple playwriting classes in college, and senior year I was in a class taught by Arthur Kopit, who also happened to teach in the graduate playwriting program at [New York University]. That spring he suggested I apply [for the playwriting MFA program] and I balked—I was certainly not enough of a playwright

for that kind of commitment. I went off to England on a yearlong fellowship to write poetry at the University of East Anglia. While I was there I reconsidered. Maybe writing plays would be more fun than writing poems, which, let's face it, can be a little lonely (especially in the winter in the east of England). So I applied and got into NYU, and went there for two years, and somewhere in there I must have become a playwright, though I didn't think of myself that way until much much later. But within a few years of graduating from NYU I no longer had ideas for poems, and maybe that was the point, when the playwriting edged out the poetry, that I became a playwright. Also, writing plays was (and continues to be) difficult enough that it seemed like something one could devote one's life to.

What inspired you to tell this story?

I'm often drawn to stories that examine the nature of "the truth," in which multiple perspectives reveal the impossibility of a single definitive version of events. And the sexual misconduct cases that are proliferating on college campuses right now provide a fascinating, and painful, example of this, and of the particular difficulties of ascertaining what really happened between two people.

But more than anything, I was interested in these two characters and in investigating what led each to the moment in question—how society and personality converge to create a combustible mix of self-doubt and the desire to fit in, and how, as a result, good people can end up compromising themselves and others. I was also really intrigued by the idea of trying to determine truth at the dicey, charged intersection of race and gender, where biases abound.

How did you research the piece?

Sadly, it's almost impossible not to research this topic these days. It feels like there's another article, another story, another case, presented in the news every other day. But I also watched movies like *The Hunting Ground* and read Jon Krakauer's *Missoula* and Laura Kipnis's new book *Unwanted Advances*. My husband—a lawyer whose job at NYU is to handle litigation and student affairs matters, including Title IX-related issues—was also hugely helpful.

In this play Amber and Tom have alternate flashes of vulnerability and confident certainty, keeping the audience guessing about the outcome until the very end. Could you elaborate on your

**characterization of these two roles?**

I felt it was important that we never lose sight of the humanity at the heart of both people. While I expect the audience to vacillate a bit in their sympathies, I would hope that that vacillation comes from suddenly understanding a character more deeply, rather than from writing the other character off in some way.

Amber and Tom cycle through clarity and obfuscation not as a way to mess with the audience, but because I think this is how people work, how we think about ourselves: sometimes clearly and sometimes through other, more insidious lenses.

**One of the things that struck me about the play is the sparseness of the stage directions. Do you see the staging underscoring the themes of the play?**

As far as the staging goes, that is up to the director, and I don't know yet how directors will decide to stage this play. But in terms of the play's style and structure—how, largely via direct address to the audience, we go back and forth between narration of the details and progression of the sexual misconduct hearing and the characters' reflections about what might have gotten them to that point in their lives—I would say that Amber and Tom's appeals to those physically in the theatre mirror their appeals inside of their hearing, and the lack of response from the audience underscores the impossibility of there being clear answers.

## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR



In her author's note for *Actually*, Playwright Anna Ziegler says that the play, "looks at how difficult it can be to determine what happened in a bed between two real people capable of all that humans are capable of - obfuscating, deceiving themselves, not understanding, not wanting to be impolite or to embarrass themselves, of letting need or insecurity take precedence over empathy".

As I write this note, I am reflecting on all of the experiences that have led me to the moment of directing this play. For those of you who don't know me, I think it is fair to say that I've spent much of my life learning about the socially constructed lines that we, as humans, use to categorize people in society. Categories like gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and more.

One of my ongoing preoccupations has been surrounding how I, individually, am complicit in the systems that surround me. In what ways do I hold up aspirational masculinity? Or aspirational whiteness? How can I change these habits? In directing this play, I feel like I'm confronting these questions head-on. It has been a journey in making decisions that hopefully make it difficult for you, the audience, to decide what exactly happened between these characters on one single night of their lives.

