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**Encounter Theatre As A Means Of Social Change And Empowerment**

**A DISSERTATION**

**Submitted by**

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# Encounter Theatre As A Means Of Social Change And Empowerment

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## Introduction

While a faculty member at Roxbury Community College (RCC) in 1987 I was asked to put together a theatre skit as part of a birthday celebration for Ruth Batson, founder of the METCO Program<sup>1</sup>. At the time of the presentation she was President of the African Meeting House and a member of the RCC Foundation. Knowing of her work especially in regards to the African Meeting House I put together a collection of monologues based on three Boston historic icons: Frederick Douglass, from his speech *What to the Slave is the Forth of July*; William Lloyd Garrison, from his newspaper *The Liberator*, and David Walker, from his pamphlet *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*. I portrayed Frederick Douglass, a colleague from the Social Science Department portrayed William Lloyd Garrison, and a student of mine portrayed David Walker. Afterwards Ms. Batson thanked me for the presentation and asked me a question that would prove to be a major turning point in my career. Have you ever considered developing this into a full play? My immediate answer was no. She then said, “You should consider it. Let’s talk about it; I’ll give you a call. We’re working on a project at the ‘Meeting House that you might be interested in being involved in.” That project would eventually change my academic and career pursuits.

The African Meeting House project was the development of an historical source book on its history. I wrote a play that would later be known as *Words of Resistance* as a companion to that text. *Words* is a participatory one-act drama about the history of the African American presence in New England. Simultaneously as the *Words* project was developing, I assisted in the establishment of several theatre companies. Black Folk’s

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<sup>1</sup> METCO, Inc. (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity) founded in 1966, is a private non-profit organization that seeks to eliminate racial imbalance for Boston students of color by providing educational opportunities in participating suburban towns.



Theater Company produced at the C. Walsh Theater at Suffolk University *The Meeting* by Jeff Stetson, and *Zooman and the Sign* by Charles Fuller. The Roxbury Outreach Shakespeare Experience (R.O.S.E.) founded by Decima Francis, got its birth at Roxbury Community College. R.O.S.E. for its first 5 years was our resident theatre company. Over the years Black Folk's Theater Company and R.O.S.E. have produced plays incorporating equity and non-equity actors. Most of Shakespeare's works have been performed by R.O.S.E., such as *Macbeth* produced at the Strand Theatre, *King Lear* produced at the Massachusetts College of Art Auditorium, and *Romeo and Juliet* produced at the Kresge Auditorium at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Having these professional entities at the college had a tremendous positive impact on students' exposure to the theatre arts. These collaborations also helped develop my own sense of the distinction between community and professional theatre and their roles in the community college environment. All of these works in one way or another had an educational undercurrent, be it connected to master classes, workshops, or seminars. Students of all ages were not only afforded the opportunity to be traditional audience participants, they were also afforded the opportunity to have a complete tactile experience. It is the combination of these experiences which is at the core of what I call *Encounter Theatre*, a form of participatory theatre in which both the process and the product are of equal importance that I will explain more fully in this paper.

Since writing *Words of Resistance*, I have written several other participatory theatre projects. While directing a summer youth program called New Beginnings I developed in collaboration with the students, a play about AIDS and adolescents, *The Deadly Gift*. During this project students applied for and received a production grant from



*Teens As Community Resources* to produce the play, which was staged at Roxbury Community College and Wentworth Institute, our two host colleges. Also during that summer I took 15 of my 30 students in the program to an open audition at a casting agency in Cambridge, Massachusetts for a video project on teen suicide. Out of the 15, 9 were cast in the video *Listen Up!* that was produced at WGBH-TV in Boston for Samariteens, a youth division of Samaritans, a suicide prevention organization. Currently high school counselors use this video in their efforts to address the rising teen suicide rate.

In collaboration with students and community residents of Caribbean heritage I developed a Jamaican play, *The Mighty JaJah: A Jamaican Experience*, written primarily in Jamaican dialect (patwa). This project involved intense collaborative work with a combination of Caribbean students and community residents committed in making this project as authentic as possible in its presentation of Jamaican culture

I have since expanded the *Words* project into a trilogy now titled *Words of Reflection*. I currently have several works in development all approached from the following dual perspective: a) the work although entertaining will have an educational undercurrent with a clearly defined learning outcome, and b) at least one segment of the production (development and/or performance) will be participatory in nature. Awareness of the power of these efforts to affect actors, audience, and community have come from various participants in these encounters acknowledging my approach as a kind of participatory theatre that I call Encounter Theatre.

*Encounter Theatre as a Means of Social Change and Empowerment* is an analysis of the principles and application procedures for the use of *Participatory Theatre* (a form





of *Interactive Theatre*), that is conceived, developed, and produced as an educational and therapeutic tool in addressing social, cultural, and political issues in varying communities.

From my research on participatory theatre I have located several approaches in using theatre as a means of social change and empowerment. In these approaches the focus was always either on the process of *developing the product* (the development of the educational theatre experience) or on the *completion of the product* (the educational theatre experience itself) never on both. I am equally interested in both the process and the product; the process of developing empowering periods of engagement for those participating, and developing and mounting a product, the performance piece, that is equally empowering and engaging. The difference is that I believe the process and the product must be of equal importance, where all who share in the participatory theatre experience gain newer insights into the thematic issues presented. This dual process should stimulate the desire for all who participate to react in some positive way to a clearly defined objective.

How can *Encounter Theatre* work as an educational tool? The objective is to empower participants with an understanding and a means of addressing issues and concerns that affect their community. There has been enormous work in the field of educational theatre concentrating on the needs of children; however little research has been done to address in equitable fashion the needs of adolescents. In this study I present a detailed analysis of how *Participatory Theatre* works as an educational and therapeutic tool in addressing social and cultural issues in varying communities in particular adolescent and adult populations and how my method of *Encounter Theatre* is unique.



Whether the concern is bridging the gap between the generation divide, or working on furthering dialogue for better cultural and ethnic understanding, the main focus of my community involvements has been on exploring new avenues of dialogue between differing groups to achieve better cultural awareness.

How can *Encounter Theatre* be used for social change? I will also demonstrate, by use of examples, how using encounter theatre works with various populations and themes and how the method is successful in achieving clear educational benefits.

In my professional experience, looking at the populations that I serve, primarily adolescent and adult, I have discovered that the use of theatre has been a very powerful tool in teaching diversity, empowering segments of the population with the informational tools needed to aid in them addressing their own social issues and concerns. As an educator with over twenty-five years of professional experience teaching at all levels, in both traditional and non-traditional environments, I am always looking for innovative ways of enhancing the educational experience of my students. In the process of my own discovery and professional development my students are key beneficiaries.

As a theatre educator, I have over the last twenty-five years created a range of theatrical works that are designed specifically as a means of teaching cultural history through the joint artistic participation of both thespians<sup>2</sup> and patrons. *Participatory Theatre as a means of social empowerment* is at the core of this body of work. Having performed these works in varying settings and communities and acquiring varying levels of success, I have come to the determination that it is time to assess their true academic properties from instructional and cultural as well as professional perspective. My curiosity of the principles of psychodrama and the connection of therapy, drama and

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<sup>2</sup> Theatre artists, actors devoted to the craft.



educational empowerment is vital to my professional pursuits. Elements of psychodrama techniques can be adapted as useful tools in *Encounter Theatre*, but only those spontaneous elements that are transforming and enlightening, not those elements that stagnate creative vision and expression. The therapeutic elements used, as will be explained, are used as a conduit for artistic purposes in gaining deeper awareness of character and thematic intent. This study develops the main characteristics of *Encounter Theatre* and how they are seen in various works.



## Chapter One:

### Defining Encounter Theatre A Form of Participatory Theatre

#### I. The Encounter Theatre Process

My theory for the *Encounter Theatre* approach is holistic in nature, where thematic objectives are discussed, analyzed, and agreed upon. Unanimous agreement in the project's objectives must be initially established before the project, or as I would like to call it, the encounter, can begin. My rationale behind this initial approach is that all participants must be equally accepting of the theatrical challenge; that is they must initially understand what role *they* play in the development of this project. They must feel that not only do they have a role in the project's development, but also all equally share their roles and the responsibilities associated with them. Depending on the manner that the group is initially formed; formally-as a classroom based activity, or informally-as a community based activity, in either situation participants must have clearly defined roles in the project that they willingly accept, even if these roles evolve<sup>3</sup> into something else. In all of applications of the *Encounter Theatre* methodology, be it with youth, adult or community groups; amateur, semi-professional, or professional; all participants have a collective voice in the process and the product, resulting in empowering participants with the means to effect social change; this is the philosophical foundation.

The Encounter Theatre concept has five main components: Pre-Stage, Developmental Stage, Production Stage, Social Change Stage, and Empowerment Stage. The **Pre-Stage** discussion in the process always begins with a basic analysis of purpose.

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<sup>3</sup> I say evolve rather than change because I philosophically believe that change in a theatrical process can be damaging for it can derail the initial purpose; evolve in this context means to me that the initial purpose still remains however new discoveries are encountered and incorporated in the theatre process. Thus the learning outcome is enhanced not stifled.





The purpose that needs to be brought to the surface is what common challenge, issue, concern, and/or problem do we collectively share that needs to be addressed and what role will theatre play in addressing this need? Now posing the question varies depending on the environment. If we were in a school or classroom setting the parameters surrounding the general scope of the thematic topics would already be established. The initial discussion would then focus on narrowing the topic and to that topic attach several manageable scenarios that can later be built upon. In a community setting the discussion may immediately begin with a specific thematic objective. Often in community encounters their issues are empowerment and problem solving in nature. Their objectives are clear but the methodology in achieving those objectives become the task at hand. In either environment what must be established is that the issues and concerns of the group belong to the group and the role of this participatory theatre encounter will be in aiding the group in achieving those objectives. There must be unanimous buy-in to the process. In other words, the group must agree that there is an issue that is shared, and that collectively they will address it. The role of the theatre artists is in aiding the group in developing a viable professional, quality work that will through an encounter process (development and production) address these issues.

The **Development Stage** has a two-fold objective: 1) address the concerns of the group through a continual engagement of discussion, processing of information, analysis of data, and agreement on choice of material to be used. 2) Instruct the group in the arts and crafts of theatre. From theatre design to production, the group will become thoroughly immersed in the disciplines of theatre. This two-fold process conducted simultaneously, establishes the educational process of discovery for the participants and



at the same time addresses the quality control issue in the nature of the type of end product that will be achieved.

The **Production Stage** is a holistic approach to the educational theatre experience, where audience and actors not only share performance space; they are in fact intertwined in the production, often where there is no clear distinction made between audience participants and theatre artists. When the theatrical work is produced for an audience it takes on a much bigger role. The work is not only possesses of high production values, acting, staging, management, all professional in their approach and delivery of the artistic work to the public; the work also possesses and imparts social relevant messages that are enlightening and moving.

The **Social Change Stage** is the evaluative process of both individual and collective discoveries concerning the educational value of the encounter. Self-assessment is done to determine the level of personal achievement. The individual discoveries relate to first assessing the value of the skills acquired in the process and the knowledge acquired pertaining to the thematic subject of the encounter. Assessing the level of one's acting skills is a continual process, but relating to these skills as *tools* used to impart knowledge is a unique aspect of the empowerment process. The collective value relates to group awareness of the power of the theatrical medium as a means of enlightenment. Connecting skills development (acting training) to teaching and learning (educational theatre) is the foundation of the social change stage. Participants have an epiphany – they see deeper meaning in what they are performing, some trigger helps them see what they are doing differently. Social change comes first when participants realize that



theatre is making a statement. Participants realize they shared interests, and in working together they effect social change.

The **Empowerment Stage** is the metamorphic process of participants, both individual and collective, who have discovered that they have something to offer their communities and they are now equipped with the skill and knowledge level to effect change. From a purely theatrical perspective this is achieved by the direct effect that the artistic work has on the audience and the community. The empowerment change takes place as individuals and groups within the community are effected by the encounter theatre process and they themselves become empowered with the desire to effect social change. The objectives in the encounter process do not change but evolve into something that addresses both the needs of the encounter group and those of the larger community equally impacted by those issues and concern. They realize that they can decide how much they want to put into it, and that they can impart knowledge and make it useful. They see the social change and experience the ability to lead others to see social change; learning for the first time that they have ability to present so much information in a short period of time. They take ownership and become empowered.

The *Encounter* Approach comes directly out of my professional experience in teaching and my studies in educational theatre. Also the work of the Jamaican theatre group *Sistren* demonstrates this dynamic. I will use part of my own experience and various plays I have created through the encounter process to demonstrate its effectiveness. In this text the reader will discover how various forms of Participatory Theatre are used in academic and community-based situations. The full play texts that are discussed are also included in the appendix for reference purposes.



## **The *Encounter Theatre* Process**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pre-stage Process:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Agreement</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Equals</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Collective Consensus</b></p>  | <p>Discussion in the <i>Pre-Stage Process</i> always begins with a basic analysis of purpose. The purpose that needs to be brought to the surface is what common challenge, issue, concern, and/or problem do we collectively share that needs to be addressed and what role will theatre play in addressing this need?</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development Process:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme Driven Play Development &amp; Theatre Training Skills Development</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Equals</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Creation of Product (The Process)</b></p> | <p>The <i>Development Process</i> has a two-fold objective: 1) address the concerns of the group through a continual engagement of discussion, processing of information, analysis of data, and agreement on choice of material to be used, and 2) instruct the group in the arts and crafts of theatre.</p>                |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Production Process:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Artists and Audience Share Space</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Equals</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Performance (The Product)</b></p>   | <p>The <i>Production Process</i> has a holistic approach to the educational theatre experience, where audience and actors not only share performance space; they are in fact intertwined in the production, often where there is no clear distinction made between audience participants and theatre artists.</p>           |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Social Change Process:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Individual &amp; Collective Discoveries</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Equals</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Purpose</b></p>   | <p>The <i>Social Change Process</i> is the evaluative process of both individual and collective discoveries concerning the educational value of the encounter.</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Empowerment Process:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Individual &amp; Collective Action</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Equals</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Effecting Social change</b></p>  | <p>The <i>Empowerment Process</i> is the final process where change takes place as individuals and groups within the community are effected by the encounter theatre process and they themselves become empowered with the desire to effect social change.</p>  |





## II. Defining Encounter Theatre

Certain aspects of my education began at different periods in my life and have led to my current focus on *Encounter Theatre*. While a youth growing up in Roxbury, the heart of the African American community in Boston, I was exposed to various aspects of the visual arts, which have had a profound impact on my life. I think to a large degree this was due to my older brothers' influence. Leroy, a portrait artist whose medium was pastels, would periodically allow me to observe some of his work. My family did not particularly care for his art and thought his artistic pursuits were unrealistic. Often growing up I would hear comments such as, "Why don't you take the civil service exam [meaning for a young black man to have stability he needed to get a 'real job' that in their view had a future- that is, benefits, retirement, etc.]. I at times, when my brother was between jobs and often would come home to stay a few days to get back on his feet, would agree with them. This caused some periodic tension between us. You see he was twenty years older than I and often times I would criticize things about him I was too young to really understand, things about the world in which he and I both lived, a world where you were made quite aware of your uniqueness and difference, that being African-American.

Racism came at an early age. When I was six years old I remember playing kickball in the street in front of the apartment building I lived in a run -down tenement situated on a side street across from a fire station, down the street from the 'projects'<sup>4</sup> and two blocks from the transit station. A patrol car came down the street, and we kids moved to one side to let the car pass. As the car was passing, I greeted cheerfully the white

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<sup>4</sup> Low income housing development.



police officer driving the car. “Hi, officer!” I recall saying expecting an equally cheerful response. In school I remembered a friendly officer saying to us during one of those ‘safety days’ “A police officer is your best friend.” I didn’t expect what followed. “Get out of the street you little black bastard.” The officer responded. I froze there in the street as the car drove away, numbed by what I had experienced. I remember that face, a non-descriptive but familiar face resembling many racist people that in the course of my life would cross my path. I looked over to the front stoop to my house where my father and uncle were sitting. Rather than explain to them what had happened, I decided to keep it to myself. I didn’t know it then but the internalized anger I felt that day would remain with me for the rest of my life.

I grew up in the 60’s witnessing many events of the Civil Rights Movement first hand. Like many I remember John F. Kennedy (JFK)’s assassination vividly. On that day in 1963, I was sent home from school. I recall watching the news reports on television. This was for me the beginning of my mediated education. A few years later, Malcolm X died, then Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK), then Robert F. Kennedy (RFK), and in between other people and events that had major impact on all our lives. Television was to become an important medium in educational instruction.

It was in the fifth grade that I first became really interested in school and the idea of becoming a teacher was implanted. My teacher Ms. Lizzot was a high-energy person. At my school, Dearborn Middle and Junior high School, they had recently made minor physical improvements, which involved removing from all the classrooms all the old oak and cast iron desks and chairs that were bolted to the floors, painted the walls and replacing the furniture with steel legged, and composite-topped furniture. Aesthetically



the only major difference I noticed was that for the first time you could actually move your seat. Most teachers being creatures of habit merely arranged the new furniture in the same arrangement as the original immovable ones they replaced. Not Ms. Lizzot.

One day she arranged the seats into small groups of five or six in a U shaped pattern with the open side of the U facing the blackboard. She sectioned off the left side of the blackboard and made a grid that reflected each group and students in it. That day she had us choose where we wanted to sit but told us each marking period we would change groups. Afterwards we awkwardly took our new seats. She asked us to name our group. A little puzzled we began naming do wop groups,<sup>5</sup> birds, sports teams, etc. It was all right for her. She said, "You decide as a group what your name will be and I will write it on the board." From then on our lessons became a group not an individual effort. Each lesson she would give a particular point value and the scores were recorded on the blackboard. At the end of the marking period the group with the highest score would be able to pick from the prizes first, the group coming in second would pick second, and so on. After a while we students really got into it, and it became a game, it was fun. During the course of the marking period we would see our group scores rise and rise. At the end of the marking period, true to her word she came in with a huge (from a kid's point of view) box of all kinds of prizes. There were pencil boxes, flash cards, puzzles, books, etc. I later found out that she purchased all of the items on her own. Some would think that the learning was made too competitive, not true. Assessing the prizes they were all equal in value and on the whole the class was actively engaged in the process of learning.

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<sup>5</sup> Ensemble vocal groups of the 1950's and 1960's which specialized in Rhythm and Blue vocal harmonies covering the range from falsetto and first tenor down to baritone and bass.



In addition to this unique approach, Ms. Lizzot never shied away from a question. I remember when someone asked her what the Montgomery Bus Boycott was about. Instead of giving us a lecture about it, she had us arrange the seats in a row and said, “I will be the bus driver.” After giving us only a brief geographical understanding of where Montgomery, Alabama was she said, “OK you can board the bus now.” As we filed past her she told each individual black child, “Black in the back,” in a very strong stern voice. To the few white students in my class she said, “Sit where you like.” At first it was strange and from a juvenile perspective we giggled for a moment. But as we sat there in this row with my few white classmates sitting alone near the teacher while all of us were either sitting or standing in the back, she looked at us and said. “This is what the bus boycott is about. The city won’t allow Afro-Americans to sit anywhere they please. They must sit in the back, and if a white patron gets on the bus and needs a seat a black passenger must give up his seat.” I vividly remember that day and I appreciate the way this important event in history was taught to us by the use of *Participatory Theatre*.

*The Encounter Theatre Process* shows the impact of how through the use of *participatory theatre* one’s own social change empowers them to then effect social change on others. The desire to become a teacher was born in that classroom activity. This desire had remained with me today and has shaped the direction of my professional life. To demonstrate then how this lesson translates easily into the *Encounter Theatre* Process model, I have developed the following diagram:





### Montgomery Bus Boycott Participatory Theatre Lesson<sup>6</sup>

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Pre-stage Process:</b>     | She gained collective consensus by giving us the necessary background information and stated the process that she would take through to better understand the subject.  |
| <b>Development Process:</b>   | She engaged us in the process of setting the stage and then actively participating in the development of the production by having us individually or in pairs enter the playing space and through improvisation develop the product- the scenario.  |
| <b>Production Process:</b>    | Through staging the production we began to experience the performance taking shape as Ms. Lizzot -the teacher now actress-maintained character as the bus driver, which established each child upon entering as actor/actress performing a role entering the bus as a patron. Thus giving the production professional structure, adhering to professional theatrical principles.  |
| <b>Social Change Process:</b> | She enlightened us with the understanding of how wrong certain laws and city ordinances were, how this particular one was beneficial to some at the expense of others, and what was being done to change this situation.  |
| <b>Empowerment Process:</b>   | Individual and collective action took place after this encounter. Collectively the class effected social change in its response to this issue via the products produced from the lesson experienced. Be it illustrations or written responses produced and displayed, the class no longer looked at this subject from an uninformed and non-responsive stance. Individually she inspired me to want to become a teacher like she was, someone who can make learning enjoyable, enlightening, and inspiring. |

<sup>6</sup> This diagram shows how my fifth grade learning experience fits well in the *Encounter Theatre* model.



Ms. Lizzot's participatory theatre efforts helped me learn that such an educational approach that is multicultural and social-reconstructionist can benefit from the use of participatory theatre. Ms. Lizzot's interactive theatre experience was one of the influences that led to my *Encounter Theatre*; other important influences are participatory theatre, drama for empowerment, and psychodrama. The focused goal of *Drama for Empowerment*, an aspect of participatory theatre, is focused on the process of discovery. In this process the individual or community takes ownership of one's destiny with the final product being something that effects change. After reading *Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in the Classroom* by Carl Grant and Christine Sleeter my views about the power of participatory theatre were reinforced. Using participatory theatre as a means of social change and empowerment in multicultural education is most effective in empowering the traditionally powerless. In this section I will draw from the works of Augusto Boal, Pru Lambert and others to introduce my views on how *Drama for Empowerment*, and *Theatre in Education* are powerful teaching mediums and how *Encounter Theatre* incorporates the essence of both methodologies to produce an dramatically new educational theatre pedagogy.

In the *Drama for Empowerment* methodology it is not crucial that the details of the mechanics of acting, playwriting, and production be thoroughly developed. It is the essence of theatre and the spirit of its form and function, as a teaching medium, that is at the heart of the experience. When one (either group or individual) can process various experiences or situations, via creating scenarios, it is quite possible for them to arrive at a concrete and viable resolve in which violent confrontations and/or negative consequences are avoided. This teaching methodology is excellent in a multicultural and social-



reconstructionist approach where harmony, group trust and respect are coupled with a political and social awareness of individuality, what it means to be different, and the development of critical and analytical tools needed to understand and appreciate the difference. What separates this from traditional educational approaches is that it is not teaching the disenfranchised to assimilate into the dominant society but to heighten their awareness of the continual process one must work through to achieve societal acceptability without sacrificing identity.

Largely since the Second World War, a genuinely new concept of Drama as an educational tool has emerged. Pioneered by Peter Slade and the post-war breed of local education authority drama advisers, rationalized in colleges and universities by such people as Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton and John Hodgson, made respectable by an H.M.I. official report, it has above all been practiced and refined in the schools themselves. This drama is very much influenced by the realization of the educative and exploratory nature of children's play than on adult drama. Situations of dramatic conflict, imaginative projection and role-play are set up to help children explore through improvisation the problems and possibilities of their identity, their surroundings, other people and the interplay of all three. (O'Toole 11)

Note that the focus is on child development through improvisation. Adolescent and adult learners are not factored in to this equation. What Peter Slade established in the 1940's and 1950's and other like Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton and John Hodgson elaborated on again focused on theatre's role in the education of children. Once children



reach a stage of pre-adult, the adolescent stage, they in many ways must be instructed through different parameters. Their modes of behavior are different and continually evolving. Their maturity levels are continually going through growth spurts. And in a relatively short period of time, they will find themselves on the other side of the spectrum, being adults, and treated as such, but with all the responsibilities that goes with adulthood. As adults-in-training so to speak, they must be respected as a group of individuals that have the ability to make informed decisions, and as adults must be challenged to make such informed decisions.

How then is this new acquired understanding (knowledge) applied to problem solving within a community context? The role of *Encounter Theatre* creates that opportunity. Unlike children's theatre where the adult educators guide the young learners through a highly structured process of discovery (even if elements of improvisation are implemented) *Encounter Theatre* takes risks. Although the outcomes can be predetermined in the produced theatrical encounter, depending on the participatory element evolving the audience, the modes in achieving the resolves may evolve in several different scenarios, each of which must be considered as of equal value. In keeping your options open the end results are always positive. For example, in *Words of Resistance*, at the end of scene two the audience is totally absorbed in a town meeting of 1850 in which they are subdivided in to smaller groups to discuss their community's response to the pending passing of the Fugitive Slave Law. The audience believes that they must come up with concrete decisions and just as they are about to arrive at some decision making an interruption occurs and news is brought in that not only has the law been passed, but several individuals who are suffering as a direct consequence of the law's passing, needs





the community's immediate help. The audience then proceeds in the harboring of fugitive slaves when a bounty hunter enters the town meeting disrupting it. Although the conclusion is predetermined and staged, the lengths of the discussions are not. They are spontaneous and their duration depends on the level of engagement in their discussions.

*Drama for Empowerment* is politically transforming. For example, in a class activity I was involved in, the group was given an opportunity to experience how *Drama for Empowerment* works in the field. In this role-playing exercise on peer pressure, the class was divided up between students and theatre workshop facilitators. Most of the students gravitated to a particular role in which the potential for group conflict and clear examples of peer pressure were evident. The facilitators had the task of 'connecting' with each student. First by collectively 'breaking the ice' using a theatre game. I, playing a student who did not want to participate, sat out and observed the group activity. Later when we as a class were processing this event, one of my classmates commented on how my participation was much more meaningful than the rest of the group. I had the opportunity to observe the entire process. When you give the student the opportunity to choose whether or not to participate in an activity is empowering in itself. My personal experience in this exercise, playing the student, was interesting. At one point I felt like joining in the activity (it seemed like fun) but because I made the decision not to participate I felt I had locked myself out of the activity. As a classmate I was right in what I experienced. By listening and observing the activity I had a deeper understanding of what was going on in the group dynamics. I developed an appreciation for the purpose and power of the group activity in breaking down barriers and opening up dialogue.



Another classroom example was a video of a group of students from A. C. Davis High School, in Washington State demonstrating how the “process” educated students to move to act and resolve an issue affecting them. Students analyzed plot, theme, and who is at/in conflict. In this video, students addressed an array of issues. At its conclusion major questions were raised that were presented to the audience. This was done to begin the process of dialogue. During the dialogue process the following things happen that transforms the performers and audience involved:

- The first step, *achieving democracy*

This involved audience interaction in a very animated way: everyone is participating engaged in the activity where no one is clearly leading or dominating.

- The second step, *analyzing his or her own life circumstance.*

This requires each individual, audience/participant to give input about their own interpretations of their circumstances. Each input becomes “vital”: everyone’s role is important.

- The third step, every one *learns social action skills*

In this step the goal is collective: everyone takes ownership for not only their interpretations and their actions. These are compared and shared with members of the group. Collective responsibility is achieved as the group arrives at mutual understanding.

- The fourth step, *coalescing, working together towards a common interest.*

The most important point in the process of using drama is to aid individuals and groups to acquire a voice to speak out and address their issues. The goal in the



group dynamics is for the group not the facilitator to take ownership of the play development process. When the group is focused on the goal the positive group dynamics takes place.

An article titled *Popular Theatre: One Road to Self-Determined Development Action* by Pru Lambert explains, by definition and example, what *popular theatre* is, and how it is used as a tool for social change and empowerment. Lambert defines various philosophical approaches to the use of theatre in community education projects, and gives a very clear overview of the leading pioneers in this field. In analyzing Lambert's views on popular theatre his article introduced me to the work of Augusto Boal, the pioneer in the field, to further explore varying viewpoints about the relevance of participatory theatre in education. Pru Lambert states that popular theatre is theatre "which is realistic, critical and free" (Leis 11) used as a means of protest.

In his view there are three roles organizers of popular theatre events perform: 1) they can be dramatists or professionals who's primary concern is on the quality of the spectacle; 2) they can be ideologues who's primary goal is on communicative propaganda; 3) or they can be developmentalists who can either use theatre as an educational tool (focus on an expedient product to resolution with minimal attention focused on the process) or as a dialectical tool (primary attention focused more on the analytical process of discovery) through a *Freirian* process of consciousness-raising (*conscientization*). It is the latter methodology that Lambert explores. His focus is on, as he puts it, "an illustration of the power of popular theatre as agent of *conscientization* and catalyst for action." (Lambert 242)



*The conscientization* theatre parallels the work of Paulo Freire and his literacy teaching process of empowerment. Freire aimed at liberating the oppressed and empowering them with the control over their own destiny. Lambert draws a correlation between these two Brazilians, Boal and Freire. He states that, “what Boal is to popular theatre Freire is to literacy.” In a quote he draws from Boal, captures the essence of the power of the theatrical medium, the core of the theory behind drama for empowerment: “I believe that all the truly revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production in the theatre so that the people themselves may utilize them. The theater is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it.” (Boal 122)

Lambert states that Boal’s methodology, primarily used (as Freire’s work) as a means of irradiating illiteracy, has two main stages: *simultaneous dramaturgy* and *forum theatre*. From reading Augusto Boal’s book *Theater of the Oppressed*, I discovered however that structurally there are four main stages to Boal’s methodology. Although the first two stages, *knowing the body* and *making the body expressive* are clearly developmental stages, inherent in most theatre (acting) workshop regiments, there are stages three: *the theatre as language* and four: *the theatre as discourse* which are the most relevant. Augusto Boal’s work addresses the political upheavals that existed in Latin American in the mid 1970’s in which the barriers between the ruling class and peasant class were crumbling. The correlation of these crumbling barriers to that of theatre is connected to the destruction of the distinction between actor and spectator. Boal feels that all must act, be protagonist, in the process of transforming a society where the current oppressed people are liberated. This is shown in his work with the *People’s*





*Theatre in Peru* discussed in detail in his book. The following stages outline his transformation process changing the spectator in to the actor:

### **The Four-Stage Process of Transformation:**

**Stage one: *knowing the body*** is an exercise stage designed to: “undo the muscular structure of the participants. That is, to take them apart, to study and analyze them. Not to weaken or destroy them, but to raise them to the level of consciousness. So that each worker, each peasant understands, sees, and feels to what point his body is governed by his work.” (Boal 128)

**The second stage: *making the body expressive***, is designed to, through the use of theatrical games, teach participants to better understand how to use their bodies as a ‘resource for self-expression. I am not talking about parlor games,” explains Boal “and not necessarily those of the theatrical laboratory. The participants are invited to ‘play,’ not to ‘interpret’ characters but they will “play” better to the extent that they ‘interpret’ better.” (Boal 130) What Lambert points out are only two of the three degrees of the third stage. The third stage is divided in to three distinct degrees of the spectator’s direct participation one can easily infer from Lambert’s article. Pru Lambert’s article has enhanced my thinking about the applicability of theatre as a teaching and learning tool. One of Lambert’s references, Jeff Wirth’s *Interactive Acting: Acting, Improvisation, and Interacting for Audience Participatory Theatre* is an excellent training guide to any practitioner interested in participatory (stated in his text as interactive) theatre.

In Augusto Boal’s section titled “Poetics of the Oppressed” through the use of detailed examples, he explains his methodology. Below are stages three and four outlined as he has written them.



“**Third stage: *The theatre as Language***: one begins to practice theatre as a language that is living and present, not as a finished product displaying images from the past:

**First degree: *Simultaneous dramaturgy***: the spectators “write” simultaneously with the acting of the actors;

**Second degree: *Image theatre***: the spectators intervene directly, “speaking” through images made with the actors’ bodies;

**Third degree: *Forum theatre***: the spectators intervene directly in the dramatic action and act.

**Fourth stage: *the theatre as discourse***: simple forms in which the spectators-actor creates “spectacles” according to his need to discuss certain themes or rehearse certain actions.” (Boal 126)

Boal produced the first theory of the relationship between actor and audience. Based on the work of social change put forward by Paulo Freire, who he worked under one of his literary programs in Peru, it is from Boal’s work that I gained most of my inspiration.

In order to understand the poetics of the oppressed one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people-‘spectators’-passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon- into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action. I hope that the difference remain clear, Aristotle proposes a poetics in which the spectator delegates power to the dramatic character so that the latter may act and think for him. Brecht proposes a poetics in which the spectator delegates powers to the character who thus acts in his place but the spectator reserves the right to think for himself,



often in opposition to the character. In the first case a ‘catharsis’ occurs; in the second an awakening of critical consciousness. But the poetics of the oppressed focuses on the action itself: either to act or think in his place; on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonist role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change – in short, trains himself for real action. In this case, perhaps the theatre is not revolutionary in itself, but is surely a rehearsal for the revolution. The liberated spectator, as a whole person, launches into action. (Boal 122)

Others have also been inspiring; the following example is of a community-based theatre group in Jamaica that over the years has gain international attention. The eleven-member female theatre group from Jamaica named *Sistren* is a collective made up of eleven working class women who use participatory drama, based on the work of Augusto Boal as influenced by Paulo Freire to address issues of class and sex bias within their society. *Sistren*, since its inception in 1977, has toured internationally and has received high praise. As a result of their success they have been able to ‘give back’ to their community. *Sistren* is an excellent example of participatory theatre in action. Through charitable acts such as financing the building of a community center through contributing proceeds from their performances, or creating a variety of theatrical productions that often times began merely as improvisational skits, their work ultimately became the catalyst for change in addressing many community based problems.

During the late 1980’s in a joint sponsorship, The Caribbean Focus Study Program of Roxbury Community College hosted them in a series of lectures and master classes in conjunction with it Jamaican Reality course and study tour project. Several



members even lived for a while in the Greater Roxbury Community with members of the Jamaican Reality project. And when the project's two-week study tour took place that summer, members of *Sistren* accompanied them on the tour. From the feedback I received from student and community participants, the experience was an exciting educational exchange and the participation of members of *Sistren* were invaluable in their Jamaican culturalization.

“The *conscientization* process is a long one, and there are no effective short cuts since all action must, in the long run, be undertaken in exposure to all sorts of national and international pressures which can undermine it.” (Lambert 82: 249) I concur with Lambert's summarizing remarks. In participatory theatre projects that I have been engaged in over the years, in which my focus was both on the process and the product, some works have taken as little as six months to a year to mount, while others have gone through several years of successive stages of evolution. Throughout each of my projects the focus has always been two fold:

- 1) the use of theatre as a means of social development and empowerment, and
- 2) to afford students and community participants a memorable academically and culturally rewarding experience.

In curriculum reform, the worse end product that can occur in this process is educational systems or individual schools developing curriculum that is only a 'Band-Aid approach' to solving the issue. As James Banks states “A mainstream -centric curriculum has negative consequences for mainstream students because it reinforces their false sense of superiority, gives them a misleading conception of their relationship with other racial and ethnic groups, and denies them the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge,





perspectives, and frames of reference that can be gained from studying and experiencing other cultures and groups.” (Banks 195) For education to truly be multicultural it must be transforming. It must be inclusive of the spectrum of racial and cultural diversity that is represented in society. To arbitrarily insert dead heroes and superficial holidays in the name of multicultural education not only trivialize the significance of that culture it creates a distorted picture of history, a history from the oppressors perspective. My work as an educator is to make every learning experience engaging, transforming and enlightening.

As an artist theatre has come to be my main teaching vehicle for effecting change. As Ross Kidd and Mamunur Rashid puts it: “Theatre by the people, for the people and of the people attempts to overcome the ... limitations of being the passive recipients of ideas and analysis from the outside, robbed of the opportunity to voice their own concerns and to do their own thinking. As Freire would put it, cultural liberation is not ‘a gift’ or mere access to culture but ‘the conquered right of the popular classes to express themselves.’ the finished form of the theatre-finalized pieces of thinking with no room for audience contributions- and the tokenistic approach to post performance discussion which was tacked on at the end as an empty ritual reinforced this ‘banking’ orientation.” (Kidd 35) *Drama for Empowerment* has assisted me in clarifying my own philosophical ideas on participatory theatre’s form and function as a teaching medium. In addition, and quite possibly the most important, *Drama for Empowerment* has validated what I have been doing for over a decade in the field of community education.

What Paulo Freire advanced Boal adapted to the educational theatre medium. The liberation process begins with the individual as an independent thinker, thus



the learning becomes transforming. How does this apply to educational theatre, when actor and audience are merged creating one unique type of educational encounter? Like *Drama for Empowerment* the focus is on the process of discovery. This is very important, crucial in most ways, in the development of new works for new audiences. However the assurance of producing a quality product, adhering to tried and tested theatre protocols are absent in this methodology. My educational theatre methodology adsorbs and applies the basic principles of *Theatre in Education. Drama for Empowerment* or *Drama in Education* (DIE) differs from the process of *Theatre in Education* (TIE) in that central to the Theatre in Education process is on developing a more active role of audience as participants in the theatrical experience. The audiences' involvement is crucial.

*Theatre in Education* (TIE) “prime motivation lies in its explicit educational purpose and that its distinctive formal feature is its use of active audience participation. Central to the work, in all its variety of theatre forms and educational strategies, are the twin conventions that human behaviour and institutions are formed through social activity and can therefore be changed, and that audiences, as potential agents of change, should be active participants in their own learning. (Vine 109)

Their thoughts and actions, their direct involvement is central to the theatrical experience, thus creating a new praxis different from the traditional role of distant observer. To be precise both have a clear focus on a polished end product that is jointly produced by artists and community participants as well. No matter the age group, or educational theme the objectives are the same.



Through the use of *Encounter Theatre* community participants and artisans develop a work that absorbs their collective experiences and transforms their individual and collective knowledge in to a product that is both educationally and artistically rich. Individual participants in this experience, I call *encounters*, become more self-aware, more knowledgeable about the world and the people around them, and they become empowered with the understanding that their input does matter and does effect change. These shared encounters produce works that are individually stimulating, and communally beneficial. Thus the methodology focus is on the process and the product, both aspects being of equal importance.



### III. Psychodrama

My interest in psychodrama began through an interview I conducted with Edward Williams, Ph.D. a clinical psychologist, educator, and artist who runs a production company titled: *Creating It Through Productions, Incorporated*.

This interview helped to focus my attention to how psychodrama techniques can be adapted for use as part of a teaching and training regiment for the development of a encounter theatre ensemble company. My interest is in developing an ensemble whose body of work is educationally rooted in teaching the significant influence that Afrocentric culture has had on history. My philosophical view on the psychodrama approach to individual and group therapy is that it has its benefits more on the individual and small group level than in larger group context. There are unique approaches that are applicable for encounter theatre use. I will also explore ways of adapting these techniques introduced during the training sessions to my professional environment, including information and examples when appropriate, to help clarify the applicability of these techniques. I will divide my comments into the following domains:

- The role of theatre as a means of therapy in participatory theatre
- Using psychodrama in the understanding and developing of group dynamics
- The clash of disciplines: Psychodrama training vs. acting as an art
- Defining Playback Theatre

In this section I will conclude with a summary of a) observations of the group dynamics of a training session, and b) applicability of the techniques introduced to encounter theatre.





During the training session I observed, but more importantly experienced, many fascinating therapeutic activities that I must reflect on. Not all techniques learned would directly pertain to my professional needs in the training of semi and quasi-professional actors. However most would in some way be useful in the development of good group dynamics, especially in resolving conflicts in interpersonal relationships. As I train actors to take on the role of reenacting a person of a historical event they must understand that their additional role as educator requires an academic discipline that in itself has a structure. Historical accuracy and believability are two main factors in their characterizations. The major skills needed in order to work in this unique ensemble are:

- a) Discipline: which would be drawn from their acting training and
- b) Acceptance: of their role as educators whose knowledge base is drawn from the ensemble via the body of work.

My definition of teaching, basically is sharing. My philosophy about the relationship between the teacher and student in the learning environment is one in which their relationship at any given time can be interchangeable. Each individual brings something unique to the learning environment and if they are allowed to share their experiences they will all leave this environment enriched by that exchange. We all have the capacity to both learn and teach. If each one is willing to give, share an experience a point of view, the group will gain insight. They will also learn and leave empowered. I approach all my courses with this duality in mind. One key question that I pondered through out the training sessions was, when does the discipline of acting become paramount in the therapeutic process? Not all therapists are actors. For the protagonist's "surplus reality" to truly have that level of reality or dramatic edge, presenting truth



requires the therapist and auxiliaries to have some formal grounding in theatre training. Understanding how to stage an event requires knowledge of theatrical blocking, stage movement, and its relationship to the audience, the client/protagonist or the group observing. In addition, the therapist and participants need some grounding in basic acting approaches such as character analysis, character development, and their technical role within the staged event. Without this grounding in discipline and training the quality and effectiveness of the activity would be compromised.

In terms of the discipline of acting, if I was approaching a role I can become that character on stage and internalize the reality of the character on stage. However, the discipline of the art of acting for me is one major factor in the artist's training. The discipline is my safety valve. I know I am not this character so I will never go over the top. As long as I can be as real as possible, relative to the character on stage, and do all the physical action and everything required in making it surplus reality, that to me is 50% of the art of discipline. The other 50% of the discipline stems from being able, once that scene is over and I am out of the limelight and I am in the wings, to make the psychological transition back to reality. When I am back on stage I am back in character...I can turn it on and turn it off like a faucet. In my conversation with Dr. Williams he clarified this point of actor and character separation.

That's a part of the discipline you can do in a psychodramatic setting for actors. Take them through a psychodrama process. Not using themselves as the object of the play, but use the characters. This will come out and this will allow them to talk about themselves, it will allow them to get to know each other. But continuously focus on this is theatre, this is a script,



and this is a character. What I have learned in my experience is it helps them a lot in terms of focusing, it helps them a lot in terms of separating the characters from their own personal identities...Don't identify with the character... it is not real. Theatre is not real in the sense of the real world. If you start internalizing these characters and situations as real they are going to *immobility* you and you will not be able to move and function as an actor, be versatile as an actor, free yourself up to take some risks.

(Williams 1998)

Another dimension to acceptance is that of each individual bringing a different perspective to the environment. No matter how careful we try or perceive we are being, we all bring excess baggage to the shared environment. For some this baggage can be maneuvered around relatively easy, to the extent that it becomes virtually invisible. However, to others like an annoying repetitive sound like the clicking of a pen, the baggage cannot be blocked out or ignored. My instructional style basically is open and non-formal. I encourage free flowing discussions about topics and issues that trigger the direction of the lesson. Based on these collective comments I feel the students have contributed to the learning environment. As a director I try to allow as much input in the development process as possible in the creation of a theatrical work. However, in both situations there are limits. My personal view about teaching, no matter what the subject or context that it is delivered; it is a form of therapy. As a therapy there is certain structural properties that are consistent with the art of teaching (the process) and its correlation with the definition of the teaching and learning paradigm (theory). In terms of teaching in respect to educational theatre the training session in psychodrama has



given me a tangible way of drawing connections to the art of drama as a means of therapy.

Therapy is, from my perspective, creating an environment with a group or individuals that would allow them to express certain personal fears, frustrations, and desires. Helping them to work out some of their personal concerns [both emotional and physical handicaps] that will help them to cope with whatever they have set for themselves. And also maybe bring some closure to some early life experience that they haven't been able to acknowledge or bring closure to. (Williams 1998)

In a study by Linderman (1942) at Massachusetts General Hospital on grief, loss and separation as a direct result of the Coconut Grove fire in which several hundred people perished, he discovered when you lose someone your whole being becomes unstable. Although this is a very old study it is still applicable today. The nightclub fires of Midwest and New England of 2003 had a similar effect. There have been events-memorial services, and direct action taken on behalf of those lost in the tragedies. You have a void due to the loss of someone in whom you had invested a lot of energy. The natural inclination of people is to find a substitute for this loss. This is part of the grieving process. If it does not happen one goes from grief through depression to melancholy. In Dr. Jacob Levy Moreno's view spontaneity is invested in people, and that people need people.<sup>7</sup> As we grow older one's acquaintance level goes down. Older people due to death have fewer people to invest their energy into. You need more than one person to

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Jacob levy Moreno is the originator of psychodrama, sociodrama, role training, sociometry, and group psychotherapy took most of Dr. Sigmund Freud's ideas and used the stage rather than the couch in therapy.





invest energy into. That is why many elderly couples who lose partners die soon after. Moreno felt that you could map out the people you have energy invested into. This map is called a Social Atom (Hollander 1978).

In our exercise of creating our own social atoms I discovered how appropriate this would be in my theatre workshop training. Having students visualize their relationships is an excellent way of getting them to better relate to one another as well as the theatrical material they are presented with. I recall a playwright who even before writing the first words of a new play would spend weeks, sometimes months, drafting biographies of all the characters he envisioned in this body of work. He would carry around this notebook and every time a thought would come to him concerning one of the characters he would jot it down. Maybe that is why his works were exceptionally well written, the dialogues were crisp and the characters were always well developed. Moreno felt that all therapists are social atom repairmen. This playwright was truly a master surgeon.

#### **•Using psychodrama in understanding and developing group dynamics**

Psychodrama as Moreno puts it, is the theatre of the individual and it is the group, which represents the chorus. The group dynamics inherent in Moreno's first theatre troupe was that they became extremely successful at improvisational theatre. They would create improvisations based on newspaper stories. They were so successful in recreating reality that patrons of their theatre often questioned whether or not these stories that they acted out were in fact improvisations or rehearsed pieces. Through this process many techniques were developed that proved beneficial in addressing psychological disorders of patients that were in Moreno's care. As a dramatist I am specifically interested in the applicability of certain techniques to educational theatre, not



merely in theatre game and warm-up exercises but in actual character analysis that enables the artist/actor to lend truth to each and every one of their performances.

The director, the clinician, or the trainer must not be involved in the psychodrama. There must be at all time a clear acceptance of the professional distance between therapist and client as well as educator and student. This distance aids in maintaining objectivity to avoid any transference or counter-transference, especially when dealing with long-term psychotherapy. The role of the leader is a sacred one. The position of being the authority figure must be upheld and guarded at all times. This position I don't philosophically agree with for I believe in a more democratic approach focused on group consensus, the heart of the pre-stage in the encounter process. I believe that director of a play just as a therapist takes an active role in the process, although their roles are authoritative in nature it is the director of a play who can benefit more from active engagement in the process. This is the personal and collective discover that takes place. Yet in the therapeutic situation the clinician must be in total control, their risk must be minimized. Also there is a fair measure of power in the role as workshop leader or trainer. Just simply having prior knowledge of individuals in the group creates a potential danger that could become counter-productive in the overall groups dynamics.

What tends to happen is when they get involved, participating with the other participants that to some degree you become the GOD. You become the answer to everything. There is no wrong that you do. Also unconsciously you manipulate. I interview them individually before they get into a group. I don't allow any socializing, group members socializing outside the group. I don't allow any sexual contact. If you are attracted to



someone, I don't allow that in a group. Unless there is an emergency I don't allow them to telephone each other. What tends to happen is these relationships are formed on the outside and when they come back into a group, setting situations occur and their personal relationships with each other plays into the group itself. Or there's an expectation of one or the other to support each other based on what ever happens in the group change. (Williams 1998)

*Role Reversal:* is one psycho dramatic techniques that I find applicable to the training of actors in the deeper understanding of their character as well as an activity in which theatre group members can role reverse with one another to gain a deeper insight to one another and themselves. This process will be most beneficial in the development of a theatre ensemble in which roles are constantly reversed and interchanged. In the true nature of an ensemble all actors are on an equal footing, each one learning a number of roles and at times performing each and everyone. In a true ensemble no one is the star, all are of equal importance to the production. In this environment the best actor training takes place. Actors are concentrate more on character development and are more willing to take risks in order to achieve a better performance. The greatest challenge for an actor is to develop a sensory memory of experience that they can call on at demand to aid in their characterization. This sensory memory often times stems from one's own personal past experience, but what if the action called for was never experienced? For example, a role calls for the actor to portray a drug addict. The actor has no personal experience but must rely on keen observational skills in order to develop a characterization that is



acceptable. Taking on another person's identity is a great way to develop an inner understanding of that character. Thus one learns from walking in the other man's shoes.

*Doubling*: In doubling an individual's language is used sparingly. The double can talk while the protagonist is talking, however, the comments must either mirror what the protagonist is saying or express what the protagonist is thinking. This process of doubling allows for the sharing of an experience. It allows individuals of the group to reverse roles. Doubles cannot make a mistake. They can only clarify a situation (Peter Rowan<sup>8</sup>). It is important to know when to stop it. Moreno felt that having the co-conscious and conscious coexisting, the both psyche would mess and the result would be a deeper understanding about the individual in that given situation. Applying this to theatre I can see actors who are having great difficulty developing their character teaming up with either an assistant director or fellow actor who could double with them to assist them in bringing out the essence of that character's reality. Also simply having the actor double himself in a mirror could do this. You don't always have to have a double to double. The learning curve is based on practice. In psychodrama when *doubling* you should never conclude with giving advice or solutions, but you may offer questions in the first person. In adapting this to *Encounter Theatre role reversal* engages one in an exploration of cause and effect. Why does this character behave in this manner, what is the root of this behavior, how is it manifested, and what is the goal of the character in dealing with this situation? This helps the actor develop a clear motivation. Note that the character's motivation in a play or a scene is not necessarily achieved, it depends on the objectives outlined in the script, but all actors must find their motivation. *Doubling* aids

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Rowan, L.M.H.C. *Training Session in Psychodrama* Professor at Lesley University's Graduate School Expressive Therapy Program





the actor in seeing and understanding the details of their interpretive actions. Are the gestures, mannerism, vocal expressions, and diction appropriate?

We can never truly see ourselves as we are; the best is a mirrored interpretation, or better yet a live interpretation from a trained peer/professional. Both role *reversal* and *doubling* can be used in the developmental stage of *Encounter Theatre*. These techniques cannot only aid in skill development but also in script development. The scenarios that develop in psychodrama can actually be used as seeds planted in various places of a new script, which germinates simultaneously in the actor training and script development process producing a quality product and experience.

In any psycho dramatic exercise props hinder spontaneity. They become crutches or obstacles. The goal is to allow things to happen organically. Therapy is not an event. Several points come to mind as a result of the training sessions: 1) The protagonists must be representatives of the group (real or for application to theatre training a real character) 2) their confrontation(s) should be supported so they can act through the event and 3) attention to group dynamic is extremely important. In developing an ensemble group the inherent support that the team requires and relies on must be maintained or the group will self-destruct.

**•The clash of disciplines: Psychodramatic training vs. acting as an art**

Psychodrama basically is working with a group of people with their individual problems. What you do collectively is to dramatize those problems within the group, with group members taking on the roles of the particular individual problem. My personal pursuit for defining psychodrama as a type of participatory theatre is to clarify



its appropriateness to certain educational environments. I posed the following direct question to Dr. Williams: In your words can you define what Psychodrama is?

Psychodrama is a very powerful, very powerful energy form of therapy, and it's risk taking. The person who is coordinating it truly has to have skills in this area. They have to know when to cut it off. They have to know also not to get involved. Whoever is presenting these programs should never be involved or be group members themselves because they would simple destroy it, but at least know how to bring it to a close. Never, ever leave it hanging. But when I say never leave it hanging doesn't mean that you have to resolve the issue, or resolve the problem, but at least bring it to a close where those who are involved in it will be comfortable with themselves individually and be comfortable collectively. You don't want them to go out saying that, well we did this; there was no closure to it. Because what tends to happen if there is no closure brought to it, it eventually comes back to your next session or your session after that. (Williams 1998)

The following is an example of a psychodrama sessions that Dr. Williams had experienced recently in several of workshops he conducted. In my follow-up interview with him he clarified the role of the therapist and participants in the process. What I learned from his stories, coupled with my own workshop experiences has given me a clearer understanding of the psychotherapeutic process.<sup>9</sup> As I tried to visualize this activity or psychodrama session, the latter part of what Dr. Williams' described made me

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. William's form of psychodrama, Playback Theatre uses improvisation and role play of client experiences as the basis for theatrical content where only the skilled actors perform.



think of how oftentimes when someone who is dealing with a crisis, while they are explaining it to you or the group they are embellishing the situation with a lot of things that actually are not there. What they are actually verbalizing are their own fears and/or frustrations?

In terms of psychodrama for a non clinician, I would go into it as a theatre form, which I know this is what you're going to do, I wouldn't base it on the subconscious too much because there are some dangers there. I would focus on the here and now as much as possible. And I would gear it towards the theatre piece in which you're working. It's very good in character analysis. It's very good in allowing a script that's being read, to be broken down into the characters and the environment, and how each of the players interprets the story line. Again, your focus is on the subject matter and your goal for doing this rather than focusing on the group individual, personal frustrations. I believe that there is more than one method of treating people. If you do a fair assessment and evaluation, and set up a treatment plan, it doesn't mean that I am the one to offer you that service, I feel if I can't provide that service for you I would make an honest and responsible referral to an agency or to an individual. When I meet with someone my first session with him or her is for them to get to know who I am, try to get to know who they are....They have the option of saying no to me at anytime. They also have the option of saying this does not work. But let's look and talk about it. Again, try to give them as much self-help as possible. Because that's what I feel treatment is all



about. Not dependency. Most people are coming with painful stories, stories that they haven't shared with anyone, let alone want to acknowledge to themselves. And if you can respect that, that's half the treatment, half the battle. (Williams 1998)

Just in mounting productions or going through the rehearsal process, I can recall many horror stories about participant's lack of discipline and acceptance and how it compromised the performance. Viewing this process from a purely theatrical perspective, I can see those problems with personality conflicts and so forth and how you cannot get to the work because they individual performers are bringing all of this external baggage on stage. As I try to get them into character, the more I try the more interference I am confronted with. In addition, they are not interfacing with each other because of this blockage. For example, one of my students made a comment to me... he said, "Just between us Dave, in the spring (98) when we do this production I can't work with so-in-so because she has made this rehearsal a bad experience. I want to do the work but she has taken on some responsibilities and dropped the ball! I'm just uncomfortable working with her. I just wanted to share that with you." The funny thing is that everyone in that class individually was sharing the same thing with me. And so I said to him, on a personal note, "I understand what you're saying and I'm addressing that [issue]." Without going into the personal details, it was interesting that his frustration was related to the fact that, 'wait a minute this person is holding me back, she is holding the purse strings to my success."

For actors it's a whole different thing. And it is all psychodrama and playback theatre when you're going through rehearsals and pulling a show





together. It really is. If you yourself see it getting out of hand, with the blocking what I tend to do is to meet with them individually to try to work it out. I do take risks with my actors sometimes if it really gets out of hand. And you don't want to put that individual as a scapegoat...opens it up, generally open it up in a discussion. Not necessarily around that particular problem but you might want to say that some people are feeling uncomfortable and the morale is not as high as it might be. I think that gives them permission collectively to talk about it. And see where the chips fall. And again, try to bring some closure to it. (Williams 1998)

Playback Theatre has to be true. It has to be a real life experience. The stories being acted out have to be experience by the storyteller in order for the honesty and the therapeutic aspect of this to work to be achieved. In Playback Theatre from the presentational and audience perspective, participants are there to kind of come away with some kind of experience, come away with a deeper understanding, a deeper insight to a situation. Does the story come from that audience? It is not a proscenium theatre piece where I am peering in from the fourth wall perspective. I have stepped across the fourth wall. The staging is truly a black box arrangement. It is back and forth, one moment I could be sitting experiencing it [the story] and then another minute I may be up there tell it and it is coming to life in front of me, around me. To help clarify this it's an engaging two-way process. It is an ongoing dialogue, its verbal or non-verbal. And if it is engaging, well, is this not another term or category for participatory theatre? This is a type of therapeutic theatre, which unlike psychodrama does require line that has no beginning and no end, how do we tell history?



If a history is made of uncountable moments, what do you choose to tell or omit? If official American history is the story of presidents, wars, and the building of cities, what and who are not included?

Choice... you make it and it is acted out. After it is acted out the storyteller can look at the action which he or she are told from a distance. Two things happen, it clarifies from reality what really occurred, or they will see what they left out in this story based on the improv by the actors who are doing the story itself. It also allows the storyteller an opportunity to expand on that story in terms of what happened, really happened. It is a very safe way to some degree, for the storyteller to tell how this problem or situation might happen. (Williams 1998)

In Playback Theatre the actors, the storyteller, and the audience are all incorporated in the process. It is interactive and allows the participants to give feedback on the roles they experienced the participants in connection with the audiences feedback to their impressions of the performance.

**Role of Director/Therapist:** In *Encounter Theatre* the role of the director is to guide/direct the process. If it is a new work being created, all voices are equal and decisions are more democratic. In mounting an already existing work, the director's role changes in his role as leader of the process, more like a committee chair, who can keep the group to and on task, but is also an equal member of the collective whose opinion must be honored along with others in the group. This fluctuating role of the of director dose not alter from one situation to another as Dr. Williams explains:



It has to be controlled by the trainer, in terms of setting the situation up, the actors have to be extremely comfortable with the stories being told. They have to have a lot of training and rehearsals, not in terms of the stories they are going to hear because what they are going to hear you can't rehearse for because we don't know what stories are going to be told. But in terms of training, listening skills, having a good feel of what improvisation is about, to be very focused on not only the story being told but being focused on each other. In Playback Theatre you do not know what character you are going to play or what sets [scenes] you are going to play. The storyteller has a choice in choosing who are going to be the characters in the story that is being told, including selecting one of the actors to play themselves. That means females play males, males play females, and that you play various ethnic groups. (Williams 1998)

**Acting Training:** How is the quality of the acting and thus the theatrical experience achieved? What training methodology do you subscribe to and what training process do you have your actors participate in? The actors play various social classes.

So when we are in training, we go through that process. You got to be comfortable with yourself. You got to be comfortable with playing these various ethnic groups. You cannot stereotype any ethnic group. You must play it straight. You can take a risk to some degree, if you are comfortable, in taking on a dialect but I want them to be very comfortable about doing that, because I don't want them, to offend the storyteller or



anyone sitting in the audience. The storyteller and actors bounce off of each other. They use each other as stimulates. I invite people in, and they don't know who is coming here to rehearsals, they don't know, it is a part of their training. (Williams 1998)

In this situation I share his belief in the individual being true to him/her self and their art of acting avoiding stereotypes for they offend and are totally counter productive. This is a cornerstone of the improvisational process of Playback Theatre; when most improvisational troupes use stereotyping as a quick means of developing and sustaining character, when using theatre as therapy the audience are not your typical audience but clients, patients that need what you present as part of their therapeutic healing process. I particularly like the comment he makes about taking on the challenge of dialect, only if you are comfortable. This is a risk, a big risk. If you cannot sustain the accent then avoid using it at all. In my play, *The Mighty Jajah: A Jamaican Reality*, I use Jamaican dialect. The role I played in the premiere production was that of radio announcer. During rehearsal, I was jokingly referred to as a 'Jafaking,' meaning that I did not sound like a Jamaican and to an audience inclusive of Jamaican; it would be offensive to see an actor do butchery to your language. I accepted my labeling as a sign, as Dr. Williams states, of the fact that every time I attempt to speak with a Jamaican accent without proper training from a vocal coach (this is the professional side of the Developmental Process) I should relinquish the role to someone more capable of presenting a more authentic characterization.





**Spontaneity: The Here and Now:** What is the core methodology of Playback Theatre's improvisational training process? How does the group get in to a collective zone, able to perform in what seems a moments notice a complete scenario?

I invite people every Saturday [cast rehearsal] just to say hello to me, I'd say come up. The elevator operator or the people fixing the elevator if they were comfortable, I'd say come on in here and see what we are doing. They'd sit for a couple of minutes, come on you got a story to tell us don't you? Come on sit down and tell us a story, that's what I'd do. To give them some training, spontaneous, new stories, new backgrounds, new ethnic groups, it's a challenge for them and it works. (Williams 1998)

Thus the core methodology lies in the stored memories of the actors. By the actors ability to recall from memory an incident, characterization, situation, episode, the performance is enhanced and the audience truly believes in the actor's ability to create out of nowhere a complete characterization or scenario.

**Playback Theatre Process:** The theme does not necessarily have to be the issues of racism. It could be the issues around communications. It could be the issues around control. Whatever the subject matter is that is basically the stories you are going to hear on the subject matter. Now, the audience is the story teller, what you do is a warm-up exercise, you just do not go in and do Playback Theatre. You do a series of warm-up exercises because many members of the audience may or may not know each other. There is a process you go through that will allow them to get to know each other prior to telling their stories. The actors are part of the warm-up exercise.



I will tell the participants that the actors are in the audience with you. They will tell you who they are, or...I will not point them [the actors] out, usually they [audience] knows who they are. I want them [the audience] to know there is no hidden agenda. The reason I put the actors in the audience is because I want the actors to also become familiar with the audience. (Williams 1998)

In my trilogy of the history of the development of the African American community of Greater Boston, *Words Of Reflection*, the entire performance is situated in a ‘black box’ theatrical environment. Although initially conceived for performance in a church setting it quickly became a touring project where the performance and audience space, which has always shared, could be in a community room, function hall, church, classroom etc. The important structural feature is that the actors know that the integrity of the play rests with the actor’s ability to be flexible and adjust to whatever environment the production is booked in. Thus the blocking is specific in places that call for it, and general for all other places in the script. What differs here between what I do and what improvisational actors do is that their script is solely based on the words of the audience who feed the actors information from which they create on a blank open space the stage. In Dr. William’s playback theatre the set up is slightly different. In order to determine his structural approach to his method I have included subheadings.

**Setting the Stage:** Dr. William’s pre stage process is more traditional in that he begins with classic theatrical warm-up exercises and activities. During the latter part of this stage he begins the transitional process of setting the stage for Playback Theatre.



Once they go through the warm-up exercise, which usually takes anywhere between 30 minutes and 45 minutes, and it has to be that long to build up trust and some comfort. Then you set up the stage for the Playback Theatre. There are six chairs that are set up facing the audience. There should be at least six actors. Then you put an empty chair there. That empty chair is for anyone in the audience to come up and sit in and do the improv with the actors. This is another edge thing for the actors.....your going to get someone up there who has never performed before or you may get someone up there that is a good actor, who is a good improv, and this happened at Harvard [University] we had a guy come up and sat with them [actors] and perform through four different scenes, and they have never seen him before and he had never seen them before. But again, that empty chair is for anyone in the audience who wants to come up and take a risk and sit and go through a performance with the actors through an improv. (Williams 1998)

In *Encounter Theatre* depending on the group and objectives would depend on the developmental approach. For example working with the less trained actors more time would be devoted to skill and ensemble development. The focus is on developing trust and a collective work ethic. Every exercise is clearly directed towards connecting in some way to the ultimate goal, that goal being the creation of a work that addresses a social need. In Playback Theatre the focus is on the client as being separate from the actors. The client's only involvement is in the sharing of their stories, which is taken and improvised professionally by the trained ensemble of actors.



**The Process:** In Playback Theatre the stage is used as a symbolic neutral location from which various scenarios will be presented that relates and reflects many of the audiences' actual situations. The chair is symbolic of the individual whose story will unfold in front of him/her and the audience.

The trainer and the story teller who is a volunteer, sits between the audience on the side of the actors where they can be seen by both groups. The trainer asks some questions of the group, name, where you come from, do you have any brothers and sisters, what your hobbies are?...general questions. We try to change the questions for each person who comes up, but we try to keep the questions the same for the individual groups. After you ask this series of questions, then the storyteller tells his or her story the audience can hear it and the actors can hear it. After the story is finished, we will ask [the storyteller] is there anymore you want to say that you want to add, not subtract. Yes or no. They can do that. Then the storyteller selects the characters. Then at that point the actors can ask the storyteller some questions. Not how you were feeling, or what led up to that day, or what happened afterwards. They can only ask questions about the story that was told. Just to clarify. After that the actors have an option of not doing it. They might identify with the story, they might not like the storyteller; they might be in a bad mood, whatever reason they feel they do not feel like participating they can get up and leave and sit in the audience and watch. (Williams 1998)





The difference in the *Encounter* process is first there is a clearly defined goal. Every improvisation, theatre game, scenario is geared towards being small or big pieces in the play puzzle. In Playback Theatre it is limited to just the development of these scenarios. In *Encounter Theatre* the activities are designed to address a collective therapeutic objective, which is to develop a work to be presented to a given community. This is the point where Playback Theatre and Encounter Theatre differs greatly.

**Analytical Processing:** Since the process is improvisational, often with scenarios being open-ended, starting and ending not at a fixed or formal beginning and end but at an abrupt moment in time dictated by the Director/Therapist or the actors themselves.

We either cut it off at some point when they're ready to or I'll say cut. Then the actors will sit down I will ask the storyteller what do you think? They would share what they thought about it. Is this how it really Happened? Most of the time they will because reality is setting in, in terms of what really happened or what was really said that they could talk about. I will then ask them questions. How do you feel about it? Does this help you? Etc. The next thing is that the audience will talk about only what they saw. It is only focused on the story. On what has been said.  
(Williams 1998)

The *Encounter* process relies on more traditional approaches to play and production development, following the rigors of a complete formal rehearsal process preceded by a script development process. Again, depending on the make up of the group and the objectives agreed upon the script development may happen simultaneously with the



mounting of the production. In developing new works the script is never considered complete until the play premieres. The *Encounter* method is primarily designed for this type of process, a clear focus on new works development.

**Playback Theatre Outcomes:** To learn from this theatrical approach I needed to process how they, both actor ensemble and director/therapist process the outcomes of each Playback Theatre encounter. In this section I have divided outcomes in to three categories: a) Observation of the group dynamics of the training session, b) The applicability of the techniques, and c) My personal experiences and overall learning outcome. I am interested in the professional actor training process used in developing an improvisational acting ensemble in this style of theatre and how these training techniques can be incorporated in the Encounter Theatre process?

#### **A. Observations of the group dynamics of the training session,**

Sometimes people choose auxiliaries that they will never come in contact with again. This makes it comfortable for them to share an intimate experience with a total stranger. Other times people need to share with someone they have a common background in order to open up. You are constantly sending and receiving messages from people below the consciousness level. Often people choose people on a telepathic basis. Often times they are not conscious of it. And then sometimes the individual cannot choose an auxiliary and does role reversal with an empty chair. Group therapy works because individuals are far similar than dissimilar. There is a basic common thread as Dr. Williams explains, that allows you to use it across cultures in both the short and long term therapeutic situations:



Psychotherapy is where you work with a client from 1 to 9 to 13 weeks.

*Short-term Psychotherapy* is a different aspect of therapy. It is highly intense and the client has to have a criterion that would get them into short-term psychotherapy.

*Long term Therapy* doesn't work for everyone. From my experience, talking to my colleagues, and observing, what happens is the therapist becomes part of the problem in treatment. That's not always planned that way, but it tends to end up that way. A lot of dependency sets in where the client can't let go of the therapist, and the therapist can't let go of the client. (Williams 1998)

Sometimes the process of acting out psychodrama takes time. However, the emotional intensity that comes from the process is rewarding. When I observed in a class session a protagonist constantly role reversing with the auxiliary I discovered that in order for her (the protagonist) to reach a catharsis (purging of emotional baggage or confronting an unresolved issue) she had to confront the crisis that she needed to resolve. The role reversal was limited to subtle gestures and spoken phrases in order to be understood. Adapting this to an acting workshop would be extremely effective. It would force each actor to free up their emotions to help them do a better performance.

## **B. Applicability of the techniques**

As mentioned earlier, I am keenly interested in the teaching and therapy interface with in the realm of dramatize material of a historical, cultural and social nature. Theatre as a means of social and political empowerment is my academic quest. This training



session in psychodrama has aided me in identifying several tools that will assist me in my pursuit. Similar to Dr. Williams experience working with artists, I too want to become a better trainer:

Issues around racism, issues around peer relationships, issues around struggling and trying to find an identity. I work with them individually and in-group form both in a traditional Freudian therapy form but also in Playback Theatre and Psychodrama. Then I have an older group of people I work with and for the past couple of years that population as far as professional backgrounds are, mostly are artists who are looking at their fears of performing publicly, trying to understand their art form, the best way how to present themselves, and how to deal with again the issues of racism, the issues of competition, and how to work collectively as a team member in what ever form of performance that they have. (Williams 1998)

### **C. My personal experiences and overall learning outcome.**

Towards the end of the training session issues arose. Individuals in the class were caught up into a very heavy emotional process of enactment where roles got fuzzy. Most members of the group were cognoscenti of the group dynamics. The crisis stemmed from one group members inability to separate her personal issues (baggage) from her auxiliary role in someone else's psychodrama. It was interesting to me that this individual either a therapist or therapist in training could fall victim to such an event. Regardless of what triggered this outburst it was extremely counter productive. My final analysis of the situation was that she selfishly wanted attention. And she got it at the groups expense. Dr. Williams referred to these individuals as *Workshop Junkies*:





I run into this all the time when I do public workshops. And I am very conscious of it. When I am training my playback actors now is to also observe the participants as they come in, because you will always get these individuals who will sign up for the workshop, because they're lonely, they will not go and see a therapist, and they will not go and see a support group. But for them this is a way of coping and dealing and getting attention.<sup>10</sup>

**Termination:**

Termination to any activity or event is extremely important. The worse situation to create is one that is left unresolved. New open-endings oftentimes cause old endings to resurface. The product of this is symptoms reappear through a process of denial that develops into anger. The ghosts that get in the way are those fears or issues that are unresolved that the individual refuses to bring closure to. In reflecting on my Psychodrama workshop experience, I now wonder if some of my classmates are workshop junkies.

