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EDITOR'S NOTE: PHOTO OF YOUR AREA SCHOOL WITH TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD CAST AT END

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## **Broadway Visits the Beltway for Theatre in Our Schools Month Finale**

*To Kill a Mockingbird* Treats Area Thespians to a Preview

(CINCINNATI) April 2, 2019—The cast of the Broadway production of *To Kill a Mockingbird* presented 400 middle and high school students with a special performance at the Library of Congress on Tuesday in support of Theatre in Our Schools Month, which is held annually in March. The students, from schools in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, are members of the International Thespian Society, the honor society for drama students. Students from New Kent High School, Thespian Troupe 7644, New Kent, Virginia were there.

The group was welcomed by Carla Hayden, the Librarian of Congress, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi, U.S. House of Representatives.

*To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee's enduring story of racial injustice and childhood innocence, is one of America's most popular works of fiction. The entire team of the Broadway production, based on Lee's classic, jumped at the opportunity to present scenes from the play in the nation's Capital in partnership with the Educational Theatre Association to celebrate [Theatre in Our Schools Month \(TIOS\)](#).

The [grassroots TIOS campaign](#) raises public awareness of the impact of theatre education and draws attention to the need for more student access to quality programs that teach collaboration, communication, critical thinking and other important life and career skills. During TIOS, thousands of students and theatre educators have taken that message to their communities, school boards, and elected officials, including today in Washington, D.C.

In attendance at the event were playwright Aaron Sorkin, director Bartlett Sher, and the stars of the current Broadway production: Jeff Daniels, Celia Keenan-Bolger, Gideon Glick, Will Pullen, Gbenga Akinnagbe, and LaTanya Richardson Jackson Neal Huff, and Dakin Matthews.

To dramatize the importance of TIOS, the *To Kill a Mockingbird* production awarded [Thespian DemocracyWorks](#) essay winner [Brannon Evans](#) a \$10,000 college scholarship, made possible through a Grant to the [Educational Theatre Foundation](#). Evans is a member of Thespian Troupe 5483 at Millard West High School in Omaha, Nebraska. She and her teacher, Brooke Phillips, were present to accept the scholarship from Aaron Sorkin and Julie Cohen Theobald, President, Educational Theatre Foundation.

Evans was asked to read her essay to the gathering of elected officials, friends of theatre, cast and the production team. In response to her reading, in addition to enthusiastic applause, Evans was then invited from Sher and Sorkin to step in and read the next day for a cast member who could not make the trip. She handled the opportunity with great aplomb, earning more applause the audience as well as the cast.

In her winning essay, Evans discusses how she learned firsthand about the themes of *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a member of her high school production, and how that experience inspired her. She writes of struggling with race and self-identity, and discovering how theatre “empowers those of us who may feel marginalized by who we naturally are.” She adds, “I found almost everyone cast had felt out of place at some point, and we’re all more alike than we had thought. People I hadn’t expected to discussed being bullied because of their skin, background, sexual orientation, or any and everything that made them different yet unique. Theatre is what brought us together, and that feeling is something everyone should have the opportunity to experience.”

Theobald said, “This special event, held in our nation’s repository of history, demonstrates that telling an important story through theatre can be transformative for everyone who participates, whether they are backstage, on stage, or in the audience.”

The preview coincided with the announcement of a national tour of the show which will begin in Washington, D C. in August, 2020.

Attendees included International Thespian Society troupes and their teachers from:

District of Columbia: KIPP DC College Preparatory, Thespian Troupe 8707; McKinley Tech, Thespian Troupe 8836

Maryland: Atholton High School, Thespian Troupe 1739; Bullis School, Thespian Troupe 3707; Dulaney High School, Thespian Troupe 25; Friends Meeting School, Thespian Troupe 8770; Jemicy School, Thespian Troupe 8269; Linganore High School, Thespian Troupe 1872; Thomas S Wootton High School, Thespian Troupe 335

Virginia: Christiansburg High School, Thespian Troupe 3070; New Kent High School, Thespian Troupe 7644; Rock Ridge High School, Thespian Troupe 8104; Tabb High School, Thespian Troupe 1585; Turner Ashby High School, Thespian Troupe 6288

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[www.schooltheatre.org/programs/tios](http://www.schooltheatre.org/programs/tios), [www.educationaltheatrefoundation.org](http://www.educationaltheatrefoundation.org).

Photo credit: Amanda Reynolds/Plume Photography

Cast of *To Kill A Mockingbird* with student and teacher from New Kent High School, Thespian Troupe 7644, New Kent, Virginia, who attended the invitation-only reading on April 2 in honor of Theatre in Our Schools month.

FROM LEFT: Aaron Sorkin, Will Pullen, Troupe Director Victoria Kesling Council, Gideon Glick, Celia Keenan-Bolger, Jeff Daniels, Thespian William Samuel Bowery III, Dakin Matthews, LaTanya Richardson Jackson, Gbenga Akinnagbe, Neal Huff.

