



**KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Kansas Museum of History  
6425 S.W. Sixth  
Topeka, Kansas 66615-1099

**DIVISION OF EDUCATION**  
KANSAS MUSEUM OF HISTORY  
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KANSAS MUSEUM OF HISTORY

6425 South West Sixth ▪ Topeka, Kansas 66615-1099 ▪ 913/272-8681

October 18, 1993

Angela Bates  
Nicodemus Historical Society  
Bogue, KS 67625

Dear Ms. Bates:

Thank you for accepting to serve as a member of the advisory panel for our New Opportunities Program grant. The Society received this grant from the Mid-America Arts Alliance to fund a Black history play. Kay Kuhlmann and Kevin Willmott, both of Lawrence, have spent the last seven months working on this three act play. Kay wrote the act on Brown v. Topeka Board of Education, Kevin wrote the act on the buffalo soldiers, and jointly they produced the act on Nicodemus. They anticipate using a cast of seven.

As a member of our advisory panel, we are asking that you review and comment on the enclosed script. ~~We would sincerely appreciate receiving your comments by Friday, November 5.~~ Please mail them back to me in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

The playwrights have scheduled three community workshops in October to receive additional feedback from area residents. They will be advertised locally. Each workshop will include a readers theater followed by discussion. You are invited to attend any or all of the workshops which will be held at the following locations:

Nicodemus, October 23, noon, at the Nicodemus Community Center  
Lawrence, October 24, 3:00 p.m., at the Second Christian Church  
Topeka, October 30, 1:00 p.m., at the Kansas Museum of History

Our goal is to have the script finished by the end of November. We are currently working on securing funding to stage the play in February and March 1994. We hope to be able to offer performances in Lawrence, Topeka, and Nicodemus.

Please return the enclosed form with your comments. We need your social security number to be able to pay you your \$75 honorarium.

Thank you for your assistance with this project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Jennie Chinn at (913) 272-8681.

Sincerely,

Mary W. Madden  
Education Supervisor/Project Manager



**SCHOOL DESEGREGATION**

FIRST DRAFT  
INTERNAL USE ONLY

by Kay Kuhlmann  
October, 1993



### CAST OF CHARACTERS

**CLARKE** (the young boy from Nicodemus piece), who is now an old man, 80 years old.

**LILLIE**, his great-granddaughter; she is 10 years old.

**RAYMOND**, Lillie's father.

**CYNTHIA**, Lillie's mother.

**DR. KENNETH CLARK**, a psychologist.

**LILLIE AS ADULT**, (may be played by same actress who plays Cynthia).

Casting needs: 3 African-American adult males  
1 African-American adult female  
1 African-American 10-year-old female

Props: set furniture  
dolls and case  
crayons for audience  
coloring sheets for audience  
slides

### SETTING

Topeka, Kansas: 1953: An office waiting area  
1953: Schoolroom (entire performance space serves as this schoolroom)  
1993: adult Lillie's office



(AS PLAY OPENS, WE SEE CLARKE, RAYMOND, AND 10-YEAR-OLD LILLIE ENTERING AN OFFICE WAITING AREA. CLARKE AND RAYMOND ARE EACH HOLDING ONE OF LILLIE'S HANDS.)

(PRIOR TO THEIR ENTRANCE ON STAGE, THERE IS SOME MUSIC FROM THE 1950'S ERA TO SET THE MOOD OF THE TIMES, AND SOME SLIDES OF YOUNG BLACK CHILDREN AT PLAY AND/OR IN SCHOOLYARD. SLIDES SHOULD HAVE AUTOMOBILES OR SOMETHING ELSE OF THE 1950'S TO HELP SET THE TIME PERIOD FOR THE AUDIENCE.)



CLARKE

If I live to be a hundred, which it looks like I'm goin' to, I won't understand the ways of this world.

LILLIE

Grandpappy, you promised you'd let me do this. I want to see the dolls, like Dr. Clarke said I could.

CLARKE

What'd you say, Raymond? You're the father. You want this girl to be playin' with a bunch of dolls, gettin' herself all confused? And what's the meaning of it all anyway?

RAYMOND

What I understood Dr. Clarke to say is that they have an experiment they want to do, to show whether or not black girls like Lillie can tell their own color of doll when you put it all mixed in with white girl dolls.

CLARKE

Course she can tell! How could she not be able to tell! I never thought I'd live to see this. Should a stayed up there in Nicodemus, every one of us. I shoulda kept your pappy up there, then he shoulda raised you up there, and you shoulda raised Lillie up there. Right there in Nicodemus. Where we could live in peace and make up our own rules for how to school our children.

RAYMOND

But you came to Topeka. I had nothing to do about that. You did that long before I ever arrived on this earth. You saying that now I should pack up the family and move back up there?

CLARKE

Tell me this. Why does the government want Lillie to be in a different school? A school with a whole lot of white children who don't even want her there? Does that make any sense?

LILLIE

Grandpappy, why did you go to Nicodemus in the first place? Why didn't you just stay in Kentucky?

CLARKE

I was a little boy. My daddy didn't give me any choice in the matter.



LILLIE

That's not the way you usually tell it, Grandpappy. Usually you tell about coming to Kansas as a boy with your parents and sister so you could be free. You always tell it like it was your idea as much as anybody's.

CLARKE

You gonna argue with an old man, Lillie?

LILLIE

I'm sorry, Grandpappy. I'm just having a debate with you.

RAYMOND

(laughing) Grandpappy, now you're all of a sudden going to try to unteach Lillie what you been teaching her all these years? All of a sudden now, you're going to tell her to listen to you instead of being her own judge about her own life? Lillie's been saying she wants to go to the school nearest our house. That she doesn't see why she should have to walk all the way across town when there's a school that's plenty good just down the street from us. Now, does that make any sense to you?

CLARKE

Some things make different sense from different directions. That's all I'm sayin'. And how are these dolls gonna help her to get to the near school?

LILLIE

This is going to be an experiment, Grandpappy. That means we don't know yet how it's going to turn out. You're worrying about the result, and we don't even know what it's going to be.

RAYMOND

Lillie wants to do this pretty bad, Grandpappy. You know, she's always wanting to be scientific. What's the harm in letting her be in an experiment?

CLARKE

Humphh! These going to be white folks doing this experiment?

RAYMOND

Dr. Clarke is a black psychologist from Howard University. That satisfy you?

CLARKE

Howard University? Ain't that one of our own colleges? What's he doing all messed up in something like this?

LILLIE

He's a psychologist, Grandpappy. That's what he went to Howard University to learn how to do. That's where I'm going to go too.



CLARKE

On what money?

LILLIE

First I have to worry about going to a school where I can learn everything I need to know to even get into college. Then, I'll worry about what money's going to send me there.

CLARKE

Well, miss, what's wrong with the school you been goin' to? Looks like you might be gettin' a little too smart as it is.

RAYMOND

Lillie's school has no new science books. They are still teaching from books that are 40 years old. The school for our youngsters doesn't have the money to buy all the new books and learning equipment that the white folks are getting, that's the point, Grandpappy.

LILLIE

Don't you pay your taxes, Grandpappy?

CLARKE

Lordy, yes.

LILLIE

Don't you pay your taxes just like the white people do?

CLARKE

Except I don't pay as much because I don't make as much as most 'em.

LILLIE

Don't you think your great-granddaughter should get just as good an education out of your tax money as everybody else is getting?

RAYMOND

You got to admit, you helped us raise one smart young lady here.

LILLIE

Thanks, Daddy. That's not always what you say.

RAYMOND

When I say something otherwise, I'm joking. Shouldn't tell you that, Lillie. Sometimes your head's already a little too big for your body, but it's the truth. You're a smart girl and you deserve to have the best education like everyone else is getting.

CLARKE

I don't know about these new-fangled ideas. Why don't they just give more money to Lillie's school, let them get better books and equipment, and leave us to educate our own?



LILLIE

Oh, Grandpappy, will you just let me be in the experiment? I always have wanted to be in an experiment, with real scientists, and all that stuff.

CLARKE

What they gonna do to her? Hook up some crazy things to her head and cut off all her pretty hair?

LILLIE

(laughing) Oh, Grandpappy, you just leave that to Dr. Clarke. He knows what he's doing. Nothing bad's going to happen to me. Can I? Please, can I do the experiment?

CLARKE

An experiment with dolls, huh? Sounds mighty peculiar...

RAYMOND

We can sit right outside the room. And Lillie's Mother will be coming down too. I just wanted to bring her myself to meet this Dr. Clarke and make sure he's everything he told us in his letter and over the telephone.

CLARKE

You fixin' on doin' this, young lady? Can't change your mind?

LILLIE

I would like to be in the experiment, Grandpappy.

CLARKE

Lordy, I knew we shoul'da stayed in Nicodemus. Better jobs ain't worth all this big city trouble, it don't seem to me. But I guess this is supposed to be progress. Who's an old man to stand in the way of progress?

LILLIE

(hugging Clarke) Thank you, Grandpappy. Thank you, Daddy. I'm supposed to go in now.

RAYMOND

Lillie?

LILLIE

Yes, Daddy?

RAYMOND

You do good in there, now. Don't you let some big shot from Howard University tell you how you think or what you feel. Hear me?

LILLIE

I love you, Daddy.



CLARKE

One other thing, Raymond. Why they choosin' my great-granddaughter for this experiment? Why can't someone else do it?

RAYMOND

Oh, she won't be the only one there. There'll be other children too. All ages from three to fourteen. That's part of the experiment.

CLARKE

White children too?

RAYMOND

Yes, that's what I understood. White children too.

CLARKE

Boys?

RAYMOND

Boys, too. That's what they said.

CLARKE

Lordy, how they think they gonna git any boys to play with dolls?

RAYMOND

You got a point there, Grandpappy. Well, we'll just let Lillie tell us about it when she gets finished. Maybe they know something about boys we don't.

LILLIE

Can I go now, Daddy?

RAYMOND

Git going then, child. Don't pester me. Go pester that Dr. Clarke. (he laughs)

(LIGHTING CHANGE SO THAT WE ARE NOW INSIDE THE OFFICE WHERE THE EXPERIMENT IS BEING CONDUCTED. DR. CLARKE IS PRESENT, AS IS LILLIE. NOW LILLIE MOVES DOWN INTO THE AUDIENCE. ALL AUDIENCE MEMBERS ARE PART OF THE EXPERIMENT. HOUSE LIGHTS GO ON SO THAT STUDENTS IN AUDIENCE ARE IN ROOM WITH DR. CLARK.)

DR. CLARKE

What have I got in this case? You're all wondering, I imagine. Well, what I've got here are some dolls. Now, you boys, don't pretend to me you've never seen dolls before. But first I'd like to ask the girls something.

(HE TAKES OUT FOUR DOLLS; 2 ARE BLACK DOLLS, 2 ARE WHITE DOLLS. THE BLACK DOLLS ARE OF TWO DIFFERENT SKIN SHADES, ONE MUCH DARKER THAN THE OTHER.)



DR. CLARK

I'll ask you to make a list of your answers, we've got so many of you here today. On the little pieces of paper you've been given I'd like you to write down your answers. It's best if you don't discuss your answers with the student sitting next to you. But I know some of you will anyway, even though I've asked you not to. But just remember this. Don't let your neighbor persuade you of anything. These are personal answers, and you can answer however you want.

These are dolls, aren't they? Now, before you boys start worrying that I'm going to ask you to sew some clothes for them, I'll just ask you to look at them. This is Doll #1, this one Doll #2, Doll #3, and Doll #4. Just look at them for a moment, if you will.

Now, on your piece of paper, please write down the number of the doll you think is a white doll. If there's more than one, write down all the numbers. Now write down the number of the colored doll. Now, the Negro doll.

Now, write down the number of the doll you think has the nicest clothes. Of course, they're only dressed in diapers here, but you know they've got some clothes in their dresser drawers that their parents just haven't dressed them in yet. Now I'm asking you to write down only one number. Which doll has the nicest clothes?

Now, write down the number of the doll that you think is the nicest.

Which doll do you like best?

Finally, which doll is the prettiest? Write that down, please.

Now, if you will, I'd like you to turn in your papers. Don't worry that everyone is going to know how you answered. This is an experiment in which we will summarize the results, but no one student will be stood up here in the front and have his answers read out loud. No, that's not what we're doing here.

Now, my assistant is going to pass out some drawings for you. You've also been given some colored crayons. You have black, brown, white yellow, pink, and tan crayons. I'd like you to quickly color the drawings that you've been given with those crayons. Now, don't pay any attention to what color someone has told you in the past you should color them. You just color them whatever color you like. You've probably noticed, if you've been looking at your neighbor's drawings, that some of you have different drawings from each other. Don't worry about that. You just color the ones you were given.



DR. CLARK

That concludes our experiment for today. I'd like to thank all of you for taking time to do this. Your answers will help us make some findings that we will present to the Court. They are trying to decide a very important issue.

(LIGHTS FADE ON AUDIENCE AND ARE BACK UP ON THE STAGE ONLY. NOW PRESENT ARE LILLIE'S MOTHER, CYNTHIA, AS WELL AS CLARKE AND RAYMOND.)

DR. CLARK

I know this sounds like it might be a worthless experiment. But I'd like to show you some of the results.

CLARKE

I can tell you right now what my great-granddaughter answered. She picked the Negro dolls, and she colored her little girl black or brown.

CYNTHIA

Are you sure, Pappy?

RAYMOND

Course I'm sure. Sure as can be.

DR. CLARK

That may be true in your great-granddaughter's case. We do not know which child chose which colors individually. What we do know is this. Without the children being told, we marked their papers and colorings with their skin color. The results are alarming.

RAYMOND

Alarming how?

DR. CLARK

The students, both black and white, indicated a preference for the white dolls. This was not true in each and every case. But it was true often enough that it is accurate to say there is a pattern here. It did not make any difference what color the student was. In most cases, he or she preferred the white dolls. Found them the prettiest, likely to have the nicest clothes. And maybe what is most disturbing, most of the students said that they liked the white dolls best.

CLARKE

This is plain foolishness. Don't prove a thing.



DR. CLARK

Now, the colorings. The Negro children with very light skin tended to color the drawings white and yellow. But 15 of the children with medium brown skin and 14 of the dark-brown children also colored the figures with white or yellow crayon. Or an outlandish mixture of all the colors. When they were asked to add the colors they preferred in members of the opposite sex, 52 per cent of the children crayoned the drawings white, or in some mixture of colors.

CLARKE

So what?

CYNTHIA

Pappy, I hate to tell you this. But Lillie did that same thing.

RAYMOND

How do you know that?

CYNTHIA

She told me. Came home right after the experiment and bragged to me about how colored a picture of a white doll.

CLARKE

Now, sir, tell me. Why would my own great-granddaughter do such a thing?

DR. CLARK

I only know this. What disturbed me the most was how much the students seemed to be suffering when we asked them to make these decisions. And the younger the children were, the more they suffered. Why, there was a 5-year-old at one of the schools I visited who began to cry when I showed the dolls and asked her to make a choice. It was almost as if she knew she would like to choose a Negro doll, but she wasn't able to do it.

CLARKE

Don't prove nothing. Just a way of upsettin' these children. Shouldn't even of let Lillie do this. I told you, Raymond.

DR. CLARK

What we will be able to do with these results, sir, and with many others very much like them from other groups of students, is present this information to the Court.

CLARKE

What court?

DR. CLARK

Courts are deciding right now all over this country whether it is fair to continue to send Negro children to different schools than white children.



CLARKE

Don't have nothin' to do with us. Nothin' at all. Lillie's got her heart set on goin' on to college. Now, how can you say she's sufferin' from goin' to Negro schools? She's smart as the dickens. Ain't a white child around smarter than my Lillie.

DR. CLARK

What college does she plan to go to?

RAYMOND

Same as you went to. Howard University, there in Washington. Now, isn't that one of the best colleges around?

DR. CLARK

It is certainly an excellent university. But does Lillie think any other college would accept her?

CYNTHIA

I don't know. She's always just said she wants to go to that Howard University for Negroes.

CLARKE

And what's so wrong with that?

DR. CLARK

Nothing at all. A good university. But, shouldn't Lillie have otehr choices? Should she only be able to go to Negro colleges?

CLARKE

Seems to me, if that's who wants her, that's where she should go. Why go somewhere if you're not wanted?

DR. CLARK

Do you like the idea of your great-granddaughter having to go all the way across the country to go to college? What if she wanted to go right here? What if you can't afford to send her all the way across the country? And, even if you can, what about Negro parents who can not afford it? Should their children be deprived of the same educational opportunities that white children receive?

RAYMOND

It's not fair, Pappy. You got to admit, it's not fair.

CLARKE

Well, who's gonna change it? And how many colored children gonna get hurt tryin' to get into those white schools? You just openin' a can of worms, that's what I say. You think those white folks gonna let my Lillie go to their schools without a fight? You want your own little girl being spit on every day she walks in a white school yard? No sir, I don't think we can afford to put our children through such a thing.



DR. CLARK

Well, it's in the courts now, sir. It will be decided by judges. And right here in Topeka is the test case. It's going to the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. to decide.

CYNTHIA

These are changing times, Pappy. Maybe children like Lillie can make a difference to Negro children of the future.

CLARKE

Let some one else's children be the ones to make the difference. Why we gonna put our Lillie through such a thing? Tryin' to go to a white school! That's only trouble. I knew I should of stayed in Nicodemus. Darn me for moving down here.

CYNTHIA

But, don't you see, Pappy? You could just as easily say your own Daddy should have stayed in Kentucky. Not come to Kansas at all. What would you say to that?

CLARKE

I'd say my Daddy wanted what was best for his children. That's why he moved us out to Kansas. For a free life in a free state. (he starts thinking of what he has said and begins chuckling) Okay, so you hung me on that one. Guess you're sayin' that this is just another try at getting more freedom. Never ends, does it?

RAYMOND

No, Pappy, I don't think it ever ends.

(LIGHTS FADE ON THIS SCENE. WE SEE THE ADULT LILLIE (played by same actress who played Cynthia) IN A SPOTLIGHT.)

ADULT LILLIE

My father was right. It never ends. The Supreme Court decided that Negro children did have the right to attend the schools closest to their homes. That was in 1954, when the court case called "Brown versus the Topeka Board of Education" was decided. A young Black girl, Linda Brown, just about my age, got her name put on that case, because her Father decided he would be one of the first to challenge the laws that said Negro children had no right to an education alongside white children.

Just as Grandpappy predicted, that first year I went to a white school I was spit on. But usually not by the white children. Usually it was by their parents. And not all of them at that. Just a few white folks who felt threatened that history was changing.



ADULT LILLIE, continued

At first, when I went to that white school I was just glad not to have to walk so far to school anymore. Now I could go right down the street from my own house. That didn't keep me from being nervous though, in those first few years after I changed schools.

And I missed many of my black friends. Some of their parents didn't want the changes. But over the years, I made friends with some white children my own age too. Pretty soon, I got so I noticed the difference less and less.