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. Williams refers to them as Workshop Junkies.



#### **IV. Summary:**

Elements of *Playback Theater* can be used and incorporated in the *Encounter Theatre* process only if these techniques enhance the actor training experience. These techniques must be limited as Dr. William's has done in the rehearsal process, to uncovering and capturing stored memories of personal experiences and observations that can be later incorporated in a theatrical performance. In *Encounter Theatre* once the objectives are determined, the therapeutic aspects of the encounter must be educationally driven, meaning that the learning outcome of the actors and the audience must be considered, discussed and pursued. Using any of these techniques on the audience unaware of the motives is strictly forbidden. As stated earlier, using participatory theatre as a means of social change and empowerment in multicultural education is most effective in empowering the traditionally powerless. The role of *Encounter Theatre* is to afford both the audience and actors an encounter, entertaining in nature and of the highest theatrically professional value that has a clear educational objective.



## **Chapter Two: Applications of Encounter Theatre**

### **A form of Participatory Theatre used in a Variety of Settings**

#### **I. Introduction**

Experiences in West Africa and involvement in various youth initiatives have contributed to my interest and pursuit of participatory theatre as a teaching medium. These *encounters* have enlightened me to the effective role participatory theatre has in effecting social change. Using participatory theatre as a means of social change and empowerment in multicultural education is most effective in empowering the traditionally powerless. I will present several examples applying the *Encounter Theatre* method to youth and adult communities in both semi and professional theatre environments and show how they work and why my Encounter Theatre Process is effective.

I decided to give up the security of a guaranteed job, a career awaiting me upon graduation from college with the only stipulation that I work every summer and winter inter-session. I gave all that up for the opportunity to go abroad and work building primary schools voluntarily in Ghana, West Africa. My history teacher David Northrup who at the end of a lecture in his *Europe and Africa Since 1500* course mentioned a program called *Operations Crossroads Africa* was having an informational sparked this interest. I attended and was hooked. Here was an opportunity to have my cake and eat it too! If accepted I could work for the summer and see if this is what I really want to do at the end of my undergraduate experience as it was suggested to me. So I applied and was accepted.



For eight and a half weeks I worked in Ghana, West Africa building primary school through out the country. We worked in conjunction with VOLU<sup>11</sup> the *Voluntary Workcamp Association of Ghana* and other international organizations from England, Scandinavia, Germany, and the West Indies. In addition to this we were filming the workcamp experience for a documentary for *Operations Crossroads Africa*, to later be used as a recruitment vehicle. The experience was fantastic! I traveled the entire country by road and by river, experienced differing cultures and ethnicities and for the first time in my life felt physically and mentally free.

Physically free, meaning that I have the freedom of movement. I could basically go as I pleased with out the physical sensation of an unseen barrier like those I experienced from time to time living in Boston. Boston a city of neighborhoods many close knit where outsiders are truly not welcomed. Also feeling as though you are in a forest, one person surrounded by so many, lost with no hope of finding your way, never experiencing other paradigms. If they are taught to believe this then they are truly lost in the forest.

Mentally free, meaning that I have the ability to expand my mental horizons. I for the first time was in an environment where I was a part of the majority, not the minority. At every turn, I saw a welcoming face, a friendly smile, it was truly liberating. Educationally it made me aware of why so many people seem to be culturally and spiritually bankrupt. They cannot see for the nose on their faces. They are culturally conditioned to believe that they can only achieve marginal levels of achievement. They are slaves to an intellectual belief that they are only capable of marginal success. This I believe is why people of African heritage who come to this country from other parts of

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<sup>11</sup> VOLU short for Voluntary





the world especially those from Afrocentric countries are able to, more often than not, realize the 'American Dream' than those of African heritage who are native born.

During this summer experiences I was fortunate to witness many community theatre presentations, many ceremonial in nature, relating to traditional customs, practices, and belief such as the enstooling ceremony of the Ashanti Hene (King). The ceremony's spectacles including song, dance, and costume, consists of a procession, in chronological order, of carved wooden stools, each representing a past king of the Ashanti nation ending with a new stool of which the new King is seating. In addition I witnessed community theatre presentations in which certain social issues were raised. It is those theatre presentations that I was professional drawn to. In those presentations I discovered the possibilities of educational theatre transcending entertainment to achieve and educational purpose. I would later use those experiences in future plays that I would develop.

From my African experience I returned with a new perspective on life. Some of my values and beliefs some would say changed I would say evolved. You see I now could see the forest for what it was, and what represented the trees. I was no longer lost for I was momentarily out of a particular forest and saw that the world is made up of many forests. In order not to be lost you need to compass yourself by a value and belief system that you can both preach and practice. Since then I have never found myself lost again. Now I was finally focusing on, really concentrating my time and energy in a discipline that seemed worthwhile. I developed a new focus about my teaching being about aiding others in establishing their own compass to guide their lives. This can only be done through a learning experience of self-discovery.



The concept for developing the Youth Action Movement which would be the catalyst for the development of the adolescent play about AIDS actually began during my senior year when I taught photography at the Hawthorne Youth and Community Center in Roxbury, where I was also a teen councilor, and also worked for a program called *The American Experience*. *The American Experience Program* was a cultural awareness project that paired for one-week encounters urban city teens with suburban teens to learn about the different ethnic and cultural neighborhoods of Boston. As a program Assistant my role was to assist in engaging students in all aspects of the project as well as contribute ideas for curriculum development. I participated with the program through out the life of the grant. We took students to communities such as Roxbury, Beacon Hill, South End, Chinatown, and the North End where they interacted with community residents, performers, artists and community leaders. This experience engaged the students in actively learning about the various similarities and differences of these communities. Often times community representatives would ‘hang out’ the next day to or so to experience another culture or ethnicity with the students. The only problem I had with the experience was true bonding, friendships; relationship took several days to develop.

One highlight of the program was a theatre encounter that told of the Ellis Island experience that many immigrants went through as they made their transition in to this country. What was intriguing was as we entered the performance space we were immediately given tags that we had to place around our necks so that the sign would drape across our chests. These signs, randomly distributed read, Negro, Irish, Polish, and several other ethnic and/or cultural groups. We were then lead through a performance in



which we were to act out spontaneously as a member of the group, which we wore on our chests. This interactive performance gave all of us involved a small taste of what it would have been like being a member of that particular group trying to immigrate into this country. This theatre encounter also aided in breaking down barriers that hindered the lines of communication. But the experiences were short lived due to program structure and time constraints.

On Monday the suburbanites are suspicious of the urbanites and vice-versa. On Tuesday a select few are beginning to talk and interact. By Wednesday they are interacting even more, you can see a glimmer of relationships developing. By Thursday major segments of the group have bonded. If it were not for the obvious racial distinctions you recall from Monday you couldn't distinguish the urban student from the suburban student. By Friday sincere friendships are developing, but since this is the last day you can only hope that the exchanges of phone numbers are sincere. There should have been built in the programs design follow up, maybe a reunion of sorts.

The number of drama teachers in schools has grown rapidly for years. But they are severely constrained by the timetable of forty-minute periods. School plays cannot be produced within such a framework. It is not surprising then that school plays ("theatre") must in practice be given a low priority. Most pupils' experience of drama must be confined to 'drama lessons' and the easiest way to conduct such a short lesson is to devote it to improvised drama and movement, with its focus on individual objectives. One of the central functions of drama is there by distorted

(Hargreaves 153)



There seems to be a perceived belief that all educational encounters can be achieved in the confines of a predetermined time period. I believe that some encounters require their own time to grow and develop. Each student is actually on his or her own timetable. Just because the academic experience has ended doesn't necessarily mean that the lesson has concluded. If we are to be transformed in to life-long learners we must break out of this mode of behavior, especially we educators. There is some positive feedback that I can give about the behavioral objectives of the program, it did expose people in a very intimate way to other cultures and ethnicities through an experience that they may never in life will have an opportunity to do. I did for a number of years see some of the student two of which who came from different school got married. Time is a very important, crucial element in the theatre development process. The *Encounter Theatre* method has varied in length depending on the community and scope of the project. Time ranges from as little as a month to as much as an academic year (eight months). Time will be discuss in relation to each example given.

Over the years I have experienced and experimented with students using elements of both Drama-in-Education (DIE)<sup>12</sup> and Theatre-in-Education (TIE)<sup>13</sup> as a means of social change and development. I am amazed that TIE for more that 25 years, and DIE for more than 50 years have been continual modes of educational theatre methodologies applied. However, I never until now had any formal vocabulary to classify what I have

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<sup>12</sup>As stated in *Creative Drama in the Classroom* (McCaslin p.10) "DIE (Drama-in-Education) is the use of drama as a means of teaching other subject areas. It is used to expand children's awareness, to enable them to look at reality through fantasy, to see below the surface of actions to their meanings. The objective is understanding rather than playmaking, although a play may be made in the process. Attitudes rather than characters are the chief concern."

<sup>13</sup>"TIE (Theatre-in-Education) is a British concept that differs from traditional children's theatre in its use of curricular material or social problems as themes. Performed by professional companies of actor-teachers, it presents thought-provoking content to young audiences for educational purposes rather than for entertainment. It must entertain to hold their attention, but that is not the primary purpose. The intent is to challenge the spectator and push him or her to further thinking and feeling about the issue."





been doing. I just knew then, that I was doing something right. I was truly on to something great! This is actually where the idea for a theatre-based youth initiative first formed in my mind.

The controversy over whether we should train children as performers has been in the past given a disproportionate attention to that aspect of theatre to do with acting, to the neglect of the more fundamental elements of dramatic form. Examination of the internal structure of dramatic playing, exercise and theatre reveals that at this deeper level the three modes share the same core components: focus; tension; and symbolization. These are the very tools with which the playwright and director manipulate their craft, tools which the youngest child entering an 'as if' form of behaviour unconsciously deploys in creating a fictitious context. In other words, in this sense the child is operating in dramatic form. Recognition of this view fundamentally affects how the teacher sees his craft. Our modern approach therefore includes acknowledgement by the teacher that although a theatrical presentation may no longer be a priority he has a parallel responsibility to the playwright or director. Just as they are concerned with focusing meaning, increasing and resolving tension and selecting symbols that resonate for the audience, the teacher must use these basic elements for the participants in the creative drama situation. (Bolton 15)

From my work with teens in the American Experience program I decided if I was given an opportunity I would try to create an entity that would allow youth to express their concerns creatively. Several years later I was given that opportunity.



## II. The Use of Participatory Theatre in Addressing Social Issues

### ***The Deadly Gift: Drama about AIDS awareness among teens.***

This work was developed with students from the New Beginnings Program in conjunction with the Youth Action Movement, a youth initiative sponsored by African/American American Friendship Incorporated a community leadership program that was funded by the Kellogg Foundation. The purpose of the play was to produce a work that spoke the truth, their truth, from their perspective about an issue that concerned them. Working with these students for a two month period enabled us to develop a quite impressive work.

The **Pre-Stage process of *Encounter Theatre*** did not begin immediately with ‘let’s write a play!’ If I tried to begin that way it would have been disastrous. A student community is no different than a neighborhood community as it relates to a new arrival. And the group must accept that newcomer, and the group leaders need to welcome him/her in order for one to gain acceptance. I have watched through experience working in a number of community-based programs in which the educator/group facilitator tried unsuccessfully to inspire/motivate their constituency. If the community does not buy into the activity, and feel that they have a clear voice in the creation, development, and ultimately the ownership of the work/project it is doomed from the start. The individual must feel cultural connected to the experience. The experience must have demonstrated value or more than likely they potential participants will quickly lose interest and distant themselves from the project. No matter how successful your project ultimately becomes, everyone experiences the sometimes-awkward nature of the buy-in. That is getting people to want to commit voluntarily to develop a body of work.



In the **Pre-Stage** everyone is engaged first and foremost in an informal group discussion about possible themes and objectives. In youth orientated encounters there are clear parameters established around the project. Students are asked what issues concern them, what topics are the most compelling, what do they want to address thematically by the use of theatre? In this discussion the director/educator uses the blackboard, or flip chart, jotting down student ideas as they are expressed. At this point only information is gathered. Students are asked to think about their ideas; these ideas will be explored at the next encounter. The overall objectives of the *Encounter Theatre* process are presented and questions arising from this presentation are entertained. It is emphasized that the collective must be in unanimous agreement to participate in the process. Time is given for students to digest their individual and collective role in the theatre encounter.

So how do you obtain *buy-in*? I believe in the honest approach. In the **Developmental Stage** engage them in a discussion about what it is you want to achieve, and what role you would like them to participate in. Clearly explained are the goals and object(s) of the project. Participants are asked what role they (individually) want to play. But the most important discussion you must initially have is what is the theme of this theatrical work and how does it relate to them. This is stated from the first meeting in the pre-stage and reiterated in the development stage. The goal is to create a work that speaks the truth, a certain kind of truth, from their perspective. Let them know that the dialogs must speak a truth. This is how the acting training and script development process can develop in a more seamless way. In other words, if your youth group is made up of 14 and 15 year olds then the subject matter and how the characters will express their feelings will be created and developed from that same 14 and 15 year old perspective.



So first decide on a theme then create a basic structure. For example who are the central characters? What I have found most useful is engaging the entire group is make sure that they select a them and that they each take part in the creation and development of characters, major or minor. Once this is achieved then develop a schedule of tasks, and a timeline for developing and completing this project. Included in this timetable will be workshops orientated around dramaturgy; theatre design, production, and actor training. Once this is done, with your foundation firmly established, you can then move on to the production stage.

The **Production Stage** in the project involves cultivating an audience made up of family, friends, educators, and community members who as audience participants share in the overall enjoyment of the work as passive spectators. They are transformed when the work leads to an open discussion at play's end with the actors and audience discussing the challenges, responsibilities, and decisions members of the community share in the problem the theme of the production raised. In the production process clear theatre objectives are addressed and all that are involved adhere to clearly defined professional theatre methodology, that is the group follows a clearly agreed upon performance schedule.

The **Social Change Stage** is the analysis process of the project. The play premiered and eventually closed, yet the thematic essence lingers on. It is in the extended life of the thematic essence of the encounter that is the most germane factor in the *encounter* process; in this instance it becomes truly participatory. Self-assessment and value of the experience happens. At this point individuals' experiences vary. Some experience social change immediately, while others are consciously affected later on.





Those individuals keenly interested in acting training begin immediately evaluating their skill development. Those more interested in the work's communal values focus their attentions on devising outreach mechanisms. Be it individual or collective, the social change stage spawns new life into the project. *Social Change* is merely the beginning, the development of the criteria and foundation for a *Direct Action* approach in addressing the issues raised by the production. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in his famous, *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (King 1963), the four-step process to his non-violent direct action campaign. The steps were 1) Research: collecting the fact to prove injustice was taking place, 2) Negotiation: attempt to try to have a constructive dialog to resolve the problem. 3) Self-Purification: all individuals involved in the campaign must go through a process where they are mentally and physically prepared, trained in the art and techniques, acquired the tools before embarking on the final step 4) Direct Action: which is creative tension designed to as he put it create Gadflies in the face of those who stood for injustice. Like King's third step *Self-Purification*, the Social Change Process of *The Encounter Theatre Method* seeks similar results in the individual and collective involved. The discoveries are that powerful. They do more than merely enlighten; they transform people to desire to effect social change with others.

The **Empowerment Stage** begins once everyone is in production and has an opportunity to assess their accomplishments after a performance, or series of performances. As they reflect on their individual and collective experiences they discover that they were enlightened, energized, and motivated to engage in individual or collective problem solving encounters. You see one encounter leads to another in which each one teaches one. Over the years I have produced several other works employing these



*Encounter Theatre* methods. The work that I am most proud of is *The Deadly Gift*.<sup>14</sup> It is this work that began my focused work on addressing the needs of adolescents through *Encounter Theatre*. Below is a brief synopsis of the *Encounter Theatre Process* used with adolescents, followed by an example of short encounter thematically focused on conflict resolution.

### *Adolescent Encounter Theatre Process*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>The Pre-Stage<br/>Establish Consensus</b>                   | Establish a group consensus about the theme and approach to the development of the product.  |
| <b>The Development Stage<br/>Product and Skill Development</b> | Created a work that speaks a truth from a youth's perspective and developed both the script and all the skills and talent needed for its performance to their community.     |
| <b>The Production Stage<br/>Cultivate an Audience</b>          | Cultivated an audience through the production of their work and through the post performance discussions about the product's theme.  |
| <b>The Social Change Stage<br/>Heighten Awareness</b>          | Students were transformed to desire to effect social change with others. Individual experiences varied; for some it was immediate for others it was delayed.                 |
| <b>The Empowerment Stage<br/>Community Service</b>             | Enlightened and motivated they engaged in individual or collective problem-solving encounters that were theme related. Some theatre-related other community service related. |

<sup>14</sup> See full play script of *The Deadly Gift* in Appendix B



## **Conflict Resolution: Using Drama for Educational and Social Change**

A Playwriting Workshop was designed for students interested in learning the art of playwriting from a community development perspective. Students created a play in collaboration with a particular community of choice whose theme is socially relevant to them. In this case, their school environment was chosen as their main setting, but the play also included elements of their community as well. The mechanics of script writing were explored through classroom activities such as improvisation, group discussions and short writing assignments. Students completed a one-act performance piece that was showcased at the workshop's end. Creating plays with a concentration on community development underscored the instructional approach to using the teaching of playwriting as a means of social change and empowerment. One example resulting from the playwriting workshop experiences is *The Incident at Madison O'Bryant High* play.

Students explored the multi-faceted discipline of dramatic theatre arts. Students used playwriting as a means to better understand the socio-political origins, traditions, and customs that contribute to the shaping and development of their popular culture. Utilizing their own cultural and ethnic roots, students were enriched and supported in their interaction with-in their peer group. The intent of this process was to bring about a new sense of awareness of his or her communities by the unlocking of each student's natural creativity.

During the course of the workshop sessions, students participated in a variety of workshop activities; theatre games, improvisation, storytelling, mime, etc. that helped in the development of their own character, small scenes and the one-act play as a whole.



The workshops were geared at the development of the one-act play based on a topic that the student felt was relevant to their particular constituency. When time permitted, students were assigned computer lab work during selected class sessions for work on particular aspects of the play's development.

### **Drama: *Incident At Madison O'Bryant High***

The following Drama titled, *Incident At Madison O'Bryant High School* was developed during four, two-hour workshops with students from the Madison Park and John D. O'Bryant High Schools. These are two urban public high schools in Boston who are currently participating in Roxbury Community College's *New Beginnings Program*. This after school program offers students, many of which have academic or behavioral problems that placed them at risk of failing, a second chance or fresh start. The *New Beginnings Program* affords them an opportunity at a fresh start by exposure to college life, and intense academic assistance, thus a new beginning. The workshops ran for two weeks, on two consecutive Monday and Tuesday afternoons from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Students also created a 30-minute talk show on video at the RCC Media Arts Studio. The talk show is based on this script.<sup>15</sup>

During the **Pre-Stage** students were actively engaged in a discussion about issues and concerns that affects them. Throughout the discussion students was asked what role theatre can play in addressing these issues. Either using a flip chart or a classroom chalkboard, as the ideas flow lists are compiled and later sorted out in to thematic groups. A group decision is made in editing this information in to manageable format. This approach assures collective involvement and ownership of the material. At this point we

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<sup>15</sup> See complete script, *Incident At Madison O'Bryant High School* in Appendix C





move to the development stage and finally the production stage. For clarity I have listed assessment criteria I subscribed to in this process.

During the **Development Stage** students were expected to: 1.) Participate fully in all workshop exercises and activities in the process of preparation and presentation of all class assignments and in completing all writing assignments on time. These workshop activities involve primarily actor training and script development. Some of the actor training exercises heavily relies on having the group divide up into smaller groups and have them engage in improving their characters through various scenarios that have been predetermined. Assemble participants from in and/or outside of class for their project, and arrange all additional rehearsal times needed to present their work 2.) Successfully complete a one-act play (running time 30 minutes) that must follow a pre-established format and bear a story line that must be clearly defined from which a theme can be derived. This script is the outgrowth from the small scenarios grouped together to form a completed play script. The goal in the development stage is to train emerging actors and create a body of work reflective of their collective experiences.

During the **Production Stage Assessment:** students were expected to: 1) Complete one full production of their work for class review: write an analysis of their own performance, 2) Participate in the entire Class Workshop Presentations: assist in the presentation of the work of others, and write a brief memo to each participant commenting on his or her work. The goal of the performance stage is to create an *encounter* opportunity for a particular community to experience a theatrical work that reflects thematically many of their collective concerning and/or issues. The motivation behind this encounter is to create a positive communal dialogue.



There was a final presentation of students' play done as a workshop performance. Students were encouraged to use a moderate semblance of costume and set props to enhance their presentation and gain practical experience in the development and mounting of a production.

The **Social Change Stage** involved developing lesson plans that incorporate teachers who are considering broader academic engagements of the students; the teacher should consider attaching written assignments to various stages of the development of the production project.

1. Read suggested materials and participate in discussions of those works

Allow those discussion to lead to written responses; critical analysis of the subject matter. This may lead to future script components, i.e. monologues and additional scene scenarios.

2. Write a critique of the production process and their participation in it. This can be done in journal fashion, having the students creating a storyboard of these observations and experiences.

Students at the end of the workshop experience developed a 30-minute video production of this project.

In **Empowerment Stage** the video has been used as a means of teaching future student participants. The cycle of empowerment leading to social change is evident here. Those audience participants who experience the social change eventually become empowered and will in their own way effect social change. I plan on continuing my association with *the New Beginning Program* and Roxbury Community College's



*Upward Bound Program.* I truly believe that by using drama we were able to tap into and unlock their creativity, and apply it to something relevant to them.

What is so important about this youth educational theatre initiative? I believe the most important role theatre has played in the lives of these teen participants is that they truly felt empowered. They individually and collectively found their voices and connected with an audience willing to hear them. The core of these individuals went on to graduate from high school and many have successfully gone on to college. Maybe the ultimate assessment of the value of their participation in this theatre project and other empowerment encounters will be assessed in the quality of their service to mankind.

### ***Incident At Madison O'Bryant High***

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>The Pre Stage<br/>Establishing Consensus</b></p>                          | <p>Collective involvement in the creation of the theme, and discussion about the criteria needed to address it.</p>  |
| <p><b>The Development Stage<br/>Skill and Project Development</b></p>           | <p>Assemble participants from in and/or outside of class.<br/>Complete a full one-act play for production<br/>Arrange rehearsal times as needed</p>  |
| <p><b>The Production Stage<br/>Create Communal Dialogue</b></p>                 | <p>Complete a full production of their work for class review and write an analysis of their own performance.</p> <p>Experience a theatrical work that reflects thematically many of their collective concerning and/or issues.</p> |
| <p><b>The Social Change Stage<br/>Individual and Collective Discoveries</b></p> | <p>Read and discuss thematically associated materials leading to written responses<br/>Critique the production process and their involvement in it.</p>  |
| <p><b>The Empowerment Stage<br/>Community Service</b></p>                       | <p>Audience participants are empowered by the experience and in turn effect social change. Each one teaches one.</p>   |



### III. Encounter Theatre in Youth Outreach Presentations

#### *Bring in Da Noise, Bring In Da Funk*

*Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk* produced by the Joseph Papp Public theater at the New York Shakespeare Festival under the leadership of George C. Wolfe has won four 1996 Tony Awards. George C. Wolfe and Savion Glover, who won Tony Awards for their direction and choreography, respectively for *Noise/Funk*, returned to re-stage the first national tour. *Noise/Funk* began its national tour in Detroit, Michigan in September of 1997 and Boston from May 19, through June 14th, 1998. In addition to Detroit and its scheduled run in Boston, *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk* hit major cities such as: Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, Denver and Los Angeles. *Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk* is a groundbreaking ensemble musical, conceived and directed by Mr. Wolfe, and choreographed by Mr. Glover. *Noise/Funk* utilizes the rhythms and energies of tap to celebrate the history of the beat by presenting text and songs which are comprised of Mr. Glover's tap; poetry by Reg E. Gaimes; and music by Ann Duquesnay, Zane Mark and Daryl Waters.

George C. Wolfe and Savion Glover first worked together in 1992 on the landmark Broadway musical *Jelly's Last Jam*. During the summer of 1994, Wolfe presented *Glover in Dancing under the Stars* at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, an evening of tap dancing that was part of the Public Theater's *Mondays at the Delacorte* program. *Noise/Funk* grew out of Wolfe's idea of Savion as a living repository of rhythm. Wolfe comments:

From generation to generation, tap dancers taught each other their steps.

The old timers passed their information on to Savion, and it landed in his





feet, his being, and his soul. Re-inventing these steps he has created a new form, and through his choreography in *Noise/Funk*, he is teaching tap to a new generation of dancers.<sup>16</sup>

*Noise/Funk* started as a workshop during the summer of 1995 at the Public Theater, where it opened in November to virtually unanimous critical acclaim by theatre and dance critics, playing until January 1996. It then transferred to Broadway in April 1996 and reopened to a second round of rave reviews, nine Tony Award nominations including best musical, and sell-out crowds. In his review of the Broadway production, Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* exclaimed: “Sing hallelujah! *Noise/Funk* is alive and flying higher than ever. This white-hot exchange of energy can sometimes be found at a rock concert, but rarely at a Broadway musical.”<sup>17</sup> It continued to break house records at the Ambassador Theater.<sup>18</sup>

I attended a Wednesday evening performance in March and was surprised, given that the show had been running on Broadway for three years, that the theatre was packed. Once the show began, I could see why. It was an electrifying, true toe tapping, uplifting educational experience. What is most fascinating to me is the way the play captures the essence of the African American experience, using projected images and typography as historical commentary; it covered over a three hundred year period in the span of a two-hour performance. The team of Wolfe and Glover has produced for America a theatrical phenomenon. By merging tap, rap, music, visual graphics, and stylistically simple sets,

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<sup>16</sup> From press release for the Public Theater

<sup>17</sup> From press release for the Public Theater

<sup>18</sup> In April I was sent by the Wang Center to see the Broadway production in preparation for the school outreach project.



they have created an exceptional teaching medium. Using theatre as a means of teaching Black history attracted me to *Noise/Funk* and to its educational outreach activities.

### **Educational Outreach: *Bring In 'Da Kids***

The process that I ultimately used in addressing the goals and objectives of the *Bring In 'Da Kids* project followed clearly defined *Encounter Theatre* methods. Throughout this section I will clarify the aspect of the encounter method used and the educational outcomes from the process.

#### **1. Pre-Stage - Overview of Education Outreach activities**

The educational outreach program developed by the Public Theatre called *Bring In 'Da Kids*, conceived, written, and produced by the Public Theater of New York, focused on attracting and developing new theatre audiences, primarily the youth. Their objectives were accomplished on many levels, through a series of educational and community outreach programs and special events that coincided with the show. For example, in Seattle, Washington, the theme used in their community and school outreach program was "*Black History-More Than 28 Days.*" Although the community-based activities involved celebrations centered on *Noise/Funk* and took place during Black History Month, their theme was a reminder that the show itself represents hundreds of years of Black history in America that is worthy of recognition beyond the year's shortest month.

To promote public awareness, some cities sponsored *Noise/Funk* information and Black history trivia that is facts about such individuals as Bill Robinson and created assorted bibliographies of relevant books, for distribution throughout the city.



*What's Your Noise*, bus campaign - featured art of local students who used the white space on bus-ads to illustrate their noise. *What's Your Noise* is based on the belief that *Noise* is a personal method of cultural dialogue. With this belief people in the community could see how young people express their *Noise*.<sup>19</sup>

Official *Noise/Funk* sponsorship includes on-air cast interviews, pre-slotted trivia spots, ticket giveaways, and other tie-ins. These commercial activities were handled by the national public relations entities and are not the responsibility of the advisory boards. However indirectly several of these public relations activities did overlap the advisory boards activities. During this pre stage process volunteer members came to a consensus about their mission in addressing new audience development and exposure to the Afrocentric themes inherent in the production. Buy in was not a problem; but truly reaching the educational objectives envisioned was the dilemma.

Under the direction of Dr. Edward Williams<sup>20</sup>, worked as the Wang Center's Diversity Consultant established an advisory Committee to primarily target and attract the African American community to the production of *Noise/Funk*. During its Boston engagement the volunteer advisory board, comprised of education, art, and city administrators representing various segments of Greater Boston's Black community, worked together to devise an approach. Once the committee was formed and objectives were established the processed moved to the developmental stage.

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<sup>19</sup> From press release for the Public Theater

<sup>20</sup> He is a licensed clinical psychologist and visual and performing arts producer, who I interviewed concerning the parallels between *Playback Theatre* and *Encounter Theatre* in methodology and use of therapy in addressing social change.



During the pre-stage process the advisory committee met weekly to aid in the community outreach effort in developing new young theatre audiences. Committee activities include volunteers, advocacy and ambassadorships<sup>21</sup>, potential sponsor and collaboration contacts. For example, the advisory board was able to get Ms. Dianne Walker, a nationally and internationally renowned tap dancer and mentor to Savion Glover and contemporary of the late Gregory Hines, to conduct a Master class<sup>22</sup> at one of our teacher training workshops.<sup>23</sup>

## **2. Development Stage - Audience development Committee activities**

After I accepted Dr. Edward Williams' invitation to be a participant on the advisory committee I was soon asked by Vicki Barrett, Director of the Wang Center's Young At Arts program if I would consider putting together an outreach program involving my students based on an educational study guide written by Kimberly Flynn. Again, we as a committee were first gathered together in mid-March and this request would require my students and I to conduct a series of middle and high school site visits within a span of time of a little more than a month just prior to the play's Boston run. In order to proceed with this project I called on the services of a select number of my theatre arts student from Roxbury Community College. Their involvement immediately added a new dimension to this project, one of mentoring. Because my student herald from the same communities that these middle and high school students are from, their presence as community role models brings to the situation a refreshing added bonus. After extracting basic elements from the study guide I develop a working script that I work shopped with

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<sup>21</sup> Student internships performed at the Wang Center.

<sup>22</sup> Demonstrations included audience and artist interaction plus a question & answer session.

<sup>23</sup> The teacher training workshops will be fully discussed in this section





my students. Working with my students I was able to construct three units each running approximately 30-minute aimed at engaging students and teachers in a discussion about selected segments of Black history. Accompanying these presentations were slide images that showcased many individuals highlighted in the play, in the study guide, and/or individual who I chose to incorporate to give a more complete historical representation of the time period at hand.

Teaching the historical contents to various levels of students was not easy. My challenge was to make sure that the material was age appropriate. Each academic level, elementary, middle, and secondary having their own unique learning environments, I have found must have this historical information filtered to them properly. However, to test the age appropriateness of the study guide can only be achieved in the field. In some cities at the elementary level, the outreach has been from a more hands-on approach where featuring percussive instruments, their use and level of importance in Black culture, during slavery and beyond would prove very effective. At the middle school level, a slightly more advanced view such as the history of tap in America, its evolution, rise and decline, including some sort of participatory dance with cast members proved more effective. And at the high school level more relevant though provoking topics such as August Wilson's challenge to the nation to examine the validity of diversity in theatre and what that does to the existence of Black theatre seemed appropriate for some. In Boston, the advisory committee decided due to logistical issues (too many schools to cover in a short period of time) and safety concerns (transporting children via public transportation would create potential problems), not to conduct outreach activities to the elementary schools. Our educational outreach effort was then focused on the middle and



high school levels only. Originally this included from Boston: 17 middle, 11 high schools, and from METCO:<sup>24</sup> 8 middle and high schools.<sup>25</sup> Each school will be allotted approximately 40 tickets for students and teachers to attend. My role in the educational outreach project was three-fold: First, to introduce theatre to those new audience members who probably has not experienced a live theatre performance before. Second, using participatory theatre <sup>26</sup> communicates the play's concept and aspects of the play's subject matter. And third, utilize RCC students as role models and mentors to encourage student interest in the performing arts, the art profession and higher education in general.

Again, the play *Noise/Funk* chronicles the history of African Americans spanning a three hundred period. My challenge was to extract from the study guide and the play itself portions that would be relevant to teach to middle and high school students in roughly fifty minute outreach sessions. Kimberly Flynn's study guide, produced by the *Public Theater*, it was designed to be taught to students after they had experienced the performance. We however approached students with this information in reverse order. Over approximately a month period we presented to teachers and students samplings of the play's historical content in what I like to call performance dialogues. The performance elements that we present are sprinkled in the dialogue for good measure, to keep it interesting. My team of *Theatre Art Interns* had to be taught the range of topics depicted in the play prior to their participation in the outreach. Their challenge was to be able to sustain a spirited conversation/dialogue with teachers and students about the

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<sup>24</sup> A volunteer busing program involving urban students an opportunity to be bussed to and educated in suburban school. Established in the mid-60s it was the first volunteer busing program in the nation and the most successful and still operating program.

<sup>25</sup> See footnote 30 on page 90 for complete school listings

<sup>26</sup> Interactive theatre involving complete audience interaction in the context of the performance and presentation.



dynamics of the theatre profession, the background about the plays inspiration and motivation and most importantly teach and celebrate the history of those of African descent in the United States. Again, this presentation is a performance dialogue with teachers and students. Those we interact with during the outreach process heard poetry, songs, political commentary, and narrations about the lives and contributions of a range of African American figures through out history. These historical figures paralleled the play's content.

One of the cast members who graduated from Boston's City Roots high school in Roslindale participated in a Master class at his alma mater where Channel 5's *Chronicle* television program covered the event. At this Master class I and several of my students were present to participate in a dialogue with cast members along with high school students from *City Roots* and several local schools in the Roslindale area. Channel 5's *Chronicle* was on hand to do an interview. The young cast members of *Noise/Funk* involved in the outreach activities play a vital role in mentoring and role modeling, making a positive lasting educational impact on these student's lives. By having the cast members, especially the four of the national tour from Boston, participate in these Master classes demonstrates to the young that you can achieve your dreams if you work at it.

### **3. Production Stage - Master classes: cast appearances in the community**

In preparation for the June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1998 event, we conducted two teacher workshops at the Wang Center. The first workshop was held on April 16th which included screening the promotional video on *Noise/Funk*, our presentation of samples of the curriculum developed for the Boston outreach project and the distribution of copies of the study guide. Vicki Barrett, Director of the *Young At Arts* program introduced the afternoon



activities which included an overview and what role my students and I will play in this outreach project. There was a discussion that followed about the effective ways to incorporate the study materials into each teacher's curriculum. Teachers present signed up for site and program selection choices. This workshop was geared to offer teachers choices in the content of the outreach presentations. In attendance were 16 teachers, roughly half of the total numbers of teachers who agreed to be a part of the process.

We stressed that this outreach project was less a touring theatre presentation but more of a dialogue with students and teachers about the historical content that the play captures. Included in these discussions, from a student perspective, was an overview of theatre itself; engaging in dialogue RCC students with public middle and high school students. One of the intended results of this outreach activity is the potential for Mentoring and role modeling. RCC students are products of the same community and some of the same schools that we will be visiting. The mere presence as college students for some is inspiring. For those interested in the performing arts this is an added treat. As a sample, we discussed the plays style and structure.<sup>27</sup> Kimberly Flynn's study guide was introduced and distributed for the first time to the teachers present. What was explained was that the study guide is designed as a teaching aide in the process of developing young student theatergoers into theatre critics. To develop their analytical skills, where they can truly appreciate the theatrical experience. The goal is to create not just another student group of consumers of culture, but active learners, new theatre audience participants who will critically analyze:

- How does a work of art - a play, a painting, a movie, a song do its work on you?
- How did the varied language patterns, images, music and dance grab you?

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<sup>27</sup> See Outreach Presentation Introduction pages 2 & 3





- What the point of a scene was and how it is driven home, what made the artwork?

I explained that the structure of the show happens in real time. It's a show that deals with history and it's also the way the show talks about time, which is unique, using the storyteller approach. Eventually, after experiencing the performance, teachers and students will have the opportunity to engage in further dialogue about the history presented in *Noise/Funk*. They will be able to consider the following, more general, questions about history:

- If time is a line that has no beginning and no end, how do we tell history?
- If history is made of uncountable moments, what do you choose to tell or omit?
- If “official” American history is the story of presidents, wars, and the building of cities, what and who are not included?

Then from these general questions probe deeper into selected historical periods assessing the impact and historical contributions of the performing arts. As stated in the study guide: “Every historian is a story teller who makes choices. The storytellers of the history presented in *Noise/Funk* choose to tell the progress of a people in many movements: the task of telling of emancipation of a people at ground level.”<sup>28</sup> The play does this in six parts, an enormous feat given that the historical timeline spans three hundred years:

1. **In ‘Da Beginning:** The Middle Passage
2. **Som’tin’ From Nuthin’:** Life during slavery
3. **Urbanization:** Emancipation /the Great Migration North; Harlem Renaissance
4. **Where’s The Beat?:** Tap Meets Hollywood, what happens: A tap discourse

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<sup>28</sup> Quote from *Noise Funk* lesson plan produced by the Public Theater



**5. Street Corner Symphony:** The story of a city block from '50s through '80s

**6. Noise/Funk:** Today and beyond.

“This is a lot of ground to cover, and *Noise/Funk* covers it with `only five dancers, two drummers, a singer, and a rapper (whose character name in the show is “Da Voice”) - together they bring the beat across three centuries. Through out the play you will hear names. A list of names throughout the show, characters of ‘Da Voice and ‘Da Singer will conjure up multitudes of people who made and were made by this history.”

(Flynn 3)

As Kimberly Flynn stressed, the play is conceived to fill you up, on any good night in the theatre, with more information than you can handle sitting in your seat. And the study guide merely gives you an edge. This study guide gives a detailed overview of historical figures mentioned including for easy reference, names and short biographical lists on every person mentioned in the show and even some that are not. My goal through out this project was to suggest and encourage engaging ways in which teachers and students can interact and explore particular historical periods in African American history as they prepare for the experience of seeing the performance. In order to do my job effectively I designed three-package presentation from which teachers were asked to choose from.

**1. The Middle Passage:** recalling the holocaust/Slavery and the Civil War

- A Diaspora: about names: emancipation and beyond, what’s in a name.
- Life during slavery: the importance of the slave narratives
- They stole our drum: impact of the striping of cultural artifacts
- Alliteration and assonance: explanation of rhythm and the beat



## **2. Urbanization:** Emancipation/the Great Migration North; Harlem Renaissance

- The Lynching Blues/The Blues / Crossroads I
- Migration North: Chicago Bound
- Nations: cultural & political ideology dialogue of the nation concept
- The Jazz Age/Harlem Renaissance

## **3. Civil Rights/Music Progression, and Icons from 1950s through 1980s**

- The '50s: Birth of the Civil Rights Movement
- The '60s: Hamer, King & Malcolm
- The '70s: Musical flavors
- The '80s Rap / Crossroads II

## **4. Social Change Stage - Individual and Collective**

After my students and I presented samples of each of the three units we had a dialogue with the teachers about the content presented. This was the social change stage of the process. I was amazed that very few teachers were actually in the performing arts. The teachers present represented the broad spectrum of teaching disciplines from math to language arts. There were two dance instructors present who asked questions concerning how in-depth would we go in explaining the history of dance in America. This is an excellent question. Not being trained in the art and discipline of dance I explained that I felt this is a subject that I personally am ill prepared to teach and honestly stated as such. I explained though that I could cover the history and evolution of Afrocentric dance in America but only from a discussion standpoint. Franz a then student<sup>29</sup> of Roxbury Community College concentrating in Theatre Arts., when asked at the first teacher-

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<sup>29</sup> Franz Boneau graduated in 1999.



training workshop by one of the dance teachers how will the group present the dance curriculum to the students responded by stating:

I'm not a dancer but I do know rhythm. I can relate to rhythm in rap and how the vocal beat in rap is similar to the rhythm of tap. That it culturally stems from the same source. The rapper Busta Rhymes in his rap (gave an example) sings...I can illustrate how the rhythm of the rap can be tapped out. (Franz Boneau)

He proceeded to demonstrate. It was exciting to watch. Here one of the students improvised something to the teachers especially the dance instructors that was relevant. How can we connect this subject matter to the students? And in a very precise way Franz demonstrated how to culturally connect to the students. Aisha followed with an example of a Billie Holiday song and a song of Erika Badu and how their vocal stylings are similar, excellent examples. The students have the knack for drawing from their cultural experiences and sharing that with their audience. They bring a refreshing truth to the subjects at hand. After these examples, teachers were very interested in where they came from. Are they products of the community or from somewhere else? They were both surprised and pleased to discover that with the exception of Caroline who is from France, Jimmy who is from Alabama, and Aisha who from Concord (by way of METCO), everyone in the production, including myself of the public Boston school system.

Caroline Victor, who is originally from Paris, France and spent her high school years in Burkina Faso, West Africa, this was her first year at RCC. "It is interesting to learn about the African-American experience. *Bring In 'Da Noise* is really powerful. I want to be a filmmaker, and this program has taught me a lot."





James Hardy a long time resident of Roxbury and then a full time then student at Roxbury Community College concentrating in Early Childhood Education, is a father of two children, with custody of his then six year old son. James after receiving his degree in Early Childhood Education continued his studies at University of Massachusetts at Boston, with the desire to become a teacher. His comments about the outreach project: "In doing this outreach we must unite the home with the school and the school with the community, this is how we allow the children and students to become successful and lead productive and promising lives." While at the Phyllis Wheatley School where we were interviewed by Dorchester Community News James further states:

With this program, we can show the kids where their parents and grand-parents are coming from and where we are headed. It is important to show the kids that they can go on regardless of the past and to show them that there is more beyond just where they are living....It is difficult for kids to make it. We need to show them plays and get their interest. I would like to see more inside the classroom as well as outside so the kids know that they really have a chance. We need to teach them to see beyond the corner.

On May 24, 1998 *Young Art Arts* hosted an event for 200 of their community partners. Guests including students and their families arrived in the Grand Lobby of the Wang Center at 3:30 pm for an afternoon of *Noise/Funk* related activities and community building. Partners of *Young Art Arts* were involved in the planning of this event. The Boys and Girls Clubs, Youth Enrichment Services (YES), Federated Neighborhood Housing (FDNH), East Boston Social Center and LynnArts all participated. What *Young*



*At Arts* offered on that day were six activities, which included: dinner, an art project, a song workshop, a dance session, a discussion in the Suskind Lobby and a slide presentation that I presented relating to the outreach project. Members of the cast were present and were able to join in activities when time permitted. Following these activities everyone in attendance proceeded to the Schubert Theatre for the evening performance. The Community Day performance was a tremendous success.

Vanessa Ly then a student who transferred to Mass Bay Community College to study forensic science comments about her very first outreach experience at the Woodrow Wilson Middle School:

The day went well, it was really inspirational. There was one boy who was writing a book. He wanted to be a playwright and wanted to know how we got involved in the theater. When he found out that he was going to go see the play, he was so excited. The kids knew a lot and there was a lot of interest in the program.

### **5. Empowerment Stage - Community Outreach**

The Boston Outreach Committee sold 1100 tickets for that evening performance and combined with the successful fund-raiser for the gala May 19th opening of the show, helped to underwrite the Student Day Performance on June 11<sup>th</sup>. This event had 1500 students in attendance for a free performance. At this event the National Outreach Coordinator spoke on their behalf and mentioned the combined efforts that she and I were engaged in, have both my students and cast members present and perform at selected sites. This was followed by dinner in which selected teachers who attended the performance were invited.



The Public School Performance of *Bring In Da Noise, Bring In Da Funk* took place on June 11, 1998 12:00 PM. Over 1500 students from 26 Boston Public Schools attended the 12:00 noon performance of Noise/Funk on June 11, 1998.<sup>30</sup> In addition, 250 METCO students will participate as well as 75 students from Roxbury Community College and 409 students from the Roxbury Center for the Performing Arts. Our students came from across the city representing the middle and high schools. Their interested teachers represent many areas of the curriculum ranging from math, English, history, special needs, dance, music, and performing arts.

During the spring 1998 Semester, a group of twelve students were enrolled in the spring 1998 Theatre Arts Internship. These students were hand picked based on criteria ranging from academic pursuits to personal interest. My goal as instructor was to build a new core group of students as part of my resident company. In order to do this I needed to develop a true ensemble out of a vast cross-section of students with varying levels of abilities and interests.

Willie Johnson, a former student at Roxbury Community College, received an Associates Degree in the fall of 1998. His long-term goal is to transfer to Emerson College to study Film/Global Communications and Photography as a double major.

My experience in Mr. Coleman's class has been motivational to me as an aspiring film major. It has enabled me to expand my thoughts concerning the aspects of theatre arts as an abstract form. The Theatre Arts Internship

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<sup>30</sup> *Bring in da Kids* program outreached to 21 Boston Public Schools. The Middle Schools were: Edwards\*, Curly\*, Wilson\*, O'Bryant, McCormack\*, Timilty, King, Renaissance\*, Thompson, Gavin, Lewis\*, Dearborn, Wheatley\*, Cleveland\*, and Boston Latin Academy. The High Schools were: English\*, Burke\*, Snowden\*, O'Bryant\*, Charlestown\*, Boston Technical\*, Hyde Park\*\*, Madison Park\*, Dorchester\*\*, and City Roots\*. Schools with \* are those that were visited by Roxbury Community College student-performers. Schools with \*\* are those that were requested by cast members who are alumnus.



was a well-taught class, which exposed the students to various aspects about themselves as human beings. I personally felt the class was universal and educational, and I enjoyed it.

Jimmy Pettway (enrolled) who was born in a small southern town called Camdan, Alabama and is the tenth of eleven kids. His first performance took place when he was in the sixth grade. From that day on he says he knew that show business would be his career. In 1972 he enrolled into a dramatic program at the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts. While there he had the chance to play one of the wise men in the production of *Black Nativity*.

Langston Hughes' poem, *I've Known Rivers* is what really inspired me to continue my education in the arts. I attended the Carol Nash School of Drama, studying voice over and acting, then the Leland Powell School graduating in 1976 with a diploma in Drama 1 & 2. In New York City I studied at the Hubert Burgdolf Studio, concentrating in the areas of acting, dance, fencing and vocal development. Since then I have studied at the Hudson Guild Theater, starring in the production of *To Follow The Sun*, Marie Grecco Production Co., in which I learned about the working of the theatre advertising industry.

Presently he is a member of Mr. Edward William's *Playback Theater* and *The Roxbury Repertory Theatre Company*. Working with the two directors of these theatre companies has afforded him the opportunity to participate in the community outreach. His talent and years of experience proved to be a very valuable resource.





### **Educational Outreach Summary**

The National Tour of the Public Theater's Noise/Funk: *Bring in 'Da Kids* program offered local educators in each city that the show appeared an opportunity to interact with the cast via Master classes and dance workshops and to learn more about the play's the black cultural theme and its development process through focused educational discussions. Included in each of the outreach presentation was a short video narrated by Phillysha Rashad which showcased the shows phenomenal success and the spirit behind its concept, that of showcasing Savion Glover as a repository of American tap dancing heritage through the telling of the history of the African American experience. The study guide companion to the show was designed for post-performance use. My students and I were challenged to implement the study guide prior to students viewing the production. This meant that I had to teach my students theatre production techniques ranging from technical production to acting. The outreach project became a road show in which students were performing in front of middle and high school students in a variety of setting. On any given day we could be in a class room in front of forty kids then travel to another cite to perform in a auditorium in front of over one hundred people. Schedules constantly changed for both students and schools sites, which added a level of complexity that under normal conditions would not be tolerated. But my students and I are products of the communities we are outreaching to. And it was that personal commitment of everyone that made it a success. Add to this the fact that four of the cast members are from Boston made the Boston outreach efforts even more important.

The producers from New York wanted us to be integrated into the cast outreach efforts. Unlike what has taken place in other markets, our outreach was in no way trivial.



We did not give a mere glossed over Black history lesson followed by a little song and dance number. What we offered each site we visited was an educational experience. We did not totally lecture to students. We made the experience interactive. Incorporating historical slides as well as interjecting questions throughout our presentation, the goal was to have a meaningful dialogue with students. For example, when we discussed the lynching epidemic during the period of 1890 through 1910 and the role that Ida B. Wells played as a major anti-lynching crusader; a graphic slide was shown of two Black men being lynched. We conversed with students about this period from the standpoint of how did that image make them feel? The students responded by saying it made them angry, upset even frightened, I made the connection to a scene in the play in which a dancer is lynched. I described how although the scene has but one performer dancing, through staging, lighting and the pulsating beat of his rhythmic taps, you had the sensation of a crowd converging on this individual, binding his hands behind him and stringing him up and killing him, leaving him dangling, swaying from a tree limb. There was no noose around his neck, nor was any other person present on stage, but the intensity of the scene recalled for me the graphic nature of the slide image we viewed. Our goal is for students to be educated consumers of art and not take art for granted. To learn how art expresses history and culture in an extremely powerful way. When these students finally see the performance they will be able to relate to different periods of African American history, thus the theatre experience will be even more meaningful. I truly believe that you cannot appreciate anything that you don't understand. Thus, by having this educational experience prior to seeing the performance students will truly have an extremely rewarding experience.



This outreach project created a wonderful opportunity for young people to learn an often-neglected aspect of American history. During the outreach process I have proposed to teachers choices in how to approach the curriculum. As an out growth of the study guide teachers can engage students in writing reflective essays on selected topics presented. They can also have student create their own narratives stories or tell from an oral history perspective what it would be like living during a particular time in history commenting on certain historical places and events. The feedback we have received from the New York producers and the national outreach coordinator was that our outreach efforts put the Bring In 'Da Kids program on another level. The culmination of this was at Roxbury Community College on Thursday, May 28, at our Media Arts Center, where we had eight METCO schools bussed in for an afternoon presentation that consisted off the educational outreach presentation, a solo selection from the narrator of the play, selected dance numbers performed by the dancers accompanied by the shows drummers followed by a question and answer session opened to the audience.

**A. How intense was the curriculum in this short period of time?**

My student performers brought a certain level of intensity and sincerity that was infectious. Also I had a company member of the Roxbury Repertory Theatre Company present for the presentations during the post school semester period to aid in maintaining a certain level of theatrical quality and balance, given the daily personnel changes that I had to make due to student availability. For the middle and high school students we interacted with during the outreach, we were merely at a starting point. Most teachers had not begun teaching any lessons from the study guide making our presentation the formal introduction. We hoped that teachers would continue to dialogue with their



students about the history inherent in the *Noise /Funk* play. Only in that way will the teaching of the historical significance of African American presence in the United States will be truly effective. It must be a continual learning process.

### **B. What were teacher curriculum and site presentation expectations?**

Most teachers expected for us to begin the formal introduction of the curriculum. About fifty percent of the teachers had not begun the curriculum and waited for us to come to their site to be the formal introducers. This was fine with us, but it would have worked out better if we all had more planning time. The majority of teachers were a bit puzzled as to what to truly expect. Although we had two teacher training workshops, because of changing itineraries only a small group of the teachers present had a clear sense of how to present the information at their site.

The best example I can give is with the Boston Renaissance School. These students were by far the best prepared and most involved. I must give the teachers credit for engaging the students in reading the study guide prior to our arrival. When my group asked those content questions many of them were able to quickly respond with accurate information. They were extremely attentive and active in the entire presentation.

At other sites it appeared that there were alternative goals achieved that often times happened by accident. At several of the sites we visited my students made personal connections with teachers and students we interacted. Ranging from my students being graduates from that particular school, being a relative or a neighbor of a particular student present, to a particular teacher in the workshop has been the teacher of one of my student performers. My students having the opportunity to make those connections personally touched me. They were truly the teachers in this experience. The process they





experience was *Encounter Theatre* in which through the process of engagement (development of the product), and the performance of the product they learned tremendously, as was individually from the experience. They learned professional theatre methods, which for example Franz Boneau has continued in his studies and professional work as an actor in New York. They learned the role of participatory theatre in addressing social issues, and most importantly they learned a lot about themselves in the process, from developing self-esteem, to intellectually expanding their knowledge of African American history. Finally the most powerful aspect of this encounter was the involvement of the 1500 youth from various schools that we outreached to and the educationally rich experience they gained from their involvement.



**Educational Outreach: *Bring In 'Da Kids***

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|--|---|
| <p align="center"><b>The Pre Stage</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Overview of Education Outreach</b></p>                               | <p>Volunteer advisory board, comprised of education, art, and city administrators representing various segments of Greater Boston's Black community, worked together to devise an approach.</p>   |
| <p align="center"><b>The Development Stage</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Audience development<br/>Committee activities</b></p>        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.) Train students to conduct series of middle and high school site visits using materials from <i>Bring In Da Kids</i> post-performance curriculum.</li> <li>2.) Develop outreach presentation as a pre-performance teach-in. Develop as a play script.</li> <li>3.) Train and rehearse students.</li> <li>4.) Create two teacher workshops at the Wang Center for teachers to select and book segment for performance at their school site.</li> </ol> |
| <p align="center"><b>The Production Stage</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Master classes:<br/>Cast Appearances in the Community</b></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.) Perform workshop presentations</li> <li>2.) Perform Outreach presentations</li> <li>3.) Outreach to over 1500 students at select Boston Public schools</li> <li>4.) Students and cast members perform for Metco Schools at RCC</li> </ol>  |
| <p align="center"><b>The Social Change Stage</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Individual and Collective Discoveries</b></p>              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.) Dialogue with teachers and students about content presented.</li> <li>2.) Student performers dialogue</li> <li>3.) Shared discoveries</li> </ol>   |
| <p align="center"><b>The Empowerment Stage</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Community Outreach</b></p>                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.) Have all 1500 student attend matinee performance of <i>Bring in Da Noise, Bring in Da Funk</i>.</li> <li>2.) Discuss outcomes with students and teachers</li> </ol>  |



## IV. Encounter Theatre and Cultural Awareness

### The Mighty Jajah: A Jamaican Experience

At this time I engaged both my then current students and select community residents in a theatre encounter that would test the limits of my participatory theatre theory. *The Mighty Jajah: A Jamaican Experience* was a eight month long participatory project that merged academic and community participants in an engaging process of developing a play focused on a theme of cultural interest. That theme was the history of the repatriation movement; in particular the more current Marcus Garvey inspired back-to-Africa movement.

The **Pre-Stage** involved both students and community people the play project was developed on a simple theme about the importance of cultural heritage. The thought I raised to the group was what if two children whose parents were members of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded and lead by Marcus Garvey, grew up as life long friends inspired by that influence, in their later years decided to fulfill Marcus Garvey's dream of repatriation to Africa. What if this movement was developing a tremendous following, so much so that the government saw this organization as threatening the status quo? What if the place is Jamaica, three years prior to Jamaica's independence is where the play takes place? And finally, what if the majority of the language of the play is in Jamaican dialect? These were the challenges that I proposed to the group.

As the playwright I knew I needed full commitment of the group in order to develop such an adventurous project such as this one. Creating the story was easy. Doing the background research on the environment and on historical events and people



from which to carve and craft characters wasn't that difficult. But being a non-Jamaican to make this work to speak a certain truth to the audience, which would be primarily Caribbean, was a tall order. This is why first one must gain that initial commitment from the participants. Yes I am developing a commercially viable play however for it to ring true in the eyes, ears, and hearts of the community that will eventually experience the performance, I must develop the project in workshop fashion. This means developing a play treatment, an overview outline the plot, the conflict that moves the story and the meaning fueling the theme. After discussing this with the group character Ideas develop. I established the basic premise, two life-long friend create a grassroots organization that is spiritually motivated excites the people and over a period of time amasses quite a following. The British appointed government, which is then currently dealing with periodic threats against their continued control over the island and it's people, sees this movement as threatening and feel that it must be stopped at all cost.

During the **Developmental Stage** several students were asked to participate in the project. Out of the eventual 25 cast members involved in the project only five were actually from Jamaica. Only two, including myself were African Americans. The rest were from various Caribbean Islands such as, Barbados, Trinidad, Tobago, and Montserrat. Out of the group only four individuals had any prior theatre experience. To train the participants in acting techniques and maintain their interest in the project three unique approaches where applied, character identification, character motivation, and education, language/ diction.

First, as I developed characters, when ever possible I incorporated their personal traits in the characterization. This allowed the amateur actor to comfortably get into the





character, identify with the character, know what the character is thinking and most importantly what the character will do or how he or she will react to a situation before that situation arises.

Secondly, we would have weekly script review sessions. These sessions would be primarily made up of the production team, the designers and principle actors, yet we opened these sessions to all cast members, and personally invited them to these sessions when their characters were involved in the discussion. In these discussions we would flush out inconsistencies in the story, but more importantly we would concentrate on the diction of the different characters. Our goal was to give their language authenticity. For example if your character is from a rural community and is not highly educated he or she would speak a certain way. On the other hand if the person was well educated but originally the object of the project was to develop a play so culturally rooted that the different nuances of the language would ring true.

Thirdly, I continually researched and re-researched my material. I talked to other Jamaicans outside of the production. If I limited my input to just the group with out outside stimuli the work would end up flat, two-dimensional. I was challenging myself to discover uniqueness with in the history of Jamaica. Prior to engaging in this project the West Indies was all the same to me theoretically. It was only after beginning this project and having wonderful conversations over delicious island dishes that the members would bring to our production meetings that made me clearly realize that there are vast differences between the islands. If there are cultural and linguistic differences between islands that all are under British influence surely with in the island of Jamaica there are rich cultural differences between rural and urban people, educated and the limited



educated. These differences I began to explore. This became the foundation for the subtext of the play. As we developed scenes we looked at what unique stories was each individual scene saying? And how did these small stories relate to the bigger thematic one of the play itself?

In the **Production Stage** we invited the community to partake in the encounter. This was real risk taking for me. This process involved promoting this play to the Caribbean, primarily Jamaican community. We contacted community leaders, both religious and civic and network through the cast members. The true measure of this play's success was determined in two ways. The level of involvement of all of the participants, working diligently, I felt aided in making the language and story ring true. However, to present to a highly critical public, primarily Jamaican, their feedback would indicate whether or not the play truly achieved its objectives.

In the **Social Change Stage** we worked on this language-based project in which dialect is central to the theatrical credibility of the work. It is one thing to have primarily Jamaicans viewing this work in their native tongue; it is another to have non- Jamaicans experience this production. Will they understand it? Will the dialect help or hinder the production? Fortunately the feedback from our workshop production was positive. We mounted in 1992 our premiere on the main stage at Roxbury Community College. This workshop performance was well attended by the community with roughly 250 people in attendance.

The **Empowerment Stage** happened in the form of feedback received, which fortunately was very favorable. Many community members have requested this and similar productions done in the dialect of the community it depicts. One request was to



develop a play on the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture the founder of Haiti. We would eventually like to mount a professional production of the Mighty Jajah, during the annual weekend of the Boston Caribbean Festival. Below is a summary model of the process:

*The Mighty Jajah: A Jamaican Relaity*

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <p><b>The Pre Stage</b></p>           | <p>Involved students and community residents consensus on working to assisting in the development of a play thematically focused on the importance of cultural heritage.</p>   |
| <p><b>The Development Stage</b></p>   | <p>Assist in transforming the developing script from plain English to Jamaican patwa.<br/>         Develop cast of mostly Caribbean and train them on the nuances of Jamaican dialect.<br/>         Develop a script that is culturally rich through a process of charcter development, script review, and constant researching of material.<br/>         Rehearse the play incorporating various acting techniques focused on character development</p> |
| <p><b>The Production Stage</b></p>    | <p>Invite the community to participate in the encounter through a workshop production.</p>   |
| <p><b>The Social Change Stage</b></p> | <p>Dialogue with cast members during post performance to conduct individual and collective performance analysis.</p>   |
| <p><b>The Empowerment Stage</b></p>   | <p>Solicit feedback on theeffectivness of the encounter from audience participants.</p>  |



## V. Summary

In my capacity as professor of Theatre Arts and chairperson of the Arts and Humanities Department I have had the fortunate opportunity to engage both my students and the Greater Roxbury community in many participatory theatre encounters. Although with a small department and operating with next to no resources we have been able to create very successful educational theatre projects. The teaching methodology we have employed is to infuse the visual, performing, and literary arts across the curriculum.

Two weeks prior to the premiere of a production of Charles Fuller's *Zooman an the Sign*<sup>31</sup>, a play about black-on-black crime in which a girl is killed in broad daylight in the crossfire of a gang altercation and how the family, community, and ultimately the perpetrator deals with this dilemma, a little girl, Tiffany Moore is actually killed in the neighborhood (Roxbury), under similar circumstances as in the play (set in Philadelphia). As technical Director for the production I felt that it was important for us as a theater company to in some way address this issue.

Not knowing it at the time I was actually creating a **Pre-Stage Process** environment for *Encounter Theatre*. In a production meeting I stated my concerns about how this incident directly or indirectly affected all of us. I said I felt that we needed to engage the audience in a post-performance discussion of the theme of the play and how it relates to the current plight in the community. Anyone in the community that wanted to stay after the show could stay and share in this discussion. Everyone liked the idea. The Pre-Stage process established the initial collective agreement but we needed to devise an approach to achieve this objective. We then moved to the *Developmental Stage*.

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<sup>31</sup> Produced by Black Folk's Theater Company at the C. Walsh Theater at Suffolk University in 1988.





In the **Developmental-Stage Process** we created and agreed on the methodology. Someone suggested that the stage manager would make an announcement at the end of the performance, following the second curtain call. The announcement would be to invite the audience to stay for an informal discussion about the theme of the play and its relevancy to recent events that has happened in the community. Someone else said that we could not place a time limit on the duration of these discussions, if people wanted to stay for 15 minutes then the discussion would be that long, if they wanted to stage 30 minutes so be it, there were no arguments, everyone was in agreement. Primarily because we all have at this point thoroughly absorbed the play's content and thematic essence, and director's intent. We now wanted to attempt to address the message of the play. The discussion moved to process, with questions concerning who would participate and moderate and who would not? The director was adamant about not moderating the discussion, she felt that she needed to take a traditional approach and be merely an audience participant at that point. We all agreed. Someone said why not have the community moderate? We brainstormed a bit and what came together collectively was the approach of inviting community leaders to come to the production. This would make the flow of the discussion more impartial, and keep all in attendance on task. If they wanted to moderate we would allow them the opportunity, if they declined that they merely wanted to participate we respected their wishes. Not knowing what to expect we decided to proceed with this initiative.

The **Production-Stage Process** happened simultaneously with the premiere of the play and its subsequent run. We received a tremendous response from the community. Many community leaders accepted our invitation to attend the performance and



participate as moderators, or audience participants. At the end of each performance the stage manager would make an announcement, all the actors, producers, directors, and non-essential stagehands would come out and sit on the apron of the stage demonstrating their willingness to participate in a discussion. With the exception of a few audience members leaving at some performance's end, the majority stayed.

The **Social Change Stage Process** happened during these discussions. Actors and technicians imparted their knowledge and experience not just of the play but also of their own community life's experiences relative to the discussion. Participating in this exchange of views demonstrated the power of the encounter process. Actually after several performances the discussion lasted a length equal to that of the production's length. The community wanted and needed to discuss this topic.

The **Empowerment Process** occurred once each patron left the theatre. As each one headed back to their neighborhoods they went with a sense of purpose. To what degree is their social change? It varies with each individual experience. This is one example of taking a traditional theatrical experience and making it a true encounter in which all involved are enlightened and empowered. In order to actually make this encounter happen we had to ascribe to the five-stage process.

Yvonne Murphy a local actress and performer in several of my productions over the years was a part of the technical crew and an audience participant in several of the post performance discussions. The following except is from an interview I had with her in whom I asked her to recall her experience of those discussions:

I remember many years ago I had the pleasure of seeing this play performed here in Boston, presented by a then popular theatre



organization/collaboration by the name of the Black Folks Theater Company. Many people who were connected with that production have since continued to have an impact in education and theatre in this small community called Boston, and beyond. And I remember when the play concluded each night, the audiences refused to leave. They were riveted to their seats; and alive with emotion. Fuller's story had touched an acute nerve. Many stayed to passionately argue relevant points and concerns. Some were loud, others more reserved, not all were eloquent, but all were heard. All were engaged and voluntarily invested, fighting for understanding, fighting for their community. You see, just weeks before *Zooman and The Sign* premiered, a young girl by the name of Tiffany Moore was – on vacation from the South visiting her grandma, innocently sitting atop a mailbox on a street corner in Roxbury one hot summer's day and got caught amidst the cross-fire of a local gang shootout- killed by a stray bullet not intended for her.

Coincidence?...No particularly. You see, neither time nor place dilutes the power nor haunting effect of this story – for as long as this phenomenon continues to replay itself from city to city, from incident to incident, as long as violence rules the streets and the idea of Community Responsibility continues to fail as crime occurs in our own backyards then Fuller's message is relevantly riveting; and effectively disturbing. Now, I don't know for sure if the audiences left with any lasting resolutions from our long and thoughtful Q & A sessions, but I do know this: they all were



desperate to talk about the issues presented in the performance; and discussion can lead to understanding, understanding can potentially lead to action, and group action almost always leads to or ends in change. And that is the greatest legacy any work of non-fiction can hope to have – a thought provoking impact.

Today through the use of *Encounter Theatre* I have developed an Associates of Arts Degree program in Theatre Arts, which lead to the formation of other concentrations in Musical Arts, Visual Arts and Humanities; currently we are developing a curriculum in Dance as well as an Africana Studies Program. Each of these Associate Degree Programs has a participatory element, similar to a conservatory approach, as part of the required curriculum. In the Theatre Arts concentration students are exposed to the both the technical and performing aspect of the art. Further along in their studies students are required to write an in depth research report and complete a field experience on a particular area of interest theatre. These areas of interest; for example acting techniques, theatre design, costuming, directing, or even playwriting, are triggered by their encounter experience. Since many students would have through selected courses, have had the experience of *Encounter Theatre* they would now venture into its techniques through their own projects. The central focus is on the quality of the encounter. Remember to develop a quality product through an educationally enriching and rewarding process. Over the years some of the projects that students have undertaken have been at the Boston Renaissance School for the Performing Arts, WGBH-TV and The Wang Center. These projects have always engaged students and community participants in stimulating activities.





## **Chapter Three:**

### **Development of WORDS OF REFLECTION Boston's Black History in the Making**

#### **Introduction**

Each year of high school were years of major change. My freshman year the school was all male and 90+ percent African American. The resources were meager and the instruction was marginal. Often times our daily routine would be punctuated by either a fire alarm being pulled, or a fight breaking out in the gym or the cafeteria, causing disruption in the institutuion. Sophomore year Boston high schools became coeducational which literally balance the sexual make up the school, and I believe diminished some of the flagrant negative outbursts. I survived my sophomore year, which would be the only year that I physically stayed in a normal classroom setting for the entire year. My junior year I was accepted into a program called **V.A.L.U.E.** (*Visual Arts Laboratory in Urban Education*) in which I along with a select group of Boston English High School students were relocated to 45 Myrtle Street on the north slope of Beacon Hill. During this academic year we would learn about video production and graphic arts, with basic education sprinkled in rounding out the curriculum. This was another turning point for me, for it was on Beacon Hill, when major events were taking place, which would have a positive impact on the African American community of New England and my knowledge of it.

