

A Black Play?

A Full Length Play

By: Eryn Harris

For my Grandma.  
who has always supported me.  
who would listen to my plays with a keen ear  
Analyzing, spiritualizing, breathing them in  
Not caring that it was 2 AM  
On a work day.  
Rest in power, Queen.

Camillia Harris  
1948-2022

AND  
For all my BLACK PEOPLE!  
Of your many shapes, shades, sexualities and sizes.  
Ya'll  
We are so damn beautiful!  
Not a SOUL could EVA make US think otherwise  
again.  
For we are forever rising!

### Characters

1. **One/Spencer** - *Black (He/Him)* Hopeful. The dreamer. An artist.
2. **Two/Chloe** - *Black (She/Her)* Left brain operative. Kind but don't piss her off.
3. **Three/Kaidence** *Black (She/Her)* Overthinker. Hopeless romantic. Insanely creative.
4. **Four/Amirah** - *Black (They/Them)* The leader. Rallies the people. A black woman but not a woman.
5. **Five/Abel**- *Black (He/Him)* The most experienced. Has seen some crazy shit. Often misunderstood.
6. **Six/Bernie**- *Black (He/Him)* The token. Desperate for a space to *be*.
7. **Seven/Dhante**- *Black (He/Him)* A poet and a writer. Charming.
8. **Eight/Mya**- *Black (She/Her)* A singer. Struggling to accept herself.
9. **Nine/Na'Shay** - *Black (She/Her)* An activist. A proud single woman. A mother.
10. **ABP** - A Black Playwright.
11. **Cop** - Played by a member of the ensemble
12. **Boss** - Played by the same member of the ensemble

### Notes

The dialogue in this play has a rhythm and a poetry about it. It CANNOT exist solely on paper. It MUST be breathed, felt, expressed, choked out, chewed on, screamed, hollered, stepped into, tasted, called out for response and rejoiced. It aims to articulate the things felt so deeply. It aims to articulate the dreams had but not yet reached. It aims to emulate life. It aims to sing like Aretha, to dance like Michael, to spit like Tupac, to preach like Martin but ACT like Malcolm, to get shit done! It aims to create space for conversations about blackness. It aims to innovate, like those in chains who braided maps in the heads of slaves to escape, with the hopes of one day earning its seat at the table of the greats. It aims to make its own category.

A “ / “ indicates an overlap of dialogue.

A “-” indicates cutting someone off.

## SCENE 1

*As the audience arrives they are welcomed to explore a museum like outer passageway covered with articles, pictures, art, poems, etc from scholars like W.E.B Dubois, Susan Lori Parks, Anna Devere Smith, Alain Locke, Barbra Ann Teer and other artist/scholars proposing their ideas/viewpoints/opinions on black theater.*

*ONE and NINE should stand outside greeting the audience members and answering any questions. They should also instruct each audience member to choose a number between 1-9. After choosing a number the audience member should be given a corresponding poem in a black envelope. This may serve as the gift mentioned later.*

*The theater/performance space should be decorated like an afro salon. A safe lounge area for black people. Each actor in the company should have a special object or an assortment of special objects placed in the space. There could be black power slogans on the walls, maybe an american flag with the pan african flag colors, lava lamps, fairy lights, etc. Whatever the decoration the place should feel safe and encouraging for black people.*

*After the viewing the audience should be welcomed into the space with music. "Optimistic" By The Sounds of Blackness should be playing on loop. The cast should stand scattered around the space, welcoming the audience in. They should welcome each person in, holding semi-personal conversations with each person. They may encourage them to dance their way in. There will also be a gift handed to them as they enter. It may be devised with the cast, a way in which they would like to welcome the audience into the space. They may also go along with the poems in the envelope*

*as mentioned above. The house lights should remain up.*

*Once seats are taken FOUR will begin.*

FOUR (Amirah)

*(shouting)*

WHEN I SAY PEOPLE Y'ALL SAY HEY! "PEOPLE!"

ALL

HEY!

FOUR (Amirah)

PEOPLE!

ALL

HEY!

*They repeat this until they have received the audience's attention.*

FOUR (Amirah)

HELLO MY PEOPLE! Now that I have your attention! I just want to say It is so good to see yall. Allow me to introduce myself *(as if they were rapping)* I say allow me to reintroduce myself, my name is Four! And I would like to welcome you!

*Each actor should devise how they'd like to introduce themselves, sticking to the lines, but an expression of their own design.*

ONE (Spencer)

Hey everybody my name is One

TWO (Chloe)

And I'm Two

THREE (Kaidence)

I'm Three

Four! FOUR (Amirah)

I'm Five FIVE (Abel)

I'm Six SIX (Bernie)

I'm Seven SEVEN (Dhante)

I'm Eight EIGHT (Mya)

And I'm BLACK! NINE (Na'Shay)

*Raises a black power fist.*

My name is also Nine

FOUR (Amirah)

And we are The Divine 9. We welcome you to A Black Play? But is this a black play? Iono les find out. As a great mentor and professor, LaVonda Elam would say "How you doing?" and "How you being?" Can I get everyone to say that! *(to the audience)* "How you doing?"

*They get the audience to repeat it back.*

AUDIENCE

How you doing?

FOUR (Amirah)

Alright now, can I get everyone to say "How you being?"

*They get the audience to repeat it back.*

AUDIENCE

How you being?

FOUR (Amirah)

See “how you *DOING*” is the present. It is a provisional state or mood, it's ever changing. And so how I'm *DOING*, In this very moment, is I'm (*Fill in the blank according to how the actor is feeling in the present moment*) So let me hear from yall now! I'ma shout out “How you doing” and I want you all to shout back, how you feel in this present moment. so...“HOW YOU DOING?”

*They wait for the audience's response.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Alright now “how you *BEING?*”, THAT is deeper. It's spiritual. See it reverberates higher. It is an acknowledgement to oneself, one's circumstances and how one contributes them to the outside world. So how I'm *BEING* is (*Fill in the blank according to how the actor is being*) Alright now, you know I wanna hear from yall. so...“HOW YOU BEING?”

*They wait for the audience's response.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Alright, that's good to hear! Like I said my name is FOUR! And I thank you all so much for being here. We would like to welcome you into our space. We hope you enjoyed the viewing outside and the music and that you feel welcomed. It is rare to have a space like this where you can feel comfortable to just be. SO we hope that you take advantage of your time here. Feel free to laugh when you would like. Cry when you would like. We ask only that you encourage each other in this space. You ever been to church and they say, turn to your neighbor? Well I am tasking you all to turn to your neighbors, see their faces. Some of the events you may witness tonight could be hard for some people to digest. So take care of your neighbors today. In this space all feelings are allowed..anger, sadness, grief and yes joy, YOU CAN BE JOYUS!...crying doesn't make you any less of a man just as loving Taylor Swift doesn't make you any less black. Okay! The you that you are, is the you that is needed.

ONE (Spencer)

Yes, I couldn't have said it better myself. How are ya! My name is ONE, welcome all of you. If there is anyone with us who has not felt encouraged today, maybe you actually felt discouraged to continue a task. Maybe there was no one around to remind you all that you are capable of. A friend may have missed your call when you needed it. Whatever the case may be, we want to offer you some self encouragement today. A little song that you can remember to lift yourself up in a time of need. Right now at this very moment. We are going to take the time to do that.

THREE (Kaidence)

Hello my name is THREE. I'm going to sing a song to you, once through and my partner SEVEN (*Motions to Seven*) is going to do a series of simple gestures. Then we're going to ask you to sing along and do them with us, Is that good? Anyone who wishes not to participate is free to do so..well not do so...you get what I mean! Here we go.

*THREE sing the song once through. SEVEN does a gesture for each line.*

THREE and SEVEN

YOU ARE GOOD (gesture 1) (A happy gesture)  
 YOU ARE KIND (gesture 2) (a giving gesture)  
 DON'T YOU LET NOBODY **STEAL** YOUR SHINE (gesture 3) (A sharp/abrupt gesture)  
 I AM GOOD (same as gesture 1)  
 I AM KIND (same as gesture 2)  
 I AIN'T GON LET NOBODY **STILL** MA SHINE (gesture 4) (A gesture of stillness)

THREE (Kaidence)

Okay now it's your turn. We'll do a little call and response. Repeat after us.

*Three teaches a song to the audience. Seven teaches the gesture.*

THREE and SEVEN

YOU ARE GOOD (gesture 1) (A happy gesture)

AUDIENCE

YOU ARE GOOD (gesture 1) (A happy gesture)

THREE and SEVEN

YOU ARE KIND (gesture 2) (a giving gesture)

AUDIENCE

YOU ARE KIND (gesture 2) (a giving gesture)

THREE and SEVEN

DON'T YOU LET NOBODY **STEAL** YOUR SHINE (gesture 3) (A sharp/abrupt gesture)

AUDIENCE

DON'T YOU LET NOBODY **STEAL** YOUR SHINE (gesture 3) (A sharp/abrupt gesture)



THREE and SEVEN

I AM GOOD (gesture 1) (A happy gesture)

AUDIENCE

I AM GOOD (gesture 1) (A happy gesture)

THREE and SEVEN

I AM KIND (gesture 2)

AUDIENCE

I AM KIND (gesture 2)

THREE and SEVEN

I AIN'T GON LET NOBODY **STILL** MA SHINE (gesture 4)

AUDIENCE

I AIN'T GON LET NOBODY **STILL** MA SHINE (gesture 4)

*After it has been taught, they sing it one time together.*

THREE (Kaidence)

Okay that was good! But now can we season it up a little bit. Can we add a little seasoning?

*The rest of the cast shout's back statements of agreement. They will now perform a version of the song with claps and a cooler rhythm.*

THREE (Kaidence)

Let's break it down!

THREE and SEVEN and AUDIENCE

YOU ARE GOOD (gesture 1)

YOU ARE KIND (gesture 2)

DON'T YOU LET NOBODY **STEAL** YOUR SHINE (gesture 3)

I AM GOOD (same as gesture 1)

I AM KIND (same as gesture 2)

I AIN'T GON LET NOBODY **STILL** MA SHINE (gesture 4)

THREE (Kaidence)

One mo time!

*The cast now adds the gestures back in, performing them like a dance.*

THREE and SEVEN and AUDIENCE

YOU ARE GOOD (gesture 1)

YOU ARE KIND (gesture 2)

DON'T YOU LET NOBODY **STEAL** YOUR SHINE (gesture 3)

I AM GOOD (same as gesture 1)

I AM KIND (same as gesture 2)

I AIN'T GON LET NOBODY **STILL** MA SHINE (gesture 4)

SEVEN

Thank you all so much! We hope you carry those words with you and that you feel encouraged.

ONE (Spencer)

Yes, isn't it nice to feel encouraged at the beginning of a journey?

FOUR (Amirah)

Sure is!

ONE (Spencer)

To be welcomed into a space! Made to feel like you belong.

FOUR (Amirah)

Preach!

ONE (Spencer)

With good music! Dancing! I'm talkin bout positive energy! Let that shit *TRANSCEND* THROUGH THIS PLACE!

FOUR (Amirah)

Amen!

ONE (Spencer)

Like whatever you brought to the table is just what the party needed!

FOUR (Amirah)

..okay...

ONE (Spencer)

*(as if he were preaching)*

Like YOU IS HERE!

*A church organ is struck.*

Bein who you BE!

*A church organ is struck.*

And I'm here to tell YOU, ma brothas and sistas!

*A church organ is struck.*

Dat is GOOOODT!

FOUR (Amirah)

Alright!

ONE (Spencer)

*(singing along to the tune of Powerful from Empire)*

I MATTER! YOU MATTER! WE MATTER ALL!!

