

BLACK IN AMERICA

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The mood is very active, preparatory. 6TH GRADE HISTORY WITH MS. JACOBS is written strategically on the BLACKBOARD. The walls are covered with HISTORY POSTERS and ALL OTHER THINGS HISTORY.

MS. JACOBS, 30s, white, loves her job and History a little too much, sits at her CORNER DESK that sits at the front of the classroom near the windows.

The STUDENTS converse at their desks, dressed in various COSTUMES of PEOPLE IN AMERICAN HISTORY. There's a GEORGE WASHINGTON, an ABRAHAM LINCOLN, ETC.

Some Students have POSTERS, POSTER BOARDS, SCULPTURES and MODELS to go along with their WRITTEN REPORTS.

Ms. Jacobs gets the students attention.

MS. JACOBS

Class, class. Settle down. I need to take attendance and then we'll get started with the reports. I'm so excited!!!

The Students laugh at her glee as they settle down. Ms. Jacobs does ROLL CALL.

MS. JACOBS (CONT'D)

Stanley Ames?

STANLEY, 12, white, dressed as a CONFEDERATE SOLDIER, raises his hand.

STANLEY AMES

Here.

MS. JACOBS

Good Morning, Stanley.

Stanley smiles, whatever.

MS. JACOBS (CONT'D)

Bethany?

BETHANY, 12, pretty tomboy, dressed as ROSIE THE RIVETER, does the famous Rosie The Riveter POSE.

BETHANY

Here.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

The school grounds is desolate; class is obviously in session. A MINIVAN approaches fast from the distance. The van SCREECHES to a stop, curbside, at the front of the school.

The parked Minivan has stopped, but the RIMS continue SPINNING. Along with the spinning rims, there's the ominous WINDOW TINT and the various BULLET HOLES scattered about the body of the van.

The SIDE DOOR of the minivan rips open.

Leaping out of the minivan is JAMAL WILLIAMS, 12, black, wise guy, dressed in AFRICAN TRIBAL GARB.

Jamal reached into the side of the minivan, grabs his BACKPACK, whips it onto his back. He also pulls out a folded-closed POSTER BOARD.

Jamal's MOTHER, loud mouth, speaks to Jamal from inside the minivan.

JAMAL'S MOTHER (O.S.)

You sure you have everything? You didn't leave any of your changes of outfits at home?

JAMAL

No, but if I did, now would be a pointless time to remember. They all in my backpack.

JAMAL'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Don't get smart with me, boy. Get your butt to class. You're already late.

JAMAL

It's cool; they know I'm black.

Jamal's Mother laughs.

JAMAL'S MOTHER (O.S.)

You so silly, boy. That's not why. You just late. Now run, African Warrior.

JAMAL

Aight.

(about to shut minivan door)

Wait. Before I forget.

Jamal reaches into the side of the minivan, pulls out a SPEAR.

JAMAL (CONT'D)
Bye, mama. Love you.

JAMAL'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Love you to--

Jamal slides the side door shut. Runs toward the entrance of the school, spear in one hand, poster board in the other.

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

Ms. Jacobs sits at her desk, still taking attendance.

MS. JACOBS
Jamal Williams?
(looks up from roll sheet)
Jamal? Where's Jamal?

The CLASSROOM DOOR swings open; Jamal barges in.

JAMAL
I'm here.

MS. JACOBS
You're also late. And you're also first. Get ready.

JAMAL
What? My last name Williams, which means I'm last on the roll sheet. What happened to alphabetical order?

MS. JACOBS
The same thing that happened to being on time. Let's go.

Jamal walks to the center of the room. Stands before the class. The other Kids GIGGLE at him in his half-naked tribal wear.

Jamal slides off his backpack, a slight toss of it to the side.

MALE BLACK STUDENT (O.S.)
That boy got on a diaper.

The Students laugh.

Jamal turns his back to the class and goes to grab a nearby STOOL. The CLOTH/DIAPER that Jamal wears happens to be a THONG, revealing his black buns.

The Students laugh louder. The females WHISTLE. Jamal grins as he ignores them. He sets up the poster board atop the stool; opens it.

The poster board is titled like a marquee with GLUED ON LETTERS the read BLACK IN AMERICA. Beneath the letters, an ART COLLAGE made up of various AFRICAN AMERICANS and SNAPSHOTS of them in pivotal moments throughout history.