First the Black Heritage Trail was established. Patterned after the Boston Freedom Trail it was a trail that told of the history of Boston's first black community by physically showing existing landmarks. These sites included the African Meeting House,



the Augustus St. Gaudens' Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Monument across from the State House, the home of Abolitionist Louis Hayden, and other significant locations. We were located around the corner of The African Meeting House-the oldest standing Black Church building in the country. We witnessed its renovation and for the first time became aware of the significant contributions of African Americans to New England history

During my senior year, when court ordered bussing took effect and I was to be reassigned to West Roxbury High. This created a very stressful situation. All of a sudden I was being forced out of a learning environment that sheltered me from the ills of urban blight. I watched many of my friends get reassigned to Dorchester High and West Roxbury High, a few of my good friends were fortunate to live in the newly drafted district, now the Ruggles Transit Station area, that allowed them to remain at English High and thus stay in the program. After thinking long and hard what to do, I finally figured out a way that I could remain in the program. I asked my brother Leroy if he would allow me to use his address, which was in the new English High School district, and he agreed. This involved formally making my older brother my legal guardian in order for the school officials to accept me as a continuing English High School student. We went through the process and I continued in the program for my senior year. I am eternally grateful for my brother being there for me.

During the fall of that year, I took an introductory architecture course at Harvard's School of Design. I created and donated a linoleum block print of the Black Heritage Trail to the Museum of Afro-American History the caretakers of the African Meeting House, and also developed an interest in pursuing a college education. I knew that in



order to get in to college I needed to have certain courses under my belt, science, language, and English composition. I ask for and was granted special permission to attend English High once a week to attend my Biology, Spanish, and Senior English classes. The arrangement was contingent upon the individual instructors' approval, and my agreement to completing all assignment required. These instructors gave no breaks. I went to English High on Wednesday mornings and turned in my weekly assignments collected my next week's assignments and took my weekly tests. It was difficult at first and caused minor morale problems in class when other students became aware of my 'special status.' However, all that went away when my classmates saw that I was working hard at the lessons and that the teachers truly were not giving me preferential treatment.

During my senior year, I became more and more interested in the history of Black's in Boston. Part of this was again due to being on Beacon Hill, an oasis away from the madness of the bussing situation. Another part of it was being in the company of teachers and students that were very supportive and encouraged me to pursue my interests. And still another part of it was due to my newfound confidence in interpersonal expression. All of this is background that led me to become involved in a project at the African Meeting House. My most extended play further developed my theory of *Encounter Theatre*.

African-Americans have been present and intrinsically a part of Greater Boston's history for went over 350 years, yet the significance of this history has been largely ignored or has gone unknown. My trilogy explores the history of Boston's African-American community spanning the period beginning in 1790 through 1954.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Chapter Four includes the complete *Words of Reflection Trilogy*.



Through the use of *Encounter Theatre* students and adults are encouraged to learn more about the history of New England African-Americans and become involved in teaching this history to others. The specific objectives of this project are:

- (1) To enhance the educational efforts of schools, colleges and other institutions by engaging students and adults in culturally enriching theatrical activities;
- (2) To highlight the richness of Greater Boston's Black history; and
- (3) To strengthen a network of institutions and scholars who will collaborate on ongoing public programming efforts.





## II. Words of Reflection Trilogy Brief Overview

The trilogy is divided into three one-act participatory plays: *Words of Resistance*, *Words of Revolt*, and *Words of Renaissance*. The trilogy's text is created by the use of connecting real stories via a narrator that in chronological order tells of the historical development of the African American community of Greater Boston. These stories, many eyewitness accounts, both positive and negative, tell of the trials and tribulations of Blacks in and around Boston during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Audience and actors share performance space during the encounter with the outcome being one of mutual discovery about the historical meaning and significance of Black presences of Greater Boston. Each is explained in detail.

*Words of Resistance (1790-1850)* highlights the founding of Boston's first African-American church -The African Meeting House- in response to the exclusion of Black people from the main pews of local white churches. Appearances are made by Lewis and Harriet Hayden (Underground Railroad), William and Ellen Craft (runaway slave), Robert Morse (first Black Massachusetts attorney), abolitionist Charles Lenox Redmond, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, political activist author David Walker, and Black Church cofounders Cato Gardner, Scipio Dalton, P.G. Smith, and G.H. Holmes. Key events include the founding of the Smith School in the basement of the African Meeting House in 1820, Prudence Crandall's Boarding School in Canterbury, CT. in 1831<sup>33</sup>, and the 1849 lawsuit to desegregate Boston's schools. *Words of Resistance* covers

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<sup>33</sup>The Prudence Crandall Boarding School incident in Canterbury, CT., although not of the Greater Boston community, many Black Bostonians attended this school and were affected by it. The affect of racial hostility that this Black boarding school in New England encountered is highlighted in *Words of Reflection*.



local and national events spanning the period 1790 through 1854, which had a direct impact on the African American community of New England. Initially, the project centered on the impact of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. As the project developed, and more data pertaining to the history of free Blacks during this period was added the project began to expand. To keep the project manageable, I maintained the original format of the participatory drama, that is, maintained the narrator as the primary, present-day story teller with the secondary characters appearing as voices from the past.

*Words of Revolt (1850-1919)* covers the aftermath of the struggle over the Fugitive Slave Act, the Civil War and the struggle for Emancipation, and Reconstruction. Highlights include the creation of educational opportunities and major Black churches which were formed after the African Meeting House (Charles Street AME, Concord Baptist, and Twelfth Baptist), and such issues as the repatriation movement and the founding of Liberia, the ramifications of the Amistad Mutiny and court case of 1839, the Niagara Movement concluding with the return of African- American soldiers from World War I.

*Words of Revolt* starts with the aftermath of the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act and spans more than a half century through 1919 covering events such as the Civil War, Reconstruction, Black migration from the south to the North, the birth of Jim Crow laws, World War I, and historical events connected to the development of Boston's Black community. In addition, the major dialogues, correspondence and great debates between such figures as Abraham Lincoln and Stephens, Frederick Douglass and various figures during his day, W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, Washington and William Monroe Trotter and others are included.



*Words of Renaissance (1919-1954)* covers the movement of African-Americans from the North Slope of Beacon Hill to the South End and Lower Roxbury, after the selling of the African Meeting House. Voices focus on the beginning of Black migration to Boston from the South, Africa and the Caribbean, and other developments that led up to the Civil Rights Era. Topics covered are the development of the Pan-African Movement, The Universal Negro Improvement Association lead by Marcus Garvey, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People led by W. E. B. DuBois, the Black Arts Movement (such as the Harlem Renaissance), national and global political unrest and its impact on Boston's African American community. The trilogy ends with the landmark *Brown verses The Board of Education* case.

The African Meeting House is the foundation, or environment from which the premise of the play springs to life. As stated earlier in my introduction, The African Meeting House developed an historical source book on its history. The play that would later be known as *Words of Resistance* I wrote as a companion play to that text. I also developed material on the history or misinterpretation of history of the people of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Colored Regiment during the Civil War.<sup>34</sup> The goal of this reader was to expose students in an exploratory way, in a process of discovering the true history of these individuals and the sacrifices they made for the liberation of their people. Coupled with the performances of *Words of Revolt*, and *Words of Renaissance* students and teachers will gain important background knowledge of this historical period. More importantly they will begin to see history from a varied perspective.

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<sup>34</sup> See Appendix A



This trilogy of one-act plays offers a unique encounter for all participants. Each work running approximately 50 minutes affords participants an opportunity to experience what it was like to live in Greater Boston during these periods. As a learning tool participants experience history in the making and come away with a more personal awareness of the people, places and events in history. As a social tool participants experience often for the first time what it feels like to walk in someone else's shoes. As an educator the most gratifying experience I have had is in the testimonies of student actors who encounter personal insightful discoveries about this living history. They are then empowered with this new knowledge and are challenged to impart this learned information to others, thus extending the encounter beyond the performance space.





**The Encounter Theatre Process**  
**Words Of Reflection Trilogy**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Pre-Stage</b>           | Performing group made up of former and current students, and community members come to a consensus about their level of participation.  |
| <b>Development Stage</b>   | Involved two steps, the development of the play for performance, and the development of the ensemble to perform the play.   |
| <b>Production Stage</b>    | <p>The play is designed for performance by five actors: two female, three male, with the addition of a narrator.</p> <p><i>Words Of Resistance:</i> interactive discussion about effects of Fugitive Slave Act of 1950</p> <p><i>Words Of Revolt:</i> Interactive participation and discussion about the 1905 lecture of Booker T. Washington held at the Columbus Avenue AME Church. Incident dubbed, The Boston Riot.</p> <p><i>Words Of Renaissance:</i> Interactive participation and discussion about the Jazz Scene of Boston circa 1940's and its influence on the developing community post World War II.</p> |
| <b>Social Change Stage</b> | Stimulate, educate, and motivate participants through the encounter experience ultimately sparking the desire to effect social change.  |
| <b>Empowerment Stage</b>   | <p>The specific objectives of this project are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To enhance the educational efforts of schools, colleges and other institutions by engaging students and adults in culturally enriching theatrical activities;</li> <li>2. To highlight the richness of Greater Boston's Black history; and</li> <li>3. To strengthen a network of institutions and scholars who will collaborate on ongoing public programming efforts.</li> </ol>  |



**The Pre Stage:** Students and community participants involved in the project came to a consensus about their level of participation. Students who were concurrently enrolled in a related theatre class agreed upon the academic requirements that their involvement would satisfy.

...you were able to, since most of us were in the classes, we were able to take class time to even work more on it [the Project]... most of us had a hard time identifying with the characters. That's why you picked two particular people out, Grendle and Derrick, because they already came with [theatre] backgrounds. But the rest of us it was totally brand new to us. But we did have the willingness to take on the project...you made it fun David. You are very likeable. You sold it well. And during that period of time, I know I can at least speak for myself, I was more into that militant stage. So I was really interested and curious about anything Black. So that for me, that's what drawn me to your project.

(Terry 2004)

Those from the community agreed upon participating based on their beliefs in the project's benefits to the larger community.

You are very passionate about your work, and it reads in your enthusiasm. And so you're able to garner, or grab people...sweep people up in your enthusiasm. And folks that are willing to step up and learn new things or be involved in learning usually tend to stick with you. I remember being invited and we went to a rehearsal where I think it was mostly people from your Acting class, and I saw some people that I knew, and then other



people that I didn't know...and they were like....some were on the fence, others were really excited...and that is what made me stay on during the first rehearsal process. Okay there is some sort of momentum here going on, then you talked about going to the actual museum...and really learning about these characters, that they were related to history, connecting this to...they did this in Boston. There were a lot of different points that stood out for me. (Murphy 2004)

The **Development Stage** involved two steps, the creation of the play and the development of the ensemble to perform the play. *Words of Reflection: Boston's Black History in the Making* is presented in storytelling form. The trilogy relies on actual commentary derived from journals, letters, and speeches of those who experienced these various historical events. The time frame of this trilogy covers 1790 through 1954. I chose to begin just after the abolition of slavery in Massachusetts (1790). However slave trading and trafficking in Massachusetts still persisted well in to the 1800's and the state and the country were constantly dealing with the dilemma of living with major contradictions concerning slavery. There is a free Black community in New England as well as a slave community. Are all men created equal? Is a slave a man? What actor and participants were involved in was a thorough actor training and play development process.

Yeah, when you actually ask everyone to come together. Okay people we have to rehearse this damn thing. So when are we going to get together? We had to get together....We had to open up our books and figure out our schedules, then everybody started to say hey this is for real. And let's do



this. There was a date that was involved, an end point. Yeah, you had all this vision of, we're going to go down to the African Meeting House, and you were like, Frederick Douglass spoke here. All this stuff that you just take for granted, or you think is just cliché, or it's very distant. Frederick Douglass is a great man but you don't actually think of him speaking here and making pivotal speeches here in Boston. And who was his audience and things of that nature? That was when we actually started doing the rehearsal process for me. It became a real thing to do. And people started getting me on board. (Murphy 2004)

The project requires a performance by a theatre ensemble, which is a group of actors with interchangeable roles at any given performance. Once the talent was identified and the training and rehearsal process was complete the project proceeded to the production stage. In addition I worked on communication skills such as, production, articulation and enunciation, posture and movement. This stage of the *encounter theatre process* is the most lengthy since skill development cannot happen rapidly. The duration of this stage could last as little as several weeks or an academic semester, sometimes even an academic year. The product being produced dictates the length. In theatre terms the opening performance date will indicate how much time will be devoted to the preparation and development of the project for production.

The **Production Stage** incorporates the essence of all three one-act plays, thus the production of *Words of Reflection: Boston's Black History in the Making* is actually a trilogy of these one-act plays combined and staged as a production with one intermission. The play is designed for performance by five actors: two female, three male, with the





addition of a narrator. Preference is given to an all-black cast however; at least one male and possibly one female role could be cast with white actors. Four of the actors represent the voices (1,2,3, & 4); in addition they cover the range of characters (both negative and positive). The fifth actor serves as a historical footnote through out the play (newspaper reporter, community resident, politician.). This actor, who is male, represents individuals whose roles and actions were pivotal points in New England African American history. The narrator is the present-day storyteller who guides the participants through the encounter.

The **Social Change Stage** involves discoveries both individual and collective about the worth of the encounter. Finding value in what you have experienced is vital for it will motivate you to want to use this newfound understanding [knowledge] in a very productive way. They discover that the encounter was not just a performance but an educational experience from which they individually and collectively learned about a piece of history, shared it with various communities, and in the process came to know more about each other and about themselves.

Michael Thierry a local actor, artist, and educator who has been working with various productions of the Words of Reflection project for more than fifteen years comments about his experience:

As an actor and educator I was interested in doing performances that had social relevance within the community of Roxbury, as a long-time resident I was impressed with the level of community support to grassroots theatre productions...it never ceases to amaze me how relevant African American/Black History is to all Americans. The very principles,



precepts, and foundations of the liberty espoused by our founding fathers were made reality only through the trials and tribulations of the African in America. I have used historical data from the play when discussing things like gentrification in Boston, answering why neighborhoods are so racially and ethnically diverse and oftentimes divided. Also in speaking to students about the community of the American experience from the N.I.N.A. (No Irish Need Apply) signs of 19<sup>th</sup> century Boston, to the separate but equal 'Jim Crow' legislation fought against by men such as A. Philip Randolph and Martin Luther King you could not have men like these without the Maria Stewart's and Scipio Dalton's of the distant past. They paved the way.

I enjoyed the plays and traveling to different locales including the historical African Meeting House/Museum of Afro-American History. What was most enjoyable was watching grade school students get an understanding that the battle for freedom in America was an ongoing one fought on many levels even in their own neighborhoods. I enjoyed the question and answer sessions where they would put themselves in the place of their ancestors and realize there was no one to phone, no one to order a tank or aircraft carrier from, the Abolitionist and opposers of Slavery had to rely on themselves, self-reliance was and is the reality of Black America...one moment in particular that stands out is when one actor posing as a slave catcher questions a small white child about 10



years old about whether he knew where the escaped slaves were hiding and the child became so distraught he started crying and tried to hit the actor. After that experience we decided to tone down the acting but keep the information when dealing with younger crowds.

(Thierry 2004)

A very powerful moment when the acting reaches a level of realism when audience participants are so moved that they want to act out. This is another aspect of social change transitioning into empowerment.

I remember watching Arthur do his thing. Kind of gets that proud peacock thing going on. Chest all out...There goes Arthur! I remember watching him do that and being very proud of him being walked down the aisle. Take the podium and actually go through his monologue with this momentum behind him. I remember listening to Derrick singing, I remember just before all this began and the doors would open as we began the play Derrick and Arthur arguing over what parts they wanted to play. The skirmishes that happened upstairs in the church, there is a lot that I remember as far as emotion is concerned. The ensemble piece is a very proud moment when you see the machine finally turning and you see things happen around you and you kick in and do your part. I remember being petrified. Will this really go off? Was there people out there, were they going to like what we are going to do, will they understand it? Were we going to be able to convey what we got out of the process before we got on the stage? Which was an in-depth understanding of what these

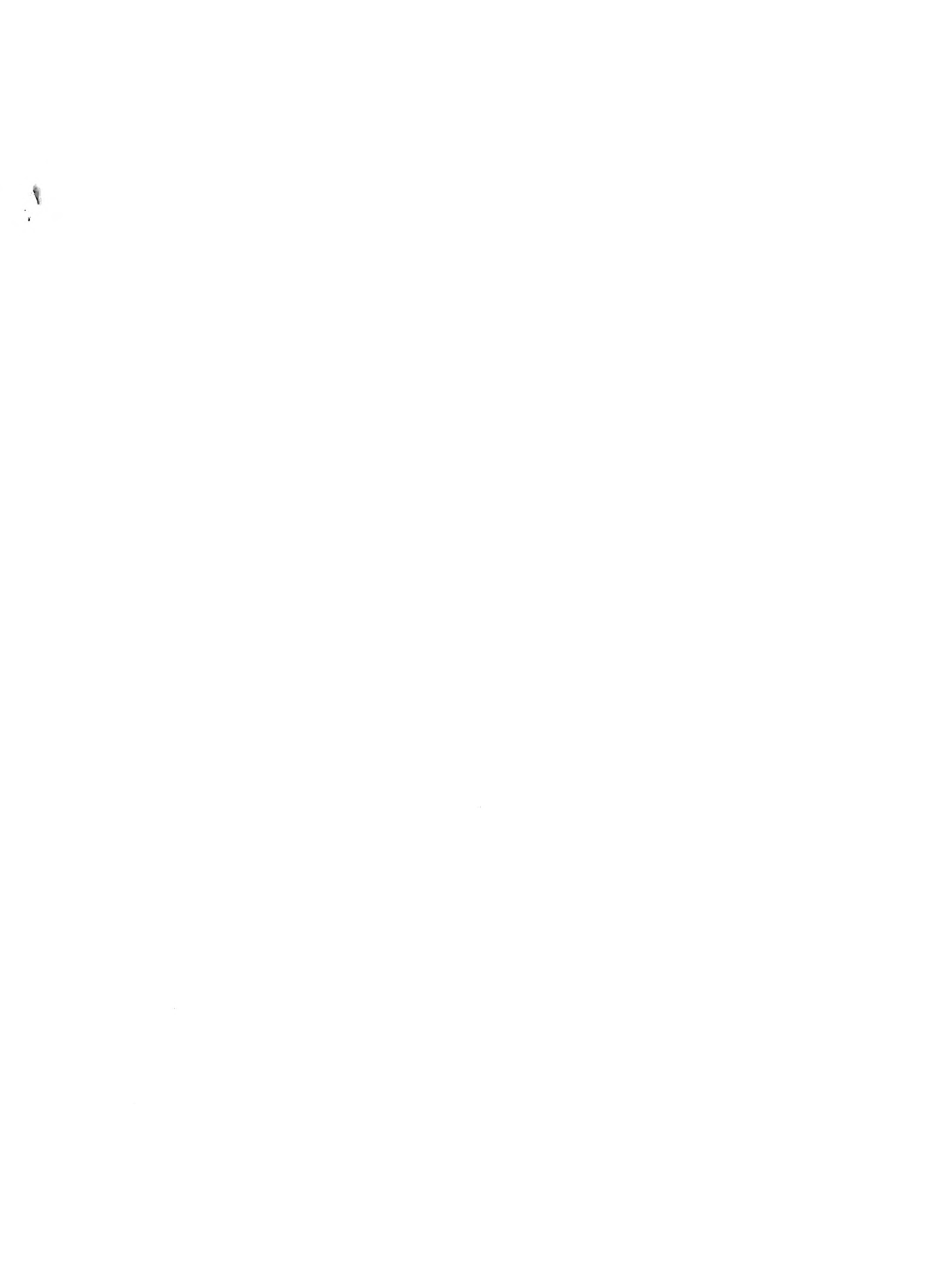


people went through at the time? This Abolitionist Movement...[the play] it really makes the word abolition have meaning other than this big long term. And that Abolitionists were comprised of Black and White...What was their socioeconomic stature? They were farmers, they were merchants, they were actually well to do writers... it was like this big coalition. And why in *Words of Resistance* these particular people who came to the forefront to speak to abolitionist were so inspiring. (Murphy 2004)

The **Empowerment Stage** begins almost immediately upon the social realization process. Individually participants often probe deeper into the historical backgrounds of the characters they encounter. They want to know more about their lives and how these individuals' contributions to society made an impact then and now. The discovery that someone's effort was the catalyst for change is an exciting moment because it personalizes their history where the individual who performed the character develops an identifying connection with the historical figure.

Collectively the group often wants to continue to perform, feeling that with each additional encounter they will become better performers thus making the product more polished and at the same time spread the knowledge.

In every Act of *Words* someone learned something, either through the performance or the viewing. In speaking the words it brings new life to them and one cannot but marvel at how some of the problems of today's world can still be addressed profoundly by the words of our predecessors the builders of true freedom in the Americas. This is the legacy of African





Americans, Blacks, Coloreds; whatever we have been called in antiquity we are the most profound champions of freedom the world has ever known. *Encounter Theatre* brings the past to life and ignites in the young a thirst to know more about themselves for these are supermen and wonder women so amazing is the fact these voices were of real people. As an educator performing allows you to experience different viewpoints and sometimes can cause an epiphany into the depths of meaning a few *Words of Resistance* can hold. (Thierry 2004)

### **The Role of Theatre Arts Internship Students in Encounter Theatre:**

The Theatre Arts Internship course is an independent theatre study course at Roxbury Community College (RCC) developed for those interested in learning, from exposure and first-hand experience, the multifaceted world of theatre. Students must be interviewed prior to enrolling to determine if this is an appropriate match. The criteria for enrollment and the academic standards of the course are very demanding. Students concentrating in Theatre Arts who have completed their prerequisites are given top priority. As part of their program of study they are required to work as part of an ensemble on several productions both on and off campus to give them the widest possible academic experience and exposure. Students who are in other arts concentrations desiring a different art experience to complement their academic studies are encouraged and welcomed to participate. Those students who come with prior demonstrated arts experience (from prior performance work), assessed artistic ability (through the interview process), and/or recommendation from RCC's Counseling and Placement Service



(through the counseling and assessment process) are considered for enrollment. The course involved a major commitment of time and energy requiring that students to be willing to give commit on an average of approximately ten to fifteen hours per week devoted to pre-production, development (rehearsal), and performance objectives. All activities are approached from a conservatory perspective, that is, students are indoctrinated into an ensemble philosophy that creates no one star performer. Each individual will have their moment in the 'limelight.' Team building is the most important value the group can achieve in this process.

Here is an example of **the Social Change Stage** at work. Students who performed at Lesley College on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1998 in the production of *Words of Resistance* were thrown off track just prior to the performance when one of the acting students was called away for an emergency within an hour before the performance. At that time in the group only two students had any prior acting experience, one who left and one with some true semi-professional acting experience. This was the first time they would be in front of an audience as a group. It could have resulted in disaster. To put myself in their emotional shoes I had to take on the role of an ensemble member and demonstrate the team concept of when one player is missing it is up to the group to compensate. The student who was now absent had two major roles, and I assumed one. That was to lead the audience in singing the Negro Spiritual *Oh Freedom* immediately after the horrific tale of the brutal mutilation and murder of a slave. Not being a singer, I had to conceal my nervousness from the students and proceed. Also just prior to the performance I told the only student with prior acting experience, Franz, that the second half of the show is in his hands, and that I will literally leave the playing space and he must end the show.



**The Empowerment Stage** that took place was when Franz not only ended the play successfully, but also led the audience in a discussion about the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which engaged the entire house. Without his motivation, ‘stepping up to the plate,’ the participatory element of the play would have been compromised. In this production students demonstrated a level of commitment and maturity that resulted in a successful performance, which I am extremely appreciative.



*Encounter Theatre Process*

**Lesley University *Words of Resistance* Performance**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pre-Stage</b></p>           | <p>Students and community participants involved in the project came to a consensus about their level of participation.</p> <p>Students who were currently enrolled in a related theatre class agreed upon the academic requirements that their involvement would satisfy.</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development Stage</b></p>   | <p>Involved two steps, the creation of the play and the development of the ensemble to perform the play.</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Production Stage</b></p>    | <p>The play is designed for performance by five actors: two female, three male, with the addition of a narrator.</p> <p>Students are indoctrinated into an ensemble philosophical approach that creates no one star performer. Each individual has their moment in the 'limelight,' <i>Team Building</i> is the most important value the group can achieve in the production process.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Social Change Stage</b></p> | <p>First time students performed as group<br/>Hour before performance students took on additional roles due to performer's absence</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Empowerment Stage</b></p>   | <p>Student takes on Educator role<br/>Leads interactive discussion about Fugitive Slave Act of 1850</p>   |





### III. Development of the *Words of Reflection Trilogy*

#### Historical Overview

##### A. *Words of Resistance (1790-1854)*

Boston's black community development has been greatly influenced by local and national social, economic and political trends. Events, such as immigration and its effect on housing, job shortages, education, and political representation, had a unique effect on the development of Boston's black community.

England's King Charles I persecution of the Puritans caused a great exodus from English citizens to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. However slavery in a Puritan society was much different than in other parts of the American Colonies. Due to the socio-economic climate and religious conditions in Boston, slavery as an institution did not flourish. In 1638 European slave traders brought the first Africans to Boston, via the West Indies. They were brought to replace the Native Americans as laborers.

By 1643 the population of the Bay Colony rose to over 15,000 and just prior to the war for independence the total population neared 20,000. During the early 1700's Boston was a town with a rather high percentage of blacks in its population. "In 1752, 10 percent of the city's population was black, numbering just over fifteen hundred persons." (Horton, *Black Bostonians*, p.vii) During the American Revolution the population of Boston diminished to an all time low of about 6,000. This decline was due to many fleeing the New England area too during the war. This had a direct impact on the black population because the wealthy Tories who fled Boston to the north [Canada] took their slaves with them.



Although in 1700 a Boston committee tried to stop the trafficking of black slaves, slavery continued to be a part of New England life. Throughout this period most New Englanders were seafarers or merchants, occupations that proved to be more highly profitable than those New Englanders who participated in slavery as slave traders.

The principles and ideals expressed in revolutionary Boston, the important role Boston's blacks played in the war effort, and the declining economic importance of local slavery combined to give rise to a strong abolitionist spirit among Boston's revolutionary generation, whites as well as blacks. This spirit created the climate for the 1783 decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Court that slavery was inconsistent with the provisions of the 1780 state constitution. With the state's abolition of slavery, Boston's blacks could expand their efforts to build their community.

(Horton 1993:26)

By the turn of the 19th Century Boston appeared to be a promising community for African Americans.

In the census record of 1790, the first ever taken in Massachusetts [and the nation], Boston's African American population numbered about .3%. Although by the 1790's the overall population of Boston rose to 18,000 the black percentage was only marginal, just under eight hundred or about .3 percent. For the rest of the century, the black population of Boston would never reach the level of pre-1750. This was more likely due to the industrialization period's demand for workers in the mills and textile industries where competition for work with White laborers created employment obstacles and thus many Blacks sought gainful employment elsewhere.



By the turn of the 19th century, Boston's African American community rose slightly to .4% or less than 1,000 out of a population of 25,000 "(Hayden 4)...and by 1810 it [the population of Boston] had gone well beyond 30,000-a five fold increase in 35 years." (O'Connor 65) This percentage however is misleading. African Americans were documented not independently by name but in a general, "mass" category as 'Negroes' attached to their respective white household if they were slaves. The free 'Negroes', who labored as domestics and stable keepers, made up the majority of this percentage and lived near their employer's residence, these individuals primarily were the only ones recorded in the early census records. Those trades' people who worked through out the city may have been listed in the occupational directory. The remaining percentage of the African American community of Boston was simply not recorded.<sup>35</sup>

The Boston city directory or census lists all trades of economic importance such as black smiths, ship caulkers, whalers, even barbers [hairdressers]. Boston's African Americans, due to social restrictions, customs and practice, were limited to what occupations they could hold. Most Black males worked along the docks as seamen or long shore men, others owned provision shops and used clothing shops. There were a high number of barbers through out Boston, one of the few trades that blacks at this time had a monopoly. The directory gave the names of 32 "hairdressers," most owners of shops, situated in every part of the city. There were 14 clothes shops, most of them on Brattle Street, a junk shop, a provision shop, and 4 boarding houses. Although this would imply that the passing of slavery in Massachusetts had not produced any sweeping change in the local economic and industrial position of this group, it would seem that a

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<sup>35</sup> By 1820 the Black population of Boston reached 1,690-source Robert C. Hayden, African -Americans in Boston: More Than 350 Years



promising proportion of African Americans had become business proprietors. (Horton & Horton 129)

For the most part, blacks lived close to their respective occupations. Gainful employment often times varied daily and depended on one's ability to be in the right place at the right time. This would partly justify the overcrowded conditions for African Americans across from Charlestown along the wharves, where many were tied to the shipping and fishing industries, when in other parts of the city there was plenty of open space to build housing. Another hindrance was transportation since there was only one roadway, [the neck which is now Washington Street] which connected Boston proper to the rest of the area. Until adequate transportation is established, allowing more timely traversal of workers to and from their places of employment, Boston would continue to have selected overcrowded living conditions, not by choice but by design.

Given the small percentage of the population, Black Bostonians were receiving a disproportionate share of unemployment and economic hardship. Even abolitionists, who rallied in support of black causes, afforded blacks' only menial labor. They were reluctant to give them truly gainful employment. The better jobs were afforded to the new immigrants that were descending upon Boston in great numbers.

Cato Gardner and Scipio Dalton who were members of a predominantly White First Baptist Church of Boston between the years 1772 and 1805 were not accorded the same privileges as the white fellowship. They were assigned seats in the galleries (back of the balcony) where they could only hear, not see the preacher. They had no voting rights and their participation in church activities was limited to public worship and to services connected with births, baptisms, marriages and death. After the abolition of





slavery in Massachusetts in 1790 the African American community of Boston began to mobilize and form a separate congregation that would provide relief from the discrimination they were experiencing in other Boston churches. Worship services were held in private homes, the old Franklin Hall on Nassau Street and often, the African American community used Annuli Hall. "By 1789, blacks had been granted the use of Faneuil Hall for religious meetings on Tuesday or Friday afternoon." (Horton, 79:40) Although these services were nondenominational, the leader was an African American Baptist preacher from New Hampshire, the Reverend Thomas Paul.

With the leadership of Cato Gardner and Scipio Dalton letters went out to two white Baptist churches asking their assistance in the establishment of an African American church. The records of the First Baptist Church, which segregated its Black membership, made the following advice to the two churches which offered assistance: "the delegates plainly dissuaded them [the blacks] from the admission of white members among them as they may ultimately become the minority and defeat their intentions of being an African Church." (Hayden 1983: 4) In 1805 both churches sent their pastors and deacons to assist in the official formation of the First African Baptist on August 8, 1805. With twenty members, Thomas Paul was installed as the pastor.

During that same year this church group purchased land on the North Slope of Beacon Hill in the then West End of Boston. At this time the African American community primarily existed near the wharves opposite Charlestown. The reason for this site choice is unknown, but since this was then open land and the black community was by then overcrowded, it was probably the best location not only for a church but also for the development of a new Black community.



Within a year of the land purchase, the Black community raised the necessary funds required for the building of their new church. Spearheaded by the fundraising efforts of Cato Gardner, who alone raised \$1,500.00 of the \$7,700.00 needed, the African Meeting House was built and in December of 1806 received its official dedication. A commemorative inscription above the front entrance of the Meeting House reads: "Cato Gardner, first Promoter of the Building 1806." An interesting historical footnote to mention is that mason George Holmes, one of the black builders of the Meeting House created the first hod to carry bricks and mortar that was ever used in Boston.

In 1812, the Meeting House became a charter member of the Boston Baptist Association. By 1819 The African Meeting House boasted 100 financial members. However, due to the Reverend Paul's increasing missionary work, which included several trips to Haiti for the Home Mission Society and his failing health, he resigned in 1829. Upon his resignation, Reverend Paul commented about his church by saying: "I planted the seed and Apollo watered it, but God made it grow." (I Corinthians 3:6)

Between 1829 and 1840, with the departure of Reverend Paul, dissension grew among the membership, and with a succession of ministers coming and going, the First African Baptist Church reached a turning point. Under the leadership of Reverend G. H. Black (1838 -1841) the African Meeting House underwent a transition of major historical significance to the African American church community. In 1840, 40 members of the African Baptist Church, for reasons unknown, split from the congregation and formed a new church (which would eventually be known as Twelfth Baptist Church. The current church, located on Warren Street near Dudley Square, has a plaque above its entrance, which reads: "the Second African Meeting House"). Reverend Black died a year later.



Prior to his death, in 1837 the African Baptist Church name was changed to the First Independent Baptist Church of People of Color of Boston, as the minutes of the 1838 Boston Baptist Association states: “for the very good reason that the name African is ill applied to a church composed of American citizens.”(Horton 1979: 91)

The African Meeting House also served the educational needs of the Black families in Boston. In 1808 a school for African American students was established in the Basement (street floor) of the Meeting House. Twenty-one years after the denial of a petition to the Massachusetts legislature for the admission of black students to the Boston Public Schools (1787) by Prince Hall, founder of the Masonic African Lodge, Black parents in 1808 requested a separate school for black students. When the City of Boston denied, Primus Hall, the son of Prince Hall established a community school in his home at the corner of West Cedar and Revere Streets on Beacon Hill. Shortly after establishing this school, his home became too small to accommodate the growing number of African American students and thus the school was moved to the African Meeting House. According to Stanley Schultz’s book The Culture Factory, “The average Boston schoolroom of 1833 crammed one teacher and sixty-two students into a nineteen-by-twenty-six-foot space, and was often located in the densest most rundown sectors of town.” (Wilson 94: 200)

In 1834 the City of Boston constructed the Smith School for black children. This was due to funds appropriated from the estate of Ariel Smith who in his will contributed the necessary funds for the construction of a school for black children. “The school’s second black teacher, Prince Saunders (sometimes spelled Sanders), persuaded Abiel Smith, a white businessman, to write into his will funds for the education of black



children in Boston. Smith had already donated a hundred dollars to the construction of the Meeting House on the condition that it is used towards quarters for a “colored school.” (Fraser et al, 79: 20-21) The community school was officially moved from the Meeting House to the corner of Joy and Smith Court. This did not satisfy the entire black community. William Cooper Nell in 1840, believed separate was an unacceptable environment to learn in. He mounted a campaign to end Boston’s school segregation practice.

In 1849 Benjamin Roberts sued the City of Boston for denying his daughter Sarah to right to attend the school closest to her home. Although the Roberts vs. the City of Boston case had abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner and black attorney Robert Morris, Judge Lemuel Shaw in 1850 ruled against Roberts, arguing that Sarah was not denied adequate education, which was provided at the Abiel Smith School.<sup>36</sup> Not satisfied with these limited and for the most part inferior learning conditions, (the entire city’s black children attended this one school) the black community protested first by petitioning the city (William Cooper Nell during the 1840’s through early 50’s), then by the courts (Roberts vs. The City of Boston in 1849). Eventually five years later, in 1855 fueled by furor over the Fugitive Slave Law (which required all citizens to assist in the capture of a fugitive) a bill was past by the Massachusetts legislature and sign by the Governor, Black children were allowed to enroll in any of the city’s school. The Boston Black community was relentless in petitioning the City of Boston in regards to equal rights. By the fall of

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<sup>36</sup>This school tradition, which began in the home of Prince Hall, founder of the black Masonic Lodge, soon relocated to the basement of the African Meeting House. Later due to the generosity of the Abiel Smith estate, the Smith School was established for the instruction of Boston’s black children.





the next year the Abiel Smith School officially closed, as black children began to attend other Boston schools.<sup>37</sup>

Not only was the African Meeting house the religious and educational focal point for the developing African American community, it was also the home of the Abolitionist Movement. For blacks of Boston the attainment of true freedom and full political rights was inexorably linked to the national abolition of slavery. As black and white Bostonians mobilized the African Meeting House became the hotbed of abolitionist agitation. Speakers like Lydia Maria Child, who wrote An Appeal In favor Of That Class of Americans Called Africans (1833), recited this and other personal works condemning slavery. William Lloyd Garrison founded the New England Anti-Slavery Society on January 6, 1832. Even the famed Frederick Douglass gave an address here rallying black men to enlist in the 54th and 55th all black regiments during the Civil War; his two oldest sons were among the first recruits.

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<sup>37</sup>This set a precedent for the separate but equal ruling in the Plessy versus Fergusson case of 1895 which would be later struck down by the brown versus the Board of Education in Topeka, KA. of 1954.



### **B. *Words of Revolt (1850-1919)***

By 1840 the black population had reached nearly two thousand. The limited job market was threatened by the wave of white immigration. The potato rot in Ireland in 1845 and the repeal of the English Corn Law in 1846 brought to an end Ireland's favorable position in the British trade system. This disastrous condition caused a mass influx of Irish immigrants to the United States. Most of these immigrants came to the city with no shelter or employment. They immediately became competitors for the low-wage jobs once almost exclusively held by Blacks.

By 1850, Irish workers were filling over 7,000 laboring jobs. Jobs once held by blacks-cooks, porters, and laborers-were being steadily filled by these 'new' immigrants. By 1860 2.5 million Irish would immigrate to the United States, and those entering Boston rose from 443 in 1836 to more than 65,556 by 1846.

In all, 87 percent of the city's laboring jobs in that year were being filled by foreign-born workers, while blacks held only 1.5 percent of those jobs. Even given the small percentage of black workers, considering that the vast majority of blacks were unskilled workers, their percentage of the laborers was very low. By 1860, there was a decline in black laborers, while the number and percentage of foreign-born laborers increased. Foreign-born workers filled over 80 percent of the jobs as domestic servants, while blacks filled less than 2 percent.

(Horton 1979:77)



**Table 1<sup>38</sup>**  
**BLACK POPULATION OF BOSTON, 1830-1860**

| Year | Total Population<br>of Boston (thousands) | Black<br>Population | % of Total<br>Population |
|------|---|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1830 | 61.4                                      | 1,875               | 3.1                      |
| 1840 | 84.4                                      | 1,988               | 2.4                      |
| 1850 | 136.9                                     | 1,999               | 1.5                      |
| 1860 | 177.8                                     | 2,261               | 1.3                      |

Table 1 indicates that although black Bostonians grew in numbers between 1830 and 1860 their overall percentage of Boston's population was rather small.

**Table 2<sup>39</sup>**  
**LARGEST NORTHERN URBAN BLACK POPULATION 1860\***

| City               | Black<br>Population | % of Total<br>Population |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Philadelphia       | 22,185              | 3.9                      |
| New York City      | 12,472              | 1.5                      |
| Brooklyn, New York | 4,313               | 1.6                      |
| Cincinnati, Ohio   | 3,737               | 2.3                      |

\*Even though these cities have black populations much larger than Boston, the percentages of blacks in their total populations are comparable to the percentage in Boston.

Table 2 above illustrates the relative size of the black population in Boston compared to other northern urban cities with a sizable black population during the mid 1800's. Note that Boston although not on this table was at the time the fifth largest black community in the north prior to the Civil War.

Most black families lived in multiple-family dwellings. Within their households often lived extended families. In addition this included the taking-on of boarders. The sharing of one's residence was due to a combination of cultural tradition and necessity.

<sup>38</sup> From Peter R. Knights, Plain People of Boston, 1830-1860 (New York, 1971), p.29

<sup>39</sup> From Hollis, Lynch, The Black Urban Condition (New York, 1973), p.4



With social codes prohibiting blacks from housing in other parts of the city, black boarders often rented rooms in black households. Boarders pooled their income and shared responsibilities with the household. Those who were young with no occupation often aided others in childcare and domestic responsibilities. With limited housing and unfavorable economic and social conditions, living within this paradigm for African Americans was their cultural/racial responsibility. This pattern of ethnic and racial communal boundaries still in many ways exists today. Boston on the one hand, is proud of its cultural heritage and traditions and it's those traditions that tourism often banks upon. However, on the other hand it is this ethnic/racial separation, this city of polarized neighborhoods that is often central to the city's racial and cultural problems.

Segregation in housing, transportation, education, and employment during the ante-bellum period in Boston continued to be issues that African Americans rallied in protest and opposition to. The Black church aided in addressing these concerns. The black church was not only a place of worship; it proved time and time again to be the community's center. It offered new Black immigrants, from the south and Caribbean, introduction to the community, assisting in finding housing and employment.

When Boston's black population was small (11,000 in 1910 and only 23,000 in 1940), the black church was the place for black people not only to worship, but also to mobilize and organize any worthy cause. The church served as a social-welfare office, an employment office, and as an educational institution. Nothing has been off limits to the black church.... But the black church, in a sense, escapes definition. It is the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.), the Pentecostal, the Baptist, and the New





Zion. And it is not just a religious experience it is a protest, a protection, a promise. It is a place of love, a place to organize anger, a place to throw your head back and shout. The black church is its own secret. It is the major institution of the black community, the only "thing" it has owned outright before and after Emancipation. And, after all the suffering, degradation and sacrifice, it still continues to fulfill its promise.

(Hayden 1983:1)

The political climate of Boston during the late 19th century was influenced greatly by ethnic prejudice in which one ethnic group who happened to garner some political power or influence abused another new less fortunate group. Blacks who for the most part were not immigrants in the European tradition tended to receive prejudice of a different sort, racism. What one white immigrant group did to another was tame compared to what many old and new immigrant groups did to the Black population. "No Irish Need Apply and factory managers and store owners refused to hire black workers. Was there not some ground to anticipate a commonality of interest, given these partial similarities of experiences?" (Schneider 163) However a few blacks did serve in political office. In 1895 when the new Democrats redistricted the city Black political participation declined dramatically. Through redistricting, a new era in Boston politics arose, the creation of the *Ward Boss*. These *Ward Bosses* amassed such community control through favoritism, nepotism, and corruption that in order to achieve anything you had obtained their political 'blessing.' The work to rule was, don't fight it out in the courts, talk to and gain favor of the one who had the power of political influence. This



style of politics was not only in the State House, it also existed in each and every neighborhood of Boston, and Boston's Black community was no different.

As conditions on the North Slope of Beacon Hill [considered the West End at the time] became overcrowded, the city's land mass was expanding due to a major urban project. Over a thirty-year period by the leveling of Breeds Hill and the transportation of land from Needham to fill in the marshy area of Back Bay, the Fenway, and coastal areas of the Charles River [the West End, East Boston, and the Boston Waterfront] Boston added roughly 50 percent to its central landmass making new land became available. This new land meant new housing. By 1895 blacks began to relocate to the South End:

...between Washington Street and Columbus Avenue, [Black's were] taking up residence in the old brownstone apartments that had been originally intended for well-to-do whites. In the early 1900's they spread along Columbus Avenue and Tremont Street into the upper part of the South End, settling along Northampton and Lenox Streets; and by the 1930's with their population having passed the 20,000 mark, they extended the black community of the city down to Dudley Street in lower Roxbury.....It was here in the South End-Lower Roxbury area that the black community developed its own distinctive political organization by the start of the 20th century, as a handful of local political leaders traded power for patronage much as the Irish ward bosses had done 50 years earlier.

(O'Connor 213-214)



For the most part of the 19th century the black population of Boston lived in the West End along the north slope of Beacon Hill and along Cambridge Street. The size of this population stabilized between 1,800 and 2,000. For the most part this was an isolated, pocketed community that seldom made major inroads into mainstream Boston but there were a few community members like William Monroe Trotter, Archibald Grimke, and W. E. B. DuBois that garnered, local, national, and even international attention.

The African Meeting House was sold to a Jewish congregation in 1898 during a period when the neighborhood was deteriorating and most of the black population had relocated to the South End and Lower Roxbury areas of Boston and new Jewish immigrants were moving in. The church of the African Meeting House purchased a building at the corner of Camden and Tremont Streets and officially moved from Beacon Hill. In 1915 this new church changed its name to the current People's Baptist Church.

The African Meeting House building was a Jewish Synagogue for the better part of the 20th Century until the Museum of Afro American History purchased it in 1972. A Black Heritage Trail, which parallels the Freedom Trail, highlights the Meeting House as its beacon. Unlike most walking tours which consist of mainly plaques recalling what once existed on various sites along the tour, the Black Heritage Trail consists of existing original buildings that celebrate the historical black presence of Boston. No other such trail exists nationally. Today the African Meeting House, restored to its 1854 design, is listed on the National Historic Site Register. It is truly a national African American historic treasure. The following participatory play pays tribute to this landmark and tells of Boston's African American community that develops from its early beginnings.



The splitting of congregation membership of the African Meeting House occurred several times during the 19th Century. The subsequent splintering off of church membership became the seeds to the establishment of other major black churches in Boston. For example, People's Baptist Church, first known as St. Paul's Baptist Church, boosts its lineage to the African Meeting House. In 1905 the Boston Globe reported that "...St. Paul's Baptist Church society will hold a series of exercises covering one week incidental to the 100th Anniversary of their founding of the first religious society of colored people in New England." (Hayden 1994: 6)





### C. *Words of Renaissance (1919-1954)*

The 1930' and 40's was Boston's Renaissance period. The intersections of Massachusetts Avenue, Tremont Street, and Columbus Avenues were bustling with jazz entertainment. Several nightspots boasted entertainer of the caliber of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Fats Waller and others. Clubs like *The Hi-Hat*, and *the Rainbow Room*, and *Estelle's* had a mixed clientele of blacks and white. During this period there was tremendous social activity with in the black community. Many service and social organizations were active and mobilizing the black community to address various issues. For example, numerous female African American students who could not obtain dormitory housing at their respective colleges were afforded residence at 558 Massachusetts Avenue the home of *The League of Women for Community Service, Inc.* Corretta Scott King while living there was courted by Martin Luther King, Jr. who was a student at Boston University and who also at the time lived on Massachusetts Avenue. Their facility served as a regular meeting place for a variety of clubs and civic and social groups in the community such as the South Wend Historical Society and the Boston Negro Art Association.

During World War II black skilled laborers from various parts of the United States came to New England to work in the factories, and in shipbuilding as part of the war effort. During this time the black population of Boston doubled in size in one decade. The black population rose from:

23,000 in 1940 to over 40,000 in 1950. Since no new construction took place in the Roxbury area after 1920, the overcrowded black population was literally bulging at the seams. When the general prosperity of the post



war years after 1945 stimulated the heavily Jewish population in North Dorchester and Upper Roxbury to seek better housing in the suburbs, the blacks burst out of their ghettos and spread throughout the former Jewish district with amazing rapidity until, by 1960, they had moved all the way down Blue Hill Avenue to Mattapan Square. (O'Connor 216)

Assisted by redlining by banks and block busting by real estate people caused much of the movement of the Black population during this time.

Currently black Bostonians make up 22 percent of the city's population. The cultural mix of blacks from all regions of the country and Caribbean, with a range in economic and educational experiences greatly enhanced Boston's black community making it the HUB of black New England. This rich cultural and ethnic mix can still be experienced today.



### III. Summary:

The goal of the *Words of Reflection* Trilogy is to educate and inform audience and performers about the significant history Boston's Black community have contributed to the history of the United States. The trilogy covers major events in American history that all had their start in Greater Boston. Some of the significant features of the trilogy are in the participatory nature of each one-act play. Each Encounter Theatre performance included an engaging interaction between audience and actors discussing/debating on a key historical issue of that affected this community and thus this society as a whole. In *Words of Resistance* the discussion is focused on community response to the pending passing of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Bill, in *Words of Revolt*, it is on the Columbus Avenue Church public event sponsored by The Negro Business League in 1905 which had Booker T. Washington deliver a speech sparking an altercation with William Monroe Trotter. This event dubbed the Boston Riot, led to the formation of the Niagara Movement and the subsequent founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Finally *Words of Renaissance* focuses on the development of the present-day Black community of Boston with a central focus on Boston Jazz scene of the late 1930's and 1940's. Each one-act play's length is limited to 50 minutes with a 5-10 minute discussion. This structural design makes the project manageable as a touring production in school environments in which time is a factor.

Over the years the production has had successful performances all over Greater Boston. There has been requests over the years in embellish the standing work with other historical characters, or create individual plays focused on one particular character, for instance the story of Anthony Burns. In addition, companion text to the



trilogy has also been requested, material that can be used in the classroom as a pre-performance lesson. I hope to address both of these in the future.





**Chapter Four:**  
**Community History**  
**WORDS OF REFLECTION:**

Boston's Black History in the Making

Written by *David D. Coleman II* and first performed on the Mainstage at Roxbury Community College Visual & Performing Arts Center on **May 24, 25, 26, & 30, 2001** under the direction of *Sayif M. Sanyika*. Produced by ACT Roxbury Consortium<sup>40</sup> & the Arts & Humanities Department of Roxbury Community College in association with The Roxbury Repertory Theatre Company

**STAGING:**

The play is envisioned for production on a proscenium stage with the upstage area showcasing a huge mural painting depicting various New England African Americans as well as an array of continental Africans culturally associated with their presence. The mural, suspended upstage center is roughly twenty feet high and thirty-five feet wide with a large rectangle area in the center. This center point is for rear-projected images that will periodically be displayed during the run of the performance. These projected images: paintings, woodcut prints, photographs, newspaper frontages-headlines, etc. visually document, African American presence in New England's history. In addition, in roughly a semi-circle are six life-size portraits of images of African Americans spanning the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These images encased in large picture frames, along with the upstage mural have the appearance of being free floating images along the left/down left and right/down right stage areas, with the center stage open with a raised podium symmetrically centered up stage in front of the mural. The

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<sup>40</sup> Artists, Culture, and Trade Roxbury Consortium established to promote the arts of Greater Roxbury by developing economic opportunities and cultural events featuring local artists.



stage is black as well as the areas surrounding the six images on stage. These positions are where the actors will periodically appear and disappear from time to time during the duration of the production. All images are lit and are constant through out the performance, giving the allusion of art gallery paintings, or a museum exhibit, or neutral black box setting. The environment is a seating area arranged as pews of a church with a podium centered in front of the seating. This area will be used as seating space for the different cast members and the general audience.

#### **COSTUME:**

All actors wear black (slacks and full length skirts) and white (shirts & blouses) clothing with color limited to those personal prop items (hats, scarves, etc. that they don periodically through out the play. The Narrator will wear church robes and period attire to distinguish himself from each character he is portraying. Items worn will be those symbolic of the type of character they are portraying. i.e. women will wear bonnets, men escorts, waistcoats and the like.

#### **BLOCKING:**

Performance is abstractly staged using very few props or backdrops. Those backdrops (including slide images) that are used are symbolic of the issues that will be discussed. In the script are written picture numbers with titles and descriptions. These images refer to major blocking of actors for that particular moment in the scene. The idea behind this is that all actors are living images within these living pictures that the audience is observing as though they are in a museum or art gallery exhibit. The action either begins with or ends with a "photo moment" in which the actors, present in the scene, freeze for a moment, then move transitioning to their next scene.



## IMAGES:

Images are used as a major supplement to the up stage mural/backdrop. These visual images, in the form of projected pictures cover the major topics of the play. In addition there are supplemental images provided, depending on the staging of the production and the director's interpretation. Also you will note references to Pictures. These references are primarily connected to major stage blocking of actors. Some of these live pictures do have supporting visual images projected simultaneously up stage. Where this is down in the play it is indicated.

|         |    |   |
|---------|----|---|
| Picture | 1  | Red Flannel   |
| Picture | 2  | Unified Family                                      |
| Picture | 3  | The Robinson's Trial                                |
| Picture | 4  | The Mutilated Slave                                 |
| Picture | 5  | The Auction Block                                   |
| Picture | 6  | Three generations of black Males                    |
| Picture | 7  | Faneuil Hall Protest                                |
| Picture | 8  | The Huddling Masses                                 |
| Picture | 9  | Cinque  |
| Picture | 10 | Runaways  |
| Picture | 11 | The Meeting House Congregation                      |
| Picture | 12 | William & Ellen Craft                               |
| Picture | 13 | A Runaway   |
| Picture | 14 | Another Runaways                                    |
| Picture | 15 | Jesus Was Black?, Yes He Was!.                      |
| Picture | 16 | Anthony Burns:                                      |
| Picture | 17 | Lincoln & Douglass Debate                           |
| Picture | 18 | Call To Arms  |
| Picture | 19 | Booker T. Washington:                               |
| Picture | 20 | Archibald Grimke                                    |
| Picture | 21 | William Monroe Trotter                              |
| Picture | 22 | W. E. B. DuBois:                                    |
| Picture | 23 | The Birth Of A Nation                               |
| Picture | 24 | If We Must Die!:                                    |
| Picture | 25 | Early 20th Century Black Boston Community:          |
| Picture | 26 | The Living Is Easy:                                 |
| Picture | 27 | Black in World War II:                              |
| Picture | 28 | Brown vs. The Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas: |

All illustrations created by Michael Russell Thierry



## **ACT ONE: WORDS OF RESISTANCE**

[SCENE ONE: Moves from 1800 through 1850. Time changes progressively in relationship to the changing themes.]

[SCENE TWO: Early 1850, the *Encounter* experience is a discussion of the ramifications of the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act.]

[SCENE THREE: Early 1850, after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act.]

## **ACT TWO: WORDS OF REVOLT**

[SCENE ONE: Moves from 1850 through 1875. The prelude to the Civil War, the Civil War and Reconstruction are covered. Time changes progressively in relationship to the changing themes.]

[SCENE TWO Early 1870's through 1900, the period of the second industrial revolution and African-American migration to the North and West. Turn of the Century 1900, after the passage of the "Jim Crow Laws" The Boston Riot (the *Encounter* experience is participating for or against the views of Booker T. Washington), 1907 Niagara Movement, through the First World War are covered.]

## **ACT THREE: WORDS OF RENAISSANCE**

[SCENE ONE: Moves from the end of World War I through 1919. Time changes progressively in relationship to the changing themes.]

[SCENE TWO: 1919 through 1945 covers the Great Depression years, the Black Arts Movement, and World War II. The *Encounter* experience is a Boston Jazz Club scene and patrons being refused entry to the Hi Hat Club].

[SCENE THREE: Mid 1940's through early 1950's covers the period that preludes the Civil Rights Movement of the later twentieth century.]





**LIST OF CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:  
ACT ONE: WORDS OF RESISTANCE  
SCENE ONE:**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| NARRATOR #1:             | A representation of all past Pastors of the African House and of present-day pastors of A.M.E. churches                              |
| RED FLANNEL:             | Slave narrative  |
| PRINCE HALL:             | Founder of the African Masonic Lodge   |
| SCIPIO DALTON:           | A founding member of the African Meeting House   |
| CHLOE E. THOMAS          | Elderly Black resident of Myrtle Street  |
| LYDIA MARIA CHILD:       | Wrote in 1833 "An Appeal In Favor Of That Class Of Americans Called Africans" one of the earliest statements against race prejudice. |
| VOICE: #1                | A concerned citizen who makes statements that are Summations of the events of the time   |
| JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL:    | Reads from a letter he wrote to a friend   |
| DAVID WALKER:            | Author "An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the world   |
| WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON:  | Abolitionist Newspaper Publisher   |
| MARIA STEWART:           | First woman to speak in a public forum   |
| WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING: | In 1835 "loved the south." and stressed solving the problem of slavery through discourse   |
| WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT:   | Well known American poet who published a poem about Cinque's demeanor during the Amistad Mutiny trial.                               |
| CINQUE                   | Leader of the Mendi who revolted on the La Amistad   |
| VOICE: #2                | Reiterating historical statements that may or may not be pleasant also gives historical commentary                                   |
| ROSSETTA FORTEN:         | Daughter of a prominent black leader of the 1800's   |
| CHARLES LENOX REDMOND:   | Noted black abolitionist who toured with Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison   |



|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| COMMITTEE MEMBER: | Member of Boston School Committee during 1840's   |
| JUDGE PERKINS:    | Supreme Court Justice of Indiana during the 1840's  |
| ROBERT MORRIS:    | First Black New England Attorney Second Black to receive a Law Degree in the United States                |
| JUDGE SHAW:       | Chief Justice of Massachusetts during the 1840's  |
| WILLIAM CRAFT:    | Fugitive slave and abolitionist who traveled around the country and abroad speaking for the cause         |
| ELLEN CRAFT:      | William's wife who escaped bondage with her husband disguised as a white man and her husband as her slave |
| REPORTER:         | Reporting the news of the day   |
| CHOIR:            | Singing Negro Spirituals of the early to mid 1800's   |

### SCENE TWO:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| THE CONGREGATION:       | Actors and audience   |
| REV. THOMPSON:          | Presiding pastor of the African Meeting House in 1850                           |
| LEWIS HAYDEN:           | Prominent black abolitionist of Boston known for harboring fugitives            |
| HARRIET HAYDEN:         | Lewis' wife equally outspoken against slavery                                   |
| VOICE #1                | Member of the congregation  |
| VOICE #2                | Member of the congregation  |
| SLAVE CATCHERS:         | Bounty Hunters  |
| MARTIN ROBINSON DELANY: | Free Black commenting of the Fugitive Slave Act.                                |
| WILLIAM CRAFT:          | Runaway slave   |
| ELLEN CRAFT:            | Runaway slave   |
| NARRATOR:               | A representative of all past pastors of the African Meeting House is only heard |
| CHOIR:                  | Members of the congregation   |



CHARLOTTE FORTEN GRIMKE: Daughter of a prominent black New England Family

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: Delivers an extraction of his "What to the Slave Is The Fourth of July?"

***ACT TWO: WORDS OF REVOLT***

**SCENE ONE:**

NARRATOR: A representation of all past Pastors of the African Meeting House and of present-day pastors of A.M.E. churches

FREDERICK DOUGLASS:

REPORTER: Newspaper and magazine interviewer and storyteller

VOICE #1: A concerned citizen makes statements that are summations of the events

VOICE: #2 Reiterating statements that may or may not be pleasant also gives historical commentary

ANTHONY BURNS: Most famous fugitive slave case to rock Boston was that of Anthony Bums in May and June of 1854. Burns gives his own account of his return to and rendition from slavery.

ROBERT PURVIS: to the payment School Tax."

WILLIAM C. NELL: Read from letter in which Bums is formally Excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ, At Union, VA. September 1855 won the battle for Boston school desegregation

CHARLOTTE FORTEN GRIMKE: Recites from her journal writings

JUDGE: Judge in John Brown Trial

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: President of the United States

**SCENE TWO:**

NARRATOR A representation of all past Pastors of the African Meeting House and of present-day pastors of A.M.E. churches

VOICE #1: A concerned citizen



VOICE: #2                      Reiterating statements that may or may not be pleasant

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON:    "Cast down your buckets where you are."

W. E. B. Du BOIS:            Late 19th early 20th Century Civil Right Activist  
& scholar

**ACT THREE: WORDS OF RENAISSANCE**  
**SCENE ONE:**

NARRATOR:                    A representation of all past Pastors of the African Meeting House is only hear

VOICE # 1:                    A representative of the black church of early 1900's

VOICE # 2:                    Boston Resident of the day Makes statement that is a summation of the events of the time

REPORTER:                    Newspaper columnist of the day

REAL ESTATE AGENT:        White Realtor from the turn of the 20th century

WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER:    Businessman, editor of "The Guardian," and militant civil rights leader

W. E. B. Du BOIS:            Educator, leading black intellectual Founder of the NAACP Writer of "Souls of Black Folk and The Talented Tenth.

MOORFIELD STOLEY:        Lawyer, President of NAACP chapter in NYC author of "The Negro Question"

COMMITTEE MEMBER:        Member of various School Committee during the early 1900's

D. W. GRIFFITH:            Director of "Birth of a Nation"

MANAGEMENT:              Movie house manager at the Tremont Theater

CONGREGATION:              Actors and audience

REAL ESTATE AGENT:        Demonstrator of racist housing practices in Boston

REPORTER:                    White journalist





**SCENE TWO:**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| NARRATOR:             | A representative of all past pastors of Black churches of Greater Boston circa 1910's & 20's |
| COMMITTEE MEMBER:     | Member of School Committee during the early 1900's   |
| STATE SUPERINTENDENT: | From Massachusetts   |
| VOICE #1:             | A representative of the black church of early 1900's   |
| VOICE # 2:            | Boston Resident of the day Makes statement that is a summation of the events of the time     |
| MOORFIELD STOLEY:     | Lawyer, President of NAACP chapter in NYC author of "The Negro Question"                     |
| SOLDER #1:            | Soldier returning from W.W.I   |
| SOLDER # 2:           | Soldier returning from W.W.I   |
| SOLDER # 3:           | Soldier returning from W.W.I   |
| CONGREGATION:         | Actors and audience  |

**SCENE THREE:**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| VOICE #1:            | A concerned citizen of the black elite                                       |
| VOICE #2:            | Resident reiterating historical statements                                   |
| NARRATOR:            | Present day pastor   |
| REPORTER:            | Reporter for local Boston Newspaper  |
| JULIUS C. CHAPPELLE: | Black legislature around the turn of the century                             |
| DOROTHY WEST:        | Author of The Living is Easy about the Boston black elite during World War I |
| RESIDENT #1:         | Tells of the Hi Hat Club   |
| RESIDENT #2:         | Tells of the Pioneer Club  |
| RESIDENT #3:         | Tells of Wally's Paradise  |



RESIDENT #4: Echoes other resident's sentiments

THURGOOD MARSHALL: Chief lawyer for NAACP Legal Defense Committee

JUDGE: Of the United States Supreme Court

CONGREGATION: Actors and audience

**END**





Picture # 1: Red Flannel



## ACT ONE, SCENE ONE:

*[Scene opens with narrator entering from down right crossing to the center stage observing the images. He crosses to each image carefully inspecting them, even dusting them off and attempting to adjust their position. He then proceeds up stage to the podium. Once he arrives at this position the light changes and an image appears upstage in the center of the mural. This introduction is heard off stage with theme music, that of the sounds of drumming in background along with humming by the Choir. The play begins with actors entering from all areas of the stage converging assembled down center. The drumming continues as background.]*

### RED FLANNEL:

"Granny Judith said that in Africa they had very few pretty things, and that they had no red colors in cloth, in fact they had no cloth at all. Some strangers with pale faces come one day and draped a small piece of red flannel down on the ground. All the black folks grabbed for it. Then a larger piece was draped a little further on, and on until the river was reached. Then a large piece was draped in the river and on the other side. They was led on, each one trying to git a piece as it was draped. Finally, when the ship was reached, they draped large pieces on the plank and up into the ship till they got as many blacks on board as they wanted. Then the gate was chained up, and they could not get back. That is the way Granny Judith say they got her to America..... Granny Judith born Millie, and Millie Born me. No, I ain't never had no desire to go to Africa, 'cause I 'gwine to stay where I is."<sup>41</sup>

### NARRATOR:

Those were the words of an anonymous plantation slave recounting a story her grandmother told her about how her kind arrived on these American shores. Now its not the most glamorous and some would argue factual history of the origin and rational presence of multi-generations of slaves in a particular region of the United States ... But since the majority of African American history is passed on from an oral tradition ... let us continue...

### VOICE 1:

Negro indentured servants were first brought to Jamestown, VA., in 1619, slavery gradually spread to all of the colonies. It flourished most, however, in the Southern colonies, where slaves could be used profitably as field hands in the cultivation of tobacco, rice, and indigo. When the American Revolution broke out, three fourths of the Negro population lived south of the Mason Dixon Line.

### VOICE # 2

In 1638 European slave traders brought the first Africans to Boston, via the West Indies as slaves to replace the Native Americans who were unsuccessfully held in slavery. However slavery in a Puritan society was much different than in other parts of the American Colonies. England's King Charles I persecution of the Puritans caused a great

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<sup>41</sup> Anonymous slave narrative





exodus of English citizens to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Due to the socio-economic climate and religious conditions in Boston, slavery as an institution did not flourish. By 1643 the population of the Bay Colony rose to over 15,000 and just prior to the war for independence the total population neared 20,000.

**VOICE # 1:**

During the early 1700's Boston was a town with a rather high percentage of Negroes in its population. By 1752, 10 percent of Boston's population was Negro, numbering just over fifteen hundred persons.

**VOICE # 2:**

Wait a minute ... Although in 1700 a Boston committee tried to stop the trafficking of Negro slaves by 1741 in New England slavery was a part of life. It was economics not morality that changed things. During this period most New Englanders were seafarers or fur traders, occupations that proved to be more highly profitable than those New Englander who participated in slavery as slave traders. However, there were those wealthy merchant families who did retain slaves as servants.

**VOICE 1:**

Just as slavery seemed to be dying out it was revived by an agricultural rebirth in the South. A new demand for cotton and the introduction of improved machinery such as the cotton gin transformed the Southern states into the greatest cotton-growing region in the world. Cotton production jumped from 178,000 bales in 1810 to 3,841,000 bales in 1860. To achieve this tremendous increase required a whole army of new workers, chiefly black slaves. Within 50 years the number of slaves rose from about 1, 190,000 to almost 4,000,000.

*[The drumming stops. Actors freeze. As Voice 1 speaks actors move.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

In the year 1804 Negroes made up three percent of the population of Boston. The free Negroes, the majority of this percentage, offered substantial accessions for the Boston community. Those who were not fugitive slaves or servants, living in white households, congregated about the wharves at the extreme northern tip of the North End, opposite Charlestown. This locality was customarily referred to as 'New Guinea.'

**VOICE # 1:**

However, it is plain the Negro was making economic and industrial progress. The Negroes had almost a monopoly of the barbering business. The directory gave the names of 32 'hairdressers,' most of them were owners of shops, situated in every part of the city.

**VOICE # 2:**

There were 14 clothes shops, most of them on Brattle Street, a junk-shop, a provision shop, and 4 boarding houses. Thus, at this time, a promising proportion of the Negroes had become business proprietors.





**Picture # 2: Unified Family**



**VOICE # 1:**

A further and more important advance in organization was made with the founding of the first Negro church, originally called the African Meeting House.

*[Narrator enters from up left to center of main floor and addresses audience]*

**NARRATOR:**

*[speaks through out the rest of scene]*

Welcome brothers and sisters to the African Meeting House! My name is Rev. and I am your pastor for this special service. I have been informed that a number of you who live and work in this here city do not know the importance of these four walls, this building, our Meeting House. This will be the focus of my sermon today. Before we begin, let us rise in song.

*[congregation engaged in spiritual hymn "This Little Light of Mine" sung by Choir and audience.]*

**CHOIR:**

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Everywhere I go, I'm going to let it shine  
(3 times)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

In the Meeting House, I'm going to let it shine  
(3 times)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine."

*(As the Reverent motions for the congregation to be seated, Prince Hall shaking his head rises and begins to orate)*

**PRINCE HALL:**

*[Speaking to the audience from down right]*

"Now, my brethren, as we see an experience, that all things here are frail and changeable and nothing here to be depended upon: Let us seek those things which are above, and at the same time let us pray to Almighty God, while we remain in the tabernacle, that he would give us the grace of patience and strength to bear up under all our troubles, which at this day God knows we have our share. Patience, I say, for were we not possessed of a great measure of it; you could not bear up under the daily insults you meet with in the streets of Boston. My brethren, let us not be cast down under these other abuses we at present labor under: for the darkest is before the break of day."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> An extract from his *Charge to the African Lodge* by Prince Hall the founder of that lodge delivered this speech to his fellow-Masons in 1797.



**NARRATOR:**

Those were the words of Prince Hall, founder of the African Masonic Lodge. From an excerpt from his speech "Charge to the African Lodge" delivered in Boston in 1797. He commented on the conditions under which African-Americans of Boston were subjected to. The history of Black Presence in Greater Boston is an important history to know of. For those of you who are not aware of this history, its formation, and its significant place in this here society, let me give you a brief background ... This simple, brick building nestled in Smith Court on Boston's Beacon Hill reveals little to the passerby to indicate its grand place in history. Yet not only is this building, our meeting house, the oldest standing church building for black people of Boston, New England, America it is also the political, social, and educational, focal point of the black communities throughout New England and even America! If only these four walls could talk then you would understand the significance of this institution!

**SCIPIO DALTON:**

*[Speaking to the audience from down left]*

Cato Gardner and I Scipio Dalton were members of the predominantly white First Baptist Church between the years 1772 and 1808. Although we could attend their [white] churches were not accorded equal privileges with them. We coloured Baptists were assigned seats in the galleries, where we could only hear not see the preacher. We had no voting privileges, and our participation at church was limited to public worship and to services connected with births, baptism, marriage, and death. Some of us began to hold worship services in private homes. Others used Faneuil Hall. These informal, nondenominational gatherings were the beginning of the independent Negro church movement in Boston.

**NARRATOR:**

Dedicated in 1806 as the African Meeting House and built entirely with black laborer, the building was also known over the years as the First African Baptist Church, the Abolition Church, the Black Faneuil Hall, the Belknap Street Church, and later after that street's name was changed to Joy Street, the Joy Street Church...

