

A Voice From the Past For the Future



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VOICE FROM THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE



CAST LISTED AS THEY SHOULD APPEAR

Narrator
Sojourner Truth
Frederick Douglass
Harriet Tubman
Ida B. Wells
Booker T. Washington
George Washington Carver
Mary McLeod Bethune
Rosa Parks
Bus Driver,
At least four extra blacks for bus scene
Two Police Officers
Picketers (at least 10)
Martin Luther King
Mary C. Terrell
Choir
Slaves (about 4)

*If you are a church or a college is producing this play, add a little creativity by adding a portrayal of your pastor or dean, include a completion of your church's vision, i.e., if your church's vision include your having an on campus college, in the portrayal have it completed and mention how it has impacted your community.

(**Narrator:** - needs be an excellent orator and dramatic speaker)

To make this play entertaining a success, it is imperative that all characters memorize their lines and speak in a dramatic tone befitting the character he/she is portraying. The narrator MUST be able to speak dramatically.

Narrator: “A piece of freedom is no longer enough for human beings. . . . Freedom is like life; It cannot be had in installments.” Good evening. Those are words so eloquently spoken by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We welcome you to our play “*A Voice From the Past For the Future.*” During this play you will hear words of famous civil rights leaders who impacted not only their generation but hundreds of generations yet to come. Although all these leaders with the exception of one are no longer here with us, their words still ring truth in our souls and can inspire us to move forward in our destiny for greatness. Sit back, relax and take a journey into the past as they show us how to face each day with courage, hope, and determination.

For this play the choir should be dressed in either ethnic clothing or in clothes that history shows that African American wore (it could be field clothes, housekeeping, etc.)

Choir: Sings **AIN'T GONNA LET NOBODY TURN ME 'ROUN'**

SOJOURNER TRUTH

(1797 - 1883)

(Slowly enters on a cane. Has a shawl wrapped around her shoulders, gray hair (wig), has yarn & needle in her hand. Walks to rocking chair and slowly sits. Although she was illiterate, and her grammar wasn't perfect, she was considered to be a good lecturer.) It's important that the character speaks in the tone of an elderly lady and make some dramatic pauses - timing and tone is everything to capture the audience's attention.

Sojourner: Good evening, I'm Isabella. I was born in Hurley, New York sometime in 1797. In 1843 after I became a Christian I changed my name from Isabella to Sojourner Truth. Sojourner because I was to travel up and down the land showing people their sins and being a sign to them," and Truth "because I was to declare the truth unto the people".

I was born a slave and was never taught to read or write but I knew I was a human being and deserved to be treated as one. I refused to accept the treatment that we received just because of the color of our skin. I refused to be treated badly just because I was a woman. I deserved to be treated with dignity. We all do.

It matters not who you are or where you have been. You are a human being, created in God's image and after His likeness. Did not God Himself ask "how can we curse man who has been created in His image?" You are valuable, regardless of your education, financial status, or background. I knew I didn't have the advantages that others had but I had dignity and respect for myself.

You know, I went on to be with the Lord November 26, 1883 and on December 1st of that year, New York Globe remembered what I stood for. They wrote:

"Sojourner Truth stands preeminently as the only colored woman who gained a national reputation on the lecture platform in the days before the [Civil] War."

(rises from rocking chair and slowly starts exiting) Imagine that, an illiterate black woman born a slave, viewed by the laws of our country as less than human, actually made an impact on her generation. You can too. *(exits)*

Narrator: The Bible tells how the Hebrews escaped to the Promised Land. To slaves, their struggle in America reminded them of the Hebrews struggle in Egypt. Frederick Douglass, the famous Abolitionist and former slave said that when blacks sang about reaching Canaan it symbolized something more than a hope of reaching heaven. The South was their Egypt and the North was their Canaan. So when they sang "Wade In the Water" It was just like the Hebrews singing about crossing Jordan. Both symbolized going to heaven and reaching for freedom.

Song: **WADE IN THE WATER**

EXCERPT ONLY OF DOUGLAS PART
FREDERICK DOUGLAS
(1817-1895)

(Standing at lectern. Dressed in a suit. He has gray hair, a large afro. An excellent speaker. He did not like that his father was white man).

Douglass: “If there is no struggle, there is no progress. . . . This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.”

Good evening, I’m Frederick Douglass and what you have just heard is from a speech I gave on August 4, 1857 in Canandaigua, New York. I was born in Maryland in 1817, I guess. You know we really didn’t keep very good records back then. Few in my time knew anything about months and days. “We measured the ages of our children by spring-time, harvest-time, planting-time, and the like.”

EXCERPT ONLY OF TUBMAN
HARRIET TUBMAN
Moses
(1820? - 1913)

(enters wearing a scarf on her head, a long dress, has a walking stick. She comes out slowly and looks around to make sure no one is watching her. She then signals for four slaves to come out because the coast is clear. The slaves come running out, breathing very hard and looking scared. Ms. Tubman spoke in very broken English – the writing is meant to reflect that and the character playing this part needs to speak in the same pattern) .

Tubman: *(talking to the slaves)* O.K. Now move it and don’t stop fer nontin. There be some people waitin on the other side and they feed ya and tell ya where to go from there. *(the slaves vigorously shakes Ms. Tubman’s hand)* Alright now, Go! *(slaves runs off stage)*

Excerpt Only of Ms. Parks Part
ROSA PARKS
1913 -

(have a fake bus dropback or arrange seating as if on a bus. Have Rosa sitting with four other blacks. Rosa has on a dress, a coat, and she wears eyeglasses).

Narrator: The date is Thursday, December 1, 1955. We're in Montgomery, Alabama.

Bus Driver: (*white male*) Move to the back of the bus. (*the four blacks move to the back of the bus but Rosa remains seated.*)

Bus Driver: Hey you, I said, move to the back of the bus!

Rosa: I'm not moving. I'm tired. I'm not moving.

Bus Driver: Look lady, don't make me have you arrested!