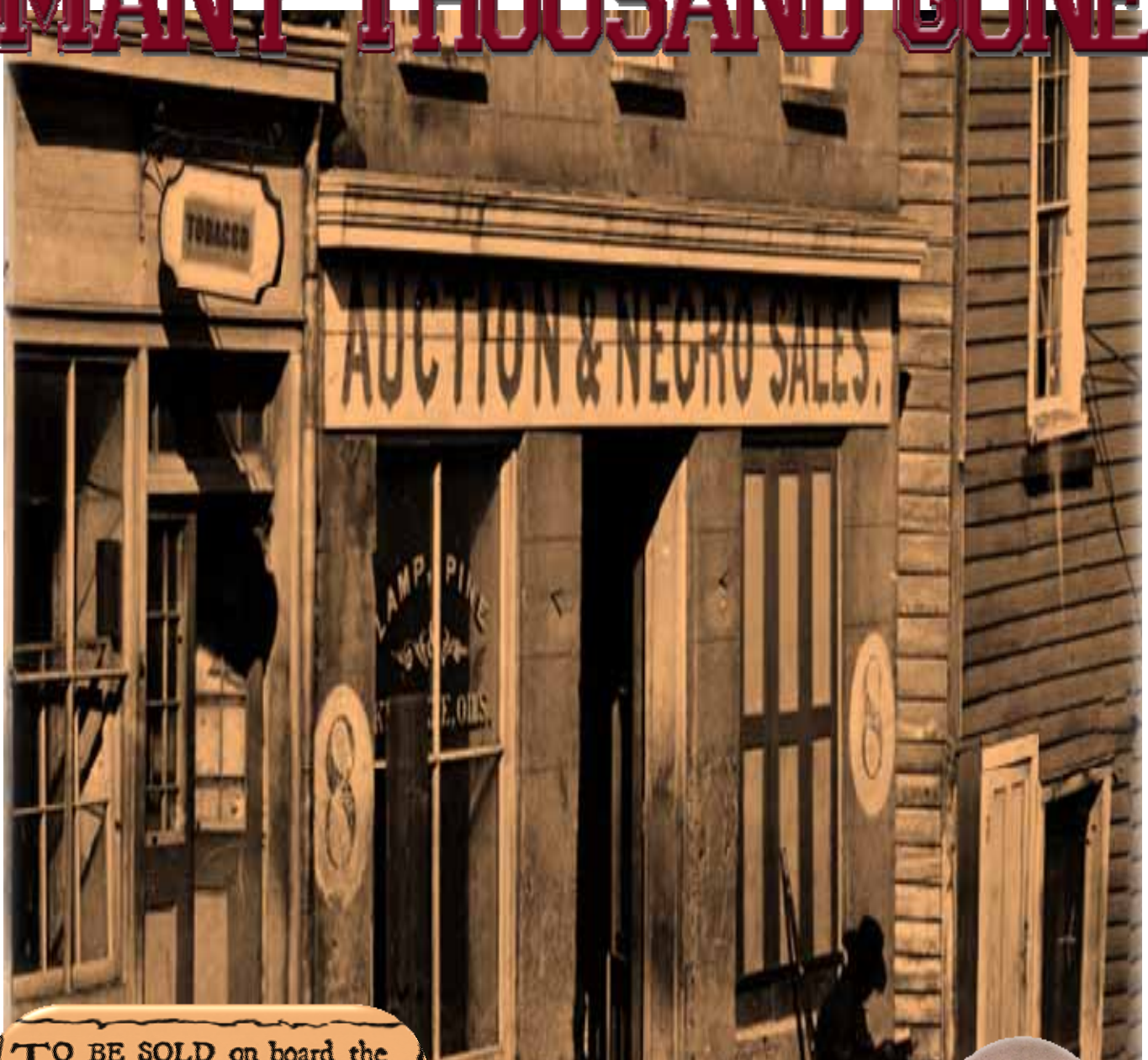


MANY THOUSAND GONE



TO BE SOLD on board the
Ship *Bance-Island*, on tuesday the 6th
of *May* next, at *Ashley-Ferry*; a choice
cargo of about 250 fine healthy

NEGROES,

just arrived from the
Windward & Rice Coast.
—The utmost care has
already been taken, and
shall be continued, to keep them free from
the least danger of being infected with the
SMALL-POX, no boat having been on
board, and all other communication with
people from *Charles-Town* prevented.