This play takes place near the end of the Obama administration, after Trayvon Martin was shot and the #BlackLivesMatter movement began. It takes place right around the time that Brock Turner assaulted Chanel Miller in the famous Stanford case. It takes place right before #MeToo took off on twitter, at the urging of celebrity Alyssa Milano (though it is worth noting that Black activist, Tarana Burke truly started this movement back in 2006).

It is perhaps worth offering a bit of context for Title IX in the United States. Best known for its effects in promoting women's sports (particularly in the '80s and '90s), Title IX is a federal civil rights law that states "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance". Under guidance from the Obama administration in 2011, a strong emphasis was placed on schools' obligation to prevent sexual harassment and assault, as sexual harassment and assault is an expansion of "discrimination" in the Title IX clause. The Obama administration stipulated that the standard of proof used to determine the outcome of these cases should be "preponderance of the evidence" (otherwise known as "fifty percent plus a feather"). The Trump administration has since shifted the determination of sexual assault to a "clear and convincing" evidence standard, which is more typically used for civil lawsuits.

It would be irresponsible to sway the audience in any direction, as we all know that judicial systems are imperfect, and have historically benefited certain groups far more than others. Our two characters could each be at a disadvantage for circumstances beyond their control. So as you watch the play (and as you reflect on the play), I ask you to consider the ways in which your mind may have been made up when you arrived at the theatre.

Jenna Rogers  
Director, *Actually*

**SYNOPSIS**

*Actually* takes place on the contemporary campus of Princeton University, and tells the story of two very different freshmen finding their way. Amber comes from a well to do Jewish family. Tom is a young African American man raised in poverty, the first in his family to attend university. The two engage in an awkward meeting in their shared psychology class, followed by a revealing first date at an ice cream shop. Despite Ambers over eagerness and Toms obvious aloofness they end up on a second date where the two, hit it off at a frat party, share some laughs and a few too many drinks. Precisely what happens next is the devastating, complex question at the heart of this riveting new drama. They agree on the drinking, they agree on the attraction, but consent is foggy. Tom and Amber both plead their case in a direct address to the audience, each defending their own very different versions of events. With lyricism and wit, *Actually* investigates gender and race politics, our crippling desire to fit in, and the three sides to every story.

**SETTING**

The Contemporary Campus of Princeton University

**STYLE**

The play unfolds in large part as a pair of overlapping monologues in direct address to the audience.



## CHARACTERS



*Emma Houghton* as Amber

*Amber*

Amber comes from a well to do Jewish family. She is an awkward English major starting in her first year at Princeton University. Despite her fears, Amber uses outward confidence to take every chance she gets, trying hard to live up to her first-year expectations. The façade of confidence that Amber builds masks her internal insecurities about her self-prescribed averageness. Unable to say “no” to her parents and friends, Amber’s character molds to the wills of those around her. Her greatest desire is to be “seen.” Amber’s seems to stem from indecision and her own perceived powerlessness

Amber reveals the significant moments that brought her to where she is including the death of a father who singularly “heard her,” a mother who counsels Amber to avoid carbohydrates if she ever hopes to marry, a consensual but rough early sexual encounter that left her forever silent during intercourse, and excessive drinking and stripping off her tank top on the dance floor the night of the alleged rape. The reflection of these moments leaving her to realize she is surrendering to a system over which she should exert more control.



*Diego Stredel* as Tom

*Tom*

Tom is a young African American man raised in poverty, the first in his family to attend university. Tom presents a complex history: a single mother with cancer, the promiscuous pursuit of sex, love of classical music and the piano, and constant exposure to racist comments downplayed by white people as “micro-aggressions.” A self-proclaimed ladies’ man, he playfully boasts of his nightly conquests with young women and his talent for artfully dodging follow-up texts that might lead to commitment combines sexual swagger with social apprehension

Tom, finds himself changing his personality based on the people he’s around, blending in “like a chameleon.” This creates a lot of uncertainty for Tom as he never feels truly comfortable around others. Tom tiptoes his way through the world aware of who he is and how other people perceive him.

