

# **BLACKS AND WHITES**

**by Phillip W. Weiss**

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## Cast

**Jim – a black man, late 30s**

**Mabel – a black woman, late 30s**

**Paula – a white woman, early 40s**

**Frank – a white man, late 50s**

**This is a three-act play.**

**Act 1 – *page 1***

**Time: 1939**

**Place: a room**

**Location: Hollywood, California**

**Jim and Mabel**

**Act 2 – *page 34***

**Time: the present**

**Place: a living room**

**Location: New York City**

**Paula and Frank**

**Act 3, Scene 1 – *page 48***

**Time: The present**

**Place: a bedroom**

**Location: New York City**

**Jim, Mabel, Paula, Frank**

**Act 3, Scene 2 – *page 53***

**Time: The present**

**Place: a room**

**Jim, Mabel, Paula, Frank**

**This play is a work of fiction. The characters are fictitious and their resemblance to any person living or dead is purely coincidental and entirely unintentional.**

## **Credits**

**“Rock-a-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody”  
written by Jean Schwartz  
lyrics by Sam M. Lewis and Joe Young**

**“We’re Strangers to Each Other”  
music and lyrics by Phillip W. Weiss**

## **Synopsis**

**Two African-American movie actors and two white persons engage in separate but parallel discussions on the status of race relations in the United States and the toxic effect that racism has had on their lives. Can the damage be undone? Is racial harmony possible?**

Act 1

*Time: 1939*

*Place: a room*

*Location: Hollywood, California*

*The stage is dark. From Off Stage a song can be heard)*

Rock-a bye your baby  
 With a Dixie Melody,  
 When you croon,  
 Croon a tune, from the heart of Dixie.  
 Hang that cradle mammy mine,  
 Right on that Mason-Dixon line,  
 And swing it from Virginia  
 To Tennessee with all the soul that's in ya.  
 Mammy, mammy, listen what they're playing,  
 They're playing, weep no more my lady,  
 Sing it for me,  
 And ol' black Joe ...

*(Suddenly the song is interrupted. The stage lights go on revealing a black man dressed in overalls and work shoes)*

**BLACK MAN**  
*(angry)*

I can't stand it any more!

*He pauses, then speaks directly to the audience)*

I tell ya, that song just gets me so riled up, singing about ol' black Joe. Well guess what? I'm black and my name is Jim, which is almost the same as Joe, so whenever I hear that song, I think they're singing about me. Now I know it's only a song and supposedly nobody means any harm by it, but still, as a black man I don't like it, singing about us like we have nothing better to do than listen to some joker singing about, of all places, Dixie, you know that lovely place where blacks have to pay a poll tax to vote and have to eat in segregated restaurants, use segregated bathrooms, attend segregated schools, where they treat us like we have some kind of disease.

*(A large, heavy, black woman enters the stage. She is carrying a basket full of laundry. She is dressed as a maid.)*

**BLACK WOMAN**  
 Whatchya fussin' about now, Jim?

**JIM**

Aw, Mabel, it ain't nothin'.

**MABEL**

Well it gotta be something 'cause I could hear you runnin' your mouth a mile away.

**JIM**

It's that damn song again. It gets on my nerves.

**MABEL**

What are you complaining about? Aren't they singing about me too? At least somebody is singing about us.

**JIM**

Hush your mouth, woman!

**MABEL**

You're always fussin'.

**JIM**

Yeah. So what?

**MABEL**

So, nothing.

**JIM**

Aw, stop your gabbin'. You're just tryin' to make trouble. Who do you think you are anyway?

**MABEL**

Somebody who doesn't go around runnin' my mouth like a damn fool.

**JIM**

Who would listen to you anyway? You got nothing useful to say.

**MABEL**

Well ain't you the mister big shot, soundin' so high and mighty. You haven't done a good day's work in I don't know how long.

**JIM**

So what? You're nothing but a maid, a servant. You have no right to criticize.

**MABEL**

I do my work an' I get paid for it, which is more than I can say for you.

**JIM**

Hush up now, woman! They'd took my name, made a mockery of it, put it in song, make it sound like I'm jus' a stupid, simple fool an' now I got deal with your nonsense.

**MABEL**

Nonsense, nothing! I gotta put up with the same guff as you but you don't hear me complainin' and besides what good would it do?

**JIM**

Every time you talk that way it practically makes me want to scream! Like in that overblown movie about the "old south," your servility actually made me sick.

**MABEL**

Listen, boy, they paid me good to play that role, so shut your face!

**JIM**

Yeah, they paid you good, but you still played a loudmouthed fool and that ain't worth NO amount of money.

**MABEL**

If you keep on runnin' your face like that I'm gonna dump this laundry over your head!

**JIM**

You're all talk.

**MABEL**

Well, what am I supposed to do? I need the money and I would rather have money in the bank than nothing on the plate.

**JIM**

You wouldn't go starvin', no way.

**MABEL**

Why you say that?

**JIM**

'Cause there'd be other jobs.

**MABEL**

Jim, you are dumber than a mule that's jus' been kicked in the head.

**JIM**

No, I'm not! When you play those roles you have no idea of how you're hurting your own people.

**MABEL**

*(baffled)*

MY PEOPLE!? Watch you talkin' about now?

**JIM**

You know exactly what I'm talkin' about.

**MABEL**

Jim, if you keep on vexing me this way, I'm gonna let you have it but good.

**JIM**

What's the matter? Can't handle the truth?

**MABEL**

I can handle anything you throw at me, but not when you not makin' sense.

**JIM**

Now it's YOU who's being dumb.

**MABEL**

Oh, it's ME being dumb now? No, no, no! I'm jus' annoyed ... at YOU!

**JIM**

Well you wouldn't be so "annoyed" if you thought I wasn't tellin' the truth.

**MABEL**

Look here, mister. You don't know what ya talkin' about. I'm makin' good money, okay, an' without that money I'd be out on the street.

**JIM**

No, Mabel, you're upset because deep down you know that you're selling out your people for a few bucks.

**MABEL**

Here we go again with that "people" talk.

**JIM**

That's right, Mabel. They're your people whether you like it or not. You are a public figure, a symbol, an' when the public sees you on the screen they think that all black women are meant to be maids and all black men stevedores.

**MABEL**

Jim, you're so wrong. First, I don't represent nobody. And second, who the hell are you to lecture me on how I should make a living?

**JIM**

Who am I, you ask? I'm the guy who refuses to sell out. Yeah, I coulda made a bundle playin' a shuffling, mumbling Negro, like some of the other brothers do, but I told them, "screw you an' your money, I have my dignity."

**MABEL**

An' what did that get you?

**JIM**

At least I know I ain't laughed at.

**MABEL**

Yeah, you got that right. Nobody's laughin' and nobody's payin' you either.

**JIM**

That's right, Mabel, nobody's payin'.

**MABEL**

Oh, so it's a question of pride.