FOUR (Amirah)

I think they get it!

ONE (Spencer)

Good.

They should.

Keep it ingrained in your brain.

Let your spirit be moved and healed.

Becauseee...sadly,

isn't attending a play

often,

a little more like

*this*

*House lights down abruptly  
The entire company jumps into play.*

SCENE 2

*EIGHT and FIVE stand on a concession line together, facing SIX, who is manning the line. Three and Nine join the line, behind five and Eight. Four joins behind them. TWO and Seven jump on line behind them. One joins alone.*

EIGHT (Mya)

Two tickets for A Black Play please!

SIX (Bernie)

Certainly. Here you are, two tickets. Remember there is no eating in the theater, No flash photography and please silence your cell phones. The coat check is this way if you need it, oh..and I'm going to need your joy.

FIVE (Abel)

Excuse me?

SIX (Bernie)

Your *joy*. We are asking all participants to check their joy at the door. This is a black play after all. There will be no need for it. In fact the very presence of it, Is a little disrupting.

*Everyone murmurs along the line.*

FIVE (Abel)

Oh..um..of course..

*Five and Eight have a purging of several small moments of joy. Maybe they dance. Sing. Do an inside joke. Once they are finished they hand it over to Six. Gold confetti sprinkles into the air. Six receives their joy and locks it away. Five and Eight are now visibly drained, tired, worn down.*

SIX (Bernie)  
*(to Five and Eight)*

Thank You so much! Enjoy the show!

*Five and Eight walk around to the edge of the stage.  
 They sit, defeated. Three walks up next.*

SIX (Bernie)  
*(to Three)*

Oh and I'll take your joy.

*Three purges her joy, maybe she does a small step  
 routine. Gold confetti sprinkles into the air. She  
 gives it to Six. She is now worn down.*

SIX (Bernie)  
*(To Three)*

Thank You so much! Enjoy the show!

*She walks around to the edge of the stage. She sits  
 with Five and Eight, also defeated.*

SIX (Bernie)

Next!

*Nine walks up next. She purges her joy, gold confetti  
 sprinkles into the air, she joins the rest, defeated.*

SIX (Bernie)  
*(to Nine)*

Thank You, Enjoy the show!

*Four walks up next and does the same.*

SIX (Bernie)

Next!

*Four exits after purging their joy.  
 Seven and Two walk up next.*

SIX (Bernie)

Next!

*Seven walks up, he kisses two on the forehead, he hands her over to six. Gold confetti sprinkles into the air. Seven looks worn down.*

TWO (Chloe)  
(to Seven)

What- You're giving me away?

SEVEN (Dhante)

Yes, You're my joy.

TWO (Chloe)  
(to Seven)

Aww how sweet. Am I supposed to just melt into your arms now? If I'm your joy, why the hell do you have to check me at the door?

SIX (Bernie)

Ma'am you're holding up the line.

TWO (Chloe)

And I'll keep holding up the line. What kind of play is this? That were not allowed to have joy.

SIX (Bernie)

It's a BLACK play. You ever known a black play to have joy?

TWO (Chloe)

YES! (to Seven) Seven c'mon this is ridiculous, we're not staying.

*Seven doesn't respond.*

SIX

Ma'am you'll be returned at the end of the play.

TWO  
(sarcastically)

Oh, I'll be returned?! Why didn't you just say that before! I guess it's all good now.

SIX

Well okay then! *(to Seven)* Enjoy the show sir.

*Seven starts walking towards the entrance.*

TWO

NO IT'S NOT OKAY. Why are you all agreeing to this?!

*Seven stops.*

ONE

Ma'am if I may? Sometimes you have to check your joy at the door.

SIX

Yes, listen to this man.

ONE

I mean if we're gonna talk about black shit. At some point, we're gonna have to talk about slavery and where's the joy in that?

SIX

Thank you!

TWO

I think *if* we're gonna talk about slavery, I'm gonna *need* my joy to sip on when the air in the room gets a little dry and tense. And when the crack of a whip triggers my genetic PTSD I didn't know I had, I'm gonna need my joy, to hold me and tell me it's gonna be alright. And you think slaves didn't have any joy? How do you think negro spirituals came to be? Modern day gospel and R&B. Cuz in all that pain they found something to keep them persevering on. A hum on the wind. A snap. A "*oh aye aye aye ah ah ah*" *(she sings the opening melody of Stand Up by Cynthia Erivo)* Something to uplift and unite them. I'm gonna need that! And that, is just IF, we're talking about slavery in this "black play". Because, just because it's a black play, doesn't mean, at some point we're gonna have to talk about slavery! Slavery does not define our culture. It was not the birth of us, nor shall it be the end of us. SO-

ONE (Spencer)

OKAY TWO! You're right. CUT- Everyone can come back now, you can drop any character shapes you may have been making.

*Everyone drops the worn down act.*

NINE (Na'Shay)

*(to two)*

That was some deep shit you said there two.

*Eight snaps in appreciation.*

FIVE (Abel)

For real! I fuck with that, heavy.

TWO

Thank you.

ONE (Spencer)

Two let me talk to you. Okay, everything you said was spot on. Okay. It just wasn't *on* script. You were supposed to let Seven kiss you on the forehead, he gives you away, he is now worn down, distraught. Then I walk in, I purge my joy, I am now worn down, distraught, then Four was supposed to come in with the-

FOUR (Amirah)

I'm here!

*Four appears with a broom and a jar in their hand.*

ONE (Spencer)

Right, with the broom and sweep up all the joy into a jar. Very meta!

*Four begins sweeping the joy into the jar.*

ONE (Spencer)

And then Six was supposed to say-

SIX (Bernie)

*(rushing over to Four)*

Hey! Hey! Hey! What are you doing?

ONE (Spencer)

Exactly and then Four says-

FOUR (Amirah)



Trying to preserve the joy.

SIX (Bernie)

For what?

FOUR (Amirah)

well....We're gonna need it.

ONE (Spencer)

Correct! And then we fade to black! That's how it was supposed to happen.

TWO (Chloe)

Look, I'm sorry! It's just the whole Idea of telling people they can't have joy at a black play wasn't sitting right with me.

ONE (Spencer)

THAT IS THE POINT! That's why we welcomed them into *our* black play, with song and encouragement!

TWO (Chloe)

And then turned right around and gave them a scene where we're being told to check our joy?? Like what??

ONE (Spencer)

YES to juxtapose two competing ideas right up next to each other. The idea that the world says, you have to check your joy. And the idea that we say, you don't have too.

TWO (Chloe)

*(to audience)*

Oh...well...I just wanted that to be clear.

*Blackout.*

*Changes by Tupac plays.*

## SCENE 3

*Two and Three enter dancing to the music as actors clear the stage. They do a small dance and exit. Four sings along as they clean up for expecting company. Music fades. They receive a phone call. They look at the caller ID. It reads ABP.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Aw shit.

*They answer the call.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Hey! ABP wassup!....No...no I did not forget...well it's just taking a little longer than...I under....yes....yes I understand there is a deadline....okay!.....I'm literally getting them all together....right now!!, sortof, kinda..I I am!...Look ABP, you know I gotchu....If anybody can handle this mission it's me....What's our motto?...yes, "Black don't crack" but that's not the motto I meant....that's right "For we are forever rising"... Iight then!

*Everyone enters the stage chatting.*

Look, look I gotta go....because! the people are on their way....Alright, peace ABP.

*Four hangs up the phone.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Hello everyone!

FIVE (Abel)

Iight Four, you got us all down here. What's so urgent?!

SIX (Bernie)

For real. I left my job. Early. Niggas can't be doing that in corperate america.

NINE (Na'Shay)

*(Throwing shade)*

Niggas *working* in corperate america are sellouts!

Oooo. One (Spencer)

Here we go again. EIGHT (Mya)

SIX (Bernie)  
*(Throwing shade)*  
 Niggas runnin-the-streets-without-a-pot-to-piss-in, all-in-the name-of “protest” need to get their priorities checked.

Oh shit. SEVEN (Dhante)  
*(choking out a laugh)*

That’s not funny. TWO (Chloe)  
*(to Seven)*

SEVEN (Dhante)  
*(to Two) (still amused)*

What? FOUR (Amirah)  
 Alright Six and Nine. Calm it down. You’re both fighting the good fight. One of you thinks it's better to take the system down from the inside.

Exactly. SIX (Bernie)

And the other- FOUR (Amirah)

NINE (Na’Shay)  
 Finds it more provocative to let that shit burn to the ground! And rebuild an empire more befitting of my people.

Damn straight! FIVE (Abel)

FOUR (Amirah)  
 And you know what, both of those methods have their strengths and weaknesses.

NINE (Na'Shay)

Some weaker than others.

SIX (Bernie)

If you have something to say Nine, you should just say it!

NINE (Na'Shay)

Fine, you're a token.

SIX (Bernie)

what!

NINE (Na'Shay)

Like my grandma always said, if you can say what, you heard me.

THREE (Kaidence)

See. This is the real reason why we can't get ahead as a people. Cuz we always arguing!

EIGHT (Mya)

For real. Before this gets any crazier, Four, why did you invite us all here? I mean, when I got the text I thought it was just me, you invited, but...that's cool.

FOUR (Amirah)

Oh..uh..no..it's just because I sent out a text in the group chat but...

TWO (Chloe)

...You are not in the group chat cuz you have an android.

EIGHT (Mya)

Oh..and god forbid the chat turns green right?

*Everyone murmurs an excuse.*

FOUR (Amirah)

..Sorry Eight.

FIVE (Abel)

Oh my god Four, why are we here!??

FOUR (Amirah)

Right! I brought you all here to, low key, do exactly what you doing right now. Have a good old fashioned salon!

FIVE (Abel)

A salon?

FOUR (Amirah)

Yes. A group of people sitting around talking bout important topics. Debating, analyzing, coming up with formulas, a consensus. And boy do I have a hot question.

THREE (Kaidence)

What's the question?

*Four leans into the group. The anticipation builds.*

FOUR (Amirah)

What. Is. A black play?

TWO (Chloe)

A black play?

FOUR (Amirah)

A black play!

SEVEN (Dhante)

Blackidy black black play

FIVE (Abel)

*(asking Three)*

How many times can you say black?

EIGHT (Mya)

PLAayyyyy!

ONE (Spencer)

BLAAACK!

FOUR (Amirah)

*(centering everyone)*

A BLACK PLAY!

*(pause)* well...

TWO (Chloe)

*A fire is ignited. They jump into performance.  
Dialogue is quick and extremely articulate.*

THREE (Kaidence)

-Susan Lori Parks would say “A black play does not exist” and that “Every play is a black play”

ONE (Spencer)

“SAY WHAT!!”

SIX (Bernie)

Ethel Pitts Walker would say “The plays of a real negro theater MUST BE!”

FIVE (Abel)

*(chanting)*

“ABOUT US! BY US! FOR US! AND NEAR US!”

ONE (Spencer)

“SAY WHAT!!”

FIVE (Abel)

*(chanting)*

“ABOUT US! BY US! FOR US! AND NEAR US!”

ONE (Spencer)

One Mo Gin!

FIVE (Abel)

*(chanting)*

“ABOUT US! BY US! FOR US! AND NEAR US!”

ALL

ABOUT US-

SIX (Bernie)

THAT IS! “they must have plays which reveal negro life as it is!”

AS IT IS! ONE (Spencer)

None a that stereotypical shit! SEVEN

ABOUT US! FIVE (Abel)

Neck rolling, weave shaking, teeth sucking shit SEVEN

*They all collectively suck their teeth and throw it away.*

I ain't grow up with a Daddy. SEVEN (Dhante)

And I definitely did! EIGHT (Mya)

*Pause.  
Eight and Seven share a look.*

And we both still black! SEVEN and EIGHT

*They dap each other up.*

Ay hey hey EIGHT (Mya)

About us! THREE (Kaidence)

BY US! ALL

SIX (Bernie)

“THAT IS! they must be written by negro authors who understand from birth and continued association just what it means to be a Negro today”

TWO (Chloe)

And yesterday! Circa 1820 lookin like 2023.

