

As I sit here writing my director's notes, I am reminded of the moment I reached out to Doug and asked him about *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*. Within a few moments, Doug got back to me and – the Polkadot adventure began! As I waited to begin the process of creating Squareville, I felt like I was carrying around an amazing present I knew all about, but was not allowed to open. I found myself frequently listening to the music, joyfully blasting the songs in my head. I fell in love with the show's message of hope, love, and acceptance. It is a show that really hits home for me. It is a show where it is easy to identify with all of the characters. As the lyrics and texts sank in, I remembered my own childhood, in particular my grade school years. I was and always will be the little boy who liked something different than the other little boys. But while I had been the one bullied, I also had said mean and hateful things to others because I was hurting. We can find ourselves in Lily, Sky, and Penelope.

An important aspect of the show we cannot – and should not – ignore is the historical context. There was a time in our country where skin color was a deciding factor in an assessment of a person's character, place, and worth. This show celebrates those groundbreaking individuals who were the very first to step over those unfair, discriminatory boundaries. It reminds us that while segregation is no longer legal, discrimination and prejudice are still prevalent. The characters demand we “go challenge our world” the way Linda Brown, Ruby Bridges, and Little Rock 9 challenged their world – simply by walking in the door of a school.

Besides identifying with the bully and the bullied, my empathy with the teacher guided my interpretation of the show. The teacher is entrusted with shaping the minds of her students, who in turn will become the “next generation of thought”. As we grow up, we are taught a way, a path to go. Is it the right path? That's for you to decide as you grow. We as children and adults stick to this path we were taught until we are faced with a moment that challenges it. It is in this moment we choose whether to agree with the things we were taught. Or we can choose to go against the grain, form your own opinion, and move forward with a new way of thinking. Now, as an adult in a teaching position, I strive to teach acceptance and love, not only of others but within yourself as well. We are ALL different in some way “shape” or form. So embrace your cool!

I also need to take a moment and thank my incredible cast and creative team. This show has been a passion project for me and you have all helped this vision come to life so beautifully. I am constantly learning from all of you. I thank each and every one of you for your time and your talents, and for being the beautiful human beings that you all are.

Enjoy the show!

Chad Parsons