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When You See Me

By Stan Hood

Sometimes I *can* see the writing on the wall. I must admit that January of 2007 was the first month that I have received so many requests for Black History skits for teens to perform. I had not taken any previous requests all that seriously because surveys showed that today's teens were not all that interested in history at all- much less Black History. Evidently, I was wrong- really wrong. The following is my humble apology. It had not occurred to me that what our young people are doing at this present moment is making history. With that revelation, I felt compelled to sew the right seeds in them, to put a positive message on their lips. As you practice this, watch as confidence swells in their spirits. As always, I would love to hear from you. Here is the link for a online testimonial <http://members.AudioGenerator.com/st1.asp?c=49149&P=When+You+See+Me> or you can call and leave on voicemail 1-800-609-9006 x8223

Setting

There is no elaborate set design but you have two choices of visuals. You can either have all of the actors out on the stage at once or you can have them enter one at a time. Because of the nature of the play, I am in favor of having them all out at once to establish an unbroken rhythm. Depending upon the design of your sanctuary or hall, the time that it would take for them to walk out may affect the atmosphere that you want to create. In the end, it is certainly up to you. IMPORTANT: I have created seven characters here. Based on the time that you have, you may not choose to use them all or you may choose to create more based on the fact that they don't interact with each other.

Costumes

Each character is encouraged to put earnest effort into creating the costume and even adding to it. If you begin searching now, you may cheaply find items at thrift stores or even be able to borrow the items from an acquaintance.

Action

It is a good idea not to place the characters in exact order. Let the audience be surprised with who will speak next. At the appropriate time, characters step forward and make their presentation. Afterwards, they return to their position. It is important to not just stand there awaiting your turn but your very pose should reflect your personality. You may choose to conceal your identity if your prop can be hidden or reveal it from the start. I will make suggestions throughout.

One – The Fireman

Dressed like a thug. I use correct English here only for clarity but the character is intended to use heavy slang. Have fun with it. I suggest that he carry a shopping bag with a fireman's hat in it that he will put on at the end of his/her presentation. Go to this link for more research on McCoy

http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/174/Elijah_McCoy_inventor_of_quality_products

Fireman I know what you think when you see me. You want to cross the street. You're disgusted because my underwear is showing. You don't give me a chance. You believe that I'm a statistic waiting to happen. When I stand behind you in the express check out line at Wal-Mart, you keep looking back to make sure that I'm not going to do anything to you. You keep feeling for your wallet and finally move it from your back pocket to the front because you figure if I have enough time, I'm gonna get that. If I notice your prejudice and get angry, it only makes me look worse. After all, acting ignorant is what you expect, right? Yeah, it's true that I can't walk fast wearing clothes like these and yeah, sometimes I do have to hold them up. But maybe I don't want to walk fast because I'm tired. (pulls the hat out his bag). You see, actually, I'm a fire fighter who just worked a double shift and needed to pick something up on the way home from work.

Who knows? I could be the "Real McCoy." Do you know where that saying came from? It was Elijah McCoy who's also known as the black Thomas Edison. He revolutionized the railroad system and helped it become what it is today. But before he became famous, he worked a lot jobs- (puts on the hat) one being a local firefighter with the Michigan Central Railroad.

Two – The Ghetto Doctor

Setting

This is a female role. While I wanted to find famous black people to model the monologues after, I specifically wanted to find some examples as close to the present as possible. I found Dr. Jane Wright to be a perfect example for a young lady with outspoken confidence. Dr. Wright is conservative in dress but carries with her a strong New Yorker's determination. To get more info about her, go to this link http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_336.html

Dr. J. Wright

In the past few years, I could easily have been mistaken for Rosa Parks when I walked into a room. Even black folks can't tell many of us apart. When they see a lighter skinned black woman who commands respect where ever she goes, they assume that it must be Rosa. But I'm here to tell you today that black women can do more than cook, clean and refuse to move on a bus.

