

# CHARACTERS UNITE

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## ACTIVITY GUIDE

The Power of Storytelling to Promote Tolerance and Respect

**characters** welcome. 

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The Power of Storytelling to Promote Tolerance and Respect

**2**    **An Introduction**

**3-8**    **Characters Unite: What Are the Issues?**

- 3    Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination
- 5    Human and Civil Rights
- 7    Diversity and Civility

**9-11**    **The Power of Storytelling**

- 9    A Tool for Change
- 10    My Personal Story

**12-14**    **In the Classroom**

- 12    National Standards of Education
- 13    Classroom Lessons

**15**    **Sources and Resources**

## Characters Unite: Introduction

“Their story, yours and mine -- it’s what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them.”

- *William Carlos Williams*

### BACKGROUND

**Characters Unite** is a public service campaign committed to combating prejudice and discrimination while promoting greater tolerance and respect. Started by USA Network in 2009, with the support of leading civil and human rights nonprofit organizations, this initiative was created on the simple idea that life is richer and our country is stronger when we see beyond stereotypes and appreciate our individual differences.

Stories have incredible power. They offer a safe vehicle to share challenging experiences. They break down barriers and unite diverse people. They educate and persuade. They inspire respect and understanding.

USA Network has teamed up with The Moth, a renowned nonprofit storytelling organization, to create **The Characters Unite School Storytelling Project**. This program, modeled on the Moth-SHOP, The Moth’s ongoing community education workshop, inspires students across the country to share their own experiences of facing prejudice, hate and discrimination. By telling personal stories, we can raise awareness, bridge our cultural divides and start a larger dialogue about how to address and overcome social injustices.

***You have an important story to tell. We believe the power of your story can help make America’s story one of acceptance and respect.***

### ACTIVITY GUIDE OVERVIEW

This activity guide will introduce you to the civil and human rights challenges affecting our country and to storytelling as a tool for positive change. You will look at prejudice, intolerance and discrimination and the ways they are revealed in society today. You will learn about the strengths and challenges of diversity and civility.

Finally, you will examine the power of storytelling to start a productive dialogue about tolerance and respect. And you will get to tell your own story of prejudice and power, using storytelling guidelines that inspire you to be brave, find your voice and take a stand.

At the end of the guide, we have created classroom activities for you and your teacher to continue exploring these issues and find more ways to tell your story - to your friends, your family, your community and the world.

## Characters Unite: What Are the Issues?

### Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

- *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

## What exactly are intolerance, prejudice and discrimination and how are they revealed in our country? What stories can you tell about these challenges?

Characters Unite is all about combating prejudice, intolerance and discrimination. Look at the following definitions of these words. When these problems exist in society, they prevent us from respecting each person’s unique life story and challenge our most basic human and civil rights.

**Prejudice** is a preconceived judgment or irrational opinion for or against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics or community.

**Intolerance** is the unwillingness to recognize and respect other people’s practices, opinions and beliefs.

**Discrimination** is an action or behavior made in favor of or against someone based on something about them – for example, their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, physical or mental disability, etc. – instead of on their merit.

- **Did You Know:** Americans believe that parents and teachers are most responsible for reducing the amount of prejudice and intolerance in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Does your school spend time addressing these issues? What are you learning from your teachers and parents?
- **Tell Your Story:** Did you ever make a snap judgment about someone and then change your mind once you got to know them better?

## Characters Unite: What Are the Issues?

### Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination

In today’s society, two serious acts of intolerance and prejudice are bullying and hate crimes.

**Bullying/Cyber-bullying** is repeated verbal, physical or emotional harassment intended to inflict harm. Bullying happens in person. Cyber-bullying happens online or electronically.

- **Did You Know:** In a recent study, 77% of American students said they had been bullied.<sup>2</sup> Have you had any conversations with friends and family about the high profile incidents of bullying that have recently occurred in America’s schools?

- **Tell Your Story:** Have you ever found yourself being mean to someone because they were different from you? Or has anyone ever been mean to you? What happened?

**Hate Crimes** are criminal acts - such as arson, vandalism, physical violence, or murder - motivated by bias and hostility towards a person or group of people.

- **Did You Know:** Since 1990, the number of hate crimes reported has consistently ranged around 7,500 or more annually - that’s nearly one every hour of every day.<sup>3</sup> Do you think that hate and anger in our country has increased or decreased in recent years?

- **Tell Your Story:** Have you seen stories of hate crimes in the media and on TV? How do you think this form of prejudice threatens the freedoms and rights of the targeted person or group of people?