THREE and EIGHT

Shame

FOUR (Amirah)

What it feel like to be walkin in this blackness.

TWO (Chloe)

Chain gangs to prison gangs  
It's the same story just a different name

FOUR (Amirah)

This multidimensional blackness

EIGHT (Mya)

See I flaunt mine! For it shines errrr day!  
My umber kissed skin  
Glistenin under the suns rays

SEVEN

And I carry mine like a load on my back  
Never wishing to be FREE *of* it  
But SEEN *with* it  
As more than a lost animal alienated from the pack  
And ALIVE!

FIVE (Abel)

*THE* Black EXPERIENCE does not exist!

ALL

SAY WHAT?



FIVE (Abel)

*THE* black EXPERIENCE does not exist!  
 We are all EXPERIENCING! our own shit!  
 in shared skin.  
 And sometimes....we come together...and laugh about it.

*Five does some funny gesture..maybe he parades  
 around or puts on a funny voice.  
 The cast comes together in shared laughter.*

EIGHT (Mya)

And they'd call this a gang

FIVE (Abel)

We do a little dance

*FIVE does a groovy version of the electric slide.  
 SEVEN thinks it's cool and joins in.  
 Three, eight and Two laugh together  
 One hypes them up. Nine sways along.  
 The moment softly decrescendos*

NINE (Na'Shay)

And lay on some hands

*Nine puts her arms around Six and Seven*

FOUR (Amirah)

And sometimes....we cry about it

*Silence. They all stand together looking at one  
 another. Four stands in the middle.*

FOUR (Amirah)

*(a whisper, only for them)*

About us *(They look to them)* By Us *(They look to them)* For us

TWO (Chloe)

For us.

SIX (Bernie)

That is! “the leader must cater primarily to negro audiences and be supported and sustained by their entertainment and approval.”

FOUR (Amirah)

*(speaks directly to the audience)*

To all my black people sitting in the audience. Do yall approve? Can we get a clap of hands if you approve of the messages we're out here displaying today.

*Wait for the audience clapping.*

*If they do clap, Four turns back to the cast and says*

Well alright, let's continue.

*If they don't clap, Four turns back to the cast and says*

Alright. Well that's perfectly okay, we will have a box outside the theater for you to share your feelings after the show. And TRUST! we will read them! and adjust accordingly. This is for you. For now let's continue.

ALL

“ABOUT US! BY US! FOR US!”

SIX (Bernie)

Near us!

THREE (Kaidence)

*(with immense excitement)*

That is! “the theater must be in a negro neighborhood!”

*Silence.*

*Everyone awkwardly looks around the space, gathering that they are not in a negro neighborhood.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Well...how bout if the theater was at a PWI with a 12.8 african american percentage rate and an all black cast of Nine?!

*They all consider this.*

FIVE (Abel)

We'll take what we can get.

ALL

Near us!

THREE (Kaidence)

That is! "the theater must be in a" negro-*ish* "neighborhood near the mass of ordinary negro peoples."

EIGHT (Mya)

Mmm I love that is says *ordinary* negro peoples. See a lot of times, people like to use these words.

FOUR (Amirah)

Mmm

EIGHT (Mya)

Y'all know what I'm talking about. These words, like-

TWO (Chloe)

Exotic.

EIGHT (Mya)

Mm hmm.

NINE (Na'Shay)

Ratchet.

EIGHT and FOUR

Mmm.

FIVE

Animal.

THREE

Ghetto

SEVEN

*(to three)*

And sometimes we even use that one on ourselves.

NINE (Na'Shay)

hm

EIGHT (Mya)

Yes yes, these words that dehumanize us or make us seem alien, foreign, a spectacle. And don't get me wrong We are special! We got that magic. The glitter and gold.

THREE (Kaidence)

I know that's right!

EIGHT (Mya)

But that don't mean we aren't human. That we don't feel. Bleed. Shit. Curse. Die and Breathe just the same. So I love when it says *ordinary* People.

*Everyone murmurs in agreement.*

FOUR (Amirah)

*(calling everyone's attention)*

PEOPLE?

ALL

*(A weak response)*

hmm?

FOUR (Amirah)

*(Calling attention again)*

I SAY MY PEOPLE!!!

ALL

*(A stronger response)*

YEAH!

*Four starts a rhythmic step in place. Everyone copies that rhythmic step. They all rhythmically step around the stage until they form a circle around Four. Four begins speaking as they form the circle.*

FOUR (Amirah)

We have a mission  
 A mission that is gonna require assuming some positions  
 Some roles  
 We're are all gonna take on some roles  
 But these roles will *sometimes* be ourselves  
 I am asking you to portray black life  
 As it is!

*The stepping stops.*

PEOPLE!

ALL

Yeah!

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(like a proper theater critic)*

*hwhat* is a black play?

*Silence.*  
*They all look at one another.*

FIVE (Abel)

What you want, like an example?

FOUR (Amirah)

Yup!

FIVE (Abel)

Hold up!

*Lights change.*  
*Power by Kanye West plays*  
*Actors are getting prepared to go on stage, ON the*  
*stage.*

*Seven (Dhante) wears a colored hoodie, he stands*  
*next to Four (Amirah). Five (Abel) instructs her to*  
*dress like an exaggerated version of Seven*

*(Dhante). She wears a du-rag, the same color as his hoodie, oversized pants, and big sneakers.*

*Five (Abel) wearing a different colored shirt, helps Two (Chloe) to dress like an exaggerated version of him. She wears a du-rag the same color as his shirt, oversized pants, and big sneakers.*

*Six (Bernie) wears a different colored shirt, he stands next to Nine (Na'Shay). Five (Abel) instructs her to dress like an exaggerated version of Six (Bernie). She wears a du-rag the same color as his shirt, oversized pants and big sneakers.*

*Abel (five) is the director. He oversees it all. When everything looks good, he will begin.  
Music fades*

FIVE (Abel)

Alright let's go, action.

SCENE 4

*Lights up on ABEL and DHANTE on a couch playing video games.*

TWO (Chloe)  
*(As Abel)*

So I say to her, Yo you want me to be honest with you bout where I been, then you gotta stop bitchin.

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

Bitchin?

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

Yeah, like naggin. The shits annoying.

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

You talk to your girl like that?

TWO (Chloe)

*(as Abel)*

Well I didn't call her a bitch.

FOUR (Amirah)

*(as Dhante)*

Oh I know that. You wouldn't be sittin here if you did.

TWO (Chloe)

*(as Abel)*

Shitt u got that right! You know how mamas be like "I'll slap the black off" a you"

FOUR (Amirah)

*(as Dhante)*

Yeah!

TWO (Chloe)

*(as Abel)*

Well these women today they said "fuck the black, I'll slap you colorblind, you talk to ME wrong or call me outta MY name!"

FOUR (Amirah)

*(as Dhante)*

..I never speak a harsh word to my girl. She get me tight, I take a walk. That's how you do it.

TWO (Chloe)

*(as Abel)*

Man I don't took so many walks, my shoes got holes in the soles the size of africa!

FOUR (Amirah)

*(as Dhante)*

Abel you're a clown!

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

It's true tho! (beat) Iono man, one minute things be good, we chilling. Next minute she talkin bout why you ain't doing this? Why don't you go back to school! Why can't you be like that? And then turn right around and be like "I really see you babe, for who you are!" Apparently not. So I dumped her ass.

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

GOTCHU!

*Dhante wins the game!*

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

DAMN!

*Abel loses, he puts down the controller.*

Man I think I'm tied'a dating us.

*Three (Kaidance) walks out, interrupting the scene, with a script in her hand..*

THREE (Kaidance)

Um, wait a minute.

*Everyone looks at her.  
 She takes a moment. Studying the script.*

I just feel like-

FIVE (Abel)

Let's keep going!

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as herself)*

You wanna take it back to your line?

TWO (Chloe)



Uh Yeah. *(as herself)*

Let's go! FIVE (Abel)

*Two and Four get back into character.*

Man I think I'm tied'a dating us. TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

What you mean? FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

*SPENCER (One) enters walking past three. He is reading a copy of Essence magazine. He admires the black women in the photos.*

Black women are so damn beautiful! SPENCER (One)  
*(as Spencer)*

*Bernie follows behind him with a bowl of popcorn.*

Right. NINE (Na'shay)  
*(As Bernie)*

*They both take a seat.*

Right! FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

I mean iight..but other women are too. TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

SPENCER (One)  
*(as Spencer)*

Okay...That is true!

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

Well sure, but one don't negate the other. Spencer simply made a statement about the Queens on his board. That's not to condemn the others. Why should the praise of one mean the disapproval of another? He said, black. women. are. beautiful! Not that no other woman is beautiful.

THREE (Kaidence)  
*(reading along the script)*

RIGHT!

SPENCER (One)  
*(as Spencer)*

Right!

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

..light.

*Dhante and Bernie share a look.*

SPENCER (One)  
*(as spencer)*

One day

I wanna meet the most amazing man!

And together, we are going to adopt the most beautiful little black girl.

And we are gonna raise her to be gracefully strong.

To know that nothing can break her down, not no words, not no hands, not no man.

And we're gonna teach her that love is a gift.

A gift that's okay to accept, like help.

And that in her strongness not to neglect her emotions.

If she gotta cry in the midst of holding up the roof on a rainy day

I want us to be there!

To tell her its our turn to carry it the rest of the way,

Cuz I want her to know

Ain't no relationship worth entering that can't equally provide a way.

NINE (Na'shay)  
*(As Bernie)*

Mann I don't know what you just said but okay!

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

Mr.Wise beyond your years, over there. I hear you Spencer, Love me some black women.

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

Man I used to! But I don't fuck wit em no mo.

*Silence.*

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

What!?! Now it's got to be all silent cause I disagree. Damn, I ain't say they weren't beautiful or that I hate em. I just..

SPENCER (One)  
*(as Spencer)*

Don't fuck wit em no more.

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

Exactly! Dats a problem?

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

Nope.

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

Oh really Dhante? Cuz it feels like a problem.

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(as Dhante)*

You said what you said! And dis a free space. You got the freedom to speak.

NINE (Na'shay)  
*(As Bernie)*

But what you mean you don't fuck wit em? Like you don't like em?

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as Abel)*

No, I like em. Some of my best friends are black girls! I just don't *mess* wit em.

*Two drops her character.*

TWO (Chloe)  
*(as herself)*

Alright hold up, what are we saying?

FIVE (Abel)

That is not the line, why are we stopping again??

TWO (Chloe)

Because what is this?

*FOUR, and NINE also drop their characters.  
 EIGHT and THREE enter with very apparent  
 attitudes.*

THREE (Kaidence)

I'd like to know! cuz I tried to consume all this with an open mind but I think I let this go on too long. What is this?

FIVE (Abel)

Four said they wanted an example.

THREE (Kaidence)

An examp-.So this is your idea of A black play!?

FIVE (Abel)

Well yeah..it's *an* example.

THREE (Kaidence)

A scene degrading BLACK women???

FIVE (Abel)

You *would* see it that way!

TWO (Chloe)

How else are we supposed to see it?!

SEVEN (Dhante)

For real man, even I'm offended. (*referring to the women*) You got them dressed like exaggerated versions of us.

SIX (Bernie)

(*referring to Nine*)

I don't even dress like this.

