Wythe: A Drama in Black and White...and So Much More

Written by
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Under the Guidance of Laura Browder and Patricia Herrera

Spring Semester 2012
Performed Monday, April 16 at Henderson Middle School, Richmond
Cast

Tyrone- Camden
Mr. White (Jane’s Father)- Camden
Board Member 1- Kelsey
Board Chairman- Charlene
Off Stage Voice 2- Kathryn
Judge Merhige- Kelsey
Stranger- Cheyenne
Bianca- Danielle
Ray- Danielle
Coach Jackson- Cheleah
Intercom- Amanda
Sa’ad el Amin- Cheleah
Ms. Young-Kelsey
Amber- Cheyenne
Jane- Kathryn
Mrs. White (Jane’s Mother)- Amanda
Board Member 2- Danielle
Off Stage Voice 1- Cheyenne
Clerk- Charlene
Mrs. Black (Tyrone’s Mother)- Cheleah
Jasmine- Charlene
Kerry- Amanda
Emma- Kelsey
Sarah- Cheyenne
Principal- Amanda
Will- Danielle
Kiona- Danielle

Prop List

2-3 tables
6 chairs
Newspaper
Typewriter
Bag of letters
A judge’s robe
A clock that can be manipulated
A whistle
Unfolded clothing
textbooks
lockers
2 Sets of caps and gowns - for Costumes to take care of?

Scene 1: The Historical Background

May 3, 1970

On the stage there is a man in a chair at a small table; he is reading the paper, and seems very focused and concerned about what he reads. There is a woman as well; she is sitting down, writing a letter.

The man finishes reading, sets the paper down in his lap and begins to rub his temple, as though strained by what he has read.
Mr. White: This is going too far...

Mrs. White (looks up): What is, dear?

Mr. White: Have a look...

Mrs. White: More Soviet missiles?

Mr. White: No.

Mrs. White: Anti-war protests?

Mr. White: Well, yes that too-- but no.

Mrs. White: Nixon and Cambodia?

Mr. White: Stop guessing, just come have a look.

Mrs. White (crosses to the paper and reads): The U.S. Supreme Court ended the Mississippi turmoil in October. It ordered desegregation “at once” throughout the South. The administration later interpreted “at once” to mean-- Oh my goodness-- the fall of 1970? Well you don’t think they can... well we decide where our children go to school.

Mr. White: Keep reading.

Mrs. White: At this point, action shifted to congress, where two Southern-backed amendments were pending. One... would sanction so-called freedom of-choice desegregation-- well that’s... that’s

Mr. White: Keep reading.

Mrs. White: The other... would require the government to act equally against both Northern and Southern school segregation. What does that mean, act equally?

Mr. White: A number of [ideas] called for busing, sometimes large-scale, to achieve fixed ratios of blacks to whites in Southern schools... the rest just says the Supreme Court hasn’t decided yet what it all means, neighborhood schools, busing, this “unitary school system” they keep talking about. (shaking his head) I didn’t serve my country just to be told where my kids have to go to school.

Mrs. White: Busing... they’ll put our kids on buses with... with Negro children? We moved here for the schools. These are good schools. John, we can’t just sit here and read about this. We ought to write a letter.
Mr. White: To the Supreme Court? Go ahead.

Mrs. White: We have a School Board for a reason don’t we?

Mr. White (folding paper): According to this article we ought to just have “good faith” in our officials. They’ll make the right choice. They have kids too, don’t they?

Mrs. White: I’m writing a letter. I’m telling the School Board why this shouldn’t happen. This has gone too far!

End Scene

Credit: Richmond Times Dispatch “...Bloomed in Spring In U.S. Court Here” (May 3, 1970; B-2)

Later in May, 1970

On the stage there is a table with three chairs behind it. School Board members sit in two of the chairs, center and left. Board Member #1 sits furthest left sits in front of a typewriter. The Board Chairman sits center. From the right, a second Board Member enters, carrying a bag of letters.

Board Member #2: More letters came in today.

Board Chairman (sitting center): Well let’s have a look. (puts on glasses)

Board Member #2 seats him/herself, and hands Board Chairman a letter. Board Chairman opens the letter.

Board Chairman: Ah, Mr. & Mrs. Sullivan

Off-stage voice #1: Dear Mrs. Crockford:

Off-stage voice #2: As the parents of two children, both of whom will be attending Mary Mumford School this fall

Off-stage voice #1: (we hope),

Off-stage voice #2: we would like to express our views on the Bradley vs School Board case.