What interested me the most, though, were all the wonderful books at the new school. They were newer, they had all the new information in science that I needed to learn to get into college and succeed in life at my highest possible level. I'm not saying that those books were better because they were at a white school. Not at all. They were better because they were newer, they were more expensive, and finally I got the benefit of the education that my parents were paying for with their tax dollars just like all other parents in this country.

By the time I was ready to go to college, I did indeed choose Howard University in Washington, D.C. Why? Not because it was a school that was founded by blacks, but because it was one of the best colleges in the country. Now I didn't have to make my decisions based on what school would take me. I could choose for myself.

While I was at Howard University in the 60's, a lot of other things changed in this country as well for black citizens. Or, I should say, they began changing--slowly.

Now, I have children of my own. And in some ways, we're right back where we started. My children don't go to the school closest to our home either. That's because they are required to go to a school where the numbers of students of each race can be balanced. I don't know if this is the answer. Doesn't it seem, in some ways, that we're right back where we were in 1954?

I returned to Kansas after I got my degree from Howard University. Now I teach students of all colors right alongside each other. I don't see so many students being spit on because of their color like I did 40 years ago. But there are still problems between the races, even here in Kansas, which calls itself "The Free State."

We still have a lot of poverty. Not just among African-Americans, of course. There are too many poor people of all races in this country these days. But, somehow, you have to wonder if race and color aren't still issues to some people in this country.



ADULT LILLIE, continued

Grandpappy died the same year I went off to Howard University. He was coming around on the idea of black children going to schools with white children, but he was still mighty happy to see me choose Howard University. What he said was: "I don't care if it's black, or it's white; you deserve the best education in this country. Howard University is the best."

Even today, 40 years after the Supreme Court decided the case of Brown versus Topeka Board of Education, the schools are found to still be segregating students by color in one way or another.

But, just as my Grandfather came to Kansas--the black settlement of Nicodemus--years ago, I came back to Kansas to be a part of a state which is still looking for ways to make all its citizens equal.

(EXIT AS LIGHTS FADE. SLIDES OF BROWN CASE, ETC. ARE SHOWN WITH MUSIC AS LIGHTS FADE. NOW MIXED WITH SLIDES OF BUFFALO SOLDIERS AND NICODEMUS SETTLEMENT.)



**BUFFALO SOLDIER**

**A One Act Play**

**Written by Kevin Willmott**

**Commissioned by  
Kansas Museum of History**



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Eight actors play all these roles, One White Male, One Native American Male and Five African Americans Males.)

WARD, a 100 year old buffalo soldier and narrator

WALKING BEAR, Indian brave

SATANKA, chief of the Kiowas

Col. BENJAMIN GRIERSON, Commander Tenth Cavalry

Col. GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER, Seventh Cavalry

Gen. W. H. PENROSE, Tenth Cavalry

GEORGE GRAY, Tenth Cavalry

WILLIAM SHARPE, Tenth Cavalry

TOM MILLER, Tenth Cavalry

WARREN JEFFERSON, Tenth Cavalry

SAMUEL O'NEILL, Tenth Cavalry

BILL PARKS, Tenth Cavalry

WILL THOMAS, Tenth Cavalry

EMANUEL STANCE, Tenth Cavalry



(An empty stage. The only set piece is a metal lawn chair. The other characters appear on stage in pools of light some with selected small hand props. These characters should look as authentic as possible in dress and hand props. A screen can be used to project actual photographic images of the principles and places involved.)

(Lights up. On stage is a lone elderly black man, ninety years old or better, MR. WARD. He wears civilian clothes and the tattered cowboy hat of a cavalry soldier. Sitting on a metal lounge chair, he reclines on his front porch watching the neighborhood children play.) Observing his grand kids fighting, he stands correcting them with his cane.)

WARD

(Shouting into street.)

BOBBY! BOBBY! Ya'll break that up...ya'll need to stop all this fighting...understand...get along...ya'll sit down over there behave ya foolselfes. Say what? Say it again boy. What it this here on my hat? That's the first time you noticed that.

(Takes off hat, shows it to them.)

This here is the insignia of the Buffalo Soldier, see I was a Buffalo Soldier in the Tenth Cavalry stationed in Fort Leavenworth...Kansas...that's where the Buffalo Soldier originated from. That's also where they got the penitentiary.

(Points at kids.)

There was also the Ninth Cavalry, the Twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth Infantry, all soldiers, all negroes, ALL Buffalo Soldiers. Why they call us the Buffalo soldiers? Well...the people we fought, the Indians gives us that name...

(FADE DOWN on WARD, the sound of drums  
FADE UP on WALKING BEAR.)

WALKING BEAR

We fought the U.S. Cavalry, the white man, with everything we had. We fought to protect our land and our way of life. One day we encountered a different type of soldier, a cavalry man with dark skin and hair like that between the horns on a buffalo. The buffalo is a sacred creature, strong and fierce, difficult to kill. We had little respect for the white man and his lies and broken treaties, his murderous ways, but the buffalo men were fearless...brave. When the white man brought the buffalo men to fight us, I knew our cause, the cause of my people, was at great risk.



(Photos of Buffalo soldiers, one wearing a buffalo coat.)

(STANCE, a black soldier appears.)

STANCE

The Indians didn't like to fight us buffalo soldiers, they never scalped us. I could never find out why. All we ever got by way of explanation was: "Buffalo soldier no good, heap bad medicine."

(Lights out , Lights up WARD.)

WARD

(Smoothing out hat with care.)

Yeah, let me tell ya, them indians, them indians was something else! FIGHT! Them was some brave mens...Took everything the government could muster to put the Red Man down. ( A beat.) Naw, I ain't gonna let ya play with my hat, you'll have it out there in the dirt somewhere.

(Putting hat back on.)

Tell you some stories...SHOOT, ya'll don't wanna hear none of what I got to say, this here's HISTORY, be boring to ya'll...go play with some of the T.V. games ya Mama bought ya. I tell ya one thing though, the things that we put out, as negroes, BLACK MENS, in the Tenth Cavalry, put all that video nonsense to shame. We had real adventures! (A beat.) LIKE WHAT? Boy...let me tell you. Shoot, boy, ya'll just don't know...the THINGS, the THINGS, we went through!

(Black out WARD, fade up on three black soldiers. SHARPE is pacing, upset while GRAY and MILLER, are sitting at a wooden table.)

SHARPE

I don't know, Isaiah, we been here now going on three months. They can't find no white officer that wanna take charge. You seen the supplies they send us, hell, a dog eats better. Look how many men are in the infirmary SICK...they say its cholera! That's right! Rank water! Eating that rotten half cooked food.

GRAY

You seen them horses they brought in today. Pitiful! Them horses is leftovers from the civil war.

SHARPE

They give us what the white troops turn down.

MILLER

~~Bill ya know'd that we ya joined up!~~ It's no different than it was when we fought the south. We get thirteen dollars a month. The white fellas get thirty.

*CMF shoots what he sees  
dandy about Sully's clown to*



SHARPE

That's what I'm saying! That's why we got to leave, we got to cut this here loose!

MILLER

Bill where you gonna find anything out there making even a lousy thirteen dollars a month, HUH? It may be bad but it IS food and clothes and a roof...and maybe, maybe it'll be gettin' better.

SHARPE

And maybe not, maybe it'll get worse! You know where they gonna put us -- way out in the middle of no where, far from town as they can find -- fighting them red skins cause they AIN'T gonna let no colored men 'round no white folks with guns! Am I lying!

GRAY

Amens Bill, amens.

MILLER

(Stands.)

All you saying is true, Bill. You a smart man, you ain't no fool. I don't know what's gonna happen to us if we stay in here. But I know more about THIS than I does that out there.

(Pointing to the door.)

I ain't got nothing to lose by staying here. See, I done looked at all sides and I don't expect much. In fact I "x-pects" the worst! You better get your mind right, NOW. 'Cause as long as you a colored man in this here country you gotta PROVE you got the right to live. This HERE'S where I prove it! Where YOU gonna prove it!

(The two men stare each other down. Finally, Sharpe sits down, followed by Miller.)

MILLER

Let's play some cards.

(Fade down SOLDIERS, lights up, WARD.)

WARD

Yeah, it was rough in the beginning. When they allowed us to join up in the cavalry, negroes showed up in droves. But them white officers didn't want nothing to do with it. They even approached the "boy general", George Armstrong Custer...

(Black out WARD, lights up CUSTER.)



CUSTER

I don't want anything to do with it. Colored troops...they seem more suited to judging shovels and hoes than muskets. I am in favor of elevating the negro to the extent of his capacity and intelligence, and our doing everything to advance the race morally, mentally, physically...even socially. But I am opposed to making this advance by debasing any portion of the white race. As to trusting the negro with the sacred responsibility of the right of suffrage...I should think of elevating an Indian Chief to the Popedom of Rome.

(Photo of drawing of Custer, his wife and their black cook.)

WARD

Yeah, ole Custer thought he was too good to serve with the black man. This the same man that use to have "relations" with his cook, a black woman...carried her all down in the Dakotas with him. That's right. But you talk to them they was all "siddity", high class...society.

(Photo of Fort Riley, Custer's residence, etc.)

CUSTER

Capt. Benteen's wife, Elizabeth, wrote him about the "brunettes" who we left guarding Fort Riley during the absence of the Seventh Cavalry. She said a more boisterous, undisciplined groups of creatures you won't find. (Laughs.) These negroes use the parade ground as a playground, turning hand-springs all over the sprouting grass...disgraceful!.

(Lights down CUSTER, lights up WARD.)

WARD

The men of the Ninth and Tenth didn't shed many tears when Sitting Bull and them Sioux's tore up Custer long haired behind. In fact! They was glad he hadn't taken charge of the Tenth cause that probably would have been them laid out at the Little Big Horn...I feel's right sorry for them white boys in the Seventh that had to follow that nut to they deaths. But see, Custer thought he was bad, boy had a ego problem, ego was wider than a wagon sheet! One day he was trying to, you know, put his nose up at Satanka, Chief of the Kiowa's...but Satanka didn't play that.

(Lights down WARD, lights up SATANKA AND CUSTER.)



SATANKA

I liked to play, I liked to fight..I even enjoy my enemies. So when I rode up on Custer, I extended my hand...

(CUSTER does not shake his hand.)

Custer did not shake it, ole Satanka was not shook, you see, I have been around Kansas forts, many a while, and know the prejudices of white men. I called up my interpreter, Walking Bird, but Custer still acted like he couldn't understand what Satanka was telling. Finally, Walking Bird stroked Custer arm like a horse saying, "Heap big nice sonabitch, heap sonabitch."

(Black out SATANKA, CUSTER. Lights up WARD.)

WARD

Don't tell ya Mama, I used that word round ya, but that's what was said. Hates to say it, but the govenment had what you call a extermination policy against the Indians, like the Hitler did the Jews over in Europe. I feels bad about our part in that. White folks hated the Indians worst than they did us in a lot a ways.

(Photos of Native Americans families on screen.)

CUSTER

Topeka Weekly Reader...the Homesteaders have little sympathy for these Indians...As far as we are concerned they are a set of miserable, dirty, lousy, blanketed, thieving, lying, sneaking, murdering, faithless gut eating skunks as the Lord ever permitted to infect the earth, and their immediate and final extermination all men, except Indian agents and traders should pray for.

(SATANKA enters.)

SATANKA

I have heard that you intend to settle us on a reservation near the mountains. I don't want to settle. I love to roam over the prairies. There I feel free and happy, but when we settle down we grow pale and die. I have laid aside my lance, bow, and shield, and yet I feel safe in your presence. I have told you the truth. I have no little lies hid about me, but I don't know how it is with these commissioners. Are they as clear as I am? A long time ago this land belonged to our fathers; but when I go up the river I see camps of soldiers on the banks. These soldiers cut down the timber; they kill my buffalos; and when I see that, my heart feels like bursting; I feel sorry...Has the white man become a child that he should recklessly kill and not eat? When the red men slay game, they do so that they may live and not starve.



## WARD

One day Satanka and some other chiefs slipped off and went down to Texas to stop the slaughter of the land by the homesteaders. There they fought, killed some Texans. When they came back General Sherman asked him if he knew about the raids in Texas...He said yes, they had done it. We arrested Satanka and escorted him back to Jacksboro, Texas to stand trial.

(Lights up on Satanka.)

He was sentenced to be hung but they commuted his sentenced to life. Ole Satanka rottin' away in a prison hospital, couldn't take no more, threw himself from a high window. Died.

(Lights fade down on SATANKA, black out.)

(As the lights slowly come up, we see several troopers dancing around a campfire. One is playing a fiddle while MILLER is sipping on a cup of coffee. He steps out to us and speaks.)

## MILLER

We tried to have a good time...best we could. We ain't no angels...We drank, fought, was rawdy like ALL soldiers, we like the company of women. Had to have something to keep from going loco. Because of this they sometime talked bad 'bout us, like we was porch monkeys, bafoons. Shoot the white soldiers did it -- all soldiers do! Them people that talked that bad talk couldn't withstood a minute of what we withstood. Hell, during some of the hard campaigns our horses and mules would just collapse, die right under us...We never had no good boots. Hell, half of us went barefoot, soles of ya feet bleeding from the sharp rocks, sand burrs.

## SHARPE

Your watch Miller.

## MILLER

Yeah, alright. Our clothes would be in tatters, some of the men fought battles in nothin' but they underwear. Quartermaster sent us that junk they'd call supplies, bad rifles, bad ammo...We had to grow some vegetables keep that scurvy from killing us. Good thing most of us ain't never seen no better. Some of us ran off in the beginning, went to Mexico joined up with Indians, desperados, but now we got the lowest desertion rate in the army. Let me tell right now, for a white man, Colonel Grierson is a good man, respects us, treats us like men. He's tried to do the best he could for us, they ain't gonna let him do too much on account we colored. It's odd to see a white man treat ya that way. Some of us don't quite know how to take it. You can trust a white man that treats ya bad, that's honest. You gotta watch one that offers ya manhood.



(Lights up, Col. GRIERSON, a white officer.)

GRIERSON

When Colonel Hatch took the Ninth Cavalry and I took the Tenth. We knew we had many difficulties before us. Like the negroes in my regiment, I was an unlikely candidate for success in the cavalry. I had studied music. When I was eight a pony kicked me in the face..I have never cared for horses since. My admiration of President Lincoln brought me in the war, my successful raids through Mississippi made me a Colonel. I considered leaving the army after the south's defeat but took this charge instead. We recruited from the upper south in the beginning but I was dissatisfied with the results and soon had recruiters concentrate on the northern cities, Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Pittsburgh. I told the recruiters, "Enlist all the superior men you can who will be a credit to the regiment." Prejudice was always a problem. General William Hoffman, Third Infantry, commander of Fort Leavenworth, disliked negroes and the officers that served with them. He tried to make our stay there as uncomfortable as possible. He quartered the men on low ground which soon became a swamp causing several of the men to fall ill with pneumonia. He ignored my pleas to at least create walk ways so the men could keep their feet dry. Hoffman was very petty issuing dozens of complaints against my men for minor trumped up infractions. During inspection my company commanders were ordered to keep the negro troops at least ten to fifteen yards from the white troops and we were not allowed to march in review. Other times he told us simply to stay out of sight! I fought back, protested mainly to no avail. I instructed our company commanders to strike the work "colored" from our reports. We are simply the Tenth Regiment of Cavalry, United States Army! There are Old Fogies in this army that still see no place for the negro, they would love to disband the colored regiments. But I SAY, Colored troops will hold their place in the Army of the United States as long as the government lasts.

(SHARPE stepping from the darkness into the light.)

SHARPE

They called us Moacs, brunettes, niggers, africans, everything but a child of God. When they called us buffalo soldiers we figured out that the indians worshipped the buffalo, treated him with the upmost respect...we took that name, kept it for our own. We got orders to force the indians south of the Kansas line, we had been up and down Smoky Hill, Saline and Solomon rivers scoutin'.

MILLER

Major George A. Forsyth with his second in command Lieutenant Frederick Beecher had just left Fort Wallace and was thirteen miles east investigating an indian attack on a freight train.



## GRAY

It was 'round noon on September 22 when we came up on two of Forsyth's scouts, they commenced to sayin' Forsyth's camp was attacked and was surrounded by hostiles...In desperate straits they was running out of rations, medicine and had many wounded.

## SHARPE

Captain Louis H. Carpenter, H company, Tenth Cavalry gave us orders to move out pronto! About thirty five miles out we came on a up on a indian trail with many dead indians up on scaffold in the trees. They had all died of gunshots...Capt. Carpenter thought one of the dead was Roman Nose, a Cheyenne warrior with a deadly reputation! We found Jack Donovan, another one of Forsyth's scouts, he also said Forsyth was being overrun.

## MILLER

Carpenter took thirty of our best riders off with a few supplies...Running the horses full speed about eighteen miles north we finally reached what was a horrible sight.

## GREY

Six of Forsyth's command was dead...that included Lt. Beecher and Surgeon Mooers. Fifteen was wounded...Forsyth himself had been hit in both legs and maggots was eating at his wounds.

## SHARPE

The smell of the dead bodies, men, animals, everythang was so overpowering the Captain had us move the wounded away from the STINCH, so they could be treated.

## MILLER

Ole Doc Fitzgerald had a time talkin' Major Forsyth in to lettin' him take off that leg...Forsyth was hollerin', I NEED MY LEG, I NEED MY LEG! Ole Doc said, "Better loose ya leg, than ya life." He cut that leg right on off. Years to come they would call this here the Battle of Beecher's island...named after the young Lieutenant.

(WALKING BEAR appears from down stage.)

## WALKING BEAR

The white man made much of this battle, survivors told the tale that they had killed hundreds of redskins, we found no more than thirty...they called it Battle of Beecher Island we remember it as the fight when Roman Nose was killed.

(Black out WALKING BEAR.)



GREY

We moved on back to Fort Wallace and on October 13th moved out again accompanin' General Carr and Captain Graham. General Carr had been one of those Generals that didn't believe in negro soldiers...refused to serve with us.

SHARPE

Carr was out here from the Department of Washington and was looking for his regiment, the Fifth, so he could join up with them as head white man...

MILLER

(Nudging SHARPE.)

Gone fool...

SHARPE

Well as commander...We couldn't find the Fifth no where! Captain Graham decided to take two troopers and look further down Beaver Creek. He didn't get 200 yards when a party of warriors tried to cut them off from the rest of us. They charged the Indians and drove them off.

MILLER

Graham rejoined us. We was crossing north of the Beaver when some 200 'ought indians came up from the south guns blazing! Captain Carpenter had us stay our distance firing the whole while finally running them off.

GREY

No more than a half hour later they returned with reinforcements hundreds of warriors screamed down on us again. Carpenter worried we was gonna get caught in the bottom of that creek bed. Instead, we stood on a small piece of high ground -- forming the wagons in the shape of a horseshoe.