THREE (Kaidence)

I just wanna know what you mean by, you don't *mess* wit us?

SIX (Bernie)

Yeah what you talkin bout? relationship wise? Sex? Romantically?

FIVE (Abel)

Yeah.

ONE (Spencer)

Oh I get that me either. Women are beautiful but loving and being with them in that way, its just not in me.

FIVE (Abel)

Hold up now, I ain't gay!

SPENCER (One)

What's wrong with being gay?

ABEL (Five)

Nothing! Look yall are misunderstanding me.

SIX (Bernie)

Alright So you'd mess with...a white girl?

Yeah. ABEL (Five)

Latina? SPENCER (One)

Most def! ABEL (Five)

Asian? SIX (Bernie)

Mmm hmm! ABEL (Five)

Pacific islander? SPENCER (One)

YES! ABEL (Five)

Native American? SIX (Bernie)

Yeah! ABEL (Five)

But not a black queen? DHANTE (Seven)

...Nah ABEL (Five)

You hate yourself. DHANTE (Seven)  
*(like its a fact)*

*Spencer and Six (Bernie) break into laughter.*

ABEL (Five)  
*(defensively)*

What?

SIX (Bernie)  
*(to Dhante)*

Alright, Dhante come on. I'm sure he doesn't hate himself.

DHANTE (Seven)

What? he must!

ABEL (Five)

I do not hate myself. And I do not hate black women. I love black women. I'm just tired of dating them. Need me sumthin new. Sumthin less irritating, sumthin less provokin, sumthin less trauma associatin, Sumthin less broken. I need fun for once and sumthin less close to home. Sumthin quick, easy and guiltless. look, I need to cum and get it done. Don't wanna talk. Don't wanna share. Don't wanna finger coil through hair. Don't wanna be pushed. This is my best! Don't see MORE, SEE ME! Right here, right now, As I am! Don't get me wrong...I dig the culture and wordless communication. I dig the passion and preserving on. I dig...the sex. The rhythm and flow. The sweet music when our bodies fit like puzzle pieces of the same tree. I dig our roots. Them shits go deep. But they come wit pain. And that shits unsettling. Look It's getting harder and harder to just walk away. FUCKING YOUR OWN!! That's not something you can just get up and walk away from. Cuz there's a history. Something was made. Deeper than lust or pleasure. I'm talkin soul ties going back to the motherland. You feel me! Each loop turning into knots, that I can't undo. Now I got to bond wit you. And you reveal pieces of me I ain't even yet discovered and maybe didn't even wanna open up. But it's too late, cuz you don't even see all that I could do and now you holding my potential to my head like a glock and I gotta live up. All the while I'm screamin Damn, just let me breathe! So no...I can't fuck wit em no mo. I am simply tired of the connection.

DHANTE (Seven)

Damn you might be the only nigga I know rather fuck a white ghost than a soul.

FIVE (Abel)

Look, this is just the truth of MY experience, not THE. You got something else Three? drop something.

## SCENE 5

*BLACK OUT to tight spotlight on THREE.  
One, Five, Six and Seven exit.  
Two, Four, Eight and Nine, stand in the black.*

KAIDENCE (Three)  
*(to the Women, referencing the men)*

They never like us!

*A spotlight appears on two and nine.*

CHLOE (Two)  
*(as if to say, so what!)*

And!

KAIDENCE (Three)  
*(choked up)*

It still...

*A spotlight appears on FOUR and EIGHT on  
opposite sides of the stage.*

	AMIRAH (Four)		MYA (Eight)
Hurts.		Hurts?	

	ALL WOMEN
Every fucking time!	

	KAIDENCE (Three)
I woke up on those words	

	CHLOE (Two)
They.	

	AMIRAH (Four)
Never.	

	MYA (Eight)
Like.	



NA'SHAY (Nine)

Us.

KAIDENCE (Three)

And the image is still so clear/

AMIRAH (Four)

They never like us!/  
I turned foot on those words  
Making my dramatic exit towards the elevator doors

KAIDENCE (Three)

I turned foot on those words

Making my dramatic exit towards the elevator doors

MYA (Eight) and Chloe (two)

Leaving him to stand there and contemplate the viscosity of my speech

KAIDENCE (Three)

Masked with my tears and a broken heart

And then I thought this

ALL WOMEN

My king

CHLOE (Two)

This world will tell you your worthless

Nothing but/ a

KAIDENCE (Three)

A thug

AMIRAH (Four)

A Beast

MYA (Eight)

A monster

CHLOE (Two)

Whose only purpose is to lie in the street

NA'SHAY (Nine)

Screaming for you momma

MYA (Eight)

With a knee in your neck  
Hyperventilating

ALL WOMEN

"I can't breathe" !!

AMIRAH (Four)

And when your gone

CHLOE (Two)

They'll Find the music  
You've been making on your laptop  
But never got the chance to post

AMIRAH (Four)

And steal your words  
Cuz you never got them copywritten  
And steal your beats  
Cuz they poppin  
And now every body's boppin  
To the latest Tik Tok sound  
And your name ain't nowhere in it

NA'SHAY (Nine)

My King  
I'm crying for you  
You gone  
But I'm still fighting for you  
I'm giving up my life  
To make yours remembered  
Through the eyes of lover  
Cuz when you love

*They all take an audible breath or sigh.*

## KAIDENCE (Three)

You see someone for who they are  
 Not the media's depiction  
 Or white peoples addiction  
 To singling us out cuz our blackness can't be mixed in  
 No we not equal

## MYA (Eight)

And I'm not tryna be  
 I ain't gon not season my food  
 So I can be like you  
 And break off my hair  
 Installing a weave  
 We can have individuality!

## AMIRAH (Four)

*(putting a hand on eights shoulder)*

And still have peace

## AMIRAH and MYA

And in our rights be equal

*Amirah takes her hand and they share a moment.*

## NA'SHAY (Nine)

So I ain't gon erase all the pain from the vocals  
 So I can sing about Taylor the latte boy not knowing my coffee order and how that hurts

## KAIDENCE (Three)

No, what hurts.

Is my hands at night  
 fumbling over these piano keys  
 Could be early arthritis  
 Or it's just the hours I been putting in  
 Cuz there's just so much content for me to put in  
 a simple chord progression  
 And I'm getting lost in the A minor and the Ds

If I make a mistake and play a C major  
 My body does a cease  
 Cuz that sounds a little to bright for what I'm feelin right now

*An A Minor chord is struck on a piano.  
 Eights smile fades she steps away from Four*

MYA (Eight)

*\*Sings\**  
*I'm Going down*

*An C Minor chord is struck on a piano.*

*\*Sings\**  
*There's no savin me*

*A G major chord is struck on a piano.*

*\*Sings\**  
*Heart on the ground*

*An F Major chord is struck on a piano.*

*\*Sings\**  
*Couldn't pick the pieces up*

*An A minor chord is struck on the piano.*

KAIDENCE (Three)  
*(bothered by the bright sound)*

*\*Sings\**  
*I try to hold*

MYA and KAIDENCE

*\*Sings\**  
*But these thoughts are pulling me*

MYA (Eight)

*\*Sings\**  
*To a place that's cold*

KAIDENCE (Three)

*\*Sings\**  
*And I can't escape*

CHLOE (Two)

3 Am at night  
 And Day is coming up  
 The sun is coming up  
 And somebody's waking up  
 But I never went to sleep

MYA (Eight)

Cuz my thoughts keep telling my heart to sing

CHLOE (Two)

It's crazy

MYA and CHLOE

How my consciousness continues to stream

KAIDENCE (Three)

I started off this piece thinking bout a dream I had,  
 where, I told you I liked you.  
 And you said "You ain't date women like me"  
 And I stood their puzzled cuz

*(beat)*

Nigga you like me  
 Came right out a woman that look just like me  
 But that's the thing  
 I'm like yuh sister, a best friend, advice giver

CHLOE (Two)

A place to recharge when the world has drained you out

MYA (Eight)

And when you done charging up on the love I have to give you

AMIRAH (Four)

Done feeding up on the food I cooked for you

NA'SHAY (Nine)

Done looking in my eyes

To see your reflection

ALL WOMEN and FOUR

My idea of perfection, My

AMIRAH (Four)

**thick lipted**

CHLOE (Two)

Melanin enrich-ted

MYA (Eight)

Soul sangin'

AMIRAH (Four)

Kinky hair gifted

NA'SHAY (Nine)

Innovated

CHLOE (Two)

Original

KAIDENCE (Three)

Creation of God

ALL WOMEN

You walk away

KAIDENCE (Three)

Until the next recharging day

AMIRAH (Four)

See a plate just ain't a plate

It's the thought to make it

NA'SHAY (Nine)

And chicken just ain't chicken

Without the smell of home

And friendly competition

ALL WOMEN and FOUR

Can't nobody make mac and cheese  
Like my grandma

KAIDENCE (Three)

Everybody say it

CHLOE (Two)

And now I'm writing bout a night with no sleep

KAIDENCE (Three)

*\*Sings\**  
*I need a savior*  
*I know his name*  
*He is waiting for me*  
*And only him can take these pieces*  
*And make them whole*

MYA (Eight)

*\*Sings\**  
*I'm not going down*

KAIDENCE AND MYA

*\*Sings\**  
*Cuz there's saving me*  
|

KAIDENCE (Three)

*\*Sings\**  
*Heart not on the ground*

KAIDENCE AND MYA

*\*Sings\**  
*Cuz it's safe in the comfort of his hands*

CHLOE (Two)

It's always a circle I gotta make to get to the point within  
And the point is  
I see you I mean I really see you

Spirit Mind Body and Soul

KAIDENCE (Three)

While you intertwining yours with every girl that can past the brown paper bag test  
And that's okay, it's your preference  
And all skin is beautiful but

MYA (Eight)

never being in the line up  
But being first in line, when you need an up  
Starts to make you question?  
What the hell is wrong with me?  
Well do I always fail  
The test in uplifting myself

KAIDENCE (Three)

Because I'm still gon lift you up

NA'SHAY (Nine)

And be sensitive to them calling you a criminal

AMIRAH (Four)

And I'm still gon tell you that your beautiful

*Amirah grabs Mya and spins her around.*

KAIDENCE (Three)

And although I don't need you cuz I can provide for myself  
I still

MYA (Eight)

*(to Four with great yearning)*

want you

*Tight spotlight on Mya and Amirah holding hands  
and gazing at each other.*

*Awkward pause*

EIGHT (Mya)

*(nervously clarifying)*

..As my friend!



AMIRAH (Four)  
*(a little thrown off)*

..My brotha

NA'SHAY (Nine)

my son, pops and uncle too

CHLOE and KAIDENCE

my lover

KAIDENCE (Three)

I still want you

AMIRAH (Four)

So I'll still stay bein yo sista

KAIDENCE (Three)

Ain't no problem too big you can't bring to yo advice giver

NA'SHAY (Nine)

I'm gon always hold you down.

*Mya sings the chorus to "All Falls Down" by  
 Kanye West*

MYA (Eight)

*\*Sings\**

*And lift you up*

*If it all falls down*

ALL WOMEN and FOUR

*\*Sings\**

*I'm lifting you up*

*When it all falls down*

NA'SHAY (Nine)

BUT!

this shall no longer be a one sided thing

If wanting you, means belittling me

Than you can walk

Cuz brotha I may call you a king

ALL WOMEN and FOUR

But I am a Queen!

NA'SHAY (Nine)

Sistas!

we have got to lift *us* up!

We are here too!

ALL WOMEN and FOUR

Yeah!

NA'SHAY (Nine)

We matter too!

ALL WOMEN and FOUR

Yeah!

NA'SHAY (Nine)

We are too-

Thick lip-ted

Melanin Enrich-ted

Soul Sangin

Kinky Hair Gifted

Innovated

Original

Creations of God!