#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Do you ever see examples of intolerance in the words and actions of your family, your friends or yourself? What are they and how are they expressed?

- What messages and stories of prejudice and discrimination do you see in the media, in advertisements or in entertainment?

- What have you learned about intolerance, prejudice and discrimination?

## Characters Unite: What Are the Issues?

### Human and Civil Rights

“Basically, we could not have peace, or an atmosphere in which peace could grow, unless we recognized the rights of individual human beings... their importance, their dignity... and agreed that was the basic thing that had to be accepted throughout the world.”

- *Eleanor Roosevelt*

**What are our basic human and civil rights? What are some issues in America affecting these rights? What are your personal stories around each issue?**

**Human Rights** are standards that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings. They are universal; they are held by all people, everywhere – regardless of age, sex, race, religion, nationality, income level or any other status or condition in life. Human rights belong to each and every one of us equally.

**Civil Rights** are rights bestowed upon citizens of a country. They include protection from discrimination and individual rights such as the freedoms of thought and conscience, speech and expression, religion and the press. In the U.S., civil rights are protected by the Constitution and its amendments.

Human and civil rights in America encompass a broad and wide range of topics and issues, including the following list. Take some time to think about each one and talk with your friends about the ways they affect you and your community. People have different opinions about these topics. You do not have to agree, but understanding different perspectives can help lead to greater respect and acceptance.

**Disability Rights** are civil rights for persons with physical and intellectual disabilities, protected, in part, by The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The ADA guarantees equal opportunity in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications.

- **Did You Know:** Approximately one in six Americans — around 50 million people — are living with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> Do you or anyone you know have a physical or intellectual disability? What everyday challenges do these disabilities create?

- **Tell Your Story:** For the most part, physical and intellectual disabilities are beyond the control of the person who experiences them. Have you ever felt singled out and ridiculed for something that is just part of who you are?

## Characters Unite: What Are the Issues?

### Human and Civil Rights

**LGBT Rights** refer to guaranteeing that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are ensured equality and embraced as full members of the American family at home, at work and in every community.

- **Did You Know:** In 2009, nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experienced harassment at school and nearly two-thirds felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation.<sup>5</sup>
- **Tell Your Story:** Do you think that people in your community are accepting of LGBT people and lifestyle? Why or why not?

**Racism** is the systematic practice of denying people access to rights, representation or resources based on racial differences.

- **Did You Know:** Only five percent of Americans say that race relations are no longer a problem in the U.S.<sup>6</sup> Do you agree? What, if any, racial tensions do you see affecting your community?
- **Tell Your Story:** Are you a racial minority or majority in your neighborhood? How does this affect your experience of living in the community?

**Religious Freedom** is a principle from the First Amendment that supports the right of an individual or group to worship – or not to worship – as they choose.

- **Did You Know:** America has the largest number of religious groups than any other nation in the world.<sup>7</sup> Have you had any conversations with your family about the diverse religious beliefs in our country? What have you learned about ways to embrace and understand our differences?
- **Tell Your Story:** Do you and your friends have similar or different religious beliefs? Have you ever gone to a place of worship different from your own?

**Women's Equality** is the idea that women and girls of all ages deserve equal rights and freedoms to men. Important topics include pay equity, discrimination in the workplace, domestic violence and women's health issues.

- **Did You Know:** Women occupy only 16% of the seats in Congress, yet they make up 50.7% of the U.S. population.<sup>8</sup> Do you think the percentage of women in Congress should be more representative of the population percentage? Why or why not?
- **Tell Your Story:** How has being a girl or a boy ever worked to your advantage or disadvantage? What happened?

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Can you give an example of how one of the human or civil rights positively affects your life today? Conversely, do you think there is still progress to be made?
- How do you think we can best unite around challenges involving these rights and find solutions that work for all Americans?
- What have you learned about human and civil rights?

## Characters Unite: What Are the Issues?

### Diversity and Civility

“Today we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation’s promise through civility, courage, compassion and character.”

- *George W. Bush*

How do we come together and talk about the human and civil rights challenges affecting our country? How do we embrace our diversity and respect every story? What are your stories?

**Diversity** means being varied or different. Diversity gives our country an unmatched level of opportunity, energy, excitement and ideas. Conversely, our diversity can also be an obstacle when we search for common ground on difficult issues facing America.