**MRS. CHLOE E. THOMAS:**

*[A resident interrupts and moves down center.]*

"I'm Mrs. Chloe E. Thomas. I live in the old women's home on Myrtle Street. A while ago, I heard from the lips of some of those of our most honored fathers, Cato Gardner, Father Primus Hall, Hamlet Earl, Scipio Dalton, Peter G. Smith, and G.H. Holmes, that George Holmes made the first hod to carry bricks and mortar that was ever used in Boston. He invented it for the purpose of carrying bricks and mortar to build our Meeting House with, as he was a mason and calculated to do his part to the best of his ability. And, Boston Smith, father of P.G. Smith, with the rest of his devoted brothers, was anxious to do all in his powers. As Boston Smith was a master builder, he led the carpentry department. Abel Barbados, being a master mason, also assisted. He was the father of Mrs. Catherine Barbados at 27 Myrtle Street."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> A elderly resident of the Old Women's Home on Myrtle Street (1883)







Picture # 3: The Robinson's Trial



**NARRATOR:**

The establishment of the African Meeting House greatly influenced this Black colony. The African Meeting House became the home of the Abolitionist Movement. For blacks of Boston, the attainment of true freedom and full political rights was inexorably linked to the national abolition of slavery. [The Robinsons enter are confronted by the Judge] Sometimes fugitive aid in Boston was an individual effort, but more often it was a group concern. In 1827, John and Sophia Robinson were convicted of withholding a five-year-old black child, Elizabeth, from her white guardian whom they feared would sell her into slavery. The Robinsons, who were part of no organized antislavery group, received four months in jail for this act but the child was never recovered, having 'disappeared into the black community.

*[The Robinsons are led away as the Judge repeats Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!]*

**NARRATOR:**

As Bostonians joined forces to oppose legal bondage, the African Meeting House became a hotbed of abolitionist agitation.

*[Lydia Maria Child who wrote in 1833 "An Appeal In Favour Of That Class of Americans Called Africans" stands up from the balcony and makes one of the earliest statements against race prejudice.]*

**VOICE #2:**

*[From opposite side of the room]*

"Listener, what follows is very sickening: but we must not allow our nerves to be more sensitive than our consciences. If such things are done in our country, it is important that we should know of them, and seriously reflect upon them."<sup>44</sup>

*[The following passage in acted out in pantomime]*

**LYDIA MARIA CHILD:**

"The door was fastened, that none of the Negroes, either through fear or sympathy, should attempt to escape; he then told them that the design of this meeting was to teach them to remain at home and obey his orders. All things being now in train, George was called up, and by assistance of his younger brother, laid on a broad bench or block. The master then cut off his ankles with a broad ax. In vain the unhappy victim screamed. Not a hand among so many dared to interfere. Having cast the feet into the fire, he lectured the Negroes at some length. He then proceeded to cut off his limbs below the knees. The sufferer begged him to begin with his head. It was in vain--the master went on thus, until trunk, arms and head were all in the fire. Still protracting the intervals with lectures, and threats of like punishment, in case any of them were disobedient, or ran away, or disclosed the tragedy they were compelled to witness..."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Excerpt of Lydia Maria Child 1833 *An Appeal In Favour Of That Class of Americans Called Africans*

<sup>45</sup> Excerpt of Lydia Maria Child 1833 *An Appeal In Favour Of That Class of Americans Called Africans*



**VOICE #1:**

"The Negroes were allowed to disperse, with charges to keep the secret under the penalty of like punishment. But some of them whispered the horrid deed; the neighbors found the remains and testified against him."<sup>46</sup>

**NARRATOR:**

Lilburn Lewis was bound over to await the sitting of the court; but before that period arrived, he committed suicide.

[*Song "Oh, Freedom is sung by Choir*]

**CHOIR:**

"Oh, Freedom, oh freedom, oh freedom over me;  
And before I'd be a slave, I'd be buried in my grave,  
And go home to my Lord and be free."  
Next two verses are improvised.

**NARRATOR:**

"By the middle 1820's there was almost no abolition voice in the Deep South; those who opposed the accepted mores had either submitted to the suppression of their beliefs or had left the region."

[*James Russell Lowell stands and reads from a letter he wrote to a friend...*]

**JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL:**

"I am James Russell Lowell and I have been working for the abolition cause for quite a while. One day a friend argued in favor of the slaveholder's rights. Eloquently paraphrasing Shakespeare let me read to you something I wrote him. "Hath not a slave holder hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter as an abolitionist is? If you prick them do they not bleed? If you tickle them do they not laugh? If you poison them do they not die? If you wrong them shall they not revenge? ... Even they are human. The longer I live the more I am convinced that the world must be healed by degrees."<sup>47</sup>

**NARRATOR:**

"The years between 1808 and 1831 have generally been considered years of indifference in the slavery controversy, or of preoccupation with other things. It is equally true that those were years of economic and social change from which later antislavery and proslavery combatants drew their motives and their arguments..."

<sup>46</sup> Excerpt of Lydia Maria Child's *An Appeal In Favour Of That Class of Americans Called Africans*

<sup>47</sup> Excerpt from a letter by James Russell Lowell, Harvard educator and Abolitionist





Picture # 4: The Mutilated Slave





[*Slaves on an auction block being bided on a man in the crowd steps down stage and speaks*]

**OPPOSING VIEW:**

"Slavery has ever been the stepping ladder by which countries have passed from barbarism to civilization ... divisions of mankind into grades ... constitutes the very soul of civilization; and the more those grades are in a country, the more highly civilized may we expect to find it."

**NARRATOR:**

In the early days of the antislavery movement most of its leaders believed in nonviolence. They thought that they could win freedom for the slaves by a revolution in public opinion, rather than with swords and guns. There were always a few men who disagreed.

[*David Walker is seen entering stage left distributing his document to a group of laborers*]

**REPORTER:**

"NEWS FLASH! In 1829 the nation was startled by David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World in which he called on slaves to rebel and "kill or be killed."

**VOICE #2:**

David Walker didn't have to be told that if a slave struck his master it meant death. Freeborn in North Carolina, but the son of a slave father, he knew slavery--what he called "the peculiar institution" --firsthand. His hatred of slavery drove him to Boston, where he sold clothes and subscriptions to "Freedom's Journal." He burned to deliver his own message to the slaves. Walker's "Appeal" was a harsh out-cry against the injustices done the Negro, and an open call to rise up in arms and overthrow slavery. In a year it ran through three editions, terrifying the slave holder's."

**DAVID WALKER:**

[*David Walker looking at laborers - then turns and talks*]

"Can our condition be any worse? Can it be more mean and abject? If there are any changes, will they not be for the better, though they may appear for the worst at first? Can they get us any lower? Where can they get us? ... The Indians of North and South America - The Greeks - The Irish - The Jews - in fine, all the inhabitants of the earth (except, however, the sons of Africa) are called men, and of course are, and ought to be free. But we (coloured people) and our children are brutes and of course are, and ought to be slaves to the American people and their children forever? To dig their mines and work their farms; and thus go on enriching them from one generation to another with our blood and our tears?...<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Excerpt from David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World in four articles with a Preamble* published 1829 and 1830





Picture #5: The Auction Block



[*Upstage from David Walker several men pantomime hard labor, an overseer urges them on.. as the overseer turns ... the men become aggressive in their movements when Walker says ..(NO!) They freeze at a potential moment for confrontation*]

NO. How would they like for us to make slaves of, and hold them in cruel slavery, and murder them as they do us? ... I ask you, had you not rather be killed than to be a slave to a tyrant, who takes the life of your mother, wife and dear little children? ... Answer God almighty; and believe this, that it is no more harm for you to kill a man who is trying to kill you, than it is for you to take a drink of water when thirsty ... The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears...<sup>49</sup>

[*Slaves shift their movement showing they have control of their destiny in pantomime*]

We must and shall be free! God will deliver us. And woe, woe, will be to you if we have to obtain our freedom by fighting. Throw away your fears and prejudices then, and treat us like men, and we will like you more than we do now hate you... You are astonished at my saying we hate you? For if we are men we cannot but hate you, while you are treating us like dogs."<sup>50</sup>

**VOICE #1:**

"Georgia offered \$10,000 for Walker taken alive and \$1,000 for him dead. State after state in the South made it a crime to circulate the "Appeal," and a crime to teach Negroes to read." "It is evident they have read this pamphlet, nay, we know that the larger portion of them have read it, or heard it read, and that they glory in its principles, as if were a star in the east, guiding them to freedom and emancipation."<sup>51</sup>

**VOICE #2:**

"The Mayor of Savannah, William T. Williams and the Governor Owens of Georgia wrote to Boston's Mayor Otis, begging him to stop Walker's "highly inflammatory" work. Reports soon circulated Boston stating that a group of Georgia men were offering a \$3,000 reward to anyone who would take David Walker's life. His friends advised him to go to Canada, but he refused to run away..."<sup>52</sup>

**DAVID WALKER:**

"I'll stand my ground ... Even if I must die in this cause..." [ *light fades* ]

**VOICE #1:**

A year later, David Walker was dead. Whether he died of poison or from natural causes is still a mystery. But the "Appeal" lives on ... [Slave move toward Overseer and all exit stage left] and others like Nat Turner in 1831 in Virginia revolted, but this time not in

<sup>49</sup> Excerpt from David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World in four articles with a Preamble* published 1829 and 1830

<sup>50</sup> Excerpt from David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World in four articles with a Preamble* published 1829 and 1830

<sup>51</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, 28 September, 183.; reprinted in *Richmond Enquirer*, February 18, 1830

<sup>52</sup> Williams to Otis, December 12, 1829, Records of Chatham County, Georgia.



words but by use of violence. Leaving a trail of more than seventy whites murdered before being killed himself and leaving the words of Walker haunting in the minds of many.

**DAVID WALKER:**

"We must and shall be free! God will deliver us. And woe, woe will be to you if we have to obtain our freedom by fighting."

**VOICE #2:**

Inspired by "Walker's Appeal" Maria Stewart, a born-again Christian and advocate for the cause of God and Freedom, felt that she too had a great work to perform, and in 1831 she found her way to the newly opened office of *The Liberator* a Boston-based Abolitionist Newspaper founded and operated by William Lloyd Garrison.

**WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON:**

"Maria Stewart, flush with the promise of ripening womanhood, made herself known to me by coming into my office and placing into my hands, for criticism and friendly advice a manuscript embodying her devotional thoughts and aspirations. Included were various essays pertaining to the conditions of that class with which she was complexionately identified."<sup>53</sup>

**NARRATOR:**

"Encouraged when Garrison published two of her essays, Stewart went on to speak publicly, to various audiences. Her speech in Boston's Franklin Hall on September 21, 1832 was the first public lecture by an American woman. Her message was secular:

**MARIA STEWART:**

"Sons and daughters of Africa, awake! Arise! Distinguish yourselves! Again, it was asserted that we were "a ragged set, crying for liberty." I reply to it, the whites have so long and so loudly proclaimed the theme of equal rights and privileges that our souls have caught the flame also, ragged as we are. As far as our merit deserves, we feel a common desire to rise above the condition of servants and drudges. I have learnt, by bitter experience, that continual hard labor deadens the energies of the soul, and benumbs the faculties of the mind; the ideas become confined, the mind barren, and, like the scorching sands of Arabia, produces nothing; or like the uncultivated soil, brings forth thorns and thistles."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Excerpt from *The Liberator* edited by William Lloyd Garrison in 1831

<sup>54</sup> Maria Stewart *Franklin Hall Address*, September 21, 1832 documented as the first speech by an American Women in a public forum.





**NARRATOR:**

In her speech Maria Stewart painted a vivid sketch of Boston's black community, in which she was sympathetic to the males but also critical.

*[Three generations of black men, dejected and downtrodden enter stage right, group center stage]*

**MARIA STEWART:**

"Look at our young men-smart, active, and energetic, with souls filled with ambitious fire; if they look forward, alas! What are their prospects? They can be nothing but the humblest laborer, on account of their dark complexion ... Look at our middle-aged men,...In winter, every cent they earn goes to buy their wood and pay their rent; their poor wives also toil beyond their strength, to help support their families. Look at our aged sires, whose heads are whitened with the frosts of seventy winters, with their wood-saws on their backs. Alas, what keeps us so? Prejudice, ignorance and poverty."<sup>55</sup>

**NARRATOR:**

A year later when she lectured at the African Masonic Hall, her criticism of black men of Boston had grown sharper.

**MARIA STEWART:**

"Is it blindness of mind or stupidity of soul or want of education that has caused our men never to let their voices be heard nor their hands be raised in behalf of their color? Or has it been for fear of offending the whites? If it has 0 ye fearful ones, throw off your fearfulness and come forth. If you are men, convince them those you posses the spirit of men.

Have the sons of Africa no souls? Feel they no ambitious desires? ... Where is the man that has distinguished himself in these modem days by acting wholly in the defense of African rights and liberty? You are abundantly capable, gentlemen, of making yourself men of distinction: and this gross neglect on your part causes my blood to boil within me. 0 ye sons of Africa, when will your voices be heard in our legislative halls, in defiance of your enemies, contending for equal rights and liberty?"<sup>56</sup>

*[The men exit at start of next passage]*

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<sup>55</sup> Except from *Maria Stewart Selected Speeches* ed by Marilyn Richardson

<sup>56</sup> Excerpt from Maria Stewart speeches 1833





**Picture # 6: Three Generations of Black Males**



**WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON:**

During my recent tour ... on the subject of slavery, every place I visited gave fresh evidence of the fact that a greater change in the public sentiment towards the liberation of the slave needs to be effected in the Free states - AND PARTICULARLY IN NEW ENGLAND - than the South. As I published in the Liberator:

I found contempt more bitter, opposition more active ... prejudice more stubborn and apathy more frozen in New England than among the slave-holders themselves ... Till every chain be broken and every bondsman set free, let Southern oppressors tremble, let their Northern apologists tremble ... I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I BE as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On the subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife ... tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; --but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like this one. I am earnest. I will not equivocate. I will not excuse. I will not retreat a single inch - AND I WILL BE HEARD!<sup>57</sup>

**VOICE #1:**

It is but the other day that the brave Lovejoy gave his breast to the bullets of a mob for the rights of free speech and opinion and died when it was better not to live.

**NARRATOR:**

Elijah Lovejoy clergy editor of a religious paper in Alton, Illinois that was unpopular for advocating gradual abolition was killed by a mob...

*[Narrator walks in front of the podium and moves towards a small group of protesters protesting the killing of Rev. Elijah Lovejoy.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

We had a protest against the killing of Lovejoy at Faneuil Hall on December 8, 1837. William Ellery Channing, a noted white abolitionist aristocrat who loved the south and stressed solving the problem of slavery through discourse, spoke followed by a move to formulate a statement of those gathered.

*[Entering from the crowd appears William Ellery Channing from one side of the room states]*

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<sup>57</sup> Excerpt from editorial written and published by William Lloyd Garrison 1835





Picture # 7: Faneuil Hall Protest





**WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING:**

"An institution so founded in wrong, so imbued with injustice, cannot be made a good. It cannot, like other institutions, be perpetuated by being improved. To improve it is to prepare the way for its subversion. Every melioration of the slave's lot is a step toward freedom. Slavery is thus radically, essentially evil."<sup>58</sup>

**VOICE # 2:**

"At the Faneuil Hall Meeting the attorney general of Massachusetts stood and blamed Lovejoy for inciting a riot and that he "died as the fool dieth." He claimed that the Alton citizens had acted in the tradition of the Revolutionary rioters of Boston ... that slaves were like "wild beasts" and abolitionists were like "fools."

**NARRATOR:**

*[Narrator returns to podium as mob disperses.]*

This was the kind of feeling that people in those days had.

**REPORTER:**

NEWS FLASH! "Spanish slavers seized 53 men and women from the Mendi region of Africa and their subsequent shipment of slaves bound for Cuba, in violation of a Spanish treaty that expressly forbade slave trading in British waters. Once in the Havana slave markets, traders purchased the Africans for later resale and hired a captain to conduct La Amistad to Principe, Puerto Rico. After four days at sea the slaves, organized and led by Cinque, revolted. Murdering their captors and taking their former ship's captain and cook hostage, the mutineers demanded safe return to Africa. News to follow....

*[Changes to a group of black citizens huddling.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

*[The story continues with the next voice]*

Secretly steering the ship westward at night to counteract the day's easterly travels, the crew, after months at sea, brought the boat to Long Island where it was boarded by American forces who arrested the mutineers and freed the slavers. Brought ashore in New Haven, the slaves became a cause celebre at a critical juncture in the abolitionist movement. More to come.

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<sup>58</sup> Excerpt from protest speech delivered by William Ellery Channing at Faneuil Hall on December 8, 1837. In this passage he paraphrases William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice's* Shylock speech to the court when Shylock begins, Hath not a Jew hands, etc.





Picture # 8: Cinque



**NARRATOR:**

*[The story continues with the next voice]*

The plight of these Africans attracted the attention of many Americans. One such American was well-known poet William Cullen Bryant who wrote a poem about the revolt's leader. Published in the *Emancipator* on September 19th, 1839 to coincide with Cinque's first day in court:

**WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT:**

Chained in a foreign land he stood,  
 A man of giant frame,  
 Amid the gathering multitude  
 That shrunk to hear his name—

All stem of look and strong of limb,  
 His dark eye on the ground--  
 And silently they gazed on him,  
 As on a lion bound.

Vainly, but well, that chief had fought—  
 He was a captive now;  
 Yet pride, that fortune humbles not,  
 Was written on his brow.

The scars his dark broad bosom wore  
 Showed warrior true and brave;  
 A prince among his tribe before,  
 He could not be a slave.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> From Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad* (1987) page 66



*[reading newspaper story about La Amistad Revolt]*

**REPORTER:**

Prominent abolitionists Lewis Tappan, Roger Sherman Baldwin, and former president John Quincy Adams all championed the cause of the Amistad mutineers throughout the United States. After two years of suits in lower courts, the Supreme Court agreed with arguments in favor of acquittal by Adams and Baldwin, and ruled that Cinque and his compatriots had been illegally seized.

**CINQUE:**

We ago home now!

**NARRATOR:**

*[As narrator walks back behind the podium]*

Another reform movement of the 1830's and 40's that aroused greater interest was that of education. To acquire an education was the burning desire of most free blacks, especially those who had formerly been slaves. Only a few northern communities and no southern ones had free public schools open to blacks.

**VOICE # 2:**

*[From the audience reiterating a statement from a North Carolina legislator]*

"Gentlemen, I hope you do not conceive it at all necessary that everybody should be able to read, write, and cipher. If one is to keep a store or a school, or to be a lawyer or physician, such branches may, perhaps, be taught him; though I do not look upon them as by any means indispensable; but if he is to be a plain fanner, or a mechanic, they are of no manner of use, but rather a detriment."

**VOICE #1:**

*[VOICE from across the floor makes statement that summarizes a public sentiment.]*

"It was a crime to teach Coloured children! Mobs in some localities invaded schools, burned books and ran teachers out of town if they talked of abolition to their classes or dared instruct Coloured children."

**PRUDENCE CRANDALL:**

I am Prudence Crandall. And I operate a boarding school for girls in Canterbury, Connecticut where in 1831 a Negro girl, Sarah Harris, applied for admission as a non-resident student. She was accepted, although most of the parents withdrew their daughters in protest. Acting on my Quaker beliefs, I opened a school especially for coloured girls. Why, the villagers tried to bum our school. They threw manure into my well, the local doctors refused to treat my students and the grocers even refused to sell me food. But to my school came Negro girls from Boston, Philadelphia and New York...

*[Congregation applauds her, giving her shouts of praise across the stage]*







Picture # 9: The Huddling Masses



**REPORTER:**

NEWS FLASH .... ADVANCING! At the Sabbath School Exhibition, held in Park-Street Church on the 4TH of July, the Coloured boys were permitted to occupy pews one fourth of the way up the side aisle. The march of equality has certainly begun in Boston! The Coloured girls took their seats near the door, as usual.

**ROSSETTA FORTEN:**

"I get along pretty well in school, but father, Miss Tracy the principal does not allow me into the room with the other scholars because I'm coloured."<sup>60</sup>

**NARRATOR:**

This was a common school like many that were opened--on a segregated basis--to increasing numbers of black children during the 1820's and 30's. This school tradition, which began in the home of Prince Hall, founder of the black Masonic Lodge, soon relocated to the basement of the African Meeting House. Later due to the generosity of the Abiel Smith estate, the Smith School was established for the instruction of Boston's black children. In 1820, the Smith School opened in Boston, in the basement of the African Meeting House, as a citywide public school for black children. Although its plant was inadequate, it became the point of embarkation for many of Boston's future black leaders, but as a rule, free blacks in northern states paid school taxes even if their children were not allowed to attend the schools. Blacks thereby helped finance the public education of white children. Many black spokesmen were bitter in their denunciation of such public finance. Frederick Douglass, as usual, got to the core of the matter:

**FREDERICK DOUGLASS:**

"In the northern states, we are not slaves to individuals, not personal slaves, yet in many respects we are the slaves to the community."<sup>61</sup>

**NARRATOR:**

Some black abolitionists recommend civil disobedience:

**CHARLES LENOX REDMOND:**

"Let every coloured man, called upon to pay taxes to any institution in which he is deprived or denied it privileges and advantages, withhold his taxes though it costs imprisonment or confiscation. Let our motto be--No privileges, No Pay!"<sup>62</sup>

*[Congregation shouts: No privileges, no pay!]*

<sup>60</sup> Daughter of James Forten, wealthy black sail maker from Philadelphia

<sup>61</sup> Statement extracted from speech given on the subject of taxation and the Negro

<sup>62</sup> In 1843 Charles Lenox Redmond with Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison were on a lecture tour for the New England Anti-Slavery Society.



**NARRATOR:**

In defense of segregation, school and public authorities called on everything but experience. Boston school board members alleged that black children were a different sort altogether.

[*Three School committee members enter.*]

**BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER:**

"Their peculiar physical, mental and moral structure requires an educational treatment, different, in some respects, from that of white children. Teachers of schools in which they are intermingled remark that, in those parts of study and instruction in which progress depends on memory or on the imitative faculties, chiefly, the colored children will often keep pace with white children; but when progress comes to depend chiefly on the faculties of invention, comparison, and reasoning, they quickly fall behind."

**NARRATOR:**

"Arguments were made to establish separate schools for black children on issues of race, even if the issue of equality, or proximity were not addressed. In the late 1840's Judge Perkins of the Supreme Court of Indiana granted a white parent's request that black children--who were paying tuition--be excluded from a public school so that the parent might send his own children there."

**JUDGE PERKINS:**

"This has not been done because they did not need education, nor because their wealth was such as to render aid undesirable, but because black children were deemed unfit associates of white, as school companions."

**NARRATOR:**

"In Boston, the chief Justice of the State argued that it was no hardship for all the city's black children to attend a single school, while white children often attended schools nearest their homes."

**JUSTICE SHAW:**

"In Boston, where more than one hundred thousand inhabitants live within a space so small ... it would be scarcely an inconvenience to require a boy of good health to traverse daily the whole extent of it."

**NARRATOR:**

Not satisfied with these limited and for the most part inferior learning conditions, (the entire city's black children attended this one school) the black community protested first by petitioning the city (William Cooper Nell during the 1840's through early 50's), then by the courts (Roberts vs. The City of Boston in 1849). Benjamin F. Roberts the father of Sara C. Roberts in 1849, sued, the city of Boston, to enter his child in the nearest school. Even though arguing in her defense were noted white abolitionist Charles Sumner and prominent black lawyer of the New England area Robert Morris, it was to no avail. The courts held that school authorities were not bound by any rule.<sup>63</sup> Blacks during this time struggled constantly for the right to learn, for the right to be taught in an equal and non-

<sup>63</sup> This decision led to the 1896 'Separate but Equal' decision in the *Plessy versus Ferguson* case.



segregated setting. The conspiracy to keep them in ignorance was pervasive. Most ironic of all, free blacks were expected to pay taxes for schools they could not attend.

**VOICE # 2:**

Colored parents in protest removed their children from the Smith Street School, where they had been taught privately. They did this for six straight years until the legislature gave in. And on a Monday morning in September in 1855 the City of Boston's colored children returned to the public Smith Street School and other schools in their neighborhoods.

**SCHOOLBOY:**

Now we are like other Boston boys!

**VOICE # 1:**

Runaways from the Deep South who made their way across the Mason-Dixon Line were usually slaves with a modicum of education and money. Ellen Craft, who had been fathered by her master and given to her half-sister as a child, worked as a seamstress in Macon, Georgia. Her husband, William Craft, was a cabinetmaker who moonlighted as a hotel waiter to earn extra money. Although they lived over a hundred miles apart their marriage was further strained by Ellen's fear of having a child who could be sold away from her. Shortly before Christmas in 1848, they matured a bold scheme for an escape.

*[William & Ellen Craft plan their escape.]*<sup>64</sup>

**ELLEN CRAFT:**

"Now William, listen to me and take my advice, and we shall be free in less than a month."

**WILLIAM CRAFT:**

"Let me hear your plans then."

**ELLEN CRAFT:**

"Take part of your money and purchase me a good suit of gentlemen's apparel, and when the white people give us our holiday, let us go off to the North. I am white enough to go as the master, and you can pass as my servant."

**WILLIAM CRAFT:**

"But you are not tall enough for a man."

**ELLEN CRAFT:**

"Give me a pair of very high-heeled boots, and they will bring me up more than an inch and get me a very high hat, then I'll do."

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<sup>64</sup> The following account, written by Josephine Brown, a free woman, was based on conversations she had with Ellen Craft in the 1850's







Picture # 10: Runaways



**WILLIAM CRAFT:**

"But then, my dear, you would make a very boyish looking man, with no whiskers or mustache."

**ELLEN CRAFT:**

"I could bind up my face in a handkerchief, as if I was suffering dreadfully from the toothache, and then no one would discover the want of beard."

**WILLIAM CRAFT:**

"What if you were called up to write your name in the books at hotels?"

**ELLEN CRAFT:**

"I would also bind up my right hand and put it in a sling, and that would be an excuse for not writing."

**WILLIAM CRAFT:**

"I fear you could not carry out the deception for so long a time, for it must be several hundred miles to the free states."

**ELLEN CRAFT:**

"Come William, don't be a coward! Get me the clothes, and I promise you we shall both be free in a few days. You have money enough to fit me out and to pay our passage to the North."

**NARRATOR:**

The right for education, freedom, and justice is issues we are always faced with. If we are to stand erect like men, then we must fight like men! Each year during the early 1800's, the south demanded more territory and gained more power in the federal government. It is now the year 1850 and a key issue that will effect every black citizen of Boston is about to be discussed here at the African Meeting House.

**(END OF ACT ONE, SCENE ONE)**

[Note: the ending of this scene will be with narrator, center stage, concluding his speech and relinquishing the floor to the chairman of the meeting (Rev. Thompson).]



**ACT ONE, SCENE TWO:**

*[This scene is the discussion stage of the performance. It begins immediately after the Narrator from Scene One relinquishes the floor to Rev. Thompson.]*

**REV. THOMPSON:**

The Fugitive Slave Act is part of a larger effort of the United States Congress to make states compromise with one another with the hope of keeping the country from having a Civil War. One of the issues at stake is that they are trying to satisfy those who want slavery maintained, those who want it expanded, and those who want it ended." One of the agreements being considered is The Fugitive Slave Act. Since the majority of you do not know what this law means, and how it will effect us, let me explain ... If passed:

*[Congregation rises to discuss this issue]*

**VOICE #1:**

*[Interrupts]*"All citizens must assist in the return of a fugitive. -Any citizen who helps a fugitive escape or interferes with an "official" trying to catch a fugitive can receive a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail.

**VOICE #2:**

Negroes who are accused of being fugitives are not allowed to plead their defense in court. -Instead of judges and juries, special appointed commissioners determine what should happen to the fugitive. Note that Commissioners are paid for each case. They receive twice as much money if the decision accuses the Negro of being a fugitive.

*[There is a response from the audience to this news]*

**REV. THOMPSON:**

Brothers and sisters, do you understand now what is happening here if the law is passed?

**VOICE #1:**

In the past we have helped slaves escape and officials have turned their backs ... and there have been no penalties.

**VOICE #2:**

In the past, a captured fugitive had the right to a court hearing.

**VOICE #1:**

Everyone in the Meeting House is against slavery. Some of us have used words and others have acted to protect fugitives.

**CONGREGATION:**

But what are we going to do?





**Picture #11: The Meeting House Congregation**





**REV. THOMPSON:**

If one of our brethren is placed in jail, who will pay his fine? -If any of us is imprisoned who will care for our families? Will you brother still harbor fugitives and offer them safe passage? Or will you simply turn your back?

*[After all of the committees are engaged in discussion Lewis Hayden, prominent member of the African Meeting House, is delivered a message from a messenger. He rises and speaks to Rev. Thompson and the congregation.]*

**LEWIS HAYDEN:**

Rev. Thompson! Rev. Thompson! May I have the floor?

**REV. THOMPSON:**

Brother Lewis Hayden, ever since you escaped on the Underground Railroad from Lexington, Kentucky and moved to Boston, with your wife Harriet, you have become an outspoken leader in the abolitionist movement. What information do you and your wife have for us to hear at this meeting? The Fugitive Slave Act is an issue of great importance to us all.

**LEWIS HAYDEN:**

Rev. Thompson I have just received the following news, delivered by messenger from our most honoured brother Martin Robinson Delaney, the Fugitive Slave Act was just passed into law!

**REV. THOMPSON:**

It appears that coming to a resolve in this meetings agenda is more crucial now than ever before. "Please, Brother Hayden you may definitely have the floor." (Addressing the congregation) All committees listen well. Take back this news your about to receive to every household. Brother Hayden tell us all that you know.

**LEWIS HAYDEN:**

[He presents a document that he reads aloud to the congregation. A visual appears at the same time that relates to his comments.] Caution Colored People One And All!



# CAUTION !!

**COLORED PEOPLE**

**OF BOSTON, ONE A ALL,**

**You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and  
advised, to avoid conversing with the  
Watchmen and Police Officers  
of Boston,**

**For since the recent**

**ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN,  
they are empowered to act as  
KIDNAPPERS  
AND  
SLAVE CATCHERS**

**And they have already been actually employed in  
KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING  
SLAVES. Therefore if you value your LIBERTY,  
and the Welfare of the Fugitives among you, Shun  
them in every possible manner, as so many HOUNDS  
on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.**

**Keep a Sharp Look Out for  
KIDNAPPERS, and have  
TOP EYE open.<sup>65</sup>**

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<sup>65</sup> This notice was posted in and around the city of Boston on or shortly after April 24, 1851.





Picture # 12: William & Ellen Craft



**REV. THOMPSON:**

*[Interrupts and speaks to the congregation]* "This news must be posted on every street lamp, nailed on every door. This news must spread through out New England for it affects all of us regardless of if we were born free, emancipated, or fugitive. *[turning to Louis Hayden.]* This means Boston will cease to be a haven for escaped slaves?"

**LEWIS HAYDEN:**

No, Rev. Thompson regardless of what effect this law will have we will continue!

**CONGREGATION:**

That's right brother Hayden. We are with you!

**LEWIS HAYDEN:**

My wife Harriet and I will still use our home as a station on the Underground Railroad, but besides this we now have a problem that must be addressed.

**REV. THOMPSON:**

We are all ears! Please continue.

**LEWIS HAYDEN:**

Brother William, sister Ellen will please step forward.

*[William and Ellen Craft move forward]*

**WILLIAM CRAFT:**

Although our return to Boston was only recent, we have hoped to start a new life here in the North. With the passing of this law our future is uncertain.

**ELLEN CRAFT:**

We can now be assured that already we are being hounded by agents sent by our ... master ... to locate and return us back to Georgia ... to bondage!

**CONGREGATION:**

No! Never! We cannot allow that.

**MRS. HARRIET HAYDEN:**

The Crafts are well known in these parts. It behooves us to come to their aid at this time of great emergency! For the Slave Catchers could very well be in pursuit of them at this very hour! My husband and I can offer them refuge..."We, as always, will keep two kegs of gunpowder on our porch, ever ready for that final hour when it is deemed necessary that it would be better to blow up our home rather than surrender any ex-slave that comes to us for refuge.





**USHER:**

*[Usher running in...]*

Brother Hayden I see someone coming! Quick hide them within the congregation at once!...

**REV. THOMPSON:**

Please! Let us resume our previous positions. Whom ever is approaching must think that nothing is amiss. Let us all rise in song...

*[The congregation begins singing "Steal Away."]*

**CHOIR:**

"Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.  
Steal away, steal away home I ain't got long to stay here."

*[Enters a pair of Slave catchers, apparently searching for someone. The congregation completes singing the verse and begins humming the next one as the Slave Catcher speaks.]*

**SLAVE CATCHER:**

We're searching for a pair of runaways. A dark skinned buck and a high yella, near white looking winch. They where last seen in these a hear parts. Have ya seen 'em?

*[Addressing Rev. Thompson, who merely shakes his head, no. One of the slave catchers, directed by the other, proceeds to comb the congregation in search of the runaways. The Crafts, well hidden by the congregation are seen exiting without being detected by the Slave Catchers. A short time passes and the Slave Catchers convinced that the runaways are nowhere to be found move toward Rev. Thompson as if to harass him. Enters Martin Robinson Delaney greeted by ushers and members of the congregation. He approaches the Hayden's and Rev. Thompson center stage. The Slave Catchers seeing his apparent support of the congregation move cautiously towards the door. As one of Slave Catchers and Delaney pass each other they stare in each other's eyes. The other Slave Catcher deliberately bumps into Delaney as they exit.]*

**REV. THOMPSON:**

Greeting Brother Delaney. Brother Hayden has just shared with us the tragic news you forwarded by messenger. Please tell us your thoughts.

*[As Delaney begins Amazing Grace is hummed in the background]*

**MARTIN ROBINSON DELANY:**

By the provisions of this bill the colored people of the United States are positively degraded beneath the level of the whites - are made liable at any time, in any place, and under all circumstances, to be arrested, and, upon the claim of any white person, without the privilege even of making a defense, sent into endless bondage. Let no visionary nonsense about habeas corpus, or a fair trial, deceive us; there are no such rights granted



in this bill ... There is no earthly chance - no hope under heaven for the coloured person who is brought before one of these officers of the law. The slave is more secure than we; he knows who holds the hell upon his bosom - we know not the wretch who may grasp us by the throat.... Good or bad, mild or harsh, easy or hard, lenient or severe, saint or Satan - whenever that master demands any one of us, even our affectionate wives and darling little children, we must go into slavery - there is no alternative. The will of the man who sits in judgment on our liberty, is the law... This is the power over the slave in the south that is now extended to the North... What can we do? What shall we do? This is the great and important question: -Shall we submit to be dragged like brutes before heartless men, and sent into degradation and bondage? Shall we fly, or shall we resist?<sup>66</sup>

[*Charlotte Forten Grimke rises and addresses the Rev. Thompson while the congregation is singing. As the Rev. speaks one-by-one attention is drawn to the visual of the "Caution Coloured People" poster until all eyes, and harsh facial expressions, are on it.*]

#### **CHARLOTTE FORTEN GRIMKE:**

The 4th of July, the celebration of this day! What a mockery it is! My soul sickens of it. I am glad to see that the people are much less demonstrative in their mock patriotism than of old. Miss James showed me a photograph of a young slave girl who escaped in a box. My heart was full as I gazed at it; full of admiration for the heroic girl, who risked all for freedom; full of indignation that in this boasted land of liberty such a thing could occur. Were she of any other nation her heroism would receive all due honor from these Americans, but as it is, there is not even a single spot in this broad land, where her rights can be protected, - not one. Only in the dominions of a queen is she free. How long, Oh God! how long will this continue!

[*Congregation continues singing.*]

#### **CONGREGATION:**

"Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.  
Steal away, steal away home I ain't got long to stay here.

[*From the audience Frederick Douglass speaks*]

#### **FREDERICK DOUGLASS:**

"Fellow Citizens: Pardon me, and allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today? What have I, or those I represent to do with your national independence?"

I say it with a sad sense of disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn... My subject, then fellow citizens, is "American Slavery...."

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<sup>66</sup> Martin Robinson Delaney commenting on the 18 September 1850 bill that established the Fugitive Slave Law.



What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? On what branch of the subject do the people of this country need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? Is it not astonishing that while we are plowing, planting, and using all kinds of mechanical tools,...that while we are reading, writing, and ciphering, acting as clerks and merchants having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, orators, and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men..., living in families as husbands, wives, and children, and above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave--we are called upon to prove that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? That he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. What! Am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow-men, ...Must I argue that a system, thus marked with blood and stained with pollution is wrong? No, I will not. I have better employment for my time and strength than such arguments would imply.

*[Congregation rise, shout approval and move to center stage.]*

What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of these United States at this very hour.

Congregation each facing different directions, continues singing and as they walk off stage."<sup>67</sup>

#### **NARRATOR:**

In 1852 on July 5th in Rochester, New York Frederick Douglass delivered this stirring speech "What to the Slave is the Forth of July. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, founding principles that Thomas Jefferson wrote in the United State's Declaration of Independence.... All men are created equal. A luxury that only white America during the 1850's could embrace. Yet during this time, the sons and daughters of Africa must prove that they are human before acquiring their freedom.

#### **CONGREGATION:**

"Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.  
Steal away, steal away home I ain't got long to stay here

**[Fade to black]**  
**[END ACT ONE]**

#### **INTERMISSION**

<sup>67</sup> An extraction from Frederick Douglass' speech "What To The Slave Is The Fourth of July?" Delivered July 5, 1852 in Rochester, new York



**ACT TWO, SCENE ONE:**

[*Light rises on Narrator who begins at the same time Frederick Douglass freezes facing down stage.*]

**NARRATOR:**

Those were the words of Frederick Douglass. An escaped slave, Frederick Douglass was one of the foremost black abolitionists and civil rights leaders in the United States. His powerful speeches, newspaper articles, and books awakened whites to the evils of slavery and inspired blacks in their struggle for freedom and equality. His statement (date) captures the essences of the then socio-political climate that African-Americans for generations were subjected to in this country. However not all African-Americans were docile; some used physical means to acquire their freedom while others through their documented deeds used "Words to Revolt."

[*Frederick Douglass exits as a Newspaper reporter enters from stage right and crosses to center stage and begins speaking. Light dims on Narrator.*]

**REPORTER:**

Newspaper and magazine interviews of Fugitive Slaves were documented through out history. In *Voice of the Fugitive* in five successive interviews, Mr. Smith tells of how he obtained his freedom. (All Voices enter from various positions on stage and converge center stage, gathering around the Reporter.) In the 22nd of April 1852 installment, his story continues at this point bloodhounds are pursuing him.

**VOICE #1:**

"We left Smith and his hunting dog surrounded and kept at bay for a short time, by the blood hounds; but there being only three of them in number, they were soon killed or compelled to retreat. This victorious struggle, by the aid of the faithful hunting dog, endeared him to his master stronger than ever; for without his aid Smith must have been taken back into slavery. From thence they proceeded north to the Virginia and Ohio line, which occupied several nights."<sup>68</sup>

**VOICE # 2:**

"They traveled by night and kept concealed by day, until they reached the above river with no other guide than the North Star. In wandering up and down the stream to find a conveyance to cross in he saw a large steamboat passing down the stream, which confirmed him in the belief that this was the Ohio River, having heard much about the steamboats running that river... and succeeded in crossing."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Excerpt from *Voice of the Fugitive* published in April 22, 1852 in five installments in various Black and Abolitionist newspapers. During that year in three successive installments Mr. Smith tells of his escape to freedom.

<sup>69</sup> Second except of *Voices of Freedom*







**Picture #13: A Runaway**



**VOICE # 1:**

"The next morning he saw an old gentleman in whom he found a friend and an abolitionist. This friend sent him on to another friend about thirty miles distance, who gave him employment for five years."<sup>70</sup>

**VOICE #2:**

"From thence he came to Huron Co., Ohio, where he purchased a small farm and lived on it about seven years, having given up all hopes of ever seeing his wife again; but in the Fall of 1850, after the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Bill, the news came to him that a warrant was out for him, and that if he did not flee way to Canada, he would be taken as a slave. On the strength of this report, at a very great sacrifice, he sold his property and went to Canada."<sup>71</sup>

**VOICE # 1:**

"While traveling about among his fugitive brethren, he found a man who told him he knew a woman in Canada who was from near Richmond, Virginia, who had once belonged to a man there by the name of William Wright: this of course aroused Mr. Smith's curiosity to see the woman; so he went the next day to where he had been told that she lived. As he approached the house he saw a female whom he thought resembled "Fanny," his long bereft wife; and, as he approached her with trembling lest he be mistaken he offered his hand and ventured to call her by her former name, to which she answered with astonishment. At this moment her eyes sparkled and flashed like strokes of lightning upon his furrowed cheeks and wrinkled brow, and with uplifted hands and joyful heart she exclaimed from the depths of her soul, "oh! Is this my beloved husband who I never again expected to see? They are now living happily together on the Queen's "Free Soil."<sup>72</sup>

*[Voices exits stage left as Voice # 2 enters from up stage left and crossing down center.]*

**UNCLE ISOM:**

"Talking 'bout niggers running away, didn't my step pappy run away? Didn't my Uncle Gabe run away? The frost would just bite they toes 'most nigh off too, whiles they was gone. They put Uncle Isom (my step pappy) in jail, and whiles he was in there he killed a white guardsman. Then they put in the paper, "A nigger to kill," and our master seen it and bought him. He was a double-strengthened man. He was so strong. He'd run off, so help you God. They had the bloodhounds after him once, and he caught the hound what was leading and beat the rest of the dogs. The white folks run up on him before he knowed it and made them dogs eat his ear plumb out. But, don't you know, he got away anyhow.

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<sup>70</sup> Third excerpt from *Voices of Freedom*

<sup>71</sup> Forth excerpt from *Voice of freedom*

<sup>72</sup> Fifth excerpt from *Voices of Freedom*





Picture #14 Another Runaway



One morning I was sweeping out the hall in the big house, and somebody come a-knocking on the front door, and I goes to the door. There was Uncle Isom with rags all on his head. He said, "tell Old Master here I am." He say, "Go round to the kitchen and tell black mammy to give you breakfast." When he was through eating, they give him three hundred lashes and, bless my soul, he run off again."

[*Voice # 1 and # 2 move down center. Picture # 17: Jesus Was Black?. Yes He Was!* ]

### **JESUS WAS BLACK? YES HE WAS!:**

We have as much right biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro, as you buckra or white people have to believe that God is a fine looking, symmetrical and ornamented white man. For the bulk of you and all the fool Negroes of the country believe that God is a white-skinned, blue-eyed, straight-haired, projecting nosed, compressed lipped and finely robed white gentleman, sitting upon a throne somewhere in the heavens. Every race of people since time began who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by carvings, or by any other form or figure, have conveyed the idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves, and why should not the Negro believe that he resembles God as much as other people?

**VOICE #1:**

Was Jesus a member of the Negro race?

**VOICE # 2:**

Yes. Matthew 1:

**VOICE # 1:**

How do you know?

**VOICE #2:**

Because He was in the line of Abraham and David the King...

**VOICE # 1:**

Should we make a difference in people because they are Negro?

**VOICE #2:**

No. Jeremiah. 13:23.

**VOICE #1:**

Why?

**VOICE #2:**

Because it is as natural to be black as the leopard to be spotted. Jeremiah. 13:23







**Picture # 15 Jesus Was Black? Yes He Was!**



*[Light fades on center stage. Light simultaneously rises on Narrator up center stage still at podium.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Segregation in housing, transportation, education, and employment during the antebellum period in Boston continued to be issues that African Americans rallied in protest and opposition to. The black church aided in addressing these concerns. The black church was not only a place of worship it proved time and time again to be the community's center. It offered new immigrants introduction to the community, assisting in finding housing and employment.

*[Seen entering down right is Anthony Burns. Voices enter encircling Anthony Burns.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

Anthony Burns born a slave in Virginia was 19 when he escaped to Boston in 1854.

**VOICE # 2:**

Here in Boston only a few months he was arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act when his former owner Charles Suttle arrived in Boston seeking the return of his property.

**VOICE # 1:**

His hearing triggered a massive riot in Boston. The Negro community mobilized an attempt to break Burns from captivity. Guns were fired ... but the Negro citizens were no match for this now mounting horde of white armed local troops..... On June 2nd when the decision to return Burns to Virginia was announced thousands of troops were called out, and Boston was under martial law.<sup>73</sup>

(Bells heard off stage)

**VOICE # 2:**

Bells tolled in the city's churches when a sole Negro figure was marched down the center of the street, each side lined up with armed militia holding back the crowds...

**VOICE # 1:**

...prepared to fire on anyone who attempted to rescue him, especially those members of the free Negro community.

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<sup>73</sup> Information obtained from *Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave* by Virginia Hamilton





Picture # 16: Anthony Burns



**VOICE # 2:**

As he boarded a vessel docked on long wharf and it prepared to set sail for Virginia, most of us felt that this would be the last that we would see or hear of this young man Anthony Bums.

**VOICE # 1:**

How long, Oh God! How long will this continue!

**NARRATOR:**

The Fugitive Slave Burns, who resided in Boston and worked in a clothing store owned by Coffin Pitts, was one of this city's first casualties.

*[Voices pantomime through next piece.]*

**NARRATOR:**

In less than a year Anthony Bums returned to Boston a free man, for Rev. Leonard Grimes, Coffin Pitts, and members of the Twelfth Baptist Church had collected funds and arranged his purchase. The church stood as a spiritual, social, and physical haven for the black community...

*[Voices taking various positions travel down stage.]*

**NARRATOR:**

By the 1840 the black population of Boston had reach near two thousand. Their limited job market was threatened by the wave of white immigration. The potato rot in Ireland in 1845 and the repeal of the English Corn Law in 1846 brought to an end Ireland's favorable position in the British trade system. This disastrous condition caused a mass influx of Irish immigrants to the United States. Most of these immigrants came to the city with no shelter or employment. They immediately became competitors for the once exclusive jobs that blacks held. Jobs once held by black, cooks, porters, laborers were being steadily filled by these 'new' immigrants. By 1850, Irish workers were filling over 7,000 laboring jobs. By 1860 2.5 million Irish would immigrate to the United States, and those entering Boston rose from 443 in 1836 to more than 65,556 by 1846.

**VOICE # 1:**

Most Colored families lived in multiple-family dwellings. Within our households lived extended families. In addition this included the taking-on of boarders.

**NARRATOR:**

With limited housing and unfavorable economic and social conditions, living within this paradigm for African Americans was their cultural/racial responsibility. (Voices exit) These patterns of ethnic and racial communal boundaries still in many ways exist today. Boston on the one hand, is proud of its cultural heritage and traditions and it's those traditions that tourism often banks upon. However, on the other hand it is this





ethnic/racial separation, this city of polarized neighborhoods that is often central to the city's racial and cultural problems.

*[Enters from stage right]*

**NARRATOR:**

On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln issued a proclamation that later he called "the central act of my administration, and the greatest event of the 19th Century." The Emancipation Proclamation promised freedom for slaves held in any of the Confederate states that did not return to the union by the end of the year. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the Abolitionists had urged Lincoln to take this step and had criticized him for refusing to do so. He replied:

**LINCOLN:**

"My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either save or destroy slavery. If I decree emancipation for the slave at the beginning of the war, Missouri, Kentucky, and probably Maryland would most certainly join the South in secession."<sup>74</sup>

**NARRATOR:**

After the war had been in progress for more than a year, there was no danger of this, but there was a need at that time to enlist the public opinion of the world in behalf of the Union. Freeing the slaves would do this. Lincoln had drawn up the proclamation in July 1862. However, Secretary of State William Henry Seward urged that the proclamation should not be issued at that time.

*[Enters from stage left, addressing Lincoln. The two exit stage left and right respectively while Voice # 1 and Frederick Douglass enter from up stage left and right and travel down center replacing them.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Lincoln vowed to issue the proclamation after the first Union victory. The occasion came with the battle of Antietam on September 17, and a preliminary proclamation that affected about 3 million slaves was issued on September 22, 1862. The Confederate states and their slave holders paid no attention to it's warning, even after January 1, 1863 when Lincoln issued the final version of the proclamation. You see the Final proclamation did not apply to the Border States, which were not in rebellion against the Union, and it could not be enforced in the regions held by Confederate troops.

**NARRATOR:**

Black leaders such as the author William Wells Brown, the physician Martin R. Delaney, and Frederick Douglass vigorously recruited blacks into the Union armed forces. Douglass declared in the North Star:

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<sup>74</sup> Abraham Lincoln's response to Abolitionist concerning the issue of slavery





**Picture # 17: Lincoln & Douglass Debate**



**FREDERICK DOUGLASS:**

"Who would be free themselves must strike the first blow."

**VOICE # 1:**

As the Northern armies captured a region, the slaves there were given their freedom. Many of the freed slaves joined the Union Army.

*[Enter Voices who join the others center stage.]*

**NARRATOR:**

The Civil War (1861-1865) for African Americans at the time, be they free or slave, was a war for liberation. Although the Union [North] was reluctant to enlist blacks into the military two important turns of events happened which change the course of history.

**VOICE # 1:**

First was the political maneuvering of President Abraham Lincoln. The Civil War was now two years old and the North had not garnered a major victory yet. The President's armed forces were losing the war at every front. He desperately needed a symbolic moral victory to turn the tide. When he passed the Emancipation Proclamation in January of 1863, which freed slaves in the territories of the Union, for all practical purposes it would have been nothing more than mere words on paper had he not attached this enactment with a Union military victory. A desperately needed battle victory to coincide with the official announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation would make it a major political statement.

**VOICE # 2:**

Second due to high casualties, the North desperately needed more recruits. The North reluctantly put prejudice aside and two month later a public "Call To Arms" went out to the African-American community asking them to enlist in the Union Army.

**VOICE # 1:**

Frederick Douglass was appointed by then Governor of Massachusetts John A. Andrew, to help recruit a regiment of African-American soldiers for the Commonwealth. In his public address at the African Meeting House, Frederick Douglass stated:

**FREDERICK DOUGLASS:**

"When first the rebel cannon shattered the walls of Sumter, I predicted that the war ... would not be fought out entirely by white men. Every month's experience during these two dreary years, has confirmed that opinion ... Only a moderate share of sagacity was needed to see that the arm of the slave was the best defense against the arm of the slaveholding rebels, I have implored the imperiled nation to unchain against her foes her powerful black hand ... Who would be free themselves must strike the blow. Better even die free, than to live slaves ... by every aspiration that you cherish for the freedom and equality of yourselves and your children ... I urge you to fly to arms, and strike with death



the power that would bury the Government and your Liberty in the same hopeless grave. The day dawns - the morning star is bright upon the horizon! The iron gate of our prison stands half open. One gallant rush from the North will fling it wide open, while four millions of our brothers and sisters shall march out into Liberty! The chance is now given you to end in a day the bondage of centuries, and to rise in one bound from social degradation to the plane of common equality with all other varieties of men.<sup>75</sup>

*[All Voices remain down stage but reposition themselves at different location.]*

**NARRATOR:**

The African-American males who responded to Douglass' "Call To Arms" not only came from Greater Boston and various parts of New England but from every state of the North, with three from the West Indies and an additional twenty-one from Canada. They represented all walks of life and educational and economical backgrounds. Racist opponents in the North, through fear or ignorance, launched a smear campaign to discredit any attempt at black recruitment. When this failed to stop recruitment efforts they tried to spread slanderous remarks stereotyping the black recruits.

**VOICE # 1:**

... slander that they would not fight, paid them less than white soldiers, denied them Negro officers. Rebel generals threatened that any Negro soldier captured on the field of battle, as well as any white officer with him, would be enslaved, hanged or shot as an inciter of slave insurrection. There are two misconceptions concerning the Negroes involvement in the Civil War and the Abolitionist Movement that must be addressed. One misconception is the belief that all Negro people lived in slavery in the South before the Civil War. In fact 500,000 free Negroes lived through out the North and South about evenly divided

**VOICE # 2:**

Another perception was that Abolitionists were high and mighty white Northerners, mostly Bostonians. In fact for their relatively small population in Northern cities Negroes made up the majority of Abolitionist. In all Northern cities that had a Negro presence, the community was a highly organized and diligent force in the fight against slavery. The small Negro community of Boston, about 2% of the city's population, could not support an entire Colored regiment. Prominent Negro Abolitionists were hired as recruiters: Rock Sweat Rock (who later becomes the first Black Attorney)- covered New England; Frederick Douglass - recruited in New York; Martin Delaney - went to Illinois and Indiana; and others traveled as far as Canada. Due to racial tension often by poor whites that refused to accept Blacks as their equals, recruitment went on in secrecy.

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<sup>75</sup> Except from Frederick Douglass' *Call To Arms* speech delivered at the African Meeting House 1863.







Picture # 18 Call To Arms



*[Seen alone is a young Black man in movement. First being defiant, then distraught, then curious, then finally, proud, marching off.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Offspring of some of the famous Black Abolitionist enlisted, Sojourner Truth's grandson and the sons of Frederick Douglass and Martin Delaney along with people from all walks of life. Eli Bittle (19 years old) who refused to sing My Country 'Tis Of Thee, was dismissed from school and roamed the street of Boston. He did this as a personal protest against the singing of a patriotic song that boasted of a land of liberty that he did not share. That day he happened upon a recruiter for the 54th Regiment and enlisted on the spot. Eli Bittle was one of the surviving members of the 54th Regiment. After the establishment of the 54th Regiment twenty other regiments were formed. Another important note is that 10,000 African Americans chose the Navy like Abolitionist Lewis Hayden's son. In all 178,975 Black served as soldiers in the Union Army. The battle of Fort Wagner that the 54th Regiment was engaged in and suffered 50% casualties, was a small affair as battles go but it's importance was in the long run, and what it said about the human spirit and the light of truth it sheds on history.

*[Scattered voices are heard as reflections of the past. One-by-one assembling down center stage, positioning themselves in various stances.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

I worked in the house; Mistress wa'n't going to let nobody wash them julep glasses but me.

**VOICE # 1:**

Mammy was a field hand ... she hated housework - like me.

**VOICE # 2:**

I ain't scared of nothing.

**VOICE # 1:**

I belong to a full-blood Creek Indian, and I didn't know nothin' but Creek talk long after the Civil War.

**VOICE # 2:**

The souls is all white or black, 'pending on the man's life and not on his skin.

**VOICE # 1:**

I got the scars on my body to show to this day.



**VOICE #2:**

I been dragged about and put through the shackles so bad I done forgot some of my children's names.

**VOICE # 2:**

Time I was ten years old I was making a regular hand' hind the plow.

**VOICE # 1:**

I'm happy and satisfied now, and I hopes I see a million years to come.

[Images of Black Civil War Soldiers are seen as up stage as Voices exit in various directions.]

**NARRATOR:**

Before the war was over, almost 200,000 black soldiers, organized in 166 regiments of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, together with almost 30,000 black sailors- about one-quarter of the navy- had fought so effectively that Abraham Lincoln, seconding Douglass, was of the opinion that "the black phalanx was the critical weight that had tipped the scale in favor of the Union triumph."

*[Image of Sergeant William Carney is seen up stage, he enters from stage left carrying U.S. flag.]*

During the battle Sergeant Carney although wounded three times, held the flag and never let the flag touch the ground. To these black servicemen Congress awarded, for their gallantry and intrepidity in action, twenty Medals of Honor. Sergeant William Carney of New Bedford was the first African American awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery at the battle of Fort Wagner in 1863.

*[Image changes to flag he saved hanging in the Hall of Flags at the Massachusetts State House.]*

By the end of the Civil War more than 186,000 black men were in the Union Army. They performed heroically despite discrimination in pay, rations, equipment, and assignments and the unrelenting hostility of the Confederate troops. Regiments like Boston's 54th and 55<sup>th</sup> Regiments displayed unparalleled bravery in numerous battles. Black slaves also served as a labor force for the Confederacy, but thousands of these slaves dropped their tools and escaped to the Union lines.

**(Fades to dim.)**

**[END OF ACT TWO, SCENE ONE]**



**ACT TWO, SCENE TWO:**

*[Light rises on Narrator as Voices enter one-by-one from various directions, converging at center stage in Victorian era dress.]*

**NARRATOR:**

As a result of the Union victory in the Civil War and the ratification of the 13th Amendment of the Constitution (1865), nearly 4 million black slaves were freed. The 14th Amendment (1868) granted blacks citizenship, and the 15th Amendment (1870) guaranteed their rights to vote.

*[Images of Victorian era African Americans are seen up stage.]*

**VOICE 1:**

Yet the Reconstruction period was one of disappointment and frustration for the Negro, for these new provisions of the constitution were often ignored, particularly in the South. After the Civil War, we freedmen were thrown largely on our own meager resources. Landless and uprooted, we had to move about in search of work because we generally lacked adequate food, clothing, and shelter. The federal Freedman's Bureau, established by Congress in 1865, assisted us by giving us food and helped us in finding jobs and homes for our families.

**VOICE 2:**

The bureau established hospitals and schools, including such institutions of higher learning as Fisk University and Hampton Institute. Northern philanthropic agencies, such as the American Missionary Association, also aided we freedmen. Many Southerners feared that the liberated slaves would rise in bloody revolt. But we freedmen were too busy trying to eke out a living and searching for our loved ones to be concerned about revenge. The Southern states enacted laws resembling the earlier slave codes. These "Black Codes" restricted our movement in an effort to force us to work as plantation laborers--often for our former masters--at absurdly low wages. During these years the emancipated Negro never received his forty acres and a mule that the government promised us in order to start a new life.

**NARRATOR:**

Now that the black man is free who will employ him? How will he feed his family? Where will he live?

**VOICE # 1:**

Coloured people are not accepted!

**VOICE # 2:**

Whites only!

**VOICE # 1:**

Your not welcomed here, boy!





**VOICE # 2:**

We don't employ your kind, now git!

**VOICES:**

NIGGER'S!!

*[Images of a group of Black elected officials is seen up stage.]*

**NARRATOR:**

During the Reconstruction period, blacks wielded some political power in the South for the first time. Their leaders were largely clergymen, lawyers, and teachers who had been educated in the North and abroad. Among the ablest were Robert B. Elliott of South Carolina and John R. Lynch of Mississippi. Both were speakers of their respective state House of Representatives and were members of the United States Congress.

**NARRATOR:**

Between 1869-1901, 20 black representatives and 2 black senators--Hiram R. Revels and Blanche K. Bruce of Mississippi--sat in the United States Congress. But black political power was short-lived. Northern politicians grew increasingly conciliatory to the white south, so that by 1872 virtually all leaders of the Confederacy had been pardoned and were able to vote and hold office. By means of economic pressure and the terrorist activities of violent anti-black groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, most blacks were kept away from the polls.

*[Negative image of Black elected officials on the cover of Harper's Bazaar Magazine is seen.]*

**VOICE 1:**

By 1877, with the withdrawal of the last federal troops from the South, Southern whites were again in full control. The rebirth of white supremacy in the South was accompanied by the growth of enforced racial separation. Starting with Tennessee in 1870, all the Southern states reenacted laws prohibiting racial intermarriage. They also passed Jim Crow laws segregating Negroes and whites in almost all public places.

**VOICE 2:**

By 1885, most Southern states had officially segregated their public schools. The provisions of new state constitutions such as those adopted by Mississippi in 1890 and by South Carolina and Louisiana in 1895 disfranchised Negroes. Only a few Southern Negro elected officials lingered on. No coloured man was to serve in the United States Congress for three decades after the departure of George H. White of North Carolina in 1901.

*[Images of frontage of slave narrative books are seen up stage.]*

Determined that future generations would not forget our legacy many of us former slaves became literary celebrities. The publishing of slave narratives was widely successful. It appeared that the hopes and aspirations of this newly acknowledged Negro American population would be realized.





**Picture # 19: Booker T. Washington**



*[Image of the Plessy vs. Ferguson ruling is seen up stage.]*

**NARRATOR:**

With the passing of "JIM CROW" laws geared at maintaining the "status quo" by "keeping blacks in their place" the South became a difficult place to live. By the turn of the 20th century large numbers of blacks began a mass exodus from the South to the North, and Northwest creating their own towns, seeking a new way of life.

*[Enters from stage left is Booker T. Washington who moves down center stage and freezes. The light is dim around him. The Narrator continues.]*

With this movement raised the question of what direction was the future of this new black population heading. An open controversy over acceptable black leadership began in 1895, when Booker T. Washington founder of Tuskegee Institute was invited to address a white audience at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, GA. While emphasizing the importance of economic advancement to blacks, he repeatedly used the paraphrase:

*[Light rises on Booker T Washington.]*

**BOOKER T. WASHINGTON:**

Cast down your buckets where you are."

*[Entering from different directions are Voices # 1, 2, converging on to center stage to where Washington is speaking forming a small gathering of listeners. They assemble around Washington as he continues in pantomime.]*

**NARRATOR:**

During the year 1895 several important events took place that effected African American leadership in the United States. That year the famous Black orator Frederick Douglass, not soon after giving a fiery speech for a rally organized by Anti-Lynching crusader Ida B. Wells, passed away leaving a tremendous legacy as the premiere African American civil rights activist of the 19th century. That same year Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, began his ascent as an African American leader, when asked to deliver an address at the Atlanta Cotton Exposition.

*[Voice # 1 turns and steps down stage towards the audience.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

Designed to explain to mainly a white listening public the status of the Negro and the self-perpetuated economic means to deliver them from their dire straits, this address was hailed by the white and segments of the Negro public as a positive statement about the Negro community's achievement potential...establishing Washington as the consummate Colored leader.

*[Voice # 1 turns and steps back up stage as Voice # 2 turns and steps down stage towards the audience.]*



**VOICE # 2:**

However this speech later dubbed 'The Atlanta Compromise Address' stressed that the Negro should not at this time strive for political and social equality until achieving economic stability comparable to white society.

*[Voice # 2 turns and steps back up stage as Voice # 1 turns and steps down stage towards the audience.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

This stance, although greatly embraced by the white status quo, did not sit well with leading Colored intellectuals of the day. Some Negroes were incensed by his comment.

**BOOKER T. WASHINGTON:**

"The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is extremist folly."

**VOICE # 2:**

Others feared that the enemies of equal rights were encouraged by his promise.

**BOOKER T. WASHINGTON:**

"In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress... My conciliatory policy appealed to white politicians, many of whom contributed money to Tuskegee Institute.

*[Enters from stage right is W. E. B. DuBois]*

It afforded me the opportunity to become an advisor to several United States Presidents on racial issues and on the appointment of the Negro to government positions. In the South many Negroes have been motivated by my self- help programs."

**W. E. B. Du BOIS:**

"Yes but in the North, many criticize your attitude towards racial segregation and discrimination including myself. I argue that it is higher education, rather than vocational training, and political agitation that would eventually win full civil rights for the Negro."

*[Voices exit in different directions leaving Washington & DuBois center stage facing each other.]*

**NARRATOR:**

In 'The Souls of Black Folk' (1903), Du Bois, the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University, declared that the problem of the "Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line." He criticized Washington for accepting racial discrimination and minimizing the value of college training for blacks. Du Bois felt that blacks needed higher education for leadership. In his essay "The Talented Tenth" he wrote:





**W. E. B. Du BOIS:**

"The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men."

**NARRATOR:**

The split between Washington and Du Bois reflected a bitter division of opinion among black leaders.

*[Washington exits stage left as simultaneously DuBois exits stage right. Leaving the Narrator up stage, light dims, fading to black.]*

**(END OF ACT TWO)**



**ACT THREE, SCENE ONE:**

*[Act Three Scene One opens with the light rising on late 19th century politician George L. Ruffin positioned up stage center. Center stage is slowly lit dimly as Ruffin walks down center into the light.]*

**NARRATOR:**

The political climate of Boston during the late 19th century was influenced greatly by ethnic prejudice in which one ethnic group who happened to garner some political power or influence abused another new less fortunate group. Blacks who for the most part were not immigrants in the European tradition tended to receive prejudice of a different sort, racism. What one white immigrant group did to another was tame compared to what many old and new immigrant groups did to its black population. However a few blacks did serve in political offices bravely stepping forward and lending voice for those whose needs and concerns often went unheard.

*[Enters from stage left is George Ruffin who crosses down center speaking. Light rises on him.]*

**GEORGE L. RUFFIN:**

I George L. Ruffin, was the first Negro on the Boston City Council. I held office for a year, 1876-1877. I was later followed by:

*[Images of Boston African American Politicians are seen up stage. As Ruffin does a role call of names (heard off stage) of late 19th century councilmen.]*

James W. Pope, 1881  
 William O. Armstrong, 1885-1886  
 Andrew B. Leattimore, 1887-1888  
 Charles E. Harris, 1889-1890  
 Nelson Gaskins, 1891  
 Walden Banks, 1892-93  
 Stanley Ruffin, 1894-1895  
 J. Henderson Allston, 1894-1895  
 Charles H. Hall, 1895

*[Different images of African American Politicians are seen up stage. As Ruffin does a role call of names of late 19th century Massachusetts State Representatives.]*

Five years later I served as a State Representative for two years 1882, 1883. I followed distinguished men such as our first Negro State Representatives Edwin G. Walker, son of the famous David Walker, and Charles L. Mitchell, 1866. John J. Smith held office for three one year terms, 1868, 1869, 1872.

*[Voices heard off stage.]*



Joshua B. Smith, 1873, 1874  
 George W. Lowther, 1878, 1879  
 Julius C. Chappelle, 1883 through 1886

was the longest continuous tenure of any 19th century Negro on Beacon Hill.

Like myself several Boston City Councilmen moved on the serve as State Representatives: William O. Armstrong, 1889, 1890, Andrew B. Leattimore, 1889, 1890 and Charles E. Harris, 1892. The last to serve are Robert T. Teamoh, 1894 and William L. Reed, 1896, 1897.

*[Image of portrait of Judge George L. Ruffin displayed at the Charlestown District Court, unveiled in February 1990 is seen up stage. George L. Ruffin exits stage left.]*

**NARRATOR:**

George L. Ruffin, first black to earn a law degree from Harvard in 1869, became Boston's first black Massachusetts judge when he was appointed in 1883 to the District Court of Charlestown where he served until his death in 1886.

*[Enter Voices from various directions converging on center stage forming a crowd, pantomiming confronting racial discrimination.]*

In 1895 when the new Democrats redistricted the city black political participation declined dramatically. Through redistricting, a new era in Boston politics arose, the creation of the Ward Boss. These Ward Bosses amassed such community control through favoritism, nepotism, and corruption that in order to achieve anything you had obtain their political 'blessing.' The work to rule was, don't fight it out in the courts, talk to and gain favor of the one who had the power of political influence. This style of politics was not only in the State House, it also existed in each and every neighborhood of Boston, and Boston's black community was no different.

*[Enters Archibald Grimke from stage right]*

**ARCHIBALD GRIMKE:**

I Archibald Grimke (1849-1930) was the second Negro to graduate from Harvard Law school. While struggling to establish a law practice in Boston I founded the first New England Negro newspaper, *The Hub*, in 1883. This newspaper voiced the concerns of Colored people of this region.

**NARRATOR:**

However it was short-lived lasting only until 1886. Archibald Grimke was very active in politics though he never held a political office. In 1884 President Cleveland appointed him to be consul at Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Starting as an alternate delegate for Henry Cabot Lodge at the Republican National Convention in 1884 He became a leader in Negro "independent" politics.





Picture # 20: Archibald Grimke





**ARCHEBALD GRIMKE:**

"The Republican party is no longer devoted to the colored man."

*[Resident steps away moving down stage from the crowd and speaks.]*

**RESIDENT:**

Victorian Boston was a divided metropolis, an old walking city of Negroes and European immigrants close to the docks, and an all-white modern city of three-deckers and single family homes in Boston's streetcar suburbs. Most Negroes of Boston in the nineteenth century lived on what white folks called 'Nigger Hill," which developed as servant quarters for Colored people employed by wealthy Beacon Hill families., It grew to be the largest area of Colored residence because of its proximity to the food markets near Faneuil Hall:

(Voices from the crowd.)

**VOICE # 1:**

Where colored workers carried quarters and halves of meat on their backs...

**VOICE #2:**

And the docks where Negroes were laborers and teamsters.