**JIM**

I'm sayin' no such thing and don't put words in my mouth.

**MABEL**

Then what exactly are you sayin'?

**JIM**

What I'm sayin' is this: at some point we have to make a stand, make our voices heard, demand respect and be treated as equals.

**MABEL**

Have you been drinking again?

**JIM**

No I haven't, and what I'm saying has nothing to do with whether I'm drunk. It has to do with being part of a system that perpetuates ugly racist stereotypes that keep us down.

**MABEL**

Don't you think I know that? Don't you think I know how those movies make me look?

**JIM**

Yeah, Mabel, I know you know an' that's what irks me because you know better, yet you still take the money.

**MABEL**

You think we're really despised, don't you.

**JIM**

Maybe that's a little too strong a word, but we're not liked, that's for sure.

**MABEL**

You got a point.

**JIM**

I KNOW I got a point.

**MABEL**

*(suddenly galvanized)*

Why SHOULD I be playin' a maid? For once, let 'em show some white girl pushing a mop while I'm all decked out, gallivanting around.

**JIM**

*(laughing)*

That would sure be a grand sight.

**MABEL**

I earned it and I would be partying, laughing, whooping it up, really enjoying myself.

**JIM**

I know you would, Mabel. In fact, your words now got me feeling all fired up.

**MABEL**

That's right, Jim. Let's show them who's the boss.

**JIM**

*(gets up, starts pacing back and forth across the stage)*

O! Black Joe, makin' me sound like a fool. Well I'M NO FOOL! I AM A MAN! AND I WANT WHAT'S MINE!

**MABEL**

That's right, Jim, you ARE the man. You could be the black Clark Gable.

**JIM**

*(contemptuous)*

Clark Gable. If I were white I'd be getting all the lead roles.

**MABEL**

You think so?

**JIM**

I KNOW so.

**MABEL**

I wonder what them white girls would have said about you playin' a southern gentleman?

**JIM**

Who cares what they'd say. All I know is that I wouldn't be taking guff from them, that's for sure.

**MABEL**

Hey, I know them better than you do and believe me none of them are anything to write home about.

**JIM**

Yeah, but some of them are pretty.

**MABEL**

And white ... and snobs. Ooo, what I would have liked to have said to some of those girls.

**JIM**

I bet you would have had a lot to say.

**MABEL**

You bet I would have. Listen, Jim, what I can't understand is why a good lookin' guy like ... like the character Clark Gable played ... , a guy who could have any woman he wants, anywhere in the world, would want to waste his time going after a spoiled, self-centered brat who tells him right to his face that she don't like him ... and means it! What kind of story is that?

**JIM**

*(laughs)*

Now don't start tearin' down Gable too. He had enough problems in that movie.

**MABEL**

I've had it up to here *(points to her neck)* with those stuck up floozies. They're nothin' but a high-faluttin', prissy-faced teases who get guys so bamboozled that soon they don't know what they're doing.

**JIM**

Yeah, you're right, but the people buy it, especially white people. By the way, why are you on Gable's case anyway? Did he do something bad to you?

**MABEL**

He wouldn't have the nerve to try and besides, what I'm saying ain't personal. I'm jus' tryin' to make a point.

**JIM**

Which is?

**MABEL**

That I'm really sick and tired of playing a maid and now I'm all messed up in my head because of you!

**JIM**

Because of me?!

**MABEL**

Yeah, because of YOU! Before this conversation started, I was feeling fine, did not have a care in the world. Now I'm all upset and sounding like a blithering fool.

**JIM**

Good!

**MABEL**

Good?! You mean that it's okay for me to be upset and sound like a blithering fool?

**JIM**

Of course not! What you're now feeling is something called social consciousness. The first time you feel it, it hits you real hard, like something has grabbed you by the guts and won't let go. We all go through it.

**MABEL**

So this is normal?

**JIM**

As normal as breathing. You'll get over it real soon and after you do, you'll be a stronger and wiser person for it.

**MABEL**

It's kind of scary.

**JIM**

That's okay. Go with the feeling. Remember, you're not alone.

**MABEL**

*(angry)*

Oh them nasty thieves. I oughta go to the front office right now and give 'em a piece of my mind!

**JIM**

That's right, Mabel, you do that!

**MABEL**

*(indignant)*

In the past two years I've made 27 movies, playing maids, mammies, and washer women. Well, that's finished. Do you know that I went to college, majored in accounting?

**JIM**

You don't say?

**MABEL**

I do say. I know I could at least play a secretary, but you think they would ever cast me as an office worker? No! So how about you and me going to the front office and having a little talk with the boss?

**JIM**

You mean the two of us?

**MABEL**

Yeah, the two of us.

**JIM**

That wouldn't be a good idea.

**MABEL**

Why not?

**JIM**

'Cause they'd laugh us right off the lot.

**MABEL**

What's a matter? You're afraid? I thought you were a union man or something.

**JIM**

HUSH UP! Don't say that too loud. Somebody may hear you.

**MABEL**

Why you being so secretive?

**JIM**

Because if they even think that you're in a union they'll fire you. So we have to be careful.

**MABEL**

Now you're telling me this after you got me all riled up?

**JIM**

I wasn't trying to get you all riled up. I was jus' trying to help you better appreciate your situation.

**MABEL**

I don't recall ever asking you for help.

**JIM**

Then why are we talking?

**MABEL**

Because you were runnin' off at the mouth an' I came by to check on you. Don't you remember?

**JIM**

That didn't mean you had to talk to me.

**MABEL**

What was I supposed to do? Just stand there and watch you flapping your lips?

**JIM**

I was just blowing off some steam. It's gets so frustrating, knowing that I'm being kept down.

**MABEL**

I understand how you feel, Joe. I'm in the same boat as you, you know, just like we were in that musical about them white actors on that river boat steamer.

**JIM**

The captain was okay, it was his wife that was the problem. A real dried up prune. And cheap too, just like they all are. I remember while I was rehearsing the main song for the movie, the director was there listening to me and after I was finished he struck up a conversation with me, telling me how much he liked what he heard, and asking me how I liked being in the movie and telling me how glad he was that I was part of the cast. Since he was being so friendly, I figured I'd ask him for a pay raise, so I asked. Immediately he starts hemmin' and moanin' and groanin' about expenses and overhead and the like, you know, like he was trying to brush me off, until finally I couldn't take it anymore and blew up at him.

**MABEL**

You gotta be more careful.

**JIM**

I couldn't help myself. He was patronizing me, talking down to me.

**MABEL**

That's too bad, but at least you were a featured player in a major movie, which is a lot more than can be said for most black actors.

**JIM**

Yes, I was a featured player, but I wasn't the star and it's the stars who make the big money, and in this world without money you're nothing, which is especially true for a black man.

**MABEL**

Well if you WERE a star, then maybe nobody'd want to see your movies and then where would you be?