- We have different backgrounds, experience and interests.
- We have diverse needs, hopes, concerns and dreams.
- We have various beliefs and ways of doing things.
- We have diverse viewpoints on what is best for our country.

Our challenge is accepting these differences and allowing them to exist in a safe and inclusive environment. It's about embracing every person we meet and each voice that we hear, even though we don't always agree.

- **Did You Know:** According to a recent poll, only 25% of Americans see our country's growing diversity as a clear-cut strength and advantage.<sup>9</sup> Do you think our growing diversity will strengthen or challenge our ability to respect and embrace differences and find solutions to our country's problems?
- **Tell Your Story:** How are you different from each member of your family? Your friends? What opportunities or challenges do you have from these differences?



Characters Unite:  
What Are the Issues?

Diversity and Civility

**Civility** is the polite and respectful way people can engage in conversation and debate, particularly when discussing challenging issues with diverse opinions and solutions. We need to ask ourselves:

- Do we **really listen** and try to understand?
- Do we **interrupt** if we don't agree?
- Do we **question someone's intelligence** if he or she disagrees?
- Do we **manipulate** the facts in order to be more persuasive?
- Do we shout or **say insulting things** when we get upset?

The way we talk about the issues affecting our country is as important as the issues themselves. Our communication can fuel or defuse intolerance and hate. It can create productive dialogue or angry discourse.

- **Did you know:** Two out of three Americans consider a lack of civility to be a major problem for our country, and 72% think that the problem has become worse in recent years.<sup>10</sup> Have you seen examples of uncivil conduct – in your school, in media or entertainment, on the roads or in professional sports? What responsibility do American citizens have to be civil towards one another?
- **Tell Your Story:** How do you and your family discuss challenging issues? Do you always hold the same beliefs?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How do you state an opinion without insulting someone who disagrees? Do you think it is possible to be persuasive if you are not civil? Why or why not?
- How do you see our diversity and civility working together to solve our nation's problems?
- What have you learned about diversity and civility?

Characters Unite:  
The Power of  
Storytelling

A Tool for Change

“Stories have power. They  
delight, enchant, touch,  
teach, recall, inspire,  
motivate, challenge.  
They help us understand.”

- *Janet Litherland*

What is storytelling? Why is your personal story so important to tell? How is it a tool to shed light on issues of prejudice and intolerance and start making progress towards solving America's problems?

**Storytelling** is an oral tradition that has been around since the beginning of time. It is the oldest form of communication. Every society has stories; they help shape values and morals, pass on traditions, provide wisdom, spread knowledge and build a diverse nation.

**Personal Storytelling**, or narratives, are autobiographical stories that come from real life experiences with a clear point of view and purpose. These stories usually have special meaning or significance in your life. They express who you are, what you want and what you believe.

Storytelling is a powerful tool to help us discuss the issues affecting our country today. When you tell your personal story of facing prejudice, hate and discrimination, you share a difficult life experience for a very important purpose - to tell the truth, to encourage change, to take a stand, to imagine a new vision for America. Your story has the power to:

- **Unite people in mutual understanding.** The stories may be different, but the message is the same. Intolerance is never acceptable.
- **Shift perspectives and question individual views and filters.** Your story educates, persuades and allows others to see things from your distinct point of view.
- **Encourage respect and celebrate diversity.** It enables people to learn about your unique background, special family traditions, different opinions or beliefs.
- **Inspire critical thinking and problem solving.** Your story sheds light on a challenging situation that asks for a new way of thinking to achieve greater acceptance in the future.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What types of stories do you like to tell? Why do you tell them? How does it strengthen and build your relationship with the people you tell?
- Can you think of a story you have told that helped change someone's thoughts, opinions or actions for the better?
- What have you learned about personal storytelling as a tool for change?

## Characters Unite: The Power of Storytelling

### My Personal Story

“There is no agony like  
bearing an untold story  
inside of you.”

- *Maya Angelou*

### What is your personal story of facing prejudice and discrimination? What are guidelines for creating and telling it?

As part of the Characters Unite campaign, USA Network is partnering with The Moth, the highly acclaimed nonprofit organization based in New York City, dedicated to the art and craft of storytelling.

**The Moth** has a unique history of helping people develop and create personal stories about important things in their world. These true stories are always simple, old-fashioned storytelling at its best, told live on stage and without notes. The Moth has presented over three thousand stories in events across the country. People from all walks of life including Moby, Ethan Hawke, Darryl “DMC” McDaniels, a voodoo priestess, a hot-dog-eating champion, a professional gambler, a Nobel Laureate and an astronaut have told their stories.