ALL WOMEN and FOUR

Yeah!

ALL WOMEN and FOUR

*\*Sings\**

*Jesus is my savior*

*Savior*

*My savior*

*Jesus my savior*

*Savior*

ALL WOMEN

*\*sings\**

*And I'm finding that I've*

*Been tryna find*

*Healing in distractions*

*\*Sings\**

*Healing in distractions*

*You can't find healing in distractions*

*Give him your all and not a fraction*

*Make his word your reflection*

*And you'll be made whole*

AMIRAH (Four)

*\*Spoken\**

I'm finding that I've been tryna find

Healing in distractions

*\*Spoken\**

You can't find healing in distractions

*\*Sings\**

*And you'll be made whole*

*The WOMEN and FOUR all take a collective inhale and exhale. The WOMEN all exit. THREE stays behind. FIVE enters slow clapping..*

FIVE (Abel)

Light Three! I'm picking up what you dropped. I respect it, cuz it's yuh truth. But tell me, what makes yours a black play and not mine?

THREE (Kaidence)

Fine Five! Your truth is a black play.

FIVE (Abel)

Nah c'mon don't patronize me now! I wanna hear whatchu really think.

THREE (Kaidence)

And I just told you! It's a black play....it's just one I'm tied of seein.

*Three Exits. Five stays for a moment.*

FIVE (Abel)

Man whatever

SCENE 6

*Four enters struggling with a stack of books while on the phone.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Uh huh... You want me to do what?... ABP!.... do you know how long we would be here??.... we cannot talk about every black issue ever... I'm holding about 10 of them right now and I can barely carry the load... look I know you wanna make a space but-

*They drop a book.*

FIVE (Abel)

Need some help?

FOUR (Amirah)

..Uh I think I got it.

*Four drops all the paper and books. Five goes to help them pick them up.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Aww mann.

*They pick up the phone.*

Look, I'll call you back ABP.

*They hang up the phone. Five hands them a book.*

Thank you.

FIVE (Abel)

See you shoulda just let me help. That's what's wrong with yall, you never want to accept help. Then you fall on your face and somehow it's my fault.

FOUR

Excuse me..that's what's wrong with you, ain't nobody said it was your fault. But you always talkin outcha ass and writin checks ya mouth can't cash.

FIVE (Abel)

*(sucks teeth)*

I swear there is no love in the black community.

FOUR (Amirah)

And then you throw guilt trips by saying stuff like that, when you get hurt. Cuz you clapped at someone and couldn't handle them clapping back.

*Silence. Five doesn't argue.*

c'mon you know it's not true. No love? I'm not sure you can even mutter the words, black and community, without feeling warm. Without conjuring up images of laughter and family. I can smell the barbeque and cocoa butter. A gathering, groups of people-

FIVE (Abel)

Dying. Protestin. Killing each other over some street cred and a new pair of sneakers. That's my reality.

*Five exits.*

*Four stands in silence.*

*Six (Bernie) enters.*

SIX (Bernie)

Hey Four you got a minute?

FOUR (Amirah)

Um...yea whatsup six?

SIX (Bernie)

*Rapping*

So I know you said that we were on a mission right?

You wanted us to start assuming some positions right?

So I, had a question bout these roles we was takin.?

FOUR (Amirah)

Okay...shoot?

SIX (Bernie)

You said these "roles" would sometimes be ourselves?

FOUR (Amirah)

Right! Portraying life as it is.

SIX (Bernie)

*(immense excitement)*

You mean, I ain't got ta be six??? I ain't got ta be a number that was placed on me at birth? Numbers placed on all of us! I ain't got ta carry the weight of multiple experiences? I ain't got to be on the front lines day after day fighting the good fight for the advancement of a whole people? Filling up the silence of the universe with all I have to shout!? I ain't got ta be under the microscope one day, constantly perfecting every flaw, provin that this skin don't equal enemy. And then bopping the down the street to Kendrick Lamar the next day, just to prove I reserve the right to say nigga!? Maine shit, I can drop this ridiculous accent and stop sayin "I ain't got ta". I can just carry mine and my own for a day? I get to *be* selfish. Dancing to my 80s throwbacks under a soft light, enjoying the quiet moments of a breath.

FOUR (Amirah)

Yes, six. All that and more.

SIX (Bernie)

*(exhales)*

Well then you can call me Bernie.

FOUR (Amirah)

Alright Bernie.

BERNIE (Six)

Yeah, I'ma be Bernie for a little while. It's gonna be my freedom name! In signifying that when I am Bernie, I am my own individual self. Free to fall IN and OUT of any ideas of blackness, as I so choose. *(beat)* I'll come back to Six. I always do. When I'm not in the walls of these safe spaces, the world slaps me in the face and reminds me that I carry six. But even though we've been assigned these numbers, we have redefined them. We put all our numbers together and make an equation of experiences voicing for the voiceless. Giving them a beacon to identify with. And there's power in that. But, I am due for a recharging day, because the revolution will wear you the fuck out.

FOUR (Amirah)

Well you take your day Bernie. What are you gonna do?

BERNIE (Six)

Honestly...I'm gonna get in bed, eat ice cream and watch my favorite show, *The Boondocks*.

Nice!  
FOUR (Amirah)

Portray life as it is right?  
BERNIE

That's the mission.  
FOUR (Amirah)

A black play about a black man eating ice cream and watching TV. *(laughs to himself)* They'd never buy that.  
BERNIE (Six)

It's not *for* them.  
FOUR (Amirah)

*They tap him on his shoulder and pick up the books.  
They motion to exit*

Hey Four  
BERNIE

Yeah  
FOUR (Amirah)

What's your freedom name?  
BERNIE

...Amirah  
FOUR (Amirah)

Amirah...What does it mean?  
BERNIE (Six)

Leader.  
AMIRAH (Four)

*Amirah smiles and exits  
Bernie pulls out a tub of ice cream*

*He sits on the couch  
Turns on the TV*

*Four (Amirah) dressed like Riley from The  
Boondocks renters. They say a famous line from the  
tv show. They exit.*

*He laughs and laughs and laughs.  
Blackout*

SCENE 7

*Lights up. Chloe (Two) is braiding Dhante's  
(seven's) hair.*

Oooch!  
DHANTE (Seven)

*She continues braiding  
A moment later*

Oooch Chloe dang!  
DHANTE (Seven)

CHLOE (Two)  
Sorry babe. But you so damn tender headed.

DHANTE (Seven)  
I am not tender headed. You just braid rough.

CHLOE (Two)  
I do not braid rough. I just can't grasp your hair cuz you keep holding your head down.

DHANTE (Seven)  
Cuz I'm tryna write! And it *hurts*, cuz you braid rough!!!

CHLOE (Two)  
It hurts, cuz you're tender headed!

DHANTE (Seven)  
*(sucks teeth)*  
You sound like my mama.



CHLOE (Two)

I'll take that as a compliment. She's a strong woman!

*DHANTE sucks his teeth. He keeps writing.  
CHLOE smiles, she keeps braiding.*

CHLOE (Two)

So what you got so far?

DHANTE (Seven)

You wanna hear it?

CHLOE (Two)

Yeah

*She stops braiding to listen.*

DHANTE (Seven)

*(reading from the notebook)*

Juxtaposed into just a position in life  
As they danced under the warm rays of an old star.  
Icicles pierced the hearts of those who disapproved.  
Warm they could be, but frozen they chose  
to stand in the shadows of their own hate.  
Love is patient, love is kind.  
Love DOES see color, but not in red letters shouting Exit  
rather in gold plated welcomes of a rich life to be.  
Like the crown he was fastening for her head  
made of all the I love you's he's ever said  
and the promises of equality and respect  
for their marriage to come.  
He saw her in all her black beauty and it radiated so,  
brighter than that old star.

CHLOE (Two)

Damn babe. Okay..I see you.

DHANTE (Seven)

It needs work.

*She picks the comb back up to continue braiding.*

CHLOE (Two)  
*(braiding roughly)*

Damn perfectionist mindset.

DHANTE (Seven)

Oooch

CHLOE (Two)

It sounded pretty good to me.

DHANTE (Seven)

Well thank you but it's missing something you know?

CHLOE (Two)  
*(mocking him)*

Nah what do I know, cause I'm not a poet like you. I don't pee metaphors and walk around saying things like "this comb is the dream of my ancestors' fury. A weapon in disguise. In one use, parting the waves of my nubian coils, in another use, arming me, to slash the face of my enemy"

DHANTE (Seven)

Damn babe, was that off the dome? cuz you might actually be more of a poet then you give yourself credit for.

CHLOE (Two)  
*(grabbing his face)*

Oh my god, use the left side of your brain for once!

*He laughs*

DHANTE (Seven)

Iono you might be in the wrong profession.

*He continues writing.  
 She goes back to braiding his hair.*

CHLOE (Two)

Yeah, tell my daddy that. If I don't become a lawyer he gon have a heart attack. All that tuition he paid for cuz his little girl said she wanted to change the world.

DHANTE (Seven)

And you will!

CHLOE (Two)

Yeah..something like that. So how many more poems you gotta write?

DHANTE (Seven)

*(sighs)*

My editor says I should add at least 3 more. Then maybe they'll finally publish it.

CHLOE (Two)

I don't know why they turned down the first draft. It was amazing.

DHANTE (Seven)

Yeah they're just pickin. One week they saying "it's got too many typos" and I'm tryna tell them that's the vernacular, it's posed to look that way. C U Z for cuz not BEcause. Next week they sayin "it's too one toned. It's gotta have a journey". This week "add 3 more poems, but make these ones raw, you know tell us what's really going on at home" And I'm lookin at her like, What's really going on at home??? Honestly, I think they just don't like the content! They lookin for a story about being gunned down by the police and a crack addicted mama. Absent father, which is the only part that's true. But I'm giving them black love, aspirations, dreams, gut busting laughter, you know an authentic experience and that's not what they want.

CHLOE (Two)

I think you need to find another publishing company.

DHANTE (Seven)

I already put mad money into them though. The book is set to come out next year, if they would stop pushing back the release date.

CHLOE (Two)

That's what I'm saying. Maybe it's not worth it.

DHANTE (Seven)

Not worth it?

CHLOE (Two)

Not your poetry babe, I'm sayin the company. Putting your time and money into them when they clearly have an agenda. Why don't you publish it yourself?

DHANTE (Seven)

I thought about that, But they got deals with amazon, school districts, book stores, I'll get more exposure if I go through them, rather than...what?.. standin in central park talkin bout "buy my book!..Please..I promise it's a good read. Black joy! Whatchu know about that?!"

CHLOE (Two)

You could do that..or you could post it all over social media, get friends to buy it and share it, reach out to schools and book stores *yourself* and ask them to display it. Put *your* face at the front

of it. *Your* beauty, *your* intelligence, *your* charm and YOU be in charge of how you want *your* book to be promoted. I'm just saying, sometimes we waste our time and energy tryna to get other people to give us a foot in the door, when we could build a whole damn house.

*Silence.*  
*He stares at her*  
*Enamored.*

What? CHLOE (Two)

Damn DHANTE (Seven)

What?? CHLOE (Two)  
*(laughs)*

That was hot! Got me feelin all empowered. DHANTE (Seven)

*She hits him playfully.*

Shut up! CHLOE (Two)

I mean....my mama ain't home whatchu tryna do?! DHANTE (Seven)

*He moves closer to her.*

Stopp.. You need to chill. CHLOE (Two)  
*(laughing)*

I'm just saying CHLOE (Two)  
*She playfully pushes him back.*  
DHANTE (Seven)

Can you sit down? CHLOE (Two)

Okay okay DHANTE (Seven)

*He goes to sit back in the chair.*

CHLOE (Two)

Let me finish your head.