**JIM**

You're missin' my point.

**MABEL**

No, I'm not missin' your point. Do you honestly think that white people would pay to see movies starring a black man?

**JIM**

Yes, I do, but right now, I'm just a hired hand, meaning that I have to scrounge for an extra nickel and dime, like they're doing me some kind of favor. That's how they keep us down! But boy would people be singing a different tune if I had big bucks. Then I'd be calling the shots. Where ever I'd go it would be the red carpet treatment and first class service, and why, because money talks, as the saying goes. It trumps everything, even race. Even the most nasty, vicious, stupid, goose-stepping bigot would think twice before closing the door in my face. And that's a fact.

**MABEL**

Well if you think you could make money, then why don't you start your own production company? Then you'd be your own boss.

**JIM**

It takes money to make money. You got money to invest?

**MABEL**

Don't mock me, boy. You know I don't. But if I had the money, I'd give it to you, you know I would.

**JIM**

That's easy talk when we both know you can't deliver.

**MABEL**  
*(annoyed)*

What do you want me to say?

**JIM**

The truth!

**MABEL**

I am telling the truth and truthfully I don't have the money to help you.

**JIM**

So much for the truth *(pause)* If I had the money I'd hire the finest black actors and make the grandest movies, musicals, comedy, drama, everything. I'd drive them white companies right out of business 'cause when we black people are given a chance to compete fair and square, then we always come out on top. Look at Joe Louis and Jesse Owens.

**MABEL**

Those boys are great but how many white people you'd think would go pay to see your shows?

**JIM**

Plenty would because quality entertainment always sells, and that's a fact. It's just a question of financing and that's where we're behind that eight ball because they have the money an' we don't and that's what gives them the power to call the shots. And being black just makes everything worse.

**MABEL**

That's for sure. I wanted to try out for the role of the wicked witch in that wizard movie but when I showed up at the audition, the director looked at me, started laughing and then started talking to me just like I was child. It was so humiliating.

**JIM**  
*(dismissive)*

You can do better than being in junk like that. Ugh! What a silly story. Just shows what kind of fluff passes for entertainment today.

**MABEL**  
Maybe it was fluff but that movie made a ton of money.

**JIM**  
*(surprised)*

It did?

**MABEL**  
I read that in a newspaper.

**JIM**  
*(sarcastic)*

Well good for them. It's just amazing how these movie big shots manage to make so much money peddling what they try to pass off as quality entertainment. But they pay a price too because the more money they make the more decadent they become, which is what happens when you have too much money to spend and you're not working for it. I see them coming and goin' everyday, openly flaunting their wealth, with their fancy clothes, expensive cars, and slutty women, acting like they're such big shots. Sooner or later they all get into trouble, which is okay by me because to them we don't even exist. Well it's about time a black man changed all that.

**MABEL**  
And maybe a black woman too. For instance, in that movie about the "old south," I play a freed slave who's still loyal to my old master. I think if I we're in charge I'd definitely make a few changes to that storyline. I mean, why the hell would I want to be loyal to my old master? What did he ever do for me?

**JIM**  
*(laughs)*

Beats me.

**MABEL**

That's right. That's exactly what he did, beat you, beat US! But that's how they wrote the story because that's what the public, the white public, wanted. I wonder what people would have thought if saw me, a black mammy, coming up with money to buy the plantation? I bet black folk all over the world would have loved to see that.

**JIM**

I know I would have. Where would you get the money?

**MABEL**

Maybe I'd find it under a rock while walking through the woods.

**JIM**

Who'd believe that?

**MABEL**

Who cares? It's a movie, remember?

**JIM**

That's true. In movie land ANYTHING is possible.

**MABEL**

It's no stranger than some of the other fluff that Hollywood tries to pass off as quality entertainment. An' besides, doesn't a mammy deserve a little bit of luck?

**JIM**

Now that you mention it, she sure does, and so do the rest of us too.

**MABEL**

And after I bought the farm I'd become a lady of leisure.

**JIM**

While still playin' a maid?.

**MABEL**

Of course not, you fool. I'd be a lady of property. But of course that would never happen in the movies because people are used to seeing black women playing maids and other low roles. I wonder how people would feel seeing movies with pretty white gals doing laundry all day, washing the dishes and moping the floor? I don't think they'd be too happy with that.

**JIM**

You won't get any argument from me on that point. That's just what I've been saying. We're expected to take the demeaning roles for one reason only, because we're black.

**MABEL**

Jim, all that's true, and now I'm so mad I could take this laundry and dump in the street, but I know if I do that, I'd just be making a mess and besides it would do no good.

**JIM**

I know, Mabel. That's what makes all so frustrating. We want to better ourselves but we just can't afford it.

**MABEL**

That's true.

**JIM**

That's why to make real change you gotta have organization and money. .

**MABEL**

Talk is fine but if you can't back it up then what good is it? You speak up and what do you get? Grief!

**JIM**

Maybe that's the price we gotta pay to make some real change, bring fairness to the workplace and earn a little respect.

**MABEL**

But that's a big price to pay, especially if you're on your own. No sense in fighting if you can't win.

**JIM**

What makes you think we can't win?

**MABEL**

Even the white actors and workers get abused and if they're treated like dirt, then what can WE do?

**JIM**

We can do a whole lot, if we go about it carefully.

**MABEL**

What do you have in mind?

**JIM**

I've been thinking about sending out a flyer to all the other black actors calling for a meeting to discuss what we've been talking about.

**MABEL**

I thought that you didn't want anyone to think that you're a union man! Now you want to contact other black actors.

**JIM**

I know exactly what I said, but this has nothing to do with organizing. I just want to bring some of us together for mutual support. Going at it alone would be a waste of time. But if we hang in together, then maybe we could get our point across.

**MABEL**

Yeah, we have a right to assemble and even to speak out, but that don't mean they'll listen.

**JIM**

Well, they BETTER listen or else!

**MABEL**

Or else what, Jim? Watcha gonna do? Give 'em a nasty stare? Give 'em the finger? (pause) Even white workers are getting bashed down. Look what happened at that Ford plant in Detroit. The workers not only got fired, they got run out of the factory by the police. Or what about those two Jewish fellas who got tossed off the track team in Germany at the Berlin Olympics.

**JIM**

What about those fellas?

**MABEL**

I read that the coach dropped them because he didn't want to offend Hitler, so he replaced them with two blacks. Can you believe that?

**JIM**

Sure I can believe that. We're the best runners in the world. At least SOMEWHERE we're appreciated.

**MABEL**

Yeah ... in Nazi Germany. Anyway, white people are getting pushed around too.

**JIM**

But they're also in charge and even if they're down if they can still work their way up without doors being closed in their faces while we're denied the same opportunity, except I guess at the Olympic games where it's okay for blacks to jump high and run fast without getting in trouble.