**NARRATOR:**

Behind the wooden block fronts were black-only courts and alleys, and around the corner neighborhoods of Irish, British immigrants, and Yankees. In 1850, Boston was the most segregated city in the North, second only to Portland, Maine, in 1860. In the late nineteenth century only two other cities, Utica, New York, and Chicago, were as segregated as Boston. Most black Bostonians were virtually shut out of the market for single-family homes.

**RESIDENT:**

"comparatively few colored men of Boston are the owners of the houses in which they live; and as a natural result, after long years of toil, and the expenditure of thousands of dollars for house rent, we are not better off in old age than when we commenced to pay tribute to a hungry horde of property owners."

*[Resident moves up stage rejoining crowd.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Even first generation immigrant groups were more likely to be homeowners than were blacks; in 1900 they were four times as likely to be homeowners. Poverty and racial discrimination contributed to this difference, yet even blacks that could afford homes encountered barriers: It was virtually impossible for a wealthy black to purchase a home in Brookline or the Back Bay.

*[Seen is a Real Estate Agent entering from stage right moving to center stage.]*





Picture # 21: The William Monroe Trotter Era



Real estate agents, who claimed they were respecting the wishes of their clients, argued:

**REAL ESTATE AGENT:**

"Plant one colored family on Commonwealth Avenue and there would be an exodus of whites for three blocks each way and a fall of thousands in the value of real estate"

*[Image of William Monroe Trotter is seen up stage.]*

*[Entering from stage left is William Monroe Trotter moving down center.]*

**WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER:**

I William Monroe Trotter (1872-1934), Businessman, editor and militant civil rights leader grew up in Hyde Park, a white suburb of Boston. I entered Harvard College in the fall of 1891 and thrived there. Encountering no major discrimination, I worked hard and made Phi Beta Kappa in my junior year, the first Negro to be so honored at the College. Once out of college, I had no illusions about the personal obstacles presented by my color in the business world where I hoped to make my fortune as a real estate agent.

**NARRATOR:**

In Boston, and more obviously in the South, conditions for the race were worsening weighing heavily on his already highly sensitized racial conscience. Consequently, to become property owners some blacks paid excessive amounts for a home, and others, more ingenious, discovered that the:

*[Seen is William Monroe Trotter dealing with a White Realtor.]*

**REAL ESTATE AGENT:**

"Only way for a colored man to buy desirable property in Boston is through a third party."

**NARRATOR:**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, discrimination in housing increased as more real estate agents received instructions:

**REAL ESTATE AGENT:**

"Under no consideration to be sold to darkies."

*[Real Estate Agent exits stage right leaving Trotter standing with Voices # 1 & 2 looking on. They all freeze as the Narrator continues.]*

**NARRATOR:**

At the turn of the 20th century many important black organizations were established. The national population of African Americans was 8.8 million compared to 76.2 million whites. In major northern cities African Americans disenfranchised of their political rights began forming their own organization to combat the social and political injustice



they were experiencing. These organizations were not all focused on political activism, many dealt with other social and cultural issues.

*[Voice # 1 steps out from the crowd and steps down stage and speaks.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

With the Supreme Court ruling in the Plessy Vs Ferguson case in 1896 which established institutionalized segregation as a national doctrine, in which Justice Shaw's ruling in the 1849 Roberts vs. the city of Boston was used as a legal precedent in this case, and the rise in Klu Klux Klan activity, many Negro organizations were established to protest these racist laws and the social injustice and blatant murder that many Negro communities were subjected to.

*[Voice # 1 Freezes as Voice # 2 steps down stage and speaks.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

The Negro Academy was established in 1897 to promote Negro achievement in the arts & sciences a topic that was of equal importance. Its leadership boasted some of the greatest Negro intellectuals of the period, Alexander Cromwell, W. E. B. DuBois, Alain Locke, Archibald Grimke and later Schaumburg to name a few. Most important was that these organizations united in an effort to protect the Negro community as we prepared ourselves for the next century without shackle slavery.

*[Voice # 2 freezes alone as we see enter writing a letter  
President Grover Cleveland who stops and begins reading it]*

**GROVER CLEVELAND:**

“My Dear Sir; I thank you for sending me a copy of your address delivered at the Atlanta Exposition. I thank you with much enthusiasm for making the address. I have read it with intense interest, and I think the Exposition would be fully justified if it did not do more than furnish the opportunity for its delivery. Your words cannot fail to delight and encourage all who wish well for your race; and if our colored fellow-citizens do not from your utterances gather new hope and form new determinations to gain every valuable advantage offered them by their citizenship, it will be strange indeed.

Yours very truly, Grover Cleveland.”<sup>76</sup>

*[President Cleveland exits as the Narrator speaks.]*

<sup>76</sup> Letter from President Grover Cleveland, found in Booker T. Washington's Up From Slavery, page 166.





**NARRATOR:**

The turn of the century saw the establishment of Booker T. Washington as the black leader that white society embraced. During the period of 1900 through to the year of his death in 1915 he would be the African American leader called to the White House to discuss matters of the black community. Often the result of these meetings with this secession of presidents gained for him financial support of Tuskegee Institute as well as other black colleges. As his political clout grew so did the factions who opposed him.

**VOICE # 1:**

Although W. E. B. DuBois at this time embraced Washington's view and was even offered a teaching position at Tuskegee Institute, he soon formed a differing position about the methodology of Negro achievement.

**VOICE # 2:**

In his article 'The Talented Tenth DuBois saw the upper 10% of the Negro intelligencia as the group better equipped to lead the community to prosperity. William Monroe Trotter differed greatly from Booker T. Washington complacency stance. Trotter adamantly opposed Washington's views and by utilizing his own financial resources established a weekly newspaper named 'The Guardian' whose major purpose was to attack Washington at every opportunity.

**WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER:**

"The growth of caste feeling and caste laws combined with Booker T. Washington's betrayal of the colored people pushed me towards a life that I had not anticipated."

**VOICE # 1:**

The great decision of his life, to start The Boston Guardian newspaper and plunge into racial agitation and organizing against racial injustice, was not made quickly. It crept up on him for years and derived in part from frustration in his real estate business. At the turn of the century...

**WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER:**

"Jim Crow customs were spreading even in Boston, historically regarded as the most liberal city on the color line. I have had my ups and downs in business. But when I launched The Guardian and could boast that it enjoyed a circulation of 2,500 after only eight months, in contrast to my business troubles, it was an overnight success!"

*[Voice becomes audience participants in a public event at which Booker T. Washington, entering stage left, is seen pantomiming addressing the gathering.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

In Boston 1905 The Negro Business League decided to host as part of one of their public events a speech at the Columbus Avenue church by the now famous Booker T. Washington. When news of this event reached William Monroe Trotter, a staunch opponent of Washington, he decided to use this event as an opportunity to openly challenge his view by publicly address him at this event.



**VOICE # 2:**

He decided to draft a list of questions that he would ask Washington at this gathering with the hope of publicly discrediting him and his leadership status. Trotter's plan was to deliberately heckle Washington by not allowing him to deliver his speech. Trotter gathered several of his colleagues including the noted intellectual Archibald Grimke. True to form, at the event, at the moment that Washington began his speech, Trotter rose from the crowd shouting questions at Washington, demanding his response.

**VOICE # 1:**

Members of The Negro Business League attempted to silence him but to no avail. He even was physically removed from the church only to return and attempt to continue his heckling. Eventually this disturbance got out of hand.

*[During this time all audience is briefly engaged in discussions turned in to mayhem. Voices split the audience between those who agree with Accomodationism and those who do not.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Other parties, perhaps without Trotter's consent, were more disruptive, and Trotter as the known leader of the opposition was made the scapegoat. An Eyewitness account states that Trotter's sister allegedly stabs a policeman in the hand with her hatpin but is not arrested. Archibald Grimke, fearing for the safety of his daughter Angelina, leaves the disturbance with her and takes her safely home. And upon returning back to support his friend he learns that the Boston police were summoned and Trotter was subsequently arrested.

*[Trotter escorted off stage right handcuffed. Washington continues his pantomimed speech.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

Although the speech continued the desired momentum of Washington's presentation was lost. Upset about the disturbance Washington used his legal resources and brought charges against William Monroe Trotter. Washington's associates in Boston hired lawyers and pursued the case to its conclusion, resulting in Trotter spending a month in the Charles Street Jail for disturbing the peace. The incident, later dubbed *The Boston Riot* and eventual court trial was picked up by the black press and became national news, news that made it clear to the public that there was other black leadership in the nation and they did not have to follow the Booker T. Washington doctrine.

*[Exiting are all voices as the light dims on center stage and rises on the Narrator. Image of W. E. B. DuBois is seen up stage.]*



**NARRATOR:**

W. E. B. Du Bois who did not agree with the methodology that Trotter used to confront Washington views did agree with his motivation for doing it and made this publicly known. Du Bois and others were highly upset with Washington in the way he made a major spectacle of his suit against Trotter, which many felt could have been resolved in a quieter and less public way. Du Bois writing an essay, "Of Booker T Washington and Others," publicly stating his disapproval of Washington's response to the incident caused Washington to retaliate by using his influence to literally ostracize him, Trotter and others from his major political arena. This forced Du Bois to seek out 'free thinking individuals' not under Washington's influence.

*[W. E. B. DuBois enters from stage right. Voices enter from various positions on stage converging at center stage.]*

Black leaders nationally rallied together to combat the rising tide of lynching and Black economic disenfranchisement. The Niagara Movement, established in 1905 by William E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter was one of the first organizations, national in scope, designed to confront and combat social and political injustice plaguing African Americans. From July 11 to 13, 1905 twenty-nine men representing fourteen states met at Niagara Falls on the Canadian side of Ontario. This group of men embodied the spirit of The Talented Tenth, which Du Bois wrote about in his famous essay.

**W. E. B. DuBOIS:**

"The men of the Niagara Movement ... turn toward the nation and ask in the name of ten million the privilege of a hearing. In the past year the work of the Negro-hater has flourished in the land. Step by step, the defenders of the rights of American and the fifty or more representatives of stolen votes still sit in the nation's capital. " Against this the Niagara Movement eternally protests. We will not be satisfied to take one jot or tittle less than our full manhood rights. We claim for ourselves every single right that belongs to a freeborn American, political, civil and social; and until we get these rights we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of America. The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone but for all true Americans."

**NARRATOR:**

In article in an Atlanta journal 'The Voice of the Negro, in September 1905, Du Bois wrote: "There has been a determined effort in this country to stop the free expression of opinion among black men." Local and college chapters of the organization were established with major meetings held in Oberlin and Boston. The Niagara Movement although a noble gesture never gained the national support that it had envisioned. At its first national convention at Harper's Ferry, Virginia its membership never amounted to more than several dozen members and without financial support it didn't flourish long. Booker T. Washington's political machine although tarnished somewhat by the Boston Riot incident was still the leading black political leaders the movement felt needed to 'come around to their way of thinking about how to address the black community's issues at hand. At the first convention Du Bois was more adamant about his opposition against Washington:





Picture # 22: W. E. B. DuBois





**W. E. B. DuBOIS:**

"While Booker T. Washington was preaching the virtues of industry and thrift, mobs in both the North and the South were burning the homes of Negro workers and terrorizing black citizens.

*[Images of Black protest are seen up stage. Voices change posturing, protesting of racial violence that has erupted across the country. They gather center stage in a protest crowd. Each speaking from the crowd looking in various directions down stage.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

There were race riots in Springfield, Ohio, within a few years, and in 1904 a Negro was hanged there on a telegraph pole and riddled with bullets. The same year in Statesboro, Georgia, two men were lynched, two colored women whipped, a young mother beaten and kicked, her husband killed and many Negro homes wrecked.

**VOICE # 2:**

In the Greensburg, Indiana, in 1908 a riot erupted resulting in Negroes being beaten and driven out of town. In Springfield, Illinois, that year, in spite of the state militia, a mob destroyed Negro homes and businesses, lynched an eighty four year old man within sight of the state capitol and strung up an innocent barber after burning his shop. For these public crimes, no one was ever punished. In many communities Negroes felt that they had no legal protection against violence."

*[Reentering is William Monroe Trotter joining W. E. B. DuBois center stage with Voices gathered around them.]*

**NARRATOR:**

By 1910 when blacks in the southern states made up 30% of the population and just 2% in the northern states the Niagara Movement had reach an end. Although the Niagara Movement was short lived, lasting only five years, it was the forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, (NAACP), of which W. E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter and Archibald Grimke were key founders. Founded in New York mainly to combat the rising tide of lynching and race riots that were erupting nationally it would be come the most significant African American rights organization of the United States. Many of the Niagara Movement's founders joined several white liberals such as Arthur Springam, John Dewey, Jane Addams, Oswald Garrison Villard, and the grandson of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison to form the NAACP. Later adding to its General Committee Clarence Darrow, Mary Church Terrell, Adam Clayton Powell Sr., Charles W. Chestnutt, and Ida Wells-Barnett. William Monroe Trotter, one of the original founders of the Niagara Movement, and NAACP suspect of white support soon declined any association with this new organization. One of the NAACP's first major victory was the 1915 success in the Supreme Court case outlawing the 'grandfather clause' that restricted black suffrage.

*[Voices speaking from the gathering.]*



**NARRATOR:**

“The Guardian” appeared when Booker T. Washington's reputation among African-Americans was at its height. Trotter's ardent opposition of Washington via his paper revived the old opposition against him, including such leaders as DuBois and the resurgence of the protest tradition among Negroes. The Tuskegee Machine and the opposition as the two camps came to refer to each other, locked in a mortal struggle that did not entirely abate even with Washington's death in 1915. Thus joined, the battle became bitter as both sides resorted to personal attacks and underhanded methods. These came to light over the so-called Boston Riot of July 1903, the most famous episode of Trotter's career, as he served a month in jail for his part in disrupting a speech by Washington. This was the benchmark in his life ... the jail term was the final push that brought the brilliant talents of DuBois into the radical camp and established, albeit temporarily, friendly relations between him and Trotter. The two most able champions of the anti-Washington persuasion, although for only a few years, worked together.

*[Trotter and DuBois are seen center stage as DuBois exits stage right leaving Trotter alone down stage.]*

**VOICE #1:**

Trotter was arrested again in 1915 for his part in trying to have the motion picture "The Birth of a Nation" closed in Boston. Set in the Reconstruction era, it showed Negroes leaving the fields to sing and dance, forcing their attentions on white women, sitting in southern legislatures with their hats on and shoes off, whooping through a bill to permit racial intermarriage--in short, making a travesty of Reconstruction until the white man returned to power after the withdrawal of the last federal troops

*[Still Image from Birth of A Nation is seen up stage. Trotter is seen viewing this in disgust.]*

**VOICE #2:**

There was a stirring chase scene: suitably depraved looking man (actually a white actor in black face) pursued a white girl across the countryside until, to avoid a fate worse than death, the fair maiden threw herself off a cliff. In this motion picture the freedmen were the villains and the law-abiding riders of the Ku Klux Klan were the heroes.

*[Enters film maker D. W. Griffith from up stage left, and attorney Moorefield Storey from up stage right. Still image is still seen up stage. The both travel down center meeting with William Monroe Trotter. Other voices enter from stage left and right but stay distant, merely observing the three.]*

**NARRATOR:**

In April 1915 when news came to Boston that the film would start to run there, Trotter cut short a lecture tour and hurried back to Boston. He sent a letter of protest to then Mayor James Michael Curley, who set up a hearing with the local branch of the NAACP. Trotter applied the kind of pressure that Curley would understand:



*[Voices #1 and # 2 from stage left and right respectively, move towards center stage in protest.]*

**VOICE #1:**

Negroes had supported Curley in the past, but their future votes depended on his handling of "The Birth of a Nation." D. W. Griffith testified on behalf of his motion picture and, turning to Moorefield Storey (an NAACP officer), announced:

**D. W. GRIFFITH:**

I will contribute \$10,000 to charity if Storey can point out any incident that was not historically true.

**MOORFIELD STOREY:**

Was it true that a Negro lieutenant had locked a white girl in his room and demanded that she marry him?

**NARRATOR:**

The hearing ended with the protesters scoring most of the points.

**D. W. GRIFFITH:**

It was a pleasure to meet you (extending his hand).

**MOORFIELD STOREY:**

No sir (drawing his hand back). It was not a pleasure.

*[Exit Griffith up stage left and Storey up stage right. Leaving Trotter center stage with Voice # 1 to his left and Voice # 2 to his right. Enters from down right is a Theatre Manager who remains down right with A eyes of the group fixated on him pantomiming greeting patrons entering the theatre as the Narrator speaks.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Mayor Curley decided that the film could be shown if a few parts were cut out. The Tremont Theater made the changes and launched the film on schedule. During the next week, Trotter, William Lewis, and others made further appeals to Curley and Governor David Walsh, both of whom insisted that they could do nothing.

*[Trotter and the Voices-turn protesters move down stage right towards the Theatre Manager. Light dims on Narrator.]*

**VOICE #1:**

The situation exploded Saturday April 15, 1915, on opening night. Acting on rumors of a Negro plot to pack the house, seize and destroy the film, Tremont Theater management planted scores of plainclothes policemen on duty in the theater.

**VOICE #2:**

At about 7:30 Trotter led a group of Negroes into the lobby and tried to buy tickets. Abruptly the ticket windows slammed shut. *(The Manager stops them from entering.)*



**MANAGEMENT:**

The performance is sold out.

**WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER:**

Not true! (*Eyeing an imaginary white man purchasing a ticket and entering the theater.*) That white man there just purchased three tickets. I demand to be sold a ticket!

**MANAGEMENT:**

We are sold out I say! You and your kind, group must leave the premises.

**VOICE # 1:**

Furious, Trotter shouted discrimination. The police moved in. One white plainclothes man struck Trotter. Trotter is knocked down to the ground. The lobby was filled with police with clubs. Trotter and ten others were arrested.

*[Trotter gets up and is arrested with the others and is lead off stage left While Trotter is being escorted off.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

The film ran, punctuated by occasional jeers from the audience.

*[Viewed is a film clip from Birth Of A Nation as Voice # 1 from stage right and looking up viewing the film clip turns down stage to the audience and speaks. Voice # 2 from stage left jeering at the images up stage. As Voice # 1 speaks he throws an object at the screen and runs down stage to down right and stops.]*

**VOICE# 1:**

At the point when the fair maiden was about to leap to her death a Negro stood in the audience and as a newspaper account stated, "spattered a very ancient egg by a will-directed shot over the exact middle of the white screen."

**NARRATOR:**

*(Light rises on Narrator.)* Six years later when the film was scheduled for a second run showing at the Schubert Theatre, William Monroe Trotter and the Boston Chapter of the NAACP protested. The forced the banning of the film's second Boston showing when some 600 members of the black community attended the hearing on the film.

*[Light fades to black on Narrator as Voice #1 steps down stage and joins Voice #2 as they sing.]*







Picture # 23: The Birth Of A Nation



**CONGREGATION:**

Lift every Voice and sing,  
Till earth and heaven ring  
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise High  
as the list'ing skies  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun Of our new day begun  
Let us march on till victory is won.  
(Center stage fades to black)<sup>77</sup>

**(END OF ACT THREE, SCENE ONE)**

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<sup>77</sup> First Verse of "Lift Ev'ry Voice And Sing" by James and Rosamond Johnson



**ACT THREE, SCENE TWO:**

*[Act Three Scene Two begin with the light rising on the Narrator up stage at the podium. Voices enter in darkness from various directions converging once again at center stage. Center stage slowly rises as we see a group of protesting Boston citizens experiencing segregation.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Segregated housing patterns in Boston inevitably contributed to racially divided schools. Not de jure segregation but de facto segregation. One black state Normal School graduate who applied for a position was told:

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER:**

"Go down South among your own people."

**NARRATOR:**

Throughout the nineteenth century the Boston School Committee hired one full-time black teacher, the daughter of a prominent black abolitionist, one black substitute teacher, and three black instructors for the adult evening school.

*[Enters State Superintendent from up right traveling down center speaking to the group. Pictured up stage are several images of segregated Black school classrooms.]*

**A STATE SUPERINTENDENT WRITES:**

There has never been any serious attempt in this State to offer adequate educational facilities for the colored race. The average length of the term for the State is only four months; practically all of the schools are taught in dilapidated churches, which of course, are not equipped with suitable desks, blackboards, and the other essentials of a school; practically 0 the teachers are incompetent, possessing little or no education and having had no professional training whatever, except a few weeks obtained in the summer schools.; the schools are generally overcrowded, some of them having as many as 100 students to a teacher; no attempt is made to do more than teach the children to read, write, and figure, and these subjects are learned very imperfectly.

*[Images change to that of a poor neighborhood in Boston changing to that of sick people in hospitals, sanatoriums up stage as State Superintendent exits up right.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Black neighborhoods were also cesspools of disease for those living in such dense areas. Families drew their water from outside pumps, which were located near outdoor water closets. Fecal matter often contaminated the water supply and helped to spread disease. The poor health of Boston blacks was even more glaringly deficient in a city with such excellent hospitals. The black population in the West End lived within walking distance of six hospitals and the South End community was next to four hospitals, yet there were no black infants born in the Lying-In hospital for Women between 1865 and 1900 and



very few patients used Massachusetts General Hospital or New England Hospital for Women.

*[Images up stage change to that of Black nurses.]*

**VOICE #1:**

Negro mothers probably preferred colored midwives in giving birth.

**NARRATOR:**

But there were still enough miscarriages and emergencies to expect better city aid. The usual explanation for black migration to the North is a recitation of push and pull factors:

**VOICE # 1:**

shortages of labor in the North during World Wars I and II,

**VOICE #2:**

The curtailment of foreign immigration to northern cities 'round the time of World War I,

**VOICE #3:**

The devastation of the cotton plants by floods and boll weevils.

**VOICE #4:**

The widespread adoption of mechanical cotton pickers, and the terror of the lynch mob.

*[Enters Moorefield Storey from up right moves down center joining the protesters.]*

**MOORFIELD STOREY:**

More dangerous and wicked than neglect is the barbarous cruelty of lynching. I need not revive the figures of the past. Since the United States has entered the war a careful investigation shows that 219 Negro men, women, and children have been killed and lynched by mobs in addition to two white men, one of these being Robert Prager.

**VOICE #1:**

4 Negroes were lynched in Alabama, 2 in Arkansas, 1 in Florida

**VOICE #2:**

7 in Georgia, 1 in Kentucky, 11 in Louisiana, 3 in Mississippi,

**VOICE #1:**

1 in North Carolina, 1 in Oklahoma, 2 in South Carolina, 5 in Tennessee, 9 in Texas,

**VOICE #2:**

3 in Virginia, 1 in West Virginia, and 1 in Wyoming.





**MOORFIELD STOREY:**

In addition to these cases 175 men, women, and children were tortured, burned and killed at East St. Louis in July, 1917, and three Negroes were killed by a mob in Chester, Pennsylvania, in September 1917. Since 1885 between 3,000 and 4,000 cases of lynching have been reported, and in only three instances does investigation show that any lyncher was punished. In two of these cases the victim of the mob was white. In the third case, those of a particularly atrocious murder of a Tennessee farmer and his two daughters, the lynchers were two young, friendless white boys.

**NARRATOR:**

Between 1917 and 1925 is the period that the worse race riots occurred in the U.S. These riots often would end with the brutal lynching of a black citizen. During this period the black press continued its efforts in covering these stories in an effort to inform not only the black community of these atrocities but the nation as well.

*[Reporter steps out from group and speaks to the audience.]*

**REPORTER:**

News Flash! Sergeant William E. Carter (1858-1918), served in the Spanish -American War, the Massachusetts National Guard from 1899 to 1917, and in World War I, where he was killed in action in October 1918. He will be missed by family and friends.

**VOICE # 1:**

"During World War I, stories of race riots and lynching filled the front pages, rivaling only the war news in death and violence. In July 1917, a massacre occurred in East St. Louis, Illinois, in which many Negroes were burned alive in their homes, 6,000 driven from the city and \$400,000 worth of property destroyed. In Elaine, Arkansas, in 1919, ten white persons and eleven Negroes were killed and dozens were injured."

**VOICE # 2:**

In Topeka, Kansas one of the worse race riots occurred it is estimated that over a thousand Negroes lost their lives. During this riot it was reported by eyewitnesses that dynamite was dropped from airplanes totally destroying the black section known as Black Wall Street.

*[Voice # 2 steps out and moves down stage center from the group stop and recites From Harlem Shadows by Claude McKay his poem If We Must Die. Light centers on him and fades to dim on everyone including the Narrator leaving them in a black silhouette.]*

'It We Must Die'

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.  
If we must die, O let us nobly die,



In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
 Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!  
 O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!  
 Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,  
 And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!  
 What though before us lie the open grave?  
 Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
 Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!<sup>78</sup>

(Light rises on Narrator and fades to black on Voice #2.)

**NARRATOR:**

If *We Must Die* by Jamaican born Claude McKay and published in *Harlem Shadows* in 1922 was the first literary achievement that signaled the beginning of the New Negro Movement also known as The Harlem Renaissance period. During this period African American intellectuals and artist were jointly engaged in redefining their cultural heritage and identity. Claude McKay brought national attention to the lynching epidemic that the black community especially in the south was continually plagued with. W. E. B. DuBois disturbed after witnessing on display in a white-owned business establishment's storefront window in Atlanta the charred remains of an unfortunate black man, decided that his life's work must be focused on ending this type of tyranny in the United States.

*[Light dims on Narrator as he travels down to center stage. Seen up stage is an image of a silent protest parade up Fifth Avenue in New York City. Heard is the voice of the Narrator.]*

There was a silent protest parade up Fifth Avenue in New York City on July 18, 1917.

*[The Narrator joins a group of three protesters A in a straight line silhouetted in black by overhead lights resulting in the Narrator being the only visible person on stage.]*

Staged by the NAACP, the march was a demonstration against violence against blacks in the United States. The migration of blacks out of the south and the competition for jobs in the North with white workers led to ever growing racial unrest during the latter year of this decade, including thirty eight lynching in 1917 and a riot in East St. Louis, 1918 that cost at least forty lives.

*[Image up stage changes to image of the 369th United States Infantry and simultaneously the frontal light rises on group at center stage with the Narrator. Seen is a group of three World War I soldiers standing in a row at attention center stage facing the audience. A citizen is seen entering from down right addressing the audience.]*

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<sup>78</sup>First published in *Harlem Shadows* his poem *If We Must Die* by Claude McKay.





Picture 24: If We Must Die!



**VOICE 1:**

Here are some of the men of the 369th United States Infantry who just returned home after the Great War. Did you know that the 369th served in the trenches longer than any other American outfit and had the distinction of never having a single man captured, or lost a trench or a foot of ground?

*[Soldier # 1 stepping forward from the group speaks.]*

**SOLDIER #1:**

171 officers and men of the 369th were awarded the *Croix de Guerre* by the French government for our accomplishments on the battlefield.

*[Soldier # 2 stepping from the group joins Soldier # 1 and speaks.]*

**SOLDIER #2:**

There was a parade for us up Fifth Avenue in New York City on February 18, 1919.

*[Image up stage changes to parade for the 369th United States Infantry as Soldier # 3 steps down joining the other two soldiers and speaks.]*

**SOLDIER # 3:**

They say that we fought with such gallantry during World War I that the Germans called us the "Hell Fighters."

*[Narrator speaks from his position.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Although the black soldier again proved their bravery and patriotism, returned home to find an America that had changed very little.

*[Light fades to black on Narrator who travels back up stage to the podium. From their current position the Three Soldiers reciting an excerpt from the NAACP's Crisis Magazine writing by W. E. B. DuBois speak.]*

**SOLDER # 1:**

*[From the Crisis, 1919]*

We are returning from war! ... Tens of thousands of us were drafted into a great struggle. We fought gladly and to the last drop of blood; for America and her highest ideals, we fought. For the America that represents and gloats in lynching, disenfranchisement, brutality and devilish insult - for this, we were forced by vindictive fate to fight.

**SOLDER # 2:**

But today we return! We return from slavery of the uniform, which the world's madness demanded us to don to the freedom of civil grab. We stand again to look America squarely in the face and call a spade a spade. We sing: This country of ours, despite all its better souls has done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.





**SOLDER # 3:**

It lynches. And lynching is barbarism of a degree of contemptible nastiness unparalleled in human history. Yet for fifty years America has lynched two Negroes a week, and has kept this up right through the war.

*[Light fades to black on the three soldiers with the light remaining on one Protester stage right who steps down stage and begins to sing joined in by those in silhouette.]*

**CONGREGATION:**

Stoney the road we trod  
 Bitter the chast'ing rod  
 Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
 Yet with a steady beat,  
 Have not our weary feet.  
 Come to the place for which our people sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered'  
 We have come, treading our path thro' the blood of the slaughtered;  
 Out from the gloomy past,  
 Till now we stand at last  
 Where the bright gleam of our bright star is cast.<sup>79</sup>

**(Lights fade to black.)**

**(END OF ACT THREE, SCENE TWO)**

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<sup>79</sup> Second verse of *Lift Ev'ry Voice And Sing* by James and Rosamond Johnson





Picture # 25: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Black Boston Community



**ACT THREE, SCENE THREE:**

*[Act Three, Scene Three begins with Narrator again at podium with Voices # 1 & 2 left and right of a Reporter center stage seen reading a newspaper. The light rises on center stage. As the scene begins Reporter travels from up stage left down to center stage carrying a suitcase as Voice # 1 begins.]*

**VOICE #1:**

The Negro came to Boston because they had heard that jobs were plentiful, and they chose Boston because family or friends lived there.

*[Images of early 20th century African Americans are seen up stage. Reporter pauses takes out of his suit jacket pocket a piece of paper unfolds and reads it. Looking around at signs he picks up his suitcase and proceeds down right periodically glancing down at the paper and walking cautiously fast. He stops down right, props his suitcase up on its side and sits.]*

**VOICE #2:**

*(Speaking to Voice # 1)* When Tonk and Pearl got married and took an apartment near the Carryout, Pearl's brother, Boley, moved in with them. Later, Pearl's nephew, J. R., came up from their hometown in North Carolina and he, too, moved in with them. J. R. joined Tonk and Boley on the street comer and when Earl told Tonk of some job openings where he worked, Tonk took J.R. with him. These three then, were kinsmen, shared the same residence, hung out together on the street comer, and two of them- for a time at least- were co-workers

**NARRATOR:**

Certain prejudice towards migrants existed, as the reaction to a sensational Herald newspaper report illustrates.

*[Images up stage change to various pictures of spiritual leaders in the Black community of this period. Reporter rises and seeing someone travel across exiting stage left. All voices converge on to center stage and pantomime to the following news report.]*

**REPORTER:**

News Flash! A white reporter investigating the existence of voodoo in Boston, after several unsuccessful inquiries, was led to a South End tenement where he found 20 Negroes from the West Indies, Virginia, and Maryland, ranging in ages from 10 to 60, and a voodoo priest and priestess. He attended two different ceremonies and on this third visit, he asked the priest to give some herb medicine for his sore knee.

**VOICE # 1:**

At the gathering the priestess, encircled by her guests, stood in the center of the room, adorned with herbs, a piece of old iron, a handful of horsehair which she raised above her head as she uttered her prayer:



**VOICE # 2**

She took a dead snake out of a bottle, raised it above her right hand, and sang a song. Then she and the priest sat silently on a throne, a sturdy plank suspended between two chairs, while the group seated in a circle, prayed,

*[Enters from stage down left is a Voodoo Priest chanting and creating a rhythmic sound with a shakeray. All Voices, as if in a trance, move rhythmically to his tune and mimic his chanting. As the reporter observes taking notes.]*

**GROUP:**

O thou God VOODOO, take all-evil away. O thou God VOODOO, keep us from all charms and spells.

**REPORTER:**

After this prayer each of the participants explained why spells had been cast on them. Accompanied by Uncle Joe on the fiddle, the participants danced and removed one article of clothing at a time. Spirited dancing continued late in the evening - shocked I withdrew at one in the morning.

*[Reporter and Priest exit stage left and right.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Nothing illustrates better the division between migrant blacks and cosmopolitan blacks than the explosive reaction to the Herald article. At first black leaders, who charged white newspapers with fabrication, denied that voodoo existed, but later the National League of Boston, a black civil rights organization, was forced to admit the existence of voodoo but tried to minimize its scope. An investigative committee appointed by the League reported that they found:

**VOICE # 1:**

"Something approaching this practice in a house on Primus Avenue in the West End ... but the newspaper overestimated the extent of the practice. We the National League of Boston have passed a resolution condemning voodoo as a degrading and disreputable superstition and chastise its adherents as foolish, low, and ignorant persons.

*[Enters Voices # 2 from stage left and right they join Voices # 1, center stage as the Narrator continues.]*

**NARRATOR:**

This incident can be limited to the National League's opinions on voodoo, but it actually expresses widespread embarrassment felt by Black Bostonians about the practices of these newcomers.

*[Image up stage appears of a local Black church.]*





**VOICE # 2:**

Colored migrants established a formal church in the fall of 1871 Ebenezer Baptist. Originated in a prayer meeting in 1868 held in the kitchen of Martha Jones, a South End resident of Ottawa Court, she converted one of the court's apartments into a chapel for services three nights a week. Later another room was added. We come together to sing the praises to the Lord, and to Jesus Christ, his son, who came to do us good and to save us, and then we feel so thankful, that we sing the tunes pretty loud, and the glory to God comes out very full and strong.

**VOICE # 1:**

The songs and shouts came out so loud that urbanized Negroes, considerably offended, referred to the church as "the Jay Bird Tabernacle." When the congregation got to large for there current quarters Rev. George Lorimer, a pastor of a white Baptist church helped them find larger quarters in the South End. When the congregation again outgrew its building, they made a down payment of \$5,000 on the purchase of a large brick edifice, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, in the South End. Ebenezer Baptist had developed in a few years from a prayer meeting into a major South End religious institution.

**VOICE # 2:**

Ebenezer Baptist was the only entirely migrant colored church in Boston. Most southern migrants joined already established Negro churches. No doubt they found the religious ritual somewhat subdued, but the majority of them appear to have accepted northern-style Negro religion. Even in the churches of the Negro elite, such as the Charles St. A.M.E. Methodist and the Twelfth Baptist, Negroes born in the South formed the majority of the membership.

**NARRATOR:**

Those migrants who settled in Boston also joined Negro lodges, the Odd Fellows, Masons, Daughters of Zion, and so forth. Negro lodges which first began when Prince Hall established the first organization of Colored Masons back in 1787. The migrant found the church and affiliated with already established black churches and lodges, a halfway solution that was something less than a complete institutional life.

*[Image up stage changes to Charles Manuel "Daddy" Grace as Voice converge center stage.]*

**REPORTER:**

News Flash! Charles Manuel Grace (1881-1960) came to New Bedford from the Cape Verdean Island of Braava in 1903. He organized and houses first *House of Prayer for All People* in a former Jewish synagogue at 51 Howland Street, South End in 1943.

**VOICE # 1:**

As a traveling evangelist he established Houses of Prayer across the country. A self-styled bishop, he attracted thousands of converts to his House of Prayer. "Daddy Grace" as he was called by his parishioners, was a striking personality, who rode in fancy



Cadillacs, dressed in wide-brimmed hats and dapper suits, and wore long hair and long polished fingernails.

**VOICE # 2:**

With eloquent oratory and a sound knowledge of the Holy Scriptures he ministered to the emotional, economical and social needs of his congregations. In the late 1930's he moved his church headquarters to Harlem, New York city. His House of Prayer constructed on 419 Kempton Street in New Bedford in 1951, and painted red, white and blue, still stands today. It is estimated that he had 3 Million followers and 350 congregations.

*[Voices converge at center stage miming a church prayer ritual as Reporter enters from stage left.]*

**REPORTER:**

News Flash! James Cleveland "Jesse Owens turned Adolph Hitler's planned exhibition of the superiority of his Aryan "master race" in the 1936 Olympics at Berlin into a sham by winning four gold metals, setting two world records in the process. Hitler refused to present him with the victory medals giving even greater publicity to Owens's accomplishments.

*[Reporter travels off stage right passing and greeting Julius C. Chappelle as he enters from stage right. All Voices change their positions at center stage giving way to Chappelle and encircling him upstage. ]*

**JULIUS C. CHAPPELLE:**

I Julius C. Chappelle, combining my interests in civil rights legislation and protest against Jim Crow in the South was deeply concern with the need for economic reform

**VOICE # 1:**

Born in South Carolina, he migrated to Boston as a teenager in 1870, began work as a barber, and went to school at night to earn his high school diploma. He was elected to the Republican State Central Committee, the Boston City Council, and the state legislature. Chappelle urged the Boston branch of the National League to establish an employment bureau for Colored women.

**JULIUS C. CHAPPELLE:**

As a state legislature I introduce dozens of bills striking at the economic disabilities faced by the Negro of Massachusetts. I sponsored bills providing free textbooks in the public schools, ending the poll tax for voters, regulating child and female labor, funding free evening high schools in major Massachusetts cities, providing standards for the quantities for coal sold in baskets, and even a bill regulating pawn brokers.

*[Chappelle and all Voices in pantomime transverse the stage in random pairs as if walking the streets of affluent Boston. Walking with an apparent air about them.]*



**NARRATOR:**

The nineteenth century city was a " far more integrated place than its counterpart of the twentieth century. Residents lived within walking distance of their work, making distinctions between residential area and business districts less significant than they are in today's city. Boston was a commercial city in the mid-nineteenth century and has remained that way since...

*[Voice # 1 stepping out towards down stage from the group speaks changing her demeanor. Voice #2 addresses the audience with contempt for the Negro as the other Voices parade past her and Chappelle exits stage right.]*

**VOICE #2:**

The Negro has little home conscience or love of home, no local attachments of the better sort.... He has no pride of ancestry, and he is not influenced by the lives of great men.... He has little conception of the meaning of virtue, truth, honor, manhood, and integrity.... He does not know the value of his word or the meaning of the words in general.... They sneer at the idea of work.... Their moral natures are miserably perverted. Such a statement should not be interpreted as abusing the Negro; for, considering the putrid moral air he breathes ... there could be no other outcome....

*[Enters Voice # 1 mimicking an extremely affluent Black Brahmin enters donning top hat and cane from stage right joining the other Voices center stage.]*

**NARRATOR:**

The black Brahmins copied their style of life from white society.

**VOICE #1:**

We spent Friday afternoons at the Symphony, vacationed at Newport or on Cape Cod, and lived in Beacon Hill apartments or in South End brick homes filled with books, potted palms, dull colored plants near the window and antique furniture. Our children learned the social graces at Mr. Papanti's dancing school and studied for degrees at Wellesley or Harvard. A few Negro families even had white servants.

**NARRATOR:**

One member of the elite recalled her French governess and a white coachman, Barnard.

*[Voice #2 stepping out down stage from the group speaks.]*

**VOICE #2:**

In fact, white tutors were preferred because many in the Negro elite they believed that more gentility and culture would come from exposure to us whites.

*[Enters from stage right is Dorothy West who travels across to center stage, down stage from the Voices and speaks.]*





**Picture #26: The living Is Easy**





**DOROTHY WEST:**

My name is Dorothy West's, author of "The Living Is Easy (Boston 1948), a melodrama set in Boston around World War I. The heroine is a young, light-skinned woman Cleo Judson married to a middle-aged businessman (the "Black Banana King"), who constantly meddles in the affairs of her friends and relatives. Her husband eventually goes bankrupt and must leave her to start another business in New York City.<sup>80</sup>

**NARRATOR:**

The minor characters in the book were thinly disguised sketches of Black Brahmins. Mr. Binney, a wealthy tailor who dressed as a gentleman and went out without his hat, stick, and gloves, was easily recognizable as J. H. Lewis. His son, Simeon, the Harvard graduate who publishes the militant newspaper, The Clarion, is obviously meant to be William Monroe Trotter. The Brahmins seem uncomfortable with the poor of their -race. One of them resettles in Cambridge after other black families move into his Hyde Park neighborhood. Some Brahmins had married Irish women of humble origins, but they refused to mention the wife's former social status. Shouting Baptists embarrassed the elite, mostly Episcopalians. Aside from these brief glimpses into Brahmin snobbishness, West's major point is that each of these Brahmin families suffers some fatal tragedy because their expensive tastes outrun their meager incomes.

*[Voice # 1 steps down stage left from the group and addresses the audience.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

Conditions on the North Slope of Beacon Hill [considered the West End at the time] became overcrowded, and the city's land mass was expanding due to a major urban project. Over a thirty-year period by the leveling of Breeds Hill some of Beacon Hill and the transportation of land from Needham to fill in the marshy area of Back Bay, the Fenway, and coastal areas of the Charles River [the West End, East Boston, and the Boston Waterfront] Boston added roughly 50 percent to its central landmass making new land available. This new land meant new housing. By 1895 Negroes began to relocate to the South End:

*[Voice # 2 steps down stage right from the group and addresses the audience.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

between Washington Street and Columbus Avenue, taking up residence in the old brownstone apartments that had been originally intended for well-to-do whites. In the early 1900's they spread along Columbus Avenue and Tremont Street into the upper part of the South End, settling along Northampton and Lenox Streets; and by the 1930's with their population having passed the 20,000 mark, they extended the black community of the city down to Dudley Street in lower Roxbury... It was here in the South End-Lower Roxbury area that the black community developed its own distinctive political

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<sup>80</sup> From *The Living Is Easy* by Dorothy West published in 1940 one of only a few novels published by African American women. West wrote short stories and essays during the Harlem Renaissance period. She and Zora Neal Hurston are the most known Black women writers of that era.



organization by the start of the 20th century, as a handful of local political leaders traded power for patronage much as the Irish ward bosses had done decades earlier.

*[Voice # 1 steps down stage and addresses the audience.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

For most of the 19th century the Colored population of Boston lived in the West End along the north slope of Beacon Hill and along Cambridge Street. The size of this population stabilized between 1,800 and 2,000. For the most part this was an isolated, pocketed community that seldom made major inroads into mainstream Boston.

*[As Voice #3 continues Voice # 4 and now Reporter travel down stage. Reporter is seen with a pad of paper and pen taking notes as he travels across the stage observing the actions of the Voices.]*

When the community grew and splintered off so did the black church. By 19 10 most Negroes left Beacon Hill, which gave way for a new immigrant group of Eastern European Jews. The African Meeting house was sold to a Jewish congregation. For over seventy year the once African Meeting House was a Jewish Synagogue (until its purchase in the mid-seventies by the Museum of Afro- American History).

*[Voice # 2 moving along side Voice # 1 continuing Voice #1's sentiments speaks.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

The Charles Street Meeting House was sold and the congregation relocated to Warren Street but retained the name Charles Street in its church's name. Twentieth Baptist moved from Columbus Avenue to Warren Street, near the Dudley Square area and other area churches that trace their legacy back to the African Meeting house sprung up in every sector of the Negro community. Prior to World War 11 the Boston's Negro community was primarily centered in the South End, Lower Roxbury area. Since no new construction took place in the Roxbury area after 1920, the overcrowded Negro population was literally bulging at the seams.

*[Stage light dims as all Voices change their positions. Seen up stage are images of urban night life. Heard off- stage is faint jazz music that rises slowly and becomes background music for the community resident's comments. Light rises slightly on Narrator as he speaks.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Here in the South End the nightlife attracted Blacks from all around. Some clubs catered to an all Black clientele of working-class Blacks while other spots thrived to follow a more up-scale tradition.

*[Light fades slightly on Narrator as Residents are seen dressed in their finery transverse the streets of Boston, checking out Black Boston's night life. Resident # 1 speaks responding to observations made of the other Residents mimed activity.]*



**RESIDENT # 1:**

Outside of The Hi-Hat Club a doorman wearing a high top hat, cape and carrying a cane would greet patrons. What a sight! He made you feel very special, regal ... yeah like royalty. When you would enter the first floor eatery served some of the most mouth-watering barbecue in Boston. Upstairs was the lounge where the cool cat would mingle sipping cool drinks and listening to hot jazz. Hey people like the Oscar Peterson Trio, Slam Steward and Jimmy Rogers were frequent acts appearing there.

*[Resident # 2 steps out down stage and speaks as Resident # 1 joins in the action of the other Voices.]*

**RESIDENT # 2:**

Now The Pioneer Club was the spot! It was an after hours semi-private club located in a three-story brick row house at the end of a short alley off Tremont Street. A retreat for people who just wanted to relax and valued their privacy. People would start showing up at around 11 PM for the Jazz greats like Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie; Sony Stitt who were appearing in town would stop by after their last set. They would drop in and often play 'til the we-hours in the 'mom.

*[Resident # 3 steps out down stage and speaks as Resident #2 rejoins the other Voices.]*

**RESIDENT # 3:**

Wally's Paradise, located on Massachusetts Avenue was the Colored community's landmark jazz club. This small neighborhood jazz bar known for being the spot for up-and-coming musicians also saw the likes of Oscar Peterson, Charlie Parker, and Coleman Hawkins perform there.

*[Resident # 4 steps down stage and speaks, as Resident # 3 rejoins the other voices.]*

**RESIDENT # 4:**

Note that the Pioneer Club was also where many Negro political campaigns were organized.

*[Resident #4 rejoins the rest of the Voices as the Reporter travels quickly to center stage and speaks as an image of Boston a neighborhood map is seen.]*

**NEWS REPORTER:**

News Flash! Allen Crite noted, distinguished Negro artist whose neighborhood scenes capture the spirit of the Colored communities of the South End and Lower Roxbury of Boston begins his career during this period.

*[Seen up stage is an image of an earlier Allen Crite painting of Roxbury. Allen Crite represented by Voice # 4 speaks from up center stage.]*



**ALLEN CRITE:**

"Present people in an ordinary light, persons enjoying the usual pleasures of life with its mixtures of both sorrow and joys"

*[Reporter continues as residents change from nightlife scene to daily life scene responding to the reports of the Reporter.]*

**NEWS REPORTER:**

Ralf Coleman, noted Negro playwright, director, producer, and theatre manager, becomes the Director of the Negro Federal Theatre of Massachusetts. He holds this position from 1934 to 1939. Also he is credited with establishing The Negro Repertory Theatre of Boston the first Negro Theatre Company of Boston of which he held the position of Executive Director.

*[Light rises slightly on Narrator as he begins to speak.]*

**NARRATOR:**

During this period there was tremendous social activity with in the black community. Many service and social organizations were active and mobilizing the black community to address various issues.

*[Street scene of daily life shifts into public scene of protest.]*

**RESIDENT # 1:**

For example, numerous Colored female students who could not obtain dormitory housing at their respective colleges were afforded residence at 558 Massachusetts Avenue the home of The League of Women for Community Service, Inc.

*[Seen are Voice #3 & Voice #4 traveling across center stage as Corretta & Martin Luther King Jr.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Corretta Scott King was courted by Martin Luther King, Jr. who was a student at Boston University and who also at the time, while living there on Massachusetts Avenue.

**RESIDENT # 2:**

Their facility served as a regular meeting place for a variety of clubs and civic and social groups in the community such as the South Wend Historical Society and the Boston Negro Art Association.

*[Seen up stage are various images of Black World War H soldiers. Reporter is still present on stage taking notes of his observations continues twisting on his pad as all Voices shift from scene of protest to scene of patriotism. as the Narrator speaks.]*





**NARRATOR:**

During the World War II black skilled laborers from various parts of the United States came to New England to work in the factories, and in shipbuilding as part of the war effort. During this time the black population of Boston doubled in size in one decade. The black population rose from 23,000 in 1940 to over 40,000 in 1950.

**REPORTER:**

*(Reporter traveling quickly to center stage)* News Flash! William Edward Burghardt Du Bois co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People broke with the organization in 1934 and returned to teaching. After World War II he devoted his energy to world peace, but was harassed by the government because of his communist connections.

*[Narrator continues as all Voices change from their previous to that of a marching platoon. They march across the center and then up stage as the narrator speaks.]*

**NARRATOR:**

Though African-Americans had fought in every American war since the Revolution, they did so in circumstances far different from whites. Depending on the politics of the time and the exigencies of military necessity, they found themselves constantly subject to the varying policies of those who ultimately did not object to black soldiers putting themselves in front of a bullet, but who seemed unable to sanction their role with the force of policy or law.

*[Stepping down stage in military style Voice #1 speaks as the other continues to march in stationary formation.]*

**VOICE #1:**

There were Negro artillery units, which saw action in Europe during World War II. Although, Negroes were still segregated, they served in a great variety of capacities both on the battlefields and behind the lines. Like Sgt. Conway Waddy of Dickinson, Tex. loading the machine gun of a Mustang fighter at a base in Italy.

*[A Voice # 2 joining Voice # 1 step down stage also in military style and speaks.]*

**VOICE #2:**

...And members of a segregated army artillery unit from the 349th Field Artillery Regiment.

*[Traveling across stage, this time snapping pictures with a camera stops and addresses the audience.]*





Picture # 27: Black in World War II



**REPORTER:**

New Flash! Royal Bolling, Sr. a local hero was awarded the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantry Badge, four battle stars, and the third highest military award for valor, the Silver Star, for his outstanding service during the 92nd Infantry Division's campaign in Italy during World War II.

*[Voice # 1 & Voice # 2 together march down stage. They all fall in to a straight-line formation across center stage. Reporter fades back as if to tack a group shot from his camera as Voice # 1 speaks.]*

**VOICE #1:**

Benjamin Oliver Davis (1877-1970) had a military career that included three wars. Born in Washington, D.C., Davis attended Howard University but left in 1898 to fight in the Spanish-American War. He continued in the army after the war, seeing action in the Philippines and then in Liberia. He taught military science at Wilberforce University and at Tuskegee Institute. In 1940, he was promoted to brigadier general, the first black man to become a general in the U. S. Army.

**VOICE #2:**

*(Voice # 4 speaks from is current position.)* Benjamin O. Davis Jr. his son followed in his father's footsteps and chose the military as a career. A graduate of West Point he flew 60 combat missions in Europe. In 1954 he was promoted to brigadier general. Here Davis stands besides a P-48 Thunderbolt in Italy during World War II.

*[As Narrator speaks all Voices march off stage, first in a circle then one by one. Voice # 1 exits down right, Voice # 2 exits stage left. Narrator beings as the Reporter pauses briefly as he snaps a final photograph, jots something on his not pad, then puts pad and pen away and exits traveling up stage right.]*

**NARRATOR:**

It was not until the end of World War H that the beginnings of integration of military units became policy. On July 26, 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services. A shortage of manpower in the Korean War (1950-1953) hastened the thrust towards integration. By October 1954, more than six years after the order, integration was officially completed.

*[Image up stage changes to a protest scene for school integration. All voices reenter maintaining a position just at the perimeter of a large circle on center stage with their faces and frontal bodies just barely in view. As Voice # 1 speaks from this position they other Voices raise their hands in protest but remain in this position. The light rising just slightly on the Voices as we hear background sounds of protest chanting.]*



**VOICE # 1:**

Also during that year the Supreme Court decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), but it took demonstrations such as these demonstrators picketing in front of a school board office protesting the segregation of Negro students to gain enforcement of the 1954 Supreme Court Ruling.

*[Voice # 2 speaking from the edge of the lighted circle.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

The *Brown* case was actually comprised of five cases launched by the NAACP at the same time in different states. Two of the cases reached the Court at the beginning of the 1952, and were consolidated with the remaining three. In agreeing to hear the cases, the Supreme Court asked that the counsels consider a number of legal questions regarding the intent of Congress and the state legislators in ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment.

*[Entering from up stage right is seen Thurgood Marshall and simultaneously from stage down left is seen a Judge. The judge travels up stage and remains up stage from Marshall who when he steps down stage, turning slightly up stage to address the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States. They both travel down to center stage as Voice # 1 speaks from the edge of the lighted circle.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

From December 7 to December 9, Thurgood Marshall aggressively argued the cases as chief counsel of the NAACP. In opposing *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Marshall claimed:

**THURGOOD MARSHALL:**

Your honors, we are merely asking for what was ours by right - it was simple justice."

**VOICE # 2:**

In its verdict, the Supreme Court asked:

**JUDGE:**

Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal opportunities?..... We believe that it does.

*[Judge exits up stage right and Marshall exits down stage left as Voice # 1 speaks.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

This decision over turn the earlier *Plessy vs. Ferguson* ruling, which over turned the original ruling of the *Roberts vs. the City of Boston* case.







**Picture # 28: Brown vs. The Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas**



**NARRATOR:**

*(Narrator continues)* And while Brown had addressed only the issue of equality in education, the case started the Court on its way to reasoning that segregation, per se, was a doctrine inherently flawed.

*[All Voices reappear converging on center stage pantomiming to words of the Narrator.]*

During this time most black families in Boston lived in multiple-family dwellings. Within their households often lived extended families. In addition this included the taking-on of boarders. The sharing of one's residence was due to a combination of cultural tradition and necessity. With social codes prohibiting blacks from housing in other parts of the city, black boarders often rented rooms in black households.

*[Voice # 1 steps down stage from group and speaks as other Voices continue their activities.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

Boarders pooled their income and shared responsibilities with the household. Those who were young with no occupation often aided others in childcare and domestic responsibilities. With limited housing and unfavorable economic and social conditions, living within this paradigm for the Boston Negro was their cultural/racial responsibility.

*[Voice # 1 freezes action as Voice #2 steps down stage. Voice # 2 speaks.]*

**VOICE # 2:**

Boston on the one hand, is proud of its cultural heritage and traditions and it's those traditions that tourism often banks upon. However, on the other hand it is this ethnic/racial separation, this city of polarized neighborhoods, that is often central to the city's racial and cultural problems.

*[Seen entering from up stage right is a church congregation member who joins the other Voices assembling them into a church choir as Voice # 1 speaks.]*

**VOICE # 1:**

When the general prosperity of the post war years after 1945 stimulated the heavily Jewish population in North Dorchester and Upper Roxbury to seek better housing in the suburbs, the Negro burst out of their ghettos and spread throughout the former Jewish district all the way down Blue Hill Avenue to Mattapan Square.

*[All Voices begin to sing third verse of Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing as the Narrator speaks.]*



**NARRATOR:**

This pattern of ethnic and racial communal boundaries still in many ways exists today.

*[Narrator move down center stage and continues:]*

The cultural mix of black Boston hails from all regions of the country and Caribbean, with a range in economic and educational experiences, greatly enhances Boston's black community making it the HUB of black New England. This rich cultural and ethnic mix can still be experienced today.

**CONGREGATION:**

God of our weary years,  
 God of our silent tears,  
 Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
 Thou who hast by thy might,  
 Led us into the light,  
 Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
 Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee,  
 Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;  
 Shadowed beneath thy hand,  
 May we for ever stand,  
 True to our God,  
 True to our native land. <sup>81</sup>

**END**

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<sup>81</sup> Third verse of "Lift Ev'ry Voice And Sing" by James and Rosamond Johnson



## V. Chapter Five

### Conclusion:

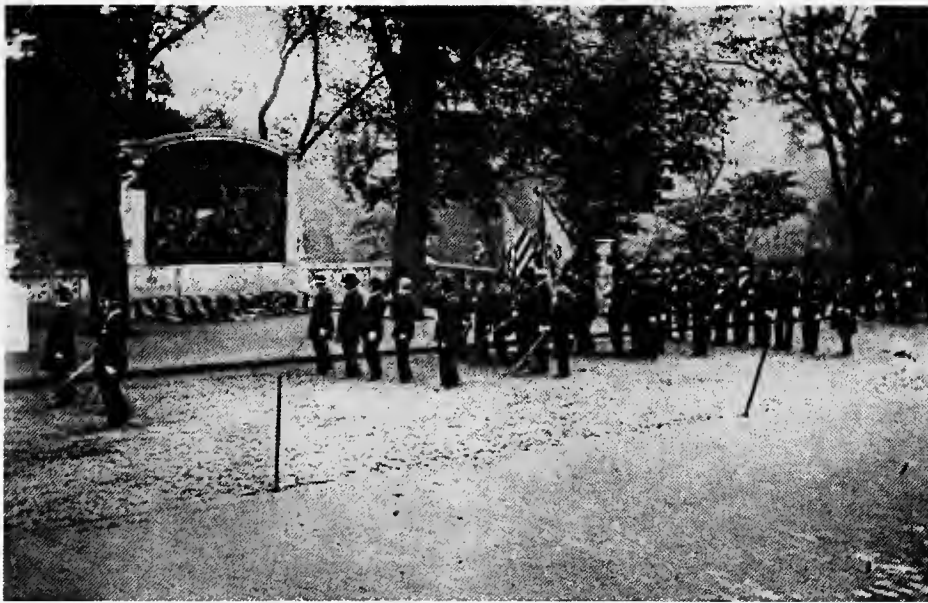
In my capacity as professor of Theatre Arts and chairman of the Arts & Humanities Department I have had the fortunate opportunity to engage both my students and the Greater Roxbury community we serve in many participatory theatre encounters. We have been able to create very successful educational theatre projects. Through the use of *Encounter Theatre* I have developed an Associates of Arts Degree program in Theatre Arts, which led to the formation of other concentrations in Musical Arts, Visual Arts and Humanities. Currently we are developing a curriculum in Dance as well as an Africana Studies Program. Each of these Associate Degree Programs has a participatory element, similar to a conservatory approach<sup>82</sup>, as part of the required curriculum. In the Theatre Arts concentration students are exposed to the both the technical and performing aspect of the art. Further along in their studies students are required to an in depth research report and a field experience on a particular area of interest theatre. Since many students would have through selected courses, have had the experience of *Participatory Theatre* they would now venture into its techniques to their own projects. The central focus is on the quality of the encounter. Remember to develop a quality product through an educationally enriching and rewarding process. Over the years some of the projects that students have undertaken have been at the Boston Renaissance School for the Performing Arts, WGBH-TV, The Wang Center-Always engaging students and community participants in stimulating activities.

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<sup>82</sup> A holistic approach to creative arts and learning, in which students are engaged in both theoretical and performance exploration in the learning of their art.







Dedication of the Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment

By James H. Smith and William J. Miller

During the autumn of 1865, Joshua B. Smith met with Governor Andrew, Charles Sumner, and other leading citizens of Boston to plan a memorial to Shaw, the other officers, and the enlisted men of the Fifty-fourth. In 1884, the interracial committee established to raise funds for the project finally reached its goal and commissioned Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907) to execute the sculpture. Twelve years later, on May 31, 1897, nearly 225 veterans of the state's three

black regiments—some of whom are shown in the above photograph—assembled in Boston to participate in the unveiling. Booker T. Washington, one of the principal speakers of the day, addressed the gathering and reminded those in attendance that the “full measure of the fruit of Fort Wagner” would not be realized until full opportunity was available to everyone, regardless of race. Edward Atkinson, *The Monument to Robert Gould Shaw* . . . (Boston and New York, 1897), 93.

From *We Fight For Freedom: Massachusetts African Americans and the Civil War*  
A Massachusetts Historical Society PICTURE BOOK Boston 1993, Page 32

### **Whose Faces are those on the Monument?**

There is a great myth surrounding the identities of the black soldiers depicted in the monument. Often times I hear that they are either made-up characters or they were the actual soldiers of the 54th. Surprising to say, this is what my research uncovered

To secure living models for his black soldiers in variety of age and face and figure, Saint-Gaudens cruised the streets of Boston and New York. He considered “countless Negroes” as models. One snowy night in New York, riding the platform of a Broadway horse car, spotting under the



What I have specifically learned from my experience in using *Encounter Theatre* is that in every encounter the students were truly empowered. Their learning about the world around them was heightened, but more importantly they gained a deeper understanding of themselves and their individual and collective roles in their communities. Adolescents through the encounter process found their individual and collective voice to speak about an issue that concerned them and share it with their community. From participation in *The Mighty Jajah: A Jamaican Reality* encounter actors and audience members developed an understanding and appreciation for the rich Jamaican culture. The challenge was using dialect as a means of exposing participants to a cultural diversity. From the *Words of Reflection* experience students developed an understanding and appreciation for the historical legacy of Greater Boston's African American community and its array of important contributions made to New England, the nation, and the world.

*Encounter Theatre* is my unique theory of effective participatory theatre involving interaction, within the performance, between audience and actors engaged in an educationally enriched experience. It involves five significant stages whatever the application, first and foremost based on a consensus of involvement of all participants and a shared view as to the production product's outcome. My most important application of the *Encounter Theatre Process* has been the work on the *Words of Reflection Trilogy*-both because of the subject matter-focusing on the historical development of Boston's Black community-and the empowerment process that the encounters create.



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## Appendix A Uncovering the Story Behind the Story:

**Using the films *Glory* and the Documentary *The 54th Regiment of Massachusetts* as a means of analysis of the moral and ethical issues raised in *literal vs. interpretive* history.**

I was on Beacon Hill in high school at a time when major events were taking place that would have a major positive impact on the African American community of Greater Boston. First the *Black Heritage Trail* was established. Patterned after the *Boston Freedom Trail* it was a trail that told of the history of Boston's first Black community by physically showing existing landmarks. *The African Meeting House, the Augustus St. Gaudens' Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Monument* (across from the State House), the home of Abolitionist Louis Hayden and other significant locations made up the trail. I only discovered by being in that community that the *African Meeting House*, was the oldest standing Black church building in the country. I became aware of the significant contributions African Americans made to New England history for the first time as I witnessed the renovation of the African Meeting House. Had it not been for this experience I like many other people would have continued to pass by historic landmarks such as the Shaw/54th Regiment Monument unaware of its importance and quite possibly not recognizing the foot soldiers as African American.

A documentary about the making of the movie *Glory* and the historical significance of the Robert Gould Shaw/54th Regiment Monument was produced in 1997 by WCVB-TV in Boston. This video documentary *Story within A Story* affords students the opportunity to view early African American presence on Beacon Hill from a unique





visual perspective, based on primary source documents of the artistic process of Augustus St. Gaudens [his rough sketches/drawing and renderings] along with background information on the political process it took in making the monument a reality. Presented here is a brief historical overview of the 54th Regiment of Massachusetts, the monument that honors the memory of Robert Gould Shaw and his troops, and an analysis of the feature film *Glory* and the documentary film *The 54th Regiment of Massachusetts*. Reviewing these works I feel are of major historical significance and are crucial for teachers and students.

### **Academic Objective:**

The Robert Gould Shaw-54th Massachusetts Regiment Memorial, a high-bronze relief created by New England Sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens and the architectural site designed by the firm of McKim, Mead and White was dedicated on May 31, 1897. Present at the dedication were veterans of the 54th and 55th Regiments, the 5th Cavalry and several distinguished speakers including Booker T. Washington. Sergeant William Carney of New Bedford, who was wounded three times in saving the American flag from Confederate capture, was also present. Carney's bravery earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor, the first African American to earn such a honor. Inscribed on the lower portion of the sculpture is a list of 62 names of those soldiers who died during the assault on Fort Wagner. The Museum of Afro-American History and the African Meeting House added these names in 1982, subsequently since that date, the monument has been referred to as the 54th Regiment Monument rather than solely to Robert Gould Shaw the young officer who led this regiment. In this essay I shall refer to it as the 54th Monument.



My behavioral objective is to take students through a process of discovery. Using secondary source materials to identify reproductions of primary source documents, students will learn to analyze what artistic expression is and its role in story telling. Terminology such as: *symbolism* in visual art to determine fact vs. fiction, *composite character* and its effect on the depicting truth, and moral and ethical issues raised in *literal vs. interpretive* history will be discussed.

### **Methodology:**

Students (Senior high or College level) will view the Film *Glory*, visit *The Robert Gould Shaw / 54th Regiment Monument*, as part of a walking tour of *The Black Heritage Trail.*, and view the documentary film, *The Massachusetts 54th Regiment*. After which they will write an analysis of this experience and how each item (each film and the monument) presented the *truth* about the 54th Regiment.

### **Assignment:**

Research essay analyzing the use of film as an artistic interpretation of history. Questions to consider in your written analysis of the film *Glory*, and your response to the documentary *The 54th Massachusetts Regiment* and the information that has been presented to you about the monument's establishment:

#### **1. *Glory* a feature film**

- a. What historical facts in your opinion has the film *Glory* gotten correct or incorrect?
- b. What historical facts you feel the film should have revealed, explored, & included?



## 2. The Shaw / 54th Regiment Monument

- a. If you were asked to trace the identities of the individuals depicted on the Shaw / 54th Monument how would you begin?
- b. What sources would you rely on for accuracy?
- c. Do you think such a finite determination can be achieved?

## 3. The *Massachusetts 54th Infantry* a documentary film

- a. What additional information has this film presented to you that *Glory* did not?
- b. Which historians comments do you feel are the most impressive/believable & why?

## 4. What visual image about the 54th Regiment is the most memorable and why?

### Primary Source:

#### From the Boston Public Library

- *Bay State Banner* (1997) Boston Thursday October 2, 1997, Page 23
- *Black Heritage Trail* (1992) U. S. Government Printing Office
- *Boston Herald* Boston, (1998) Wednesday August 12, 1998, Page 8

#### Films

- Edward Zwick Director (1989) *Glory*  
TriStar RCA/Columbia Pictures Distributors
- Jacqueline Shearer Producer (1991) /Director  
*The Massachusetts 54th Colored Infantry*  
WGBH/Boston American Experience Series

### Secondary Sources:

- Kaplan, Sidney. (1991) "American Studies in Black and White: Selected Essays 1949-1989" The Black Soldier of the Civil War in Literature and Art p. 101-123  
Amherst, MA: *University of Massachusetts at Amherst Press*. Amherst
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- (1993) We Fight For Freedom: Massachusetts African Americans and the Civil War  
A Massachusetts Historical Society PICTURE BOOK Boston



## A Brief History of the 54th Regiment of Massachusetts

*The Civil War* (1861-1865) for African Americans at the time, be they free or slave, was a war for liberation. Although the Union [North] was reluctant to enlist blacks into the military two important turns of events happened which change the course of history.

First was the political maneuvering of President Abraham Lincoln. *The Civil War* was now two years old and the North had not garnered a major victory yet. The President's armed forces were losing the war at every front. He desperately needed a symbolic moral victory to turn the tide. When he passed *The Emancipation Proclamation* in January of 1863, which freed slaves in the territories of the Union, for all practical purposes it would have been nothing more than mere words on paper had he not attached this enactment with a Union military victory. A desperately needed battle victory to coincide with the official announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation would make it a major political statement.

Second due to high casualties, the North desperately needed more recruits. The North reluctantly put prejudice aside and two month later a public "Call to Arms" went out to the African-American community asking them to enlist in the Union Army. Frederick Douglass was appointed by then Governor of Massachusetts John A. Andrew, to help recruit a regiment of African-American soldiers for the Commonwealth. In his public address at the African Meeting House, Frederick Douglass stated:

When first the rebel cannon shattered the walls of Sumter, I predicted that the war...would not be fought out entirely by white men. Every month's experience during these two dreary years, has confirmed that





opinion...Only a moderate share of sagacity was needed to see that the arm of the slave was the best defense against the arm of the slaveholding rebels, I have implored the imperiled nation to unchain against her foes her powerful black hand...Who would be free themselves must strike the blow. Better even die free, than to live slaves...by every aspiration, which you cherish for the freedom and equality of yourselves and your children...,I urge you to fly to arms, and smite with death the power that would bury the Government and your Liberty in the same hopeless grave. The day dawns - the morning star is bright upon the horizon! The iron gate of our prison stands half open. One gallant rush from the North will fling it wide open, while four millions of our brothers and sisters shall march out into Liberty! The chance is now given you to end in a day the bondage of centuries, and to rise in one bound from social degradation to the plane of common equality with all other varieties of men.”

(Kaplan 1991:101-2)



**NOW IN CAMP AT READVILLE!**

**54th REGIMENT!**

MASS. VOLUNTEERS, composed of men of

**AFRICAN DESCENT**

**COL. ROBERT G. SHAW.**

 **Colored Men. Rally 'Round the Flag of Freedom!**

**BOUNTY \$100!**

AT THE EXPIRATION OF THE TERM OF SERVICE.

**Pay, \$13 a Month!**  
**Good Food & Clothing!**  
**State Aid to Families!**

RECRUITING OFFICE.

**COR. CAMBRIDGE & NORTH RUSSELL STS.,  
 BOSTON.**

**Lieut. J. W. M. APPLETON, Recruiting Officer.**

BWELL & CO., Steam Job Printers, No. 71 Congress Street, Boston.