He is devilishly cocky, yet never crude, nor cruel. He is a contradiction of swaggering confidence, kept in constant check by his nagging fears that he doesn’t belong among the “privileged,” and that his talents will always be outweighed by the color of his skin. “In some ways I’ve been on trial my entire life,” he notes at the play’s outset, and thus behaves as if the world is always watching.

**THEMES AND TOPICS**

<b>THEMES</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Consent Sexual Assault Date Rape Homophobia Body Dysmorphia Ethnic mislabeling and Racial Profiling Racial macro-and micro-aggressions The Title IX law and academia's responsibility to uphold it sexual misconduct</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Alcohol consumption on college and university campuses Impact vs. Intent Complexity of relationships Misogyny/ Masculinity Expectations Privilege</p>
<b>POST SHOW DISCUSSION TOPICS</b>	
<p>What is affirmative consent and when/how can it be given?</p> <p>Why might someone not explicitly say no? What are other ways of identifying lack of affirmative consent?</p> <p>Can a person who's incapacitated by drugs or alcohol consent to sex? What if both parties are under the influence?</p> <p>Do power differentials affect your ability to consent? Can you speak to the examples present in the play that would call into question the affirmative consent of either characters?</p> <p>Rape vs. regret. We often hear victims of date rape struggle with guilt because rape culture tells them they're probably just experiencing post-hookup regret. Can you speak to how someone might identify if what they are feeling is regret of a consensual experience, or sexual assault.</p> <p>What if you are unsure about an encounter? What resource are available to someone who may still be working through understanding an encounter.</p> <p>Intent vs/ Impact. In the play it feels that Tom is unconvinced of his capability of committing this act, which leads me to think about impact vs intent. Do you think that potential perpetrators of sexual violence are unaware of their harm? What is the cause of this?</p>	

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## EDUCATOR RESOURCES

What factors should Tom have been aware of in himself to not put himself in this situation? Consider his history, his emotional state (finding out his mother had cancer), a progression of anger and violence.

What of Sunil's actions? Was Sunil taking advantage of Tom's vulnerable emotional state?

The play makes us consider how our previous actions and experiences influence not only our choices, but how those choices might be perceived. Contemplate Amber and Tom's complex backstories and consider how what you know about each of them influences the side you take in this story.

**ADDITIONAL READING**

**TITLE IX**

Source: <https://www.knowyourix.org/college-resources/title-ix/>

Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972:

*No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.*

Essentially, Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in educational institutions that receive **federal funding (the vast majority of schools)**. While Title IX is a very short statute, Supreme Court decisions and guidance from the U.S. Department of Education have given it a broad scope covering sexual harassment and sexual violence. Under Title IX, schools are legally required to respond and remedy hostile educational environments and failure to do so is a violation that means a school could risk losing its federal funding.

To understand the specific requirements of Title IX, schools receiving federal funding (including private K-12 schools and the majority of universities) must look to guidance materials from the U.S. Department of Education. The 2017 Interim Guidance discusses the obligations schools have to address campus sexual violence. While guidance documents are not law, they describe to schools how the Department will review and enforce Title IX complaints.

The Trump administration has made changes to guidelines that were implemented during the Obama administration. These changes shift the determination of sexual assault from "preponderance of the evidence" to a "clear and convincing" evidence standard, which is typically used for civil cases in which serious allegations are made (as opposed to the standard of beyond reasonable doubt in criminal cases). On September 22, 2017, US Secretary of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos rescinded the Obama-era guidelines which had prodded colleges and universities to more aggressively investigate campus sexual assaults.

**Who does Title IX apply to?**

Title IX applies to all educational institutions, both public and private, that receive federal funds. Almost all private colleges and universities must abide by Title IX regulations because they receive federal funding through federal financial aid programs used by their students.