Board Member #2: Hold on a moment. Which is this Bradley vs School Board?
**Board Member #1:** Just the latest I’m sure.

**Board Chairman:** Actually it started in 1961. Eleven Negro parents filed against the School Board under the Civil Rights Act of 1871, to desegregate the schools. That led to the “freedom of choice” plan in 1966. The latest of it started up again this past March... the 10th, I believe, someone petitioned the court to convert the Richmond City schools to a “unitary nonracial system”. Then April 1st, the courts made a formal order taking back the “freedom of choice” plan in favor of a plan to desegregate. You should really know all this.

**Board Member #2:** Well just not in so many words, that’s all.

**Board Chairman:** May I continue reading now?

**Board Member #2:** Carry on.

**Off-stage voice #2:** When we moved to Richmond on August 1, 1969, the primary reason for purchasing a home within six blocks of Mary Mu[m]ford School was that we wanted our children to attend this school. We also chose to live in the city,

**Off-stage voice #1:** despite higher taxes,

**Off-stage voice #2:** because we support the city and feel strongly that we owe something in return for the benefits made available to us by the city.

**Off-stage voice #1:** When we requested the city schools to admit our older son to Mary Mu[m]ford, we were told that the city operated on a Freedom of Choice basis, and we chose Mary Mu[m]ford.

**Off-stage voice #2:** We do not object to integration. Rather, we advocate it, under circumstance in which a group of individuals can learn to know and respect each other as individuals; to understand other viewpoints, and to encourage a better relationship with our fellowman.

**Off-stage voice #1:** However, we are emphatically opposed to the “busing” method of achieving racial balance.

**Off-stage voice #2:** In fact, we fully intend to leave the city, and if necessary, the state, if busing is decided upon.

**Off-stage voice #1:** “Busing” is a ridiculous,

**Off-stage voice #2:** expensive,

**Off-stage voice #1:** time-consuming
**Off-stage voice #2:** nuisance.

**Off-stage voice #1&2:** We will not allow our children to be subjected to it.

**Off-stage voice #1:** We firmly believe in the “neighborhood school” concept; if Districting is the closest thing to neighborhood school, then we would advocate Districting.

**Off-stage voice #2:** Please think of the welfare of each child, whether black or white, when you make your decision.

       Sincerely yours,

       Margaret B. Sullivan

**Off-stage voice #1:** David L. Sullivan

**Board Chairman:** Well that was a good one.

**Board Member #1:** Very well put together.

**Board Member #2:** Thinking of leaving... What do we say to that?

**Board Chairman:** Ready at the typewriter?

**Board Member #1:** Yes, ma’am.

**Board Chairman** (Board Member #1 typing in response): Mr. and Mrs. David L. Sullivan:

Thank you for your recent letter of concern for the future of the Richmond Public Schools.

**Board Member #2:** You know, it’s not like we have much of a voice in this. We can’t override the courts. If the courts say integrated schools, we have to integrate the schools! What do these parents expect from us? Don’t they know that?

**Board Chairman** (Board Member #1 typing in response): As you know, the Richmond School Board will be bound by any court decisions that are made.

**Board Member #1:** They’re not going to be happy reading that bit. Makes it sound like we just sit around all day and do what we’re told. We do have actual jobs. We work for their children’s educations!

**Board Chairman** (Board Member #1 typing in response): New paragraph... Please be assured that the School Board is working and will continue to work for the best education possible for Richmond’s children. All three look at each other, more or less content.

**Board Chairman:** Sincerely, Mrs. W. H. Crockford. Chairman.

**Board Member #2:** Next one.
Board Chairman takes and opens.

**Off-stage voice:** Mrs. Crockford, Chairman City School Board,
I favor integration, open housing, etc.

**Board Member #1:** This sounds promising.

**Off-stage voice:** On a dozen issues I would be considered a liberal because of my philosophy.

**Board Member #2:** Hmm. Very nice.

**Off-stage voice:** I oppose busing unconditionally.

*Board Members 1, 2 & 3 sigh and shrink.*

**Off-stage voice:** I would favor some form of districting and clustering to achieve some ratio of racial balance. Thank you. Sincerely, J. Robert Bronson Jr.

**Board Member #2:** At least he was concise.

**Board Chairman (Board Member #1 typing in response):** Dear Dr. Bronson: Thank you for your recent letter of concern for the future of the Richmond Public Schools. As you know, the Richmond School Board will be bound by any court decisions that are made. Please be assured that the School Board is working and will continue to work for the best education possible for Richmond’s children. Sincerely, Mrs. W. H. Crockford. Chairman.

