

# **“MEMPHIS” IS A MUST SEE**

*Catholic League director of communications Jeff Field recently had the opportunity to see the Broadway show “Memphis.” Unlike most plays these days, this is one which most Christians will find entertaining and inspiring.*

Opening to critical acclaim in October of 2009, the Broadway musical “Memphis” is a hit that should not be missed. Set in the segregated southern city of Memphis in the 1950s, the musical is more than a show full of catchy tunes and a wonderful cast; it is a lesson on how to live our lives true to our Christian values and a demonstration of the importance of God.

The story revolves around a young white disc-jockey named Huey and a black lounge singer named Felicia. When Huey first heard Felicia sing, he was moved and knew that her voice could be one to help bring unity to an area divided by race. Once Huey began playing Felicia’s music on the radio, young white children were buying rhythm and blues records at break-neck speed. All this much to the chagrin of their parents and Huey’s mother, who becomes the most transformed character over the course of the show.

A waitress at the local diner, Huey’s mother tells her son that she can’t play that “blasphemy” at the restaurant because “good Christians” frequently dine there; the “blasphemy,” of course, was black music. Later in the show, her eyes are open following a visit to a black Baptist church. She says that throughout her life she was “taught to hate them, was taught to denigrate them” and that blacks were “lesser in the good Lord’s eyes.” But following her visit to the church and hearing the pastor preach the gospel, she was through buying into the lies. Her transformation shows the value of listening to the voice of God and putting it into practice.

Another moving moment is when Gator, a black bartender who hasn't spoken a word since watching his father being lynched, intervened for Huey after Felicia's brother, Delray, found out that Huey and Felicia had been mugged for being together. Delray had warned Huey that this would happen if he and Felicia were seen together. Before an altercation ensues, Gator begs Delray to stop, saying his first words in years. His song, "Say a Prayer," asks God to change the way the world is around them. He recognizes Delray's anger but implores forgiveness for Huey in one of the most soul-stirring moments of the whole show.

A tale of redemption, faith, forgiveness and hope, it is no wonder why "Memphis" won the Tony Award for Best Musical in 2010. The show will have you thinking, laughing and tapping your feet. When looking for a Broadway hit, that is sure not to disappoint, look no further than "Memphis."