Jamal takes his place aside the beautiful and beautifully designed poster board. The Students stare back at him with smiles on their faces; it's the getup; still funny.

JAMAL

What up, though? I did my project obviously on being Black in America.

(beat)

So, what does it mean to be Black in America? Besides being a nigger?

(class giggles)

First of all, it means you're a very hard worker.

(beat)

Let's start from the beginning. Before Blacks became Niggers; when they were just Africans.

START MONTAGE

EXT. OPEN SEA - DAY

Three WOODEN SHIPS sail the choppy sea.

JAMAL (V.O.)

In 1492, when Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue, he did with a fleet of three ships; the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria.

EXT. SHORE OF UNKNOWN LAND - DAY

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS and his CREW stand on the shore with their ships docked in the background. Columbus looks around at the breath-taking LANDSCAPE.

Columbus grins, the beautiful land is his for the taking.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Come on, gentlemen. Let's explore
this wench.

Columbus' Crew CHEERS. They follow as Columbus leads the way.

EXT. FLAT LANDSCAPE - DAY

Columbus and Crew stumble upon a widespread civilization of
NATIVE AMERICAN INDIANS. TENT HOMES are everywhere. NATIVES
roam about.

Columbus and the Indians catch each other's notice.

JAMAL (V.O.)

But to Columbus' surprise, he did
in fact discover a new land, about
second or third.

A small group of NATIVE AMERICANS walk over; the CHIEF walks
up to Columbus; they size each other up.

Columbus extends his hand. The Indian Chief looks confused,
quickly whips out an AXE from his side.

Columbus reacts. The Indian Chief smiles, he's only kidding.

Columbus smiles, relieved. The Indian Chief extends his hand.

Columbus shakes hands with the Indian Chief.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The peace didn't last long.

EXT. SHORE OF UNKNOWN LAND - DAY

Columbus stands on the shore with his crew looking out at the
ocean as a sea of EUROPEAN SHIPS sail their way.

JAMAL (V.O.)

Columbus sent word back to England
and sooner than later, his European
brethren were on their way to the
New World.

EXT. FLAT LANDSCAPE - DAY

Native American tents are ablaze as Native Americans fight a
vicious and bloody war against the EUROPEAN SETTLERS. The
Indians' BLADES can't stand up to the Europeans' BULLETS.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The land apparently wasn't big enough for the both of 'em. Poor Indians. I guess they didn't know you don't bring a knife to a gun fight.

EXT. FLAT LANDSCAPE - DAY

The fighting has ceased with the Europeans being the victors. Native American CORPSES lie scattered.

EUROPEANS dump bodies into a large pit that they dug out.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The gunsmoke cleared, and the Europeans were the victors. They pretty much wiped out the entire Indian race. And after the long battle and clean up, they ate dinner and called it Thanksgiving.

EXT. OPEN SEA - DAY

Three WOODEN SHIPS, not the ones belonging to Christopher Columbus, sail the choppy sea.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The Europeans set sail once again, but this time instead of going to the New World, they went to an old friend.

EXT. AFRICAN LANDSCAPE - MORNING

The sun shines on the quiet morning. A group of ZEBRA stand around eating grass.

SUPERTITLE: AFRICA

A trio of LIONS creep stealthily toward the clueless Zebras.

It's very quiet.

Suddenly the lions pounce on the zebras. Each lion devours a zebra; the rest escape becoming breakfast.

The lions enjoy their meal under the sun.

Suddenly, in SLOW MOTION, the lions are ambushed by a trio of AFRICAN WARRIORS, armed with SPEARS and LARGE BLADES. The lions flee but to no avail.

One of the Warriors jumps onto the back of a lion, stabs it with his large blade; the lion collapses with the Warrior still on his back.

The other two Warriors double-team a lion, stabbing and kicking it.

The last lion sprints, thinks it's home-free.

An African Warrior pulls a spear out of a dead lion. Aims. Launches the spears at the fleeing lion. The full-length of the spear is lodged into the last lion, entering through its anus.

The last lion collapses, slides along the ground as it loses momentum and stops.

The three African Warriors look at each other like they're the best hunters in existence; job well done as usual.