**It’s now your turn to craft your own true story.** To fit with Characters Unite, the theme for your story is: “A More Perfect Union: Stories of Prejudice and Power.” Your story should highlight a real experience with dealing with intolerance, prejudice or discrimination, no matter whether you were able to fix or change the situation.

#### GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Your story should be no more than 5 minutes.
- The Moth is for true stories. There won’t be a fact-checker there, and the FBI probably won’t dig into your files to verify the names, dates and places. But please remember, The Moth is not for fiction stories.
- The Moth is not a place for readings; it is a place for tellings. No notes, papers, or cheat sheets allowed.
- Stories should have a beginning, middle and end, as well as conflict and resolution. Start in the action and set up the stakes. Your first and last lines should be clear in your head.
- If your story includes people in your class or school, you can change the names if you feel more comfortable.

#### MINING FOR A “STORY SEED” - STORY IDEA STARTERS:

Look back at the “What Are the Issues?” section. Read over the “Tell Your Story” questions and find one that inspires a story from your life. Also, see if these questions stir up any ideas:

- Have you ever felt like a fish out of water, like you didn’t belong?
- Have you ever stood up for someone who is different from you or had someone stand up for you?
- Were you born in this country? If not, what was it like coming here?
- Did you ever have a friend people didn’t want you to have? Or did you ever reject a friend because you were afraid of what other people would say?

These “story seeds” offer ideas for your personal story of prejudice and power. Pick the idea that jumps out and says, “Tell me!” There is no right or wrong. There is only the truth. Find your voice. Be brave. Share the story that speaks to you.

#### DEVELOPING THE STORY\* - STORY STRUCTURE BASICS:

Once you have decided on your story, here are some guidelines to follow:

- **What Happens in the Story?:** When you tell your personal story, you are the main character. What you want and how you get it make up the action or plot of the story.
- **What Does the Story Mean to You?:** Ask yourself why you are telling this particular story. What did you learn from this experience? How did it change you? What is the message of your story?
- **Get Into Details:** Be specific as you create your story. Use strong images that stir the imagination. “It was a nice day outside” doesn’t tell much. “It was a bright September day, and it was finally cooling down after a boiling hot summer,” tells a lot.

• **Tell On Yourself:** The best stories are when you are brave enough to show your “boo-boos.” Share your problems and flaws. We all have them, and sharing them makes us feel connected.

• **Complications:** Stories are exciting when the main character expects one reaction, and the world gives them another. What twists and turns do you come up against in your story? For example, imagine a person takes an action expecting a predictable result, such as “I went to the cafeteria to get lunch.” What makes it a story is when you get an unpredictable result. “And standing in line was my best friend from summer camp who lives in another state!”

• **The Story is One Thing, Life is Another:** Life is long, and your story is short. It’s ok to leave out details. What you leave out is as important as what you leave in. All details and events should lead to your strong ending!

• **Know your Beginning and End.** Know your very first line so you have a strong start, and have a clear last line. Stick the ending like a champion gymnast. Be clear about how things turned out, and how you changed in the process.

#### PRESENTING YOUR STORY\*:

After you’ve decided on your story and worked out the details, practice, practice, practice! Tell your story in small groups in class and/or practice at home in front of friends or family. Once you’re ready, here’s what you need to know to present your story to your class. When speaking:

- Stand in one place, with your arms loose at your sides. Move and gesture when you talk, but stay in the same spot.
- Make eye contact with the audience, or, if that’s too scary, look directly at an object in the back of the room
- Remember to breathe when you talk!
- Start with your first line, end with your last line. Don’t meander or trail off.
- Have fun!!!! The story is your own, so tell it from your heart!

\* ©MothSHOP

Characters Unite:  
In the Classroom

National Standards  
of Education

The following classroom lessons fulfill National Standards of Education in History, English Language Arts and Theater, as informed by basic standards of education in Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education, 4th Edition, written by John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano (2004). This definitive compilation was published by Mid-Continent Regional Education Laboratory, Inc. (McREL) and the Association for Supervision and Curricular Development (ASCD) after a systematic collection, review and analysis of noteworthy national and state curricular documents in all subjects.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION, GRADES 9-12

Summary of Standards for History

- 1. Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns
- 2. Understands the historical perspective

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Writing

- 1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- 2. Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing
- 3. Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
- 4. Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Reading

- 5. Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process
- 6. Reads a variety of literary texts
- 7. Reads a variety of informational texts

Listening and Speaking

- 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Viewing

- 9. Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

Media

- 10. Understands the characteristics and components of the media

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS FOR THEATER ARTS

- 1. Demonstrates competence in writing scripts
- 2. Uses acting skills
- 3. Designs and produces informal and formal productions
- 4. Directs scenes and productions
- 5. Understands how informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning
- 6. Understands the context in which theatre, film, television, and electronic media are performed today as well as in the past

Characters Unite:  
In the Classroom

Classroom Lessons

“Don’t let your inability to  
do everything stop you from  
doing something.”

