

Dizzy's World Tour

It's 1956, and you are a famous jazz musician named Dizzy Gillespie. You are known as one of the best trumpet players in the world. Two months ago, something amazing happened when you were working on your new album. A studio engineer walked in the room and said that you had an important phone call. When you picked up the phone, you were surprised to hear the man introduce himself as a member of congress!

You wondered, "Why would somebody from the government want to talk to a trumpet player?" The man on the phone was Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and he had an idea to help improve America's image around the world. It has been over ten years since the end of World War II, and in that time, America and Russia have been competing to build global alliances. It's basically an international popularity contest.

The Russian government has been producing cartoons and movies that show the ugly reality of racism in the United States. Remember, the Jim Crow Era is still happening in 1956. Children still attend segregated schools, and Black people face discrimination and violence.

The Russian movies are making the US look bad, so Congressman Powell, who is Black himself, has an idea to put together a jazz super group featuring the best Black and white American musicians. He says the government will pay you to go on a 10-week tour around the world. If people see white and Black musicians together on stage, it might change their opinion about racism in America.

Congressman Powell says that your friends Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington have already agreed to the plan. If that's the case, then you'll do it too.

One month later, you embark on the adventure of a lifetime, including stops in Pakistan, Greece, Turkey, Iran, and Egypt. The concerts are fun, but behind closed doors, you, Louis, and Duke express mixed feelings about the purpose of the trip. You feel like the government is using your celebrity status to look good, without actually changing the laws to make life better for Black Americans.

Tonight, you and the band played a concert for thousands of fans at a festival in Cairo, Egypt. After the concert, a reporter asked if he could interview you for an Egyptian newspaper. You agreed, and after a few typical questions about music, the reporter asked, "What is your opinion about segregation in the United States? Do you feel that Black people are treated fairly in America?"

Dizzy's World Tour Response

The U.S. Government is paying you to play concerts around the world to improve America's image. What will you say to the reporter who asks, "What is your opinion about segregation in the United States?"

Write your response to the dilemma in the space below.
What will you do? Why will you do it?
