

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This play is not like all of my others. If you are familiar with my work, you may know me to sit in naturalistic drama, with some humor. You may be used to earnest social dramas with a political backdrop. This play, while still derived from my same heart and compassion, is not as earnest as the others. There are hills and valleys in this play, places where it lives on the ground in naturalism, and lots of other places where naturalism betrays you and we are straight up in satire. The bigger you are willing to go, both in the world of slavery and in the present, the more earned and powerful the moments will be that hit on the ground. But without going big, without being loud and a lil' crazy and unhinged in places...without, for instance, going straight up "Gone With the Wind" in the Missy Sue scenes, the play will not work. If you don't think this play is funny, you are missing a lot of my play.

In fact, this play hits every humorous funny bone, in the past especially, but also in the present. In Scenes 8 and 9, we are going into straight up farce. I dub these two scenes "the circus." Because this is when all of the characters come together, and there are people entering the scenes before other people have fully left. There is hide-and-go-seek and "who's on first" behavior going on. To serve my play is to find a great deal of levity in the absurdity of the worlds. And to also trust and allow the real and deep moments to hit the bottom of the ocean. You'll know where these are if you trust the gravity of the story. (Hint: they are usually close to the monologues.)

There are reasons for this chosen style. Sometimes existing in the middle of racism, sexism, classism, and the insanity of it all is like living through a farce. Sometimes the enslaved HAD to be thinking, "No this bitch didn't just say..." just like we think about things now! Let the past and the present merge in consciousness. Let there be overlaps. The point is, it will be hard to tell the worlds apart because the shit is just being recycled over and over again.

May you have fun during the mounting of this play. If you are not having fun, you're taking the play too seriously. And missing the weight of what is to come. By the end of the play, we are stealing everyone's breath. And the only way to get them open enough to achieve this is to find and explore the humor along with the pain.

I trust you to find the laughter, the profundity, the rage, and the heart. Let's make art and get free...

peaceandlovedominique:)

1.

(Lights rise on a woman, SANDRA. She is dressed in a power suit. She takes a sip of water. Pushes a button on a remote, and a slide is shown. Image of a Black woman slave with a white baby suckling her bare breast. SANDRA clicks off the image.)

SANDRA. Before this becomes a complete misinterpretation of intent, I'd like to say that I am not averse to images of slavery. They do not embarrass or fatigue me. I supported *Roots*. Watched all seven volumes. My mother made me. I think I was nine. Her idea of summer vacation. I read *Jubilee*. The freedom papers of Frederick Douglass. The slave narratives of Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince and Harriet Jacobs. I have seen *12 Years a Slave*, *Slave Play*, *The Slave*, another play - not the same, *Birth of a Nation*, *The Birth of a Nation* - very different movies, *Father Comes Home from the Wars*, *An Octoroon*, *Harriet*, *Underground*, *Underground Railroad*, *Amistad*, *Sankofa*, *Beloved*, *Unchained Memories*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Glory*, and even *Django Unchained*, though there are serious debates to be had over the qualifications of that last one. I have visited the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, the Slavery Human Zoo in Moscow - yes, you heard that right, they had a human zoo, the Middle Passage Exhibit at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit - some children on a field trip threw up on a model of the slave ship - understandably - it's a very convincing diorama, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati - an elderly man with dementia, no doubt,

mistook our tour guide for Harriet Tubman. I've visited the African Burial Grounds in Manhattan, the Slave Mart Museum in Charleston, the National Museum of African American History and Culture in DC, and walked the shores of Ghana where the slave castles are still standing. I even discuss the impact of slavery in my Comparative Politics Classes. There is nothing slavery that is off limits for me. No shame in my own enslaved heritage. NO SHAME. And yet...

(She presses the remote. The slide shifts. Becomes even larger and more grotesque. The woman slave now has Sandra's face, Photoshopped onto the original. SANDRA takes a breath.)

It was hanging on my office door. After office hours. Sometime between five p.m. yesterday and nine a.m. this morning. I'm not sure what...it is trying to say... but I demand an investigation. It is imperative that the student who placed this upon my door be put on academic probation immediately. Thank you for giving me the floor.

2.

(Lights up in a slave cabin. A bed and a fireplace with a pot on it, brewing. Where are we? Have we time-traveled?)

(A man, ABNER, lies on the bed as a woman, SARA, sews up his wound with a needle and thread.)

ABNER. Ow, goddamn Sara!

SARA. Be calm and lemme work. Can't stop the needle from pokin' if my subject keep floppin' around like a dead fish.

ABNER. Said you knew what you was doin'.

SARA. Do.

ABNER. Said you sewed up two blacksmiths and four runaways.

SARA. Did.

ABNER. Then why it feel like you don't know the difference between my ribs and my ass?

SARA. Dark.

ABNER. Pull me closer to the fire if you can't see. I ain't gon' keep gettin' poked in the wrong places.

SARA. You the nurse now?

ABNER. I'm the soldier.

SARA. Shut it! You want somebody to hear you sayin' that loud?

ABNER. Let 'em. I'm proud.

SARA. Gon' be proud and dead.

(She sticks the needle into his abdomen and stitches. ABNER hisses from pain.)