

“The Five Impediments”

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LOGLINE

Five ardent women must battle history, society and each other to keep their stories from being jettisoned wholesale.

SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

It is the middle of the 21st century, and Annabel, the female African-American mayor of a metropolitan city is being put through the ringer by a local television news reporter and the Chief of Police. At a press conference following yet another police shooting of an unarmed citizen, the mayor gave a harsh reprimand to the officers involved. The news reporter misquotes her on television, painting her to be a ruthless tyrant, and the Chief of Police makes reference to her race, accusing her of using the unfortunate incident for a personal vendetta. Annabel watches the events unfold on television while on the phone with her lawyer. The news reports breaks to the discovery of a photo of Annabel, age 20, wearing a “Fuck the Police” t-shirt, and uses this photo to further their claim that the mayor is biased. She finishes the call with her lawyer in a rage, demanding that the Chief of Police be fired and the news reporter be sanctioned. She vows to get to the bottom of the t-shirt photo. After stewing for a few moments, Annabel calls her ex-wife, whom she suspects of having leaked the photo to the press. She threatens her ex-wife with legal action.

In 2010, an eight-year-old Mexican-American girl named Annie gives a presentation for her school’s Cultural Day event. She is twice interrupted by her classmate, Danny Shipley, as she attempts to describe the traditions and trials of her people. Her presentation includes childhood a story about a trip to the mall that resulted in young Annie’s first experience with overt racism. Neither the mall experience nor her impish classmate leave feisty, young Annie deterred.

Seventeen-year-old Ana has lost none of her childish spunk and, unfortunately, almost none of her naïveté. Ana submitted a drawing of Lady Trieu for her art class final project – a nod to both 2019’s “The Watchmen,” and her own Vietnamese heritage. Bristled by her art teacher’s refusal to allow a drawing that depicts weapons, Ana decides to rebel by not submitting a final project at all. Instead, she decides to paint a mural of Lady Trieu during one of her tagging sessions with her best friend, Tommy. Fuming, she explains to Tommy why she won’t allow her teacher to prevent her from painting whatever she wants to paint. She lays out her plans for the future, and promises to emerge victorious. A patrolling police car spots them and chases Tommy and Ana off before she can finish the mural.

Twenty-year-old Hannah organises an impromptu rally to protest the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. She is concerned for her family members caught behind enemy lines in Afghanistan, and urges her university comrades to speak out for the less fortunate. The campus police arrive to dismantle the protest and Hannah is handcuffed. While awaiting her fate, Hannah recounts the terrible tragedy that befell her and Tommy that day two years ago when the police chased them away from the mural.

It is some years later and Anah has just won her bid for city council member. While she ran on a platform of transparency, diversity and inclusion, her brief experience in the world of politics – coupled with her personal experience of having been silenced and even endangered for trying to tell her story – has convinced her that the only way to survive is to play the game. After considering offering different versions of her personal and cultural narrative, Anah capitulates and, with the help of her former and future selves, tells the only story she knows will survive the volatile market of cultural narrative.