End Scene.

Alternatives: Instead of off-stage voices, one/two people coming on stage to speak the letters, as if disjointed from the scene beside/behind them.

Credit: Information on the Bradley vs. School Board case:
Letters: Broson Letter (VCU Collections)
Sullivan Letter (VCU Collections)

April 1971

Two men enter stage from the side. One is putting on a robe before he sits down at the table placed...
center stage; this is Judge Merhige. The other is a clerk; he begins speaking as they walk, and follows and stands at the side of Merhige’s desk for the duration of the conversation.

**Clerk:** Good morning Judge Merhige.

**Judge Merhige:** Yes; fresh air today. Had a lovely run.

**Clerk:** You received some more letters today.

**Judge Merhige:** Have I?

**Clerk:** Angry letters.

**Judge Merhige:** Justice makes people angry.

**Clerk:** This whole desegregation thing is stirring up quite a frenzy in Richmond. Are you sure about it?

**Judge Merhige:** So sure I’ve decided upon a plan.

**Assistant/Clerk:** Which is?

**Judge Merhige:** Busing.

**Clerk (baffled):** Busing?

**Judge Merhige:** Remember when I went to look at the schools last? I didn’t look at the schools.

**Clerk:** Isn’t that what you set out to do? With the lawyers?

**Judge Merhige:** I didn’t require the lawyers to come along. I was out there in the neighborhoods at seven in the morning. To require them to join me so early; well that would have been a violation of their Eighth Amendment rights.

_Clerk looks at Merhige questioningly._

**Judge Merhige:** Cruel and unusual punishment. *(smiles)*

**Clerk:** Well if you weren’t looking at the schools what were you looking at?

**Judge Merhige:** Housing patterns.

**Clerk (baffled):** Housing patterns.
**Judge Merhige:** What we have here is two White school systems in the suburbs and one Black school system in the city. Why? The school boundaries created around Richmond city and the two surrounding suburbs are artificial—clearly designed to prevent desegregation—it’s unconstitutional! Education is the responsibility of the state, and the State Board of Education has failed to remedy this—failed to desegregate the schools.

**Clerk:** And so the plan is?

**Judge Merhige:** Not Freedom of choice! Freedom of choice isn’t working! We need a new desegregation plan.

**Clerk:** Busing...

**Judge Merhige:** Switch their schools. Make it so that 21-57 percent of high school students are White, 43-79 percent are Negro; and similarly in the middle schools, and similarly in the elementary schools. Combine that heavily White population of the counties, with the Negro population of the city.

**Clerk:** Haven’t you read the letters? Busing is the last thing these parents want!

**Judge Merhige:** And those parents will fight it! Like the lawyers fight, and the Board of Education fights, like every Housing Association has fought for decades already. But when they do, this decision will be upheld. Negroes and Whites will go to school together this Fall, on buses.

*Pause, rearrange. Positions of Clerk and Merhige freeze. Clerk steps forward and speaks his part; returns to his place, and Merhige steps forward and speaks his part.*

**Clerk:** In August 1970, an “Interim Plan” was approved for the 1970-71 school year; it involved some busing to amend the racial mix of Richmond schools. After its realization, Richmond lost 16% of its white student enrollment. On April 5, 1971, the district court ordered Merhige’s plan, “Plan III” for the school year of 1971-72, combining students from Richmond city schools, Henrico and Chesterfield. Busing was approved by the Supreme Court as a tool of desegregation.

**Judge Merhige:** As for me, I received hate mail, hate calls, roasting in Richmond newspapers, and anti-busing protesters outside of my home. A man spat in my face, my dog was killed, and for two years my family and I lived under 24-hour U.S. Marshal protection. Despite it, I never stepped down.

*Fade to black.*

**End Scene.**

Richmond Times Dispatch: “‘Early Riser’ Merhige Plans to Visit City School Areas” (April 30, 1970; Section D); “Judge Merhige Calls for Consolidation By September in City, Two Counties” (Jan. 11, 1972; Front Page); “Cataclysm in Richmond: School Case Decision” (Jan. 13, 1972; Commentary); “Desegregation: From 1954 to Consolidation” (Jan. 11, 1972).

Lohmann, Bill. “A Judge’s Legacy” Richmond Law (Summer, 2005).