**MABEL**

Yes, a strong pair of legs and a good set of track shoes can certainly come in handy, especially if you're being chased by the police. But if you stay out of trouble, then nobody cares.

**JIM**

The problem is, being able to stay out of trouble. The police have it in for us, just waiting to run us in on the slightest pretext. That's why the jails are always packed with blacks. I mean, all of us can't be criminals!

**MABEL**

We're not all criminals, but like you've said, we gotta be careful 'cause they have the power.

**JIM**

Yeah, that's right but sometimes a man has a do what a man has do. Just like when our parents were slaves. If it weren't for guys like Frederick Douglas or Nat Turner, we'd still be slaves today.

**MABEL**

We still ARE slaves, wage slaves. The workplace is our plantation, the production assistants our overseers. Because without money, we are nothing, in fact LESS than nothing, lower than the low, and the bosses know it too because a lot of them were once workers too.

**JIM**

They actually worked? Are you for real?

**MABEL**

Yeah, I'm for real. A lot of them came to this country plum broke but made it big. How about that Jewish guy who heads that big movie studio on the other side of town? I heard that he came to this country from Russia with nothing and now look at him. He owns half of Hollywood.

**JIM**

That don't mean nothin'. He's white so he came to this country with a big advantage over us. Our people came here in chains and we're never allowed to forget it. What bugs me is that you have all kinds of people coming to this country and making big bucks while we blacks, who were here from the start, are kept down, made to grovel and scrounge, and are treated like we count for nothing ... NOTHING!

**MABEL**

That's not entirely so, Jim. Look at all the progress we've made since we'd been freed.

**JIM**

What progress? We work, pay taxes, do all kinda stuff, but for what? We're still not treated as equals an' that's a fact. If we were, they wouldn't be making fun of us like they do in the movies.

**MABEL**

We're not the only ones who get poked fun at. What about all those white comics, like Laurel and Hardy for instance. You don't hear white people complaining about them.

**JIM**

That's different. It's one thing for white people to laugh at themselves, 'cause they take it as joke but when they start in with us there's an edge to their so-called humor that's meant to put us down, keep us in our place and make us feel that we count for nothing. Like for instance this morning I heard on the radio this white comedian telling all kind of nasty jokes and a lot of these jokes were about black men, making it sound like we're nothing but a bunch of stupid thugs, drunks, and the like, you know, as if we're nothing but a bunch of idiots. I could hear the audience laughing, yeah, they sure loved it, but I wasn't laughing, not one bit. Once again the black man was being reduced to the level of a joke, a thing, not to be taken seriously. It's pure racism masquerading as humor and all it does is set people against us.

**MABEL**

I never seen it that way before, but now that I come to think of it, a couple of days ago I was talking to this white guy and he started cracking all these jokes about Polish people and the Irish. At the time I thought they were hilarious and we were both laughing up a storm, but after listening to you, I can see that jokes like those can be really mean and cruel and meant to keep people down. *(pause)* Well, as far as I'm concerned we DO count for something, which is why we gotta keep on goin' and not give up.

**JIM**

That's all I ever hear nowadays. Just hang in there, just stay the course, keep on the safe track, we'll get to that promised-land soon enough. Well, damn it, I'm tired of it! I can't wait any longer! I want my share of the pie!

**MABEL**

Don't you think I'm hungry for my slice too? We all feel this way.

**JIM**

I don't know how we all feel, but this is how I feel and if every black in America felt the same way, then NOTHING could stop us! We'd get what's ours. We built this country ... from nothing ... for nothing, and now it's time for payback, time to cash in and live the good life.

**MABEL**

Well before you start sending out your letters, think about what's happening to the Jews in Germany.

**JIM**

What about them?

**MABEL**

They're being treated worse than we are, and they're white.

**JIM**

That's just further proof that we gotta do something fast to protect ourselves because if that's the way white people treat other white people, then there's no telling what they'd do to us if they had the chance. Look what Germany and Russia did to Poland. They obliterated an entire country and the Poles are white! And what about what happened to those Italians who were lynched in New Orleans in 1891 and the Jews who were pelted with garbage in New York in 1901, during a funeral procession no less? After that incident, the Jews said nobody ever treated them like that, not even in Russia where they're hated.

**MABEL**

If the Jews can be bullied around, and they supposedly control EVERYTHING, then what chance do we have against the system here?

**JIM**

Right now, none. We're not united. You have some brothers who say "no problem, everything is jus' fine." Then you have others who say "we have problems but let's not rock the boat." I don't know what planet they're operating from. And then there's those who are angry, want to change things but don't know what to. They're the ones that get into trouble.

**MABEL**

I wish I could have told that prissy lady in that “old south” movie what I really thought about her.

**JIM**

Someday you may have that chance, especially if somebody makes a sequel. But unfortunately for now you have to bide your time until we get organized.

**MABEL**

Who’s gonna help us out?

**JIM**

Right now nobody and that’s why I want to bring together other blacks.

**MABEL**

But what good would they do? They’re just as bad off as we are.

**JIM**

Then I’ll contact some white actors too. Maybe some of them would be willing to join us.

**MABEL**

That seems kind of half-baked to me. I mean, if being black in the United States is a problem for us, then aren't we the ones who have to deal with it?

**JIM**

Of course, but they’d be our back up. Don't you get it? We can't go at this alone.

**MABEL**

You’re dreaming. There is no way that any white people are gonna stick their necks out to help us. That’s a little bit of a stretch.

**JIM**

That's not true. There are white people out there who would help us out.

**MABEL**

You mean like the white singers who do blackface and make us look and sound like jerks?

**JIM**

Don't get me wrong. That burns me up too.

**MABEL**

Or sing those stupid songs reminiscing about the old south, you know, when we were slaves?

**JIM**

Like Rock a bye your baby? Now you know why I can't stand that song.

**MABEL**

*(laughs)*

But for white people, those were the good ol' days.

**JIM**

Not for us, though. We did the picking while they made the money.

**MABEL**

To tell you the truth, this whole subject starting to give me a real bad headache.

**JIM**

Like I said before, that's the price you have to pay for using your mind. It's like exercising a muscle that you never used before. At first you're sore but gradually the pain disappears as you use it more and make it stronger. It's the same way with the mind.

**MABEL**

I never knew you were so smart.

**JIM**

I'm just a simple country boy who just wants what's mine.

**MABEL**

You are so modest. No wonder that that young white gal in that river boat movie took a shining to you.

**JIM**

Me and her were just friends, nothing more.

**MABEL**

I remember when I was growing up I had a lot friends, black and white, and we'd be playing all the time but then one day something happened to one of the white gals and the next thing all the white folks are storming down the street beating up on every black they could find. It was terrible.

**JIM**

That's why we have to careful dealing with white people. They can turn on you anytime.

**MABEL**

But that don't stop you from dealing with them.

