

## SYNOPSIS OF O BEAUTIFUL

Bullying, gun control and abortion rights are just a few issues that get a mention in this powerful play written by Theresa Rebeck. What sets this one apart from other political plays is that some of the founding fathers themselves and other historic figures stop by to weigh in on some of today's hottest topics.

In this New York area suburban community, housewives gather for bake sales and share recipes, husbands collect guns and everyone watches "The **Simon West** Show," a sort of **Glenn Beck**-type who preaches about protecting the right to bear arms in the face of a government that he sees as an enemy.

Ty Janaleris, an African-American teacher in the overwhelmingly white school, upsets parents and Principal Loomis when he supplements the approved text book with handouts to teach the kids high school history. Even a handout containing the thoughts of **Thomas Jefferson** is suspect because it hasn't been approved.

What the parents don't know is that their ideal world already doesn't exist for their kids. Alice Fletcher is pregnant following a date rape by Luke Simpson who abandons her for new girlfriend Gwen Turner. Unable to turn to parents who won't understand her desire for an abortion, she finds a friend in Jesus.

Meanwhile, Alice is so caught up in her own problems, she isn't able to help classmate Lennie Ryan who is being bullied by the students. Lennie had participated in the school's talent show where he flubbed the words to "O Beautiful." Ever since, he has been taunted and tortured by the other kids who post horrible things about him on the internet, barrage him with hateful text messages and beat him up.

When tragedy ensues, Alice finally speaks up, but the parents of the kids involved in the bullying turn on her. After all, she called Thomas Jefferson a rapist after reading one of the unapproved handouts and lied about having an abortion. Janaleris tries to help – against the advice of his wise sister, Sondra – who warns him that he could lose his job.

Meanwhile, the themes of parental rights vs. women's rights, the Second Amendment and the intent of the Constitution, who should control the classroom curriculum and the place of religion in all of that, play out against the television program and various guests including Patrick Henry, Jefferson, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin. Also dropping by during the action are Joan of Arc and St. Paul.