**Who is responsible for enforcing Title IX?**

Institutions are responsible for complying with federal laws. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education enforces Title IX. OCR has the authority to develop policy on the regulations it enforces. In regard to athletics programs, OCR developed an Intercollegiate Athletics Policy Interpretation that was issued December 11, 1979. The 1979 Policy Interpretation remains current policy. On April 2, 1990, OCR issued an athletics policy document called "Title IX Athletics Investigator's Manual" that has assisted athletics departments with enforcement and compliance issues with Title IX. Anyone may file an OCR complaint, and the identity of the party who files the complaint will be kept confidential.

**Why do schools even handle sexual assault?**

"Rape is a crime, and students who report to their schools can also report to the police. However, rape and other forms of gender-based violence can make it hard to show up to class and learn, and federal antidiscrimination law recognizes that. To make sure that all students, regardless of their gender identity and expression, have equal access to education, schools are required to prevent and respond to reports of sexual violence. This isn't a replacement for reporting to the police; it's a parallel option for survivors based in civil rights—rather than criminal—law.



**UNDERSTANDING CONSENT**

The following resources have been compiled to assist you in facilitating a conversation about the events in the play surrounding consent, sexual assault and healthy relationships.

**GROUND RULES**

Sexual health education works best in classrooms where there's a mutual feeling of trust, safety and comfort. Ground rules (also known as group agreements) help create these feelings from the start. Ground rules that work are:

- appropriate for your students' age and developmental stage
- agreed upon by everyone
- well explained so that students are very clear about what's expected
- posted clearly in your classroom
- referred to at the beginning and throughout the sexual health unit

**Make your ground rules list with your class.**

Ground rules work better when students are involved in creating the list. The list doesn't have to be long. You can use 5 or 10 bullet points that are broad enough to cover the key messages you want students to remember. Some examples you can use as a guide are:

- no put downs
- respect each other
- no personal questions
- it's okay to pass
- questions are welcome
- use correct terms
- listen when others are speaking
- classroom discussions are confidential
- speak for yourself
- respect personal boundaries
- we will be sensitive to diversity, and be careful about making careless remarks
- it's okay to have fun

**UNDERSTANDING CONSENT: WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU**

This information will help you learn about the laws in Canada that protect you and your right to make choices about sex and relationships.

**What do I need to know about consent to sexual activity?**

Sexual activity includes kissing, sexual touching, and sexual intercourse (e.g., oral, anal, vaginal).

The choice to have sex, or not, is very personal. Only you can decide what is right for you.

**Consent** means partners agree to the sexual activity and everyone understands what they're agreeing to. Partners must give and get consent every time they have sex.

**Consent is:**

- needed for every sexual activity
- understanding what you're saying yes to
- asking your partner if they understand what they're saying yes to
- checking in with your partner and accepting that either of you can change your mind at any time

People **cannot** give consent if they're:

- high or drunk
- forced, threatened, bribed, intimidated, or offered rewards to do something sexual

Sexual activity without consent is sexual assault.

**What do I need to know about sex and the law in Canada?**

When the time comes to think about having sex, everyone has the right to make their own choices.

Consent laws are to protect you and help you enjoy healthy relationships.

According to the law in Canada, **age of consent** means the **legal age** when a youth can make a decision to have sex or not.

The law says a 16-year-old can consent to sex, **except** if the:

- other person is in a position of authority (e.g., teacher, coach, employer)
- sexual activity is exploitative (e.g., porn, prostitution)

By law, you must be 18 to have sex with a person in a position of authority. Are there exceptions to the law?

***What if I'm 14 or 15 and thinking of having sex?***

According to the law, a 14 or 15-year-old can consent to sex if the partner **is less than 5 years older and not in a position of authority**.

***What if I'm 12 or 13?***

According to the law, a 12 or 13-year-old can consent to sex if the partner is **less than 2 years older and not in a position of authority**.