“Thirty Years ago, Richmond’s public schools implemented a massive busing plan. Here are five childhood memories of that era: The Great Experiment.” Style Weekly (Jan. 1, 1980).

Scene 2: 

Spring 1971

Two kitchen tables, with chairs surrounding. Two women enter into each in with a newspaper, places it on the table and leans over.

Mrs. White: Honey! The paper! It’s the districts. The new school districts.

A young woman runs into the kitchen and hops into a chair, leaning over with her mother, looking at the paper.

Jane: Where am I going?

Mrs. Black: Tyrone! Come on, see where you’re going to school this year!

Young man’s voice (off-stage): I already know where I’m going-- I’m going to Armstrong. And I’m playing football, and I’m beating the crap out of Maggie Walker in the championship! (He cheers his way on stage.)

Mother #2 is inspecting the newspaper while he speaks.

Mrs. White & Mrs. Black: George Wythe.

Jane: Yes. (smiles)

Tyone: What? (disappointed)

Off-stage voice 1: From the 1970-71 school year to the 1971-72 school year, both Henrico and Chesterfield showed a loss in White students. The entire Richmond white school population lost 3703 students. For that school year, 12000 were bused, Negro and White.
End Scene.

Credit: “Thirty Years ago, Richmond’s public schools implemented a massive busing plan. Here are five childhood memories of that era: The Great Experiment.” Style Weekly (Jan. 1, 1980).

End Prologue.

Scene 3- Getting to School

Mrs. Black: Did you buy your bus pass last night at the grocery store?

Tyrone: Yes mom.

Mrs. Black: Good. Get going, you don’t want to be late.

Student leaves for bus stop. 2-3 people standing at the bus stop...not students, it’s a city bus.

Stranger: What are you doing out here so early?

Tyrone: I’m taking the bus to George Wythe.

Stranger: Isn’t that all the way in South Side?

Tyrone: Yes ma’am. Bussing is the new law Judge Merhige enforced to integrate schools. So now I have to go all the way across town just for school. (He yawns)

Bus arrives. The student gets on and moves off stage. (Something to signify that he’s going to be there for awhile, like a clock that we can fast forward)

Mrs. White: It’s 7:45, you need to go.

Jane: Aww mom it’s just down the street. I’m meeting Emma and Sarah at the corner in five minutes.

Mrs. White: Well, you know, the early bird gets the worm.

Jane: I’m going.

Mrs. White: Have a good day! Work hard!

Jane: Thanks mom!
Jane walks to the corner to meet her friend when a city bus full of kids drops off more students nearby. They all walk the last 5 blocks to school talking amongst each other.

Ray: Man, I’m tired. I can’t believe we have to get up and go all the way over here to this school. Armstrong is right by my house!

Sarah: (A mumble) Too bad you didn’t just go there.

Emma: Tell me about it!

Ray: (Glancing at Sarah, uncertain if the girls said something) I’ve wanted to play football there since I was a kid. What time did you have to wake up?

Tyrone: 4:30.

Ray: Man, this can’t be life.

Tyrone: (He yawns) I know, I don’t think I can make it like this all year.

Ray: Is it just me, or are they looking at us funny?

Tyrone: Yeah, maybe, but I don’t want any problems. Let’s just get through this day and be done with it.

Sarah: I can’t believe we’re actually going to school with them. How many are going to be in each class?

Jane: I don’t know but I heard that 15 teachers left because they’re here now.

Emma: I hope they don’t try and take over everything. It’s gonna be a long school year!

Scene 4 - In-School Scuffle

Lights up on George Wythe High School. Tyrone enters looking somewhat timid. He draws the attention of a group of White Students who give cold looks and scoff.

Sarah: Here we go!

Emma: You better watch yourself. This was never supposed to be your school.

Sarah: Why don’t you just go back where you belong!
The group of White Students walks away.

**Tyrone:** Oh boy…

**Tyrone** looks around uneasily. He spots a group of black students who are engaging in playful banter with each other and walks over to them.

**Tyrone:** Man, they aren’t wasting any time are they? Hey! At least it can’t get any worse, right?

*His joke falls flat.*

**Tyrone:** So, what’s up?

**Will:** Nothin’ man…

**Tyrone:** So where’d they bus you guys in from? I was supposed to go to Arm…

**Will:** *(Cutting him off)* Armstrong- we know. And aren’t you just so **proud** of it! You all got your **legacy** and your **history** and you just think you’re so fancy now, don’t you?