END SLOW MOTION

EXT. AFRICAN COAST - DAY

The three Wooden Ships approaches shore. An AFRICAN ENVOY stands on the shore in wait.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The former Europeans, who now called themselves Colonials, finally made it to the store.

The ships anchor. Groups of WHITE MEN, Colonials, exit the ships.

The HEAD COLONIAL looks out at the landscape. Flashes a big smile.

JAMAL (V.O.)

And they couldn't wait to shop.

EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - DAY

HUTS made out of things from nature are spread throughout the poverish landscape.

Toward the end of the village, a PALACE-LIKE HUT overlooks.

AFRICAN VILLAGERS, all of whom SKINNY/MALNOURISHED, roam about in the MARKETPLACE that doesn't have much market.

CHILDREN run amok, throwing REAL SPEARS at each other; they barely avoid killing each other.

The Villagers wear TRIBAL CLOTHING made out of LEAVES, ANIMAL SKIN, ETC.

JAMAL (V.O.)

Africa back in the day wasn't like it is now. They had more food and clean water back then.

The African Envoy enters the village accompanied by the Colonials.

EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - PALACE HUT - DAY

Two BUFF AFRICAN WARRIORS stand guard at the entrance of the hut. The Colonials stand in wait minus the Head Colonial and Envoy.

INT. PALACE HUT - DAY

The African Envoy and the Head Colonial with one of his COLONIALS stand before the VILLAGE KING, African, tall, handsome, proud, who sits on his BAMBOO THRONE.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The Head Colonial met with the Village King looking to purchase, as he put it, livestock.

The African Envoy converses with the Village King in their native tongue, a language that consists of SMACKING OF THE MOUTH NOISES and other GIBBERISH.

The Head Colonial and His Henchman look at each other and grin, what kind of weirdo language are they speaking?

AFRICAN ENVOY

(to Head Colonial)

My King is interested. But how interested should he be?

The Head Colonial nods to his Henchman who holds a CARRY SACK.

The Henchman steps forward, reveals what's in the sack--GOLD and JEWELS.

HEAD COLONIAL
More in ships.

The Village King stares seriously at the Head Colonial.
Smiles.

The Head Colonial smiles. They have a deal.

JAMAL (V.O.)
People might have told you that the
white ran up in Africa and bum-
rushed the Africans and dragged 'em
to America. No, No, No. The King
sold his subjects.

The Village King's stomach GROWLS.

The Village King's GUARDS and ROYAL SUBJECTS don't react;
growls are normal.

The Head Colonial and his Henchman look at each other;
awkward moment.

JAMAL (V.O.)
I guess everybody gotta eat.

EXT. AFRICAN COAST - DAY

Droves of AFRICANS of all ages are marched into the three
ships.

An AFRICAN WOMAN, looks famished, walks topless, her breasts
sag down to her knees.

An AFRICAN MOTHER walks as her two SMALL CHILDREN sit on her
ENORMOUS BUTT.

JAMAL (V.O.)
And sold they were off. Told by
their leader that they were going
to a better place.

As the confused Africans walk to the boats, they watch droves
of TREASURE being hauled by skinny AFRICAN WARRIORS.

EXT. OPEN SEA - DAY

The three wooden ships sail through the choppy ocean. DAY
changes to NIGHT repeatedly.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The journey to America was many days and many nights.

EXT. WOODEN SHIP - DAY

The Colonials lounge around the ship deck EATING, DRINKING(Brown Liquor that is).

A few Colonials, one of them being the Head Colonial, sit around a BARREL using it as a table as they play CARDS.

JAMAL (V.O.)

For the Colonials the trip was like a cruise.

The Head Colonial signals to the Henchman that was with him in the Village's King's Hut.

The Henchman heads to the lower deck.

INT. WOODEN SHIP - LOWER DECK - DAY

The Henchman walks down the stairway, up to a locked door. He pulls out a KEY. Unlocks the door. Opens it. Peeks inside.

JAMAL (V.O.)

For the Africans it was like--

INT. WOODEN SHIP - LOWER DECK CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The Henchman peeks inside. The Africans are packed uncomfortably tight together, taking up pretty much the entire chamber.