SHARPE

The Indians charged and we opened up on them with seven shot Spencers...We wasn't no green troops no more, we could handle ourselves pretty good. We got quite a few of them and they finally ran off. That night the wolves howled...HOWLED something crazy! But the Indians didn't attack no more.

MILLER

In the mornin', we started back to Fort Wallace and got there on October 21st. We had gone and marched 230 miles in nine days, killed ten or more indians, wounded I don't no how many and had saved General Carr from getting his hair cut off the top a his head. Carr put Captain Carpenter in for the Medal of Honor. We had three men hurt, Private John Daniels of H company was the only one hurt good. Yeah, General Carr's opinion of us changed like the colors in October...He loved us colored boys after that.

(They all start to laugh. Fadeout SOLDIERS.)



## WARD

Yeah, they saved Carr's behind again when his group and a company of Buffalo soldiers under General Penrose was herding cattle, our meat supply...Both groups got caught in a terrible blizzard. Carr was suppose to find Penrose and get him badly needed supplies but Carr and his men was buried by the snow. Wild Bill Hickok was scoutin' for the buffalo soldiers...he went out and met up with two buffalo soldiers that was sent out to find Carr. Well, it all worked out but they suffered something awful. Four of Carr's men froze to death and they lost over 200 head of cattle. The Buffalo soldiers suffering from frostbite had to scrounge up hides from the dead animals for foot gear to replace their boots that had fallen apart. They made in back to Fort Lyon on February 19th. Penrose too was impressed with the will of the black man.

(Lights up, PENROSE. Photos of Buffalo soldiers on screen.)

## PENROSE

(Reading a letter.)

Officers and soldiers of the Tenth U.S. Cavalry. You started from this post on an important mission under many disadvantages. Your horses were in poor condition, and you were to march, without forage, to penetrate a raw, and before unknown country. Hardly had you started when you encountered severe storms of rain and snow, accompanied by intense cold; you were without suitable and necessary shelter for such inclement weather; your horses perished day by day, you yourselves suffering from intense cold, many with frostbitten hands and feet; but through these hardships and difficulties you pushed nobly on, undaunted, undismayed, anxious to meet the enemy.

Respectfully,

W.H. Penrose  
 Captain and Bvt. Brig. General U.S.A.  
 Late Commander Indian Expedition from  
 from Fort Lyon, C.T.

## WARD

Of the 419 Medal of Honor awarded during the Indian wars, 13 was awarded to negroes. Sergeant Emanuel Stance was the first black indian fighter to earn the Medal of Honor. Stance was in Company F. Ninth Cavalry stationed at Fort McKavett, Texas. Stance was a tiny joker...short round...when in come to courage he was tall as a Georgia pine.

(Lights up, STANCE.)



## STANCE

It was the morning of May 20th, I left Fort McKavett with ten troopers. We were to scout the area around Kickapoo Spring about twenty miles to the north. We were about ten miles out when I spotted a party of Indians driving a herd of horses. I had the men form a line and charge a dead run at the Indians. Our Spencers set the air of fire and ran the Indians, who seemed shaken by the charge, off and runnin', we captured nine horses. We went on to Kickapoo Spring and bivouacked for the night. Following morning, we headed back to Post with the horses we had captured. We hadn't got far when I spied a party of warriors preparing to attack a small train. We charged again and forced the Indians to flee...we captured five more horses. But those fella's weren't going to be run off so easy. They came up from behind and opened fire on us from long range. We wheeled back around and I turned my little command LOOSE on them...after a few volleys they left me to continue my march in peace.

(Enter SMITH.)

## SMITH

I was one of the troopers with Sergeant Stance. He's being too modest. We had a running fight for eight miles with them warriors. Sarge was out front leading way ahead of us, shooting, yelling for us to press the attack. Sarge you something else...

## STANCE

This was my fifth successful encounter with Indians in the last two years...this seemed to impress Captain Carroll...he put me in for the medal. On July 24, 1870, I received the Medal of Honor, I wrote the Adjutant General in Washington, I told him, "I will cherish the gift as a thing of priceless value and endeavor by my future conduct to merit the high honor confirmed upon me."

(Looking at medal.)

But ya see, my pride and happiness didn't last long. When we were off duty and went into town we never had to look for trouble it was always waiting on us. A white man by the name of John Jackson, a settler near the fort murdered a FRIEND OF MINE, Private Boston Henry, shot him in cold blood...of course he escaped from the law and then killed Corporal Albert Marshall and Private Charles Murray who was in my company, Captain Carroll's F Company! When they finally caught this man they had a so-called trial, the jury quick set him free.

(A sudden burst of anger.)

That's what it's like to be a colored man in this country. You try to do right, you try to fit in, you try and prove you just like every other man, and for a minute you forget, for a MINUTE you think you like everybody else. FOR A MINUTE YOU THINK YOU EQUAL! Then here it comes, here it comes like death creeping under ya door, a word, NIGGER, a remark, an order! Our just out right MURDER.

(A beat.)



STANCE (Cont.)

What's it gonna take? What do I have to do? I do what you tell me to do. I obey, I take orders, I play dumb for you, I'm appreciative, MY GOD IN HEAVEN I EVEN KILL FOR YOU! And for what? So you can think of me as an animal...a horse, a buffalo. ( A beat.) What is it going to take?

(Fade to black, STANCE.)

WARD

Yeah, we caught hell more from the people we was protecting than the Indians we was fighting. At least the Indians respected us. Well, wasn't nothin' we could do about that but just go on living--but it did cross our minds and we talked about, quietly, amongst ourselves.

(Lights up, campfire. Four buffalo soldiers are camped around the open fire, JEFFERSON sips a cup of coffee, PARKS stands guard, O'NEILL is seated poking at the fire and THOMAS is in the middle of making a point.)

THOMAS

I know ya'll be thinking about it just like I do. What we doing fightin' these indians...HUH? When the white folks we fightin' for, is fightin' us. I swear sometimes I think we right stupid..

(The men chuckle.)

JEFFERSON

(Tossing out his last few drops of coffee.)

Yeah, it has crossed my mind. But we soldiers we ain't no politicians. A soldiers job is to do what's told, right?

THOMAS

A soldiers job ain't to be a damn fool!

O'NEILL

What you talkin' about them indians is savages.

PARKS

They say we savages.

THOMAS

What's wrong with you O'Neill all of a sudden you think you white! We all savages!

JEFFERSON

Lower your voice before you bring the Lieutenant over here, you want THAT.



O'NEILL

All I'm saying is what I SEE. Them Redskins will cut you in two.

THOMAS

And we won't? You need to wake up, fool, this is war. Everybody's cuttin' everybody in two. The only question is who's side of the CUTTIN' should you be on. I'm saying we should get away from these white folks, side up with them indians.

O'NEILL

Fool is you drunk! They'd have your nappy head on the end of a pole.

PARKS

I'm sorry Mose but I ain't siding up with no Indians.

THOMAS

I been around indians they ain't no different that us.

JEFFERSON

I been around indians too! I seen how the Choctaw's down in Oklahoma did them negroes they owned.

O'NEILL

Say what!

JEFFERSON

That's right! Choctaws owned slaves, Chickasaws, Creeks, Cherokees...Seminoles all of um owned us.

PARKS

You lying.

JEFFERSON

You didn't know that! Yes sir! It was what they called the civilized tribes. They the ones that owned us...see they figured if they could be like white folks, own some of us, white folks might get up off um.

THOMAS

Just like we figured, if we kill them, white folks might like US. ( Aside.) It's a wonder we ain't all dead.

O'NEILL

I'll be damned even the indians owned us!

THOMAS

That still don't make what we doing right! White folks just knew getting indians involved in the slave trade would keep them from taking in runaways. Besides, not all indians owned us...not all Choctaws was wrong...what about them Seminoles, hell, them Seminoles let colored people in they tribe!



PARKS

My Granddaddy told me he knew a slave named John Horse that slipped off and became part of the tribe down there in them swamps. Hell, he became a chief down there.

O'NEILL

Why don't you go down in them swamps with um! You like um so damn much!

PARKS

Your mouth gonna get your behind in trouble.

JEFFERSON

I tell ya this I would sho' marry a Indian woman. If I found a good one.

O'NEILL

What! I ain't gonna sleep with no dog...you crazy.

PARKS

You the one that's crazy, a Indian woman a good lookin' woman. Look almost as good as a colored woman.

THOMAS

I got Indian blood in me...

O'NEILL

Yeah, and I'm the King a 'Angland.

THOMAS

I got Choctaw in me. My mama was Choctaw.

O'NEILL

Your mama was a redskin huh? Your black daddy had him a good squaw, didn't he, huh. No wonder you got problems killin' redskins, you one of um.

THOMAS

You ignorant O'Neill. You an ignorant man.

O'NEILL

(Stands.)

I is huh, well, maybe I can't read and cypher like you mister book reader but I got mother wit'. I knows that I'm here...now, a black nigger in a white man's country, fightin' red men that wanna kill me. For killing them I get food and money and without them two things you can't live! I seen smart niggers like you growin' up. Niggers that think they special. I seen where that get ya. Hung up upside to a tree with ya privates cut out. I may be ignorant but I'm still here and I'm gonna be here as LONG as I can be.



THOMAS

You ever think in that small mind of yours that living like a dog ain't living. That being a fool for money is still being a fool! That if you ever gonna stop being a black nigger in a white man country you gonna have to start fightin' the RIGHT people!

(They attack each another, wrestling to the ground, kicking and punching. A white LIEUTENANT and a black SERGEANT hurry over breaking up the fight. The other men pull them apart.)

LIEUTENANT

Sergeant what is the problem here?

SERGEANT

Ah, I'm not sure sir, but sir I will get to the bottom of it, sir.

LIEUTENANT

See to it...Private Thomas...problem?

THOMAS

No sir...

LIEUTENANT

Private O'Neill you have a problem?

O'NEILL

Naw sir...

LIEUTENANT

Can't you men get along? Don't you get enough fighting already, HUM? Whatever your problems are you they don't exist. You have only one problem pleasing the Department of War. Is that understood?

(The men mumble, Yes, sir.)

SERGEANT

Can't you nappy heads do better than that?

THE MEN

YES SIR!

(The Lieutenant walks off.)

SERGEANT

When we get back to the post I'll get to the bottom of this and there ya'll will be punished. Now get ya back sides on that ground and go to sleep.



(The SERGEANT exits. The men stare at each other as we fade to black.)

(Lights up, WARD.)

WARD

And when they punished you, you knowed you was punished. You think your Mama switchin' your narrow behinds is bad, shoot, try standing on the head of a barrel from 9.00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Or having to sit inside a barrel for that same amount of time. Oooowe! I tell ya whatever you did, you wouldn't do no more! Bet ya'll didn't know that Indians had black slaves...Know'd ya didn't...not many people do know, so many thangs they don't tell ya in school...especially about people got some color to um. Back then white folks knew that Indians and negroes getting together would be BAD medicine!

(Lights up THOMAS.)

THOMAS

My Grandfather told me the story of two missionaries that traveled and met with the Delaware nation, the missionaries had several black slaves. The Indians of the Delaware Nation, could not help recollecting that them missionaries had a people among them, who, because of they color, they had made slaves of. Now they could not see any reason, if a people being BLACK entitled them to enslave um, why a RED color should not equally qualify the SAME treatment. The Indians therefore determined to WAIT, to see whether all the black people amongst them were made thus happy and joyful before they would put confidence in THEIR promises; for they thought a people who had suffered so much and so long by the hands of white folks, should be entitled to their attention FIRST! So, they sent back them two missionaries, with many thanks, promising that when they saw the black people among them restored to freedom and happiness they would gladly receive more missionaries.

(Black out, THOMAS. Lights up, WALKING BEAR.)

WALKING BEAR

We had several black soldiers come and join our people. Many of them tired of being mistreated...would run away from the bluecoats, go over the hill...they would say. They would become much help to us and our battles with the white man. One Buffalo soldier came to us at night...he played a shiny horn, a bugle he called it. He rode his pony with us when we went against some white buffalo hunters in the Texas country. We always hoped that more of the black soldiers would join us. But, we understood why they didn't.



(Lights up, WARD.)

WARD

Naw, we couldn't join up with them Indians, bad as we wanted too. Had no choice but to follow orders. I believes us going through all that, made it better for my kids, and they kids and ya'll. We proved we was men...not animals. Our story, the story of the Buffalo Soldier is a big one, we overcame every obstacle in our path but two...prejudice and discrimination. And heck, we still here so we musta overcome them too! Shoot, we did it all chased Geronimo all cross the country, went south of the border after Pancho Villa, ran up San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt, let him take all the credit, tamed every Boomer, cattle rustler, bootlegger, gunman from the Rio' Grande clean up in them Dakotas. And yeah, you right, don't many people know about us, what we done. Hell, don't matter. I can see what we done, the cities, bustlin', the farms, the progress, that all the momument the Buffalo Soldier is looking for.

(A beat.)

Now, ya'll go play, Ya'll done wore me out. I'malay down.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF PLAY



November 2, 1993

Mary W. Madden  
Division of Education  
Kansas Museum of History  
6425 SW 6th  
Topeka, Kansas 66615-1009

Dear Mary:

I received the script for the play regarding Nicodemus and must admit that I was disappointed in the lack of general knowledge of the history and sequence of historical events, and above all the overall negativity that seems to be inherently woven into the various scenes. It doesn't ever really address the positive issue of the survival aspect of the town and people, as well as the most important emancipation celebration. I am assuming that little time has been taken to read the enormous amount of information on the history of Nicodemus to get a real concept of when, why, and how Nicodemus was established and how it has survived. It is apparent in the last scene, and I quote, page #15 " Maybe all these young people that's leavin' maybe they'll come back and visit. Have gatherin's at the church or something'." , that the importance of the emancipation celebration was grossly overlooked.

I was out of town and couldn't catch up with Kay before she and Kevin came out to Nicodemus for Pioneer Days on Saturday, October 23, to inform her that there would be no time on the schedule for a reading, and to tell her that I felt before a reading could be done for the community, that the script desperately needed work. I can not in any conscious allow the community to hear such a poorly scripted play of their rich history, without some attempt to have Kay and Kevin work on it. However, when they arrive I appraised her of the situation, and suggested that they watch the 2 documentaries and videos by Good Morning America, Sunday Today Show, and the Sun Flower Journeys, look at the exhibit materials to get a better understanding of the history of the town, and encourage them to talk with people. Within 15 minutes she informed me that she they were not going to stay. I was appalled, however, she must have had her reasons.



I do feel that if the script is such, that it is worthy to read to the community, we can arrange to do it without another trip out here for them. I want to be cooperative and provide as much professional assistance that I can, but to be quite honest, I am very disappointed in what they have written thus far. I wonder how much was conceived and written by Kevin. Even the dialogue needs some work. I have worked with several companies that have produced and are currently producing theatrical and documentary works on Nicodemus and do have some professional experience in reviewing such works with a critical eye. I do not want to seem too harsh on them, however, they need to study the history more. I found this to be true with the buffalo soldier script also! As you may or may not know I wrote a 45 minute script on the history of the buffalo soldiers and we do this presentation all over the state.

The history is too critical and important to treat it with such lack of serious regard.

Please review my comments and let me know what you want to do next.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Angela Bates,  
President



## COMMENTS

- #1. Pap didn't have anything to do with Nicodemus' history, however his role in motivating the exodus is good.
- #2. Page #7 - when the people arrived it was too late in the season to plant, that is why they all but starved that first winter. They ran out of supplies and had to solicit assistance from surrounding communities, and the native americans assisted them.
- #3. Page #7 - They didn't come "to get away from working for the white man"- they were not share croppers, they came to get land and to have a place they could call their own. This is too negative and sterotypical. This needs to be consistent with scene #1, page 1 "A man needs his own place, somewhere that's yours....."
- #4. The other point here is that the railroad did not come towards Nicodemus until 1885 years later. People stayed in the area and worked the land, they did not generally seek employment outside the area until later years. They were farmers. This seems out of sequence and logically makes no sense if they have recently arrived in Nicodemus or within the first 2 years.
- #5. Page #9 - "Why would I do that?..." this comment seems inappropriate. It assumes that Hill has assumed himself guilty and Foster really has not accused him. This scene assumes that Hill was the cause of the railroad not coming through - he wasn't the folks voted against it.
- #6. Page 10 - I don't understand the significance of this scene (4) at all.
- #7. Page 12 - this entire scene needs to come somewhere after they have arrived and before the concept of the railroad. I also think that to describe life in the dugout versus the size and building of a soddie is of more significance.
- #8. Page 13 - "Them was out of the garden?" is rhetorical - suggestion - make reference to how the garden is doing.
- #9. Page 14 - There needs to be some reference to them working together to make it in Nicodemus, the hard times, good times, etc. not just 'I been happy with you'. Needs to be in 'we' form rather than I 'you fulfill your dreams' - They came together as a family!
- #10. Page 14 - the reference to the railroad - again, negative and needs to be put in a positive form - example - "we survived inspite of the railroad not coming through". Again, it was the folks who voted against it - no necessary the desire of the white man not wanting a colored man to have anything.
- #11. Page 15 - This scene needs to be replaced with dialogue that deals with the



concept of the emancipation celebration, rather than a vague concept of maybe they'll come back for a church gathering - this is too weak.

#### Other General Comments

Overall sequence of events needs to be reworked.

More emphasis on why and how they survived.

More emphasis put on the community cohesiveness and working together to survive.

Needs some indication of what types of businesses, and livelihood the town reached in its hay day. One gets the impression that few people are there and they didn't really make it - no sure why, but illusion that it may be because the railroad failed to come through.