**Tyrone:** *(very perplexed)* I.. what? What are you talking about?

**Will:** Don’t pretend. Just stay out of my way. We may get carted to the same school now, but that doesn’t change anything. Don’t let me catch you on my side of town.

*The Maggie Walker student walks off.*

**Tyrone:** Well, I guess things can get worse.

**Scene 5: Sports & Friendship**

The scene starts black. Lights come up when a loud whistle blows, and Coach _____ *(Wythe cheering coach)* is watching four girls practicing a routine they have just learned. Two of the girls are black *(Bianca and Jasmine)* and two are white *(Jane and Kerry)*. Jasmine and Jane clearly have a good hold on the routine and are doing the best. Kerry is a little behind with each step and looks a little confused. When the whistle blows, they stop the routine and catch their breath.

**COACH** *(blowing whistle)*: Alright ladies, gather around, gather around! Not bad ladies, not bad. I’m seeing a lot of progress, but we still have a long way to go. If we’re going to be ready for the big Armstrong game coming up, we’re going to need to pull ourselves together and really look like a team.
That’s all the time we have today though, practice dismissed! *(walks off stage)*

*Jane does a quick twirl, clearly pleased with her progress in learning the routine. She turns to the rest of the group and smiles, but notices that no one else is as enthusiastic as her.*

**BIANCA** (to Jasmine): Pssssh, Coach is right. We have a looooong way to go if these girls keep cheering like this. They don’t have any...soul!

**JANE** *(Hurt, she awkwardly walks over to Kerry)*: Come on Kerry, let’s practice the routine one more time. Oh I just can’t wait for the Armstrong game!

**KERRY:** I don’t know, Jane...I....

**JANE:** Just one more time! Pleeceeeaaaaasseeeee!

**KERRY:** Well...

**JANE** *(Already in position, ready to cheer)*: Great! Now line up over here with me. *(animated, cheerleader voice)* 5, 6, 7, 8! READY! OK!

*Girls perform flat but solid cheer. Kerry is one step behind Jane. Jasmine is watching with Bianca.*

**JASMINE:** Ohhhh no! We are NOT going to Armstrong with THAT white girl cheer, not if I have anything to do with it. You have to do it like this.

Bianca and Jasmine line up and perform the same cheer, but with soul. Jane attempts to follow along and imitate Bianca and Jasmine’s moves, which she isn’t too terrible at. Kerry is still one step behind and clearly not comfortable with all the soul.

**KERRY:** Oh I can’t do this! I don’t have any *(quote fingers)* “soul!” An integrated squad is a stupid idea!

**JANE:** Kerry, don’t say that! The game is next week! WE have to pull this together as a TEAM. Come on, ummm, Jasmine and Bianca, can you uhh...show us how to...cheer with “soul?”

*Girls laugh.*

**BIANCA:** You really think you two, white as you are, can cheer like us?

**JANE:** Well, that or you have to start cheering like us?

**JASMINE:** OH NO! I am NOT going up into Armstrong in front of all my old friends and making a fool of myself just because I had to get bused to Wythe! We have to pull this together. Look, Kerry, try this.
Demonstrates step

KERRY: (Clearly a little wary of Jasmine, looks to Jane) Umm, Jane... (Jane has walked over to Bianca, who is laughing at Jane’s soulful cheering, but clearly kind of impressed at how’s she’s picking it up) Ummm...ok...uh can you show me again.

JASMINE: Like this.

She demonstrates again. They do the step together and work through it a little bit until Kerry starts to get the hang of it. Bianca and Jane watch. They clap when Kerry finally gets the step. Kerry, surprised with herself, smiles.

BIANCA: Theeeeere you go. If you keep that up, we can actually walk into Armstrong with some pride.

KERRY: You really think so?

JASMINE: It’ll take a little more work, but if we work together, we might just pull it off.

JANE: Great! Alright, let’s do it together one more time!

Girls do routine, it is near perfect. When they finish, they look around, surprised at themselves. Jane jumps up and down and hugs Bianca, who is shocked and doesn’t know what to do.

JANE: YES YES YES! That was perfect!

JASMINE: Now THAT’S a routine I can go into Armstrong proud of.

Horn honks off in the distance.

KERRY: Oh! That’s my brother! Well I have to go, great job ya’ll! (Pauses in front of Jasmine) and ummm...thanks...Jasmine.

JASMINE: No problem. Shoot, Bianca, we better go before we miss our bus! See you tomorrow, Jane!

JANE: Bye ya’ll! (Jane walks over to gym bag and begins pulling things together when Tyrone walks over in his football practice gear)

TYRONE (looks a little nervous): Ummmm hey there.