In 1967, there was a room full of mostly white male doctors who stood around a prestigious research center waiting to see who their next boss would be. Can you imagine their faces when this fine caramel sister at the young age of 33 walked into the room and let them know that a sister could look good and have a brain too? (laughs) What a mighty God we serve!

I never let anybody tell me what I couldn't do. Sure, some people tried to work against me. That just meant that I had to know my stuff. From that day on, I continued to reach one achievement after another. That goes to show you that even a New York accent and the color of your skin aren't excuses to fail. I'm "Doctor" Jane Wright.

Three – The Nerd

Setting

This character can be male or female. He does not represent any particular famous person, but instead a particular group of black people who need to be respected. I would play this character as angry. He would have nerd qualities but I would almost preach the lines. The costume is obvious.

If you need some inspiration from a success story, you can get it from here. <http://www.dallasblack.com/site.aspx/entertainment/jaleelwhiteinterviewwmps>

Nerd

I know what you think when you see me. I'm someone that you don't want to be around because I'm serious about my education. What's wrong with black people? I for one am sick and tired of hearing young black boys and girls talk a lot of trash about what they're going to do when they grow up but never back it up with anything. How can you own the company if you never learn the business? My brothers are always talking about how big their houses are going to be and how expensive their cars will be. How can you get those things flunking out of school? My sisters are always talking about how the Lord is going to send them a tall, dark and handsome man- who is rich. But don't sell yourself short. Get your education so that you bring something to the table. Instead of hoping to be chosen by somebody, put yourself in position to do the choosing.

(starts to pace back and forth while bringing the speech home)
Do you remember the guy that played Steve Urkle from Family Matters? Jaleel White is now an accomplished screen writer and director. It's not how you start. It's how you finish. Do you see this hair? Money could work wonders with that. Do you see these teeth? Good insurance can take care of that. You see these glasses? A good job will get laser eye surgery. I know that my body isn't much to look at but my personal trainer will take care of that. And oh yeah, these clothes, I'm sure my beautiful wife (or handsome husband) will do enough shopping to hook me up!

Four – Fat

Setting

Where do I start with this one? Of course, you can use a male or female for this part. Depending on the dynamics of your church, you may have difficulty getting a young person to do it. My suggestion is to pass out the script to all of the young people and allow someone to volunteer after reading it. Feelings are always a touchy subject. If all else fails, you can easily stuff a thin person's clothing. Personally, I would encourage a heavy set person to do it by reminding them that you will have the floor to express your feelings. There is healing in pouring your heart out. But that's just me. I would even do the part myself if I had too. Just pray about it.

There are no costume issues here. Just let the actor choose.

Actor

Some of the most successful people of African descent were and are heavy set, full figured or whatever you want to call it. Fred Hammond is called a modern day psalmist. Maya Angelo is regarded as one of the greatest poets of our time. I could go on and on but I know that for some of you, it won't matter because some people are just simple-minded. It doesn't matter who the person is. All you see is fat. It's a good thing that God doesn't see things the way that we do. In First Samuel Chapter 16, Jesse brought out all of his popular, tall, handsome and muscular sons to see if they were chosen by the Lord to be king. But the prophet said something encouraging to Jesse. He said that the Lord doesn't look on the outward appearance of a man, He looks at the heart.

I know what you think when you see me. You think I don't have anything to offer. But they said the same thing about Aretha Franklin, Oprah Winfrey and Randy Jackson. Now they are all icons of success.

To all of those who don't have a beach body, it's alright. God is more concerned with how much love you have for your fellow man. In fact, the Bible says that the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the arch angel. The dead in Christ shall rise first to meet Him in the air. And those that remain- fat people, skinny people, tall people,

short people, black people, white people- shall be caught up to meet Jesus in the air. And one of my favorite parts says that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we will get a new body and a new mind. The Bible says that we shall be like Jesus. No matter what you may think of me now, remember that I'm only a caterpillar that God is transforming into a butterfly. It doesn't matter how long He takes. It only matters that he said it. I believe it. And that settles it.