Recruitment Poster, 1863

Shortly after adoption of the Emancipation Proclamation, Massachusetts's abolitionist Governor John A. Andrew (1818–1866) obtained authorization to organize the first regular army regiment of black troops from the North. The Boston black abolitionist leader Lewis Hayden was a frequent advisor to Andrew and had convinced the governor to raise the unit. Overcoming their initial distrust and disappointment that the War Department would not commission black officers,

Northern blacks rallied to Andrew's call. Blacks from across the North traveled to the Fifty-fourth's camp at Readville and by the end of May 1863, enough volunteers had arrived to fill a second unit. The black community invested enormous symbolism in the regiment, believing that their fate rested upon its success. The Fifty-fourth Massachusetts embodied the aspirations of a people and their hopes to end slavery and racial prejudice.

From *We Fight For Freedom: Massachusetts African Americans and the Civil War*  
 A Massachusetts Historical Society PICTURE BOOK Boston 1993, Page 17



# DOUGLASS' MONTHLY.

"OPEN THE SOUTH FOR THE FREE, IN THE CAUSE OF ALL SUCH AS ARE APPORTIONED TO DESTRUCTION; OPEN THE SOUTH, NOT FOR SLAVERY, AND PLEASE THE CAUSE OF THE POOR AND NEEDY."—*Proverbs xxii, 3, 4.*

THOMAS V. FERRIS, Vt. } BOOKBINDER, NEW YORK, MARCH 1863. } ONE DOLLAR PER ANNUM

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### DOUGLASS' MONTHLY

#### MEN OF COLOR, TO ARMS!

When first the rebel cannon shattered the walls of Sumter, and drove away its starting garrison, I predicted that the war, then and there inaugurated would not be fought out entirely by white men. Every month's experience during these two dreary years, has confirmed that opinion. A war unsharper and braver than carried on for the perpetual enslavement of colored men, could logically and hardly upon

tell you that this is the "white man's war"—that you will be no "hater of it after, than before the war"; that the getting of you into the army is a "sacrifice you on the first opportunity." Believe them not—towards themselves, they do not wish to have their countrymen stained by your brave example. Leave them to their timidity, or to whatever measure may hold them back.

I have not thought lightly of the words I am now addressing to you. Ten cannot I give essence of close abstractions of the great struggle now in progress—and of the deep conviction that this is your hour, and mine.

In good earnest then, and after the best deliberation, I now for the first time during this war feel at liberty to call and counsel you to arm. My every consideration which binds you to your enslaved fellow country-men, and the peace and welfare of your country; by every aspiration which you cherish for the freedom and equality of yourselves and your children; by all the ties of blood and identity which make us one with the brave black men, now fighting our battles in Louisiana, in South Carolina, I urge you to fly to arms, and smite with death the power that would bury the Charlemagne and your Liberty in the same hopeless grave. I wish I could tell you that the State of New York calls you to this high honor. For the moment her constitution and theories are silent on the subject. They will speak by and by, and doubtless on the right side; but we are not permitted to wait for

I will not argue. To do so implies hesitation and doubt, and you do not hesitate. You do not doubt. The day dawns—the morning star is bright upon the horizon! The two gates of our prison stand half open. One gulfed rush from the North will fling it wide open, while four millions of our brothers and sisters, shall march out into Liberty! The chance is now given you to end in a day the bondage of centuries, and to rise in one bound from social degradation to the plane of common equality with all other varieties of men. Remember Denmark Vesey of Charleston.—Remember Nathaniel Turner of South Hampton, remember Elizabeth Green, and Cope and who followed noble John Brown, and fell in glorious martyrdom for the cause of the slave.—Remember that in a contest with oppression the Almighty has no attributes which can take sides with oppression. The case is before you. This is our golden opportunity—let us accept it—and forever wipe out the dark reproaches so long heaped against us by our enemies. We too survive the gratitude of our Country—and the best blessings of our posterity through all time. The soldiers of this first regiment now in camp at Readville, a short distance from Boston. I will undertake to forward to Boston all persons adjudged fit to be mustered into the regiment, who shall apply to me at any time within the next two weeks. FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

Rochester, March 24, 1863.

1. Frederick Douglass, "Men of Color, To Arms!" *Douglass' Monthly*, March 1863.

## Frederick Douglass, "Call To Arms!" *Douglass' Monthly*, March 1863

From *American Studies in Black & White: Selected Essays 1949-1989* University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst by Kaplan, Sidney. 1991, Illustration # 1

The African-American males who responded to Douglass' "Call To Arms" not only came from Greater Boston and various parts of New England but from every state of the North, with three from the West Indies and an additional twenty-one from Canada. They represented all walks of life and educational and economical backgrounds. Racist opponents in the North, through fear or ignorance, launched a smear campaign to discredit any attempt at black recruitment. When this failed to stop recruitment efforts they tried to spread slanderous remarks stereotyping the black recruits:

...slander that they would not fight, paid them less than white soldiers, denied them black officers. Rebel generals threatened that any black soldier captured on the field of battle, as well as any white officer with



him, would be enslaved or hanged or shot as an inciter of slave insurrection. Yet, before the war was over, almost 200,000 black soldiers, organized in 166 regiments of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, together with almost 30,000 black sailors- about one-quarter of the navy- had fought so effectively that Abraham Lincoln, seconding Douglass, was of the opinion that the black phalanx was the critical weight that had tipped the scale in favor of the Union triumph. To these black servicemen Congress awarded, for their gallantry and intrepidity in action, twenty Medals of Honor.

(Kaplan 102)

Unlike the fictional composite characters of the movie *Glory* which gave the impression that most of the soldiers were southern runaway slaves, the real members of the 54th and 55th were made up of mostly trades people who were northern free Blacks. Also included in their ranks were artists and entrepreneurs. Some of the individuals who enlisted were Private Lewis and Regimental Sergeant-Major Charles Douglass, sons of Frederick Douglass, and Toussaint L'Ouverture Delaney, son of Martin Delaney. Their sons were some of the surviving members of the 54th; the film *Glory*, leaves you with the impression that the entire Regiment died at battle at Fort Wagner. In addition to Douglass and Delaney's sons were the sons and relatives of other leading abolitionist. William Lloyd Garrison's eldest son soon followed in enlisting in the 55th Regiment, even James Russell Lowell's two nephews, became officers in the 54th and 55th Regiments.





The monument's inception began through a fund established by Joshua B. Smith in 1865. Joshua Smith was a former employee of the Shaw household, and a fugitive slave from North Carolina, who later became a State Representative from Cambridge. The building of the Monument took fourteen years of fundraising and political lobbying spearheaded by Smith. I believe that a combination of Smith's personal ties with the Shaw household as a former employee, coupled with the historical note that he became a State Representative for Cambridge, Massachusetts, no doubt had major impact.

The idea for a monument began not as the monument we see today across from the State House of Massachusetts but as a large shaft to mark the grave of those fallen heroes on South Carolina soil. The original vision was to be erected there on or near their common gravesite. And although they raised fifteen hundred dollars to do it, it never materialized for the following reasons: 1) a monument erected on South Carolina soil would have no longer been respected when Union troops withdrew [after Reconstruction], and 2) the spot of the common grave is now covered by the sea. Thus the idea died for a while.

The idea that started with Smith gained momentum after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. In 1865, Governor Andrew appointed a large committee that included Charles Sumner, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and black Baptist minister Leonard A. Grimes (of the 12th Baptist Church). They assisted in a major fundraising campaign, not just to erect a statue commemorating Shaw, but one that would capture this important event in history. I'm sure Reverend Grimes was on the committee to assure that the role of African-American participation would not be trivialized.



What should have taken a few years took more than thirty to realize. One reason for this long lapse in time was that two key committee members, Sumner and Longfellow passed away. Another reason was that the public's interest in such a cause waned and the project almost died itself. Then in 1881 Henry Hobson Richardson the designer of Boston's Trinity Church, picked up the baton. He questioned why such a noble campaign had stalled and urges that efforts be pushed forward. He recommended the sculptor Saint-Gaudens be hired to create the monument. Then thirty-five, the sculptor was only fifteen at the time of the 54th Regiment's Fort Wagner Battle.

Several modifications were made of the original 'Boston' concept, which began as a traditional equestrian statue of Shaw, then later changed to a high-bronze relief envisioned for the interior of the State House. It eventually became the present-day bronze relief located across from the State House. Although other tributes to the black soldier of the Civil War era were nationally erected, the 54th Regiment Monument is by far, the most recognized national tribute to African -American participation in the Civil War.



Robert Gould Shaw 54th Regiment Memorial, circa 1960.

From *We Fight For Freedom: Massachusetts African Americans and the Civil War*  
A Massachusetts Historical Society PICTURE BOOK Boston 1993, Page 32



gaslight in Madison Square a black man whose head struck him as being just right, he jumped off the car and persuaded the man to come to his studio and pose for him. “I’ve done nothing but model, model furiously for the last month,” he wrote to a friend. “I’ve been putting Negroes of all types in the Shaw, and it’s been great fun.” (Kaplan 117)



Detail Photographs of African American Soldiers featured on the St. Gaudens Monument  
 From *American Studies in Black & White: Selected Essays 1949-1989*  
 University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst by Kaplan, Sidney. 1991, Page 118

Saint-Gaudens modeled about forty ‘heads’ during the course of the monument’s development. Of these forty or so ‘heads’ he actually ended up using less than thirty. Which ones are Bostonians? Which ones are New Yorkers? For a time it was a general mystery, but through the efforts of the Museum of Afro-American History, under which the African Meeting House is operated, and the National Park Service, which oversees both sites, annual reenactments of the 54th and 55th Regiments have taken place in



Boston. Many of the reenactment participants are actual ancestors of 54th and 55th Regiment soldiers and some even have documented proof of Saint-Gaudens immortalizing their ancestors.

Augustus Saint-Gaudens' choice on inscription for the monument comes from Anna Waterston is poem titled "Together" which pays tribute to Shaw and the Regiment. It comes from her book of Verses published in 1863. Anna Waterston is the daughter of Josiah Quincy, then President of Harvard and Mayor of Boston. Another noteworthy tribute to Colonel Shaw was a marble bust created by the African-American sculptor Edmonia Lewis. Her bust of Shaw was displayed at the Soldier's Relief Fair in Boston in 1864.

Featured in the Bay State Banner on Thursday October 2, 1997 was the following picture announcing the newly cast version of the Boston 54th Regiment Monument on display at the *National Gallery of Art* in Washington, DC. Cast from the original mold of Augustus Saint-Gaudens which is on display at his studio in New York-a National Historic Site, the unveiling of this new cast was attended by Retired General Colin Powell and Bostonian Norman Conkin, a descendent of a Massachusetts 54th Regiment soldier.







Retired Gen. Colin Powell, Shell Oil President Phillip Carrol and Bostonian Norman Conklin, Descendant of a Mass. 54th Regiment Soldier, admire the newly cast version of the Augustus Saint-Gaudens memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment in Washington, D.C. The sculpture, cast from the same mold as the one opposite the State House, is at the National Gallery of Art.

The following information is gathered from Patricia A Turner's book *Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and Their Influence on Culture* Chapter 10 from Real Blacks to Reel Blacks. In this section the author uses the films *Mississippi Burning*, *Glory* and *Lean on Me* to show inaccuracies in these films depiction of historical fact. The section *Glorious Inaccuracies* zeroes in on the films choice in character depiction and its ultimate influence on the audiences perception of historical fact. The choice in the stories point of view, screen image of certain historical figures, and the omission or alterations of historical fact to fit perceived cinema graphic values in story telling are revealed. Below is a brief excerpt from this section. Included is information relevant to the characterizations that appear in the film.



It should come as no surprise that the bulk of the available information on the Massachusetts 54th-the first free Black Civil War regiment- focuses on the life of its young white leader, Robert Gould Shaw. And most of the point of view in the film is his: The audience sees the events play out through his eyes, from his perspective.... Like all of the battle scenes, the Antietam battle scene is meticulously filmed, as is the chilling hospital scene in which Shaw is bandaged. The details of Shaw's life are, for the most part, meticulously recorded. As the producers acknowledge in the film credits, they relied on the young colonel's letters, now in the possession of Harvard University.

Unfortunately, the producers seem to have made little effort to consult the extant primary sources that would have offered the African-American point of view. To be sure, some of this material is rare, but trained scholars could have unearthed it. For example, few African-American lives have been better documented than that of Frederick Douglass, the abolitionist leader who, in reality, played a significant role in the formation of the 54th, but whose contributions are reduced to a cameo in the film. Even a cursory examination of the biographies of Douglass would have revealed accurate examples of how he looked in the Civil War Years. Perhaps the filmmakers chose to age Douglass for theatrical purposes.... Other character modifications involved changes much more significant than ages. Attention to detail is severely lacking in the scenes that focus on the African-American characters. (Turner 172-173)



**In The Film**

Frederick Douglass role limited to cameo  
appeared older (60-70 years old)

**In Reality**

role formation of the 54<sup>th</sup> extensive  
was younger (early forties b. 1817)

**Composite Characters**

**Rawlins** (Morgan Freeman)

the southern gravedigger

**Trip** (Denzel Washington) illiterate

southern runaway slave

carried the flag to his death

**Sharts** (Jihimy Kennedy)

A runaway from Tennessee

**Searle** (Andre Braugher)

**Actual characters**

did not exist

**Thomas Ampey** literate

free northerner died while

carrying flag was recovered by

**William Carney** literate carried

the flag and lived 1st Black to win

Congressional Medal of Honor

did not exist

did not exist

boyhood friend of Shaw's

The major flaw in this line of reasoning can be seen in the decision to make of these characters three recent slaves and the fourth an inept Northerner. The rank and file of the 54th do not match this profile. Many were sons or grandsons of ex-slaves who had spent their whole lives in the North. They were not all illiterate; we have letters and diaries that prove it. They were not as rough as the Trip, Rawlins, and Sharts characters suggest, more were they polished to the point of ineffectiveness as the



Searles character indicates. To use the much-quoted but very appropriate adage coined by Ralph Ellison, the real men of the 54th are *invisible* in this film. (Turner 174)

### **The Documentary: The Massachusetts 54th Colored Infantry**

This documentary produced after the film *Glory* was released, addresses two misconceptions concerning African Americans involvement in the Civil War and the Abolitionist Movement. One misconception the documentary addresses is the belief that all Black people lived in slavery in the South before the Civil War. In fact 500,000 free Blacks lived through out the North and South about evenly divided. Another perception was that Abolitionists were high and mighty white Northerners, mostly Bostonians. In fact for their relatively small population in Northern cities African Americans made up the majority of Abolitionist. In all Northern cities that had an African American presence, the Black community was a highly organized and diligent force in the fight against slavery.

The small Black community of Boston, about 2% of the city's population, could not support an entire Black regiment. Prominent Black Abolitionists were hired as recruiters: Rock Sweat Rock (who later becomes the first Black Attorney)- covered New England; Frederick Douglass - recruited in New York; Martin Delaney - went to Illinois and Indiana; and others traveled as far as Canada. Due to racial tension, often initiated by poor whites that refused to accept Blacks as their equals, recruitment went on in secrecy.

Offspring of some of the famous Black Abolitionist enlisted Sojourner Truth's grandson and the sons of Frederick Douglass and Martin Delaney along with people from





all walks of life. Eli Bittle (19 years old) who refused to sing *My Country 'Tis of Thee*, was dismissed from school and roamed the street of Boston. He did this as a personal protest against the singing of a patriotic song that boasted of a land of liberty that he did not share. That day he happened upon a recruiter for the 54th Regiment and enlisted on the spot. Eli Bittle was one of the surviving members of the 54th Regiment. After the establishment of the 54th Regiment twenty other regiments were formed. Another important note is that 10,000 African Americans chose the Navy like Abolitionist Louis Hayden's son. In all 178,975 Black served as soldiers in the Union Army.

The most important aspect of this documentary is that it attaches real faces to this true event. Highlighted in the film are the real faces and the words of those who lived it. Many African Americans accepted enlisting in the Union Army as their racial duty and responsibility. "They had fought for the right to fight, they had fought for freedom," someone states. African Americans had to not only prove that they could be soldiers who could fight and (often) die with dignity; they had to prove they were men. The battle of Fort Wagner that the 54th Regiment was engaged in and suffered 50% casualties ( the 54th Regiment depicted in the movie *Glory* as being totally enlisted), was a small affair as battles go but it's importance was in the long run, and what it said about the human spirit, and the light of truth it sheds on history.





49. "Serg't. W. H. Carney—Co. C., 54th Mass. Vols.," in Joseph T. Wilson,  
*The Black Phalanx* (1890).

**Sergeant William H. Carney, Company C, 54th Massachusetts Volunteers**  
in Joseph T. Wilson *The Black Phalanx* (1890).

From *American Studies in Black & White: Selected Essays 1949-1989*  
University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst by Kaplan, Sidney. 1991, Illustration # 49

In briefly comparing the feature film *Glory* to the documentary, *The Massachusetts 54th Colored Infantry* several facts needs to be pointed out. The documentary clarified for me the following facts that the move *Glory* did not dwell on. For one, many important people enlisted in both the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments, two sons of Frederick Douglass enlisted in the 54th and two sons of William Lloyd Garrison enlisted in the 55th all of whom came back alive. James Trotter, father of William Monroe Trotter the editor of the Boston Guardian Newspaper was also a surviving member of the 55th. These facts do not come across in the film *Glory*.



Secondly, most of the 54th Regiment was made up of affluent, well-educated members of the Black communities hailing from the Mid West and all over New England. The film

Using film as a means of capturing and retelling history is an important and powerful medium in disseminating information to a wide audience. However, we live in a highly mediated society in which more and more people are using film and television as their sole means of acquiring knowledge. All history is revisionist history, which is subject to interpretation by its author. It doesn't matter if it's a textbook, newspaper story, feature film or documentary film all of these works are creative interpretations. Why read the book when you can see the movie is often the rationale of many people who are leisurely accepting of the film director's interpretation as historical fact. Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple* was markedly different than the Alice Walker book from which it was based. In true Spielberg fashion he created an epic movie that was interpreted for a wider audience. His consideration for not exploring the intimate relationship between the main character Celie and Shug Avery may have been politically motivated. Had he kept to the original text he might have lost the PG rating and along with it his wider, broader audience appeal or those purists and those who are culturally connected to the work of Alice Walker might take offense to this omission.

When analyzing film we must consider the following: the time in which the film depicts, the time in which the film is created, the rationale for the works creation, and finally from whose perspective is the work (story) presented. *Glory* however, depicts the majority as illiterate runaway southern slaves. This was probably done in consideration of this nation's popular belief of the caliber of Black soldiers during the Civil War. Finally, the 54th Regiment was only engaged in a limited number of altercations and did suffer



tremendous casualties, at least 50%. Unlike the final scene in the movie *Glory* where Col. Shaw and the flag barer Trip are seen killed and their bodies left in a trench together with the rest of the Regiment, there were survivors. For one the true flag barer Sergeant William Carney survived and as illustrated earlier in this essay, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the first African American to earn this prestigious award. Only recently, has information resurfaced publicly, about the major contributions of African-Americans in this chapter of history. At the Saint-Gaudens' Monument dedication, William James captured well the significant, lasting imprint on history this monument will/has made: "...after the great generals have had their monuments and long after the abstract soldier's monuments have been reared on every village green, Saint-Gaudens' bronze would live on." (Kaplan, 91:103)





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**Appendix B: Social Issue**  
**YOUTH ACTION MOVEMENT**  
**PRODUCTION**

**The Deadly Gift: Teen Drama about AIDS awareness**

Written by David D. Coleman II with Students of the Youth Action Movement

Omesha Allen, Cheryl Barrett, Natasha Belixzaire, John Carvalho,  
Shelley Coon, Manny Correia, Vagner Correia, Neldy Jean-Francois,  
Luizette Correia, Jorge Lopes, Martine Menard, Fabienne Renelien,  
Tyisha Turner, Judith Muhammad, and Salodeen Muhammad

Under the Direction of David D. Coleman II, Program Director

INTRODUCTION

“The Deadly Gift,” is a play about AIDS, not just the disease; but about the people inflicted, and those who can get it. We have written this play to educate teens about the dangers and misconceptions associated with AIDS. It’s about those who are unaware of the dangers of unprotected sex. People need to know the consequence of having sex irresponsibly can be far more dangerous than anything in the world. We are performing this play to further AIDS awareness amongst teens and our community as a whole.

We are trying to get across that AIDS is a serious problem, not just domestic but a global issue. If one were to have sex without a condom it is quite possible to loose your life, all for something that won’t last very long. Besides sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and their negative effects on the family are things you might have to worry about. We the teens at the Youth Action Movement Program have worked very hard to make this play an unforgettable experience. -The Youth Action Movement



**THE DEADLY GIFT**  
**A Drama about AIDS awareness among teens**

**Outline:**

**ACT I**

**At THE PARTY**

- SCENE 1. The Burke Family (Setting up for the party)  
 SCENE 2. The House Party (James Crew enter party)  
 SCENE 3. The Confrontation (Jealously)

**ACT II**

**AT HOME**

- SCENE 1. The Burke Family (Blinkie's problem)  
 SCENE 2. Manny & Tina (The Encounter)  
 SCENE 3. James Crew (Just Chilling)

**ACT III**

**AT SCHOOL**

- SCENE 1. Manny & The Boyz (In the school yard)  
 SCENE 2. Blinkie & Her Crew (In the Library)  
 SCENE 3. Monie & Company (In the Cafeteria)  
 SCENE 4. Dee & Company (In the Cafeteria)

**INTERMISSION**

**ACT IV**

**HOME AGAIN**

- SCENE 1. The Burke Home (Blinkie's checkup)  
 SCENE 2. James Crew (reflecting)

**ACT V**

**HOSPITAL**

- SCENE 1. The Checkup (Tina's plight)  
 SCENE 2. The Visit (doing the right thing)  
 SCENE 3. AIDS RAP: Start (Summary)  
 SCENE 4. Manny's Visit (the gift)  
 SCENE 5. AIDS RAP: END (The Deadly Gift)



**THE DEADLY GIFT  
CAST**

Produced by the Youth Action Movement, *The Deadly Gift* premiered in August 1991 at Roxbury Community College and at Wentworth Institute of Technology.

**THE BURKE CREW**

|                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| MESHA BURKE----- | OMESHA ALLEN       |
| CARLABURKE-----  | CASSANDRE KELBREAU |
| DUCKY-----       | NATASHA BROOKS     |
| JOHN-----        | JOHN CARVALHO      |
| PAULA-----       | CRYSTRAL GONCALVES |
| BLINKIE-----     | JUDTH MUHAMMAD     |

**THE JAMES CREW**

|              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| JOSE-----    | JOSE CORREIA      |
| MIKE-----    | MICHAEL BROWN     |
| SHELLEY----- | SHELLEY COON      |
| DANA-----    | SALODEEN MUHAMMAD |

**MANNY & THE BOYZ**

|             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| MANNY-----  | MANNY CORREIA  |
| JORGE-----  | JORGE LOPES    |
| VAGNER----- | VAGNER CORREIA |
| JOHN-----   | JOHN CARVALHO  |

**MONIE & COMPANY**

|             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| MONIE-----  | NICKY THOMASSAINT   |
| STACEY----- | MARTINE MERNARD     |
| LINDA-----  | TYISHA TURNER       |
| DEE-----    | NELDY JEAN-FRANCOIS |
| FAB-----    | FABIENNE RENELIEN   |
| TINA-----   | NATASHA BELIZAIRE   |





**ACT I**  
**THE PARTY**

The time: is the early 1990's.

The place: Lower Roxbury section of Boston, Massachusetts

Setting: Realistic but sparse, only essential set pieces and staging needed.

The play begins at a house party given by the Burke children, both students at Copley High School. Her parents have gone for the weekend to attend a funeral of a close family friend. Rather than dwell on the sad occasion. Ducky and Omesha decides to give a party in the hopes that it will lift their spirits.

The play opens in the interior of the living room and foyer of a large house located in Roxbury, Massachusetts. This is where the Burke family lives. The Burke family's moderately furnished house shows signs of being lived in by a very active family. The house is neatly kept although schoolbooks, jackets, and walkmans are seen scattered about the room. Most of the furniture has been moved back against the walls allowing the center of the room to be opened indicating that some type of function has or will take place.

There are no decorations with the exception of a punch bowl located on the table against the wall in the foyer. To the left we see a DJ stereo propped up on a pair of speakers. The lights are dimmed as some of the cast members enter. Seen entering the room are Ducky, Misha, and Tyisha as the music starts the doorbell rings.







**ACT I**  
**SCENE I**  
**THE BURKE'S HOME**

**THE PARTY GIVERS**

*[Enters Meisha, Ducky, and their friend John. The house is all ready set up for a party. The group is discussing plans for the party while awaiting the arrival of the DJ as the scene opens.]*

**DUCKY:**

So how did ya'll get the chance to throw this party?

**MEISHA:**

Mom's left town.

**DUCKY:**

What'd you mean she left? Isn't it unusual for her to do that at such a short notice?

**CARLA:**

Yeah, I know. It's because she heard last night that her best friend died.

**DUCKY:**

That's hard.

**MEISHA:**

Yeah and the thing about it is that she died of AIDS.

**JOHN:**

How's she handling it? *(looks around)* I mean, to die of AIDS in just, *(pauses)*...knowing that I'm guaranteed to die. *(looks down shaking his head)* Man that'll just, *(doesn't know what to say)*...I don't know, but, that's scary.

**CARLA:**

I know. We knew ahead of time, about a year ago, that her friend had AIDS. But...

**MEISHA:**

*(interrupting)* Now she's gone because of a mistake. It wasn't even her fault. We thought the lady was cured when she went to that rehab program. Cause after...

**CARLA:**

*(interrupts angrily)* Don't tell her business!

**DUCKY:**

*(to Carla)* Calm down! It's okay. We understand.

**JOHN:**

You know we didn't mean to make an issue of it.



[*The doorbell rings*]

**DUCKY:**

I'll get the door. (*head towards door*)

**MEISHA:**

It better be Butterball and her girl Paula. They're always late for everything.

[*Ducky opens the door. Enters Paula & Blinkie, whom they sometimes call Butterball because she's pregnant.*]

**PAULA:**

What's up? Sorry we're late.

**BLINKIE:**

I thought I was going in labor.

**JOHN:**

That girl can think of an excuse in two secs and make it sound so real. Look at her, she's only three months pregnant, she's hardly showing.

[*The group all laughs at her comment*]

**DUKY:**

Ya'll are late, we're almost finished setting up for the party tonight.

**PAULA:**

How did you get the crib to yourselves anyway?

**MEISHA:**

Mom's left town.

**DUCKY:**

Man, I wish that D.J. would hurry up and get here. He's taking too long.

**MEISHA:**

Yeah, I wonder what's keeping him? (*innocently*) I hope he didn't die or nothing. (*sarcastically Ducky & Paula start laughing*)

**CARLA:**

(*cutting in*) That's not funny! You never know what could've happened. He could be in the hospital, sick like Shelly was.

**DUCKY:**

That's messed up. How did Shelly get it anyway? I know he's not gay, all them girls he had.









**CARLA:**

A lot of people get it from unprotected sex. Then after you had it for a while you can get a cold or something, it'll shoot up into the flu or pneumonia and then you'll be sitting at the table of GOD.

**MEISHA:**

Change the subject 'cause all that shit's bootie! If there's a guy wit' a nice body, a big butt, a cut face, a car and some money, you best believe I'm a be wid that, without question!

**CARLA:**

You're dumb! You'll get with any guy who's got money.

**MEISHA:**

If I see a big fat, dookie link walkin' this way, I'll....

*[The bell rings and Meisha goes to open it. The DJ enters carrying records. The group go to help set-up the stereo equipment.]*

**DUCKY:**

*(to the DJ)* Where were you? We've been waiting here thinking something happened to you.

*[The DJ simply just shrugs his shoulder and continues to set-up hi equipment]*

**MEISHA:**

*(tugging on Tyisha's arm)* Come on! We've only got about an hour before people start coming.

*[They begin to set up the equipment. Time passes. The scene continues an hour later and some guests are already in the house. The party has already begun and people have started to arrive.]*

**CARLA:**

You know my mother's friend who had AIDS?

**PAULA:**

Yeah.

**CARLA:**

Well she received noticed of her death yesterday, so she left to go to the funeral.

**BLINKIE:**

That's sad. I don't know what I'll do if I got AIDS or even just the virus.

**MEISHA:**

*(to Blinkie)* As many Niggers you been with, you couldn't count the diseases you can receive.



**BLINKIE:**

That's fowl. I'm cautious of AIDS. If they have the virus then we use the Jimmy, but if they got AIDS all the way, then they keep stepping.

**MEISHA:**

You're so stupid. You can still get AIDS.

**PAULA:**

*(snapping)* Don't be going off on my best friend like that.

**MEISHA:**

The way you're talking, especially since you're pregnant, I think you should go get checked out.

**BLINKIE:**

What are you trying to say, that I got AIDS?

**DUCKY:**

Would ya'll chill. *(changing the subject)* We have to finish setting up. And I don't like this conversation anyway.

**CARLA:**

I know it, *(looking at Blinkie & Tyisha)* ya'll need to stop. Okay? *(pause)* I can't bear the loss of another person *(sternly)* especially when this one is close to me.

**JOHN:**

*(cutting in)* Hey, why don't we do what we're here to do?

**DUCKY:**

I know cause this conversation is scary. *(She moves to the DJ area and begins dancing.)*

**MEISHA:**

*(compassionately)* I still think you should go.

**PAULA:**

*(to Meisha)* Why don't you shut up!

**MEISHA:**

*(ignoring Paula)* I'm not saying anything, only that ya'll know I always say be careful *(to Blinkie)* and you're putting yourself at risk every time you have unprotected sex!

**BLINKIE:**

*(interrupts)* You don't know what you're talking about. *(Blinkie moves towards Meisha as though she's about to fight her.)*



**JOHN:**

*(stepping in between them)* Break it up! We've been friends too long for us to beef over something like this.

**BLINKIE:**

*(to Paula)* What if Meisha's right? What if I do have HIV or even AIDS?

**PAULA:**

*(to Meisha)* Would you please shut up! *(to Blinkie)* Don't talk like that.

**BLINKIE:**

I don't know Paula. I was checked four months before I was pregnant and it was negative. It's very scary now.

**PAULA:**

*(to Meisha)* Now you see what you're doing...

**DUCKY:**

*(still grooving to the music)* Why ya'll ain't dancing?

**PAULA:**

Blinkie's thinking about what Meisha said. Now she's scared.

**DUCKY:**

Well that was because of the way she came off. But it was also because she was mad, ya'll were late. *(Changing the subject, continuing to dance.)* Come on let's party.

**PAULA:**

I'm going to dance.

**CARLA:**

*(calling to Blinkie)* Blinkie don't let what my sister said get to you.

**BLINKIE:**

*(To Carla)* But I can't help to think what if, *(getting emotional)*...What if I am positive.

**CARLA:**

To put your mind at ease, we're going to take you to get tested tomorrow and prove you're negative.

**BLINKIE:**

*(obviously nervous)* I ain't sweating it. I told you I had a test four months ago and it was negative. You think I could be positive? That...the test I took four months ago could be wrong? And my *(looking at her stomach)* baby could have AIDS?





**CARLA:**

*(interrupts)* Butterball you better chill. *(attempting to calm her down)* Why don't you go and dance.

*[Blinkie walks over to the area where several couples are dancing. She approaches a guy she obviously knows and they begin to dance. The group still huddled to one side of the room near the DJ begin to scan the party, checking out the guests. Eyes scan over to Blinkie and her dance partner who are now getting down in the middle of the dance floor, dancing every erotically.]*

**DUCKY:**

Look at 'em at it. Look at her on that boy. *(shaking her head)* Every time I turn around she's on someone new.

**CARLA:**

Or either they're on her *(they laugh, Carla goes to dance)*.

**DUCKY:**

*(to Paula)* See that boy over there *(pointing nonchalantly)* he's crazy fine! Now that's the kind of guy I'd like to have a one-night-stand with.

**MEISHA:**

Please, that'll be the only one-night-stand cuz everyday after that you'll be laying in the hospital.

**PAULA:**

You all need to chill because you all know that's the father of Blinkie's baby, and he's denying it. *(steps to the side with tears in her eyes.)*

**DUCKY:**

Dag Meisha, you serious? I didn't know.

**MEISHA:**

*(They all look at Blinkie & the guy)* that means Blinkie may be...I knew about the AIDS stuff but, I had no idea that was her baby's father.

**DUCKY:**

You're serious about that father stuff?

**PAULA:**

Not my girl. My best friend! You better still be joking!

**DUCKY:**

Sorry But I'm not.

*[Carla walks back over to Paula and Ducky continuing her conversation with them.]*

**CARLA:**

We're going to prove that Blinkie's negative by testing her.



**DUCKY:**

I don't think that can be possible.

**CARLA:**

Oh come on now. Don't tell me that....Oh shoot, (*looking at the fine dude*) ain't he that dude (*pointing*) people says has AIDS or is HIV positive?

**DUCKY:**

That's what we're talking about.

**CARLA:**

I don't get it.

**DUCKY:**

She slept with him...that means her baby and the mother can both have it.

**PAULA:**

She was so loyal to him. She may have talked to other dudes but she never did anything with them.

**CARLA:**

Oh my, (*looking up*) no GOD! (*touching Paula on the arm*) Oh I'm so sorry Paula.

[*John walks over to the group. He can see that something is obviously wrong.*]

**JOHN:**

What's wrong? (*pause*) I know something's wrong 'cause you all ain't dancin'.

**MEISHA:**

We think Blinkie may be infected with the HIV virus.

**JOHN:**

Yeah, (*disbelieving*) no come on.

**MEISHA:**

I'm serious John. I'm not playing this time.

**JOHN:**

(*angrily shouting*) You just can't stop it can you?

**DUCKY:**

(*attempting to calm him down*) John chill. We're for real. All jokes aside.



**CARLA:**

Damn! (*disbelieving*) This can't be true. Every time something goes right for you, life turns you down.

**PAULA:**

Look (wiping her tears from her eyes) I'm not going to believe it until I know it's true. This conversation is crazy! I don't want to hear it. (*angrily*) I knew you never liked her.

[*Paula angrily walks briskly towards the door. As she's passing Meisha she deliberately bumps into her.*]

**MEISHA:**

What's wrong Paula? What's your problem?

**PAULA:**

Get out of my way! (*rambling off*) I should have known from the start you never...

**MEISHA:**

(*grabs her by the arm*) What are you talking about?

**PAULA:**

Get your hand off me you...

**MEISHA:**

Tell me what's the matter.

**PAULA:**

I'll kill you if you don't get your hands off me. (*still rambling*) If she does come out to be positive.

[*Meisha lets loose of Paula, watches her exit through the front door, slamming it. Everyone in the party, except Blinkie and the guy she is dancing with momentarily turn and notice the noise of the door slamming, but immediately after return to their routines. Meisha walks over to the group.*]

**MEISHA:**

What's up with Paula? Blinkie hasn't even been tested yet and she's taking this so seriously!

**CARLA:**

It is serious.

**MEISHA:**

Your right it is a serious problem. (*Breathing heavily*) My night was just ruined. Oh well....



**EVERYONE:**

*(Everyone looks at Meisha)* Your fowl!

*[Scene ends as action immediately cuts to the exterior front of the Burke's home.]*





**ACT I**  
**SCENE II**  
**THE J CREW**

*[The scene begins at the exterior front of the Burke home. Seen are Jose, Mike, Dana, and Shelley, a group of guys from the neighborhood walking towards the house. The scene opens just prior to their arrival at the front door.]*

**JOSE:**

Check it right. I saw Mike and his girl down around the way. Yo dog, that bitch is FAT! She's so fat she jumped up in the air and got stuck! *(The guys laugh.)*

**MIKE:**

My girl, what about your girl Minnie?

**JOSE:**

Minnie, who's Minnie?

**MIKE:**

As Minnie fingers as you can get around it. *(Everyone laughs)*

**JOSE:**

Forget you, you dingy hooker.

**MIKE:**

That's right, just like I was hooking your sister last night.

**SHELLEY:**

Yo, Jose go get your welfare check and buy some new jokes.

**JOSE:**

Welfare? Look at your family. Your poor little dirty brother.

**DANA:**

Yeah dog, he does have a point there. Your brother is kinda dirty.

**SHELLEY:**

I know you ain't talking, the same Nigger who tried to get on the bus with cans.

**DANA:**

Me? It's your mother that old Chinese lady who we be seeing Downtown with the big trash bags filled with cans!

**SHELLEY:**

Naw., that's your sister.



**JOSE:**

Well we all know it wasn't your sister 'cause I was with her last night.

**MIKE:**

Her and her fifty cans.

*[They arrive at the front door of the house and ring the bell. One of the guests standing near the door opens it and lets them into the party. At this point all joking stops, as they enter their eyes are focused on the girls they see nearby and on the dance floor. Some of them scope the punch bowl they tap the others to get their attention and then they all proceed to the punch bowl. As they are getting their drinks the conversation continues.]*

**SHELLEY:**

Your mom's so fat she sat she had to take off her pants to get in her pockets

**JOSE:**

Your mom's so fat she sat on a scale and it said to be continued.

**DANA:**

Your mom's so dumb that she went to the movies and they said under seventeen not admitted. So she went home and got sixteen of her friends.

**SHELLEY:**

Your haircut is so wack that it looks like Stevie Wonder cut it.

**MIKE:**

Your mom's so poor she went to Kentucky Fried Chicken one day and licked her fingers the next.

**DANA:**

Your mom's so fat that she makes bell-bottoms look tight.

**SHELLEY:**

Your mom's so dumb that she went to the family double dare, they asked her name and she said I'll take the physical challenge.

**DANA:**

Your mom's so dumb that she got locked in Star Market and died of starvation.

**SHELLEY:**

Your mom's so short that she jumped off a curb to commit suicide.



**MIKE:**

Your family is so poor that when you took the family picture and the photographer said “say cheese” you all got in line.

**DANA:**

What do you call a fag in a wheel chair?

**MIKE:**

What?

**DANA:**

Roll-Aids.

**SHELLEY:**

What do you call a fag with out AIDS?

**DANA:**

What?

**SHELLEY:**

A virgin.

**JOSE:**

Wait a minute. (*eyeing some girls on the dance floor*) Why don't ya'll chill with those AIDS jokes.

*[Jose heads over to one of the girls he's been watching and begins to dance with her. The others follow his lead and begin to search for dance partners.]*



**ACT I**  
**SCENE III**  
**THE BURKE HOME**

**MANNY & COMPANY**

*[Other people have started arriving at the party. Some have come as couples, others in small groups of either males or females. From the looks of things most of the teens know each other, with the exception of a group of three girls (Monie and her Crew) who have taken a position in the farthest corner of the room, distancing themselves from the rest of the group. One of the girls is noticeably looking around the room obviously looking for someone. Soon after the girls have entered and situated themselves in the party, Manny and his Crew (Jorge, John, and Vagner) enter. Unknown to Manny at this time is that his girlfriend, Monie, whom he recently had a fight with, is at the party.]*

**MANNY:**

This party is slamming'!

**JORGE:**

*(looking around)* The females look nice.

**VAGNER:**

Let's get some digits.

**JOHN:**

I'm going to dance. *(Heads for the dance floor)* I'm going to look for a female.

**JORGE:**

*(to Manny)* Go find a bitch to dance with.

**MANNY:**

*(to Jorge)* I'm wid dat.

**JORGE:**

*(tapping Manny and pointing at a girl he sees)* Look at that girl over there.

**MANNY:**

*(Looking in the same direction)* The one with the big ass?

**JORGE:**

Yep! She's nasty.

**MANNY:**

I'm gonna dance with her.

**VAGNER:**

Go ahead son.





*[Manny heads towards the girls he's been watching and he asks her to dance. Vagner not wanting to be left out follows their lead. As they move to the dance floor four girls walk towards the punch bowl up stage. As they gather their refreshments they notice Manny and his crew scooping them and begin their conversation.]*

**DEE:**

Tina, that guy over there is scopin' you.

**FAB:**

He's kinda cute.

**CHE:**

Yeah, he is! Ya wanna get with him?

**TINA:**

Naw...I can't do that.

**DEE:**

You want me to talk to him for you?

**TINA:**

Naw, I don't even KNOW him.

**DEE:**

You want me to introduce ya'll?

**TINA:**

NO!....

**DEE:**

Let's walk over there...Oh Shoot! Here he comes!

*[Manny approaches Tina unaware that now he is being watched by Monie and her Crew.]*

**STACEY:**

Monie, Manny's headin' for some other girl.

**LINDA:**

Seems to me after yawls fight he ain't had much to say to you. (Stacey and Linda laugh)

**MONIE:**

*(while staring at Manny & Tina's group)* It ain't even like that...He's just tryin' to make me jealous.



**STACEY:**

Seems like it's working.

**MONIE:**

*(angrily)* Shut up!

*[Action shifts to Manny who has just introduced himself to Tina and her girlfriends. Tina's friends have distanced themselves a little from the two of them to give them some privacy.]*

**MANNY:**

What's your name?

**TINA:**

Tina.

**MANNY:**

You got a boyfriend?

**TINA:**

No.

**MANNY:**

Why a pretty girl like you without a boyfriend? You need one?

**TINA:**

If I find the right one.

**MANNY:**

I think the right guy is right here in this party.

**TINA:**

Who?

**MANNY:**

Who else? Wanna dance?

**TINA:**

*(smiles and shrugs her shoulders)* Sure.

*[As Manny and Tina dance we see Monie and her Crew, over to the far corner of the room, talking amongst themselves. They begin pointing at Manny and Tina making obviously negative comments. Then they begin eyeing Tina's girlfriends.]*



**STACEY:**

What are those girls looking at? They seem to have some kind of problem with us.

**MONIE:**

I know they better not try anything.

**LINDA:**

Monique it seems like Manny was looking at her.

**STACEY:**

Yeah, the minute they got here I saw him looking at t he one with the shirt on.

**LINDA:**

It seems like Manny was looking at her. Monie, look now he's dancin' wit some chic... Think he's still out to make ya jealous?

**STACEY:**

Looks to me like he wants new skins.

**MONIE:**

Naw, it ain't even like that...

**LINDA:**

Don't even sweat it Monie, he ain't nobody.

**MONIE:**

He's my man.

**STACEY:**

It ain't even Manny cuz He KNOWS BETTER.

**LINDA:**

Yeah. It's that girl, did you see the way she was scopin' him?

**MONIE:**

Bet! I got somethin' for that whoe! I'll teach her to mess wit my man.

*[Action shifts to the other side of the room.]*

**DEE:**

Yo Fab, Shey, don't mean to bust yawls bubble, but some people are staring us down, and it ain't no guys.



**FAB:**

What's up wit them? They've been staring at us for a while.

**CHE:**

I'm about to go over there and ask them what's up.

**DEE:**

Let's go then.

*[Dee, Shey, and Fab walk over to Monie and her Crew. All the while Manny and Tina continue to dance, not noticing anything other than each other.]*

**DEE:**

*(to Stacey)* Do you have a problem?

**STACEY:**

*(stepping up to Dee, in her face)* Yea, you bitches!

**MONIE:**

Yeah, first ya'll step out of yawls place and then YOU *(pointing at Tina and speaking loudly so everyone can hear especially Manny.)* try to take my man! I ain't havin' it.

**LINDA:**

Then won't you do somethin' about it?

**JOHN:**

*(Standing near)* Hey, why don't ya'll chill.

**CHE:**

Naw! They started it, and we're gonna finish it.

*[Scene ends just as we see the tension mounting between the girls. In the center of the floor still dancing are Manny and Tina, obviously in their own world.]*





**ACT II**  
**SCENE I**  
**THE BURKE FAMILY HOME**  
*[Scene opens at the Burke family home...]*

**CARLA:**

I can't believe it, first mom's friend, now mine, and to make things worst, you had to bring up the subject on Blinkie.

**MEISHA:**

Look. I was only trying to look out for her.

**CARLA:**

Well, now you won't have to anymore because she has it, not HIV but AIDS,

*[Doorbell rings. Meisha rises slowly, staring at Carla, as she moves towards the door. She opens it letting in John, Ducky, and Tyisha.]*

**MEISHA:**

John and Ducky are here.

**DUCKY:**

We were about to go in town, but we decided to drop by here first. *(looks at Carla and Meisha)* So what have ya'll been talkin' about or doing?

**MEISHA:**

We were discussing Blinkie.

**JOHN:**

I know Paula must be taking it very hard. I mean they were always together. It was like they were each other's shadows except for when they slept.

**DUCKY:**

Why did that dude do it anyway? *(To John)* Why didn't he use his condom? Why are guys like that John, huh?

**JOHN:**

Yo, I know I'm a dude an all, but I can't speak for him. He has a mind of his own.

**DUCKY:**

*(angrily)* I'm about to go home. This isn't why I came. *(getting up)* I wanted to talk to ya'll. *(looking around)* I wanted to get it off my mind.

**CARLA:**

It's okay Ducky. We'll have to face it together. Think of how she feels. Her feelings are worst.

*[Telephone rings]*



**MEISHA:**

I got it!

[*Paula is heard off stage*]

**PAULA:**

Are you busy?

**MEISHA:**

No, everyone's over here. (*sensing something's wrong*) Paula are you feeling okay?

**PAULA:**

I don't know how I feel right now. Blinkie just went into the hospital this morning. Her mother called to let me know.

**MEISHA:**

Oh no. I can't believe it. She's going to....DIE!

**PAULA:**

Don't say that. Miracles happen sometimes. I just hope one comes for her soon.

**MEISHA:**

Why don't you come over, and about what I said when we were setting up for the party, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for it to come out like that. You understand?

**PAULA:**

Just forget it Meisha. It Happened, it's just a matter of time and she'll soon...Look I'll call ya back or see you in school tomorrow, okay?

**MEISHA:**

Yeah. Okay. See ya tomorrow, bye.

**PAULA:**

Bye. (*hangs up the telephone*)

**CARLA:**

Who was that?

**MEISHA:**

That was Paula.

**JOHN:**

What she say? I heard you mention about what happened at the party.



**MEISHA:**

Why is everyone trying to blame me? (*walks away from the group*) All I said was words. (*Angrily*) I didn't have sex with her. (*with her back turned*) I wasn't the one laying on my back so why don't ya'll get off my back! (*exits the room.*)

**CARLA:**

Yo get off her John! (*girls turn towards him*) How you sound coming off on my sister like that? Get out!

**DUCKY:**

(*rises*) Calm down Carla.

**CARLA:**

No! "Cause you can leave too! And do you have anything to say (*looking at Tyisha*) you can leave too!

**DUCKY:**

It's okay because we have to go anyway. Come on guys. (*John and Ducky get up and head for the door.*)

**ALL:**

Bye.

**CARLA:**

(*not looking at them*) Yeah.

[*Scene ends as they exit the front door.*]









**ACT II: Scene II**  
**Tina's House**

*[This scene takes place at the home of Tina. Manny and Tina (Martine) are in her living room sitting on the sofa talking.]*

**TINA:**

I had a nice time Friday night. You're a very good dancer.

**MANNY:**

Thank you. I thought about you all night. I really like you. I feel as if...I don't know...as if you are different from the other girls. *(smiles) shy.* I like that.

**TINA:**

I like you too. I'm not all that shy, really.

**MANNY:**

You're very pretty.

**TINA:**

Thank you.

**MANNY:**

I'm not going with anyone. Are you ah...*(about to say virgin, he quickly catches himself and rephrases the sentence)* seeing anyone?

**TINA:**

I...I...

**MANNY:**

Before you say anything, base your answer on the fact that I don't want you to see anyone else, or even think of anyone else. Just you, me and the world. That's it.

**TINA:**

*(in a low whisper)* No.

**MANNY:**

Was that a no?

**TINA:**

mmhum.

**MANNY:**

You've made me so happy! *(he moves forward to kiss her)*



**TINA:**

What about you? There'll be no other right?

**MANNY:**

*(with a sarcastic smile)* Sure, of course not. Would I do such a thing?

*[Martine just smiles and allows him to kiss her. Scene ends.]*



**ACT II: Scene III**  
**The "J" Crew**

*[Jose and his crew are seen hanging on the corner of their block in front of a variety store. People are seen passing by. Some going in or coming out of the store. The group obviously are just passing the time, bored, with nothing to do. They try to strike up a conversation with girls that periodically pass by.]*

**MIKE:**

Yo baby, how's 'bout me and you doing the loco thing?

**GIRL:**

With you, I don't think so> *(girl rolls her eyes and walks into store)*

**SHELLEY:**

Yo mike one of these days you're gonna get smacked.

**MIKE:**

I don't think so. *(jokingly)* You see I'm a lover not a fighter.

**DANA:**

*(mimicking Michael Jackson)* I'm a lover not a fighter. You ain't gonna get wit the ladies with that weak G.

**MIKE:**

Kiss my ass. *(to Dana)* I haven't seen you wit no girl since Janet dumped you.

**SHELLEY & JOSE:**

Oooh! Dana got dissed.

**DANA:**

Yo, I still gets mine.

**SHELLEY:**

Yeah, wit what?

**DANA:**

Your mama! That's what!

**SHELLEY:**

*(shoves him playfully)* Don't talk about my mom, dog! *(Girl exits from store walks in front of group. She obviously wants to be noticed.)*

**SHELLEY:**

*(to Mike)* Let me show you how it's done. *(walks over and begins talking to the girl.)*



**MIKE:**

*(yells to Shelley)* Yo don't get slapped.

**JOSE:**

Shelley needs to slow down.

**DANA & MIKE:**

*(singing)* Slow down!

**DANA:**

What you talkin' 'bout. My man's getting the digits.

**JOSE:**

Yeah, I see, but he really should chill sometimes. I mean so he got the digits and yeah maybe be wit it. Even knockin' the boots after 'while, but is that all it's about?

**DANA & MIKE:**

Yeah, (the give each other dap and begin singing Knock the Boots)

**DANA:**

Why you always get serious when one of your boyz are getting over? Stop acting like a sucker. *(slaps Dana five)*

**MIKE:**

Maybe James is jealous 'cause he ain't gettin' none.

**DANA:**

Maybe he's going the other way?

**MIKE:**

Oooh. *(Mike slaps Dana five again)*

**JOSE:**

Dana you better chill wid dat. I'm serious, what are we doing. Remember Friday night? Mike got wit that girl Che and Dana you was wit her girl Fab. My question to both of you is who were they with before you?

**SHELLEY:**

*(walks back over to the group holding up a slip of paper)* Is the boy bad or what?









**ACT III: Scene I**  
**Manny & the Boyz**

*[The scene opens with Jorge, Manny Vagner, and John talking about what they did last night outside of the school on the basketball court.]*

**JORGE:**

*(dribbling a basket ball)* Did you get some skins last night?

**MANNY:**

I got some from that girl Tina.

**VAGNER:**

*(interrupting)* Stop frontin’

**JORGE:**

*(chiming in)* I got some too.

**JOHN:**

*(Looking at Vagner and Jorge laughing)* Ya’ll love to lie.

**MANNY:**

Let me tell you what happened after I dropped Monie off. I went back to walk Tina home. No one was there so she invited me in and we started talking. Before ya know it I was waxing that ass.

**JORGE:**

*(proudly)* Check out my dogs. I guess we were the only one’s who got busy.

*[Everyone smiles and laughs except John.]*

**JOHN:**

*(with a serious tone)* Did you use a Jimmy hat?

**MANNY:**

Nope!

**VAGNER:**

*(jokingly)* You didn’t wax it the way I do?

**MANNY:**

*(laughing)* You can’t do shit!



**JOHN:**

(seriously) You better watch out.

**MANNY:**

(to John) Mind your business! (*shooting basketball*) I know what I'm doing.

**JOHN:**

I'm just trying to tell you to take precautions.

**JORGE:**

(*Vagner laughing*) That don't matter as long as my dogs are gettin' some. (Manny and Jorge give each other daps]

**MANNY:**

Why are you acting like this? Is it because you ain't gettin' none?

**JOHN:**

Yeah, what ever. (*School Bell rings.*)

**MANNY:**

I have to go to class.

**JORGE:**

(*exiting*) Peace out doggy dog.

**MANNY:**

(*taking last shot, exiting*) See ya!

**VAGNER:**

See that fine girl heading towards the lav I'll peace ya'll out. (*exits*)

[*Scene ends with John picking up the basketball, looks at his friends exiting, shakes his head and heads inside school.*]



**ACT III: Scene II**  
**Blinkie & Her Crew at the School Library**

**NARRATOR:**

[*From off stage*]

All of the girls that gave the party and a couple of their friends (*Blinkie, Carla, Meisha, Paula and Ducky*) all decided to go to the library to catch up on some work, and while they are doing their schoolwork they start to have a very deep conversation.

**MEISHA:**

(*says coldly*) Blinkie did you get tested?

**BLINKIE:**

(*angrily*) No, I was too busy with my schoolwork.

**CARLA:**

You better forget about school and all that crap because you don't know if you have AIDS or not.

**DUCKY:**

I know this is nothing to be played with. It's a real serious matter.

**PAULA:**

I know that's right, I knew this girl who waited a whole year before she went to get tested, all because she was scared. (While the girls are talking John walks in.)

**JOHN:**

How ya'll lovely ladies doing?

**MEISHA:**

We were doing just fine until you showed up.

**JOHN:**

Listen you (*Meisha interrupts*)

**MEISHA:**

Don't be comin' over here starting anything cuz I ain't havin' it.

**JOHN:**

Who was talking to you in the first place you fat...

**CARLA:**

[*Carla interrupts*] You didn't have to come over here in the first place. You came over here to say Hi and Bye. Don't be comin' over here getting smart cuz I will put a serious hurtin' on you. (*everybody starts saying oooh.*)]





**JOHN:**

All right, Bye!

**DUCKY:**

Yeah, you better go because you was just getting ready to get stomped on.

**JOHN:**

Okay, well I'll see you ladies later.

**ALL OF THE GIRLS:**

Bye John.

*[Scene Ends]*







**ACT III: Scene III**  
**Monie & Company At Her Crib**

*[Scene opens at the home of Monie. She is seen talking to her girlfriends Stacey, and Linda about her relationship with Manny.]*

**STACEY:**

Wasn't the party pumpin' on Friday?

**LINDA:**

Sure was. Did you see them Niggas that was there?

**MONIE:**

I can't believe it. Did you see how Manny was staring at that bitch Tina or whatever her name is?

**LINDA:**

Well I'm not surprised, 'cause all boys are dogs.

**MONIE:**

People, what do you think I should do about Manny? Ya'll think I should forget about him?

**STACEY:**

What are you talking about, leaving Manny? I can't believe you. You gonna let some bitch take your man?

**LINDA:**

I know Monie, I also know it sounds stupid (retarded) to be fighting over some boy, but like Stacey said he's your man, you know you can't be havin' that!

**MONIE:**

You're right. I'll have to stand and get my man back.

**LINDA:**

Yeah!

**STACEY:**

So what are you gonna do 'bout it?

**MONIE:**

Well, I'm going to talk to him about it, and if he likes her then he can forget about me. 'Cause I'm not down with sharing Niggers, so it's either me or her.



**LINDA:**

Girlfriend, you should go up to that bitch's and let her know what's up.

**STACEY:**

Yeah, he's your man!

**MONIE:**

Maybe ya'll right. It's time I fight for my man. (to Stacey) Let me ask you something. Did you ever have sex with him?

**STACEY:**

*(proudly)* Yeah.

**LINDA:**

Hum, that's just how Niggers are. They're dogs.





**ACT III: Scene IV**  
**Dee & Company in the School Cafeteria**

*[Dee and Fab are at the lunch table talking. Marie-Theresa comes running to their table.]*

**MARIE-TERESA:**

Did you guys hear the rumor that's going around?

**FAB:**

What rumor?

**MARIE-TERESA:**

The one about Tina!

**DEE:**

Tina?

**MARIE-TERESA:**

Yeah.

**DEE:**

Do you mean the one about her being pregnant?

**MARIE-TERESA:**

Girl that's old news. I'm talking about the latest one.

**FAB:**

Well, stop playing around and tell us what it is.

**MARIE-TERESA:**

Well, remember those girls at the party?

**DEE:**

The ones that were talking all that trash?

**MARIE-TERESA:**

Yea. Anyway, I heard that they were going around saying that Tina has AIDS.

**ALL:**

AIDS!!!

**DEE:**

This time those bitches have gone too far.



**FAB:**

Does Tina Know?

**DEE:**

We'll soon find out cuz here she comes.

*[Tina walks over to the table with a smile on her face.]*

**TINA:**

What's up? Why do you guys look so mad?

**DEE:**

Why do you look so happy?

**TINA:**

Cuz it's a beautiful day.

**FAB:**

Yeah, right. Fro who?

**TINA:**

For me!

**FAB:**

What's that suppose to mean?

**TINA:**

Oh nothing.

**MARIE-TERESA:**

You know, you're never told us what happened between you and that boy that you met at the party.

**TINA:**

What's there to tell. I'm in love.

**FAB:**

With who?

**TINA:**

Who do you think?

**FAB:**

But you just met him?



**TINA:**

*(smiling)* Yeah, but we did more things in one night than many people do in a lifetime.

**FAB:**

You don't even know him.

**TINA:**

We know each other INSIDE and OUT.

**DEE:**

Are you saying that you slept with him?

**TINA:**

What do you think?

**DEE:**

What I think doesn't matter. Did you or did you not sleep with him?

**TINA:**

Yea, I did. Why are you guys so upset? And what's up with all these questions?

**FAB:**

Did you hear the rumor that people are spreading about you?

**TINA:**

What rumor? Is it the one about me being pregnant? Now you know that's not true.

**MT:**

We thought that we knew, but now we're not too sure.

**FAB:**

Besides, that's not even the rumor.

**TINA:**

What is it then?

**FAB:**

People are saying that you have AIDS.

**TINA:**

I have what?

**DEE:**

AIDS. You know the disease.



**TINA:**

That's crazy! How would I have gotten it?

**FAB:**

You did sleep with that guy, right?

**TINA:**

Well...yeah.

**MT:**

And you don't do drugs, right?

**TINA:**

Yeah.

**DEE:**

So you tell us how you could have gotten it.

**TINA:**

Are you saying that MY MAN has AIDS?

**FAB:**

You tell us. You're the one who knows him INSIDE and OUT!

**TINA:**

Are you sure about that?

**TINA:**

Yes, I am! And if you guys were really my friends, you would take my word for it and not go around listening to rumor.

**DEE:**

It's just that we don't want to see you get hurt.

**MT:**

Why don't you go to the hospital just to make sure.

**TINA:**

I can't believe this. The first good thing that happens to me in a very long time, and my friends are trying to mess it up. Thanks a lot, FRIENDS! *(Tina gets up)*

**DEE:**

Don't leave. We don't mean anything by it. We're just looking out for you.

**TINA:**

Well I Can look out for myself. *(she runs out of the cafeteria crying)*





**DEE:**

Tina come back!

**ALL:**

TINA! TINA!

*[As the bell rings they exit the cafeteria.]*



**ACT IV: Scene I**  
**The Burke Home**

*[Scene opens at the Burke home. Time has passed but the rumors at school still persist. However Blinkie's situation has everyone's total attention as they meet to offer her some support. Present are Carla, Ducky and Blinkie, Paula is in the adjoining room.]*

**CARLA:**

How are yak doing? (Ducky just looks at her then turns away) Look, I know that I yelled at you for the wrong reason but I'm sorry. It's just that everyone seems to be getting on my sister lately.

**DUCKY:**

I don't care anymore. We all have to face the situation together. No matter what happens.

**CARLA:**

That's true. We know that Meisha had nothing to do with it.

(Paula enters)

**BLINKIE:**

You know Paula, I didn't think you would be like this. I thought you would comfort me and tell me things would be all right and miracles do happen, but what you did scared me.

**PAULA:**

But why Blinkie? Why? You should have taken the time to think and not listen to what a boy tells you.

**BLINKIE:**

It's too late for what I should have done and what I shouldn't

**PAULA:**

Well maybe if you did...

**BLINKIE:**

*(interrupts)* Damn it Paula! Look at me, look at me! Does it matter now? It's too late you know. Why do you even care? Your rushing my death. You don't give a damn about me. We were like sisters-more than sisters and now you're turning on me.

**PAULA:**

I'm not turning on you. We're still like sisters. It's just that I', upset, I'm angry. I thought you were smarter than him but, but...

**BLINKIE:**

But, what Paula?



**PAULA:**

Now look at you. You're dying right before my eyes and I'm dying with you.  
I feel weak each day.

**BLINKIE:**

Paula, don't say that. At least live the rest of my life where I leave off. That's the least I ask of you.

**PAULA:**

I'm sorry for everything I said. I was upset. I kept remembering everything we did and all the people we talked about. The colleges we planned to go together to and our prom dresses. The time you got hit by a car and all you kept saying was don't tell my mother just tell her I was at school. All those days we hooked and that boy we jumped.

**BLINKIE:**

But it's all gone now. No college, no prom dress, and our memories end here.

**PAULA:**

No it won't. Your memories will be with me 'till I join you. Don't go too soon. I want to be able to keep seeing you.

**BLINKIE:**

I'll be back. Maybe not the way I was, but in another form.

**PAULA:**

I know you will. I'll name my first born after you.

**BLINKIE:**

I thought the moment you walked out you would never return.

**PAULA:**

I wouldn't leave you like that., I mean...

**BLINKIE:**

Its okay. I understand. You're gonna miss me.

**PAULA:**

Yeah, but you'll be back don't worry.

*[Scene ends with all the girls embracing.]*



**ACT IV: Scene II**  
**The "J" Crew**

*[The fellahs are all gathered in Jose's bedroom sitting around listening to music. James is a little distracted, obviously he has something on his mind, the others are grooving to the sounds.]*

**DANA:**

Kriss Cross is slamming. Check it. *(passes the headphones to Shelley who puts them on and starts bopping)*

**MIKE:**

Yo James, what you think about Naughty By Nature? Are they slamming or what?

**JOSE:**

Huh! What?

**MIKE:**

I said is N.B.N. slamming or what? What's up wit you?

**JOSE:**

Huh. Oh my bag, I wasn't listening.

**MIKE:**

I can see that. What's your problem? You've been acting strange for the last couple of days. What's up?

**JOSE:**

Nothing man, everything's cool...

**SHELLEY:**

Yo Jose

*(Removing the headphones then holds up the tape)* can I borrow this?

**JOSE:**

Yeah, that's cool.

**DANA:**

What's up wit my man? Looks to me like he's trippin'

**SHELLEY:**

Chill. Something's wrong. *(To Jose)* We're your boyz, what's up?

**JOSE:**

I've heard a girl at Omesha's party has AIDS.





**SHELLEY:**

Your lying? And if she does so what? Why are you all bent out of shape over a rumor? You didn't get busy wit any of them. And I know for a fact that Mike and Dana didn't get any because we all went home together. Wait a minute you jettied. Where'd you go?

**MIKE:**

Last time I saw you Friday night you were talking to Marie-Theresa.

**JOSE:**

I got wit M.T.

**SHELLEY:**

About time, I was getting a little worried about my brother. I thought you where getting a little funny on us. *(laughs)* Ain't like it was your first time.

**JOSE:**

Shelley it ain't even like that.

**SHELLEY:**

My man never got none until Friday night.

**JOSE:**

Don't sweat that. *(pause)* Mike what you know about the rumor?

**MIKE:**

Well talk's goin' 'round that one of the girls got AIDS. Who, I don't know? Yo, just forget it. I'm outta here. Later.

**DANA:**

Wait up! I'll check ya'll later. And Jose chill on that AIDS stuff all right? Peace.

**JOSE:**

That's just like them. Can't never talk about nothin' serious. Hey don't you have to go too?

**SHELLEY:**

No. I have time. And obviously you need to talk. So let's do this.

*[Scene ends with Shelley and Jose beginning their deep discussion.]*







**ACT V: Scene I**  
**Hospital Scene**

*[Scene begins at the hospital, much time has passed. Seen at the hospital are Dee, Fab and Marie-Theresa, close friends of Tina's waiting in front of her room scared to go in. Finally they muster up enough courage to enter. Upon seeing them, Tina turns their way as her friend's eyes and heads turn away from her.]*

**TINA:**

I take it you guys know why I am here? *(still no one looks at her)* You guys can look at me. You can't catch AIDS by looking.

**DEE:**

It's not that we can't look at you, we don't know what to say. We're just as confused about this situation as you are.

**TINA:**

Who says I'm confused? I got AIDS, what's so confusing about that? I'm going to die. Everyone dies; one of you might die before me.

**FAB:**

*(beginning to cry)* Why are you saying these things?

**TINA:**

Saying what? The truth?

**FAB:**

I can't take it anymore.

*[Turning her back from Tina, this situation is too much for her to bear so Fab leaves the room.]*

**TINA:**

*(disgusted)* And she suppose to be the strong one!

**DEE:**

*(coming over to sit on her bedside)* Tina, don't do this to us, don't do this to yourself. Don't you know no matter what, we will always be there for you?

**MT:**

Its true!

**TINA:**

*(looking away)* I guess you know how I caught it? I loved him you know. I still do. When I told him he told me there's no way I got it from him. He refused to believe me. Don't you? *(She lifts her heads to look at their faces.)*



**MT:**

Of course we believe you.

**TINA:**

*(begins to cry)* I'm scared. I don't know what to do. My mother is not speaking to me. I feel so alone so lonely!

**MT:**

You have us.

**DEE:**

We're her for you.

**TINA:**

I keep thinking, over and over, if only we had used a condom. If only I had listened to you, if only...I had waited a little longer.

**MT:**

It's not your fault. You couldn't have known.

**TINA:**

That's why I should have been protected. I was so blind...so in love. Look where that got me.

**MT:**

But you have us. Not many people are as lucky.

**FAB:**

*(reenters the room speaking to Tina)* Can I please talk to you alone?:

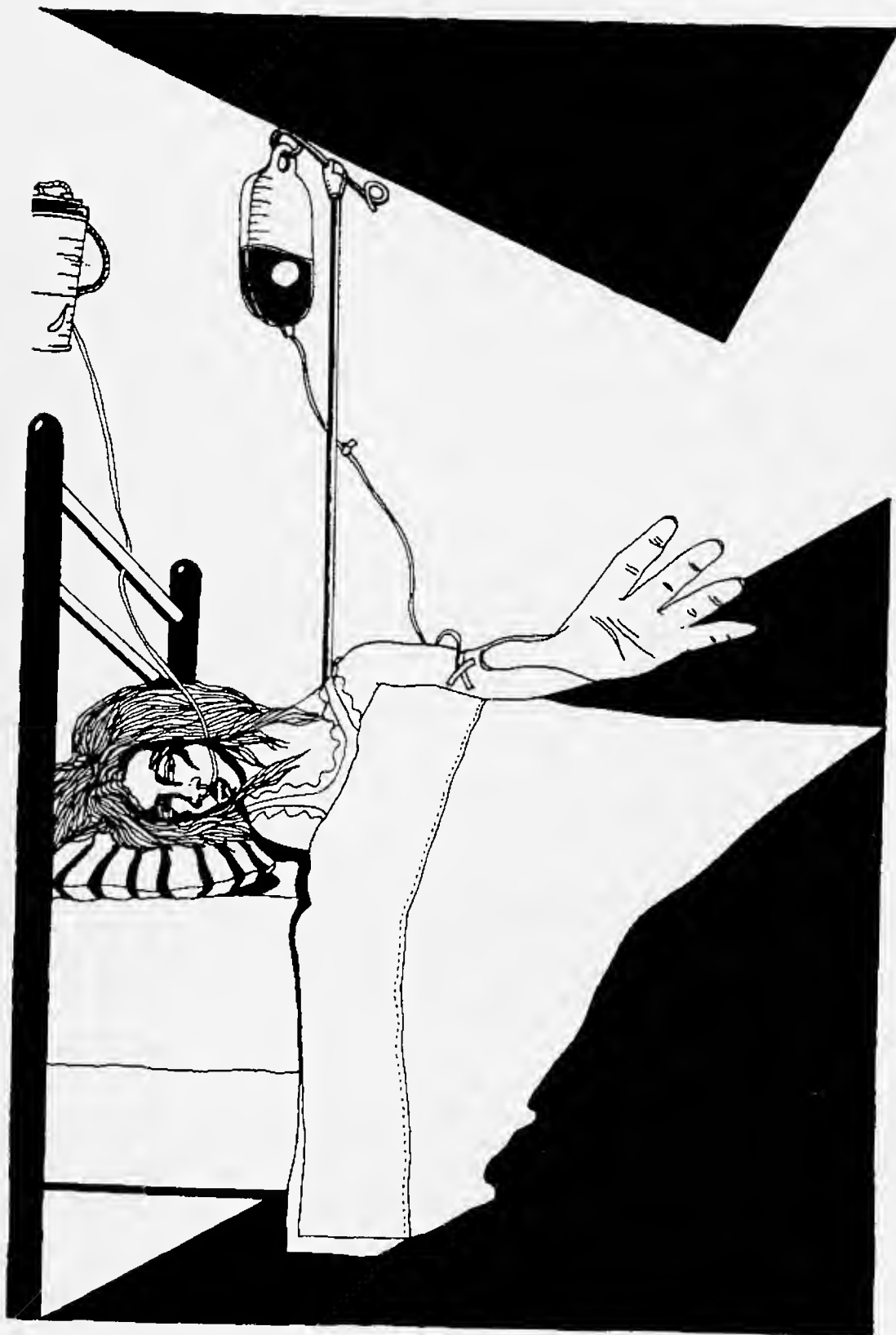
**DEE:**

We'll leave. (to FAB) We'll wait for you outside.

