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**FIRST STAGE CHILDREN'S THEATER ANNOUNCES  
"WITNESS THE CHANGE" BLOG CONTEST  
TO COINCIDE WITH JANUARY PRODUCTION**

MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin (December 12, 2008) – First Stage Children's Theater will hold a blog contest to coincide with their presentation of WITNESS, based on the book by Karen Hesse, scheduled to open January 23, 2009. The contest is open to the public, with a deadline for entries set for January 11, 2009.

To enter the contest, young people 18 years of age and under are asked to "Describe a moment in your life when you witnessed something that you wanted to change, and found yourself no longer able to bear witness to what was happening, but took a risk and stepped in to make the change happen. How did you feel?"

Participants may submit responses by posting a comment to the blog at [www.witnessthechange.blogspot.com](http://www.witnessthechange.blogspot.com) by January 11, 2009. Entries will be reviewed by First Stage Children's Theater, and will announce the winners on the opening night of WITNESS, January 23, 2009.

Prizes to include season tickets to First Stage Children's Theater's 2009-2010 season and a copy of Karen Hesse's book, *Witness*.

WITNESS takes place in a small Vermont town in 1924, in which Esther Hirsch, a nine-year-old Jewish girl is befriended by Leanora Sutter, a young African-American. When the Ku Klux Klan comes into town, the girls and their fathers are targeted. They find themselves being hated just for being alive. Esther and Leanora show courage and bigotry is defeated. WITNESS serves as a warning of what can happen if bigotry is allowed to grow unabated, but it also offers a powerful message of hope.

"The opening of WITNESS coincides with two significant dates that

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*First Stage Children's Theater Announces "Witness the Change" Blog Contest/add one*

represent some of the unprecedented change in our nation from both the past and present – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (January 19) and the Presidential Inauguration (January 23)," states Rob Goodman, First Stage Managing Director.

"In a season when Milwaukee is celebrating people with the courage to fight for change, First Stage wants its young audience to make the connection between their ability to stand up for change and the way that the characters Esther and Leonora bravely teamed together to usher tolerance into their community," continues Goodman.

Directed by First Stage Associate Artistic Director and Theater Academy Director John Maclay, WITNESS runs January 23 through February 22, 2009 at the Todd Wehr Theater in the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 North Water Street, Milwaukee, Wis. To purchase tickets, visit [www.FirstStage.org](http://www.FirstStage.org) or call (414) 273-7206.

First Stage Children's Theater is Milwaukee's premier, professional family theater. Founded in 1987, the mission of the company is to provide professional theater productions for young people and their families that engage, enlighten and entertain, Theater Academy training that fosters life skills through stage skills and dynamic in-school education programs that provide learning through theater. First Stage is a member of the Theater Communications Group, TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education and Americans for the Arts as well as Theatre Wisconsin and Milwaukee Arts Partners, and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF).

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