*He turns and looks at her wide eyed and smirking.  
She burst into laughter.*

CHLOE (Two)

Stop it! That is not what I meant.

*He picks up his book and sits back in the chair.*

DHANTE (Seven)

Alright alright I'm just playing..

CHLOE (Two)  
*(smiling)*

Your too much

*She goes back to braiding his hair.  
A moment.  
He looks up at her.*

DHANTE (Seven)

Seriously tho, Thank you. It's a good idea. I'ma do this.

*She smiles down at him.*

CHLOE (Two)

You got this.

*She kisses him.*

DHANTE (Seven)

*\*Singing along to the tune of "Lets Get It On" by Marvin Gaye\**

Bow bow bow bow I been really tryin baby!

*She hits him playfully. They both laugh. Lights fade  
on them.*

SCENE 8

*Four walks out with a clipboard.*

FOUR (Amirah)

Well I guess we can cross off black heterosexual love.

*Four writes it down. Eight and Three enter.*

THREE (Kaidence)

Ugh, was that even a play? That's just Two and Seven on a day to day basis.

EIGHT (Mya)

Well, Four did say, life as it is. Somebody sounds bitter.

THREE (Kaidence)

I'm not bitter, I'm just tired of constantly falling in and out of love and it all going into a void.

EIGHT (Mya)

Well that kind of thing can happen when you're in love with somebody else's boyfriend.

*Four hides.*

THREE (Kaidence)

You're one to judge. At least I can talk about who I love.

*Silence*

*Eight recalls a moment.*

EIGHT (Mya)

...It was so obvious, wasn't it?

THREE (Kaidence)

I mean..you want me to lie to you or you want me to tell you the truth?

EIGHT (Mya)

The truth!

THREE (Kaidence)

Well then yeah it was pretty obvious.

EIGHT (Mya)

Ughhh

THREE (Kaidence)

I mean "I want you!....as a friend" that was a little spot on.

*Eight begins to panic*

EIGHT (Mya)

But it was acting. It's not real. Maybe they won't think it's real?

THREE (Kaidence)

I don't get why you won't just tell them how you feel. It's not like they're in a relationship.

EIGHT (Mya)

I'm not sure I really even like Them.

THREE (Kaidence)

Ugh you always do this.

EIGHT (Mya)

I'm still figuring it all out

THREE (Kaidence)

And that's fine, you can't help how you feel. I'm just saying maybe-

EIGHT (Mya)

I don't wanna talk about this anymore.

*Eight looks very stressed. Three notices, she changes her approach.*

THREE (Kaidence)

Okay, let's just breathe.

*They sit and breathe for a moment.*

...look Eight, you don't have to decide anything you're not ready to, that's up to you. And you definitely don't owe anyone an explanation. I'm sorry if I pushed in any way, It's just- I'm your friend, I want to see you happy. But more importantly, I want to make sure you know that you are loved! And when you are ready...you're in a safe space to do so.

EIGHT (Mya)  
*(sighs)*

Thanks.

THREE (Kaidence)

Of course..hey I know something that may help. C'mon.

*They exit.  
Four steps out.*

FOUR (Amirah)

She likes me!...maybe.

*Four pulls out their phone. They dial a number.*

...Hey...ABP....I think I'm starting to get how important this is.

*Blackout*

SCENE 9

*One/Spencer enters with an easel and a large notepad of blank canvases. He sets up his paints and brushes as he speaks to the audience.*

SPENCER (One)

A black play

Ain't black

If It don't try to push every possible form of artistry into its pages

To be displayed on great stages

So that everybody know

This blackness is worn by

Innovatuhs (Innovators)

So I draw!

That's my contribution

And I ain't neva known a play

Period

Let alone, Black

To allow its actors to

Upstage themselves

*Spencer turns his back to the audience.*

Allowing the art to speak for a moment

*He begins to paint, with a brush.*

*Using only the colors, black, white or gray*

*Spencer paints in silence for a moment.*

*Then he speaks, continuing to paint..*

To be black and gay

synonymous with wrong and led astray

In the wrong skin

Seeking the same sex



Just a mess  
 Too much to comprehend  
 “Just get up on out my face”  
 “I don’t know what to do witchu”  
 Is the common response of the day  
 Pledging allegiances of hate  
 To this america  
 Of the home of the free and the brave  
 More like assimilated and enslaved

*He breathes in his work.  
 he has a change of thought.*

But see not in my space

*He rips the painting off the notepad, revealing a blank canvas.  
 He starts a new painting, this time using a wide variety of colors.*

To be Black and Gay  
 Synonymous with dope and pride  
 Dope like a firm grip on the black hand side  
 Dope like singing R&B in the shower  
 Dope like bein in positions of power  
 Dope like- ya grandmas, brothers, sistas wuz woke like  
 It’s giving excellence  
 It’s giving achievements  
 Dope like-Nope not like drugs  
 Pushed into our communities  
 For the privilege of calling us thugs  
 For using it  
 And then counting yo money on da side  
 Nope dope like pride  
 A coming together of love  
 On the same side  
 A community of queer acceptance  
 But not in the way you mean it  
 I don’t need your acceptance  
 To be  
 I simply am  
 And I wear it beautifully

Thank you

Pride like a blessing  
 But not in disguise  
 Cuz pride like, get the hell up out the closet, you ain't got to hide  
 Pride like watching heterosexual TV thru a gay lense cuz it's just soooo much better  
 Pride like a warm sweater  
 Wrapped in the arms of your lover  
 Cuz love is love is love man  
 No matter how you calculate it  
 Pride in the dopest way alive  
 The intersectionality of being  
 Me

*He finishes the painting. He admires it.  
 Eight/Mya enters with Kaidence/Three.*

KAIDENCE (Three)

Hey Spencer!

SPENCER (One)

Oh hey Kaidence. Hey Mya wassup.

KAIDENCE (Three)

How did I know you'd be working on a piece!

SPENCER (One)

Oh you already know art is my life. I just finished this.

MYA (Eight)  
*(noticing the painting)*

Wow...this is...Amazing.

SPENCER (One)

Thank you!

KAIDENCE (Three)

Yeah, Spencer's work is dope! I always seem to find a puzzle piece to something I've been struggling with, staring at his work.

Aww purr  
 SPENCER (One)

*They laugh. Mya stays in thought. Spencer notices.*

You alright?  
 SPENCER (One)

Yeah it just..really speaks to me.  
 MYA (Eight)

mm  
 SPENCER (One)

*They all look at the painting together.*

MYA (Eight)  
 It's like it awakens a...longing for something in me...something warm and exciting and inviting...I'm not making any sense sorry.

SPENCER (One)  
 Nah I think you're making perfect sense. I think sometimes, we have to let the art speak the words we can't articulate. Let it speak through us!

*Catching himself*

I'm sorry. That was really corny. But I mean it.

What if you tried?  
*He gives her a brush. And clears a canvas.*

*She takes the brush. She stares at the canvas.*

MYA (Eight)  
 I don't know I'm not really much of an artist.

*She gives him back the brush.*

SPENCER (One)  
 Okay well what's your thing?

*lights shut off on Spencer (one) and Kaidence  
(three). A spotlight on a piano and Mya.  
Mya walks towards it.  
She sits and begins to play.*

MYA (Eight)

*\*Sings\**

I don't think I really like you  
I've never liked one like you before  
I think the truth is I am sad  
And I just wanna know  
What'd it be like to be loved  
What'd be like to be loved  
What'd be like to be loved  
I think I just wanna be loved  
Who doesn't wanna be loved?

And I've got love in the best way (yeah)  
I've got love in the best way  
God has blessed me, with a family and friends  
I got good people in my life  
People who love me  
People who tell me  
People who motivate me  
Support me  
People who care about me  
I got everything that I could ever need  
So why am I sad?  
What I got to be sad about?

I got food to eat  
I got a bed to sleep  
I got some company  
I got some soul in me  
I got a-  
I'm working on a college degree.  
And I'm able to afford it yeah  
Financial aid, but anyway  
I got something I'm gonna be, yeah  
Ooh ooh yeah

I'm gonna be somebody

So why am I sad?

About something I don't need

Something I don't need

I've never cared before about this...thing

But now it's like, it's everywhere

And I actually care

And I know I haven't said it yet

I'm aware

I'm aware that I haven't said what the thing is

Cuz PUTTING THAT SHIT IN THE AIR MAKES IT REAL

And I don't know if I'm ready yeah

To make it real

About how I feel

Pathetic is what I feel

I guess everybody feels this way

But I hold myself to a higher standard

I'm putting pressure on me

And I know that these aren't the right keys that I'm playing but I

Don't care

I'm just playing something to help me get it out of my mouth

And it's helping even though the right notes aren't playing

And here's the thing I've been trying to say and

I just wanna be loved

I wanna be held

I wanna be kissed

I wanna be held and kissed and loved and hugged

I want somebody to want me

The way I wanna be wanted

I want somebody to touch me

In a way that it-

I don't know

Yeah you know.

I just wanna know what'd it be like

To be laying on a chair somewhere

On a couch somewhere

On a bed somewhere

In the grass somewhere  
Underneath the stars  
on a summer night  
Talkin bout our lives together

I just wanna know what'd it be like  
To get out of class and receive a text from you  
Talkin bout girl what you doin?  
I'm really missing you  
Girl what you doin?  
Do you wanna meet me after class?  
Maybe we could chill after class  
Maybe we could  
Maybe we could  
Maybe we could and a-  
we don't have to plan to do anything  
Just being around you is all I need  
We could just chill  
watch a little TV  
Or maybe we could  
Find a minute to play on the piano  
I could tell you how I feel when I hit a note  
If you hit the right note  
Tell me what it feels like

And we could just fall into the keys  
You and me  
It seems like it's happening for everybody else but me  
Everybodies got somebody  
Where is my somebody?  
And I know what everybody says  
You will find it  
When you least expect it  
When you least expect it  
When you least expect it  
When you just stop lookin  
But I'm not even lookin  
I guess I'm kinda lookin

There's this human

And there not perfect  
 In fact, they've got a lot of flaws, that I'd usually write off  
 But lately I been feelin them  
 I don't think they're feelin me tho  
 That's my problem  
 I always assume that nobodies feelin me  
 I just

I just wanna be loved  
 I just want love  
 And I wanna be braver  
 I wanna be braver  
 And I just wanna love me  
 Cause I'm great  
 I'm really great

I am a beautiful human  
 And I'm kind  
 And I care  
 I care so much  
 I am a beautiful human  
 But right now I'm not loving myself too much  
 If I'm bein honest  
 I'm not loving myself too much  
 I been hating on me real bad  
 And I can't for the life of me figure out why  
 And I'm sad about how I been hating on me  
 I gotta let myself be free

\* Spoken\*

I feel like I won't allow myself to just be whoever I am. I'm stuck in this tryna be perfect place. And It's hard being perfect- trying to be perfect- I'm not perfect. I'm nowhere near perfect but I have these expectations of myself to be perfect and they're a little unrealistic and it's crazy cause this Mya character is really me.

What does Mya learn in the end?

*Mya sits in thought.*  
*Blackout*

## SCENE 10

*A busy train car. People are scattered about.  
Kaidence (Three) sits on the train, writing in a notebook. Dhante (Seven) sits on the edge of the stage writing in a notebook.*

## ANNOUNCER

This is a Manhattan bound 1 train, the next stop will be 66 and Lincoln center. Stand clear of the closing doors please.