Aubin, Laurens, & Appleby.

N. B. Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the
SMALL-POX in their own Country.

Pamela R. Smith



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EXCERPTS ONLY

Director's Notes

Director's Notes: This play is extracted from our master play "The Road Back to Equality." Many of the parts have been significantly edited and some rewritten for the sake of time allotment. Therefore, this play does vary from the master script.

This play is not divided in Acts and Scenes but in Time and Eras. This play is written in such a manner that you are able to select which events (eras) you want to do.

It even has the lyrics of historical black history songs included and some sheet music also. It is one of the most informative plays of its time. You may elect to use it as a conversation starter for your class

Note: Narrator has a role in just about every era. In some of the eras the Narrator is off stage, but his/her voice is heard telling the story. Narrator is only listed below in the Introduction, but does appear throughout the play.

Choir sings throughout the play and is only listed among the characters when it opens a scene. It is vitally important that you are able to have your choir positioned where it does not have to be walk up to its place every time it needs to sing – this will eat quite a bit of your time. It needs to be stationary and can sing from where you have it.

Times are estimates only. It depends on your characters' speaking pace and also on how many stanzas of the songs you sing. It is important that you have your scenes' sets to be set up where characters flow fluently and there is no unnecessary delays between scenes. Eras represent the time frame that particular scene covers, not necessarily an entire era of war, etc.

The Narrator: - must be excellent orator and dramatic speaker

To make this play entertaining, it is imperative that all characters do not just read their lines, ideally they should memorize their lines, but if time precludes that, then they **MUST** speak in a dramatic tone befitting the character he or she is portraying. Use a podium or something to hide the paper if the person has not learned the lines. Note: For the Narrator and for some others, in some scenes it is perfectly okay for the character to be reading his or her lines—just be creative.

Characters

Many Thousand Gone

This section lists all the characters in the play by Event/Era titles.

Introduction Estimated Time: 2 min

- **Narrator 1** (*different from your primary Narrator for the play – only for the Introduction*)

Spain and the Americas - (Era 1565) Estimated Time: 3 min

- **Nana**
- **Linda**

Jamestown Settlement - (Era 1619) Estimated Time: 12 min w/song

- **Nana**
- **Linda**
- **Richard Hakluyt** (the uncle) – early forties (helped to spearhead the Jamestown Settlement)
- **Richard Hakluyt** (the nephew) - late twenties
- **Nobleman #1** (*late forties*)
- **Nobleman #2** (*early forties*)
- **John Rolfe** (*first tobacco farmer in Jamestown*)

Slavery in Full Swing – (Era 1641-1696) Estimated Time: 9 min w/song

- **Slaves** (at least 6 – nonspeaking parts)
- **Legislators** (4) – 3 have speaking parts

The Zong Ship (Era 1781) Estimated Time: 6 min w/song

- **Captain Collingwood** Note: Over 123 slaves thrown overboard chained and alive
- **Seaman 1**
- **First Mate Kelsall**
- **John Lee** (Solicitor General for England)

Beginning of the Revolt (Era 1791) Estimated Time: 3 min

George Washington (off stage voice heard only)

General Toussaint L'Ouverture (Era 1791 – 1806) Estimated Time: 10 min

- **General Toussaint L'Ouverture**
- **Haitian Soldiers (3)**

Charles Ball (Cotton Gin Effect on Slavery) Estimated Time: 8 min

- **Young Charles** (about 4 years old)
- **Adult Charles** (in early fifties)
- **Ball's Siblings** (two teen girls and two teen males)
- **Auctioneer**
- **Mrs. Ball** (Charles' Mom)
- **Mr. Ball** (Charles' Father)
- **White and Black Bidders** (at least 4 whites)

Charles Ball is the author the book, "Fifty Years in Chains" that details the pain and abuse of slavery and its effect on African families. He shares the effect the cotton gin had on slavery and the lasting effects of the auction block.

Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws (Era 1865 – 1965) Estimated Time: 11 min w/songs

- **Black Male** (recently freed slave)
- **White Officer**
- **Little Girl** (black; age between 7-9)
- **Mother** (black; mother of little girl)
- **Black Males (2)**

Ida B. Wells-Barnett (Era 1884 – 1920s) Estimated Time: 5.5 min w/song

- **Ida B. Wells – Barnett** (one of the most prolific African-American females of her time. She wrote about the lynching of blacks, the unjust treatment of black soldiers. Her pen was her weapon against an unjust society when many were silent.)
- **Conductor**

Memphis Sanitation Workers’ Labor Dispute (Era 1968) Estimated Time: 15 min w/songs

- **Taylor**
- **Wife**
- **Radio Announcer** (heard only)
- **Strikers** (at least 20) – only two with speaking roles
- **Civic Leaders and Picketers** (at least 15 varying men, women, and teens)
- **Mayor Henry Loeb**
- **African-American Minister**
- **Church Member** (voice heard only)
- **Minister Joe**

Many Thousand Gone Estimated Time: 5 min

- **Renee** This is the closing of the play
- **Nana**
- **Linda**
- **Characters from the play** (depends on what scenes you used)

Total:89.5 minutes = 1 hour 29 minutes

You can shorten the time by singing only a stanza of the songs or by eliminating an era.

Introduction

Narrator: *(This narrator is different from the primary Narrator for your play – only to read the Introduction = spotlight; rest of the stage is dark)* History has a way of changing, depending upon who is telling it. Well, I invite you to take a journey with me through the true history of Negroes, Blacks, African-Americans, or whatever classification you are using today. It is a journey of African-Americans.....

Spain and the Americas

1565

(spotlight Narrator; the rest of the stage is dark.)

Narrator: Before the Jamestown Settlement, there was Esteban, who is said to be the first African to step foot in the United States. But there were also other events prior to 1619. On August 28, 1565, Menendez, a Spanish explorer, along with about 600 Spanish men, women, and children, as well as an estimated 50 African slaves arrived off the coast of Florida.....

Jamestown Settlement

1619

Richard Hakluyt (*uncle*): This is a chance for the increasing number of landless poor who burden English towns and cities to rise up out of poverty. *(pointing to the clergyman)* Clergyman, we haven't forgotten about you. This will give you an opportunity to convert savages into Christians!

Narrator: With that, the stage was set. Investors in the Virginia Company of London recruited men to send to this new world. In 1607, they headed for what would become the United States to a town now called Jamestown.

Nobleman #1 from Virginia Company of London (*standing*): I think we are finally getting everything under control in the New World. We have found a tobacco seed from Trinidad that takes to the earth there and is growing extremely well. However, we must recruit more poor immigrants and send them there. In exchange for four to seven years of labor, they will be fed, sheltered, and clothed.

Narrator: *(voice heard only)* But it did not work out as they planned. The indentured servants had a very high turnover. So, the Englishmen then thought of exploiting the Native Americans, but they were highly susceptible to diseases and proved unreliable, because they had the option to quit and return home to the next village.

Narrator: His words set the tone for how blacks would eventually be viewed for centuries in the eyes of America. The Dutchman sold the Africans for food and that set the tone for years to come in this country.

Slavery in Full Swing

1641–1696

Setting: Narrator is stage at podium. Only have a spotlight on and perhaps show images of that time as Narrator speaks. Have another part of the stage already set up for the Legislators.

Narrator: The wheels of slavery had been in motion for years, but was now in full swing. With the need for long-term laborers to keep up with the very profitable tobacco crops and other agriculture, England saw African slaves as the most profitable option since they were skilled laborers as well as experts in tropical agricultural. In 1641, Massachusetts became the first colony to legally recognize slavery.

Legislator 1: *(holding up a sheet a paper and reading from it)* We have to ensure that every Negro child born in the colony is a slave for life. *(visibly agitated)* I'm telling you that this is getting out of control.