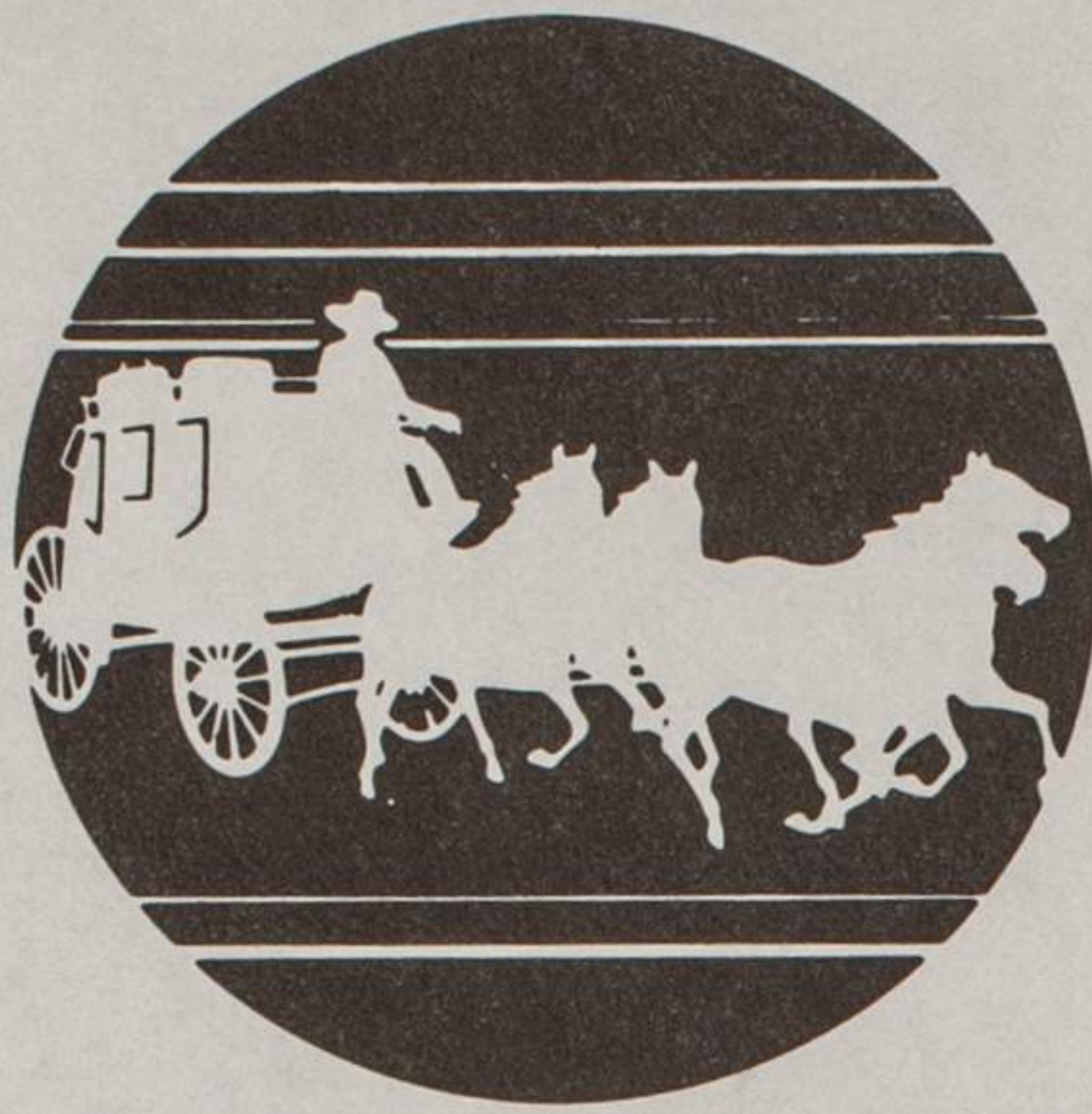
Need to incorporate the native American's assistance in the survival of the town's people that first year.

Although the dug out is important the concept of moving from a dugout to a soddie and then on to limestone structures is stronger than a mere building of a soddie.

Some where in all of this there should be a major theme of the role of the minister and the concept of God and his grace and the people's strong faith in HIM - helping them to really survive. This is very strong in the history and needs to be woven into the script with intimacy.

I'm not sure that we want to perpetuate the negative aspects of discipline and sibling rivalry in the manner in which you have incorporated it. Although, culturally and humorously you may be correct, a more powerful and important perspective is that of the family working together and assisting each other in making the 'farm' work. Encouraging and teaching each other various skills, such as reading and writing and music. Literature, music and basic education were major educational objectives of the members in the community. Hard work and working together was what made the community work and survive.





# KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

KANSAS MUSEUM OF HISTORY

6425 South West Sixth ▪ Topeka, Kansas 66615-1099 ▪ 913/272-8681

March 14, 1994

Angela Bates  
Nicodemus Historical Society  
Bogue, KS 67625

Dear Angela,

Enclosed are the third drafts of all three African American play scripts. These scripts have been heavily revised since you last saw a draft. The writers have worked on them and three members of the Education/Outreach staff have offered suggestions for revisions and editing. The writers have taken most of our suggestions into consideration.

We sincerely appreciated your honesty in the past when critiquing the scripts. Please continue to give us your honest opinion and suggestions for changes on these drafts.

I had hoped to get these scripts to you earlier but we experienced some unfortunate delays. I need your input no later than Friday, March 25. This will give the writers time to edit in your comments before the end of the grant period. (This project was funded by an M-AAA New Opportunities grant.)

I apologize for the short notice. I hope you will have time in your busy schedule to review, comment, and return these scripts to me. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience.

I look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (913) 272-8681.

Sincerely,

Mary W. Madden  
Education Supervisor



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288-06



MAR 14  
PM  
1994

ANGELA BATES  
NICODEMUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOGUE KS 67625



AFRICAN-AMERICAN SETTLEMENTS IN KANSAS  
(Actual Title Not Yet Decided)

Suggestions:

GOING TO KANSAS FREE  
GOOD TIME COMING: BLACK SETTLEMENTS ON THE PLAINS  
COM'N HOME: BLACK SETTLEMENTS IN KANSAS

Third Draft  
For Internal KSHS and MAAA Use

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and Kansas State Historical Society



The following script was written collaboratively by Kevin Willmott and Kay Kuhlmann. In review process, you may direct questions about sources and material to the playwright whose initials appear in lower right-hand corner of the particular page. Source List appears at end of script.



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(The first two listed must be played by actors who take on no other roles; all other characters can be played by an ensemble interchangeably; at least 3 African-American men and 1 African-American woman actors are necessary for the Ensemble.)

ESTHER, an African-American woman; she appears both as a character living in the 1880's and as that character's great-great-granddaughter living in the 1990's (WOMAN). Style of dress will distinguish them.

NOBLE PRENTIS, a white journalist

Ensemble:

PROMOTER, African-American

WILLIANNA, an early African-American settler

REVEREND ALFRED FAIRFAX

BEN

ZEKE

ELLA

HOSEA

TOM

SISTER MEAD

E.P. MCCABE

SARAH MCCABE

ABRAHAM T. HALL

ELECTIONEER

Z.T. FLETCHER

MRS. FLETCHER



At rise of play, we see an elderly African-American woman (same actress who will play Esther) sitting on the stage mending a quilt. She is dressed in modern clothing.

WOMAN

(Singing)

Nicodemus was a slave of African birth.  
And was bought for a bag of gold.  
He was reckoned a part of the salt of the earth  
But he died years ago.

Nicodemus was a prophet, at least he was as wise  
For he told of the battles to come  
How we trembled with fear, when he rolled up his eyes  
And he heeded the shake of this thumb.

CHORUS:

Good time coming, good time coming  
Long, long time on the way;  
Run and tell Elija to hurry up Pomp  
To meet us under the cottonwood tree,  
In the Great Solomon Valley  
At the Break of day

(Lights fade up, a PROMOTER, in another part of the theater, waving handbills for the Nicodemus Settlement.)

PROMOTER

To the colored citizens of the United States. We, the Nicodemus Town Company of Graham County, Kansas, are now in possession of our lands and the town site of Nicodemus, which is located on the N.W. quarter of Section I, Town 8, Range 21, in Graham County, Kansas, in the great Solomon Valley, 240 miles west of Topeka, and we are proud to say **IT IS THE BEST COUNTRY WE EVER SAW!** The soil is rich and black! The country is rolling and pleasing to the human eye! The Solomon River flows through Graham County and offers an abundance of excellent water! There is fine Magnesian stone for building and timber, timber plenty for fire use! And coal we are sure to find!

Now is your time to secure your home on Government land in the Great Solomon Valley of Western Kansas.

Daily we receive letters from all parts of the country desiring to locate in the great Solomon Valley of Western Kansas. Colored citizens of the United States realize your future, confront your past, come to the promised land, come to Nicodemus!



#### WOMAN

Well, that's how it started. Promoters urging my great-grandparents to head on out to Kansas, along with hundreds of other former slaves who wanted to establish their own farms and towns. My great-grandmother was one who went, and we've been here ever since. She gave birth right here in Nicodemus, northwest of here in a field. First child born in the settlement, named him Henry. This is her quilt, pieced by her own hand. I'm just doing some mending on it.

(Woman exits, leaving quilt on chair, singing earlier song trailing off as she goes.)

(Lights out on chair area; up on Prentis.)

(Enter Noble Prentis, a Kansas journalist, with an old-fashioned standing camera. He sets it up and takes several "photos," which are simultaneously displayed via slide projection at rear of stage [Stage directions will specify "photo" when one is shot.]

#### PRENTIS

(Photo of Kansas City, Mo. of the time, preferably with first group of black colonists to Kansas.)

I do believe I witnessed the first group of black settlers to arrive in Kansas. There were already black residents in Kansas, but these were settlers, wanting to form their own towns. 1873. Don't remember the month. Kansas City, Missouri, is where I saw them. They were mostly field hands from Tennessee and headed to Cherokee County in southeastern Kansas. But another group came, heading northwest. That's the story I'm following.

#### PRENTIS

(acknowledging audience)

Get my pictures here, then be on my way. Don't let me disturb your view.

#### PRENTIS

Not a very pretty sight. (Photo.) See for yourself. That's what the Solomon Valley of Kansas looks like in July of 1881. This is my first trip to Nicodemus. Settlers have been here for four years now. As I headed west from Atchison, things looked like I was used to in Kansas. Then as I headed out of Stockton, the countryside began to change like it was a different country. Not a tree in sight. Well, that's hyperbole. A tree here and there. But nothing even resembling a wooded area. Now, I'm not a farmer. But just by gazing on the soil, it seems less fertile to me. Here, in the low bluffs on each side of the Solomon river--(photo) "a compromise between a clay bank and a stone quarry." Seems to me to be more suited to growing wild grasses than anything else.

#### ESTHER

(Enters in 1880's style dress and begins piecing quilt just as he is finishing his line.)



Beg your pardon, Mister. But we grow corn.

PRENTIS

(Photo of corn.) Well, there you go. Guess that soil isn't as bad as I first thought. Corn.

But what most interests my journalist's eye was what I can see in the distance as I make my final approach to Nicodemus. Many dugouts (photo). Here's one of them. (Photo.) Even your occasional stone house. (Photo.) And the irony and excitement of this new civilization in the vastness of western Kansas.

(Turns from camera and speaks directly to audience.)

100th meridian. Something special about that number maybe. It's also a latitude that is supposedly too arid to support life. But any decent journalist can tell you that things are not always as they first seem. I'd heard of Nicodemus, the life these immigrants have been building for themselves since arriving in '77, and I decided to see for myself.

Pardon me, ma'am. Nam's Prentis. Noble Prentis. You've got a nice settlement here.

ESTHER

So we do. Thank you. I'm Esther. Excuse me while I get back to my quilting.

PRENTIS

(chuckling) See what I mean? These are determined folks. And if I were in the predicting business, I'd say they're here to stay and 150 years from now their great-grandchildren--some of them anyway--will still be here. Not in the predicting business, though. Just report the facts as I see them. And a few good photographs to help by readers get the full picture.

(Photo.) There he is. Henry Williams. First baby born in Nicodemus.

ESTHER

How do you know so much about Nicodemus?

PRENTIS

I'm a journalist. Snooping is my business.

ESTHER

Nicodemus isn't the only black settlement, you know.



PRENTIS

I did know that. but it's the only one I've visited.

ESTHER

(Photo.) This is Willianna. She's been here three years.

WILLIANNA

As I traveled toward Nicodemus in 1878 with my group, one of them shouted "Look! There is Nicodemus!" I looked with all the eyes I had. "Where is Nicodemus? I don't see it." My husband pointed out various smokes coming out of the ground . . . the families lived in dugouts . . . I began to cry.

(Esther has exited quietly with her quilt and has been replaced by the contemporary WOMAN.)

(Prentis exits before she begins.)

WOMAN

There was another black settlement know as the colony of Fairfax down in southern Chautauqua County. Started by Reverend Alfred Fairfax. Reverend Fairfax was ALSO the first black legislator in Kansas. Sho' was. Yes sir, he was an extraordinary man.

(Fade out, ora, lights up Fairfax.)

FAIRFAX

My name is Reverend Alfred Fairfax. I was born into slavery in Loudon County, Virginia in 1840. As a young man of 18, I rebelled against my master and attempted to escape. I was caught and whipped like a mule. I tried to escape again. They tracked me down, this time, selling me to another man. But I was not a very cooperative slave, and I was sold to another master and moved to Louisiana. I would lay at night and wonder . . . would I ever be free. All I knew was that I would never be free unless I made it happen. No one was going to come a rescue me. For a black man to be free you must seize it?

(Fade up, ora.)

WOMAN

To be somebody in this life you can't wait. You've got to move ahead. Reverend Fairfax knew that. He also knew no matter how many times he was caught tryin' to escape, he'd try again. And one day, ONE DAY, he'd get away from bondage and you know, that day came. The year was 1862 and Reverend Fairfax was organizing his fellow slaves.



(Lights up, Fairfax and other slaves.)

FAIRFAX  
(Speaking to other slaves.)

Is them mules still there?

BEN

They still there Alfred.

FAIRFAX

Enough for all of us?

BEN

Enough.

ZEKE

Massa have the overseer check on things 'bout this time of night. What if he finds us? They do kill slaves that run off . . . when a Massa get right tired n' mean. They can act right foolish.

ELLA

I don't know Alfred . . . maybe we shouldn't.

BEN

Come on ya'll, we can't get scared now.

ZEKE

When we gonna get scared, when we dead!

FAIRFAX

Yeah, you right, they might catch us and kill us. Especially stealin' them mules. but I tells ya this. Gone, worry about what'll happen if ya DO try and escape, but best think on this, what'll happen to you if you DON'T try and escape.

(The slaves fall silent.)

FAIRFAX (Cont.)



'Nuff talk. We got to move. Just like we planned. Ben you go to the stable and gather them mules. Zeke yo' job is to watch for the overseer.

ZEKE

Alfred you always been a good talker, but we gonna get our foolselves killed.

FAIRFAX  
(Grabs ZEKE.)

I AIN'T GONNA LET YOU RISK THE REST OF US! Now, you get them bad notions OUT yo' mind. We gonna get them mules, we gonna get on um, and we gonna get to some-kinda freedom. You believe that?

ZEKE  
(Giving in to belief.)

Sho' I believe it.

FAIRFAX  
(Appealing with friendship.)

Zeke . . . it's gonna be alright. Trust me.

FAIRFAX extends his hand. The two men shake hands.)

FAIRFAX  
Alright. Ella you got that food you been gatherin'.

ELLA  
We got enough food to hold us - 'spects about a week or so.

FAIRFAX  
We ain't gonna have no more time than that . . . when them hounds get on ya. They is still talk about Union soldiers camped down on the river. We got to get to the Mississippi. I just know if we can get there. . . we'll be alright. Anybody heard different? Them soldiers still there?

BEN  
Alfred . . . they gonna be down there. They GOT to be down there.

FAIRFAX



Be mindful of ya jobs. Don't forget nothing'.

(They all put they hands together.)

FAIRFAX (Cont.)

We gonna be free.

(The lights fade down on FAIRFAX and the others. Lights up, WOMAN.)

WOMAN

Well, Reverend Fairfax led them to freedom. Once free, the Reverend joined the Union army and fought against the South. One of the Sergeants became friends with the Reverend and taught him to read. He had a sharp mind and how they call it . . . a thirst for knowledge. After the war, he studied the bible and became a Baptist minister. During Reconstruction, Negroes had many opportunities. He returned to Louisiana and was elected a parish commissioner. Then in 1874, he was appointed assistant appraiser of the Port of New Orleans. A successful man, he decided to return home to northwest Louisiana.

Around 1878, the Union troops left the South and them southern democrats took over, their right hand was the Ku Klux Klan. Night-riders! So when the troops left there was nobody to protect the rights of black folks. So it wasn't surprising when the Republicans nominated Fairfax for congress that he was denied a seat. Fairfax had gotta too uppity, too independent, too strong, the Klan had to call.

(Fade out ORA, fade up, FAIRFAX, TOM, HOSEA, SISTER MEAD. TOME has suffered a bullet wound in the arm that SISTER MEAD is attending. HOSEA holds a rifle. FAIRFAX is crushed, feeling responsible for the attach and death of a friend. He sits in a chair his face in his hands.)

HOSEA

Alfred don't do this to yourself.

FAIRFAX

Don't do what! Hosea, Josh is dead. Ben Miller is shot through the back. Crippled! They wouldn't be in the position there in, if they hadn't followed me. Would they!

HOSEA

Josh and Ben knew what they was doing. They was with us 'cause they knew that's where they needed to be. Where they had to be!



FAIRFAX

It does not bring them back Hosea. You tell that to Josh's wife and their children. Who's gonna care for Ben? Humm?

TOM

Reverend we knew what we were ding. You were honest with us. We ALL have counted the cost! Josh is with the Lord. We'll all care for Ben. The question is Reverend. What you gonna do now? Because if you stay - they gonna kill ya.

SISTER MEAD

He's tellin' you right Reverend. It ain't worth it. It ain't worth lettin' these Night-riders burn us out. There must be a place where we can be safe.

HOSEA

We all believe in you. Reverend, you ain't no good to us dead.



SISTER MEAD

My sister has been talkin' about this exodus to Kansas. They say that Negroes is makin' whole towns, all their own...It couldn't be no worse than here.

FAIRFAX

(Still frustrated.)

Why? Why do they hate us like this? Why do they want to keep us down? Why destroy us? I hate them.

SISTER MEAD

No Reverend.

FAIRFAX

NO! I do...I hate them for what they do to us. God forgive me. Please forgive me...and forgive THEM Lord, please forgive them, for they know not what they do.

(Fade out, FAIRFAX and the others and Fade up, ORA.)

WOMAN

Kansas was a symbol of hope and freedom to Negroes. John Brown had fought to free slaves here. So Reverend Fairfax went to Kansas and brought with him 200 families, most of them locating in Chautauqua County. They created a settlement like Nicodemus. It was called Fairfax.

(Lights up, FAIRFAX.)

FAIRFAX

I acquired a 200 acre farm. We devoted 20 acres to cotton and operated the Fairfax Ginning Company. As well, I took over the pastorate of the New Hope Baptist Church in Parsons, Kansas. Kansas was providing us a place to be ourselves. To prosper with no reprisals.

(Lights out, FAIRFAX.)

WOMAN

Let me tell ya now. Kansas was not free of prejudice then and it's ain't now. But, by 1880, African American in Kansas had become a force child, we were casting 15 to 20 percent of the popular vote state wide! We were the spoke in the wheel of the Republican party. It wasn't



surprising that Reverend Fairfax soon entered politics.

FAIRFAX

A convention of Negro Republicans was held in late May of 1882. I was recommended as a nominee for the Republican State Congress. My nomination was rejected BUT E.P. McCabe, a Graham County lawyer from Nicodemus, was nominated for State Auditor. It was a pleasure to meet McCabe, he is a gentleman and very capable. Brother McCabe.