- *Newark, NJ Mayor Cory Booker*

LESSON 1

Describe the experience of telling your story of “prejudice and power.” Where did you tell it and to whom? How did it make you feel, before, during and after? What reactions did you receive? What were the benefits of telling your personal story live? How would your story have changed if, for example, you told it through instant messages or e-mail sent back and forth between two characters? Write a short essay, based on your experience and these questions, explaining why you think storytelling is so powerful and how it can be used to bring people together, build understanding and create solutions to the issues affecting America today.

LESSON 2

Identify a racial, cultural, ethnic or religious conflict that is prevalent in your community. Interview someone in class about this topic and write down his or her thoughts. Be specific, using this person’s words and language. Present these findings to your class, as if the opinions on this issue are yours. Afterwards, explore your thoughts: What are your reactions to telling another person’s story? How did it make you feel? Does it matter if you agree or not? Did speaking in another person’s voice change your opinions on the issue? What have you learned about the importance of telling your own story while understanding and respecting another person’s opinion and viewpoint?

LESSON 3

Pick a famous American who helped advance a human or civil rights issue in this country within the past 60 years. Examples include Martin Luther King, Jr., Betty Friedan and Harvey Milk. Research their life story, and write a biography, emphasizing what they did to help this issue. Answer the following questions: How did things change for the better because of them? Were they met with discrimination and intolerance for taking a stand? What do you think might have happened if they had not been brave enough to tell their story? What things about this person do you admire? How are you similar or different? What’s one thing you could do today to positively affect this issue?

LESSON 4

The number of people using the Internet to publish intolerant messages and hate speech is greater than ever. Spend some time online, finding examples of this on websites, chat sites, articles or blogs. Do you think there should be restrictions on hate speech on the web? Can this help prevent a growth of intolerance in our country? Or, is this a form of censorship and against our First Amendment right? How do we balance the two basic human rights of being free to say what we want and being free from hate speech targeted against us? Are some rights more important than others in certain situations? Write an argument for or against putting restrictions on the web, answering these questions.



## LESSON 5

Many studies point to significant gaps among racial and ethnic groups in America in the areas of health, education, jobs, economic status and criminal justice. Pick one of these topics to study, find some of this research and examine the issue thoroughly, using at least three references. Write a report, outlining your findings with statistics and facts. Answer the following questions: What differences do you find between the racial and ethnic classes? How do these discrepancies affect the idea of equal rights and freedoms for all Americans, as protected by our civil rights? How do they change our hopes of creating “a more perfect union?”

## LESSON 6

Pick a story that is making headlines in the news about which people have two diverse viewpoints. Research this topic with a classmate and learn all you can about both sides of the argument. Prepare a debate in class where you each present one side with a possible solution to the problem. Set rules of conduct in advance with your teacher. After the debate, consider these questions: What did you learn from this experience? How did it feel to have someone opposing your views? What steps did you take to ensure respect and civility when making your argument?

## LESSON 7

Research the opposition that obstructed the progress of the Women’s Suffrage Movement in its formative years. What rights were denied women? What forms of intolerance and discrimination existed that made them “second class citizens”? What struggles did they endure in order to receive equal rights under the law? Now, research the movement that has been fighting for equal rights for LGBT people since 1969. Answer the same questions. What similarities and differences do you see between these two movements? What forms of intolerance do you still see today? What can be learned from both movements that inspire greater understanding and acceptance? Write up your findings and report them to your class.

## LESSON 8

Ask your parents (or a member of your family who is older than you are) about one or more of the following topics: a time they were a victim of bullying, an experience where they felt like they did not belong or a situation where they were mean to someone who was different. What happened? How did they deal with the situation? How are things different in your world today with this issue? How are they the same? Discuss ways you might cope with similar situations in your own life.