## KAIDENCE (Three)

To the world he was a thug. The boy at the back of the classroom, wasting his potential. Selling his soul to the devil through the repeating of his favorite rap lyrics. With every word he summoned more destruction into his life. For dying in the street was his destiny, like the brotha's and sista's before him. A hashtag. Just another name on the list. His skin too dark to let in the light of love. His eyes too filled with tears to stare into his spirit too broken. Oh but his mind. The only thing of worth to this society that valued his ideas, just not from him. A nigga. Just another Nigga. But to me he was perfection. I wish my perception was universal. Maybe then-

*The train stops. People jerk forward.*

The train arrived at 66 and Lincoln Center as she was writing the word then. She closed her notebook, picked up her backpack and exited the train.

*She gets up to leave the train car.*

She stopped to put her book away but someone running to get to the train doors before they closed knocked it out of her hand.

*A person knocks the book out of her hand.*

The book hit the ground with a thud and loose papers of unfinished poems in moments of passion spilled out onto the subway floor. Her essence was now inhabiting the space, and no one knew it.

*The train car moves on and the remaining people run to exit right with their seats.*

She scrambled the papers together, put them in her bag and ran up the subway stairs into the cold streets of New York. As the cold air hit her face she wondered if she'd see him today. No, if he'd see her today. She had always seen him and those like him. She exonerated boys like him in her artwork but they always seemed to do the opposite for her. Seeing her as nothing more than a nagging bitch with a big mouth.

*Two guys walk past her and laugh.  
High schoolers enter in groups. They go to lockers and check text messages.*



And she hated generalizing, for that's what the adversaries did with their "You people". As if a single person represented a race of people. She knew not all black boys were like this boy, she had chosen to love unrequitedly. One day she'd meet her King who too felt she was a Queen. But for now all she had as a tangible model of man was an absent father, an uncle who didn't fuck with black women no more, and this boy.

*Dhante (Seven) stands reading from his notebook*

DHANTE (Seven)

A Truth I wish to share with myself

I'm tired

I need to write something

    But I hate all my ideas

    I don't know what story/stories i want to tell

I'm burned out

    I HAVE BIG ASS DREAMS BUT I AM LOSING THE ENERGY TO PURSUE THEM

    I may actually suck at writing

        I can't handle that

    I am afraid to fail at this

        I have put so much time and money into it.

        Its gotta pay off or be worth something

Right?

*He sees Kaidence. He walks towards her*

KAIDENCE (Three)

This boy who was now walking towards her stressed. His eye brows raised. He needed her.

DHANTE (Seven)

Hey Kaidence, are you busy? I have someone coming to hear one of my poems in like 5 mins and I'm just not sure about it. I need your opinion, I trust it. You know artist to artist. I can't fail at this.

KAIDENCE (Three)

She pulled him into the stairways away from the people who would see him not at his best.

*High schoolers exit.*

She fed his spirit with words of encouragement. Reminded him of his power and worth. She sang to him lyrics of a song she wrote to inspire his creativity. They prayed. And Like Mahalia Jackson shouting "Tell em about the dream Martin", she changed the direction of his thoughts towards only the things he could achieve. And when words weren't enough. She held him, like he had asked her to. Told him there was nothing he could not do for he came from greatness. With that, he was ready. He walked out of that stairway standing up a little taller than when he

had entered. His heart beating a rhythm of ease. One could say that heart song belonged in Americas cannon of soul music. He breathed a new air of confidence, walked into that audition room and exhaled radiance. Now she ain't make it to her class that day, but helping him was worth it.

*A school bell rings.  
Everyone comes out on stage.*

SCENE 11

FOUR (Amirah)

Okay nice work everyone. Three I think-

TWO (Chloe)  
*(to three)*

I don't know how to feel about that last one.

ONE (Spencer)

Two, do you have to analyze every play idea?

SIX (Bernie)

It's the lawyer in her, it's what we're taught in corporate. I get it.

NINE (Na'shay)

You would get it, token.

SIX (Bernie)

STOP calling me that!

NINE (Na'shay)

You make it so easy.

*Nine exits.*

TWO (Chloe)

No it's not the lawyer in me, I just find it interesting that we're now using this platform as an opportunity to steal other people's boyfriends. Is that what we're doing?

SEVEN (Dhante)

Nobody's stolen!

THREE (Kaidence)

I was just telling a story the way it happened.

SEVEN (Dhante)

NO!

TWO (Chloe)

OH! Is that how it happened??

*(to Seven)*

you're asking people to HOLD YOU in staircases now?

SEVEN (Dhante)

I- *(laughs)*- C'mon Two-

TWO (Chloe)

And going to other girls for advice, nice.

SEVEN (Dhante)

*Artistic* advice that's all.

TWO (Chloe)

Please, everybody knows poetry is your love language.

THREE (Kaidence)

Look, I didn't mean to start any drama.

TWO (Chloe)

Didn't you?

THREE (Kaidence)

I was just sharing how I feel in this space where we're allowed to do so.

SEVEN (Dhante)

*(to three)*

Yes but how you feel is different from how I feel.

TWO (Chloe)

Yes, let's talk about how *you* feel.

*Both the women turn to him in confrontational  
silence. Then Everyone now waits for an answer.*

SEVEN (Dhante)

Okay..alright..since everyone is involved now...Three...I honestly just came to you to talk about the poem because you're a great writer. I trusted that your opinion would be thoughtful. But that was all. And the whole, holding me part. I was feeling anxious and shaky. I needed to be calmed and you helped to do that by getting me to focus on one of my senses, touch. I appreciated the hug and you being there, but I have never seen you as anything more than a friend or collaborator, I'm sorry.

*(to Two)*

And Two...babe, poetry is how I communicate with the world, yes. But you're wrong. it's not my love language...you are my love language. Knowing who you are and what you need is through which I express love. Without you, there would be none.

*Everyone awws. Two smiles.*

TWO (Chloe)

yeah...okay...you still got it i guess.

*He hugs her.*

THREE (Kaidence)

My bad, I guess I made it all up in my head. Super embarrassing.

TWO (chloe)

It's alright I've been there.

THREE (Chloe)

I think poetry may be my love language.

*Nine appears breaking the petals off of a rose.*

NINE (Na'Shay)

I think love is overrated.

*Everyone looks at her.*

Especially romance. A single woman is a happy woman! She's a focused woman. On a mission. With a plan. A goal in life. She ain't chasing down no lover. Or shaving her legs. She's making change in a small world for a cause bigger than herself. She's not making compromises for affection. She knows how to love her damn self. Knows every itch to scratch. And every point of pleasure. As Ertha Kit once said "A man comes into my life and I have to compromise? (*laughs maniacally*) FOR WHAT! (*turning very serious*) For what? ". I think we have royally outdone ourselves with the love section of this lil play of ours. What else do we have to say?

FOUR (Amirah)

Well people?

EIGHT (Mya)

Before we leave the love section there's something I have to say!

FOUR (Amirah)

Alright Eight. The floor is yours.

EIGHT (Mya)

Um..Four...while I wouldn't necessarily call it love yet..because that word is weighted...I am very much...in *like* with you.

*Four smiles.*

*They walk towards her.*

FOUR (Amirah)

And I am very much in like with you.

*Eight smiles.*

*Everyone awws.*

EIGHT (Mya)

Cool.

*(beat)*

And another thing... in case it wasn't obvious...I'm gay.

*Everyone cheers in support.*

Okay now we can go on.

*Blackout*

SCENE 12

*The instrumental of Free Mind by Tems plays.*

*Bernie (Six) enters in darkness turning on fairy lights that hang for the ceiling.*

*When Bernie (Six) speaks,*

BERNIE (six)

Tokens...Shiny gold coins. Like gems in a **sea of rocks**, aka the **majority**.

*Nine enters wearing a Shiny Gold Satin Bonnet.*

*Two and Three follow behind her. They stand on each side of Nine. They each gracefully place and hand on her shoulder. They teach her to be like them. To walk, to dance, to wave a hand, etc*

Things that are the same, moving in like ways, like speech patterns, like hairstyles, "culture", all the same.

*She now moves in symmetry with them.  
But is it enough?  
They forcefully push her forward.*

But this one stands out.

*Nine falls.  
Two and Three walk away.*

The term itself has coined a (no pun intended) negative reputation.

*Bernie helps Nine to her feet.*

To be the token is to be the mascot for diversity. A something to be displayed, as to avoid being canceled or called racist.

*Boss enters. Spotlight on him.*

BOSS  
(to Six)

Hey Boy! We are giving you a promotion.

BERNIE (six)

Wow, a promotion!

BOSS

Yes you are now the head of the Diversity Initiative. You are in charge of making sure the company stays, right (*Raises a black power fist*)...or lit or..straight?...whatever the phrase...ahead of the curve..you get it. It's far too much work for me to have to hire new employees or keep track of all this politically correct shi- I mean stuff. So you will be the spokesperson. Sound good?

BERNIE (six)

um-

BOSS

Great!

*Boss exits stage. Nine walks up to Six. A moment. Six removes the bonnet from Nine's head. He places it on his head. A moment. He begins to walk away. Nine stops him. She rips it off his head and throws it to the ground, she*

*stomps on it repeatedly. She takes his hand. They walk away.*

SCENE 13

*Kaidence (Three) and Mya (Eight) enter dancing to good music. Maybe the instrumental of Cuff It by Beyonce is that good music.*

KAIDENCE (Three)

A black play is a college party scene. With dancing and good music.

NA'SHAY (Nine)

Don't forget the good food!

*Na'shay (Nine) enters carrying a plate of good food.*

CHLOE (Two)

Heyy! hooo!

*Chloe (two) follows behind with more food!*

SPENCER (One)

AND DRINKS! CUZ WE LEGAL NOW!

*Spencer (One) enters with bottles of alcohol.*

AMIRAH (Four)

AND WEED! cuz IT'S legal now!

*Amirah (Four) enters with weed related products. They all set up the party. They have fun for a moment.*

ABEL (Five)

YEAH and in the end, the party gets shot up!!

*Abel (Five) makes a gun with his hands.  
LOUD Shots! Change of lights!  
Everyone cowers in fear.  
Spencer (One) drops to the floor because he's been shot!*

*He dies.*

ABEL (Five)

Cuz the protagonist is in a gang and his rivals come to show him they have the power!

*Dhante (Seven) and Bernie (Six) rush in with bandanas. They stand around the body  
Amirah (Four) rises*

AMIRAH (Four)

Umm....that could happen. But I was thinking more along the lines of, they all just chill and play a relaxing game of “Never Have I Ever”. You know...a party where nobody has to die. And death isn’t always a constant thought. A night of fun?

*Pause*

BERNIE (Six)

Oh yeah..no yeah..that makes sense.

*One sits up abruptly.*

SPENCER (One)

I like that Idea!

*Everyone murmurs in agreement.  
Three and Six take their bandanas off.  
They help one stand up. He is fine now.  
They all continue setting up the party.  
The Boy’s A Liar by Ice Spice plays*

ABEL (Five)

*(holding up 10 fingers)*

Never have I ever! Seen a black party scene that didn’t end in a gang related shootout.

*Two walks over to Five and puts down a finger.*

CHLOE (Two)

Well Maybe you've been watching the wrong programs!

NA’S HAY (Nine)

Or attending the wrong parties!

*Three holds up five fingers.*



## KAIDENCE (Three)

Never have I ever, gotten drunk at a party.

*Several people put their fingers down.*

## AMIRAH (Four)

Oooo well we can change that!