(McCABE enters shaking hands with FAIRFAX.)

MCCABE

An honor, sir.

FAIRFAX

It is mutual. I've heard a great deal about you.

MCCABE

I'm sorry your nomination was not accepted. It is the state's loss.

FAIRFAX

Well...next time. But you are to be congratulated. It is important, VERY important that you win. What can I do to help? I'm sure you need finances.

MCCABE

Well I must admit since my arrival, I haven't concentrated on personal affairs, I don't own enough property to meet the property qualifications to hold office.

FAIRFAX

Possible someone from Nicodemus could deed you some land. Temporarily.

MCCABE

Yeeees. My friend Sam Garland I'm sure would be willing. Yes.

FAIRFAX

Again, let me know if there is anything I could do...goodluck.



MCCABE

And to you sir. (They shake hands. Lights down and up on ORA.)

WOMAN

Well, six years later Reverend Fairfax would succeed. His neighbors in Chautauqua County elected him as the first African-American to serve in the Kansas Legislature. He served only one term but the good Reverend didn't waste time fighting the evil of racism and discrimination. He spoke out to integrate the schools of Kansas. The day was February 1, 1889.

(Lights down WOMAN, lights up FAIRFAX speaking to the legislature.)

FAIRFAX

Mr. Speaker I have often asked myself why is there prejudice against the Negro and found this answer. For 200 years the white man, knowing that slavery was wrong, sought by every means - through the press, the pulpit and the schoolhouse - to inculcate the Negro was not a man.

This was done as one of the means to justify their cruel system of slavery and still the pangs of conscience.

The white man of the North to a great extent also believed this theory and thus the prejudice of the Negro penetrated the body of the nation. Slavery continued to flourish until it involved this country in the bloodiest war the nation every knew.

When this Grand Old Party to which I belong made the Negro a soldier he demonstrated to the nation he was a man!

Mr. Speaker I am pained when I see native born American children, who love as I do their native country, forced to leave the district in which they live, in which their parents reside, pay taxes and vote, and travel across town, passing two or three schoolhouses, on their way to attend a school set apart as a colored school.

Mr. Speaker, the Negro is peculiarly situated. The world is like a grand avenue in which every race may pursue its career, rushing, pushing, each seeking to outstrip the other. The Negro may enter, but at every step he meets obstacles in his way to hinder and delay him.

In every occasion the doors are shut to the citizen with dark skin. Not because of any act of his own, but because of a color God gave him and a social condition the white man forced upon them by their unjust laws.

Shall we encourage such prejudice by allowing school boards to discriminate on account of color in the public schools of our state?



FAIRFAX (Cont.)

The more educated the Negro becomes, the more sensitive is he to the price of the needle of American prejudice. All he asks is that the sins committed by the enslavers of his race be not forever charged against him and that the great state of Kansas, the glorious leader of every reform, shall not take a backward step by continuing to legalize the distinction and discrimination against a low, brave and true race, even though their faces be dark.

(The lights fade to black on FAIRFAX. They raise up on WOMAN.)

WOMAN

Not much more is known about Reverend Alfred Fairfax. By 1914, his name disappeared from the city directory. They say he moved, where, we don't know. We don't even know when or where he died. The town of Fairfax faded away like the founder. All we do know is that the Reverend Alfred Fairfax was a man of means, from slavery to the legislature in a life, a great man.

WOMAN

And then there was E.P. McCabe who continued the cause of black settlement in Kansas.

SARAH (enters)

E.P. McCabe. Edwin always went by E.P. but I always called him Edwin. I think he felt it was more formal than Edwin. He was always very formal, very dignified. How could I resist him?

(Lights up on MCCABE.)

SARAH

He was well educated. He worked on Wall Street as a clerk and porter. He was a distinguished gentleman always well groomed. People would say he was a good talker, but I felt he was quite reserved. Some say his light complexion assisted his political climb. White folks typically don't care for a Negro that's dark, so, I'm sure it didn't hurt, but E.P. was qualified - a natural leader.

MCCABE

Sarah is a beautiful woman. An Iowa lady. She has stuck with me through thick and thin. How could I not love her. She believed in me, strength my resolve. She could of had a career of her own but she chose to stand by me...to the end.



(Lights up on WOMAN.)

WOMAN

E.P. McCabe and his wife Sarah were quite a couple. He had big thoughts, big ideas. He even wanted to turn what was then the territory of Oklahoma into a Negro dominated state. On-Lord-have-mercy. Him and his friend, Abe Hall, their first stop was right here in Nicodemus.

(Lights up, ABRAHAM T. HALL.)

HALL

The call west caught us both with our noses wide open. E.P. and myself were friends, we were working in Chicago when we heard of the Exoduster movement. I was city editor of a Negro newspaper in Chicago called The Conservator and E.P. had been working say 18 months down at the courthouse. Well, we cut that loose and headed West! We arrived in Leavenworth, Kansas. That's where we heard about this agricultural colony, an all-black township called Nicodemus, up in Graham County, northwest Kansas. Well, it sounded good to us, so we joined. E.P. had a way of, well...wasn't no use in trying to say no.

(Lights up on WOMAN.)

WOMAN

E.P. and Abe Hall arrived here in Nicodemus in April of 1878. They set themselves up as attorneys and land agents. They would help get new homesteaders located and settled. He was elected County Clerk. McCabe served until November of 1881 and it was the white vote that kept reelecting him! He somehow had a way of getting white folks behind him. So, it wasn't no big surprise when McCabe was elected as State Auditor.

(Lights up, on MCCABE and ELECTIONEER.)

ELECTIONEER

THE RECOGNIZED LEADER OF HIS RACE IN THE WEST. THE HONORABLE E.P. MCCABE OF GRAHAM COUNTY!

(He holds up McCabe's hand in  
victory.)

WOMAN

He was reelected in 1884 but in 1886...things changed.

(Lights up on MCCABE and SARAH.)



MCCABE  
(reflecting on defeat.)

Well, not this time Sarah.

SARAH  
If you want it again, Edwin, you can run, you'll win.

MCCABE  
No, they elected an Irishman this time. It was not a coincidence. I think the Party feels Negroes have received a sufficient amount of attention. I need to move on.

SARAH  
What honey? What next?

MCCABE  
Sarah...we have a good sum saved from land speculation. Why not go to California, rest, maybe do a little prospecting.

SARAH  
California...I hear the weather is beautiful.  
(Thinking.)  
A rest would be good.

MCCABE  
Then California it is.  
(They kiss.)

(Lights down on MCCABE and SARAH. Fade up, WOMAN.)

WOMAN  
California was only one stop along the way. Oklahoma soon called. Like Kansas, Oklahoma had now become the black dream. Encouraged by the Oklahoma Immigration Association of Topeka. McCabe and Sarah set out for Oklahoma.

(MCCABE and SARAH discuss the dream.)



MCCABE

I found me a white man to sell me 160 acres eleven miles east, forty miles northeast of Oklahoma City. I'm going to purchase another 160 acres. I'll send agents south and recruit more settlers to Oklahoma. Sarah don't ya see! This is it.

SARAH

What?

MCCABE

In Nicodemus white folks owned most of the businesses...correct. That's not independence. With what I'm saying we can gain real independence, real self sufficiency!

SARAH

I don't understand, Edwin.

MCCABE

A black state. We can recruit enough Negroes to create a majority in each district and then have them vote the territory a black state. HA, HA! Oh, I love it.

SARAH

You're crazy!

MCCABE

You're right! It's just crazy enough to work. The McCabe Town Company will offer lots that can never pass to a white man, and upon them no white man can every reside or conduct business.

SARAH

Why you wanna treat white folks like that?

MCCABE

It's the only way we can prosper. White folks with money will come in and use it. It's the only way for us to own something and keep something.

SARAH

A black state? All Negroes?



MCCABE

That's right.

SARAH

White folks wouldn't have any rights?

MCCABE

Of course they would! We would administer the laws without fear OR favor to white and black alike. It's just that We would be the majority! We set the agenda!

SARAH

And if we do all this work and we can't make this state a reality. What then?

MCCABE

We would have far more power and ownership then we have now. Sarah, colored folks is catchin' hell out here. Honey. We've got to do something.

SARAH

(Pause, thinking.)

Ok...ok...alright, Edwin. It's a worthy effort.

MCCABE

I knew you'd see it my way. Now. (Thinking.) We'll call the town Langston City after the fine scholar from Howard University that was elected to Congress from Virginia. Ah, Sarah, You're looking at the next Territorial Governor of Oklahoma. HA, HA!

(SARAH shakes her head.)

(Lights down on MCCABE and SARAH, up on WOMAN.)

WOMAN

Of course, when the word got out of McCabe's idea of a Negro state, white folks didn't take kindly to that. There was talk of killin' him - assassination. McCabe just went on with his plans. (She exits.)



(Lights up on SARAH and MCCABE. He looks at some drawings and plans for the town.)

MCCABE

The agents are doing a good job. Negroes are showing up in droves.

SARAH

Frederick Douglas has criticized the exodus North because it permits the federal government to forget its responsibility to protect black rights in the South.

MCCABE

Mr. Douglas will have to understand that Negroes are tired of suffering the sting of Southern racists. The Negro wants opportunity now! And he will do whatever it takes to get it.

(MCCABE holding up copy of the Newspaper.)

MCCABE

WITHOUT FEAR, FAVOR OR PREJUDICE, WE ARE FOR THE RIGHT, AND ASK NO QUARTER SAVE JUSTICE.

(Lights fade on MCCABE.)

(Lights up on Esther and Prentis, again in conversation.)

PRENTIS

I understand the idea for Nicodemus came from a white man.

ESTHER

The idea came from wanting to be free.

PRENTIS

I meant to say that the initial FOUNDING was by a white man. W.R. Hill. Oh, You're right. The IDEA would have come from you settlers yourselves. You don't travel halfway across a nation, uprooting everything, unless the idea comes from within. At least, not if I'm any judge of human nature.

Now, as I understand it, Hill communicated his willingness to sell some of his land to some of the black citizens of Topeka. And I guess it was those people who actually did the organizing.

ESTHER

W.R. Hill has never been involved in the government of our town. Our first president of the Nicodemus Town Company is W.H. Smith.



(photo.)

(photo.) That's Simon P. Roundtree. Ordained minister and wonderful orator. He has a brand on him, you know. Put on him while he was a slave because he got his master's son to teach him to read and write. Anyway, Reverend Roundtree is the secretary of the Town Company.

(Z.T. Fletcher appears.)

ESTHER

Morning, Z.T. Mr. Prentis, this is Z.T. Fletcher, our postmaster.

(Fletcher actually "poses" for Prentis.)

FLETCHER

My wife, Mrs. Fletcher. (she enters and waves to Esther.) Nicodemus wouldn't be complete without Mrs. Fletcher.

MRS. FLETCHER

Well, it hasn't always been easy being the first woman to settle here. Sure glad when you came along, Esther.

FLETCHER

I'd say you've done just fine for yourself. And for the other good citizens.

MRS. FLETCHER

I'll be opening the school soon.

ESTHER

How many pupils you expecting?

MRS. FLETCHER

45, I believe. I hope to be giving lessons by this coming winter. But i do hate to have those children down in out dugout all day, not getting enough of the sunlight.

FLETCHER

The schooling's more important.

MRS. FLETCHER

Will you work on establishing an official school district with the other men, like you promised you would?



FLETCHER

Yes, maam. I'll be getting right on it.

MRS. FLETCHER

And don't forget that you gentlemen have promised us a four-room building in the next few years.

FLETCHER

How long will you be conducting classes? We're going to need those pupils in the fields.

MRS. FLETCHER

Like I promised you. November to March. But by the time I'm done with educating them, they'll be too tired to do any work.

FLETCHER

(to Prentis) She's just joking. I hope.

ESTHER

Sounded serious to me.

FLETCHER

Which paper you say you're from?

PRENTIS

The Atchison Weekly Champion.

FLETCHER

Never heard of it.

MRS. FLETCHER

Well, I have. That's why I'll be doing the teaching.

FLETCHER

Now, if you'll excuse me. I need to get back to my general store. (exits) Good day Esther.



MRS. FLETCHER

That would be the same as the post office, in case you're wondering, Mr. Prentis. Three years ago, my husband combined the two under one roof.

PRENTIS

I see you've got several thriving businesses here. Mind if I take some photographs?

MRS. FLETCHER

Guess it's a free country. (She and Esther joke) Be sure to see our hotel, the Boles House. (photo) You can get a good meal and a bed there for 50 cents. made of stone. Solid as a rock.

PRENTIS

(photo) Now, those are the livery stables?

ESTHER

Yes. And there's John Lee's Blacksmith Shop. And our lumber yard. (photo)

PRENTIS

Can you direct me to the sod building where you held the first election?

MRS. FLETCHER

Well, we didn't. The gentlemen did. In case you're forgetting.

PRENTIS

By my count, Nicodemus has 35 buildings. That sound right?

MRS. FLETCHER

Now, you're a journalist, Mr. Prentis. Seems to me you should be able to do your own counting. A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Prentis. (exits)

ESTHER

I need to be starting supper myself, Mr. Prentis. (she gets up, leaving quilt, and exits) Pleasure meeting you.



### PRENTIS

(engaged in looking around, not noticing her departure)

Let's see. Three churches...(he walks off looking for different building, then at rear of theater, says this:)

I went back to Atchison, reported what I's seen. The paper, the Weekly Champion, carried this opinion about Nicodemus two years later: Someday, Nicodemus may be no more than a name, "the waning and fading designation of a spot where men once lived; but to those who know the truth of history, the name will always recall the bravest attempt ever made by people of any color to establish homes in the high plains of western Kansas." (he exits)

### WOMAN

(now appears again in modern dress)

I hear it was right after that gentleman's visit to Nicodemus that my great great-grandmother and the townspeople began formally celebrating the day of our founding, September 17. Been doing it ever since. And there's also Emancipation Day, August 1st. Mr. Prentis should have stayed around another month, and he'd have seen a big celebration.

By the middle of the 1880's Nicodemus had a baseball team, a literary society, and a benefit society. Way that worked is if someone got himself into a sorrowful situation, the benefit society helped him get through it. That's the kind of community Nicodemus always has been and still is. We had druggists, a lawyer, even a harness and boot repair shop here at one time. Biggest school in the county for awhile. First band opened in 1887, run by a white man. Never any drinking establishments in this town in the early days. Things got crowded enough toward the end of the 1880's that, in one week, there were 222 new people in town, and not enough beds for them.

There was in anticipation of the railroad coming. Nicodemus was supposed to get both the Missouri Pacific and the Union Pacific. Union Pacific even laid tracks here in 1887. But finally they decided on staying south of the river, and Hill City got the train service instead of us.

Look up the road to Smith County, or east to Stockton. You'll see the same kind of this happening. Northwest Kansas is losing its population. All kinds of reasons. Same as anywhere else, the young folks are leaving the country and moving to the cities. See a lot of them back here for Emancipation Day every year, though. We call it Homecoming,. Usually there's hundreds of them. And in all my years here--that's 90 of them--I've never been hungry a day. You know, years ago they called us "The Largest Colored Colony." Today they call us a national treasure. I just call us "home."

(She begins singing some from opening of play as Lights fade gradually to black.)



SOURCES--Kay Kuhlmann  
Black Settlements script

These are in no particular order. I'm labeling them here in correspondence with some notations on script pages.

A. NICODEMUS: NEGRO HAVEN ON THE SOLOMON, 24 pp., by Glen Schwendemann, Published by State of Kansas, Commission on Civil Rights, June, 1971. Contributors to its content include Kansas State Historical Society and Wichita EAGLE BEACON.

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C. KAHNISTIQUE, September 1979, article titled "Nicodemus, Born Again Christian Town, by Mrs. Aileen Mallory of Topeka.

D. WICHITA EAGLE BEACON, July 3, 1977, article titled "It's 100 Years Old Now, by Forrest Hintz.

E. EXODUSTERS, a book by Nell Irvin Painter, 1977.

F. BLACK TOWNS, a book by N. L. Crockett, 1979.

G. KANSAS HISTORY, Winter 1982, an article titled "The Origins and Early Promotion of Nicodemus: A Pre-Exodus, All-Black Town," by Kenneth Marvin Hamilton.

H. UNIVERSITY DAILY KANSAN, February 27, 1980, article titled "Living With Faith," no byline.

I. PEOPLE magazine, September 23, 1991, article titled "Big Little Town on the Prairie."

J. TOPEKA CAPITAL JOURNAL, July 29, 1979, article titled "Nicodemus Celebration Recalls Sacrifices of Pioneers, by Tim Aylward.

K. WICHITA EAGLE BEACON, July 31, 1977, article titled "Nicodemus Celebrates Centennial," by Wayne Slater.

L. WICHITA EAGLE BEACON, January 28, 1979, article titled "Nicodemus Is On Rise Again," by Reg Fontenot.

M. WICHITA EAGLE BEACON, July 3, 1977, article titled "Little Kansas Town That Refuses to Die," by Forrest Hintz.



**BUFFALO SOLDIER**

**A One Act Play**

**Written by Kevin Willmott**

**FINAL DRAFT**

**Commissioned by  
Kansas Museum of History**



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Six actors play all these roles, One White Male and Five African Americans Males. These actors perform more than one role.)

WARD, a 100 year old buffalo soldier and narrator

Col. BENJAMIN GRIERSON, Commander Tenth Cavalry  
Col. GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER, Seventh Cavalry

FREDERIC REMINGTON, Artist, Author

Private ANDREW TRIMBLE, Ninth Cavalry  
Private WILLIAM SHARPE, Ninth Cavalry  
Private ELI BOYER, Ninth Cavalry  
Sergeant EMANUEL STANCE, Ninth Cavalry

Corporal SCOTT, Tenth Cavalry  
Sergeant GEORGE GOLDSBY, Tenth Cavalry  
Private JOHN L. BROWN, Tenth Cavalry  
Private WILLIAM MACE, Tenth Cavalry

Lieutenant HENRY O. FLIPPER, Ninth Cavalry  
Major CHARLES YOUNG, Tenth Cavalry



(An empty stage. The only set piece is a metal lawn chair. The other characters appear on stage in pools of light some with selected small hand props. These characters should look as authentic as possible in dress and hand props. A screen can be used to project actual photographic images of the principles and places involved.)

(Lights up. On stage is a lone elderly black man, ninety years old or better, MR. WARD. He wears civilian clothes and the blue and gold cowboy hat of a cavalry soldier. Sitting on a metal lounge chair, he reclines on his front porch watching the neighborhood children play.) Observing his grand kids fighting, he stands correcting them with his cane.)

WARD

(Shouting into street.)

BOBBY! BOBBY! Ya'll break that up...ya'll need to stop all this fighting...understand...get along...ya'll sit down over there behave ya foolselves. Say it again, boy. What it this here on my hat? That's the first time you noticed that.

(Takes off hat, shows it to them.)

