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We still deal with racism and anti-Semitism in our culture today, but it doesn’t always look the same as it did fifty years ago. What does discrimination look like today? How has it changed? How has it stayed the same? What can you do in your school and your community when you are confronted with racism or discrimination?
Alfred Uhry was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1936 to a middle class Jewish family. Uhry started his theatrical career with relatively little success as a lyricist, collaborating on several small musicals such as America’s Sweetheart and Here’s Where I Belong. When those projects did not bring the level of success Uhry had hoped for, he decided to go for it and write his own play.

To write that play, Uhry looked inside himself and decided to explore his own lived experiences as a Jewish man growing up in twentieth century Atlanta. His next two plays, Driving Miss Daisy and The Last Night of Ballyhoo (about prejudices within the Jewish community in Atlanta), and the subsequent musical Parade (which dramatized the case of Leo Frank, a Georgia Jew who was wrongly convicted of murder and hung by a lynch mob) came to be collectively known as “The Atlanta Trilogy.” The shows were major successes, all three receiving accolades from the Pulitzer Prize to the Tony Awards® and even to the Academy Awards for the film adaptation of Daisy.

Today, at 77 years old, Uhry continues writing plays and screenplays, including the movie Mystic Pizza and the documentary From Swastika to Jim Crow.
When Driving Miss Daisy premiered in New York to overwhelmingly positive reviews, an extended run, and eventually a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, no one was more surprised than playwright Alfred Uhry himself.

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**Driving Miss Daisy**

*1987*
- Daisy is born
*1988*
- Hoke is born
*1998*
- Boolie is born
*2023*
- Daisy hires Idella
*1948*
- Boolie hires Hoke
*1971*
- Daisy begins showing signs of dementia and is moved to a rest home, Hoke retires
*1973*
- Daisy passes away
*1987*
- Frank Uhry writes Driving Miss Daisy

**U.S. History**

1861-1865 The U.S. Civil War
1865 The 13th Amendment (banning slavery) is adopted by the U.S. government
1914-1918 World War I
1930s The Great Depression
1939-1945 World War II
1954 Brown v. Board of Education Decision
1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his famous “I have a dream” speech
1965 Voting Rights Act is passed into law
1966 Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated

**Georgia History**

1872 Georgia state legislature passes laws to segregate schools and other public spaces, bans interracial marriage
1895 Booker T. Washington delivers his Atlanta Compromise speech
1906 Atlanta Race Riot of 1906
1915 Leo Frank is kidnapped and lynched by a mob
1958 The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation Temple is bombed
1986 The State of Georgia posthumously pardons Leo Frank

**Driving Miss Daisy**

*1987*
- Daisy is a 72-year-old Jewish widow and former school teacher. After getting into a car accident while backing out of her garage, Daisy’s son decides she is too old to drive and insists on hiring a driver for his independent, stubborn, and, at times, bossy mother.

**U.S. History, Georgia History, and Driving Miss Daisy**

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**The Atlanta Compromise**

After the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves, the United States still had a long way to go before it was ready to start talking about racial equality. While African Americans could no longer legally be bought, sold, and owned as property, they were not treated as full and equal citizens. Some black leaders, such as Booker T. Washington, were actually in favor of segregation. In 1895 in Atlanta, Washington delivered a speech to this effect, asking white leaders to help blacks improve their social and economic standing in society, but promising that they did not desire full integration or social equality. The speech was very well-received by white leaders, but was very controversial in the African-American community.

**The Atlanta Race Riot of 1906**

At the turn of the century, many white people were scared of what would happen if black people advanced in society, wanting instead to “keep them in their place.” In September 1906, a newspaper published a “report” of four separate attacks on white Atlanta women by black men, but no one was physically harmed. No one has ever been convicted for the bombing. The Temple had been a center for civil rights advocacy, and continued to strengthen in its activism afterward.

**The Temple Bombing**

A group of white supremacists bombed The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation Temple, one of the largest in Atlanta, in 1958. The explosion caused severe damage to the building, but no one was physically harmed. No one has ever been convicted for the bombing. The Temple had been a center for civil rights advocacy, and continued to strengthen in its activism afterward.
The first installment of what would eventually be playwright Alfred Uhry’s Atlanta Trilogy, Driving Miss Daisy, premiered in 1987. Uhry’s surprise hit play was, to him, a deeply personal and highly autobiographical portrait of the relationship between his elderly Jewish grandmother and her black chauffeur. But this simple story of an unlikely friendship quickly revealed itself to be so much more.

Spanning 25 years, from 1948 to 1973, the play unfolds during one of the most tumultuous periods of our nation’s history. Daisy and Hoke’s relationship develops in a racially segregated Atlanta and a politically divided United States. As the nation undergoes the birth and the growing pains of the Civil Rights Movement, the characters of Driving Miss Daisy do their best to navigate their personal relationships against the ever-changing societal backdrop of the 1950s and 60s. In their lifetimes, characters Daisy and Hoke would have experienced a remarkable amount of history; their friendship, though, may be the most remarkable of all.

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