JANE (surprised): OH! Hey! You’re ummm, you’re in my physics class, right? What’s your name again?

TYRONE: It’s Tyrone.
**JANE:** Tyrone, right. I’m Jane. (*She looks confused as of what to do next, then sticks out her hand for an awkward handshake*)

**TYRONE:** Right...(*awkward pause*)/so how was practice?

**JANE:** /So how was practice? Oh! You first!

**TYRONE:** It was...better than I expected. You know, the team, they’re alright, even the whi...well, it’s just different than I expected. In a good way.

**JANE:** Well, umm, that’s good. Do you think you’ll will be ready for the Armstrong game?

**TYRONE:** Yeah, I think so.

**JANE:** Well, maybe I can be your spirit buddy.

**TYRONE:** My what?

**JANE:** You know, every football player has a cheerleader come decorate their room to get them pumped before the big game. It’s really fun.

**TYRONE:** Wait, YOU would come to MY house? And decorate MY room?

**JANE:** Well, yeah sure. I think it would be fun.

**TYRONE** (*Pauses, then smiles*): You’re different Jane, you’re not like any whi-, well, you’re different.

**JANE:** Well, hopefully in a good way?

**TYRONE:** Yeah, I think so.

*They smile at each other. Something is changing. A crush is growing. Then the honk of a horn.*

**JANE:** Oh! That must be my dad. Well I better go. Ummm, see you tomorrow?

**TYRONE:** Yeah, sure. Sit by me in class?

**JANE:** Sure! (*Smiles*) Bye!

**TYRONE:** See ya. (*Looks back before he walks off stage as Jane grabs her things. EXITS. Jane gathers her bag and goes to exit, but just before she does, she looks back and smiles bashfully like a girl with a crush. EXITS)*
Scene 6: The Warning

It’s the morning. On the stage there is a table, centered. On the table there are two piles of unfolded clothes. A woman stands in front of each pile, one is Black and the other is White. They are folding the clothes and stacking them side by side. Enter Black Son and White Daughter from opposite sides of stage. Both are visibly tired; the Black Son is rubbing his eyes; the White Daughter is stretching and yawning. Both mothers cross to their children.

Mrs. Black: You look so handsome.

Mrs. White (fixing daughter’s hair): Very pretty. The bow is perfect.

Mrs. Black: Do you have your homework?

Mrs. White: Don’t forget your History book.

Tyrone: Yes.

Jane: Mhm.

Mothers continue folding laundry, folding and sometimes laying folded clothes in opposite piles.

Mrs. Black: What are you doing in class today?

Mrs. White: Anything new in school?

Tyrone & Jane: Science lab.

Mrs. White & Mrs. Black: Ah.

Tyrone: Yeah it’s a partner thing.

Jane: I’m doing it with another student.

Tyrone: Her name is Jane.

Jane: His name is Tyrone.

Both mothers cease folding laundry.

Mrs. Black: A white child?
**Mrs. White:** A Negro boy?

**Mrs. Black:** Understand what I’m telling you

**Mrs. White:** Listen to me now

**Mrs. Black:** I’m sure she could seem perfectly nice

**Mrs. White:** And I’m not saying anything about all of...anybody

**Mrs. Black:** But you have to look at the world the way it really is

**Mrs. White:** And just because you’re in a classroom doesn’t mean you’re safe

**Mrs. Black:** You know what could happen if anyone gets the wrong idea about you and this girl?

**Mrs. White** It’s not just a bunch of stories, bad things have happened!

**Mrs. Black:** I want you home in one piece

**Mrs. White:** Ask the teacher if you can switch partners

**Mrs. Black:** If something happens and you don’t end up working with her just don’t say anything about it.

**Mrs. White:** It’s best to just err on the safe side

**Mrs. Black:** Watch out for those girls.

**Mrs. White:** Watch out for those boys.

**Scene 7: The Locker Room**

*The scene starts with a gaggle of cheerleaders (white and black) chit-chatting after school when a few black members of the football team come around the corner. The whole time, in the opposite corner of the room a couple of black girls were talking. At the start of the scene they look over and acknowledge one of their black friends on the cheerleading squad, but keep to themselves.*

**Emma:** Looking good boys!

**Jasmine:** Ow ow!!
Jane: Heeeeeey Tyrone, I can’t wait to watch you play on Friday. I’ll be cheering just for you (she winks)

Tyrone: (laughs) I’m gonna make a touchdown just for you, don’t worry.