This here is the insignia of the Buffalo Soldier, see I was a Buffalo Soldier in the Tenth Cavalry stationed in Fort Leavenworth...Kansas...that's where the Buffalo Soldier originated from, right here in Kansas. (Aside.) That's also where they got the penitentiary.

(Points at kids.)

There was also the Ninth Cavalry, the Twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth Infantry, all soldiers, all negroes, ALL Buffalo Soldiers. Why they call us the Buffalo soldiers? Well...the people we fought, the Indians gives us that name...

(Photos of Buffalo soldiers, one wearing a buffalo coat.)

(STANCE, a black soldier appears.)

STANCE

The buffalo is a sacred creature, strong and fierce, difficult to kill. The Indians didn't like to fight us buffalo soldiers. I could never find out why. Col. Richard Dodge said all he ever got by way of explanation was: "Buffalo soldier no good...bad medicine."



(Lights out, Lights up WARD.)

WARD

(Smoothing out hat with care.)

Yeah, let me tell ya, the Native American, them Indians was something else! FIGHT! Them was some brave mens...Took everything the government could muster to put the Red Man down. (A beat.) Naw, I ain't gonna let ya play with my hat, you'll have it out there in the dirt somewhere.

(Putting hat back on.)

Tell you some stories...SHOOT, ya'll don't wanna hear none of what I got to say, this here's HISTORY, be boring to ya'll...go play with some of the T.V. games ya Mama bought ya. I tell ya one thing though, the things that we put out, as negroes, BLACK MENS, in the Ninth, Tenth Cavalry, put all that video nonsense to shame. We had real adventures! (A beat.) LIKE WHAT? Boy...let me tell you, ya'll just don't know...first off they had a time finding white men that even wanted to serve as officers with black mens.

(Lights up, STANCE.)

STANCE

Let me tell right now, for a white man, Colonel Grierson is a good man, respects us, treats us like men. He's tried to do the best he could for us, they ain't gonna let him do too much on account we colored. It's odd to see a white man treat ya that way. Wasn't that long ago I was a slave. Some of us don't quite know how to take it. You know, a white man being in ya corner. You can trust a white man that treats ya bad, that's honest. You gotta watch one that offers ya manhood.

(Lights up, Col. GRIERSON, a white officer.)

GRIERSON

When Colonel Hatch took the Ninth Cavalry and I took the Tenth, we knew we had many difficulties before us. Like the negroes in my regiment, I was an unlikely candidate for success in the cavalry. I had studied music. Music was my love. When I was eight a pony kicked me in the face. I have never cared for horses since. When we started recruiting for the new regiments, I told the recruiters, "Enlist all the superior men you can who will be a credit to the regiment." Prejudice was always a problem.



## GRIERSON (Cont.)

General William Hoffman, Third Infantry, commander of Fort Leavenworth, disliked negroes and the officers that served with them. He tried to make our stay there as uncomfortable as possible. He quartered the men on low ground which soon became a swamp causing several of the men to fall ill with pneumonia. He ignored my pleas to at least create walk ways so the men could keep their feet dry. Hoffman was very petty issuing dozens of complaints against my men for minor trumped up infractions. During inspection my company commanders were ordered to keep the Negro troops at least ten to fifteen yards from the white troops and we were not allowed to march in review. Other times he told us simply to stay out of sight! I fought back, protested mainly to no avail. I instructed our company commanders to strike the word "colored" from our reports. We are simply the Tenth Regiment of Cavalry, United States Army! There are Old Fogies in this army that still see no place for the Negro, they would love to disband the colored regiments. But I SAY, Colored troops will hold their place in the Army of the United States as long as the government lasts.

(Lights down, GRIERSON, Lights up, WARD.)

## WARD

Now, Bobby, I'll split my story up in two parts. First I'll tell ya about the legendary and heroic Ninth Cavalry and then when I'm through talkin' about the Ninth, I'll tell ya about the legendary and heroic TENTH Cavalry. Let me explain somethin' to ya. I didn't fight in the Indian Wars. I joined the Tenth Cavalry in 1916. But when I talk about those that DID fight the Indians, it was like I WAS there. Because I am, a buffalo soldier. All of us, past and present, take the credit for our honor and our shame.

(Black out WARD, fade up three black soldiers. SHARPE is pacing, upset while BOYER and TRIMBLE, are sitting at a wooden table.)

## SHARPE

I don't know, Andrew, we been here now going on three months. They can't find no white officer that wanna take charge. You seen the supplies they send us. Look how many men are in the infirmary SICK...twenty-three done died of cholera! And they wonder why the men is runnin' off.



BOYER

You seen them horses they brought in today. Pitiful! Them horses is leftovers from the civil war.

SHARPE

They give us what the white troops turn down.

TRIMBLE

William, fool, ya know'd that when we ya joined up!

SHARPE

That's what I'm saying! That's why we got to leave, we got to cut this here loose!

TRIMBLE

Where you gonna find anything out there making even a lousy thirteen dollars a month, HUH? It may be bad but it IS food and clothes and a roof...and maybe, maybe it'll be gettin' better.

SHARPE

And maybe not, maybe it'll get worse! You know where they gonna put us -- way out in the middle of no where, far from town as they can find -- fighting red skins cause they AIN'T gonna let no colored men 'round no white folks with guns! Am I lying!

BOYER

Amens Will, amens.

TRIMBLE

(Stands.)

All you saying is true, Will. You a smart man, you ain't no fool. I don't know what's gonna happen to us if we stay in here. But I know more about THIS than I does that out there.

(Pointing to the door.)

I ain't got nothing to lose by staying here. See, I done looked at all sides and I don't expect much. In fact, I "x-pects" the worst! You better get your mind right, NOW. 'Cause as long as you a colored man in this here country you gotta PROVE you got the right to live. This HERE'S where I prove it! Where YOU gonna prove it!

(The two men stare each other down. Finally, SHARPE sits down followed by TRIMBLE.)



TRIMBLE

Let's play some cards.

(Fade down SOLDIERS, lights up, WARD.)

WARD

When they put the word out they was allowing us to join up in the cavalry, negroes showed up in droves. But them white officers still didn't want nothing to do with it. They even approuched the "boy general", George Armstrong Custer...

(Black out WARD, lights up CUSTER.)

CUSTER

I don't want anything to do with it. Colored troops...they seem more suited to using shovels and hoes than muskets.

(Fadeup, WARD.)

WARD

Yeah, ole Custer didn't think much of the black man. As you can see.

CUSTER

I am in favor of elevating the Negro to the extent of his capacity and intelligence, and our doing everything to advance the race morally, mentally, physically...even socially. But I am opposed to making this advance by debasing any portion of the white race. As to trusting the Negro with the sacred responsibility of the right of suffrage...I should think of elevating an Indian Chief to the Popedom of Rome.

(Photo of Fort Riley, Custer's residence, etc.)

CUSTER

Capt. Benteen's wife, wrote him about the "brunettes" who we left guarding Fort Riley during the absence of the Seventh Cavalry. She said a more boisterous, undisciplined groups of creatures you won't find. (Laughs.) These Negroes use the parade ground as a playground, turning hand-springs all over the sprouting grass...disgraceful!.

(Lights down CUSTER, lights stay up on WARD.)



## WARD

Bobby, let me tell ya, the Ninth and Tenth didn't shed many tears when Sitting Bull tore up Custer long haired behind. In fact! They was glad he hadn't taken charge of the Tenth cause that fool might have led them out into some massacre...

(Lights out, WARD. Lights up on CUSTER.)

## CUSTER

From the newspaper the Topeka Weekly Reader...the Homesteaders have little sympathy for these Indians...As far as we are concerned they are a set of miserable, dirty, lousy, blanketed, thieving, lying, sneaking, murdering, faithless gut eating skunks as the Lord ever permitted to infect the earth, and their immediate and final extermination all men, except Indian agents and traders should pray for.

(Photos of Native Americans families on screen.)

## WARD

Hates to say it, but a lotta Native Americans died in them days. Tortured, massacred. I feels bad about our part in that. White folks hated the Native American worst than they did us. I reckon cause the Red man owned the land. We didn't hate nobody. We was just tryin' to survive ourselves! Not just the Buffalo soldier but ANY soldier separates his mind from what he's ordered to do. He concentrates on the job - not on - is the job right or wrong. You take what "questions" you got and put um in a "closet" in the back of your mind. Keep it there. That's the worse thing about soldierin', boy.

(As the lights slowly come up, TRIMBLE and STANCE are dancing around a campfire. BOYER is playing a fiddle, while SHARPE is sipping on a cup of coffee. SHARPE steps out to us and speaks.)

## SHARPE

I like being a buffalo soldier. I 'spects it was because of the work. I liked working with the horses, buildin' roads and bridges, being a cavalry man. As far as being with the men, being a part of the Ninth was being like family. I think we felt that as long as we had each other, nobody and nothing could hurt us and for sure NOTHING could stop us. And nothin' did.



TRIMBLE

We tried to have a good time...best we could. We ain't no angels...We drank, fought, was rawdy like ALL soldiers, we like the company of women. Had to have something to keep from going loco. Because of this they sometime talked bad 'bout us, like we was porch monkeys, bafoons. Shoot the white soldiers did it -- all soldiers do!

BOYER

You can't pay people like them no mind. We brought law and order to the frontier - the lawmen turned to US for help - WE chased down robbers, rustlers, murders, all sorts of desperados. Heck, we earned the respect of every military friend and foe we faced.

STANCE

We guarded railroad and telegraph lines, stagecoaches, arms shipments, towns and homesteads, whites and Indians.

SHARPE

Only problem we had was, what we had to work with. Shoot, during some of the hard campaigns our horses and mules would just collapse, die right under us - worked them to death! NEVER had no good boots. Heck-fire, half of us went barefoot, soles of ya feet bleeding from the sharp rocks, sand burrs. Sometimes when ya can't get no respect ya gotta respect yourself. Ain't that right!

TRIMBLE

Preach George, Preach!

(They all laugh.)

SHARPE

Don't get me started now.

BOYER

Your watch Andrew.

TRIMBLE

Yeah, alright. Manny, Tell um 'bout the time we fought them battles in nothin' but our underwear. Fightin' in ya draws! Well heck, the Government wouldn't issue us no new uniforms and them ole rags they did issue us wouldn't last no time. We even had to make a homemaid flag to display our colors!



## STANCE

(Laughing.) Trimble ain't tellin' no lie. Shucks, Quartermaster sent us that junk they'd call supplies, bad rifles, bad ammo...We had to grow some vegetables keep that scurvy from killing us. Good thing most of us ain't never seen no better. Some of us ran off in the beginning, went to Mexico joined up with Indians, desperados, but by 1876 the white Seventh Cavalry had 72 deserters, the Third had 170, the Fifth had 224 but the all black Ninth had 6, you hear me SIX and the Tenth had 18. The lowest desertion rate in the army.

## BOYER

And you now if the white fellas was runnin' off like that, you know, you KNOW it was bad! Say now, what about ole William Cathy?

(They laugh.)

## TRIMBLE

Now, there's, there's a story. William Cathy served two years as a Buffalo soldier and earned an award for bravery. The hitch was he wasn't William Cathy, SHE was Cathy Williams! For two years she posed as a man so she could be a buffalo soldier. Ain't that kick in the head.

## STANCE

Like her, we just wanted to soldier! We liked the hard work, the discipline, being with ya comrades. But before long the War Department had us smack dab in the middle of things.

## TRIMBLE

Major George A. Forsyth, Third Infantry, with his second in command Lieutenant Frederick Beecher had just left Fort Wallace, Kansas and was thirteen miles east investigating an Indian attack on a freight train. They camped that night along a fork of the Republican River but little did they know that many of them wouldn't see another day.

## BOYER

Cheyenne war parties had come up through the Saline and Solomon rivers like a tornado - attackin' settlements. Us Buffalo soldiers got orders to force the Indians south of the Kansas line. We had been up and down the Smoky Hill, Saline and Solomon rivers, scoutin'. Suddenly, we come up on two of Forsyth's scouts, they commenced to sayin' Forsyth's camp had been attacked and was surrounded by hostiles. In desperate straits they was running out of rations, medicine, many had been wounded.



STANCE (Cont.)

(Looking at medal.)

But ya see, my pride and happiness didn't last long. When we were off duty and went into town we never had to look for trouble it was always waiting on us. A white man by the name of John Jackson, a Texan near the fort murdered a FRIEND OF MINE, Private Boston Henry, shot him in cold blood...of course Jackson escaped from the law and then he killed Corporal Albert Marshall and Private Charles Murray who was in my company, Captain Carroll's F Company! When they finally caught this man they had a so-called trial, the jury quick set him free.

(A sudden burst of anger.)

That's what it's like to be a colored man in this country. You try to fit in, you do what you're told, you try and prove you just like every other man, and for a minute you forget, for a MINUTE you think you like everybody else. FOR A MINUTE YOU THINK YOU EQUAL! Then here it comes, like death creeping under ya door, a word, a remark, an order! Our just out right MURDER. I don't know what to tell ya.

(Fade to black, STANCE.)

WARD

Yeah, we caught the devil as much from the white towns people we was protecting, than the Indians we was fighting. ESPECIALLY in Texas. At least the Indians respected us. Bobby, boy, sometimes all you can do is just go on living.

(STAGE IS BLACK. We hear gunshots. As lights fade up. We see SHARPE, TRIMBLE and BOYER in pools of light. They are reloading their weapons.)

BOYER

Late in October down in Texas, a vengeful party of Kickapoo ambushed some of the men. They killed Corporal Wright and E.T. Jones of D. Company. They was escorting mail from Camp Hudson to Fort Stockton. Escortin' mail is a dangerous detail.

TRIMBLE

In December, a hundred Mescaleros attacked the stage eastbound from El Paso. Mescaleros are Apache's that live in Texas and New Mexico. Well, they killed Private Nathan Johnson...but F. Company finally ran them Mescaleros off. They got ole Nate but they didn't stop that stage.



(We see a series of drawings of Buffalo soldiers at battle.)

(SHARPE, TRIMBLE and BOYER are engaged in an attack.)

SHARPE

This here's the worst I been in...Kickapoos, Lipans, Mexicans, and some white renegades...about nine hundred of them total attacked Fort Lancaster...after a three hour fight the renegades broke off, we took possession of the field, leavin' twenty of their people dead, scores wounded...

(A beat.)

Us three was left guarding the herd, some of them renegades come up from behind and surprised us...there's a whole mess of um, we're tryin' to hold um off...it don't look good

(SHARPE about to fire.)

(The men freeze as STANCE comes into the light.)

STANCE

Sharpe was right it didn't look good. Surprised and out numbered they were roped and dragged off. For months they were missing and presumed dead, finally we found their remains near the banks of the Pecos River. Trimble, Boyer and Sharpe died in action.

(Fade out, STANCE, slow fade the MEN. Lights up on WARD.)

(During the monologue a series of photos or drawings can be projected that relate to the events mentioned.)

WARD

The Buffalo Soldiers never got no rest. We were everywhere. The Ninth helped put down a uprising of Kiowas, Comanches and Cheyennes in what they call the Red River war. Then we was sent down to settle that big feud between cattle barons down there in Lincoln County, New Mexico. Billy the Kid was a hired gun in that mess. That's right, Billy the Kid! We worked with all them people in the old west. Shoot, Buffalo Bill Cody, Kit Carson worked for us as scouts. Umhum! But see, things was gettin' ready to heat up. The Ninth was called on to capture the Apache...Victorio. During the Victorio campaign, Sergeant Henry Johnson, from Baltimore, won a Medal of Honor saving his fellow Buffalo Soldiers. Later, on they wanted to give Johnson another medal for his bravery on San Juan Hill during the Spanish American War. Johnson was a hum-dinger! Now, you take Grierson and the Tenth Cavalry, they had been just as busy.



(We see the painting by Nick Eggenhofer "Tenth Cavalry at the Battle of Rattlesnake Springs")

(Lights up, GRIERSON.)

GRIERSON

Victorio and his Lieutenant, Nana, would lead raids into Arizona and then cross the border into Mexico. The troopers could not cross the boarder and apprehend them. We finally caught up with him at the battle of Rattlesnake Springs, we delivered Victorio a major blow. But Victorio escaped and again fled into Mexico. We had broken down Victorio making him an easy target for the final attack. With permission, we went into Mexico after him but were asked eventually to leave. Mexican troops then attacked Victorio and the Apache warrior was killed. The Buffalo soldiers received virtually no credit - we got on with our work, there were more Apache's to capture. The fierce warrior Geronimo had escaped.

(Enter, SCOTT.)

SCOTT

I'm Corporal Scott, K. Company Tenth Cavalry. On April 27, Geronimo crossed the border and tore through the Santa Cruz Valley, killed a good number of cowboys, took some hostages. Captain Lebo got word and we set out after them, quick-in-a-hurry. We found Geronimo's trail and hung to it like bark on a tree. Geronimo tried every trick in the book to shake us, but he couldn't. Frustrated, Geronimo headed for Old Mexico. We chased that man for 200 miles, the Indians had ridden thirty horses to death along the way! We caught up with Geronimo about thirty miles south of Sonora. Now, I'm a tell ya now, Geronimo was a military genius. He always got up high, in rocky slopes, cliff country, which made it next to impossible to get him out. Geronimo opened up on us with a curtain of lead. Private Hollis was killed. As I was takin' cover, I was hit in both legs. Bullets was wizzin' every which-away. I was pinned down, couldn't move. Young Lieutanant Powhattan Clarke rose up from behind a boulder, ignorin' a hail of bullets, came to my side and carried me to safety. I never will forget what that man did for me. A white man riskin' his life to save me? I reckon we'd all become like one, white and colored. We'z all buffalo soldiers.



(We see the painting by Frederick Remington of the rescue of Corporal Scott by Lieutenant Clark.)

(Lights up, WARD.)

WARD

Lieutenant Clarke received the Medal of Honor for rescuing Corporal Scott. Problem was, weren't too many white mens like Lieutenant Clarke...and boy the state of Texas was still givin' the Tenth Cavalry, the devil!

(Lights down, WARD, lights up, Tenth Cavalry soldiers, BROWN, SGT. GOLDSBY and MACE. They are in the barricks in heated discussion.)

MACE

Texas! We gotta get outta this place. I can't believe they would kill William like that.

GOLDSBY

Believe it, them Texans in McDonald's Saloon will stomp you out like a bug. You seen what they did to Watkins, shot him in the head for not singin' a song. FOR NOT SINGIN' A SONG. That Tom McCarthy's the one that done it. I told Will about goin' in that joint!

BROWN

We arrested him. Watch my word, ole Tom McCarthy gonna hang.

GOLDSBY

A white man hang for killin' a colored. I wanna see this.

MACE

I wanna see it too. I heard Col. Grierson turned McCarthy over to the Sheriff of San Angelo.

BROWN

What you think the Sheriff gonna do?

(GOLDSBY and MACE laugh.)