**JIM**

No, it don't, because we have no choice in the matter. They're around, whether we like it or not, so we have to deal with them, but like I said, you gotta be careful with them because they can't stand us.

**MABEL**

As a black woman, I know what you're saying but I've met some white people who are really nice.

**JIM**

Of course some white people are nice, but even the nice ones look down on us.

**MABEL**

I'm with you there, my boy. What about those Jim Crow laws? You go down South and what do you see? This is for colored folk, that's for white folk only, colored not allowed here, colored not allowed there. It's as if the South won the Civil War.

**JIM**

That's why we gotta do something about this situation because it just isn't fair. I served in the war, saw action in Europe, got shot at and got a medal for it, but do you think that counted for anything? NO! When I got back to the states I was told, "you can't live here" and "You can't work here" until finally I decided to go to Hollywood because I heard they were hiring black actors but once I got there I soon found out that I was in competition with white actors lining up for black roles. You know, doing black face. At that point I became desperate. Finally some white talent agent, who served in the war too, took pity on me and helped me land that role in that river boat movie and if it weren't for him, I'd be in real bad shape.

**MABEL**

You think that's bad? I'm a black woman in a white gal's world, so I had it really rough. I couldn't find work. I must have answered a hundred ads. Luckily I met some people who knew this casting director who was looking for black women to play maids, so that's how I wound up here in Hollywood.

**JIM**

What burns me up is that we didn't ask to come to this country, we were brought here, like cattle, but we're not animals. It's amazing that we even survived.

**MABEL**

But we have to survive, no matter how crappy things are we and we gotta have hope because without hope there's no point to living and if we start getting down on ourselves then they'll win because that is exactly how they want us to feel.

**JIM**

It's just so frustrating. I did some reading about some famous black folk, you know, like Jack Johnson, Dred Scott and the like and what they had to put up with was just awful. Talented, gifted people with so much to offer, yet they were subjected to indignity after indignity. Did you know that the first American to die in the revolutionary war was a black man, Crispus Attucks?

**MABEL**

I didn't know that.

**JIM**

None of this is taught in school. It's like we're being denied access to our own history.

**MABEL**

It says in the Bible that the Jewish people were slaves too, just like us.

**JIM**

But I don't think they were working on plantations, and remember, their leader, Moses, was a prince of Egypt. We didn't have any Moses. The closest we came to having a Moses was Abraham Lincoln and look what happened to him.

**MABEL**

What happened to Lincoln was horrible.

**JIM**

Lincoln deserves a lot of credit for issuing that emancipation proclamation, but we fought for our freedom. Did you know that 150,000 blacks fought in the civil war and that if it weren't for them, the North may not have won and we'd still be slaves? None of this is common knowledge.

**MABEL**

Where did you learn all this?

**JIM**

Just like you went to school, I went to school too. Meanwhile, here we are, two educated people who happen to be black, you playing servants, me playing deck hands. It's ridiculous. It's insulting. Makes you wonder why the civil war was fought at all.

**MABEL**

One day there's gonna be a whole lot of black movie stars. They can't keep us down forever.

**JIM**

That's future talk. I'm more concerned with the here and now.

**MABEL**

I am too, but boys like Joe Louis are proof that good times are acomin', maybe not fast, but they are acomin' and when they do come we'll be sitting on the top of the world, as that song says.

**JIM**

I know the guy who sings that song, his name is Jolson. He's a white man but sings with real soul. He's the only white man I know who does justice to black face. Did you see him in *The Jazz Singer*? My, oh my, you would think he's actually black, that's how good he is, and when he's singing *My Mammy*, he does it with respect.

**MABEL**

That must be a special movie for you to say that, especially about a white actor.

**JIM**

The problem is that he's the exception, not the rule. Like for instance, in that river boat movie, you know the black guy who plays the janitor? In real life he's an attorney who specializes in international law. But in Hollywood he rates playing a janitor, and why, because he's black.

**MABEL**

At least he got the role. Maybe he wasn't doing too well as a lawyer.

**JIM**

Come to think of it, I never heard of a black man being a lawyer. Why is that?

**MABEL**

A lot of lawyers are Jews. When I got into a little spat with my landlord a few years ago, I got myself a good Jewish lawyer to defend me. He did a great job too and was so nice to me. He even wanted to take me out to dinner, but I told him no.

**JIM**

Why did you tell him no?

**MABEL**

I was seeing a gentleman at the time.

**JIM**

That's no reason not to go out with a guy. It's not like you were married.

**MABEL**

Well, me and this gentleman were rather close, and if he had caught me with another man, there would have been all hell to pay.

**JIM**

Did he ever hit you?

**MABEL**

No. Actually he was quite nice but I didn't want to take any chances.

**JIM**

You did the right thing. I remember when I was married I came home from work and found my wife with another man. Boy, were they surprised! The guy ran out of there faster than a race horse and my wife was crying, carrying like there was no tomorrow. But she was putting on an act, so I told her to get out and peddle her butt on the street. I'd rather live alone than share a bed with a two - timing slut, even if she's hot.

**MABEL**

You men can be so mean.

**JIM**

I was not being mean. She was cheating on ME!

**MABEL**

So what? Maybe you weren't paying enough attention to her.

**JIM**

Yeah, right. All you women think the same.

**MABEL**

Hey, watch it with "all you women stuff"! (*pause*) You really believe that we're all the same?

**JIM**

Yeah, I believe it.

**MABEL**

Wait a minute, Jim. Do you realize what we've just done?

**JIM**

Now what are you talking about?

**MABEL**

We just put each other down, the same way that blacks are put down. This is how the problems start. Don't you see that?

**JIM**

No, I don't see that.

**MABEL**

Jim, don't you get it? I said to you "All men can be so mean" and you said "All women think the same." That's stereotyping and this what drives people apart, just like what's happened between blacks and whites in this country.

**JIM**

What are you driving at?

**MABEL**

That the demand for equal treatment is not a one sided thing. In order to get, we gotta be prepared to give. What I'm really trying to say is that no matter how condescendingly they may treat us, we have to rise above that and must not hate.

**JIM**

Hey, look. I don't hate anyone. All I want is to be treated with dignity and respect. But to achieve that in this country will require struggle because I can change my name but can't change the color of my skin.

**MABEL**

It all comes down to a question of changing attitudes, both theirs and ours.

**JIM**

True. But no matter what,, we still gotta speak up, speak out and make ourselves heard otherwise we'll be overtaken, pushed aside and declared expendable.

**MABEL**

I wouldn't want THAT to happen.

**JIM**

Well it can happen. I remember when I was in New York I took a ferry boat to the Statue of Liberty and on that statue was a poem about how America welcomes all who are yearning to be free. Well, WE'RE yearning to be free! We want to LIVE the American dream, not just dream it. One day someone will show up with a message of hope for all us black folk and when that day comes it will be like another emancipation proclamation, but this time it won't be coming from a white man but from a black man, and people will listen.