## LESSON 9

Research the different types of intellectual and physical disabilities that people have and the specific life challenges they can present. Create a character with one of these disabilities and imagine what it is like to be this person living in America today. How is their day-to-day existence different from your own? What is it like to be at school each day? Are there certain activities they have trouble doing? What sort of prejudice do you think they encounter? Be as detailed as possible. Now, write a theatrical scene, depicting a “normal” everyday activity in this person’s life. Use at least two other characters in your scene. Perform the scene for your class, using other classmates, with you in the lead role.

## LESSON 10

Personal storytelling expresses who you are and what you believe. For the majority of Americans, these ideas are strongly influenced by their religion. Get together with 4-5 of your good friends. Talk about what their religious beliefs, or lack of them, mean to them. What is the history and fundamental ideas of their faith? How did they come to believe what they do? Why is it important to them? How does it shape their unique personal story? Give each person time to share. Explore how diverse thoughts, behavior and action may be a direct result of these beliefs. Discuss ways to be open-minded and accepting of all religious beliefs and why this is important when celebrating diversity in America.

# Characters Unite: Sources and Resources

## ABOUT THE MOTH

The Moth is a nonprofit storytelling organization founded in 1997 by poet/novelist George Dawes Green to recreate in New York the feeling of sultry summer evenings on his native St. Simon’s Island, Georgia, where he and a small circle of friends would gather to spin spellbinding tales on his friend Wanda’s porch. Word of these captivating story nights in George’s living room quickly spread, and The Moth moved to bigger venues in New York and in cities around the country. Today, The Moth conducts six ongoing programs and has presented more than three thousand stories told live on stage, and without notes, from people of all walks of life, including Malcolm Gladwell, Ethan Hawke, Annie Proulx, Darryl “DMC” McDaniels, Sam Shepard, an exonerated prisoner, a Nobel Laureate and an astronaut. The Moth has been called “New York’s hottest and hippest literary ticket” by *The Wall Street Journal* and “Best Regularly Held Literary Event” by the *Village Voice*. The Moth’s free, weekly story podcast is downloaded more than one million times each month on iTunes and The Moth Radio Hour is played in more than 200 radio markets nationwide. For more information: [www.themoth.org](http://www.themoth.org).

## ABOUT CHARACTERS UNITE

Characters Unite, USA Network’s community affairs program, was created in January 2009 to address the social injustices and cultural divides still prevalent in our society. Inspired by USA Network’s iconic “Characters Welcome” brand and with the support of leading national nonprofit organizations, the ongoing campaign is dedicated to supporting activities and messaging that combat prejudice and intolerance while promoting understanding and acceptance – on air, online, and in communities across the country. For more information: [www.charactersunite.com](http://www.charactersunite.com)

## ABOUT USA NETWORK

USA Network is the #1 network in all of basic cable and is seen in over 102 million U.S. homes. A division of NBC Universal, USA is the cable television leader in original series and home to the best in blockbuster theatrical films, acquired television series and entertainment events. The award-winning USA website is located at [www.usanetwork.com](http://www.usanetwork.com).

USA Network is a program service of NBC Universal Cable, a division of NBC Universal, one of the world’s leading media and entertainment companies in the development, production, and marketing of entertainment, news and information to a global audience.

Sources

1. “United or Divided” National Poll 2009, conducted for USA Network by Hart Research Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R)

2. [www.How-To-Stop-Bullying.com](http://www.How-To-Stop-Bullying.com)

3. FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, “Hate Crime Statistics 2008”

4. American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

5. GLSEN National School Climate Survey 2009

6. Characters Unite National Poll 2009

7. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

8. The White House Project

9. “United or Divided” National Poll, 2009

10. 2010 Weber Shandwick American Civility Poll

Resources

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Maguire, J. The Power of Personal Storytelling: Spinning Tales to Connect to Others. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.

McKee, R. (2010) Story Seminar. a practical course presenting new perspectives on the craft of storytelling. [www.mckeestory.com](http://www.mckeestory.com).

This activity guide is written by Lesley Mazzotta, a producer and writer with over fifteen years experience conceiving and implementing Broadway themed experiences, international arts programs, theater arts curriculum and creative corporate campaigns. For six years, she served as Producing Director of Camp Broadway, an award winning children’s theater company. In 2007, Lesley helped create After The Storm, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides financial aid, managerial support and event programming to community centers in New Orleans that are working with children and the arts. Lesley is currently a consultant for The Broadway Workshop and has been a producer of numerous productions on and off Broadway and in London.

**characters** welcome. 

For more information go to [charactersunite.com](http://charactersunite.com)