Children younger than 12 years old **cannot** consent to any type of sexual activity. Having sex with a child younger than 12 is against the law and is sexual abuse

**CONTINUING WITH MORE COMPLEX ISSUES SURROUNDING SEXUAL CONSENT**

One mistake that can be made when discussing consent is that male children get starkly different talks than female children.

For example, males tend to get only enough information about consent to prevent illegal actions related to rape and assault, while women may only get enough information to prevent their own rape and assault.

This form of “disaster prevention” sex education may indeed prevent some legal issues, but it doesn’t help break down our foundational cultural issues about consent or lend toward building enjoyable, equitable relationships.

**When talking to teens, be sure to discuss the following questions in detail:**

- Can a person who’s incapacitated by drugs or alcohol consent to sex?
- Do you have to consent to sex after the first time you have intercourse?
- Do power differentials affect your ability to consent?
- What does safe sex have to do with consent?
- Be certain to cover the differences of verbal and nonverbal consent.

“Teens should know what verbal consent sounds like, as well as how you can ask,” McGuire says. “They should also know what nonverbal consent looks like. They should understand if that their partner is very quiet, or lying still, that that isn’t the enthusiastic consent they’re looking for, and it’s time to communicate before they keep going.”

### **MALE CONSENT AND POWER DIFFERENTIALS**

One overlooked topic that also gets lost in limited talks and “disaster prevention” is male consent. Teenage boys and men can also feel pressured or coerced into situations, despite saying no. They should understand that even if they’re visibly or physically aroused, it’s not consent. Everyone should be taught no means no. It’s also important for all teenagers to understand how they can’t truly offer consent in relationships with power differentials, such as being approached by an older mentor, teacher, or friend. Teaching teens what an equitable sexual relationship will look like can help guide a conversation about power dynamics.

### **THE TAKEAWAY HERE?**

While teens might be learning about issues like birth control, rape, and sexually transmitted infections, they’re lacking knowledge that they both need and crave regarding consent and healthy relationships. This additional knowledge is key to preventing sexual assault and sexual violence.

*Sources:*

<https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/teachers/sexual-health-education/understanding-your-role/get-prepared/ground-rules/>  
<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/understanding-consent-for-sex.aspx>

**COMMUNITY RESOURCES:****CCASA**

<http://www.calgarycasa.com/ccasaservices/crisis-intervention-and-counselling-programs/sexual-assault-response-team/>

Support Hotline: 403-237-5888

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM**

*Interested in bringing experts into your school?*

The Community Outreach Program builds cooperative and mutually supportive relationships with community groups and organizations to raise awareness of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

An effective community responds to the needs of each individual member while addressing sexual abuse and sexual assault issues in an inclusive, proactive manner. The leadership of a healthy agency will foster a safe and supportive atmosphere for individuals affected by the various forms of sexual abuse and sexual assault, create an open and interactive relationship with community groups, and develop a strong, productive partnership with the broader Calgary community.

The Community Outreach Program seeks to build connections, relationships and partnerships with other service providers and diverse communities that are strategic, effective and sustainable in order to understand and meet the unique needs of diverse clients. Building relationships with diverse communities and professional organizations allows the opportunity to address a variety of issues including:

- Accessing Calgary sexual assault and sexual abuse services.
- Providing education, support, and resources to meet unique individual and community needs.
- Enhancing CCASA's ability to address diverse communities and client needs.
- Managing barriers to services.
- Creating potential partnerships and initiatives with others.

The Community Outreach Program also presents to school and community groups raising awareness of child sexual abuse and the importance of education of this issue to parents so to help parents take an active role in talking to their children with accurate information on this issue. CCASA's education program promotes a philosophy of integrating healthy relationships with accurate information on specific sexual abuse and sexual assault issues while presenting this in a non-threatening and non-judgmental approach.

For more information about CCASA's Community Outreach Program or to arrange a presentation for your community, please call 403-237-5888 or email [education@calgarycasa.com](mailto:education@calgarycasa.com).