**MABEL**

I sure would love to live to see that day.

**JIM**

Maybe you will, Mabel, maybe you will.

**End of Act 1**

**Act 2**

*Time: The present*

*Place: a living room in an apartment in New York City*

*A man in his late 50s and a woman around 40 years of age are watching the movie "The Jazz Singer" on television. From offstage can be heard Al Jolson singing "My Mammy." Finally the song ends. The man shuts of the television.*

**THE MAN**

What a great movie, Paula. A real classic. (pause) Get it? A "reel" classic?

**PAULA**

Very cute, Frank. Yes, the movie does have its moments, but it seems so outdated.

**FRANK**

Outdated!? Okay, some of the plot is corny and the acting stagy, but the basic theme is timeless. Couldn't you just feel the tension when Jack had to choose between his job and his faith?

**PAULA**

That scene was so contrived that it almost made me laugh.

**FRANK**

There was nothing laughable about that scene.

**PAULA**

I must beg to differ with you

**FRANK**

What was the problem?

**PAULA**

Wasn't it obvious?

**FRANK**  
*(becoming annoyed)*

Get to the point.

**PAULA**

Al Jolson being in black face. It was as if the movie was mocking blacks and I don't think that's right.

**FRANK**

What was wrong with that? He was playing a minstrel and at that time that was very popular form of entertainment and I don't think many blacks objected to that.

**PAULA**

I don't know about that. All I know is that I think it's kind of weird that Hollywood would make movies featuring white actors performing in black face. It showed an insensitivity that I think was indefensible.

**FRANK**

Oh boy here we go again, white people being the bad guys again.

**PAULA**

I didn't say that. What I AM saying is that what we saw in The Jazz Singer was the perpetuation of racial stereotyping at the expense of an entire group of people and that's simply not fair.

**FRANK**  
*(defensive)*

I thought it was a great movie! It's a classic. People love it but you think it's UNFAIR?

**PAULA**

The movie IS a classic and Jolson WAS a great entertainer but still, the movie represents a parody of black people and to me that's wrong.

**FRANK**

It's only a movie; it's not meant to be taken seriously.

**PAULA**

But there I must beg to differ with you. Movies ARE taken seriously, even cartoons, and they send messages that shape the attitudes of millions of people.

**FRANK**

First, The Jazz Singer is not a parody of black people. It's about a Jewish entertainer who has to deal with issues relevant to his experience as a Jew and second, when Jolson is in black face, his performance is dignified, respectable and above all great entertainment. His rendition of My Mammy is considered one of the great songs of all time. So I think you're way off base regarding your criticisms.

**PAULA**

No, I think I'm quite on base. Though it's true that the movie does not outright mock black people, that the main character is in black face to me could be seen as an affront to blacks. How would you like it if I black actor did a take off on, let's say, an Italian? Wouldn't you find that offensive?

**FRANK**

Before I can answer that I'd have to see the movie.

**PAULA**

That answer is a cop out. With that Italian flag tattooed on your arm, I bet you wouldn't like it one bit.

**FRANK**

Don't tell me what I would like and wouldn't like.

**PAULA**

Looks like I've struck a raw nerve.

**FRANK**

You're imagining things.

**PAULA**

No I'm not. But since we're on the subject, don't you think that the country would be better off if there were less racial and ethnic stereotyping? I mean, do we really need all that crap?

**FRANK**

It's just innocent entertainment, that's all. Look at all the TV sitcoms featuring black actors. They sure don't seem to mind it.

**PAULA**

That's because they want to work and these are the roles that are offered to them and don't forget that these tv shows are financed and sponsored by big corporations who want to sell their products.

**FRANK**

What you're saying is simply untrue. Those shows are responding what the audience wants and if the audience wants to watch black sitcoms, then this what the networks will produce.

**PAULA**

I have no problem with black actors being in sitcoms. They absolutely have a right to earn a living, but let's not fool ourselves. Attitudes have not changed. We're still divided along racial lines, no matter how much the situation seems to have improved.

**FRANK**

Hey, whenever blacks object to a program it gets pulled. Look what happened with Amos and Andy. That was a really great show, very funny, totally unoffensive, yet the networks bowed to pressure and boom, no more Amos and Andy. What a shame. It was a really great show. I remember watching that show when I was a kid. Everybody loved it. Nobody ever complained.

**PAULA**

That's because when you were a kid, everyone you knew, everyone you went to school with, your neighborhood, everything, was white and for them Amos and Andy was harmless fun, but at some one else's expense.

**FRANK**

C'mon now! It was a COMEDY. It was supposed to make people laugh and it did. You didn't hear Indians complaining about Tonto, did you?

**PAULA**

As a matter of fact, some did, and if they didn't I'm sure they didn't like it anyway.

**FRANK**

What was there not to like?

**PAULA**

The blatantly racist stereotyping, making Tonto sound like a child, which in turn created the impression that EVERY Native American is child-like.

**FRANK**

I think you're being a little bit too harsh. Tonto was also a loyal and trusted friend who helped the Lone Ranger bring criminals to justice.

**PAULA**

That's right, he was, but when one thinks of Tonto, one first thinks of a man who is friendly but cannot be taken seriously.

**FRANK**

But that show was on years ago. Things have changed.

**PAULA**

No, they haven't. Schools are still segregated, whole cities are now almost entirely nonwhite, and the O J Simpson trial showed the whole world that we have a long way to go to bridging the racial gap that divides us.

**FRANK**

OJ Simpson was **GUILTY!** He got off only because the jury was almost all black. If he has been tried where the crime had occurred, it would have been a completely different story, but the DA there bowed to political pressure and had the case moved to a place where OJ could beat the rap, and he did. What a disgrace. The jury had already decided that O J would walk.

**PAULA**

Do you know what you're saying? Did you actually hear yourself talking? This is exactly what I'm talking about. You're saying that a black jury acquitted because OJ was black while a white jury would have convicted him because he was black.

**FRANK**

No way! That black jury was prejudiced, period, and they talk about white people being biased.

**PAULA**

I watched that case on TV and, Frank, you may not like what I'm going to say, but I would have found him not guilty too.

**FRANK**

**ARE YOU FOR REAL!?** That trial was a travesty of justice!

**PAULA**

Not really. Evidence wasn't properly handled. One of the detectives was caught in a lie. The glove didn't fit. Don't you think that may have given the jury sufficient grounds for reasonable doubt?

**FRANK**

Those were minor errors which in no way negated the ton of evidence pointing directly to Simpson. They chose to ignore that, like none of that mattered.

**PAULA**

What about reasonable doubt, Frank, reasonable doubt?

**FRANK**

Well, they got their way, but at least Simpson is behind bars now.

**PAULA**

I read somewhere that something like two-thirds of prisoners in jails are African-American

**FRANK**

Well, they commit the crimes so they have to do the time. If they didn't break the law, then they wouldn't be in trouble.