The Africans have feet in each other's face, butts in each other's face, you name it. It's hard to tell who's who. It's just on big black cluster.

JAMAL (V.O.)

A can of sardines.

EXT. NORTH AMERICAN COAST - DAY

The three wooden ships approach land.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The Colonials finally made it back to America. Home sweet home.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Jamal is interrupted by the Teacher.

MS. JACOBS

I don't think it happened quite
like that.

JAMAL

How do you know? You ain't black.

EXT. COLONIAL TOWN - DAY

A group of the Africans stand on a stage in chains being auctioned to a large crowd of WHITE COLONISTS. The Head Colonial is auction host.

The crowd is hateful and rowdy.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The White Colonist began auctioning
off the Africans as slaves.

A tall, dark, handsome, and skinny but muscular AFRICAN stands on stage before the crowd being bid on.

A YOUNG WHITE WOMAN with lust in her eyes sneaks on stage, runs toward the African Man and yanks down the GARB that covers his privates.

By the reaction of the crowd, his package is impressive.

YOUNG WHITE WOMAN COLONIST

Whoa. His groin hasn't stopped
growing.

A PLANTATION OWNER in the crowd notices that his WIFE likes what she sees, really likes it.

PLANTATION'S OWNER'S WIFE

You should get this one, dear. He
looks like he'll make a lot of
strong offspring.

The Plantation Owner raises his hand. YELLS OUT to the Head Colonial who's host.

PLANTATION'S OWNER

Two hundred dollars.

The crowd is struck silent in awe.

HEAD COLONIAL

Sold!

The Head Colonial has the happiest grin on his face.

HEAD COLONIAL (CONT'D)

Wow. Two hundred dollars. You must really want him.

The Plantation Owner's Wife is overjoyed, gives him a hug.

PLANTATION'S OWNER'S WIFE

Good buy, dear.

The Plantation Owner gives a half-hearted smile. He pulls out a REVOLVER HANDGUN. He SHOTS the African right through the heart.

PLANTATION'S OWNER

You're right. Good bye.

The crowd silenced again. No one looks more confused than the Plantation's Owner's Wife.

PLANTATION'S OWNER (CONT'D)

(to Wife)

Be grateful that I chose to shoot him between his arms.

The Plantation Owner's Wife gets the attention of a nearby AUCTION ATTENDANT, white, male. He walks over.

PLANTATION'S OWNER'S WIFE

Could you pack him up for me?

AUCTION ATTENDANT

Why? He's dead.

PLANTATION'S OWNER'S WIFE

And he's paid for. I'll find use for him.

(beat)

I have embalming fluid.

EXT. SOUTHERN PLANTATION - DAY

A group of SLAVES, male and female, stand like an army before their general, the WHITE PLANTATION OWNER.

Behind them are the Slaves' SHACK-LIKE LIVING QUARTERS, similar to the huts they lived in back in Africa; who would think that a hut in the jungle would be nicer.

JAMAL (V.O.)
 The Africans, excuse me Slaves,
 were given their new lodging.

A MALE SLAVE tugs on his NEW SLAVE CLOTHING, obviously not his style.

JAMAL (V.O.)
 Some of the Slaves didn't like
 their new duds.

The Male Slave tears off his clothing.

SOUTHERN PLANTATION OWNER
 Hey, you put back on those clothes.
 You're a slave now. No more of that
 tribal monkey stuff from back in
 Africa.

The Slaves eyes light up contemplatively at the sound of their homeland.

The Male Slave doesn't comply.

SOUTHERN PLANTATION OWNER (CONT'D)
 Oh. You won't obey, huh?

The Southern Plantation Owner walks away, doesn't go far.

The Slaves look around at each other; what's going on?

The Southern Plantation Owner returns with a WHIP in his hand.

SOUTHERN PLANTATION OWNER (CONT'D)
 So you wanna be naked, huh? Okay.

The Southern Plantation Owner whips the Male Slave like a child.

The Male Slave dances around grabbing himself all over like he's on fire. He puts back on the clothes, he can't get them back on fast enough.

The Southern Plantation Owner ends his assault.

The Male Slaves lies on the ground in agony, fully clothed.

SOUTHERN PLANTATION OWNER (CONT'D)
 That's more like it, monkey.