Legislator 2: I agree. *(writing on paper as he talks)*

Legislator 3: I agree, but we also need to do something with all these interracial relationships. I'm telling you that this is getting out of control. It's ungodly.

Narrator: This law solidified African slaves' position in society. It made slavery hereditary. A slave's offspring automatically became the property of her master.

The Zong Ship

1781

Narrator: (*off stage – voice heard only*) The Ship Zong set sail from Africa in September 6, 1781. As the practice was, the crew packed on many more slaves than it had room. The slaves were chained two by two, right leg and left leg.....

.....

Captain Collinwood: Look, we left Africa with 417 slaves. In twelve weeks, because of disease we have lost sixty slaves and seven of our own men! That means money. We're almost out of water. We are not going to make it to Jamaica if we don't do something now.

Seaman 1: So, Captain, what do you suggest?

Narrator: (*spotlight on. Standing at podium, can read from paper, but remain engaging to the audience*) For three days they threw slaves chained together overboard.

John Lee: (*voice heard only. This can be pre-recorded or live. He speaks as if what took place was nothing*) What is this claim that human people have been thrown overboard? This is a case of chattels or goods. Blacks are goods and property. For this purpose of insurance, they are goods and property.

Choir Sings: "Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray"

Beginning of the Revolt

1791

Narrator: *(on stage)* You can oppress people only for so long before the song in their hearts bursts forth and they openly rebel. It is August 22, 1791 and the slaves are revolting. The Haitian Revolution has begun in one of the wealthiest colonies in the Americas, Saint Domingue (later Haiti).....

General Toussaint L'Ouverture

Era 1791



General Toussaint (Breda) L'Ouverture: We had enough. Abuse. Lies. Empty promises. In August 1789, the National Assembly of France set forth the Declaration of the Rights of Man. In it France said *(reading from his paper, but does not sound as if he is reading)* "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good." They promised to preserve "the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression." *(paper to his side or wherever it is comfortable for you to hold)* Well, we got tired of waiting and tired of being demoralized, because the more we waited for them to enforce this declaration, the more harshly slave masters treated us. Plantation owners were in an uproar thinking we would soon be freed, so they fought until the Declaration was overturned in 1791. We revolted.

(lights off – he exits as the Narrator reads)

Narrator: *(voice heard only)* ...Years later Napoleon was asked about his mistreatment of L'Ouverture and he replied, "What could the death of one wretched Negro mean to me?"¹ L'Ouverture knew of the talents and possibilities in his people.

The more Haiti tried to strive, the more policies were passed to destroy them economically. When Thomas Jefferson became president he quickly passed laws to stifle Haiti's economical growth.

Haitian Soldier 2: Jefferson called upon Congress to abolish trade between the United States and what would soon be known as the independent country of Haiti.

Charles Ball

The Cotton's Gin Effect on Slavery

Narrator: *(voice heard only)* Slavery, once instituted, was hard to overcome. It provided free around-the-clock labor—free nannies, cooks, maids, tobacco farmers, and so much more. It allowed profits many had become accustomed to and unwilling to give up. Although, it appeared to be becoming less popular and some were even trying to see how to emancipate the slaves, the success of Eli Whitney's cotton gin forever changed slavery. It made the production of cotton easier and cheaper.

Auctioneer: *(has papers in his hand, dressed in period clothing, has a long stick he uses for pointing.)* Last one for today. *(points toward Young Charles)* We have a four year old boy. Turn around boy so they can get a look at you.

¹ <http://www.haitianparade.com/whowerare.php>, October 2010.

Adult Charles Ball: *(spotlight on him)* I'm Charles Ball. My mother chased after me and clung to me for dear life.

Cotton took slavery to a whole other dimension. It increased the demand for slaves. Slaves were forced to work extra long hours, provided little food or other basic needs. Often we were only given corn meal and bacon drippings or lard. Now tell me how is a grown man going to survive on that and work from sun up to sun down in the field? We were sold repeatedly. Our women were turned into slave making breeders. Some were purchased solely for that purpose—to breed slaves.