**PAULA**

And you really think things have changed?

**FRANK**

For them, yes! C'mon, didn't the election of our current president prove that?

**PAULA**

Yes, his election was a huge landmark in American history but still the problem of race persists. It's like an irritant that never goes away. Sometimes it recedes into the background but then comes roaring back to torment us.

**FRANK**

Your pessimism is beginning to disturb me.

**PAULA**

Don't you mean my realism? I mean, do you think white people still accept blacks as equal? We live in the United States but are we really united?

**FRANK**

There were plenty of blacks in the military when I served. You have black politicians in positions of political leadership. You have black movie stars winning the biggest awards and must I mention to you black athletes? So what is the problem?

**PAULA**

I'm not denying that there has been progress over the years, but it seems that whenever we're just about ready to close that racial divide, something happens to drive us apart.

**FRANK**

Well, if anyone is driving us apart it's THEM, not us. I believe in live and let live, but whenever something bad happens to them they immediately start crying racism, racism, like when a black person is arrested by the police and the guy is a little roughed up, they think it's because of his race when maybe it's just because the guy was refusing to cooperate.

**PAULA**

Yes, but Frank, how come such cases again and again involve black men and not white? Don't you think that's more than just a coincidence?

**FRANK**

No, it's not more than just a coincidence because they're doing something to attract the attention of the police, and not because they're being targeted.

**PAULA**

So what you're saying is that blacks commit crimes and whites don't?

**FRANK**

Don't be cute with me. I didn't say that. Of course white people commit crimes but you don't hear THEM screaming racism, do you?

**PAULA**

Now don't you be cute with ME! Please show me a case where a white person was incarcerated because he is white! *(pause)* Racism is insidious. It's something that takes different forms. Sometimes it's hard to detect but it's there.

**FRANK**

You're sounding a little paranoid and you're not even black. I mean, are you black?

**PAULA**

No, I'm not black and what does that have to do with anything anyway?

**FRANK**

You're sounding more and more like one of these white liberals who are on some kind of guilt trip over the alleged mistreatment of blacks and racial minorities, as if white people never had it rough.

**PAULA**

I'm just trying to explain why I think racism is still a huge problem in this country.

**FRANK**

Everything would be alright if everybody would just stop complaining and just live and let live.

**PAULA**

That's easy to say when you're not being profiled and labeled or stereotyped, but try being in the other guy or gal's shoes and you might start singing a different song.

**FRANK**

I'm Italian and Italians have been discriminated against too but you don't hear me complaining, do you? I mean, look at the movies. We're portrayed as gangsters, shakedown artists, con men and murderers, the scum of the earth.

**PAULA**

But being stereotyped is worse for racial minorities.

**FRANK**

Worse!? From what I can see, most blacks seem to be doing quite well, at least as good as me and for many a lot better.

**PAULA**

But that doesn't mean their immune from the effects of racism.

**FRANK**

What racism? They can buy houses wherever they want, work wherever they want, and what about affirmative action? Didn't that open up a lot of doors from them?

**PAULA**

It did but that doesn't mean the problem has been solved. All it means is that some of the more glaring inequalities are finally being eliminated to a certain extent and a lot of that depends on the strength of the economy. But no matter what, blacks are still viewed differently than other groups, even though they're more prosperous now than in the past.

**FRANK**

Why do you keep sticking up for them?

**PAULA**

Because I believe in the American creed of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but for all not just for some. Remember, this country was built by slaves who were brought here against their will and now we have to deal with the legacy of three centuries of injustice. It's like with Germany and the Jews. People say that the war ended a long time ago and ask why the subject of the Holocaust still needs to be discussed, but that's just a way to avoid dealing with the problem of anti-semitism.

**FRANK**

I agree that there's still a gulf between whites and blacks in this country but I really believe that you're overstating the situation.

**PAULA**

Am I? If anything I'm understating it. Racial bigotry is alive and well. Maybe we don't hear about lynchings any more but oppression can occur in other ways, like the idea of last hired, first fired or being associated with certain diseases or the prevalence out of wedlock births or being subjected to racial profiling like that college professor was in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Do you think the police would have arrested him if he had been white?

**FRANK**

Well, I never had any problems dealing with blacks. In fact I've had lots of black friends.

**PAULA**

Where I they now?

**FRANK**

I lost touch with them over the years. I remember when I was going to college I became friendly with a young black girl, a student at the school. We used to go for lunch together during class breaks and I really enjoyed her company. I was thinking about asking her out on a date but I didn't. Then the following semester our class schedules changed and we stopped running across each other. I lost touch with her and sometimes wonder what ever happened to her.

**PAULA**

You never told me about this before. It's too bad though because it seems that you liked her. Did she being black have anything to do with you not asking her out on a date?

**FRANK**

It probably did. At the time if I had brought home a black girl my mother would have fainted and my friends would have been shocked. But that's the way I was conditioned and I never tested the waters and have been single ever since.

**PAULA**

What a shame. We all have stories like that, lost opportunities that come back to haunt us. I told you about the guy I was engaged to for four years. My parents didn't like that he wasn't Jewish and put a lot a pressure on me to end the relationship and after four years that's exactly what happened. It may have made my parents happy but it left me with a huge, gapping emotional donut hole that I just can't fill.

**FRANK**

It's terrible what we do to ourselves.

**PAULA**

Yes it is. It's like in the movie *West Side Story* when Tony and Maria fall in love and look what happens to them, tragedy. That's what racism does. It kills. And there the characters aren't even black. But the result is the same. Ugh.

**FRANK**

But life does go on and we gotta make the best of it.

**PAULA**

I know you're trying to be nice, but what you're saying is pure clap-trap, a mere platitude. Of course we have to go on, but it still hurts, and if this is how I feel then I can hardly imagine how a black person, any black person, must feel living in a society that so cruelly divides and alienates people. Sometimes I try to imagine myself being black. I wonder if people would treat me the same. I wonder if YOU would still treat me the same.

**FRANK**

C'mon now, Paula, this is all speculation.

**PAULA**

I know, but let's say I was black. How would you feel about that?

**FRANK**

It wouldn't bother me a bit.

**PAULA**

Yeah, right. Yet with that girl you met in school it did bother you so why would it be any different now?

**FRANK**

Because maybe I'm a little bit older and a little bit wiser.

**PAULA**

More platitudes; racism is a feeling, not something that just disappears with time.

**FRANK**

So, what do you want me to say? Everything I say is wrong, so why even bother asking me?

**PAULA**

Because I'm trying to make a point.

**FRANK**

Which is?

**PAULA**

That racism is so deeply ingrained in us that no matter what we do we can't get out from under it.

**FRANK**

First, speak for yourself. Second, you better move to another subject because you're beginning to depress me and yourself.