The two black girls, Amber and Kiona, in the corner are disgusted by the interaction between Jane and Tyrone. Once the boys have walked out the cheerleaders go back to their original conversation and the two black girls give Jane threatening stares.

The next day in the locker room Amber and Kiona approach Jane.

Amber: You’re Jane…right?

Jane: Yeah, hi, I’m sorry, I don’t think we’ve met before (puts out hand to shake)

Amber: (disregards hand) Don’t bother. We need to talk to you.

Kiona: Who do you think you are? You have no right to be talkin’ to Tyrone.

Amber: Yeah, who the hell do you think you are? You need to stay away from him, from all of them.

The girls move in on Jane and cheerleader from before comes into the locker room.

Jane: What are you two talking about?

Kiona: You know who we’re talking about. Just stay away. (cheerleader leaves to get help) I don’t know what you think you’re doing, you two will never be together.

Jane: We’re just friends! Honest, I really don’t know what else to tell you.

Amber: I don’t care what you think you are, I’m telling you to stay away from him.

Jane: I don’t know who you think you are but you don’t tell me what to do. (turns & walks away)

Scene 8: Physics Class Discussion (pre-JeRoyd Greene)

It’s the beginning of the school day at George Wythe. Students are sitting in their Physics class, waiting on the teacher to give the instructions for the day. Students are already sitting with their lab partners- therefore Jane and Tyrone are sitting together, but there are other conversations
happening around the classroom.

Intercom bell begins to sound of... students know an announcement is going to follow. Female Student takes a seat.

**Intercom Speaker:** Can I have your attention George Wythe Bulldogs? Today’s schedule is going to shift a little to accommodate speaker JeRoyd Greene *(chatter begins to happen within the class, but the announcement continues)*. Every class will be shortened by 10 minutes, allowing for an hour for this afternoon’s assembly. Thank you, and remember, “Make it a great day or not, the choice is yours”.

**Tyrone:** *(leaning over to a girl friend in class)*
JeRoyd Greene is speaking here at Wythe?

**Jasmine:** You heard Principal Jeter! I heard mom and dad talking about him a while ago... I pray things don’t get out of hand.

**Tyrone:** *(sighs)* Me neither. But whatever. We can’t worry about that right now.

**Ms. Young:** Tyrone, take this note to Principal Jeter's’ office.

**Tyrone:** Am I in trouble, Ms. Young?

**Ms. Young:** No. Just take the note, and your things.

*Tyrone packs his things, and leaves the classroom - and walks into the “Principals office” and emerges a few moments later.*

**Tyrone:** Umm. Thank you, Mr. Jeter.

*Gets back to classroom, and has a seat. Black female student leans over and wants to know what happened.*

**Jasmine:** You in trouble? What happened? What did the note say?

**Tyrone:** No. I’m not in trouble. Nothing happened. But quit talking. We’ve got to show Ms. Young that we are better than any student in this stupid class.

**Jasmine:** What are you talking about, Tyrone?

**Tyrone:** Ms. Young sent me to Principal Jeter’s office because she was afraid that I wouldn’t do well in Physics. The note said that I should be put in a class that’s “more on my level”. She doesn’t think I can do it. We have to make sure to listen up in class. Take good notes, and leave your book here at the end of the day so Ms. Young can see that we don’t need to study to do well.... we’ll show her.
Ms. Young: Barbara- Take this note to Principal Jeter’s office-

Jasmine and Tyrone look at each other, and sigh. Tyrone begins to work intensely.

Scene 9: JeRoyd Green’s Speech

Six chairs are set up in middle of the stage, maybe facing straight forward, maybe angled to one side. Try to get them to look as much like bleachers as possible. Six students file into the room, chatting loudly, and sit in a set of bleachers. Two white students sit in the front row, two black students sit in the back row. Jane and Tyrone sit in the middle row. An authoritative-looking man, the principal of the school, walks in a stands in front of the students, clearing his throat loudly (or maybe he is a voiceover off stage?). The students become silent.

Bianca: So what’s going on with this assembly anyway?

Jasmine: You act like you don’t even know it’s Black History Week. Come one, JeRoyd Greene is here! He knows how to stick it to the man, not take any crap from white people.

Bianca: And he’s going to talk to all of us? Black and white? At George Wythe? I don’t know about all that...

Emma: Can you believe we’re having BLACK history week? This is ridiculous.

Sarah: Tell me about it. It’s not like we have white history week.