*[They all give Tina a hug and exit the room leaving Tina and Fab alone.]*









**ACT V: Scene II**  
**The Visit**

*[Jose is seen in the hospital waiting room pacing the floor, carrying flowers. Exiting Tina's room is Marie-Theresa and Dee. Jose approaches the group.]*

**DEE:**

What's he doing here? I hope he's not with his stupid friends.

**MT:**

Please don't make a scene. I'll talk to him.

**JOSE:**

Hi MT., what's up Dee? I know from the looks on your faces you all don't want me here. But please hear me out. I overheard MT talking about Tina to you guys...MT I care about you and I want you to know it...anyway I'm here alone. I want to see her. To talk to her and let her know I'm her friend too!

**MT:**

I think she will like that. Wait till Fab comes out.

*[Scene shifts back to Tina's room where we hear Fab and Tina's conversation.]*

**FAB:**

I shouldn't have left like that. I'm sorry.

**Tina:**

It's okay, I understand.

**FAB:**

I know right now you might be feeling like the weight of the world is on your shoulders and you can't take it anymore. Tina we feel bad. Hurt. We've never had this happen before, we don't know how to act. We need you to understand. Don't turn us away, Tina. Let us help you deal with it. We'll be able to learn a lot. I'm sorry this had to happen to you.

**TINA:**

Me too! I'm sorry for the way I acted before. Be patient with me. You'll see. Come gimme a hug and go home. Thank you for coming. Tell the others I said thank you. Don't hurt for me. Do one thing, learn from what I did and protect yourself. If not for yourself then do it for me. 'Till we meet again, if not here then you know where.



**FAB:**  
Don't talk like that.

**TINA:**

Okay then. Ah...see you later?

**FAB:**

Bye-bye. (*gives Tina a hug*)

**TINA:**

Bye.

*[As Fab leaves the room she closes her eyes opens them as we see tears rolling down her cheeks.]*









## ACT V: Scene III The AIDS RAP

Tina got AIDS, she must have been crazed.  
 I knew the girl was lying when she said she never been laid,  
 yeah I knew it from the get go,  
 she couldn't fool a female who was with the flow.  
 Now when I first met Tina I knew she was a hoe  
 and not a pretty little face who was good to go,  
 you know what I mean. not a beauty queen but a sex feign.  
 I don't buy the BS when they say it's just a black thing  
 'cuz it's a world wide problem the superior topic,  
 some people say Meme give it up but I won't drop it.  
 I'm hangin' strong  
 'cuz when the going gets tough most people are gone  
 like Tina's boyfriend a deceiver, an underachiever  
 when she said "He really loves me!" I believed her  
 but then how in the hell-how in the hell could he leave her?

I'm gonna tell you this story in a full description,  
 Tina never had a single premonition  
 as to what would happen or what would be,  
 this guy named Manny said he had a remedy.  
 He would lead her on up until the day  
 when he asked to hit it she said "no way,  
 I'm saving my love until I am grown,  
 wait a minute let me use the phone."  
 She called her house but no one was there  
 so Manny through the gee yes he pretended to care.  
 He said he loved her, he hit it and in a month or two,  
 she contracted HIV from you knows who.  
 You may think that this ain't fair but life is this way,  
 she was a love digger but what she dug was her grave  
 she lost her life and her prized jewel, both treasures  
 something worth more than a one night pleasure.  
 So now she's dying let's say she's living on death row  
 with no one left she depends on you know  
 to tell about how the story works  
 or how it doesn't to anything except hurt.  
 This ain't the West Side Story  
 it's a worldwide story lacking glory  
 because people wanta hide.  
 The many many facts with the many many lies,  
 it's only affects blacks is the one that I despise,  
 truly so lets tell the truth, guys  
 don't say I love you just to knock the boots



and girls when you say I love you say “prove it”  
and if they can’t then tell them to step to it,  
to move it step back,  
because a guy on sex is like a baby on crack’  
but hey I bet you knew this-even Tina knows  
that knocking boots is, just another ordinary thing  
but she sings a sad song, a sad song she sings...

Tina got AIDS, it wasn’t a good trade  
She got laid and now she’s dying of AIDS  
Passed on by the brother with the fade  
don’t be amazed the girl was crazed  
with the I love word  
he said it and therefore  
he got exactly what he went for  
a sexy...and boy did he sex it  
they played charades but you would never have guessed it,  
unprotected should’ve been tested.



**ACT V: Scene IV**  
**Manny's Visit**

*[Scene opens with Manny entering Tina's hospital room.]*

**TINA:**

What the hell are you doing here? I can't believe you actually came here! Get Out! I don't want to see you in my face!

**MANNY:**

I just came here to see how you're doing.

**TINA:**

Look at me, look at what you put me through. At least you could have used a condom...

**MANNY:**

Hold up! It's a 50/50 relationship. You should have been woman enough to stop me and tell me to put on a condom.

**TINA:**

You should have been man enough to put on a condom yourself! I trusted you, I loved you and you let me down. You said you loved me...

**MANNY:**

If I didn't love you I wouldn't be here!

**TINA:**

Why'd you do this to me?

**MANNY:**

To you? I didn't do nothin' Why'd you do this to me? You better check those other Niggas you been wit!.

**TINA:**

What? Fuck you! What are you talking about? You know I was a virgin.

**MANNY:**

Yeah, you were a virgin with the first guy you were with!

**TINA:**

*(throwing flowers from the night stand at Manny)* GET THE HELL OUT!

*[Manny leave. Outside of the room Manny is seen about to turn to go back into the room, stops and begins to cry, then walks away... ]*



**ACT V: Scene V**  
**AIDS Rap Continues**

Now you saw their mistakes  
I think we well stressed it  
unprotected should've been tested  
But this is not an isolated event  
the AIDS blanket should give you a hint  
on the growing number becoming bigger and bigger  
guys don't be ruthless and girls don't be love diggers  
and with this final line I end this  
until you really know someone leave it at a kiss  
or you might go home with a rather "Deadly Gift."

(As the Rap concludes we see information concerning Blinkie flash on the screen. Blinkie dies of full-blown AIDS three months later after she had a little baby boy. The fate of the newborn child and Tina are yet to be determined.

**THE END.**





**Appendix C: Conflict Resolution**  
***Incident at Madison O’Bryant High***  
**A One-Act Play about Violence**

**CAST**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Rasheed</b><br>a senior at Madison O’Bryant High School Leader of the Marlins | - Germaine |
| <b>Vanessa</b><br>Rasheed’s girlfriend   | -Lucy      |
| <b>Twiz</b><br>Leader of the Giants a rival gang                                 | -Marvin    |
| <b>Sashay</b><br>Girlfriend of Twiz  | -Kentia    |
| <b>Marcus</b><br>A member of the Marlins a neighborhood gang                     | -Olguy     |
| <b>K-Cino</b><br>A member of the Giants a rival gang                             | -Kenneth   |

**LOCATIONS**

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Scene 1</b><br>Early morning, first day of school | <b>Homeroom</b>          |
| <b>Scene 2</b><br>Outside of classroom               | <b>Hallway</b>           |
| <b>Scene 3</b><br>Later that day                     | <b>Lunch Room</b>        |
| <b>Scene 4</b><br>After school                       | <b>Rasheed’s house</b>   |
| <b>Scene 4</b><br>Late that afternoon                | <b>The Park</b>          |
| <b>Scene 5</b><br>That evening                       | <b>Rasheed’s house</b>   |
| <b>Scene 6</b><br>The next day                       | <b>Hallway at school</b> |



## Scene 1: Homeroom

*[Scene one opens in a classroom at Madison O'Bryant High School, an inner city school situated in the heart of Roxbury. It is the first day of school and students are seen sitting in seats and entering a homeroom class of Ms. Rodriguez, who is seen writing on the chalkboard. Vanessa, a best friend of Sasha during their junior year, is seated. Entering the classroom is Sasha.]*

**Sasha:**

Vanessa, girl...what's up?

**Vanessa:**

Hey what's up? How was Florida?

**Sasha:**

It was great! I went to Orlando...What did you do over the summer?

**Vanessa:**

I met this dude Rasheed, who's in the twelfth grade. We met at Riverside, we went to the movies..., the park, good times (*smiles*) you know. He's 19...He graduates this year. He has a football scholarship to UCLA. You know him?

**Sasha:**

Well, I use to go out with this guy Rasheed... and your practically describing him. (Notices Vanessa's jacket on the back of her chair) and what's up with the jacket?

**Vanessa:**

That's my man's jacket.

**Sashay:**

So he's down with the Marlins...so you're down with my X?

**Vanessa:**

Well if he's your X it shouldn't matter.

**Sasha:**

Yes it does matter.

**Vanessa:**

No it doesn't!

**Sasha:**

Yes it does! . (*Gets up, pushing her chair back causing it to turn over making a noise.*)



**Vanessa:**

*(Also rises and does the same)* No it don't!

*(Enters Twiz , boyfriend of Sasha, who sees the commotion and rushes to Sasha)*

**Twiz:**

Sasha, Yo, yo chill...(pulling her away from Vanessa) baby chill!

*[Enters Rasheed, boyfriend of Vanessa, who sees Twiz in Vanessa's face arguing. He rushes towards them putting himself between Vanessa and Twiz]*

**Twiz:**

Yo you better handle your girl...watch your girl or I'll...

**Rasheed:**

Get out of my face before I knock you out!

*[Ms. Rodriguez, the teacher, rushes from the blackboard at the front of the class and places herself between Rasheed and Twiz]*

**Rodriguez:**

Rasheed outside...outside now! I will talk to you later. (Reluctantly Rasheed exits the classroom Ms. Rodriguez eye the three students.) Settle down class. Sit down. I don't want any more arguments from you three or you will all be suspended for three days! *(Looking at Vanessa)* Is that clear? *(Vanessa nod yes, then she turns to Sasha)* Young lady is that clear! *(Sasha nods yes, she then looks at Twiz raising he voice)* Is that CLEAR?!!

**Vanessa & Sasha:**

*(Vanessa and Sasha say together)* Yeah.

**Twiz:**

*(reluctantly)* all right *(waves his hand).*

*[Scene quickly cuts to black]*



**Scene 2: Hallway**

*[Scene two begins immediately. We see Rasheed leaning against the wall with one foot up against it. Ms. Rodriguez enters from the classroom.]*

**Ms. Rodriguez:**

How could you do this? How could you do this? You have an opportunity to become somebody in life...

**Rasheed:**

I don't like that punk Twiz!

**Ms. Rodriguez:**

You have a full scholarship. You have a child on the way...Think about your future. I want you to have an opportunity for yourself. I want you to have a chance for the best in life. Do you understand me? *(Rasheed trying to ignore her)* Do you understand me! *(Rasheed nods his head yes.)*

**(Fades to black)**





### Scene 3: Lunch Room

[Scene opens, it's later that day in the lunchroom. We see seated Sasha, to one side of the room, and on the other side we see Vanessa and Rasheed sitting talking. Leaning against the wall, on Sasha's side is K-Cino, a member of the Giants, a rival gang of the Marlins. Sasha eyes Vanessa, noticing Vanessa and Rasheed holding hands and smiling at each other. Resentful, she takes out a pad of paper and pen and begins writing a brief note, periodically glancing back at the couple]

**Sasha:**

(calling to K-Cino) Yo, K-Cino..come over here!

**K-Cino:**

(walking coolly towards Sasha) Yo, yo..what's going on?

**Sasha:**

Give this note (folds it in half and hands it to him) to that girl; over there.

**K-Cino:**

I want a favor in return.

**Sasha:**

You know how it is.

**K-Cino:**

(As he walks over to Vanessa and Rasheed he reads the note. Briefly looks at Rasheed then hands Vanessa the note) This is from Sasha. (he turns, looks at Rasheed and laughs then exits).

**Vanessa:**

(Speaking to Rasheed) Hold on, I got something to take care of. (rises and walks over to Sasha and slams the note down on the table) I'll be there!

**Sasha:**

If you know what's best for you!!

(Vanessa turns and walks back over to Rasheed.)

**Rasheed:**

What's the deal? What's up with all that?

**Vanessa:**

Don't worry about it.

[Scene fades to black]



**Scene 4: Rasheed's House**

[Scene opens at the home of Rasheed. Rasheed shortly after arriving home from school is seen talking on the phone in his bedroom.]

**Rasheed:**

(hearing a knock at the door) Yo, all right hold up...Somebody's at the door I'll call you back, all right?

**Marvin:**

Yo, (entering) so what's the deal with Twiz.

**Rasheed:**

I don't like that dude.

**Marvin:**

You got to take out Twiz man.

**Rasheed:**

What, are you crazy man?

**Marvin:**

No, seriously did you hear what they're saying?

**Rasheed:**

I got something coming up and I can't get into no problems.

**Marvin:**

What problems? I thought we were buddies? How you gonna punk out like that., huh?

**Rasheed:**

You know? I can't get into no problems...

**Marvin:**

What problems forget that...forget those problems. How you gonna play me like that? I though you were down with us?

**Rasheed:**

I am but you don't know what I am saying. I got to think about my kid on the way, my little baby, man. I just found out that if I maintain my grades and stay out of trouble I'd get a football scholarship. Just think about one year of playing ball I'll be set...



**Marvin:**

Oh, yeah think about the kid , think about the future. (Marvin steps up into his face) And tomorrow you gonna be dead, dog! Because Twiz is gonna take you out! What's up dog? It ain't about you...it's about the gang. Man we've been there for you.

**Rasheed:**

I know, I know I love yawl. Man yo, you buggin' (moving trying to avoid him) Man, get out of my face.

**Marvin:**

Man you're a punk , dog! It's about the Marlins! I thought you were down with us?

**Rasheed:**

I am...(still moving away)

**Marvin:**

I though we were brothers! Why you want to play me like that? After all that we've been through? We go ways back.

**Rasheed:**

Man, get out of my face! I got a lot on my mind. I got this scholarship....

**Marvin:**

We offered you love man...You wouldn't be there ( *making a gang hand gesture, taping the chest of Rasheed to symbolize brotherhood*) if it weren't for us.

**Rasheed:**

But I'm saying yawls don't got the talent I got.

**Marvin:**

Man, I ain't got time for this, dog. Yo,...yo, if you don't take out Twiz he's gonna take you out! What about your scholarship then? After Twiz smokes you?

**Rasheed:**

What?... Huh?

**Marvin:**

You... (*taping Rasheed in the chest*)you got to take him out. You got to take him out, dog! (*Rasheed backing away*)

**Rasheed:**

Man, get out of my face.

**Marvin:**

(*Still approaching touching Rasheed in his chest*) You got to take him out!



**Rasheed:**

I ain't got the time for this.

**Marvin:**

What you ain't gonna take him out (*being sarcastic*) because you got family on the way you got a future and a bright lifer?

**Rasheed:**

Exactly!

[*Lifts his shirt and reveals a gun. He removes it from his pants waist and touches the gun to the hand of Rasheed who immediately draws his hand away.*]

**Rasheed:**

(*Startled*) Where'd you get that gun?

**Marvin:**

Huh? Don't worry about it. Never mind about that touch it. (*Again drawing his hand back, Rasheed avoids contact with the gun*) It's all yours, dog. It's all yours man. All you got to do is take Twiz out. all right? You down with us?

**Rasheed:**

Man, get that gun out of here! How you gonna bring a gun in my crib? I don't know about smoking' anybody.

**Marvin:**

What do you mean you don't know? (*pointing to the gun*) You gonna do it or what? We always got your back!

**Rasheed:**

Hold up, hold up...yaw! wasn't there when I was training, was yaw!...Hold up, hold up... yaw! wasn't there when I was playing was yaw!

**Marvin:**

You wouldn't be in this position if it weren't for us! Why are you now punkin' out?

**Rasheed:**

I am not punkin' out, I just don't want to do this...I got a lot of things on my mind.





**Marvin:**

All right, all right...chill...I know you got your girl, your baby's coming (tries to calm Rasheed down) you better...it's cool, it's cool...but your not gonna let him punk you, right?

**Rasheed:**

Sure, (*Staring out in space*) Twiz ain't gonna punk nobody.

**Marvin:**

And you're definitely gonna take him out , right?

**Rasheed:**

I don't know about this?

**Marvin:**

What do you mean you don't know about it? All right, I'll give you some time to think about it...remember...(pointing to him) we like family (*again gestures the sign of the gang*). Remember that dog. (*Marcus exits*)

[*Fade to black*]



## Scene 5: The Park

[Scene opens later that afternoon. We see Sasha and two of her girl friends in the park smoking cigarettes and talking, and laughing. A moment later Sasha's two friends wave good-bye to her and leave. ]

**Sasha:**

Oh, (*glancing at her watch*) she's scared, she's late.

[*enters Vanessa who approaches Sasha very cautiously, looking around to see if anyone else is there.* ]

**Vanessa:**

I'm here, now what!

**Sasha:**

So what's up with that? You're messing with my man...

**Vanessa:**

He's not your man, he's your X!

**Sasha:**

I still have feelings for him...and I am going to get him back. And I know I can!

**Vanessa:**

(*frustrated*) So what about Twiz? Ain't he your man?

**Sasha:**

Forget Twiz...I don't care about him.

**Vanessa:**

But there's no way your gonna get him back...because I am having his baby.

**Sasha:**

(*pauses. crosses her arms*) What?...your lying to me?

**Vanessa:**

You want to see the test?

**Sasha:**

So you just did it to keep him?

**Vanessa:**

It's not something I planned it just happened. We were friends...what happened...just because he's your X boyfriend...



**Sasha:**

*(angrily)* I don't want to hear it! You better watch your back...I'm gonna get to him.

**Vanessa:**

Your gonna have to hear it because your not going to have him back. (Sasha angrily stares at Vanessa) Well we met in June. I few weeks later we had sex...I got pregnant...

**Sasha:**

Don't you know how to use protection?

**Vanessa:**

We weren't thinking about it at the time.

**Sasha:**

*(raising her voice)* See how stupid you are! That's why you're not going to get to keep him and I'm going to get him back.

**Vanessa:**

You keep saying your going to get him back. How? How do you think your going to do that? He doesn't like you anymore. He dumped you for a reason. He is not going to get back with you!

**Sasha:**

Yes he will, just wait and see. *(walks away in a huff saying to herself)* I got something for you and your baby and that stupid college scholarship.

*[fade to black.]*



## Scene 6: Rasheed Home

*[Scene opens we see Marcus, a close friend of Rasheed who is also a member of the gang the Marlins, drinking and smoking marijuana as he walks towards Rasheed's house.]*

**Marcus:**

*(Talking to himself) How come Rasheed got all the hook up? I can play ball too! (finishes his drugs and alcohol and proceeds to Rasheed's home and rings the bell. Scene cuts and changes to the bedroom of Rasheed. It is a little while later, Marcus is there, playing with a football in his hand, he is seen talking to Rasheed.)*

**Marcus:**

What's that I hear about your girl in the park man? The Giants are 'dis'ing' us man.

**Rasheed:**

You're lying...

**Marcus:**

The Giants are 'dis'ing' us...Yo you got to be down with the gang, man. You got to be down with....

**Rasheed:**

Yo, I got to maintain my future. I can't hear that.

**Marcus:**

Your future is us man! We're the only family you got! We're the only ones that really matter man. Yo, Rasheed you're my boy right?

**Rasheed:**

Yeah.

**Marcus:**

Well since you're my boy you should just....don't be a professional...don't take the scholarship. Just maintain in the streets.

**Rasheed:**

What do you mean? That's my future.

**Marcus:**

Well you got to be down with the gang. You got to think of the Marlins. (as he exits he says to himself) If he don't do, it then I will.

*[fade to black.]*





**Scene 7: Hallway At School**

*[Scene opens in the hallway near a stairwell at school. This location, a bit isolated is a place that Sasha has asked Rasheed to meet her at, hoping to reestablish her relationship with him. She is seen pacing back and forth, enters Rasheed.]*

**Sasha:**

Hey, Rasheed (*they Hug*) how are you doing? We going to get back together?

**Rasheed:**

Nah, I already got a shorty....I got a girl, I got a kid on the way, you know...everything's going great.

**Sasha:**

So, but it don't matter.

**Rasheed:**

What?

**Sasha:**

We can still kick it.

**Rasheed:**

No, we can be friends but...that kick it stuff, it ain't happening.

**Sasha:**

Come on now, we can go out. You still love me?

**Rasheed:**

You don't love me. When I was in the hospital laying down, yo, you wasn't even there for me. She was there! You know what I'm saying? All you wanted me for was my loot and my fame. That's all!

**Sasha:**

Oh, so it's like that? So your diss'ing me?

**Rasheed:**

Yeah, it's like that! See Vanessa was there for me, you see we're tight. I'm saying everything okay.

**Sasha:**

Who are you yelling at?

**Rasheed:**

I'm yelling at you! You saying my girl ain't nothing, talkin' 'bout my baby and stuff....that ain't cool.



**Sasha:**

I'm saying, you understand...I want to go out with you. I think we got something.

**Rasheed:**

Your cut ,m your cut!

**Sasha:**

I don't want to hear it.

**Rasheed:**

Your cut, your cut...Your old news, your bad news...Your no more. Your garbage.

**Sasha:**

I'm saying if you don't go back out with me...I'm gonna beat your girl's ass.

**Rasheed:**

*(steps closer to her where he is now in her face)* What? You talking about beating my girl up?

**Sasha:**

You heard what I'm saying!

**Rasheed:**

You better shut up!

**Sasha:**

Don't be telling me to shut up!

*[At the same time this argument is starting Twiz is walking down the corridor. He as well as other students hear the commotion and between Sasha and Rasheed. And begin to move towards them.]*

**Twiz:**

*(to Rasheed in his face )* Yo you better watch your mouth. Don't be rolling up on her like that! You know better!

*[Seen in the crowd is K-Cino about to step in to aid Twiz but out from the crowd appears Marcus who pulls out a gun, causing K-Cino to freeze and raise his hands. Marvin proceeds towards Twiz and Rasheed startling both of them by pointing the gun to Twiz's head. The crowd freezes in fear.]*

**Marcus:**

Back off, back off.



**Rasheed:**

*(Pleading to Marcus) Yo Marcus...( In an attempt to stop Marvin, Rasheed reaches for the gun and begins to tussle with Marcus for control of it. A shot is heard and Rasheed and Marcus falls to the floor. A moment later Marcus rises above Rasheed who is not moving.)*

**Marcus:**

*(Holding Rasheed in his arms, he begins to cry.) No!....No!*

*[fade to black]*



## Epilogue: Students Responses

*[Scene opens with close ups of students sitting around in a classroom, each commenting to each other on the play and what should happen to end the story. The Narrator, who is probably their teacher but is not seen, is heard asking the group about the play that they just experienced. They all turn in the direction of the teacher.]*

### Narrator:

Now that we have seen the story all of you created, what do you think about it? *(There is a brief pause, no one responds.)* Here is your opportunity to make adjustment. For example: So Marcus pulled out a gun and accidentally shot Rasheed... Is that the *only* way it should end? There could be ten different things that could happen. What needs to be adjusted here? What would you do if you were in this situation? You *all* are the writers... *(Students look at each other.)* I'm just telling you that right now they just did this violent act, and it is going to happen more and more in school if something is not done! I am going to go around the room and you tell me what needs to be adjusted?

### Student 1:

I think Marcus should just show Twiz the gun. Like, Yo, you better back up before you get shot.

### Narrator:

So drawing the gun out to show it would be motivation enough for kids to back up?

### Student 1:

Yeah!

### Narrator:

*(Turning to student #2)* What do you think should happen?

### Student #2:

They're just standing in the hallway...*(shrugs her shoulders, expressing that she does not know.)*

### Narrator:

So do you want to change locations?...Do you want to just have them stand up?... Just brainstorm right now...Just think about it...How about you?

### Student #3:

I think that they should first like fight and then he (Marvin) should kill him.

### Narrator:

So why should Marvin shoot Twiz? Why does he want to shoot Twiz so bad?

### Student #3

*(Beginning to act out her part again)* Because he's a Giant and I'm a Marlin! He can't be disrespecting me! Telling me to get the gun out of his face!





**Narrator:**

What's the reasoning behind the violence? So why do you want him to kill so bad? You're going to kill Twiz because Rasheed doesn't want kill him?

**Student # 3**

*(In the role of Marcus)* I want to kill him for the fun of it!

**Narrator:**

You're going to kill him for the fun of it?

**Student #3:**

*(Changing back to the student)* Naw!...

**Student #4**

*(Interrupts)* No! Shot him in the leg or something...

**Student #3:**

*(Agreeing)* Yeah, that's what I'm saying!

**Narrator:**

Why do you want to inflict violence? Why do you want to hurt somebody? Think about violence...we are talking about violence in the school. Is anyone thinking about that at all? *(Turning to another student)* What adjustment you think needs to be made?

**Student #5:**

Every time Twiz comes in he's rushing from the door...He's always rushing in. That ain't right. He should be coming from a *firm* place or something.

**Narrator:**

Very good point made! Maybe next time Twiz comes from...and I'll use your words, a *firm* place or position. Your character shouldn't have to be rushing in all the time. He should be coming in from a firm or fixed point. We should see him walking in or coming in talking using his voice rather than his actions as a means of interrupting the violence earlier in the drama?

**Student #5:**

Yes, but I think that when Twiz has the gun pointed at him, he should get shot.

**Narrator:**

Twiz or Rasheed should get shot?

**Student #5:**

Rasheed. They were wrestling or what ever and then Marcus accidentally shot him. And Rasheed dies and everything is messed up and it should end right there.



**Student #4:**

*(Interrupts)* No! I still think he should bet shot in the knee!

**Narrator:**

So it messes up his whole future...his scholarship...he gets shot in the knee or something...

**Student #5:**

No!

**Narrator:**

So help me follow this...Rasheed is accidentally shot by Marcus who was trying to shoot Twiz...Wait. Who wants Rasheed to Die? *(The majority of students raise their hands)* And who wants Twiz to die? *(Only one raises his hand)* This is a good point that you're making. You all want Rasheed, one of the main characters, who has the most at stake here in this play to die. What's the moral point that you want to get across? Remember the morals that were generated and discussed at the beginning? We were talking about Violence, and there was a theme, there was a message that you all wanted to get across? Here is my question, simply put...By Rasheed being killed what statement does that make in this play about violence? *(Students debate for a moment as to why Rasheed should be shot.)*

**Student #1:**

Violence is not good because you could kill someone that you don't intend to kill.

**Student #2:**

Rasheed had a lot going for him because he was about to go to college and because of that gang stuff he got killed.

**Narrator:**

So it was a senseless act, an unnecessary death.

**Student #3:**

I think Rasheed shouldn't get killed. We always see the good one killed off in the movies.

**Narrator:**

What about the fact that students can get guns into the schools? Is it that easy?

**Students:**

Yeah!

**Narrator:**

*(Turning to each student)* Have you seen a gun in your school?



**Students**

*(All students nodding in agreement)* Yes!

**Narrator:**

How many times?

**Student #2:**

A number of times.

**Narrator:**

Do a lot of students bring guns in the school?

**Student #3:**

Yeah, I even sawed-off shotgun!

**Narrator:**

Why would a student bring a shotgun to school and not a notebook?

**Student:**

*(in unison)* Ooh. *(There is a pause as student's thing about the issue of guns in school.)*

**Student #2:**

*(Bursts out, smiling)* I know! We find out that Rasheed is not dead! He's in a hospital. He just injured, has a few broken bones...he was wounded very badly but he recovers. Marcus is arrested and sent to prison for 10 to 13 years. K-Cino, he was in a treatment center because he was in shock about what had happened...so he needs treatment. Sasha, she found a new boyfriend. She broke up with Twiz and found a good man and got married. What happened to Vanessa was she became a lawyer and she became a movie star and Rasheed later became a football star at UCLA.

**Student #3:**

*(In agreement)* Yeah, Sasha gets married and is living a very happy life. She has kids but she still thinks about Rasheed. But Vanessa is a widow. She had a baby who is now 5 years old now. She is mad at Sasha and they don't talk anymore. Marcus is in prison he ruined his life.

**Narrator:**

What happens to Marcus in prison? And what happens to the gang?

**Student # 4:**

When Marcus gets out of prison he gets back with the gang as its leader and kills Twiz in revenge. He is arrested and then he goes back to prison for life. His life is ended like that!



**Narrator:**

So all right. It seems gang fights are always about somebody getting revenge. It seems to be a never-ending cycle. Thank you for sharing your ideas.

**[*Fade to Black*]**

End





## Appendix D: Educational Outreach Project

Presentation to selected city of Boston and METCO Program Middle and High Schools Students In conjunction to the national tour's Boston performances of:

**BRING IN 'DA NOISE, BRING IN 'DA FUNK**  
**Dance-Musical's Educational Outreach Project:**

*Bring In 'Da Kids*

(Based on the Study Guide written by Kimberly Flynn)

### Introduction

#### Narrator:

*Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk* isn't a show like any other you've seen. Like others, this one began with an idea-an idea that the director George C. Wolfe and the dance Savion Glover had about rhythm, culture, and a new kind of tap dancing, and how these might intersect and inform each other. Their collaboration resulted in *Noise/Funk*, a show that they like to call "a tap/rap discourse on the staying power of the beat."

#### Voice # 1:

Unlike most shows, everything in *Noise/Funk* - the dancing, the music, the script - was created from scratch by a group of artists who gathered during the Summer of 1995 in a rehearsal room. They sat around a table and talked about history, about all the information their researcher, Shelby Jiggetts, had gathered, and also about information each of them brought to the table: information about the history of African Americans, starting from the Middle Passage - which is what historians have come to call the transporting of slaves from Africa to America - all the way through to African American life in the '90s.

#### Voice # 2:

George, Savion and the company wanted to make a play about tap, a form of dancing, and full of history that is difficult and complicated. Tap has stories to tell: but to get it to start talking, a new way of combining words and dance and theatre had to be found. So these artists didn't say let write a show. They said to each other, Let's bring it in! To bring it in, is not just to show up with it, but also to deliver the goods. What have they brought?

#### Voice # 3:

'Da Noise: "Noise" has usually been used to refer to sounds that are annoying, meaningless, but noise is important. History rarely happens in silence. So this word has been reclaimed and turned around - now noise is about being full of meaning, of pleasure, of power, of a Beat.

#### Voice # 4:

'Da Funk: "Funk" probably comes from "lu-Funki", a word in the African Ki-Kongo and Bay Kongo Languages meaning "the smell of sweat." In 1939, the great jazzman Jelly



Roll Morton put the word “funky” into popular circulation. Now it means “not cleaned up, not stripped down.” Funk is nitty-gritty and sophisticated, something real. Speaking about his choreography, Savion Glover said, “My funk is a groove you can ride - but it’s got to be a deep groove.

**Voice # 5:**

Savion and George’s subtitle for the show is “A Tap/Rap Discourse on the Staying Power of the Beat.” Let’s unpack this phrase. A discourse is a way of talking about something, and also a way of thinking about it. The beat is a pulse, a double pulse, like a heartbeat. It’s what you get live from history as it’s happening and what you give back; the beat is what’s hitting you, and it’s you hitting back. Massive forces of history sweep through the lives of ordinary people, who are then challenged to remake their lives and their identities. The beat is the noise of life in the times. The beat keeps time. The beat is the medium and the message.

**Voice # 1:**

So that’s what they bring, ‘Da Noise, ‘Da Funk, the beat. And you, the audience bring:

**Voice # 2:**

‘Da Critic! You’ve heard the saying “Everyone’s a critic!” The purpose of this presentation is to make each of you critics. Don’t just be a consumer of culture; ask yourselves: how does a work of art - a play, a painting, a movie, and a song do its work on you?

**Voice # 3:**

The structure of the show happens in real time. In a show that deals with history, it’s also the way the show talks about time. When you think and talk about African American history and how it is presented consider the following:

**Voice # 4:**

If time is a line that has no beginning and no end that we can foresee, how do we tell history?

**Voice # 5:**

If a history is made of uncountable moments, each connected to the other, what do you choose to tell and what do you omit?

**Voice # 1:**

If “official” American history is the story of presidents and wars and the building of cities, what and who are not included?

**Narrator:**

The historian is the storyteller who makes choices. The storytellers of the history presented in Noise/Funk choose to tell the progress of a people in many movements: the task of emancipation for the people on the ground.



**Voice # 1:**

This is a lot of ground to cover, and Noise/Funk covers it with only five dancers, two drummers, a singer, and a rapper (whose character name in the show is “Da Voice”) – together they bring the beat across three centuries.

**Voice # 2:**

One of the first things you’ll hear, in the opening sequence, “Bring in ‘Da Noise, Bring in ‘Da Funk,” are a list of names. Throughout the show, characters of ‘Da Voice and ‘Da Singer will conjure up multitudes of people who made and were made by this history. How did the various languages of words, images, music and movement in Noise/Funk grab you?

**Voice # 3:**

If you don’t catch each name presented when you see the show don’t worry. Any good night in the theatre should fill you with more information than you can handle sitting in your seat. Besides, you have an edge, today we will take you on a journey with us as we explore a portion of the history of African Americans in the United States.

**Voice # 4:**

We will fill you in on some of the who’s who - short biographies of persons that will be mentioned in the show -

**Voice # 5:**

and we’ll also suggest ways in which you can research related subjects further as you prepare for the performance.



## **In 'Da Beginning: The Middle Passage**

### **Narrator:**

The African Slave Trade began in 1441 and lasted for four hundred years. Western Europeans began capturing people from Africa's West Coast, sending them to Caribbean islands which were basically slave-training camps; these people were then transported again, originally to Europe, and eventually to the American colonies. This forced transport of Africans away from their home continent is called the Middle Passage.

### **Voice # 1:**

More than 14 million slaves were transported alive to America.

### **Voice # 2:**

For every 100 Africans that survived the Middle Passage, 400 others died from disease, starvation, trauma, or torture,

### **Voice # 3:**

or were killed by their captors. Some committed suicide.

### **Voice # 4:**

The slave trade involved the largest forced migration of a people in the history of the planet. Historians estimate that some 50 million people were lost to death and slavery.

### **Narrator:**

To morally and legally justify slavery slave owners and slave traders had to create a belief system that would justify one group's oppression of another and maintain the 'status quo.'

### **Opposing View:**

"Slavery has ever been the stepping ladder by which countries have passed from barbarism to civilization...divisions of mankind into grades...constitutes the very soul of civilization; and the more those grades are in a country, the more highly civilized may we expect to find it."

### **Narrator:**

In the early days of the antislavery movement, most of its leaders believed in nonviolence. They thought that they could win freedom for the slaves by a revolution in public opinion, rather than with swords and guns. There were always a few men, like David Walker who disagreed.

### **David Walker:**

[looking at laborers - then turns and talks]

"Can our condition be any worse? Can it be more mean and abject? If there are any changes, will they not be for the better, though they may appear for the worst at first? Can they get us any lower? Where can they get us?...The Indians of North and South America - The Greeks - The Irish - The Jews - in fine, all the inhabitants of the earth





(except however, the sons of Africa) are called men, and of course are, and ought to be free. But we (coloured people) and our children are brutes!...and of course are, and ought to be slaves to the American people and their children forever!...to dig their mines and work their farms; and thus go on enriching them from one generation to another with our blood and our tears!...

**NO!**...How would they like for us to make slaves of, and hold them in cruel slavery, and murder them as they do us?...I ask you, had you not rather be killed than to be a slave to a tyrant, who takes the life of your mother, wife and dear little children?...answer God almighty; and believe this, that it is no more harm for you to kill a man who is trying to kill you, than it is for you to take a drink of water when thirsty...The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears...

We must and shall be free! God will deliver us. And woe, woe, will be to you if we have to obtain our freedom by fighting. Throw away your fears and prejudices then, and treat us like men, and we will like you more than we do now hate you...You are astonished at my saying we hate you? For if we are men we cannot but hate you, while you are treating us like dogs."

## • About names

### **Narrator:**

We hear the names of slave ships. Loose records were kept of the number of slaves transported, but we do not have any record of their names. These are lost to us.

### **Voice # 1:**

What's in a name, what kinds of information do names contain?

What does this loss of the names of those who perished in the Middle Passage and those who lived as slaves tell us about the status of human beings under slavery?

### **Voice # 2:**

Names and naming have been important issues throughout African-American history.

### **Voice # 3:**

Frederick Douglass (1817?-1895), the great writer and orator, who was born into slavery and escaped, was called Frederick Bailey at birth - his mother's master's last name. After his escape he changed his name twice, once to Johnson, and then finally to Douglass, a name pulled from a novel by Sir Walter Scott.

### **Voice # 4:**

Malcolm X (1925 - 1965) was originally born Malcolm Little. What do you think Malcolm's reasons were for changing his last name to X?



## • Slave narratives

### Narrator:

The middle passage and the life of slaves have been called an “unsayable horror” because there are some evils so terrible that words cannot describe them. There will always be a part of any holocaust, such as the Middle Passage, so full of pain, terror and death that it must remain shrouded in silence, as lost to us as the names of the victims. But there is also a powerful need for those who survive such experiences to speak about them. Here is what Henry Louis Gates Jr., a scholar of African American history and culture has written on this subject:

### Henry Louis Gates Jr.:

The impulse to compose a narrative of the experience of slavery was uniquely felt by African Americans in bondage. No other group of slaves anywhere, at any other period in history, has left such a large repository of testimony about the horror of becoming the legal property of another human being.

### Voice # 1:

On such testimony was left by an African named Olaudah Equiano, who was kidnapped in 1765, at the age of 11, and sold as a slave. He endured the Middle Passage and was eventually sold to a British sea captain who renamed him Gustavus Vassa.

### Voice # 2:

Olaudah learned to read and write in English. In 1789 he published *The Interesting Narrative of The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustav Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*.

### Voice # 2:

Notice that he gives two of his names, but also identifies himself as “the African.”

### Olaudah Equiano:

The first object, which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast, was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board...I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits and they were going to kill me.

I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life; so that with the loathsomeness of the stench and the crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat...I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me...On my refusing to eat (two of the white men) tied my feet (and) flogged me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before, and although, not used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet nevertheless could I have got over the nettings I would have jumped over the side...



## • A Diaspora

### Narrator:

Olaudah describes his personal experience of the forced exiling of masses of African people. It had been going on for three hundred years when Oludah was enslaved, and would continue through the end of slavery one hundred years later.

### Voice # 1:

The exile and wandering is called a Diaspora. Diaspora (Di-as-por-a) is a Greek word meaning "dispersed," and it's used to refer to a scattering of a people, usually driven from their homeland by violent means.

### Voice # 3:

Diaspora is a tragedy, a great injustice.

### Voice # 4:

Incredible suffering accompanies diasporic people, as well as a yearning for a return to their homeland, or a search for a new, safe home.

### Voice # 5:

But in the process of any diaspora, human identities - cultures, languages, our sense of who we are - are re-shaped, re-made.

### Voice # 1:

To adapt to a drastically changed circumstance, people in exile re-invent themselves.

### Voice # 2:

This is certainly true of the African Diaspora - the people whose story is told in *Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk*.

## Som'thin' From Nuthin':

Life during slavery

[Poem: *I hear the Drums* by David D. Coleman II]

### Voice # 1:

I hear the drums and they move me.  
 Sweet rhythmic patterns beat *my* heart.  
 Faint ..., at a distance,  
 I hear my people come.  
 What a surprise!  
 They welcome me back,  
 as if gone yesterday.  
 I have traveled centuries.  
 And now, I return.



My spirit, hear me!  
 And let my people know,  
 I... am... back.

## • They stole our drum

### **Narrator:**

In 1739, a group of 20 slaves, despite harsh conditions and diverse languages, made a plan with slaves from adjoining plantations to run away on a Sunday morning when their masters were at church.

### **Voice # 1:**

In their nearly successful attempt to escape from slavery, they stole weapons, killed several planter families, and started out from South Carolina.

### **Voice #2:**

Drumming out a steady beat and calling out "Liberty!" they recruited others.

### **Voice # 3:**

As many as 100 rebels headed towards the Spanish-controlled Florida territory where they would be free.

### **Voice # 4:**

The white militia captured them and killed many of them on the banks of the Stono River.

### **Voice # 5:**

Had this rebellion succeeded, it would have changed the course of history.

### **Narrator:**

After the Stono Rebellion, the South Carolina legislature confiscated all drums belonging to slaves, and declared it a crime to teach slaves to read. Other states followed suit.

### **Voice # 1**

I hear the drums, and they've changed me.  
 Swept me off my feet.  
 Warm..., the feeling from within,  
 has captured my soul.  
 How good it feels!  
 To be back home  
 as if, I have never left.  
 The love still flows, and grows.  
 The end of my journey,  
 is the beginning, of my rebirth.  
 My spirit, hear me!





And let the world know,  
I...am...back.

• **Alliteration and assonance**

**Narrator:**

From the Stono Rebellion, throughout the centuries of slavery, the beat has drowned out the attempts to silence it. When it can't be sounded on a drum, the beat pulses through dance, and song, and language - for language too has a beat.

**Voice # 1:**

For instance, look at a few lines from "Som'thin' from Nuthin':"

**Voice # 2:**

They done stole our drum now where 'da beat  
Best listen up cuz I ain't gone repeat

**Voice # 3:**

Beat be gettin' beat on a hot pickin' day  
Day layin' on Hi John 'Da Conqueror  
'Ta make 'da pain go way

**Voice # 4:**

Zig-zaggin' braids upside Sessy's nappy haid  
Be our ancestors spirits laffin'  
"Doe 'dey bones is stone cold dead

**Voice # 5:**

Beat be our boots all broke down and torn  
Scapin' thru 'de swamp in 'de early morn

**Voice # 1:**

Beat be 'da beat singin' rhythm to our feet  
Make a sad soul right happy  
Be 'da way 'dat we speak

**Narrator:**

Beats be 'da beat singing rhythm to our feet" This sentence, spoken in the show is an example of two kinds of rhythm in language: alliteration, which is using the same consonants repeatedly in a line (Beats be 'da beat), and assonance, which is doing the same thing with vowel sounds (Beats be 'da beat) - producing a percussive, rhythmic punch, producing the beat.

**Voice # 2:**

All cultures depend on rhythm, on the pulse of history.



**Voice # 3:**

Culture is about a people's art, but culture is also its sense of the world, its customs, its laws, and its expectations for life.

**Voice # 4:**

Culture is the way a people remembers, and passes on all it has received from the past, and all it has learned from the present, to future generations, as progress, both good and bad, is rolling ahead.



**Robert Johnson:**

“The crossroads was where you sold your soul to the devil in exchange for a style and virtuosity nobody could touch.”

**Narrator:**

Mahalia Jackson in a Time Magazine article June 28, 1968 said when asked what is the blues...

**Voice # 1:**

Blues - It started...with the moans and the groans of people in the cotton fields. Before it got the name of soul, men were sellin' watermelons and vegetables on a wagon drawn by a mule, hollerin'”

**Voice # 2:**

“watermelon”

**Voice # 3:**

with a cry in their voices. And the men on the railroad tracks layin' crossties - every time they hit the hammer it was with a sad feelin', but with a beat.

**Voice # 4:**

And the Baptist preacher - he the one who had the soul - he gives out the meter, a long and short meter, and the old mothers of the church would reply. This musical thing has been here since America has been here. This is trial and tribulation music.

## • Migration North: Chicago Bound

**Voice # 1:**

Dear Sir, I am writing you in regards to present conditions in Chicago in getting employment...I lost my wife a few years ago. I have been here all my life and would like to go somewhere where I could properly educate my children so they can be of service to themselves when they gets older, and I can't do it here.

**Narrator:**

The Summer of 1919 became known as the Red Summer - red as in blood-red - when violent incidents we now call “bias crimes” (mostly whites firebombing black neighborhoods) sparked riots in 25 American cities. The most severe took place in Chicago.

**Voice # 2:**

The riot began when Eugene Williams, a black teenager accidentally swam up to a whites-only beach.

**Voice # 3:**

Stoned by people on the beach, the boy drowned in Lake Michigan trying to flee the attack.



**Voice # 4:**

After police refused to arrest his assailants (but arrested a Black man on minor charges), fighting broke out through out the city.

**Voice # 5:**

The riot spread and raged for 13 days, in spite of the presence of the state militia, and in its wake, 38 people had died, 537 were injured, and firebombings left over 1,000 Black families homeless.

- **Nations**

**Narrator:**

There has been an ongoing tension for African Americans between being members of a diasporic people and citizens of a nation, between looking for a place where they belong and wanting to belong right where they are.

**Voice: 1**

A nation is sometimes, but not always, the same as a country.

**Voice: 2**

A nation can also be a symbolic union of people who share a common identify or common goals. What kind of nation has been envisioned in:

**Voice: 3**

The Back-To-Africa movement of Marcus Garvey?

**Voice: 4**

Black nationalism of the Black Panthers?

**Voice: 5**

The Nation of Islam?

**Voice: 1**

The Hip-Hop Nation?





## • The Jazz Age

### **Narrator:**

The years after the end of World War I in America, from the '20s leading up to the Great Depression of the '30s, are called the Jazz Age. The term "Jazz" was used loosely in New York and elsewhere in the 1910s and 1920s to cover everything from ragtime to T.S. Eliot's Waste Land.

### **Voice # 2:**

From Tin Pan Alley Tunes to what we now think of as jazz proper -

### **Voice # 3:**

the music of Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong and their peers

### **Voice # 4:**

As F. Scott Fitzgerald said, "The Jazz Age," the age was black. Jazz like the dances it spawned, like its predecessor ragtime and its companion the blues, was the creation of America's Negro population...

### **Voice # 5:**

and white urban Americans wanted to go right to the source to get more of it.

### **Narrator:**

Langston Hughes once said: "

### **Langston Hughes:**

Jazz is such a happy music because it was born out of such great sadness. Its rhythms of joy grew from the heartbreak of sorrow for it was born of bondage...The music itself, for all its gaiety, remembered Africa, the ships of the middle passage, whips, chains, bloodhounds, the slave markets...So the rhythms of Congo Square in New Orleans became the first sad-happy rhythms, destined to set the tempos of American Jazz."

## • Harlem Renaissance

### **Narrator:**

The center of the Jazz Age entertainment was in Harlem, New York City, in the immensely popular nightclubs where dancing and music infused both white and black patrons with the beat. Harlem was also the setting for the Harlem Renaissance, an explosion of creativity and accomplishment on the African American literary and artistic scene. During the "Renaissance" (a word meaning "re-birth"), many writers who are now considered among the most important in America's literary heritage began their careers



**Voice # 1:**

Claude McKay (1889-1948), a Jamaican by birth, came to the United States in 1912 and experienced the inferior status in which blacks were placed in America. Unable to secure a job above a menial position despite his two published books of poetry and two years of study at Kansas State University, McKay began to work as a freelance writer producing poetry, which expressed his outrage at the indignities he continually suffered.

**Voice # 2:**

His poem "If We Must Die" (1919) and two volumes of verse, *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920) and *Harlem Shadows* (1922) signaled the beginning of the "New Negro Movement" or the Harlem Renaissance."

**Poem "If We Must Die"**

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.

If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honor us through dead!

O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!  
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!

What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

**Narrator:**

James Mercer Langston Hughes (1902-1967) had his first poem and perhaps his best-remembered verse, "The Negro Speaks Of Rivers," published shortly after graduating from high school. His college work was interrupted by an extended trip to Africa and Europe, which he financed by working in each place he visited.

**Voice # 3:**

Returning to the United States, he continued his education and began publishing more works, which earned him the title "poet laureate of Harlem" and a leading position in the Harlem Renaissance.



**Poem "The Negro Speaks Of Rivers"**

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and  
older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates  
when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo  
and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile  
and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi  
when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans,  
and I've seen its muddy bosom  
turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.



## **Street Corner Symphony:**

The story of a city block from the '50s through the '80s

### **Narrator:**

Street Corner Symphony covers a lengthy period of time, which includes the postwar civil rights movement and the urban economic troubles and ongoing racist backlash that posed a simultaneous threat to equality. To tell the story, a vast national history had to be comprised.

### **Voice # 1:**

America was a rich and immensely powerful nation after the end of World War II. The extraordinary achievements of the civil rights movement took place during a period of increasing prosperity, which would reach a climax in the later 1960s.

### **Voice # 2:**

This growth created new jobs for semi-skilled labor, and though racism still made these jobs harder to get, African-Americans moving to Northern cities could find work.

### **Voice # 3:**

Some of the money found its way into places like Harlem, Chicago's South Side, even here in Boston.

### **Voice # 4:**

Newly arrived immigrants populations, primarily Mexican-American and Puerto Rican in the 1950s and Caribbean in the 1960s, also transformed the cities making them even more racially and ethnically diverse and complex.

### **Voice # 5:**

But these new arrivals to the American Dream were confronted with fewer and fewer work opportunities, as the older industries left the cities.

### **Voice # 6:**

America's urban centers became sites of industrial and governmental neglect. Racism and the phenomenon known as "white flight" made the inner city seem expendable to those who lived elsewhere.

## **• The '50s: Birth of the Civil Rights Movement**

### **Narrator:**

The Civil Rights Movement entered its most successful phase during this time. Its energies were focused on the South, where racial segregation was still the law. The successes of the struggle to end Jim Crow in the South, accomplished through heroic determination and sacrifice, held the nation's attention.





**Voice # 1:**

Meanwhile the plight to those in the Northern inner cities grew more desperate.

**Voice # 2:**

Culturally speaking, the postwar years saw the birth of a new form of music, originally the creation of African-American artists like Little Richard, Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry, who reworked the beat as they'd received it, in forms like the blues and gospel, and invented rock 'n' roll.

**Voice # 3:**

Timeline: 1954 The Supreme Court's Brown versus the Board of Education case in Topeka, Kansas overturned the last legal obstacles to integration established in Plessy versus Ferguson nearly a hundred years before. The landmark Brown decision was an important step in making racial segregation illegal, at first in America's schools, and eventually everywhere.

**Voice # 4:**

The problem was that making something illegal and making it stop was almost never the same thing.

**Voice # 5:**

Timeline: 1955 In Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. Her protest fueled a new consciousness, setting off the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which began the Civil Rights Movement and introduced a local Baptist minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., to the nation.

**Voice # 1:**

It was also the first year of the big rock 'n' roll breakthrough, with Little Richard, Elvis Presley, Bo Diddley, and Chuck Berry all debuting on the pop charts.

**Voice # 2:**

Timeline 1956 The Montgomery Bus Boycott ended in victory when the Supreme Court ruled that segregation of buses was unconstitutional.

**Voice # 3:**

1956 is also the year that Little Richard expressed outrage that white pop singer Pat Boone's cover of "Tutti Frutti" outsold his original.

**Voice # 4:**

1957 Sam Cooke released his first hit single, "You Send Me."



## • The '60s: Hamer, King & Malcolm

### **Narrator:**

Unemployment among black men and women in 1960 was twice as high as among whites, and the average salaries of black men and women were roughly half those of their white counterparts.

### **Voice # 1:**

That year Chubby Checker released a hit record boosting a new dance craze: "Come on baby, let's do the twist"

### **Chubby Checker:**

Come on baby, let's do the twist.

Come on baby, let's do the twist.

Come on baby, let's do the twist.

It goes somethin' like this.

### **Voice #2:**

In 1962, Fannie Lou Hamer, the legendary civil rights activist, and her husband were sharecroppers on a plantation in Ruleville, Mississippi. Tells of her encounter with the owner of the plantation after she attempted to register to vote:

### **Fannie Lou Hamer:**

My Husband came, and said the plantation owner was raising cain because I had tried to register , and before he quit talking the plantation owner came, and said "

### **Plantation Owner:**

Fannie Lou, do you know-did Pap tell you what I said?"

### **Fannie Lou Hamer:**

"Yes, Sir"

### **Plantation Owner:**

I mean that. If you don't do down and withdraw your registration, you will have to leave...We are not ready for that in Mississippi.

### **Fannie Lou Hamer:**

I addressed him and told him and said: I didn't try to register for you, I tried to register for myself. I had to leave that same night.

### **Narrator:**

On the tenth of September 1962, 16 bullets was fired into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tucker (where Hamer was staying) meant for her. That same night two girls were shot in Ruleville, Mississippi.



**Voice # 1:**

Timeline 1963 Nearly half a million people converged on Washington, D.C. to call for civil rights for all Americans and an end to racial discrimination. It was the largest demonstration in the nation's history to that date.

**Voice # 2:**

On June 123, 1963, Medgar Evers, the great civil rights leader and field secretary for the NAACP, was assassinated.

**Voice # 3:**

On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

**Narrator:**

Arrested with Hundreds of others engaged in non-violent protest, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote the famous "Letter From a Birmingham Jail":

**Martin Luther King Jr.:**

Before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. For more than two centuries our forefathers labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; and they built the homes of their masters in the midst of brutal injustice and shameful humiliation-and yet out of a bottomless vitality, they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

**Voice # 1:**

Timeline 1964: The Civil Rights Act was signed into Law!

**Voice # 2:**

The Supremes was #1 on the pop charts with "Where Did Our Love Go?" signaling the ascendancy of the "Motown Sound" - the music of African-American r & b and pop artists recording for Berry Gordy's Motown Records in Detroit.

**Voice # 3:**

Malcolm X speaks to students at Oxford University:

**Malcolm X:**

My contention is that anytime you have a country, supposedly a democracy, supposedly the land of the free and home of the brave...and it doesn't enforce its own law because the color of a man's skin happens to be wrong, then I say those people are justified to resort to any means necessary to bring about justice where the government can't give justice. And in my opinion the young generation of whites, blacks, browns, whatever else there is-you're living at a time of extremes, a time of revolution, a time when there's got to be a change. People in power have misused it, and now there has to be a change and a better world has to be built, and the only way it's going to be built is with extreme methods.



And I fore one will join in with anyone, I don't care what color you are, a long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth.

**Voice # 4:**

Timeline 1965 Demonstrators planning to march from Selma to Montgomery to protest Alabama's discriminatory statutes and history of racial oppression and violence were beaten and tear gassed by state troopers as they attempted to leave Selma.

**Voice # 5:**

Tow weeks late, thousands more gathered and completed the historic Selma-Montgomery march.

**Narrator:**

On February 21, Malcolm X was assassinated in New York City, as he spoke at a large gathering in an effort to build the newly created Organization of African-American Unity. Malcolm X had envisioned the O.A.A.U. as part of the international network of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.), which aimed at addressing the interests and struggles of all the African peoples of the continent and of the diaspora.

**Voice # 1:**

That same year James Brown re-defined funk with "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag." He used guitars, horns, and his own voice like a set of drums.

**Voice # 2:**

1966 in Oakland, California, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party.

**Voice # 3:**

All power to the People!

**Voice # 4:**

By 1967, FBI agents had infiltrated Black Panther offices in major U.S. cities, disrupting their activities and destroying the unity of their organizations.

**Narrator:**

1968 on April 4th Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis where he had been mobilizing support for striking sanitation workers.

**Voice # 1:**

Riots broke out in one hundred U.S. cities.

**Voice # 2:**

A riot is a kind of social spontaneous combustion.





**Voice # 3:**

That same year President Johnson appointed the Kerner Commission to study the causes of racial unrest.

**Voice # 4:**

The commission's Report of their findings spoke of "two nations, one white and one black." The commission also found that the major cause of the riots was white racism and white terrorism directed against non-violent protest, including instances of abuse and even murder of some civil rights workers in the South.

**Narrator:**

The Kerner Commission Report demonstrates, the spark that ignites the riot is not an isolated incident but is almost always "The last straw:"

**Voice # 5:**

Writing about the 1964 Harlem riot, which broke out after police shot and killed a 15-year-old boy, Langston Hughes speaks with irony about how a riot can sometimes achieve what years of mounting community outcry and action failed to bring about:

**Langston Hughes:**

Out of our 1964 riot this week, I do not know what concrete results will come but certainly its repercussions have already reached into high places. No less an authority than President Johnson has spoken from the capital, saying grandiloquently,\* 'Violence and lawlessness cannot, must not and will not be tolerated.' Some Harlemites interpret this to mean that there will be no more head-bustings on the part of the police, or shooting of adolescents, black, white, or Puerto Rican, by men representing New York's finest.

**Voice # 1:**

Timeline 1969: At least a half a million young people gather for a huge outdoor concert in Woodstock, N.Y. Feeling the strength of their numbers, they declare themselves the "Woodstock Nation."

**Voice # 2:**

Jimi Hendrix performs his rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner."

**• The 70s:****Voice # 3:**

Timeline 1970: Reflecting back on the decade—Maryland in the early sixties;

**Voice # 1:**

or Coretta Scott King, picking up the fallen standard of her slain husband to continue the fight.



**Pauli Murray:**

Not only these and many other women whose names are well known have given this great human effort its peculiar vitality, but also women in many communities, whose names will never be known, have revealed the courage and strength of the black women in America. They are the mothers who stood in schoolyards with their children many times alone. One cannot help asking; 'Would the black struggle have come this far without the undeniable determination of its women?' ”

**Narrator:**

Timeline 1971 The National Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that African Americans were still far behind whites in economic prosperity.... Average black income was 3/5 of the average white income, and 50% of all black rural housing units were substandard compared with 8% of white.

**Voice # 1:**

The scholar Manning Marble points out that “non-white youth unemployment increased in these years. The quality of black urban life- poor housing, rat infestation, crime, high infant mortality rates, disease, and poor public education - continued to deteriorate.

**Voice # 2:**

James Brown and the J.B.s released “*Get Up (I Feel Like Being a Sex Machine)*,” introducing the new super-heavy funk.

**Voice # 3:**

Sly and the Family Stone, with their fusion of the antiwar psychedelic outlook and James Brown-inspired funk, released *There's a Riot Going On*. This album would have a major reverberating influence on music into the nineties (including rap).

**Voice # 4:**

1974 Nixon resigned rather than risk impeachment for his role in covering up the Watergate scandal.

**Voice # 5:**

Africa Bambaataa invented the term “hip-hop.” Stevie Wonder released his hit song “*Living for the City*” about the Meanness of life in the inner city.

**Voice # 1:**

1975 All U.S. troops were withdrawn from Vietnam.

**Voice # 2:**

President Ford refused federal aid to the nearly bankrupt New York City. NYC and other East and Midwest traditional industries decline. Thus NYC forced to cut back on health, education, transit, welfare...forced hospitals and libraries to close, and abandoned city parks.

**Voice #3:**

Bob Marley and the Wailers toured American cities. The reggae sound had been created when New Orleans jazz records were carried along the routes of the Black Atlantic and



introduced to Jamaica in the 1950s. Imitated and re-invented by Jamaican bands, the jazz beat re-emerged as the reggae “mm-cha.” With the legendary performances of Marley, reggae took root in the U.S.

**Voice # 4:**

1976 George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic embarked on their sci-fi “*Mothership Connection World Tour*” featuring a giant flying saucer with flashing lights. Donning afro-wigs and glam-rock costumes, they celebrate hard funk:

**Chorus:**

Make my funk a P-Funk, I want to get Funked up!  
Make my funk a P-Funk, I want to get Funked up!

**Voice # 5:**

Timeline 1977: Ford’s replacement President Jimmy Carter, rejected any effort to renew the social program initiatives of the 1960s. Now the Democratic Party also supported the policy of neglect that had begun under Nixon. In spite of the apparent lack of funds for the inner cities, Carter found money to bail out the ailing Chrysler car company.

**Voice #1:**

Black out!

**Voice # 2:**

Large sections of New York City were “blacked-out” due to a major power failure. Rioting occurred in predominantly poor areas.

**Voice # 3:**

1979, Rap scored its first commercial hit with the single “*Rapper’s Delight*” by the Sugerhill Gang: “Hip-hop, don’t stop!”

• **The 80s**

**Narrator:**

At the close of the decade of the 70s, while one-tenth of all white Americans were poor, one-third of all African Americans, and one-quarter of all Latinos lived below the poverty level. By the end of the year 1980, unemployment for black Americans was 2 1/2 times higher than for whites, with black youth out of work at the rate of nearly 40%.

**Voice # 4:**

1980 Kurtis Blow released “*The Breaks*,” rap’s first gold record.

**Voice # 5:**

1981 MTV started broadcasting. Adding a new visual dimension to popular music, MTV would make it possible for the latest trends, whether in music, language or fashion, to criss-cross the globe overnight.



**Narrator:**

1982 a particularly bad year for employment as a ongoing wave of plants close, primarily in the Midwest and Middle Atlantic States. In one year 2,700 layoffs and plants shutdowns eliminated over 1.25 million industrial jobs.

**Voice # 1:**

Michael Jackson released *Thriller*, the top-grossing album of all times.

**Voice # 2:**

Prince released his breakthrough album *1999*, creating a new hybrid of Sly Stone-influenced rock, synthesized disco beats, and James Brown's funk.

**Voice # 3:**

Grandmaster Flash, the first major American rapper/DJ, and his crew, the Furious Five (all of them from the South Bronx) recorded "*The Message*," Rap had entered the realm of explicit social commentary:

**Grandmaster Flash:**

Got a bum education, double-digit inflation  
 Can't take the train to the job, there's a strike at the station  
 Don't push me cause I'm close to the edge  
 I'm trying not to lose my head  
 It's a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder  
 How I keep from going under

**Voice # 4:**

1982 Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force released "*Looking for the Perfect Beat*," the first record with sampling.

**Voice # 5:**

Newsflash: Graffiti artist Michael Stuart, arrested for spray-painting graffiti, died from blows inflicted while in the custody of six New York City transit police.

**Voice # 1:**

1986 Run-DMC released their *Raising Hell* album, which includes "*Walk This Way*," their collaboration with Aerosmith; it reached #4 on the pop charts

**Voice # 2:**

Timeline 1987 Bernard Goetz, a white man, opened fire on a crowded train, shooting several black men he alleged were trying to mug him.

**Voice # 3:**

M.C. Lyte released *Lyte as a Rock* and Salt-N-Pepa released *Hot, Cool and Vicious*, marking 1987 as the year when women rappers broke the all-male lock on commercial rap recording.





**Voice # 4:**

The Beastie boys, a white band, released *Licensed to Ill*, a rap album. Rapper KRS-1 released *Criminal Minded*, Gangsta Rap in embryonic form. Announcing themselves as “Prophets of Rage,” Public Enemy released its first album of politically conscious rap, *Yo! Bum Rush the Show*.

**Public Enemy:**

I’m a Public Enemy but I don’t rob banks  
 I don’t shoot bullets and I don’t shoot blanks  
 My style is supreme-number one is my rank  
 And I got more power than the New York Yanks

**Narrator:**

Hip-hop culture (which included rap, graffiti art, break dancing and fashion) grew directly out of this impoverished urban landscape. Hip-hop is a true product of the circulation of populations and cultures Paul Gilroy talks about in *The Black Atlantic*.

**Voice # 1:**

Gilroy notes that one of the critical events in the development of hip-hop was when Clive “Kool DJ Herc” Campbell moved from Kingston to the South Bronx in 1969 and introduced the Jamaican practice of “toasting and boasting” in between and over the tracks he played on his double turntables.

**Voice # 2:**

As Tricia Rose, a scholar and cultural critic, points out in her important book *Black Noise*, Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash were trained in auto and electronic repair work;

**Voice # 3:**

the female rappers Salt-N-Pepa were trained as telemarketing reps for Sears;

**Voice # 4:**

and the Puerto Rican breakdancer Crazylegs started breaking because his mother couldn’t afford to send him to Little League.

**Voice # 5:**

In other words, out of the deprivations of ghetto life, where the schools are so underfunded that traditional music education isn’t available, the creators of hip-hop culture used what’s at hand to make art, to express and reinvent and reinvigorate the world in which they live.

[END]



## **Appendix E: Cultural awareness Project The Mighty Jajah: A Jamaican Experience**

**Written by David D. Coleman II  
With Jamaican Patwa translations  
by Caffie Bennett and Derrick Murdock**

**Based on an original story by  
David D. Coleman II**

### **FORWARD**

*“The Mighty Jajah: A Jamaica Experience,” is loosely based on historic events that happened during the late 1950’s. The play talks about the struggle for freedom, and a national identity just prior to Jamaica’s independence. But more importantly, “The Mighty Jajah” tells the tale of the trials and tribulations of a ‘grassroots movement’ calling for the return of Black people back to their ancestral homeland “Mother Africa.”*

### **PRODUCTION NOTES:**

*The play is designed for a performance on a proscenium stage. However, it can be adapted to other spaces. The central focus of the play is on one type of cultural movement experienced in Jamaican society. The play is envisioned for an all-Jamaican cast, with the exception of Minister Douglas who is African American, and the Narrator who is British, priority must be given to the language, patwa in particular. However, because of the similarity in ascents inherent in all the Caribbean islands, if understandings in the linguistic differences are stressed as long as a true Jamaican sound is established casting a rainbow of Caribbean actors could also be considered. Casting those of non-Caribbean origin is not advised if they possess limited linguistic and cultural understanding of Jamaica. If the latter is opted for, caution is advised to achieve authenticity.*

### **COMMENT**

*Jamaica a picturesque island, full of colorful people, spellbinding seashores, exotic fruits, and lively music [Reggae], is a place I have traveled to and have fond memories of. This year long theatrical project was an opportunity for me to return back to the island spiritually and discover more about Jamaican culture. This participatory project has afforded the cast of translators, designers, actors, and musicians the opportunity to become intensively more culturally aware of one another through this shared learning experience. It has taught us allot about the Caribbean people, their culture, and their historical significance in the Pan-African experience. This experience has taught us how similar all our lives are if we allow ourselves to appreciate the diversity rather than dwell on the differences. It is a pleasure to be associated with people who give from the heart.*



## *CHARACTERS*

- PRIME MINISTER:** A schemer who will stop at nothing to get what he wants, even if it's illegal. Only interested in maintaining the status quo.
- GOVERNOR GENERAL:** A member of the Jamaican Cabinet. Conniving and devious, with a precarious temper, who uses his authority to look out for his own best interests. He will do anything for a price.
- COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:** The highest ranking police official on the island, a no-nonsense career officer who follows the rules of law and has no tolerance for lawbreakers.
- GABBIDAN MURDOCK:** A life-long friend and disciple of the Mighty Jahjah. Vividly remembers the days of the U.N.I.A. while a youth member.
- JETTA:** A true Rastafarian, totally devoted to the simple way of life. He has compassion for his fellow man but more importantly, for his people.
- LORNA:** A levelheaded and well-educated sister of the JaJah compound who possesses the caring characteristics that naturally draws people close to her. She is well respected by the followers.
- DANNY:** A baldhead in his late twenties, a peaceful farmer who is struggling to make a living for his family. The movement that Gabbidan
- PUNCY:** Danny's wife, a country girl who has never left her quiet rural setting until the news of the Mighty Jahjah's movements captured her husband's imagination. She is very fearful towards what the future might bring.
- DANNY JOSEPH (DJ):** A mirror image of his father Danny. He respects his elders and is very inquisitive about the ever-changing events that are happening around. He sees the movement as an adventure.



## CHARACTERS

(Continued)

### MS. RUBIE:

A generous, strong willed woman from Above Rocks a rural working-class town in St. Catherine Parish, 18 mile west of Kingston. Ms. Rubie, a single parent who derives her strength from many years of personal experiences both good and bad, that deprived her of the luxury of childhood. Her ex-husband was a tyrannical and oppressive man, a man very much like her father. Living with this man fortunately did not destroy her sensitivity or diminish her compassion for others. She treasures the bond that she has developed with the people she has associated with in the movement.

### AKIA:

Ms. Rubie's only child. Very introverted but aware of the people and things around her.

### MS. DORIS:

A wise, elderly market woman. She is the matriarch of the marketplace. She is also a personal the mother of Helen the wife of the Prime Minister.