**PAULA**

*(starts crying)*

Frank, what did I do? How could I ever let him go? I really CARED about him! CARED! I wanted to marry him, have children with him but everybody said no, don't do it, you'll be miserable, and I believed them. What an idiot I was, AN IDIOT!

*(Paula is now weeping inconsolably)*

**FRANK**

*(alarmed)*

Paula I want you to calm down. *(Frank puts his arm around Paula and holds her tight. Paula is crying on his shoulder)*

I know the feeling because I've been there myself. It's horrible.

*(Frank is stroking Paula's hair and is kissing her lightly on her cheek. Paula starts to regain control.)*

**PAULA**

*(speaking in between sniffles)*

This is what racism does to you, what it did to me. It devastated me. My family thought they were doing right but all they were doing was projecting their bigotry through me. They would say, "Paula you know he's not Jewish" and "Paula, he's okay but he is a goy" and "Paula, we want you to meet a nice Jewish man, a doctor or lawyer, not someone like HIM! He's not good enough for you." You see, racism is not just about skin color. *(pause)* Do you know that I haven't spoken to my mother in six months?

**FRANK**

**Why?**

**PAULA**

**Because we're estranged; I can't talk to her because whenever I call her all I hear are complaints ... about me and I couldn't take it anymore.**

**FRANK**

**I really don't know what to tell you.**

**PAULA**

***(becoming aroused)***

**Don't tell me anything. Just hold me, be with me and love me. Really LOVE ME! I don't want to be alone – ever!**

***(Frank and Paula embrace and kiss passionately as the lights fade.)***

**End of Act 2**

Act 3, Scene 1

*Time: The present*

*Place: a bed room*

*FRANK and PAULA are in bed sleeping together. JIM and MABEL are standing on either side of the bed. They are apparitions, who can be seen and heard only by the audience.*

JIM

I didn't know white people could get so emotional.

MABEL

You know better than that. I think they're nice, especially the lady.

JIM

I can't feel too sorry for them. It's their own attitudes that got them into trouble. So, good for them and I hoped they learned a lesson.

MABEL

That's so mean. Why are being so hard on them? You're sounding just like a preacher. Who are you anyway to be judgmental? You never made mistakes?

JIM

I made plenty of mistakes but I never got all worked up over them like they did.

MABEL

Well, maybe you should have gotten worked up; might have done you some good.

JIM

Don't trifle with me.

MABEL

Stop being so prideful; that's how all these problems start, people thinking they're better than they actually are.

**JIM**

I don't think I'm better than anybody.

**MABEL**

Don't make me laugh. I've seen you strutting around like a big tom turkey, trying to impress people. Well, you don't impress me.

**JIM**

Who says I want to impress you? I'm just a regular guy who enjoys the simple things in life. Not like these folks here (*points to Frank and Paula*). (*pause*) White people, I just can't figure them out.

**MABEL**

Yeah, and that's what they say about us. I would have thought that things would have been different by now.

**JIM**

Things ARE different. Look at all the black movie stars, athletes and politicians. They're famous, admired and making millions of dollars. People respect them. No more being second-class citizens. Now, WE'RE in charge!

**MABEL**

They're just tokens put out there to pacify us, to make us think that we're really accepted, but it's all a charade. The system wants to survive and will make whatever accommodations it must to keep on going. You watch; if our current president screws up just one time, he'll be chased out of town so fast that he won't even have time to pack his bags, and it won't matter that he's the president. All people will think is, "He's just another black man in trouble." It's that ol' double standard.

**JIM**

Screw your double standard. The fact is that we made it to the big time and now can cash in and live that American dream.

**MABEL**

Everything is money with you. Don't you know when you're being bought off?

**JIM**

If they're willing to pay I'll take the money. No problem.

**MABEL**

And you think things have changed. You are pathetic.

**JIM**

Well, what am I supposed to think? Seventy years ago we were being treated like dirt AND getting paid peanuts. At least now we're getting paid more money.

**MABEL**

But that money just buys you headaches because sooner or later you screw up and then the money means nothing and people say, "You see, give them money, give them everything they want, and they still can't cut it!" That's racism.

**JIM**

No it's not. That's just acting stupid.

**MABEL**

Look, Jim, remember when you said that one day a black man would issue another emancipation proclamation, well that man arrived and looked what happened to him. He was shot, just like Lincoln. And what about that man in Los Angeles when the police pulled him over for some traffic infraction, then beat him, with clubs, and kicked him, viciously. You think that wasn't racism?

**JIM**

I know, Mabel, because we were there watching it and I hated what I saw and there was nothing we could do to help, NOTHING!

**MABEL**

I know. So things really haven't changed all that much, but still there's hope.

**JIM**

How can you still believe that?

**MABEL**

Because when I see these two good people and millions more just like them all across this country struggling with the same issues that we're struggling with, wanting to make our country a better place in which to live, I can believe that better days are yet to come.

*JIM and MABEL exit.*

*PAULA wakes up and then wakes up FRANK. FRANK kisses PAULA*

**FRANK**  
What is it, babe?

**PAULA**  
I have the strangest feeling that somebody was in this room.

**FRANK**  
You must have been dreaming.

**PAULA**  
I guess you're right. *(pause)* Frank.

**FRANK**  
What is it?

**PAULA**  
I just want to let you know that I love you.

**FRANK**  
And I love you too.

*PAULA and FRANK hug each other tightly. JIM and MABEL reappear and stand next to the bed observing PAULA and FRANK.*

**JIM**  
*(quoting from the Bible)*  
For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be laid low and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground.

**MABEL**

**Where's that from?**

**JIM**

**It's from the Bible. The Book of Baruch, chapter 5, lines 1 to 9.**

**MABEL**

**What does it mean?**

**JIM**

**It means that there's still hope. Hallelujeh!**

**MABEL**

**And Hallelujah to you!**

***Lights go out.***

**End of Act 3, Scene 1**

## Act 3, Scene 2

*Time: The present**Place: a room**Lights go on. The stage is bare. PAULA enters the stage. At center stage she faces the audience and sings:*

We're strangers to each other  
 But sometimes lovers too,  
 We're all part of a rainbow  
 With colors bright and true.

We're people going places,  
 While time is rushing by,  
 We gotta go on living,  
 We laugh and sometimes cry.

We get upset and angry,  
 And sometimes even fight,  
 That's just a waste of effort  
 In the thing that we call life.

We're strangers to each other  
 But sometimes lovers too,  
 We're all part of a rainbow  
 With colors bright and true.

*MABEL, JIM and FRANK join PAULA on the stage. They laugh, hug and embrace each other. Then they form a line facing the audience, and one by one step forward and shout:*

No more injustice!                      PAULA

No more strife!                              MABEL

No more sexism!                              JIM

No more racism!                              FRANK

*Then, still facing the audience, all four in unison shout:*

**AMERICA! ONE COUNTRY! ONE LAND! ONE PEOPLE! UNITED!**

*Lights go out.*

**The End.**