Jane: Tyrone, have you heard anything about the speaker for today?

Tyrone: Yeah, I heard my dad talking to some of his friends about him, really smart but he doesn’t think too much of white people...I don’t know how this is going to go...

Principal: In honor of Black History Week, I am pleased to present our guest speaker, Jeroyd W. Greene. Mr. Greene hails from New York and is a graduate of Yale schools of law and business. Please give him your attention and a warm greeting from the George Wythe bulldogs.

Apathetic clapping.

Green: Good afternoon George Wythe students. To get started, I’d like to ask my black brothers and sisters in the room to look around. You see those white security guards? You see those white teachers? Who do you think they’re there for? If you said you, you’re wrong. They’re there for the WHITE PEOPLE.

Sarah: Hey, I don’t know about all this...
**GREENE:** They’re not there for you. They think you’re the enemy. The City of Richmond has them here to protect these honkies from YOU.

**EMMA:** Who does this guy think he is?

**Bianca:** I don’t know about all this, this guy seems like he’s going to stir up trouble…

**Jasmine:** Nah man, he’s right. These white guys aren’t here for us. They never were. We’ve always been the enemy.

**GREENE:** These teachers and security guards are nothing but white devils, working to keep you down through oppression in the system. And you know what, the leaders of Richmond are no different. The so-called leaders in this city are devils in disguise, keeping discrimination and oppression alive and well through the system.

**Sarah:** Hey, my dad works for city government!

**Emma:** I am not gonna sit here and take this much longer!

**GREENE:** The power is controlled by WHITE DEVILS!

**JANE:** Tyrone, I don’t know how I feel about all this. I don’t feel safe.

**TYRONE:** I know, Jane, I don’t like it either.

**JANE:** Tyrone, if they leave…I might have to leave, too. I don’t know if I can stay here for this.

**TYRONE:** If you leave, I’m going with you.

*Soundscape here, a modge podge of racial insults and fiery comments from Greene that end in a ringing “WHITE DEVIIIIILLLLLSSSS!” Emma and Sarah shoot up after soundscape finishes and walk out. Jane, frightened, meekly gets up and follows them, with Tyrone and Bianca following slowly behind. Jasmine stands up and lifts a fist in the air. Blackout.*

*Final Scene.*

**Scene 11: Graduation Day**

*The stage is empty except for lockers. Two students enter from opposite ends and meet in the center. They are Tyrone and Jane. They’re in their caps and gowns, and holding their diplomas.*

**Jane (lifting her diploma):** We did it!
**Tyrone:** Yeah; we did. Doubted I was going to get here sometimes, ha. But here it is.

**Jane:** Pretty crazy four years.

**Tyrone:** No doubt there. Have you decided what you’re doing yet?

**Jane:** My parents want me to go to the University of Richmond so, guess I’m doing that.

**Tyrone:** That’s cool.

**Jane:** Yeah, I’d like to stick around. This is our city, y’know, and so much is happening. I’ll be glad to see the changes. *(pause)*

**Tyrone:** *(pause)* I’m leaving Richmond.

**Jane:** What? Well, for school...

**Tyrone:** I’m not coming back here. This city... it just isn’t a place for... If I really want to be successful-- I have to go somewhere else.

**Jane:** What was the point of everyone going to school together if you’re going to just leave now? Things are getting better here.

**Tyrone:** It was good that we were bused here! At least, for me, it was probably one of the best things that could have happened to me. Even if it was awful. But things aren’t changing quickly enough.

**Jane:** You can make those changes!

**Tyrone:** Or I can get held back! Don’t you want me to succeed?

**Jane:** Of course! Succeed here!

**Tyrone:** *(frustrated)* It’s easy for you to say that, you don’t have to worry about anything.

*(awkward pause)* **Jane looks as if she will say something, but does not**

**Tyrone:** I’m sure some day we’ll get back together and sort out the whole thing. We’ll see each other again *(laughs)*. Congratulations Jane. Good luck.

**Jane:** Congratulations Tyrone. And good luck to you too. And your out-of-Richmond success.

**Tyrone:** *(walking away, smiling)* Thanks.
Jane: Tyrone!

Tyrone: (turns) Yeah?

Jane: (looks sad but then tries to brighten up-- half-heartedly) I hope you’re wrong.

Tyrone walks back and gives Jane a long, fond hug. He walks away.

Tyrone: Me too. (sighs) Prove me wrong Richmond, prove me wrong

End Scene.
The End.