Five – The Soldier

Setting

The title is a little deceiving because the actor is actually referencing to a boxer- Muhammad Ali to be exact. He should be dressed for a boxing match. Seeing that you will be in church, he probably should wear a tank top. Seeing that Ali has a famous daughter who is a boxer, if you can't use a male for this role, it should be fairly easy to change it over. While doing this part, it would be good to dance around and jab from time to time. When standing still, you should slowly rock back and forth and shake your arms and legs out periodically.

The Message: Think for yourself.

Soldier They haven't come for me yet but I know they will. Everybody wants to be at war these days. The world doesn't ask our opinion when they get themselves into these messes but they want us to go and fight without a cause. All throughout recent history, they've wanted black people to get mad and go fight people half way around the world that they never met. At least that's what Muhammad Ali said when they came for him in the sixties. Personally, I like that because when people see athletes, they automatically think that they're stupid.

I know that Ali isn't a Christian but he had one thing right. Black people need to think for themselves. Don't just let people tell you stuff without you checking it out and doing your homework. Haven't you learned that people will use you and throw you away? Lord knows that the world is getting crazier and crazier. They're fighting a war and don't even know who the enemy is. It seems like their telling us a new name every month. Personally, I don't need to sign up for some worldwide army. I'm already a soldier. If Bush himself came here right now, do you know what I would say to him? We've already designed your weapons, worked out the physics of combat and even figured out how to spin cotton to make your uniforms. What more do you want from us? You're too late Mr. Bush. I'm already a soldier in the Army of the Lord! My best weapons are prayer and praise. I pray that God looks out for his people who are already over there and I praise Him because I'm still here!

Six – Dark and Lovely

Setting

This is a female role. As you probably guessed by the title, this actor is dealing the issue of extremely dark skin. The costume can be contemporary. Here's a link to help you with this part

http://www.angelfire.com/journal2/yardy2001/willie_lynch.htm

Dark and Lovely

What are you looking at? The only reason that you have a problem with my dark skin is because the slave masters sowed it into our forefather's brains. They mixed black and white in order to get all shades of brown. Why did they do it? So you could look at me and think that there's something wrong with me being dark and lovely. You would see my lips and wish they were thinner. You would see my hips and wish they weren't so curvy- not because there's something wrong with me; but because there's something wrong with *you*. Even with the black race itself, we still think that white is right. The more we look like them, the more right things appear to be. All of this trash came in the form of a letter in 1712 from a slave owner named Willie Lynch who taught white people how to keep black folks hating themselves and each other. He promised that black people would keep themselves in bondage for at least three hundred years if the slave masters could successfully reprogram them. Make them black people think that all they could ever be good for is entertaining us through sports and singing and telling jokes. Well, I wonder what old Mr. Lynch thought of Harriet Tubman and Sojourner truth? I bet strong black women didn't figure into his plan. I bet he never expected dark and lovely, beautiful black people to pull themselves up by the bootstraps and fight back. I bet old Willie Lynch never would have thought that in 2007 we would still be here and just as bold and beautiful as ever.

Seven – The Ordinary

Setting

This character is a just a regular everyday person who wants to be treated fairly. Dress is casual.

Ordinary Person As a man thinketh, so is he. You may see someone like me walking down the street and not be impressed. But guess what? I'm okay with that. Personally, I don't need a whole lot of attention. The proud legacy of who I am is carried within me. I don't need a lot of fanfare. All I ask for is to be treated the same as everybody else. I have no desire to be in the Whitehouse like Colon Powell or Condoleeza Rice. You might see me working at a shopping center or fast food place taking just as much pride in my work as they do. I'm okay with that. Just make sure *you see me* for who I am; not who think I'm supposed to be. Take time out to get to know me. Just because I'm not smiling doesn't mean that I'm angry. Maybe I just have something on my mind. Or maybe I've been judged so much that I'm bracing myself for more negativity. If you want to know something, just ask me. Don't assume I'm this way or that way based on the way I look. I just may surprise you and have something worth saying. If you can do that for me, I'll do the same for you and the world will be a much better place.

The End