GOLDSBY

I don't know what Grierson was thinkin' about. Grierson following the law handing that killer over to the Sheriff, they all in cahoots...he oughta know that!

BROWN

I don't know Sarge, we need to wait and see.

GOLDSBY

I know ya'll be thinking like I do, I KNOW I AIN'T THE ONLY ONE'S MIND TALKS TO UM. And I know your minds be askin' ya, what we fightin' for...HUH? When the white folks we fightin' for, is fightin' us. I swear sometimes I think we right stupid..

MACE

Yeah, it has crossed my mind. But we soldiers we ain't no law makin' people. A soldiers job is to do what's told, right?

GOLDSBY

A soldiers job ain't to be a stupid fool!

BROWN

What we gonna do?

GOLDSBY

I say we go on into town - get us some justice.

MACE

Sarge, calm down now, you mad enough to chew up some railroad iron. Wait, give the law a chance, come on now...Sarge.

GOLDSBY

(Pause.)

Alright, I'll wait.

(Lights down, MEN, lights up, WARD.)

WARD

Ole Sergeant Goldsby was right. The Sheriff turned Tom McCarthy loose pendin' trial. When they had the so called trial, the jurors had hardly left their seat when they come back with "Not guilty". The attacks continued on the troopers, white and black. So they issued a warnin'.



(Lights up, GOLDSBY.)

GOLDSBY

(Reading handbill.)

Fort Concho, Texas, February 3, 1881. We, the soldiers of the U.S. Army do hereby warn the first and last time all citizens and cowboys, etc., of San Angelo and vicinity to recognize our right of way as just and peaceable men. If we do not receive justice and fair play, which we must have, someone will suffer--if not the guilty, the innocent. It has gone too far, justice or death. Signed U.S. Soldiers.

(Lights down, GOLDSBY, lights up, WARD.)

WARD

The warning was issued by white and colored troopers. White troopers had been attacked in town too. But not like the Buffalo soldiers. The towns hated them. Snipers would shoot at them when they rode through town. So when some Texas Rangers pistol whipped some soldiers. Then cut the chevrons off the sleeves of a Negro Sergeant. Goldsby took charge.

(Lights up, GOLDSBY and his men.)

GOLDSBY

Grierson asked for an apology but them Rangers wouldn't do it. In fact, they bragged on how they would come to the fort and whip the entire garrison.

MACE

Well, we warned them.

BROWN

We sure did.

GOLDSBY

If ya don't back up ya word, ya word don't mean squat.

BROWN

Sho' you right.



MACE

What we gonna do Sarge?

GOLDSBY

Well, I'm from Selma, Alabama...only way you can buck these kinda jokers is to face um down. Man to man. I'm sick and tired of lettin' white folks shoot n' kill us up like we a bunch a wild turkeys. We keep on taking this, ain't gone be none of us left, am I RIGHT!

(The SOLDIERS stand there silent, agreeing.)

GOLDSBY

We have got to command some parts of respect!

SOLDIERS

You right sarge, you right!

GOLDSBY

They needs to be taught a lesson...

(GOLDSBY goes to the weapons case and tosses a rifle to each man.)

GOLDSBY

If you is men...COME ON!

(Black out GOLDSBY and SOLDIERS.)

WARD

They went to that saloon and shot it full of holes! Ya hear different thangs but most say they killed one Texan and wounded two others while Private John L. Brown was killed and one other was wounded. Some accounts say it was a massacre and as many as thirty-five died in that saloon. Tell ya what I do know. What I do know. Them Texas Rangers came to arrest the troopers. They wanted Sergeant Goldsby for allowing the troops to get their carbines. Col. Grierson challenged their authority on a federal post.

(Lights up, GOLDSBY, MACE and BROWN.)



WARD

The Texas Rangers was talkin' that mess, they'd kill any trooper that come to town in the next ten day and they might storm the post. Storm the post...how that boy say it on the T.V. I DON'T THINK SO...Well, sadly Private John L. Brown had been killed.

(Light fades out on BROWN.)

WARD

Nine other Buffalo Soldiers was charged with murder. Private William Mace was given a death sentence, he did win on appeal.

(Lights fade out on MACE.)

WARD

The story of Sergeant Goldsby didn't end there. No sir-e-buddy! Sergeant Goldsby, afraid to stand trial he run off, leavin' his wife, and two year old child. The child's name was Crawford Goldsby. He grew up to be one of the baddest desperados EVER. Who you think it is Bobby? Naw I ain't talkin' bout no Jesse James! The man I'm talkin' about is CHEROKEE BILL! In my opinion if the Tenth hadn't had all that trouble down in Fort Concho...might not been no Cherokee Bill.

(On the screen: Remington Drawing "How the Worm Turned".)

REMINGTON

Remington's my name. I learned of the incident years later right before the Spanish American War. A big infantryman told me of the events. Goldsby was his name. I think he was involved in the incident but he wouldn't admit it. Collier's got there money's worth when they ran the article, "How the worm turned" on May 4, 1901. But as I said, "When the great epic of the West is written, this is one of the wild notes that must sound in it."

(Fade out, REMINGTON.)

WARD

I'm a tell you about a man now, white man, by the name of Frederic Remington. He was a writer, artist. Lotta them pictures ya'll see in your history book was painted by Remington. When it comes to pictures of the Old West, he's it! Now, Remington traveled with the 10th cavalry and was they good friend.

(We see a series of sketches and paintings by Remington of the Buffalo soldiers.)



REMINGTON

In the summer of 1888, I traveled with a unit of Buffalo soldiers, Tenth Cavalry on Patrol in Arizona. I am often asked about their bravery, they ask, "Will they fight?" This is easily answered. They have fought many, many times and have NEVER had a soft detail. The old sergeant here....

(Lights up on a BLACK SERGEANT.)

REMINGTON (Cont.)

As calm of feature as a bronze statute. Once he deliberately charged and quieted an enemy rifle pit. This fellow....

(Lights up on another SOLDIER.)

REMINGTON (Cont.)

Once took charge of a lot of stampeding cavalry-horses when Apache bullets were flying loose and no one knew from what point to expect them next. These men are not the "black brutes" nor the "buffoons" of white mythology. They are charming men with whom to serve. Their physiques must be admired, great chests, broad shoulders, upstanding men. Some have doubts about the negro, seeing them, I had no doubts.

(Lights out, MEN and REMINGTON.)  
(Lights up, WARD.)

WARD

Remington's words are important not because he's a white man but because he was there. He documented the truth! Well, things was changing. The Buffalo soldiers were assigned to protect Indian lands for a change, down in Oklahoma during the landrush, them "Boomers" and "Sooners" was settling anything that was vacant. Then things really changed, we got us some black officers. Of course, they had a time gettin' negroes through West Point. Ya see, white cadets at West Point attacked the black cadets. Them negroes had a tough time concentrating on studies. The first cadet James W. Smith was ousted after striking back one of his tormentors. Another man, Cadet Johnson C. Whittaker, after two years of academic success was found tied to his bed, his ears slashed and hair cut. He was court-martialed for inflicting the wounds on himself. That make a whole lotta sense don't it. Finally, one got through, the first negro to graduate from West Point, Henry O. Flipper.

(Lights out, WARD lights up FLIPPER.)



(Photo of FLIPPER.)

#### FLIPPER

I joined the Tenth in 1878 and was assigned to Captain Nolan's A. Company. I felt well received by the officers and the men. Both Captain Nolan and Colonel Grierson praised me for my leadership during the Victorio War. The future seemed good. And then I made a mistake. I went riding with one of the few eligible young ladies on the post. The young lady was white. The atmosphere at Fort Concho changed immediately. Lieutenant Charles Nordstrom was quiet incensed, he had previously shared the young ladies undivided attention. When A. Company transferred to Fort Davis I was appointed post commissary and of course I was arrested for embezzling two thousand dollars. I was jailed in the post guardhouse. Degrading. They cleared me of the embezzling charge but I was convicted of conduct unbecoming an officer. What my conduct was - was unbecoming a black man. Colonel Shafter, Lieutenant Nordstrom, and Lieutenant Louis Wilhelm framed me. I fought these charges the rest of my life but was not granted a new trial. Black officers like myself were semi-deprived. Lead to water but not allowed to drink. Just ask Colonel Charles Young.

(Light out, FLIPPER, lights up, YOUNG.)

(Photo of YOUNG.)

#### YOUNG

I graduated from West Point in 1889 and was assigned to the Tenth Cavalry Regiment. My career spanned three decades. I served as commander of the Ohio Volunteers that went up San Juan Hill. During the border warfare with Mexico, I served under Gen. "BlackJack" Pershing when we went after Pancho Villa. Then suddenly right before World War One, I was dropped from active duty. I couldn't understand it! High blood pressure, was the excuse. I attempted to prove the charge absurd by riding my horse from Ohio to Washington and back. Even with that, the charge stuck. I believe they did this to remove me from leadership during the war...the war to make the world "safe for democracy." Of course, three days before the Armistice and the war ended, I was again placed on active duty.

(Fade out, YOUNG. Lights up, WARD.)



WARD

Flipper and Young they was forerunners, cleared the path for those to come.

(We see a series of photos of the Buffalo Soldiers at Camp Funston and Fort Leavenworth.)

WARD (Cont.)

As for myself, I was part of the last years of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry. I was stationed at Fort Riley, Camp Funston. Back to Kansas where the story started. I worked with the horses trained one to go to the Olympic games. Yeah, we was the last to ride the horses. The last REAL cavalry. They didn't activate us during War World Two. In 1950, the Tenth was converted into the 510th Tank Battalion.

(The photos end.)

WARD (Cont.)

Some would say us Buffalo Soldiers was a bunch of troublemakers, militants, others would say we was the governments handymen, fools, some say we weren't good fighters, others say we was gallant, brave. All I can say is we tried to do our job. The best we could with what we had. That's all a man can do. Bobby, the story of the Buffalo soldiers is a complicated story. See, in MY opinion most black folks lives in what they calls a "contradiction". Feelin' good about what you do for this country, feeling bad about what this country DO. In some ways a good soldier ain't got no conscience. In that way, I've never been a good soldier. I believes us going through all that made it better for you kids. I BELIEVES that. And yeah, you right, don't many people know about us, what we done. Don't matter. WE know what we done, that's all a monument the Buffalo Soldier is looking for.

(A beat.)

Now, ya'll go play, Ya'll done wore me out. Gone, go play.

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF PLAY.



**Journey To a Shared Schoolyard**

**by Kay Kuhlmann**

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SCENE 1

SLIDE OF MASTHEAD: WYANDOTTE COUNTY, KANSAS, 1879.  
Background music of period as scene opens.

Setting: Bare Stage

Characters: Alice  
                  Kansas Legislator (white male)

(Lights up.)

(The Legislator is reading a newspaper as Alice passes by looking at something written on a piece of paper; she is clearly unsure where she is going.)

LEGISLATOR

(watching her for a moment)

'Morning, young lady. Anything I can help you with?

ALICE

Uh, good morning, sir. Can you tell me where I can find the Board of Education?

LEGISLATOR

Now, you don't look old enough to have children ready for school.

ALICE

For myself, I mean. To enroll. I'll be fourteen years old come November.

LEGISLATOR

Are you new here?

ALICE

Yes, sir. We just this week arrived from Tennessee.

LEGISLATOR

Exodusters then? That's our name for you good people, coming up here to Kansas to settle from the South. If you're 14, you must have been born right after the end of the War Between the States.

ALICE

Yes, sir. My Daddy likes to joke that I waited to be born until I could be born free. We have just got here. We heard about Kansas.



LEGISLATOR

You'd be meaning the black settlements, I imagine. Why, you can wait and enroll in school when you get there. My recommendation is Nicodemus, up in the northwest part of the state, Miss...uh, ...Miss...

ALICE

Oh, pardon me, my name is Alice Willmott. (she curtsies) But we're not sure yet where we're going to settle. I don't really know why, but one man told my father the rules for schools here are a little complicated. And I've come to check on them so we can get enrolled.

LEGISLATOR

Glad to make your acquaintance (tips hat), Alice. I'm Mr. Thorne, a member of the Kansas legislature, I'm proud to say. I try to do the best job I can for all our citizens.

ALICE

Does that mean me too?

LEGISLATOR

Of course it does, young lady. We're glad to have join us anyone who wants to be a productive citizen. You'll like it in Kansas. We call ourselves "the Free State," you know. There's another good black settlement down in the southeast, called...

ALICE

Maybe we're staying in the city. The schools are already operating, and my Mother wants us to get right into school.

LEGISLATOR

Which city?

ALICE

Right here in Wyandotte.

LEGISLATOR

You still in the grades, or in high school?

ALICE

I'm ready for high school.

LEGISLATOR

That's just fine. You're an ambitious young lady. Wyandotte's got a magnificent high school. I'm sure you'll be welcome. As the law reads, "no discrimination shall be made on account of color." Good day to you (he starts to exit).

LILLIE

But my brothers are little. They're all still in the grades.



LEGISLATOR

Well, now, that gets a bit more complicated. If the city has got more than 15,000 residents--which I know Wyandotte does--the city can decide whether to have separate schools for your people and mine. Now, that's just in the grades. In the high school, you can all go together.

LILLIE

Oh, I thought you said no discrimination should be made on account...

LEGISLATOR

Just telling you the law, young lady. And, if I'm not mistaken, Wyandotte has separate schools for the younger colored students.

LILLIE

But I guess I don't understand. Why wouldn't everyone go to the same schools in the Free State?

LEGISLATOR

Used to be that way. But, you know, Kansans are pretty independent people. And now, we've got all these new immigrants coming into the state and no town likes the State Legislature telling them what they can or can't do when it comes to their own schools. We just decided the most sensible thing is to let the bigger cities make their own decisions in this matter.

ALICE

Why wouldn't the small towns also make their own decisions?

LEGISLATOR

Doesn't make economic sense. You have a small school population, doesn't make any sense to operate two different sets of schools.

ALICE

I guess if we settle in our own towns, it wouldn't make any difference.

LEGISLATOR

That's right, in the black colonies, you'd be with your own people anyway. Now, Nicodemus already has a school, and...

ALICE

Thank you, but I think I'll go ahead and get the information my parents asked me to get.

LEGISLATOR

That's all right, you go right ahead.

(LIGHTS FADE.)



SCENE 2: RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA, 1899

Newspaper Masthead of Locale and Time  
Music and Costumes of the Period

Characters: Mother, African American  
John, young African American male  
Judge

(Lights up, finding John and his Mother in their home at supper table. They are eating and talking.)

JOHN

Darn right, Momma. I'm entitled to go to school, just like the white boys.

MOTHER

Now what school you going to go to, John? And don't use that kind of language. Your school's closing down. And they sure aren't going to let you go to the white boys' school.

JOHN

I read something, Momma. Have you ever heard of Homer Plessy?

MOTHER

That colored man who got himself thrown off that train car reserved for whites a few years back?

JOHN

That's him.

MOTHER

What does that have to do with this? Plus, as I recall, he lost his case when he tried to get something done in court. And that was only three years ago.

JOHN

Well, I've been reading. And I read what one of the Judges had to say about it.

MOTHER

Well, did that Mr. Plessy win his case, or not?

JOHN

Just listen to what one of the Judges had to say.



MOTHER

Did he win his case?

JOHN

No, but please listen.

(John gets up, very excited.)

It happened on June 7, 1892. Plessy got on an East Louisiana Railway train that goes between New Orleans to Covington, up near the Mississippi border. He sits down in the first seat that's open. It turns out to be reserved for whites.

MOTHER

That's trouble. I'm tellin' you.

JOHN

Trouble is right. The conductor comes up to Plessy and asks him to move to the car for colored passengers. Well, that didn't make a whole lot of sense to Plessy. There's plenty of empty seats right there in that car where he sat down. He declines to move. Then a detective on the train comes up and arrests him.

MOTHER

So Plessy takes it to Court.

PLESSY

That's right. Trouble is, he ends up in front of a judge who didn't agree with him. Now, the way I see it, making him move was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which guarantees every American citizen equal protection of the laws. Plessy loses, but he appeals his case to the next court higher.

MOTHER

Thought he was gettin' somewhere, didn't he?

PLESSY

The United States Supreme Court doesn't get around to making a decision until 1896, four years after it happened. The Court decides that even though the Constitution does require equal protection of the laws, and this means for the colored race too-- each state can make laws as long as they are in keeping with (he reads)...as long as those laws are in keeping with "the established usages, customs and traditions of the people." The Justice who wrote the opinion for the Court even said that if the enforced separation of the two races seems to stamp the colored race with a badge of inferiority, this is because the colored race chooses to put that meaning on it.



MOTHER

They're calling him inferior, then putting the blame on him for feelin' inferior. It's just like I was tellin' you. Don't sound like he won a thing to me.

JOHN

But one Justice disagreed with the rest. That was Justice John Marshall Harlan. He warned that these kinds of decisions would put the black race not only in unfair treatment but also put what he called "a blessing on the idea of black inferiority."

MOTHER

So you're thinkin' this Judge Harlan is a reasonable man?

JOHN

I just told you what he said. That sounds reasonable to me.

MOTHER

Maybe. Maybe not.

JOHN

What do you mean?

MOTHER

We'll see. I'm all for you wanting to stay in school, son. But you've got to have some common sense too.

JOHN

Will you stand by my decision to try?

MOTHER

Of course, I will. Just don't want you to get your hopes up sky high. You're in high school. That's already a good bit of learning. Maybe the time is right for you to just go on with your life and let it be...

JOHN

We had our own school. There was a high school for white boys, a high school for white girls, and a high school for Negroes. And now they're closing ours down. It's not right.

MOTHER

There's not a school to go to any longer. So you can't go. You know why they're closing it. They got so many Negro children in the lower grades that the buildings can't hold them all.

JOHN

Does that make it right that they're going to solve the problem by turning my school into a grade school? So now I don't have a high school to attend?



MOTHER

You know what the school board says about it.

MOTHER

That if I want to go to high school, I should go to a church-sponsored school for Negroes.

MOTHER

What's so bad about that?

JOHN

I didn't say it's bad. Only it's not right under the Constitution. Some of the other parents are asking that the county not be allowed to operate a high school for white students unless we get equal facilities.

MOTHER

You mentioned that Mr. Plessy. What does he have to do with it?

JOHN

Because even though he lost his case, the Court said that that the state does have to provide equal facilities for Negroes. Do you see? The Supreme Court already said that. And now they're going to have to remember what they said when it comes to schools.

MOTHER

John, sometimes I think you've already got too much learning for your own good. You get these big ideas about..

JOHN

But this Judge that said what I read to you...this Judge John Harlan, he's going to be deciding on this one too.

MOTHER

I'll go along with your feelings on this, John. If some of the other parents are going to take it to Court, you can count on me too.

JOHN

Oh, Mama, thank you....