Choir: *No More Auction Block for Me*²

Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws



Setting: 1865-1866. Stage is set with four different scenes. Stage is dark (no lights). As it is time for each scene, then you spotlight only that scene. Only spotlight the characters when it is time for their roles.

Narrator: *(spotlight on Narrator, the rest of the stage dark)* Abraham Lincoln had signed the Proclamation of Emancipation, but he was assassinated before the Reconstruction took place, leaving President Andrew Johnson in charge. Johnson and his administration did all they could to block blacks from truly being free. Johnson and his southern Democrat Party passed Black Code Laws that reduced blacks to slavery, just called by a different name.....

²Original version by Gustavus D. Pike, 1873.

Officer: What are you doing just lying around?

Black male: *(grabs his hat off his face and sits up, looking to see who kicked him)* Nothin', sir.

White Officer: I can see you ain't doing nothing. *(angry)* Why come?

Narrator: *(spotlight on Narrator)* Slavery had been abolished, but it had an ugly brother called Black Codes—laws passed to legally continue to violate the civil and human rights of blacks. Because President Lincoln, a Republican, was assassinated and had elected to have Andrew Johnson, a Democrat, running for his Vice President, the Reconstruction was greatly hindered and almost aborted by Johnson, a known racist.

Little Girl: *(age between 7-9; on the floor reading a book)* Mom, why I can't go to the same school as Mary?

Mother: *(standing with an apron on and a large spoon in her hand)* Baby, that's just the way it is.

Little Girl: But, why?

Mother: The law says you can't. Now, finish your homework. Dinner is almost ready.
(spotlight off)

Ida B. Wells-Barnett

Crusader



Conductor: *(standing next to Ms. Well)* Ticket.

Ida B. Wells: *(hands him the ticket)*

Conductor: *(looking at the ticket. Speaks sternly to Ms. Wells.)* Where did a Negro get money for a first-class ticket?

Ida B. Wells: *(surprised as if not expecting what he said)* Excuse me?

Conductor: *(coldly)* You need to move to the smoker's section.

Ida B. Wells: *(pointing to the ticket she just gave to the conductor)* That's a first-class ticket for the ladies' section, which is where I am sitting now. My ticket is in order.

Ida B. Wells, one of the founding members of the NAACP...

Ida B. Wells-Barnett: That was some years ago, but I remember that day like yesterday. Now, you need to know that I believe in justice and equality. So, I stayed in trouble with the law, because I refused to be silenced by the injustices inflicted upon me and others.

My pen became my sword. I exposed it all for the world to see. The hatred that was being inflicted upon blacks on a daily basis. I denounced the lynchings...

Memphis 1968 Sanitation Workers' Labor Dispute



Radio Announcer: Headlining the news tonight, February 1, 1968, two city sanitation employees were crushed to death today around 4:20 pm by a mechanical packing unit on their garbage truck.

Taylor: I'm so tired of the way they treat us. That old broke down truck should have been trashed years ago.....

Well I tell you what, "If you bend your back people can ride it; but if you stand up straight, people can't ride your back. That's what we're going to do!"

Setting: Outside. Men marching with large signs saying, "I AM A Man" Women carrying signs "Dignity and Decency for our Sanitation Workers", "Union Justice Now!"

Narrator: (*spotlight on Narrator and Strikers, but rest of the stage is dark. Men are marching silently as Narrator speaks*) Well, in the words of Taylor Rogers, "They stood up straight." On February 12, 1968, 1,375 men of Memphis' Department of Public Works went on strike.

Narrator: *(on stage – spotlight on; rest of the stage is dark)* Memphis was in turmoil. Blacks could see it was past time for a change. Memphis had a mayor who refused to negotiate. It had men, who had bent as far as they were willing to bend. They were now publically standing up for their right to be men. Dr. Martin Luther King, the great peacemaker, was warned that the situation in Memphis was too volatile to be resolved peaceably.

Minister Joe: I can still see Dr. King and hear his voice. On April 3, 1968, he stood at the podium at Mason Temple and told us, “Something is happening in Memphis, something is happening in our world.” He was a man of purpose. Fearless in his mission. He electrified the atmosphere that night.