### THE MIGHTY JAHJAH:

Like Gabbidan he was a member of the U.N.I.A. His father was one of the first delegates to visit Liberia. When his father died mysteriously while in Liberia and shortly after Marcus Garvey was arrested and extradited to Jamaica , he vowed that one day he would continue the movement.

### HELEN GORDON:

The wife of the Prime Minister.

### STRANGER ON THE BUS:

#### GUARD/ROBBER #1

#### GUARD/ROBBER #2

A bumbling hired hand who do anything for a price. His assistant who is a bit slow in understanding what is immediately happening around him.

#### MARKET VENDOR #1

#### MARKET VENDOR #2





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**THE MIGHTY JAJAH: A JAMAICAN EXPERIENCE**  
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## INTRODUCTION

Play begins with a historical audio/visual overview of the Marcus Garvey Movement with visuals of Jamaica circa 1959 inter dispersed. The music of Steel Pulse's "Rally Round The Flag" is heard. The visuals and fades as the light rises on the Premier of Jamaica.

The time is 1957, Jamaica, West Indies. A period of unrest has occurred. There have been continued disturbances all around the country as worker in the sugar factories demand a better wages and working conditions. Many people have begun to look to individuals for spiritual guidance. One such person people are turning to for leadership is Reverend Jedadiah Clives, known as "The Mighty Jajah," who has begun a grassroots back-to-Africa-movement, based in Kingston that is rapidly sweeping the country.

In the years past, the government's plotters and saboteurs have been exposed, and with each exposure a strengthening and reaffirmation to the cause has resulted. People everyday are flocking by the hundreds to Kingston, the home of Brother Jedadiah Clives, whom his followers inflectionally call "the Mighty Jajah," to join him on his journey to Africa. Brother Jajah, following in the footsteps of Marcus Garvey, has successfully organized a Repatriation-To-Africa Campaign.

Brother Jajah's life-long friend Brother Gabbidan has successfully organized the masses from the rural areas of Jamaica causes quite a stir in the government, threatening the status quo. The Repatriation To Africa Movement offers many of the downtrodden an outlet hope. Because of the movement's rapidly escalating popularity, the government feels threatened. The government feels that its just a matter of time before all hell breaks loose.









**ACT ONE SCENE ONE****[Late in the evening]**

*[As the light goes up we see the interior of the office of the Premier of Jamaica. Pacing back forth in the middle of the room is the Premier himself, impatiently waiting for the arrival of the Governor General. There is a knock at the door and the Governor General enters.]*

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Come in Governor General, sorry for this emergency meeting at this un-Godly hour.  
*[motions for him to sit down]*

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

You look very troubled your Excellency, what's the problem sir?

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Well what are you gonna do, sir. Do you have a plan? *[pause]*

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

What am I gonna do? It's what are "we" gonna do!

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

I'm sure you didn't get me up in the middle of the night for nothing. Sir.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

No I didn't. *[The Premier walks over to the Governor General looking in his eyes.]* What I'm about to ask you is not for myself alone you understand, *(turning away gazing into space)* but for the good of people.

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

*(Under his breath)* Or for the good of some people?

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

*(turn quickly towards him)*

What did you say?

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

Nothing sir?

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

*(Pauses, unsure what to make of the Governor General's last comment)* Anyway, I need you to infiltrate the Mighty Jajah's group. But we need to keep this strictly confidential.

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

You know you can always count on me Sir.



**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

I know I can! You are a man of many faces and a man of many means. (*Governor General laughs*) I'm sure you can get the job done! Come go with me for a walk. (*Whispers*) Now, this is what I want you to do! (fades out)

[*Lights fade-out*]







## ACT ONE SCENE TWO

### THE PLAN

*[The scene opens in a living room of a moderately furnished home situated on the ground of an acre of land on the outskirts of Kingston, Jamaica. This land is the home of the Mighty Jajah. It's also the home base of the Repatriation movement. On the grounds we see a fenced in tenement yard converted into a compound, consisting of a small church, meetinghouse, living quarters we see three men engrossed in a discussion. Brother Gabbidan a strong virile man in his late sixties. A religious leader from Maypen, the capital of Clarendon Parish, a rural community 30 miles west of Kingston, Jamaica. Seated next to him is Minister Douglas a man also in his late sixties, a religious Moslem leader and community organizer of the Garvies, from the Temple Seven in New York City, and leader of the American delegation directly link with the Jamaican movement. Seated next to him is the Rev. Jedediah Clives also is in his late sixties, the spiritual leader and official head of the Repatriation Movement, who is affectionately known as the Mighty Jajah.]*

#### MINISTER DOUGLAS:

All plans have been completed from the state side. The brothers and sisters have gotten prepared. It is only a matter of weeks before the ship arrives in Kingston Harbor. I don't clearly see the significance, in this day and age for a ship? When a plane can do and besides that, are your followers prepared? *(looking around)* From the looks of things around here it seems that people have lost their faith....

#### GABBIDAN:

How do yu mean de people 'ave lost dere faith?

#### MINISTER DOUGLAS:

Well, I was expecting more than the numbers I see here at your compound. My group back home is twice the size.

#### GABBIDAN:

This does not reflect de entire group bredda! Yu 'ave been ere only a few days. We caan't bring everyone ere to meet your delegation. Remember, the Premier has sent agents to stop us at any cost. Keep de faith Bredda...

#### MINISTER DOUGLAS:

For me and my people to keep the faith Repatriation must be a Jamaican-lead experience. *(pointing firmly at Gabbidan)*

#### GABBIDAN:

Agreed. Me 'ave already planted de seeds in de rural areas. We 'ave representation from Half Way Tree, Red Hills road, and even Clarendon Parrish. Bredda Jajah read dem de poster.





**JAJAH:**

*[removes and unfolds flyer from his pocket and begins reading it]*

“Should we, de true Jamaicans, sacrifice de prospect of self-government, freedom, and independance, over continual oppression under dis self-righteous British government? Should we, breddas and sisdas, be denied our true African roots and accept de British definision of a who a we are? Should we allow England to define who and what we are, denying our African roots everywhere in a de world? Shall we continue to refuse GOD’s offer for repatriation back home to Africa and a life of everlasting peace and freedom? Shall we give up the prospect of living under our own vine and fig trees, tiling our own fields, teaching our own children, governing our own communities, over going back into slavery, under these wicked, unrighteous and oppressive rulers of Jamaica? NO, GOD forbid! Repatriate now!

**MINISTER DOUGLAS:**

Sounds good! Very good, indeed. The brothers and sisters will be pleased to read this. Have all the literature been distributed?

**GABBIDAN:**

All literature ‘ave been produced and distributed as planned. Very shortly the feed-back will come, you must be patient. You must simply wait.

**MINISTER DOUGLAS:**

*(rising)* That’s what I mean! You haven’t got it together. It’s taking to long and if it takes this long, a ship would not do.

**JAJAH:**

No! Gabbidan. We can no longer be patient. We can no longer wait. They have nothing to offer us! All their sweet promises and what they hope to obtain out of self-government under British colonial rule can only lead us into destruction and captivity because their leaders are all blind, and they shall all fall into the ditch of God’s judgment, captivity, war and slavery. We must leave this place now!

Now Minister Douglas do you fully understand the significance of the ship? No we can’t leave by the plane, it would be too easy and, it would not have, a significant input as leaving on a ship. *[walking over to Minister Douglas]* To leave on a ship will make a significant statement to the world. *[placing one hand on his shoulder, the other using it to gesture]* Picture this, we Africans from America and Jamaica returning home as Bredda Marcus Garvey envisioned. Our ancestors came by force, stripped from their homes, their lands, their culture! But we the chosen, the sons and daughters of those Africans are returning home.

**GABBIDAN:**

Irie Bredren! Praise Jah.



**MINISTER DOUGLAS:**

Well, I still have my doubts. *(pause)* A ship?

**JAJAH:**

Just the first one of many to follow.

**MINISTER DOUGLAS:**

A symbolic gesture.

**JAJAH:**

To show the world how strong and powerful our race can be. *(steps away)* Bredda I and I 'ave de faith, do you?

**MINISTER DOUGLAS:**

I never lost it. I just want to be sure. *(as he raises to leave)* My plane leaves in a few hours. I will get things in order and return as planned. May Allah protect us.

**JAJAH:**

Guidance bredda.

**MINISTER DOUGLAS:**

As-Salam-Wal-Laykum. Walakum Salaam.

**GABBIDAN:**

Irie bredda! Walk safe.

**[FADE OUT to 1st verse of song]**

*["Ethiopia, thou Land of Our Fathers," Marcus Garvey called for the adoption of this as the "Anthem of the Negro race. "The Universal Ethiopian Anthem" poem by Burrell and Ford.]*

Ethiopia, thou of our fathers,  
 Thou land where the gods loved to be,  
 As storm cloud at night suddenly gathers  
 Our armies come rushing to thee.  
 We must in the fight be victorious  
 When swords are thrust outward to glean;  
 For us will be ic'ttry be glorious  
 When led by the red, black, and green.

**CHORUS:**

Advance, advance to victory  
 Let Africa be free;  
 Advance to meet the foe  
 With the might  
 Of the red, the black, and the green.



*[The song echoes such issues as the repatriation movement and the founding of Liberia, the ramifications of the Amistad Mutiny and court case, the Niagara Movement concluding with the return of African-American soldiers from World War I which are seen as brief photographic images flashed up stage.]*

**[Light fades to Black]**



**ACT ONE SCENE THREE**  
**THE BUS RIDE**

*[Late afternoon, the next day. The scene opens on a group of passengers on a crowded country bus of "The Blue Bird Bus Line," traveling midway on their journey from Claredon to Kingston, to meet the Mighty JaJah. Among the passengers are Gabbidan, Jetta a Rastafarian, Danny, his wife Puncy and their son DJ, Miss Rubie and her daughter and several other passengers, who are going on to their respective destination.]*

**JETTA:**

So many years, so many tears I man suffer. Too long we singing de same song, Gabbidan. We ready fe de repatriation to Africa. One day One day! De path of righteousness Shall open unto I. Di more dem persecute I. Di stronga and stronga I rise!

**STRANGER:**

Yu right Rasta! *[While peeking through de crowd. Pushing de passengers aside.]*

**DANNY:**

*(to Gabbidan)* Justice must come fe we all breddin teach de youth dem, de right word *(Danny to his son)* Listen to Bredda Gabbie... *(to Gabbidan)* Give us another word bredda Gabbidan.

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

We 'ave a just cause and we 'ave faith in de justice of God. Most of all we "ave among our assets a Moses, Bredda Jajah someone who we can trust. He is not a spy; he comes not as a traitor not a servant for de government, but is appointed by /god and is recognized and accepted among de leaders of our race and is going to lead us out of dis state of misery, and into de path of righteousness. A place dat is truly ours. "ZION".

**DANNY:**

That's right breddin, we a go home to Mother Afrika!

**CROWD:**

Amen! Afrika.

*(Focus shifts to the women passengers catching them in mid-conversation.)*

**PUNCY:**

Whe de man dem a say is true Miss Rubie! But a yesso me live in me life sista!

**MISS RUBIE:**

Wha yu a say is true Puncy. But we just de a fe a little time, sista. Home Afrika! That's wha all we roots de.

**PUNCY:**

That's true Miss Rubie, but ano me, me a worry bout, a de pickney-dem. Me live a little life a ready, sista a betta me want fe dem.





**MISS RUBIE:**

No betta word to say Puncy. Me had a hard life daughta, sometime good but, mostly bad. But let me tell yu something, I treasure the bad times the most. I draw my strength from it, it's like a cool drink of spring water on a hot summa day, then I get the courage to face anything that come feme way.

**PUNCY:**

Miss Rubie I wish I 'ave yu strength, but yu ave seen an experience allot. As you know a right yesso inna Claredon me live all me life. Marry now and 'ave two children, its hard fe me just pick-up and leave dis place, yu undastan wha me a try fe say sista?

**PUNCY:**

Yu right sista!

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

*(Talk to Jetta, about de Back to Africa Movement)* When Bredda Jajah tell-I about dis journey, I say to I self, nothin gwan stop I, dis is I man roots, Bredda Jajah is some kind of a precha man, ho! he Africa, here I come.

**DANNY:**

Dat bredda is a messiah, im 'ave great powa.

**STRANGER:**

Wha yu a hold pan so tight! Yu tink anybody a go tief yu rasta?

**JETTA:**

I no worry bout dat bredda! I man a hold on pan Jah word.

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Man yu a hold pan Jah word inna yu hand! I man 'ave Jah word inna I man heart.

**STRANGER:**

Give I a small read off a dat word nuh bredda?

**JETTA:**

Dis is I man personal belongs, yu can't just want come teck a read so bredda!

**STRANGER:**

Irie! Irie rasta! Guidance.

**PUNCY:**

Bway! We deh pan dis old country bus a long time yunno. Miss Rubie, me nuh too sure bout dis! Me trust me husband Danny, but me afraid! Yu afraid Miss Rubie?



**MISS RUBIE:**

No child! There comes a time in our life when, change must come. Just enjoy de sweet bus ride sista!

**PUNCY:**

But I still worry bout dis Miss Rubie.

**MISS RUBIE:**

Wha yu a worry bout so!

**PUNCY:**

Fe leave a place whe we live all wi life, yes Miss Rubie, me 'ave fe worry.

**MISS RUBIE:**

No daughta, we going to a new place, new adventure.

**PUNCY:**

But me still nuh understan dis move!

**MISS RUBIE:**

Sometimes me nuh understan yu, yunno! Jah know, yu bawl bout de life yu live. Now change come and still yu can't face it. If yu want good yu nose, 'ave fe run. Yu see dis place, and all a dem tings whe frow ya. Bway! Ackee, cassava, de famous Blue Mountain Coffee, all dem tings, and still me a suffa. Me walk from Clarendon to Kingston. Sista! yu should a see de cane field! It jus a wave galong so inna de breeze. De eart never get old ya, yunno. It always soft. It nuh like dem odda foreign land. Sista it ripe and ready.

**JETTA:**

Yu right Ms. Rubie.

**MISS RUBIE:**

Look everybody, Rosealee Park, but wait! Wha dat dign seh Puncy? Walthan Park Avenue! Praise Jah. We reach. Come everybody pack-up, pack-up!

*[The group exits from the bus. They all take a long look at the city. The stranger, knock Jetta's papers out of his hands, on his way out of the bus. He bend down and tries to concealed it under his shirt.]*

**JETTA:**

Ha bredda! Where I man personal papers.

**STRANGER:**

Right here rasta! I was just picking it up fe yu man.



**JETTA:**

Irie bredda! [*Jetta gave the stranger a disturbed look.*]

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Bway! Dis is a big place.

**MISS RUBIE:**

Bredda Gabbidan, I know dere gonna be some dine-na confusion inna dis place.

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Everybody stay close.

[*they walk through the city towards Brother Jajah's compound*]  
(*to Jetta*) Look out for dat tree!

**PUNCY:**

Danny Joseph fine yu self over here!

[*FADE OUT*]





TAJAN'S INTERROGATION

MR. THURBY '92





**ACT ONE SCENE FOUR**  
**THE INTERROGATION**  
**(The same week)**

*[Scene opens with the Mighty Jajah seated on a stool in the center of a room. All is dark around him. Enters the Minister of Justice.]*

**MINISTER OF JUSTICE:**

Weel, well, well Mr. Jedadiah Clive. Welcome. I hope your trip here was a pleasant one.

**JAJAH:**

It was just a matta a time before we would meet. Well what do yu want? Yu got me here..... What's the charge?

**MINISTER OF JUSTICE:**

I just have a few questions to ask you. Just sit still, you are not under arrest, you were just brought in for questioning.

**JAJAH:**

What do yu want to question me about? I am just a simple man. I run a honest establishment. What could yu possibly want to talk to me fa?

**MINISTER OF JUSTICE:**

Tell me something. Who was that American that staying at your compound

**JAJAH:**

Who are yu talking about? What American, when? What are yu driving at?

**MINISTER OF JUSTICE:**

Let's stop this foolishness! You know who I am talking about. The American, who stayed at you compound last week. I have proof he met with you and members of your group. So I will ask one more time, who is he and where was he from?

**JAJAH:**

If you know an American visited me last week, you obviously know when him arrived and left the island. Let us not play games. That's not really what yu want to ask me? Now is it?

**MINISTER OF JUSTICE:**

I know who and what you are! You are walking a thin line, a very thin line... Your radical movement will eventually end in disaster just like all the rest. An all those people who are with you now... *[pulls out a copy of one of the pamphlets]* who believe in this propaganda are following you down a path straight to hell along with you.

**JAJAH:**

Why is it that I am condemned to hell? That's your problem. Yu are so alienated from your people that you truly believe your own propaganda.



**MINISTER OF JUSTICE:**

I have no more to say to you. (*Get out! Jajah rises, pointing his finger*) I have my eyes on your every move. Sooner or later.....

**JAJAH:**

Thank yu for the distinct pleasure of being interrogated by his excellency the Minister of Justice. [*exiting*] Ave a nice day.

**EXITS:****[FADE OUT]**



**ACT ONE SCENE FIVE**  
**THE ARRIVAL**  
**(Same week)**

*[After a long journey, the group finally at Jajah's Church. The area consists of a church, living quarters and a courtyard. Two guards are seen standing at the front gate, one of the guard at the gate is clearly recognized as the Governor General. One of the passengers on the bus, not directly a part of the group, walk up to the guards.]*

**SLICK:**

Lady! Where yu going? No one allowed in here sista!

**MISS DORIS:**

I'm a personal friend of Jajah, Me!... Miss Doris....*[looking at Slick like he's familiar]* A who a yu bredda/

**SLICK:**

*[Feeling a little uneasy, since Miss Doris could easily recognized him. He turns his head away and says to himself]* But what a de Premier's wife's madda doing don ere? *[Disguising his voice with a cough]* Go right in sista!

**SECOND GUARD:**

*[Slapping Slick's back]* Yu alright bredda?

*[Slick nods his head as Miss Doris walks in.]*

**MISS RUBIE:**

*[Seeing Miss Doris enter without anymore scrutinizing by the guards she turns to Gabbidan and says]* Bredda Gabbidan, dat sista? She was on the bus wid we. Where she a go?

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

That sista? Maybe she 'ave her own invitation. Anyway! Wait ere mi breddrin me a fe take care a de arrangements. Me be right back.*[Gabbidan proceeds to the gate entrance guarded by three brothers extending his hand]* How yu doing breddrin?

**FIRST GUARD:**

But wait! A in yasso all a conuh a go!

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

I don't know yu bredda, who are you to say I can't go in/

**SLICK:**

And who are yu bredda.

**SECOND GUARD:**

That's Bredda Gabbidan.



**FIRST GUARD:**

Who! I don't care who he is, him can't come in.

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Me undastan yu doing yu job bredda, but give I a few minutes. Tell me good friend Bredda Jajah dat I! Bredda Gabbidan has arrived.

**FIRST GUARD:**

Yu good who! A who yu say, de Mighty Jajah!

**GABBIDAN:**

Yes bredda! Nothing no wrong wid yu ears bredda, that's exactly what I'm saying.

**SLICK:**

[Feeling like a absolute fool, the Slick looks through some paper in his hands, trying to redeem himself, turn to the first guard] Yu know who dis is? Dis is Bredda Gabbidan, de man we are expecting. [turn to Bredda Gabbidan] Welcome bredda Gabbidan, come right on in, if yu need any help from us ask me personally.

**PUNCY:**

Bredda a whe we aggo sleep.u .

**SLICK:**

Tings no look as bad as it seems sista! Someone will take care fe yu, we 'ave a room prepared just for de ladies, an de men compartment is just across from yu. A sista will bring yu some blankets fe keep yu warm.

**PUNCY:**

Thank yu breadda. Jah bless yu

**LORNA:**

[Enters Lorna, a member of the movement.] Welcome everybody, me glad yu all finally arrived. These ere blankets will keep de pickney warm. It's not much but, this de best I caan do.

**MISS RUBIE:**

Tank yu sista, we should sleep good tonight.

*[The sister helps settle the group. After they enter we see the two guards and Slick still at the gate talking in a more devious way.]*

**SLICK:**

Now do as mi tell yu, get over dere yu idiots 9pointing to Bredda Gabbidan who is just about to enter the men's quarters.) an get Bredda Gabbidan's papers...







THIEVES ATTACK JETTAR

MIR THERRY



**ROBBER #1:**

A who! A who yu seh?

**SLICK:**

Yu def man, yu foo fool? Bredda Gabbidan! (*pointing*) dat one deh, right deh!

**ROBBER #2:**

Which one! A which one yu sey?

**SLICK:**

(*pointing*) That one! (*smacking his head and pointing furiously*) that one! No wait awhile, let de men de get settled, then get mi de papers. Come on. [*They all exit stage right. The light dims indicating time has passed. The two robbers reappear. All in the compound are asleep. In the darkness the two men creep over to the sleeping group of men and stop near them to look them over.*]

**ROBBER #2:**

A Who! A who Slick seh.

**ROBBER #1:**

A dis one! Me tink me rememba him, me see pan de country bus, me even talk to him.

**ROBBER #2:**

Yu sure man!

**ROBBER #1:**

Bway! [*rubbing his head*] Me no too sure, but me tink is dis one.

[*The robbers in their confusion quarrel over which person's sack or bundle to take. Robber #1 grabs papers out of Jetta's sack while Robber #2 picks up whatever he can from the group sacks and bundles. As they begin to leave Robber #1 picking up valuables dropped by Robber #2 hits Jetta over the head with Bredda Gabbidan walking stick knocking him down while Robber #1 retrieve the papers. Out of reflex Jetta jumps up and blindly swings his staff as he tries to hit the Robbers but they escape.*]

**MISS RUBIE:**

[*running out of the women's quarters*]

What is de confusion, is everybody alright?

**PUNCY:**

[*peering out of the doorway timidly*] Lord have mercy I can't teck de confusion. Danny?  
[*yelling*] Danny?

**DANNY:**

What is de matta honey, (*rushing over to his wife*) me boy alright?



**PUNCY:**

But wait yu no 'ave a wife too? Imagine inna me state of panic all yu concern is if yu boy alright! Of course him alright. How come yu no ask if me alright?

**DANNY:**

But Puncy if yu 'ave strenght fe bwall out me name so, honey yu quiet fine.

**PUNCY:**

wha append?[*Danny begins to explain what he saw as Gabbidan speaks*]

**BREDDA GABBIAN**

How much more Lord! How much more time we 'ave fe go thru dis ya foolishness, before we come out ya so.[*Enters Lorna fro m the church/meeting room. She is one of the sisters in charge of the Jajah compound*]

**LORNA:**

Hello! Everybody I hear de confusion from up a de top a de yard. .Is everyone okay! How bout yu rasta?

**JETTA:**

Bway sista dis is not I man's day. When trouble come, it pour like rain.

**LORNA:**

Don't trouble yu self Rasta! Tings will look better tomorrow.

**JETTA:**

Tell me someting sista! Everybody dat come inna dis movement, a so dem a fe suffa?

**LORNA:**

What are yu trying to say rasta? Look man when yu suffa, yu a suffa fe all a we. This movement is a righteous ting, yu 'ave fe undestan dis is fe de good of de people and, if somebody 'ave fo suffa just a little now fe de bettament later on, I don't tink it's a dat bad rasta!

**JETTA:**

I man no like trouble. Dis bredda is a peaceful man but, yu know sista all dis aggrevation could meck a man do tings him no accustum to do. Me wee lick off a man head nuh!

**LORNA:**

What da bredda dem do was wrong rasta! They are not a reflection on a de movement. Now yu can't go judging everybody. Bad tings appen to all a we some times. We all 'ave fe cope wid it. You life no gone, tank God yu still can make yu trip.

**JETTA:**

All right sista, yu right.



*[Lorna and the women folks returned to their quarters]*

**JETTA:**

*[Turn to Bredda Gabbidan and asked]*

What's de matter bredda? Is everything alright?

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Bway! Me papers... All me papers gone!.....

*[Fades Out]*





**ACT ONE: SCENE SIX**  
**PREMIER OF JAMAICA'S OFFICE**  
**(The next morning)**

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Come in Governor General. What news do you have to report? Did you get it?

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

No sir! Sorry to report, I did not get it yet. I have two men on the job.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

You are not taking this serious Governor General! Heads will roll and one of them will not be mine!

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

Relax your Excellency! Why get so upset. That Bredda Jajah, we've seen his kind before. And that Bredda Gabbidan, he is nobody! I'm in good with these people, they confide in me, they trust me! If it will make you happy, I'll keep a eye on that new gathering. I'll have it all settled in a few days.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA**

No! You will have it settled in twenty-four hours! (*pointing to the exit*) Now get out!

[*the Governor General exits*]



**ACT ONE SCENE SEVEN**  
**PLAYING DOMINOES**  
**(The next day)**

*[Miss Rubie exits the women quarter, she walked over to Jetta and Danny, who are engrossed in a domino game]*

**MISS RUBIE:**

How de breddrin dem feel today?

**DANNY:**

*[Nods. Keeps eyes glued to game]*

**JETTA:**

Bway! Yu just being concern is plenty help sista! *[to Danny]* Meck yu move bredda. *[to Miss Rubie]* Right now I man could sip on a cool dragon stout, dat could give I man, back I strength.

**MISS RUBIE:**

*[ Miss Rubie goes to a basin filled with ice and stout.]* Alright rasta! De sista will teck care of dat.

**DANNY:**

Give I one too sista!

**PUNCY:**

*(Frightened, to Danny)* Me caan stay ya Danny! To much madness me want fe go home now!

**MISS RUBIE:**

But wha is dis doh! A who a talk bout home, a yu Puncy! As little crosses come, yu tun tail and run. De path to life is not a easy road yu know sista! Sooner or lata trouble must come yu way, just teck life it come sista! An look pan de bright side, we nah travel alone, de bredda dem will teck care a we, yu feeling a little betta no daughta.

**PUNCY:**

Yu so righy Miss Rubie. Tank yu sista!

**JETTA:**

Nuff respect to yu Miss Rubie, but I agree wid Puncy. I man neva bargin fe all a dis. Let I man tell yu sometin sista! Me leave me beautiful mansion, with roolin hills covered ewith a thick green blanket. Yu believe this Miss Rubie, I man Jedidiah Brown! leave I man big two bedroom house, fe sleep pan people dirty ground. And pan top a all me crosses, dem tief Bredda Gabbidan inna de middle a de nite. I man so vex sista, dat if yu cut I man not even water yu woulda fine daughta.

**DANNY:**

Stop yu complaining bredda, make yu next move.



**JETTA:**

Yu full a big talk rasta! How come yu neva act like a man and defend Bredda Gabbidan hey..... Why yu didn't do something?

**DANNY:**

Before I could do anyting, everyting get crazy. Anyway bredda yu no see it was two a dem. Rasta is only a me!

**MISS RUBIE:**

How come not one of oonuh two idiot, ask youself what dis trouble means to Bredda Gabbidan. A lot of preparation went into dis movement. So if anyone 'ave fe cry over spilled milk, it should be Bredda Gabbidan.

**JETTA:**

Yu are so tight Miss Rubie, let I man go over and talk to Bredda Gabbidan.

[Jetta leaves. Enters DJ]

**DANNY:**

Come son, sit down. Why you look so troubled?

**DJ:**

Danny! Did dat man hurt Mr. Jetta? Did he daddy? I don't understand.

**DANNY:**

Well son, no Bredda Jetta not hurt

**DJ:**

And why those men steal Mr. Gabbidan's things?

**DANNY:**

What de man did to Mr. Jetta was wrong, but, try an understan. The robber took sometin that belong to Mr. Gabbidan and he was wrong, to do that.

**SON:**

But daddy! Mr. Jetta said, if hime did catch dat man, him woulda hurt him. Is dat right daddy?

**DANNY:**

No son! Let me explain. Some times people do bad things to you and naturally you want to justify yourself but, sometimes you 'ave fe look inside yu self and, say "is what I'm about to do is it right" Sometimes it's better to walk away from trouble than to start trouble.



**SON:**

So daddy! Two wrong don't make a right?

**DANNY:**

Yes son, you are so right.

*[Enters Brother Jetta and Brother Gabbidan]*

Wha yu seh, Bredda Gabbidan.

**DJ:**

Hello Bredda Gabbidan. Hello Bredda Jetta.*(Both men greet them)*

**DANNY:**

Bredda Gabbidan, how yu feel bout dis move to Afrika?

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Me want to see whe all me roots deh bredda!

**DJ:**

Bredda Gabbidan, when dat tief hurt Mr. Jetta why didn't you help him?

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Son, a wise man thinks with his mind not with his hands. At dis point in my life, bway! Jajah soon coll fe dis old body. Young man, I'm so old, and not as swift as I use to be. I'm looking a place of peace and quiet not trouble and disturbance.

**JETTA:**

Yu too old bredda, we 'ave fe go sun yu!

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

All I man want now is just to relax, a small house will do. Me can't afford a big one anyway. A know it don't sound like much but, I enjoy a simple life.

**JETTA:**

I and I undastan dat yu old, but yu life no ova yet! Yu caan't live poor all yu life! Come to Africa and enjoy de big life bredda.

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

A no big like me a look bredda! We just want a simple life.

*[Enter Miss Rubie and Puncy]*

**MISS RUBIE:**

Bway! Dem say woman can chat! But from em born me never see a man can chat so. Wha-happen bredda, is time fe unoh pack up yu tings, is time to go.





**JETTA:**

Wha dat yu sey?

**PUNCY:**

Yes! Bredda, One a de bredda inna de compound say ship a come.

**JETTA:**

Yeah bredda! Africa we a come!

**MISS RUBIE:**

No badda go run yu mouth now. Cause me no see no packing done. Hurry back.

**JETTA:**

Me pack aready sista! Yu no see tings dem de so?

**PUNCY:**

Well let go get de childen ready fe dis journey.

**MISS RUBIE:**

Praise Jah! Puncy me glad yu feeling a little better 'bout de journey. Come sista meck me give yu a help wid de packing.

*[Enter Lorna from the Church/Meeting Room]*

**LORNA:**

Good morning everybody! How is things today, I heard yu all had a little disturbance last night. *(looking at Jetta)* Why yu look so vex rasta?

**JETTA:**

Bway daughta, de trouble I man incounta inna dis yah yard in night, coulda last me a 'ole year.

**LORNA:**

Rasta! Jah is on yu side today because, things could 'ave been worst.

**JETTA:**

Yu right sista. Anyway tell me yu name, daughta.

**LORNA:**

Why! *[think about it for a moment]* Lorna!

**JETTA:**

Bway! Da name deh fit yu well sista! Pretty name fe a sweet woman.

**LORNA:**

Rasta yu not only smart but, yu 'ave good eyes too.







**JETTA:**

Ave course me 'ave good eyes, yu think beauty like this pass me every day?

**LORNA:**

No mind yu! Yu just full a big talk.

**JETTA:**

Nuff respect to yu sista, yu no only pretty but you a real smart too. How yu just see through I man so. Anyway tell I some ting sista, yu married? Let me see yu finga.

**LORNA:**

No bredda! Why yu want fe know dat.?

**JETTA:**

Bway! sista! From de time me a come inna de yard and, me eye catch pan yu, bway me temperature rise and me heart just a shivea.

**LORNA:**

Yu sure just a yu temperature a rise? (*Lorna gives Jetta a smile*) or is somthin else rising? Yu gwaan, yu just full up a sweet talk... a woman yu a look....Anyway you lucky Rasta! No more fightin alright?

**JETTA:**

Any ting yu want sista! (to himself) Bway she sweet eeeeh....

**LORNA:**

Any way take care a yu self.

**JETTA:**

Hold-up wha yu rushing off to, sista!

**LORNA:**

Wait! How yu expect me fe meck me living? By talking to yu all day. Bredda me 'ave work fe do, see yu lata.

**JETTA:**

Daughta I man am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Yu unda I man personal guidance.

*[Jetta takes her hand, hold her back gently]*

Sista! Come go a Africa wid me.

**LORNA:**

We talk bout dat some other time man!

**JETTA:**

Tell me now, me wan know sista!



**LORNA:**

Me talk to yu lata

**JETTA:**

When!

**LORNA:**

Soon! All right Rasta, soona datn yu tink. [*gives him a sweet smile*]

[*Slick appears in the yard. He sees Lorna hand in hand with Jetta. He overheard them talking about the robbery that took place. Slick, trying to stop the conversation, grabs Lorna by the arm.*]

**SLICK:**

Lorna, a ketch yu red handed! Mi nuh like how yu a keep man wid mi. And wha bodda mi more den all is how di bwoy a fingle you like yu a him oman. Now whe yu 'ave fi say?

**LORNA:**

Slick, whe yu a watch mei fa? Mi nuh tell yu seh it over between me an yu. And furda more mi 'ave business fi tek care of so let mi go before yu regret it.

**SLICK:**

Don't try mi faith yu nuh. Yu get so heaby till yuh a come treaten mi now. Di dutty bwoy mussy put yu up to dis.

**JETTA:**

Hey breda! A who yu a call dutty bwoy? Yuh betta watch yu mouth before me and mi breddren mash yu dung.

**SLICK:**

If de cap fit yu, yu a can wear it. yu name dutty bwoy? Mi a talk to mi oman so mi nuh know how yu get inna dis.

**LORNA:**

(Still struggling to get free from Slick) Leggo offa mi han. Yu a hurt me.

**JETTA:**

Di sista seh fi let her go, wha more yuh wan dan dat?

**DANNY:**

A weh she do yu, mek yu a treat so her so? Leggo di sista now! [*Both Jetta and Danny begin to move towards Slick. Slick looks at Jetta and Danny, sizes up the situation, looks at Lorna angrily and lets her arm go.*]





**SLICK:**

A ole heap a unnuh so mi betta leave dis place before unnuh come dung pan me like a pack of crosses. And yu Lorna as mi granny woulda seh, yu tink inna good company? When yu lid wid dogs rise wid flees. [*Slick turns and exits*]

**JETTA:**

But wait Lorna! Who dat renkin bway! How him a gwaan like him own yu.

**LORNA:**

No worry bout dat tiefing bway rasta! A yu 'ave eyes fa

**JETTA:**

Irie sista. [*Jetta give Lorna a kiss*]

[*Lorna exits*]

[*FADE OUT*]



**ACT TWO SCENE ONE**  
**(The next morning)**

**MARKET SCENE**

[*Scene open with market women entering singing, preparing the market for the day's business.*]

**MARKET WOMEN**

Carry me ackee, go a Lindstead Market, not a quattie wout sell. Carry me ackee, go a Lindstead Market, not a quattie wout sell. Bway! What a night, what a night, what a Saturday night. Bway! What a night, what a night, what a Saturday night. Everybody come feel-up, feel-up, wha dem mumma no bring. Everybody come feel-up, feel-up, wha dem mumma no bring. Oh! What a night, what a night, what a Saturday night. Oh! What a night, what a night, what a Saturday night.[*Enters customers who began bartering on price.*]

**CUSTOMER**

Wha yu 'ave fe sell today sista?

**MARKETWOMAN #1**

Me 'ave ackee, cassava, breadfruit....

**CUSTOMER**

Meck me see dem! (reaches for fruit and gets hand slapped)

**MARKETWOMAN #1**

Whe yu a feel up mi tings dem fa? Yu tink a foul! Wha appen, yu a buy it?

**CUSTOMER**

If me can't ffeel it, sista me nah but it.

**MARKETWOMAN #1**

Well, tek de money and go spread yu bed.[*Customer walks away. Moves to another vendor*]

**MARKETWOMAN #2**

Lissen lady no come over here with yu cheap self, if yu nah buy nothing.

**CUSTOMER**

Look sista me nuh come a market fe argue wid yu. How much is this sista. (*pointing to stalks of sugar cane*)

**MARKETWOMAN #2**

Just give me a dollar for de sugar cane, bredda.



**CUSTOMER**

Dat to hard! Me nuh 'ave nuh teeth. Me nuh won't it. (*walks away*)

**MARKETWOMAN #2**

Wha yu a come to de market for yu no 'ave no tooth, yu ole' goat! Gowan get away fe me tings.[Puncy and Miss Rubie enter]

**MARKETWOMAN #1**

Me 'ave cassava, sista.

**MARKETWOMAN #2**

Come over here, sista. See wha me 'ave fe yu. Me 'ave sweet sugar cane...

**PUNCY**

Me sorry, but me no 'ave no money today sista.

*[The Market women began to haggle Puncy who continues to try and explain to them she has no money, but they fail to listen.] Yu nuh listen, I said me 'ave nuh money. [Miss Rubie ignoring what is happening to Puncy continues to shop for groceries.]*

**MISS RUBIE**

A lady come! How much is de mangos?

**MARKETWOMAN #2**

Just give I a dollar daughta.

**MISS RUBIE**

Cassava, breadfruit, ackee and salt fish, wha else Puncy! It gwan be a long time pan de shop.

**PUNCY**

Miss Rubie wait! When me talk yu no lissen. Me say, me money gone! Me no 'ave nothin.

**MISS RUBIE**

Sista me neva hear yu, cause all yu doing is talk to yusef. No! Worry sista! Miss Rubie will take care a it. Bway! Him not a bad man yunno, but him wild! Him no see furda dan tip a him nose, him jus like me ex-husband Hurbert

**PUNCY**

Then, Miss Rubie, me neva know yu did married.

**MISS RUBIE**

Yes, child! But now is jus me and de two little ones. Me piece-ha husband Hurbert me seh, child, wha a fool-fool man! Jus like Jetta. Him wasn't really a bad. But any foolishness him friend dem keep up, him keep up too. Him come home late every nite, no



monny or food fe de children dem, no, Puncy, no song no sing so, him ha fe go. Me do worst, my time wid come soon Puncy, Danny is good fe yu and de pickenny-dem, bway! Sometimes me really get lonely! Jah know sista, but me time will come; me know dat; so yu hold on to dat sista man, Puncy yu here me daughta!

**PUNCY:**

Yu right, Miss Rubie.

**MISS RUBIE:**

Now is not de time to look forward, we 'ave no time to worry about yesterday.

**PUNCY:**

But what me ago do Miss Rubie? We sell everything we 'ave.

**MISS RUBIE:**

Lissen to me sista! Yu believe in GOD?

**PUNCY:**

Of course Miss Rubie.

**MISS RUBIE:**

Well leave in God's hands sista

**PUNCY:**

A friend is need, is really a friend in deed. Thank yu Miss Rubie.

**MISS RUBIE**

We in dis together sista!

**PUNCY**

Irie! Irie sista!

*[Miss Rubie and Puncy exits into the women's quarters. The market vendors gather up their wears and exit through the front gate singing the same market song. The scene ends with the entrance of Slick and two shady looking characters.]*





**ACT TWO SCENE TWO**  
**THE DOCUMENTS**  
**(Noon)**

[Scene begin with Slick talking with two men previously seen during the robbery.]

**SLICK:**

Wha happen, oonu get it? (*looking around*) Hurry man mi nuh 'ave all day. Mi can't afford fi be seen with suppen like oonuh....

**ROBBER #1:**

Hey.....bredda, easy man. How yu a gwaan so? Every ting cool.

**SLICK:**

Bway me ask yu a question (*grabbing him by the collar*). Yu wan I box yu dung? (*raising his hand as if to slap*) Lissen man yu betta straighen yu self. Me sey if yu get it?

**ROBBER #1:**

Man a whe yu a gwan so fa? Leggo off a me shirtfront, before mi no give yu wha yu want!

**SLICK:**

A who yu a talk to so? No raise me temperature yu no! Yu get it or not?

**ROBBER #2:**

Yeah, but ut a go cost yu twice as much.

**SLICK:**

A wha yu seh?

**ROBBER #1:**

Yu neva tell we seh we a go get inna trouble. It now a go cost you twice as much.

**SLICK:**

Look man! Me no 'ave time fe dis, (*sees someone coming*) teck yu money. (*slap the money in his hand*) Gimme dis rass papers. Me no want fer see yu face (*pointing*) round ya again. Yu undastand....Now coom out.[In the exchange one of the documents falls on the ground]

**ROBBER #2**

Easy bredda! (*motions for them to leave*)

[Enter Lorna the sister at Bredda Jajah's yard returning early to give a helping hand to the people from Claredon. Unexpectedly she ran into Slick. She picked up a piece of paper laying beside him and, began reading it.]



**LORNA:**

Well! Hello Slick! How yu doing? Me 'ave a hard day at de market to day. Whe yu get dis paper Slick?

**SLICK:**

Lissen woman! Get off a me case yah, wha yu want? wha yu a do ya! Gimme de papa before and yu 'ave worries.

**LORNA:**

Why yu a gwaan so Slick? Yu ack like yu 'ave something fe hide. A who fa papa dat and, whe yu get it from? Slick who dat man deh? Me see yu wid, neva see him before.

**SLICK:**

Lissen Lorna no meck me rude to yu, yunno! Yu a get me real cex. Lissen to me daughta, me 'ave a lot a tings pan me mine. Me wi talk to yu later, alright me putus!

**LORNA:**

All right Slick. Me see yu lata. [*Gives Slick a sweet smile*]

*[Lorna exits into the women's quarters. Slick exits into the Church. Enters Gabbidan from the men's quarters, he is alone. He sits on the bench outside the quarters, takes out a pipe and prepare to smoke it. He strikes a match to light it, then blows the match out and stares out in space and begins to talk to himself.]*

**GABBIDAN:**

Me can't believe dis. All me papers gone. All but dis. If dis get inna de wrong hands it would be disasterous. Why would anyone want fe do dis to we. God help we if it's anybody inna dis a movement dat is doing dis. A snake in the grass. Me need to be sure dat de people around me are truly faithful and committed to de cause. Dat new guard, wha him name is.... Slick. Something about him me just no like at all.... When Jajah come back we will 'ave a take about him. In de meantime, me will keep a sharp eye pan him....

*[Enters Jetta, Danny from the men's quarters followed by Puncy, Miss Rubie and the children. They separately busy themselves with work around the yard. Scene ends with all actors on stage]*



**ACT TWO SCENE THREE****INTERROGATION****(Later that day)**

*[The scene opens in the yard of the Jajah Compound. Everyone is busily doing their daily routine. Suddenly the Commissioner of Police and several police officers enter. Some people quickly moves indoors, other simply freeze in their tracks.]*

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Wha yu want? A wha yu a do hah?

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

I am looking for Gabbidan Murdock from the Parish of Claredon. I have a few questions to ask him.

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

I am Gabbidan Murdock. What business yu 'ave wid me sah? Me 'aven't broken de law...

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

Just have a few questions to ask you. (pointing to the bench) Sit down and be quiet! You will speak only when spoken to.

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

Yu ave no business treating me so. What give yu de right fe come and harrass me?

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

You a part of this gathering here? You a part of this Jedadiah Clive group planning that absurd back-to-Africa movement?

**BREDDA GABBIDAN:**

If I am or if I am not is not de real question yu come fe ask me. Yu come fe harrass me and me people dem. Wha kind a foolishness is dis? If yu want fe speak to me (*gesturing to the opposite side of de bench...pauses says sarcastically*) please, have a seat.

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

[Surprised, he hesitantly pauses then looks sternly in the eyes of Gabbidan] Yu are in no position of authority to demand such a request. No, I will not sit and speak wid yu, yu will come and speak wid de Minister of Justice himself. (*motions for his officers to apprehend him*) Arrest him! Take him out of here.

[FADE TO BLACK]



**ACT TWO SCENE FOUR  
PREMIER OF JAMAICA'S OFFICE**

**(Late afternoon)**

*[Scene opens with the Premier seated in his office. Enters two of his cabinet members. He motions for them to sit.]*

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Gentlemen, what news do you have to report?

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

he gathering is getting out of control, the crowd seems to be doubling more and more wach day. So far it's minor disturbances but, if things keep up, we may need more reinforcements. It's just a matter of time before the ship arrives. We'll have a mass exodus on our hands.... By the way..... di I happen to see you down at the Mighty Jajah's yard?

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

Are you out of your mind? for goodness sake! Get a hold of yourself!

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

Are you sure you weren't down there?

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

A man of my status! What would I be dooing down there amongst those commoners?

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Gentlemen! Gentlemen, please!.....Well anyway! A fight broke out but they are organize down there. This Mighty Jajah, I don't know, he seems to have everything under control

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Would you excuse us a moment? *(talking to the Commissioner of Police)*. I would like to have a word with the Governor General. *(Minister of Justice exits)* You have to be more careful Governor General. We don't have much time, I have given you a day and nothing fot done. If the Commissioner ever get wind of what we are doing.....

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

Don't worry sir!

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Haven't I heard this before?

**GOVERNOR GENERAL:**

The ship will arrive soon, but I don't know exactly when. As soon as I know of it's arrival, I bet my reputation on this, they will not leave this island.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Bet your reputation? You are gambling with your life.

*[Governor General gives the Premier of Justice a disturbed look and exits.]*





**ACT TWO SCENE FIVE**  
**PREMIER OF JAMAICA AND HIS WIFE**  
**(Late afternoon)**

*[Immediately after the Premier's meeting with the Commissioner and the Governor General, enters the Premier's wife.]*

**PREMIER'S WIFE:**

Norman I've been trying to reach you all morning, your secretary kept putting me on hold.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

What's the problem Helen! Are the kids all right?

**PREMIER'S WIFE:**

Everyone is fine Norman! I've tried to warn you about the situation at the Mighty Jahjah's yard but, like every other man you believe that a woman's word is not good enough. These are my people Norman! I'm more fortunate than those people just because I'm married to you, if not I would be down there with my people at Bredda Jahjah's yard.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

What are you saying sweetheart? Don't you believe in me. I told you I would take care of the situation. The wheel is in motion as we speak sweetheart, the Governor General is taking care of the problem.

**PREMIER'S WIFE:**

The Governor General! That man! My mother's good friend Miss Doris told her, she saw with her own two eyes the Governor General down at the yard, she even spoke to him. He is pretending to be one of the people. And as you know if Miss Doris says she saw him, you know she did.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

I know Miss Doris is a woman of good character but, honey she could have made a mistake. Thank you for looking after your husband's best interest/ Don't trouble yourself with government problems sweetheart. (kiss his wife) See you tonight.

*[Fade to Black]*



**ACT THREE SCENE ONE****(Next morning)**

*[Scene opens with the gathering at Brothers Jajah's yard celebrating the news that ships are coming. Guards in their fineries are seen encircling the gathering for their has been word that their is a threat on Brother Jajah's like. Although they carry no guns, they are seem holding huge staffs.]*

**A BREDDA:**

Wo, Yu hear de ship a come, it a come (to crowd).

**A SISTA:**

We aggo home! We aggo home to mada Afrika!(enters Slick)

**GABBIDAN:**

De Mighty Jajah come! *[The Mighty Jajah enters with his entourage, dressed in long robes accessorized with turbans and waist sashes. He sees Brother Gabbidan and crosses over to greet him]*

**JAJAH:**

Bredda Gabbie, its good to see yu, how yu feeling man? Bway! It has been a long time breddrin. Me sorry me couldn't meet yu when yu arrived. I've been detained by de Minister of Justice. Nothing to worry about yu self about anyway, him just want fe cause disturbance inna a man brain.....

**GABBIDAN:**

Him watchdog de Commissioners was here yesterday.

**JAJAH:**

Seh wha?

**GABBIDAN:**

Man dat same two left footed jackass, detained me to de other day. Him ask me questions about de American and de movement.

**JAJAH:**

Dat fool ask me de sameting, what did yu tell him?

**GABBIDAN:**

Bway! Maybe de sameting yu tell him *[look at each other and smile]*

**JAJAH AND GABBIDAN:**

Nothing!



**GABBIDAN:**

Bway! Wid all de troubles we ave fe face, not only dat bredda, but two thieves came inna yah and tief me papers, just de other night.....

**JAJAH:**

A who you think do it?

**GABBIDAN:**

Me no know!

**JAJAH:**

Me ave me suspention bredda. We will talk bout dat later.*(smiles and waves at people)*  
Me see yu bring more followers.

**GABBIDAN:**

No problem bredda Jajah, me understand. We all yesso. Dis is de last group. They ave been waiting a very long time fe see yu.

**JAJAH:**

Yu right bredda. [*Crosses to center as crowd gathers around*] Breddas and Sistas, we aggo soon breddrin to we home, we roots, mother Afrika

**CROWD:**

Afrika!

**JAJAH:**

But before we go we ave some work fe do. We ave fe get our house in a order. Our race, our family must get prepared, we must get ready.

**CROWD:**

A wha we fe do?

**JAJAH:**

Brother Marcus Garvey had a vision, a dream dat was not realized. Because of de weaknesses and prejudices of man, his movement has layed stagnant. Many breddas and sistas tried fulfill de dream. Brother Gabbidan and I ave worked hard to get we all organized, to get us disciplined to learn de true word of our people. But some of yu, some of de chosen are not ready?

**CROWD:**

No, we ready fe go! Tell us, what we aggo do?





MR. THERRY





**JAJAH:**

Brother Marcus knew it all too well bredda, when he asked...“Where can we find in dis race of ours real men. Men of character, men of purpose, men of confidence, men of faith, men who really know themselves?...So few of us can understand what it takes to meck man-de man who will never say die; de man who will never give up; de man who will never depend upon others to de fe him what him ought to do fe himself; de man who will not blame God, who will not blame nature, who will not blame fate fe his condition; but de man will go out and meck conditions suit himself. Oh, how disgusting life becomes when on every hand yu hear people (who beat your image, who bear your resemblance) telling yu dat they cannot meck it, dat Fate is against them, dat they cannot get a chance. If...the Black breddas and sistas can only get to know themselves to know dat in them is a sovereign power, is a authority dat is absolute, then in de next twenty-four hours we would ave a new race, we would ave a nation...resurrected, not from de will of others to see us rise-but from our own determination to rise, irrespective of what de world thinks.” Breddas and sistas we a leave soon, prepare yourselves, be ready. Ships a come soon to teck us home, back home to madda Africa, but we can only go as one people, with one true destiny, with one true purpose. Breddas and sistas prepare, get ready, we aggo home soon.

*[Jajah exits to his quarters][Scene ends with gatherers moving inside the quarters.  
The light fades.]*



**ACT THREE SCENE TWO**  
**JAJAH'S HOUSE**  
**(Later that day)**

*[It's night, slick is seen rummaging around in Bredda Jajah house looking for something. Not making a sound, Slick knowing exactly what he is looking for searches for important papers pertaining to the "Movement." Just as he finds what he is looking for, he accidentally bumps into a table lamp that falls to the floor. The sound rouses someone in the other room. The scene begins as we hear the sound of footsteps approaching and watch Slick in a hurry trying to conceal the papers and money he has found. Enters Bredda Jajah startling Slick who is caught red handed with evidence in hand.]*

**JAJAH:**

Whe yu a do inna mi place?

**SLICK:**

Bredda Jajah, me just a pass through! Me come fe check yu.

**JAJAH:**

Wha yu ave inna yu hand Slick?

**SLICK:**

Nothing man, just me personal belongs.

**JAJAH:**

You expect me if believe dat. Wha yu a doing wid me personal belongs?

**SLICK:**

Me just did a look fe a safe place fe put it.

**JAJAH:**

Safe place? How yu know bout dem papers. *(Holding up the papers)* Man! you know wha yu holding, yu know wha dis is? Dis a de people dem freedom!

**SLICK:**

Me just saw it laying there Bredda Jajah!

**JAJAH:**

Yu tink me a idiot, me look like me born backa cow! Me never left de papers laying deh. Dem paper was already inna a safe place.

**SISTER'S VOICE:**

The council meeting is about to begin.....



**JAJAH:**

*(letting Slick go, softly says)*A wi deal wid yu later.

**SLICK**

:*(look startled, turns and exits)*

**SISTER:**

Bredda Jajah?.....

**JAJAH:**

*(looking at Slick leaving)*A will be rite dere.....

**(EXIT FADE)**



**ACT THREE SCENE THREE**

**(Next morning)**

*[Scene opens in the yard of Brother Jajah's house. We see Miss Lorna conversing with Miss Doris, one of the principle caretaker of the gathering of the congregation. The two are preparing food.]*

**MISS DORIS:**

Miss Lorna, tell me something, is how long you been seeing dat man, whe him name?

**MISS LORNA:**

Who yu a talk about? Yu mean Slick?

**MISS DORIS:**

There is something I don't like about him, you know. I get dis feeling he can't be trusted. How can yu bring yourself fe be with him. There's something muh too right about him.

**MISS LORNA:**

Him alright, yu nuh. when yu get fe know him. Sometimes him act a bit wild.

**MISS DORIS:**

Wild you say. Wild a nuh de word for him is more like strange, crazy. Mad yes, now dat is what him is....maad.

**MISS LORNA:**

Now me wouldn't say dat yunno. *(laugh)* But, lately he seems a bit preoccupied. Like something major is on his mind.

**MISS DORIS:**

You never did answer me you know. A h ow long you know him?

**MISS LORNA:**

Just a little while, but you know is not dat what bothering yu. Me known yu too long, fe you beat around de bush wid me. Out with it sista.

**MISS DORIS:**

Dat Slick is up to no good. Dat dog.

**MISS LORNA:**

We ave dis talk before and really me no want fe hear it again.*(getting up to leave)*

**MISS DORIS:**

Wait sista! Just hear wha me ave fe say. Me never steer yu wrong before, right?

**MISS LORNA:**

No, you right. go ahead, say wha you ave fe say, since, I know me can't get yu fe shut mouth until yu done say everything.





**MISS DORIS:**

The other night when I was helping that other gathering settle down outside the yard, I saw Slick talking to two people. It was dark and I was more minding what I had to do that I didn't pay it much attention then, it's been bothering me since.

**MISS LORNA:**

But Miss Doris, what's strange about that? Breddas talk all the time.

**MISS DORIS:**

Well soon as me get inside. I hear a big commotion. Me rush outside to see what's going on and me see a Bredda down, bleeding. Blood all over the place.

**MISS LORNA:**

So what are you trying to say? What you talk about?

**MISS DORIS:**

You know. You was there. The other night.

**MISS LORNA:**

You mean when me took care of the Rasta man?

**MISS DORIS:**

There you go again. That's what I'm saying.

**MISS LORNA:**

You must be mistaken. Slick wasn't in that yard. Him was with Bredda Jajah himself.

**MISS DORIS:**

How you know that. That night I talk with Bredda Jajah and Slick wasn't there. If you don't believe me, word ask Bredda Jajah personally.

**MISS LORNA:**

Me agree to do just that.

[*Fade*]



**ACT THREE SCENE FOUR**  
**JAJAH'S HOUSE**  
**(later that day)**

[*Slick come running out of breath into Bredda Jajah's yard*]

**SLICK:**

Bredda Jajah we inna trouble. Yu hear dat, di crowd a come fi kill wi rass. Dem say we rob dem money. Dem so upset mi nuh know wha wi a go do fi calm dem dung.

**JAJAH:**

What on earth are yu talking about? Mi nuh di di people dem nutten, --Whe dem a go kill mi fa? Yu sure a nuh yu dem a come belongings and find out dat di money gone. Did yu tink fi a moment dat tiefing di money would stop di movement. Di movement is bigger dan yu an mi an nutten dat yu can do, a go stop it. Besides, mi did ave mi eyes pan yu fi a wile and mi know yu motives, even a blind man can a yu evilness.

**CROWD**

(*there is a knock at the door*) bredda Jajah! Bredda Jajah! We wan see yu, we wan see yu now!

**BREDDA:**

Me wan mi money! Dem seh yu tief I money! Tell we dat a nuh true!

**SISTA:**

No Bredda, Bredda Jajah nuh tief I money a Slick!

**CROWD:**

Yu sure? How yu know? Whe di money?....

**SISTA:**

Mi hear him tell one a him breddrin bout it.....

**JAJAH:**

Yu hear dat? Yu hear dat? Dem know just who and what you are. Dem come fi yu! (*shoves him towards the door*) Go now and meet yu demise! (*Bredda Jajah shoves Slick towards the door, and continues to shove him*)

**CROWD:**

Slick! We want wi money! Thief! Judas!

**SLICK:**

No Breddah Jajah, yu got mi all wrong. Mi tell you seh mi neve thief the money. Mi...mi...just did hold it fi yu dat's all. Mi just did a hold it fi safe keeping. Bredda Jajah yu a di last person dat mi woulda tink fi rob. Help mi out nuh before di ole pirate dem kill mi. Mi know seh dem wi lissen to yu and believe yu too.





M.R. THIERRY



**BREDDA JAJAH:**

Liar. Yu finally meet yu match. *(shoves him out of the door)*

**SISTA**

*(to Slick)* But mi nuh see yu inna Bredda Jajah yard di odda day when di robbery tek place. Mi see yu a talk to di odda two dem but mi neva tink much a it but me know, yu jus as guilty as dem.

**SLICK:**

Yu see me! Yu mussy black up or under waters. Oman just gway fram mi and go tek care a yu business before it spoil pan yu. Yu fava mi granny ole halfa foot donkey. If a box yu, yu pis pan yu heel. Gwaan home a yu yard moutha massey. Dat's why di old dead ass man whe yu did ave left yu, Yu walk and chat people business too much. Yu old fart yu.

**SISTA:**

Ole tief! gimme mi life savings before me and di res a people dem kill yu cooyah.

*[The crowd circles Slick as he attempts to run away. The Commissioner is seen coming onto the scene. He yells at the crowd to stop, but there is no response. The Commissioner pulls out his gunfires a warning shot. the shot startled the crowd, enough for Slick to break away. He begins running in the direction of the Commissioner. The Commissioner orders him to stop but he does not respond. Slick continues to run towards the Commissioner. The Commissioner fires once at Slick, he falls to the ground. The crowd freezes. The light fades to black.]*





## ACT THREE SCENE FIVE

(ext day)

*[At he fence. Lorna in the gate, she hurries towards Jetta's group. They are asleep. She shakes Jetta.]*

**LORNA:**

[In a whisper] Jetta! Wake up!

**JETTA:**

Wha de time? Wha appenin?

**LORNA:**

Shhh..Wha happen man, yu want fe wakeup de whole world! Keep yu voice down.

**JETTA:**

Wha wrong wid yu sista! Yu wake a man and yu no expect him fe get loud.

*[Jetta gets up. Lorna pulls out of hearing]*

**LORNA:**

Chuch...Rest yu self rasta. Me sey Slick ketch him full length!

**JETTA:**

Slick! Slick who! Wha yu say.

**LORNA:**

Meck yu get so fool-fool when yu sleep man! Me say Slick! De Mighty Jajah's so-call main guard.

**JETTA:**

Who! Yu say! Dat mawga old fool! Wha yu wan me fe do baby.

**LORNA:**

Man! Me say fe keep yu voice down. Get up...

**JETTA:**

Wha yu wan me fe de Lorna? Me look like de Minister Of Justice. *[Violently pulls her towards him]* No mine baby! Lissen daughta no waist yu time pan dat fool, let's spend dis time on each other. *[gives her a kiss]*

**LORNA:**

*[Lorna answer Jetta in a troubled tone]* Dat's all yu man ting of, rapping up. Yu no believe there is more to life and dis movement than love-up.



**JETTA:**

No worry yu self sista! I man will teck care a everyting.

**LORNA:**

Is time we work together as one people and stop the fighting.

**JETTA:**

No worry yu self daughta! me will take care of me one an only.

**LORNA:**

But Jetta! Wha bout de people dem. Rememda yu all coming from a long way.

**JETTA:**

Dem! I man no business wid dem. Dem can teck care of dem self.

**LORNA:**

Let me unda stand someting Jetta. Yu an these people lived in de same district fe years, travel together from Claredon to Kingston, and yu no business wid dem. Dem how yu find time fe business wid me.

*[Jetta move towards Lorna to hold her hand, with fury in her eyes Lorna walk away.]*

**JETTA:**

Lorna baby! No gwan so, yu is me one an only. Puttus I man really love sweetie-pie!

*[FADE OUT]*



**ACT THREE SCENE SIX**  
**THE PREMIER OF JAMAICA'S CHAMBERS**  
**(later that day)**

*[In the Premier's office, the Premier is seen sitting confused and dismayed because there is no word from the Governor General about the looting and shooting at the Mighty Jajah's yard. Over the intercom the secretary announced that the Commissioner of Police is here to see the Premier.]*

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Commissioner! What is he doing here at this time of the day? Please ask him to come in, thank you.

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

Your Excellency, the situation at the Mighty Jajah's yard is one for the history books!

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

What really happen down there Commissioner?

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

Looting and shooting broke out at Bredda jajah's yard. Five people got killed, I believed that the Mighty Jajah maybe among the dead. Earlier this morning he gave a speech, I don't know what it was all about. The people got very upset. Apparently someone infiltrated their group to sabotage his movement.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Commissioner, what are you saying to me? What are you trying to say Commissioner? Out with it man!

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

All hell broke loose! The man who infiltrate the group, tried to get away. Fists where flying. I fired a warning shot in the air in an attempt to calm the crowd down but, the crowd pay me no attention. And this character, came running towards me. I yelled "Stop or I'll shoot," but he kept on coming. He left me no choice, I fired only once, he dropped.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Go on, man! Go on!...

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

I rush over to see who he was, I was stunned.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

What are you trying to say Commissioner! For haven sakes! Get on with it man.



**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

Your Excellency! It was no surprises to me, there were rumor that someone was masquerading as one of the followers. But I did not believed it, but when I saw him there, all the pieces of the puzzle came together.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Out with it man, who was it?

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

This man named himself Slick. Prime Minister, it was the one and only Governor General. the name Slick fit him like a cheap suit, and he wore it very well.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

The Governor General? My right-hand man? You have made some kind of mistake Commissioner! Where is he now?

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

The knife twisted “even” deeper your Excellency. The Governor General is dead.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

You killed the Governor General! (Sternly looks at him).

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

No sir! I killed a common thief.

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

Word must not get out about this Commissioner! Our reputation and jobs will be on the line.

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

My reputation! It is just fine your Excellency. Are you concerned about yours?

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

We must take care of this little problem very quickly, without the whole country knowing about it.

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE:**

Little problem? We you say? No, no, no, sir. You will take care of this little problem yourself. *(Commissioner walks out in a huff. The slowly light fades around the Premier of Jamaica frantically pacing back-and-forth talking to himself.)*

**PREMIER OF JAMAICA:**

What am I going to do? I’m ruined! What am I going to do? *(repeat)*

[FADE TO BLACK]







1954

1954



**ACT THREE SCENE SEVENI****5 years later****NARATION:  
[*Heard off stage*]**

The date 18th November that Jajah set for the coming of repatriation ended in failure. Hundreds of followers, believers in the movement, were sent away since the government confiscated the resources needed for this exodus. Many of his followers fled and went into hiding. In the wake of this setback, Jajah blamed the government for thwarting his efforts to repatriate the believers and called on his congregation to take up an armed revolt. What started as a peaceful movement turned bloody. Those who took up the attempted armed struggle were captured, charged with treason and subsequently sentenced to death by hanging Jedidiah Clives, once reared to the status of prophet was arrested and sentenced to death for treason. Brother Gabbidan his compatriate was also arrested for treason and sentenced to life in prison. Brother Jetta wanted for treason fled and has not been seen since. It seems that with all the leaders removed from power the government's goal to destroy the movement at all cost had succeeded.

For several years the dream of the repatriation seemed over. As the government gained independence from England it appeared the government had won the hearts of the people. But their were still members of the movement determined to keep the dream alive. Sisters Rubie and Puncy, for ten years during Gabbidan's incarceration remained faithful to the movement. They remained at the Jajah compound determined to keep the dream alive. They operated a learning centre on African culture at the Jajah compound. At first many stayed away for fear of reprisal from the police. But after a while the followers returned. They re-established close contact with Minister Douglas and the members of his temple. Minister Douglas periodically forwarded news of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which encouraged the members to reaffirm their commitments to their own, movement.

The Repatriation to Africa Movement, now less radical in appearance, maintained a moderate existence. As political change took place in Jamaica, movements such as this began to again gained popularity. The idea of looking at ones blackness globally rather than locally became the new ideology of the masses. A few years later the Ship did arrive! Ms. Rubie and Puncy's children were a part of the first group to travel to Africa. The ship landed on the shore of Elmina Castle at Cape Coast. Ghana. This slave castle was the site of the major slave trade from the West African coast. A historical site for all, especially the Maroons of Jamaica who have traced their African roots directly back to this very spot. The travelers were welcomed and greeted warmly. They soon discovered that their roots in Africa, was a stronger bond than they could have ever imagined. This was truly a joyous occasion. It appeared that time healed old wounds. the government officials who once outlawed the movement were ousted out of power soon after independence. Although those surviving members of the movement were eventually exonerated of all charges, there was still no word of Jetta and Lorna's whereabouts.







Because of the popularity and pressure from the masses, soon after Gabbidan was released from prison. A bit older and grayer than before, he still had the youthful twinkle in his eyes and spirit in his heart. In a rather short span of time he was re-established as his community's leader. And with the government of Jamaica now giving formal recognition to the late Brother Jedidiah Clives as a national hero for his service to Jamaican society, many people came expressing a desire to repatriate.

*[Scene opens at a memorial service for the late Brother Jajah. Gabbidan is seen preaching to his followers at Jajah's church. The congregation is large and made up of a cross section of dignitaries, Government officials and community leaders representing all levels of Jamaican society. Seated at the head table are the Prime Minister of Jamaica, The Governor General, Minister Douglas, Ms. Rubie Bailey, Ms. Puncy Green her son DJ and his wife.]*

### GABBIDAN:

Breddas and Sistas, we are gathered here today for did special occasion to honor de memory of Bredda Jajah, a founding member of de repatriation movement, a pillar of de community, a well respected leader, and a very close friend. When Bredda Jajah and I were just little boys we were fortunate to learn of Marcus Garvey's teaching. It was those teachings that inspired us to dedicate our lives for de betterment of our people. Unfortunately today I stand up here alone wid out I friend, someone who I shared a lot with. As youths I and he had de rare privilege to experience first hand Bredda Marcus Garvey's vision of de future. I am sure at dis occasion he would want I to share with you dis vision.

*[Removes from breast pocket spectacles and a folded sheet of paper, which he unfolds and begins to read.]*

Bredda Marcus Garvey yu no, had a vision of de future. He saw before him a picture of a redeemed Africa, with her dotted cities, with her beautiful civilization, with her millions of happy children, going to and fro. Him never lost hope! The Mighty Jajah never lost hope. Why should we? Jah knows we ave been through a life-long struggle. Many times we reached a point of giving up hope. But we know all to well dat if we give up hope it means dat we teck a back place in this age of progress forever. No! No I tell yu.

Bredda Marcus said to Bredda Jajah and I, we must believe in de one God, de God of Africa and of de Black Race...he taught us that we must see our God through the spectacles *[gesturing to his own]* of Ethiopia....That the African must ave a theology rooted in conformity with his own physical appearance.

De Black man must take power of every kind-power dat is exclusive. De Black man must be in apposition to determine his own destiny. He can do dis only when he has power firmly in his own black hands...De power which our race needs at dis time can only be realized by action from wid in our own closed institutions. *[he moves to the side of the podium]* God created yu Lords, take yourselves out of the mire and hitch your hopes to de stars; *[move down center towards congregation and veiled object]* yes, rise as





high as de very stars demselves. Let no man pull you down, let no man destroy you ambition.....

*[Entering through the door are Jetta and Lorna also dressed in West Africa attire. They walk towards Jajah and the veiled object.]*

**JETTA:**

*[interrupts loudly]* Let no man destroy I man's dreams

**LORNA:**

Let no one destroy your hope.*[They both embrace Brother Gabbidan and continue speaking]*

**JETTA:**

Keep your head above the water and praise Jah!.

**GABBIDAN:**

*[touched]* Irie bredda! *[takes Jetta's and Lorna's hands placing them over his heart.]* I man ave Jah word inna I man heart.

**LORNA:**

Let's not lose sight of our dreams. In Bredda Jajah's memory, we must all keep the faith.*[Gabbidan takes both of their hand along with his and together they all lift off the veil over the object, uncovering a bust of The Mighty Jajah.]*

*[All rise and join in signing:]*

**ALL:**

O Africa Awaken!

The Morning is at Hand, No more art thou forsaken,  
O bounteous motherland. For far thy sons and daughters  
Are hastening back to thee, Their cry rings o'er the waters  
That Africa shall be free.

*[Fade to audio/visuals of Jamaica and Africa of the mid 70's depicting the triumphs of independence with music. General exit of all actors, spotlight centered on statue of Jedadiah Cleaves, The Mighty JaJah.]*

**[END]**





300 100 100

100 100 100