(lights fade on Mother and Son as a Judge appears in a spotlight saying the following very slowly and officially as Newspaper Mastheads show passage of time to decision in 1899:)



HARLAN

It is the opinion of this Court, without dissent, that while both the benefits and burdens of public taxation must be shared by citizens without discrimination against any class on account of their race, the education of people in schools maintained by state taxation is a matter belonging to the respective states. Any interference on the part of Federal authority can not be justified.

(from the shadows)

JOHN

It will never be over. Maybe it will be years from now. But Justice can't be denied forever.

MOTHER

Maybe I'll live to see the day. Now, let's find you a church school.

(Lights fade to Black.)



SCENE 3: TOPEKA, KANSAS, 1937

Newspaper Masthead of the Time  
Period Costumes and Music

Characters: Mrs. Sloane, an African American Teacher  
Willy, African American junior high student  
Thomas, African American junior high student

Setting: A Schoolroom

(As lights rise, Mrs. Sloane and Thomas are in classroom. Thomas is seated at his desk, head down. Mrs. Sloane is grading papers.)

(Thomas starts to raise head.)

MRS. SLOANE

Your punishment is not yet complete, Thomas. You have five minutes more.

THOMAS

Can't I even have a chance to explain?

MRS. SLOANE

There's nothing to explain. We have a new boy. You treated him rudely. You have behaved childishly, you are being punished like a child. It's a pretty sorry situation for a student who's supposed to be a young man.

THOMAS

How about if I apologize to him?

MRS. SLOANE

That would be a good beginning.

THOMAS

What else, Mrs. Sloane?

MRS. SLOANE

Perhaps apologize to him in the company of all the students who were present when you teased him about his "country" ways.

THOMAS

Apologize in front of everyone? (he starts to bring his head up)

MRS. SLOANE

Head back down, I haven't ended your punishment yet.

THOMAS

Yes, Mrs. Sloane. I'm very sorry for my behavior.



MRS. SLOANE

All right, Thomas. Go back out to the ball court and bring Willy back here in with you.

THOMAS

Yes, Maam. (he exits)

MRS. SLOANE

(to herself)

Poor child. He's been to country school all these years. Only three black students in his entire school. Now he's here and doesn't know what to make of it. But I won't have my students teasing him about it.

(Thomas returns with Willy, who is also African American)

MRS. SLOANE

You may proceed, Thomas.

THOMAS

Willy, I was wondering if you'd like to come to my house for supper tonight. I'll have to ask my folks, but I can come over and get you if they say okay.

WILLY

Sure. I'd like that.

MRS. SLOANE

We're very glad to have you with us in this school for 7th grade, Willy. Monroe is a wonderful school, isn't it, Thomas?

THOMAS

(to Willy)

Did you really go to a white school?

WILLY

It's a two-room school. White and black. I didn't really think about it that much, I guess because I went there all six grades.

MRS. SLOANE

If we seem to be asking too many questions, Willy, it's because we're interested, not just being nosy. Most likely you found yourself in a really fine learning situation, listening to the older students' lessons when you were in the lower grades, then being able to be a leader when you become one of the older ones.

WILLY

Yes, maam. I've always liked school, and I'd hear a lot of things from the older students and I'd store it away. Then the next year, I could always recall the lessons.

THOMAS

What's it like coming to a black school now?



WILLY

Well, here in town, the white school is closer to my house, so the strangest part is passing the school that's right up the street from me to come here. I guess the main difference I see so far is that I have to get up a lot earlier to get to school on time. I think I'm a pretty good student, because I've always worked hard, and that's what I hope to do here at Monroe.

MRS. SLOANE

That's a wonderful attitude, isn't it, Thomas?

THOMAS

Yes, maam.

MRS. SLOANE

Well, you can both go on back outside now. The bell will ring in just a few minutes.

WILLY and THOMAS

(Yes, Maam. Thank you. etc. as they exit.)

MRS. SLOANE

(to herself, as she prepares for students to come back in)  
If they go to high school, they'll both have another adjustment to make. This year, just 14 black students out of a student body of 500 in the high school. They're both strong athletes, but they'll find themselves having to have a separate team for football. Their own clubs, a separate room for socializing...well, I'll just prepare them academically and socially the best I can, and I'm sure they'll be able to figure out the rest for themselves.

(Lights Fade on Scene.)



SCENE 4: PEARSON v. CHARLESTON, S.C., 1948

Slide of Masthead, Charleston, S.C.

Characters: Harold R. Boulware, an African American attorney  
Levi Pearson, a farmer

Setting: Boulware's office in Columbia, S.C.

BOULWARE

Please come in, Mr. Pearson. Have a seat. (Levi Pearson does)  
Thank you for traveling all the way to Charleston. Now, these  
are your facts as I understand them. You have three children  
attending the Scott's Branch High School nine miles from your  
farm. Now, as I understand the case, you chipped in to pay for a  
bus to get those children to school, but the bus keeps breaking  
down.

PEARSON

That's right, Mr. Boulware. It's Reverend J.A. DeLaine who told  
me about your training as a lawyer. That you've worked on these  
kinds of cases before.

BOULWARE

Tell me about your children.

PEARSON

There's three of them. Daisy, age 18. James, he's 15; and I've  
got a younger daughter Eloise, who's 12. It's harder and harder  
to get my children to school, because it's nine miles away, and  
our bus just can't make it any longer. I'm in the fields all  
day, so can't take them myself.

BOULWARE

With your permission, I'd like to submit a petition to your  
school district...let's see, that's Number 26 of Clarendon  
County, is that right...(he's writing). The petition will pray  
the following: (reading) "that school bus transportation be  
furnished, maintained and operated out of the public funds in the  
district, for use of the said children of the Petitioner and  
other Negro school children similarly situated." I'll submit it  
to the County Superintendent there--that's Mr. McCord?--to the  
chairman of the school board, and to the State Board of Educa-  
tion.

(Lights dim as the two shake hands. MASTHEAD showing passage of  
three months time.)



BOULWARE

(Lights up again on Boulware and Pearson, shaking hands again.)

It's been three and a half months now, Mr. Pearson. There's been no response on the request for transportation for your children to their school. I need you to really think about this before I proceed.

PEARSON

Why's that?

BOULWARE

To go any further, I'm going to need to identify you. That you're the person who came to me about this matter. First of all, I'd like to assure you that I know my business. Trained for it at Howard University. I successfully argued some cases for black teachers a few years back who were seeking the same pay as their white counterparts. Didn't break any legal ground because the U.S. Supreme Court had already ruled on the issue, but you have to understand that here in South Carolina, nothing is automatic when it comes to issues separating the races. I had to sue for those teachers, even though the precedent was firmly established in case law.

PEARSON

I've discussed it with my family, and we figured this was coming. We're prepared to go ahead. You can count on me to do whatever it takes.

(Lights up on audience, who are now to represent the judges. MASTHEAD slide showing date.)

BOULWARE

(to audience) This gentleman's children are suffering irreparable damage. I ask you, the court, to issue a permanent injunction forever restraining and enjoining the school district from making a distinction on account of race or color in providing free bus service for white schoolchildren while denying it to Negroes.

You will note on my petition to the court that I am joined by my good friend Thurgood Marshall from the NAACP--that's National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--in this matter. His signature appears below mine in the petition. Now, Mr. Pearson, here, whose children are suffering...



PEARSON

(pulling Boulware off to the side) I'm a simple man. I want to do what is necessary, and this is causing a lot of excitement with my neighbors. Everyone knows the risk I'm taking, and I guess they appreciate it. But how soon do you think this can be resolved?

BOULWARE

Mr. Pearson, I'm aware of the difficulties you're suffering because of this. I know that when you were ready for spring planting, your credit had been cut off in town. I've been told that you had to cut down some of your timber and sell it for cash just to raise enough for planting.

LEVI PEARSON

That's not a problem. I've set aside this week from my fields to be here. And I don't intend to let the good people who are behind me down. I just want you to know that. But a week off from the fields is all I can afford. That's all I meant...

BOULEWARE

(someone from audience hands Boulware a document; he looks at Pearson, again at audience)

(then to Pearson:)

BOULWARE

I'm afraid you've set aside this week for nothing, Mr. Pearson. We have been thrown out of court. The school board checked your tax receipts, and it seems that your farm is on a line between school districts. The court has decided that we have no legal standing in the case.

LEVI PEARSON

You don't expect us to give up over that, do you? Can't we just begin all over again? There are plenty of other black farmers who won't have the problem of property lines. I hate to ask them to do this, but...

BOULEWARE

That's right. And this time the stakes will go higher. Because Thurgood Marshall and I have decided that the burden is too much for one citizen to bear alone. This time we're going to get together a group of twenty plaintiffs. And the issue won't just be worn out, broken down school buses. There are plenty of other disgraceful things going on in the black schools in your county as well: inferior buildings, lower teachers' salaries, inferior teaching materials. This time we aren't going to just go after some school buses. We're going to go after everything guaranteed to you by the Fourteenth Amendment.



BOULWARE, continued

But we need to find twenty plaintiffs. And they'll have to stand up to a lot of trouble before we'll ever get to court on the real issues. Can you help me find twenty of your neighbors to take this on?

PEARSON

Yes, sir. I can, and I will.

(LEVI PEARSON and BOULEWARE shake hands, as lights fade.)



SCENE 5: Rumbblings From An Entire Nation

Newspaper Masthead: 1951, Topeka

Characters: Thurgood Marshall  
Kenneth Clark

Ensemble of Actors playing multiple roles

(Lights come up on Oliver and Leola Brown, at home)

OLIVER BROWN

Leola, I've been asked to do something, and I'd like your feelings on it..

LEOLA BROWN

At the meeting last night?

OLIVER

That's right. At our NAACP meeting. Wish you could have been there.

LEOLA

What do they want you to do?

OLIVER

Now, you know when I've gone for walks with Linda, and we walk right by Sumner School, so close to our own house, it often occurs to me to wonder why it is that our daughter has to go a mile and a half to school when there's one right down the street. Why she must leave home at 7:40 to be at school by 9:00. Having to cross the railroad tracks when the cars are switching in order to catch her bus.

LEOLA

And our NAACP wants you to help them look into it?

OLIVER

More than that, Leola. They have asked me to take Linda right down here to Sumner School and try to get her enrolled there.

LEOLA

She likes Monroe, and it's a fine school. Marvelous teachers...every bit as good as the white schools, if not better.



OLIVER

Of course it is. You went to Monroe yourself. But our organization has been attending School Board meetings for a long time now, asking the question of why, on account of color, some children are made to travel outside their neighborhoods to go to school.

LEOLA

Those meetings have kept many of you there well after midnight sometimes, I know that. The Board gets all other business out of the way first, hoping we will tire of the meeting and go on home before our topic comes up.

OLIVER

The feeling in the organization is that the time has come. I'm inclined to do it if you have no objections.

LEOLA

What do you expect will happen?

OLIVER

I'll take Linda's hand; we'll walk up the steps. I will ask to see the principal and attempt to enroll my daughter at Sumner School. I think we all know what the answer will be.

LEOLA

We do indeed. Are you going to be the only one?

OLIVER

Not at all. A number of other parents, mostly mothers, will be doing the same with their own children. We are together on this if you agree.

(Lights fade on Browns; up on Thurgood Marshall)

MARSHALL

I'm happy to be here before you today. Citizens of Topeka, you are not alone. You've no doubt heard of the Levi Pearson case in South Carolina, which has now been expanded. But we at the NAACP office in New York are aware of the work you've been doing here in Topeka. We do not come here to claim your work, or to take it over. Your own local attorneys--Elisha and Charles Scott, Mr. Bledsoe--are doing a marvelous job.

I will not be able to join you in Topeka even if you invite me. My work load has become so pressing, with a number of test cases around the country being prepared for trial, that I will send my very able associate, Robert Carter, if you want his assistance. But the case is in your local hands.



MARSHALL, continued

Now, in the South Carolina case, we have developed a number of interesting witnesses. One is a psychologist named Kenneth Clarke...

(lights fade on Marshall; up on Clark on another part of the stage)

(Clark gets out his case of dolls and begins:)

CLARK

What have I got in this case? You're all wondering, I imagine. Well, what I've got here are some dolls. Now, you boys, don't pretend to me you've never seen dolls before. But first, I'd like to ask the girls something.

(He takes out four dolls; 2 are black dolls, 2 are white dolls. The black, dolls are of two different skin shades, one much darker than the other.)

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about these dolls. It's best if you don't discuss your answers with the student sitting next to you. Just remember this. these are personal answers, and you can answer however you like.

This is Doll #1, Doll #2, Doll #3, and #4. Look at them closely. Now, on a piece of paper, please write down the number of the doll you think is a white doll. If there's more than one, write down all the numbers. Now write down the number of the colored doll. Now, the Negro doll.

Which of these dolls has the nicest clothes? Of course, they're all in diapers here, but you know they've got some clothes in their dresser drawers that they just haven't been dressed in yet. So you decide: which doll has the nicest clothes in the dresser?

Next, which doll do you think is the nicest? This is just your opinion, you decide.

Now, what doll do you like best? Again, your own opinion.

Finally, which doll is the prettiest. Write that down, please.

Now, please pass your answers to the aisle, folded up so no one can see them.

Thank you for your time today.

(Lights fade on Clark's experiment; back up, now on Clark talking to Marshall)



MARSHALL

Can you testify to these results? Are they conclusive enough?

CLARK

The fact is that eleven of the sixteen Negro students who took part in this experiment thought the brown doll looked "bad;" ten of those students thought the white doll was the "nice" one. I, along with my wife Mamie, have given the test to over 400 children, and the results are consistent with the situation in Clarendon County, South Carolina. I am willing to testify to that. It is my opinion that segregation has a definitely detrimental effect on the personality development of the Negro child

(Lights fade on Scene as Clark disappears from it; back up on Thurgood Marshall)

MARSHALL

The circumstances in Topeka are different, I know that. But you have an issue that amounts to the same thing but in a more disguised form: are your children entitled to the protection of the 14th amendment to the Constitution? I agree with the contention of your own attorneys that equal facilities are not enough.

(Lights fade on Marshall; up on Dr. Pinkham in a courtroom like setting)

DR. PINKHAM

When we Menninger Foundation psychologists were being interviewed as possible expert witnesses, we wanted to avoid being repetitive, and by the time it came around to me, I knew what I wanted to stress--that separate-but-equal is a contradiction in terms.

LAWYER

(to audience)

...For, you see, the Topeka schools for black students came as close as any in the country do in attempting to establish equality. Excellent teachers. Quality education. The question of law in this case is whether states have the constitutional right to establish schools based on race.

So, I ask you, Dr. Pinkham, does enforced legal separation have any adverse effect upon the personality development of the Negro child?

PINKHAM

The fact that it is enforced...has more importance than the mere fact of segregation...because this gives...official sanction to a policy which is inevitably interpreted both by white people and by Negroes as denoting the inferiority of the Negro...Were it not for the sense that one group is inferior to the other, there would be no basis...for such segregation.



LAWYER

Well, does this interference...have any effect on the learning process?

PINKHAM

...If these attitudes are reflected back and then internalized... then one develops a sense of one's self as an inferior being...

(Lights fade on witness; up on Judge)

JUDGE

The NAACP has produced a number of impressive witnesses. Nevertheless, the district court in Topeka finds that because the the physical facilities and all other measurable factors are comparable in the white and colored schools of Topeka, we can not rule for the plaintiffs. This decision is unanimous. However, we have attached a list of "Findings of Fact" in the case.

MARSHALL

Well, this is something almost inviting us to appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Topeka judges say this: "Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law..."

Yes, because of the Plessy case, the one that began on the railroad car reserved for whites, the judges are unable to find the Topeka Schools in violation of the Constitution. If the courts are going to decide otherwise, it will have to be the Supreme Court that does it.



(All Actors take on various Voices of Narration for this segment, which must be done with a quick pace and almost as if one voice. Everyone except actor playing Marshall, who must remain in character, wear costumes of common citizens.)

ENSEMBLE MEMBER

By the time the Brown case appeal was ready to be heard by the Supreme Court, cases from three other states had been added to it. The Topeka Board of Education had decided not to get involved any further. But the districts from other states who were having to defend their segregated schools were urging Kansas not to drop out or it would hurt all the cases.

ANOTHER

But something was happening in Topeka. The general feeling among the citizens was becoming that segregation did not make very much sense in a state that had called itself "The Free State" when it was founded. So the Board of Education told the Kansas Attorney General's Office that they did not want to defend their position before the Supreme Court. Finally, the Supreme Court virtually ordered the Attorney General's office to participate.

MARSHALL

I was there for this one. Wouldn't have missed it. I'd spent years working toward this very moment in history.

It seemed to go on forever. Thousands upon thousands of pages of trial testimony.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER

Then, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court died. I was not among those who was happy about it, even though he was clearly on the side of those who favored continued segregation of schools. But the time needed for President Eisenhower to name another Chief Justice only added to the drawn-out process.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER

He chose Earl Warren.

ANOTHER

And history was altered forever.

MASTHEAD: MAY 17, 1954. WASHINGTON D.C.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER

May 17, 1954. More than 3 years since Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka had first been filed. No one suspected that it would turn out to be such an important day. Chief Justice Warren's opinion consisted of just two paragraphs.



ALL ACTORS IN UNISON

"We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place."

ONE ENSEMBLE MEMBER

"Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

MARSHALL

It was 1:20 p.m.

AN ENSEMBLE MEMBER

Within the hour, the Voice of America began broadcasting the news to the entire world: In the United States, schoolchildren could no longer be segregated by race.

(As stage lights fade, a number of newspaper headlines are flashed indicating that Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka is still alive in the courts. Followed by slides of known and unknown people who contributed to the Brown v. Board of Education case.)

END OF PLAY.



street hist.

Mary Mullen - 272-8687  
City Direct.

~~Ray~~ Kuhlmann - 913-749-3841  
(Contractor) #.

starts  
on  
write

Play (3 part play) / Grant

• Buff. • Niederer • Brown's Treas

October /

~~John~~ ~~Willmont~~ # Willmont

- Read Script -

Plumwright

- Night Sheets -

• Grant Kustumberg.

Public Revon

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5268 Roswell St.

San Diego, 92114

22 Sept -

CA

Ref: Chuck Ambers  
Buffalo

• West Picture  
• Meadens Inf.  
Surt 2/20  
B/B

NOTES



# IMPORTANT MESSAGE

FOR \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_ A.M.  
P.M.

M Sydney Thompson  
OF "Flying West"

PHONE San Diego  
AREA CODE NUMBER EXTENSION

FAX  
 MOBILE 619/266-1941  
AREA CODE NUMBER TIME TO CALL

TELEPHONED		PLEASE CALL	
CAME TO SEE YOU	<u>Send mail</u>	WILL CALL AGAIN	<u>San Diego</u>
WANTS TO SEE YOU		RUSH	
RETURNED YOUR CALL		SPECIAL ATTENTION	

MESSAGE [Handwritten scribbles]  
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SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_