The other Slaves stand in shock; they look down at their ailing fellow Slave on the ground who lies in the fetal position, spirit defeated.

The other Slaves look defeated as well.

INT. SLAVE LIVING QUARTERS - SHACK - DAY

The Slaves are gathered together for a meeting. It's clear they are divided about some issue.

The Male Slave who was whipped leads the argument. He's got his spirit back, but he hasn't given back the slave clothes.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The Slaves argued about going back to Africa. All of them wanted to go, but most of them were afraid.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The Male Slave who was whipped leads a SMALL GROUP OF ROGUE SLAVES, all male.

They run through the woods at high speed, avoiding obstacles like agile athletes.

JAMAL (V.O.)

A group of the slaves, led by the first ever whipped slave, use their elite experience in the wild to navigate the new terrain.

EXT. SOUTHERN COAST - DAY

The group of Rogue Slaves reach the shore of the beautiful SOUTHERN COAST.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The Rogue Slaves reach the southern coast.

The Rogue Slaves are reluctant to enter the water. The Whipped Slave dips a TOE in the water. He jumps back from the water, startled-like.

JAMAL (V.O.)

They're almost home free, and home bound. The problem is. They can't swim.

The Whipped Slave looks at his followers, they look discouraged.

The Whipped Slave looks around desperately. He spots a SHIP. He communicates in an AFRICAN LANGUAGE that consists of making a variety of smacking noises with your mouth.

The Whipped Slave communicates to the Rogue Slaves for them to take the boat.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The Whipped Slave finds the solution.

The Rogue Slaves run toward the DOCKED SHIP.

INT. SLAVE LIVING QUARTERS - SHACK - DAY

The Southern Plantation Owner discovers he's missing some of his property. He's furious. The Slaves look on in fear.

The Southern Plantation Owner storms out with a group of WHITE MEN who are part of his posse.

EXT. SOUTHERN COASTLINE - DAY

The hijacked ship the Rogue Slaves took is out at sea in the GULF OF MEXICO.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The Rogue Slaves almost made it out.

A SECOND SHIP sails into view, pulling up on side of the Rogue Slave Ship.

The Second Ship FIRES CANNONBALLS at the Rogue Slave Ship. It begins to sink.

The Rogue Slave leap into the water. They struggle to keep their heads afloat, which is about all they can keep above the water.

The Southern Plantation Owner takes a ROPE with a NOOSE on the end, tosses it down to the drowning Whipped Slave. He lassos the noose around head.

The Southern Plantation Owner tugs on the rope. The noose tightens around the Whipped Slave's neck.

The Southern Plantation Owner calls over one of the white men in his posse. They pull on the rope together in order to lift the Whipped Slave out of the water.

The Whipped Slave dangles as they pull him up the ship.

The Southern Plantation Owner gets an idea. He looks at his helper from his posse helping him with the rope.

The Southern Plantation Owner signals with his head for his Posse Member to look down at the Whipped Slave. The Posse Member looks.

The Whipped Slave dangles midway between the deck of the ship and the deck of the sea.

The Posse Member looks at the Southern Plantation Owner; he understands what he wanted him to see.

The Southern Plantation Owner and his Posse Member smile at each other.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

A WHITE COUPLE walk along a trail, the Woman on her Man's arm.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The Southern Plantation Owner felt an example needed to be made of the Rogue Slaves so that this kind of rebellion wouldn't happen again.

She looks up at the NIGHT'S SKY.

WOMAN OF COUPLE

Wow, dear. It's such a beautiful night out.

MAN OF COUPLE

Yes, dear. It is. The view is great too.

JAMAL (V.O.)

He invented, Strange Fruit.

WOMAN OF COUPLE

Yeah. The view is wonderful, inspiring.

The camera widens out, revealing the Rogue Slaves hanging lifeless from trees along the pathway that Couple walks down.

JAMAL (V.O.)

The situation finally became clear to the Non-English speaking Slaves. They're not African anymore.

(beat)

They're American.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Jamal stands before the class, giving his report. The Teacher interrupts.

MS. JACOBS

Uh, Jamal. I don't think it happened that way.

JAMAL

How you know? You ain't black.

The Students laugh. Ms. Jacobs is not amused.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Now. As I was reporting--

EXT. PLANTATION - FIELD - DAY