*Four grabs a bottle of Alcohol and brings Three over to a table. Three lies down on the table. Everyone gathers around her as they encourage her to drink. Lights and music fade. The party freezes. Five steps forward.*

## FIVE (Abel)

I'm always the one nobody agree wit. But it's okay. Somebody gotta be the devil's advocate. How you gon have a play wit out no conflict? Even I know that. Four talking bout (*Mocking Four*) "portray some roles, but sometimes be yoself". Man, who the hell is me??? I don got so comfortable being five, sometimes I don't know where Five ends and Abel begins. It's like I don mixed up my personality in bof a dem. (*beat*) And what the hell we doing this for anyway? Putting on a black play. (*Mocking Four*) "But is it a Black Play?" Well I'm black ain't I? and yall at a *play*, talkin bout black *shit* right? I think that qualifies. (*he looks back at the party*) See they just wanna dance around and have fun. Black joy! We wanna see more a that! And yeah it's important. It's important to show that we don't spend every second of are lives downtrodden and complaining about white people! (*pause*) Nah I'm just kidding bout the white people part, cause we do. (*laughs*) BUT theirs even joy in that sometimes. All I'ma say is, the jokes be joking. I don cramped up in all types of ways at black family functions just from laughing bout white people. But I'm getting off track. The point I'm making is, although were tired of seeing the slave stories, and the gunned down stories, and the jail stories..cause that shit hurts. It has to be acknowledged. It's equally as Important! Cause I know for damn sure slavery happening again-well it's still happening right now-But I'm talking bout the way that it happened back then. "Yes massa" and all that, nah that ain't happenin again, not while I'm around. But that's the point. I ain't gon always be around. We have got to be griots, constantly resharing the stories, both good and bad. Speaking the names of those lost to racialized violence. My descendants, descendants, descendants better know who Travon Martin was, and Philando Castile, Breona Taylor, Tyre Nichols (*sighs*) see it hurts. But I have to speak them. (*looking back at the party*) And sometimes I feel like they don't get that. Cuz they ain't seen the shit I seen. Family members droppin like flies. Friends not making their 16th birthday. They ain't done the drugs I've done. They ain't

been so hungry or fed up, that shoe laces hanging from a ceiling fan make you thirsty. Cuz it looks like a way out from all the pain. But I survive to say it's not.

*Fade to black*

SCENE 14

SEVEN (Dhante)

*(on the phone)*

Hey I think I'm gonna take your advice...yeah the advice you gave me in the play. I'ma sell some books...nah but in *real life* as me.

*Lights up. A crowded park. Seven stands by a bench, behind a table with a stack of books. A radio plays the instrumental of "Keep Ya Head Up" by 2Pac. PEOPLE walk past his bookstand. He steps forward from behind the table. Tight spotlight on him. The PEOPLE move in slow motion.*

SEVEN (Dhante)

Hello everyone my name is Seven! And *(hesitates)* I'm a poet. Truthfully, it's taken me a lot of time to be able to claim that title. I mean to put myself in the same category as the greats- Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Edgar Allen Poe, TUPAC! And those making history right now! Aja Monet, Danez Smith- How could I possibly call myself what they so gracefully claim.

*(beat)*

But then I would lay down a verse, and fall into a world where thoughts don't always complete themselves. Where dreams are personified and rhythm is key to speech, where words are at the same time weighted and freely weightless. Anyway I put my truth and soul into this lil book a mine and I was hoping you would take a second to check it out.

*The chorus of "Keep Ya Head Up" picks up with the lyrics this time. Lights back up. The PEOPLE speed up. seven steps back behind the table. PEOPLE walk up to the bookstand.*

Alright I got one for you!

*He hands a lady (Nine/Na'Shay) a book. She gives him \$20.*

Thank you so much! Stay black!

*A man (One/Spencer) gives him \$20.*

Alright and one for you sir.

*The man takes the book, he winks at him.*

hm, check out poem number 41 I'm getting the vibe you'll like that one.

*The man smiles and walks away. More people walk up and give him money. The pile of books gets smaller. As time passes the song morphs into a slower distorted version of the song. The Park is now empty. Seven stands alone counting his money. He takes out his phone.*

SEVEN (Dhante)  
(on the phone)

Babe...guess how many books I sold?

TWO (Chloe) (OS)

Ummm...50!

SEVEN (Dhante)

Damn girl. I didn't even bring 50 copies. I brought 11. My lucky number.

TWO (Chloe) (OS)

Mm, well maybe if you would've brought 50 you'da sold 50! Dream big, do big!

SEVEN (Dhante)

Well I sold 10. Can I get some credit for that!? Can I get some *love* for that?!

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)  
(laughs)

Well Iono bout some *love* but..

SEVEN (Dhante)

Wow!! It's like that?

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)

I'm just kidding-I'm kidding- I'm proud of you. I knew you could do it.

SEVEN (Dhante)

Thank you!

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)

You comming back to the crib?

SEVEN (Dhante)

Yeah I just-

*A cop stumbles through the park. He downs the last of a beer bottle and throws it in the trash can.*

COP

*(slurred speech)*

HEY! The park is closed!

SEVEN (Dhante)

Oh of course. I was just on my way out.

*Seven starts gathering his things.*

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)

Babe!

COP

*(Slurred speech)*

You can't be here!

SEVEN (Dhante)

Yes, I'm leaving right now.

*He struggles to hold the phone and disassemble the table.*

TWO (Chloe) (OS)

Seven!

SEVEN (Dhante)

*(to Two)*

Yeah babe hold up a second, uh, stay on the phone for me.

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)

Okay.

*Seven, grabs up the money and the last book.*

COP

*(Slurred speech)*

Hollldd up, where'd you get all that money?

SEVEN (Dhante)

Book sales. I was selling/my books-

COP

SELLING WHAT!!

SEVEN (Dhante)  
Books- I was just trying to say books.

COP  
Oh Is that what they're calling it.

SEVEN (Dhante)  
What?

COP  
*(slurred speech)*  
It's a code name huh?

*laughs*  
SEVEN (Dhante)  
A code- What

COP  
Don't play dumb!

SEVEN (Dhante)  
I'm not playing- Okay- I don't know- I think you got me mistaken for someone else. So I'm just gonna circle back to the first thing you said, which was that the park is closed. And then I said, I'm on my way out. So I'm gonna leave now and I'd like to do so safely.

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)  
Babe, what is going on?

SEVEN (Dhante)  
*(to Two, a whisper)*  
I don't know, I think this guy is drunk.

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)  
Guy? What guy??

COP  
WHO YOU TALKIN TO? HUH! You planning something? Tryna get over on me.

SEVEN (Dhante)  
No sir I am not. I am just leaving the park.

*Seven walks towards the cop to the exit. The Cop jumps into defense mode, he pulls out a gun.*

Don't you come any closer.

COP

*A moment. The gun is pointed at seven.*

SEVEN (Dhante)  
*(shaky) (to Two on the phone)*

Two

TWO (Chloe) (OS)  
 Yeah. I'm putting on my shoes/What is happening?

COP  
 TURN THE PHONE OFF!

SEVEN (Dhante)  
 Two....he's got a gun.

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)  
 WHAT!

COP  
 I SAID TURN IT OFF!

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)  
 Keep the phone on. You hear me. I'm calling my dad.

*Two puts him on hold and calls her Dad.*

COP  
*(holding the gun at Seven)*

I said turn it offfff... That's the problem with you people! You don't listen, to direct orders. And then things get out of hand. And then I get written up. And then no one at work wants to be your partner. Because you're attached to a police brutality case. And it's high profile, so you stop getting the good jobs and instead you get told to watch the park for hours. Sit in the cop car, assert a protective presence, help some little girl find her mommy. THEY FUCKING BENCHED ME!

*He jolts with the gun. Seven flinches*

*(beat)*

And then your wife leaves you. Because your breath always smells like rubbing alcohol. And your children want nothing to do with you. Because everybody's woke now! So you start drinking on the job, so you don't have to think about how this is all your fault...But it's not my fault...(to Seven, with immense hatred) It's yours.

*He loads the gun.*

SEVEN (Dhante)

Dude I don't know what you're talking about. But I need you to put down the gun.

COP

I MAKE THE ORDERS! Get on your knees.

*Seven lowers to the ground.*

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)

Seven! I'm back. Are you okay?

SEVEN (Dhante)

I'm tryna be

TWO (Chloe) (OS)

Look, we're on our way, you at central?

COP

Tell her to shut up!!!

SEVEN (Dhante)

Yeah central!

COP

Put the phone on the ground now!

TWO (Chloe) (OS)

Seven! Do Not. Hang. Up!

SEVEN (Dhante)  
*(to Two on the phone)*

I love you

TWO (Chloe) (OS)

Tell me that when you see me!

*Seven puts the phone on the ground. The cop kicks it towards him.*

TWO (Chloe) (O/S)

You hear me?!....You hear me?!....Seven!

*The cop picks it up.*

TWO (Chloe) (OS)

Sev-

*He hangs it up. And tosses it.*

SEVEN (Dhante)

light!

What do you want from me?

you got me on my knees!

Obstructing all my rights!

Bowing down to you like my ancestors. Proving that,

we-hold-these-truths-to-be-self-evident-that-all-men-are-created-equal

ain't nothin but shit talk

Made by a bunch a old white crackas

So what the *fuck* do you want!?

*Silence. The cop ponders.*

SEVEN (Dhante)

I SAID WHAT DO YOU WAN- AH!

*Lights drop to an instant black.*

*A gunshot is heard.*

*A moment. Heart beats.*

*Lights back up. Seven is on the ground.*

*He's been shot in the stomach.*

*The cop is gone.*

SEVEN (Dhante)

*(speaking directly to the audience)*

Ahh....shit....phhhh.....somebody.....Help....ah...i need...need..SOMEBODY HELP

ME!!!!...Don't just sit there HELP!!!!.....PLEASE..Please..

*Lights fade to black.*

SCENE 15

*Everyone is on stage in their own spotlight. No one should share a spotlight. One by one everyone will receive a phone call. It is the news of Sevens shooting. After each call, each actor should*



*inaudibly react to the news staying in the walls of their spotlight.*

*Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring.*

Yurr

ONE (Spencer)

*Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring*

Hello!!

TWO (Chloe)

*Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring*

Hey

THREE (Kaidence)

*Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring*

Hello?

FOUR (Amirah)

*Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring.*

What's good?

FIVE (Abel)

*RING. Ring. Ring. Ring.*

What's up?

SIX (Bernie)

*The ringing intensifies.  
RING. RING. Ring. Ring.*

Heyo!

EIGHT (Mya)

*The ringing further intensifies.  
RING. RING. RING. Ring.*

NINE (Na'shay)  
Hello

*RING. RING. RING. RING*

*RING! RING! RING! RING!*  
*Everyone takes a collective scream.*

THREE (Kaidence)  
To the world he was a thug. The boy at the back of the classroom, wasting his potential.

FIVE (Abel)  
They cannot keep doing this shit!!!

THREE (Kaidence)  
Selling his soul to the devil through the repeating of his favorite rap lyrics.

SIX (Bernie)  
How much longer are we expected to put up with this?

THREE (Kaidence)  
With every word he summoned more destruction into his life.

EIGHT (Mya)  
How many more lives?!

THREE (Kaidence)  
For dying in the street was his destiny.

FIVE (Abel)  
Like nah I'm for real done with this!!

THREE (Kaidence)  
like the brotha's and sista's before him. A hashtag. Just another name on the list.

FOUR (Amirah)  
*(on the phone)*  
ABP we need to talk. Like now! SHIT JUST GOT REAL.

THREE (Kaidence)  
His skin too dark to let in the light of love.

ONE (spencer)  
It could've been me...

THREE (Kaidence)  
His eyes too filled with tears

TWO (Chloe)  
*(in tears)*  
I sent him out there.

THREE (Kaidence)  
To stare into his spirit too broken.

ONE (spencer)  
It could have been any one of us.

THREE (Kaidence)  
Oh but his mind.

TWO (Chloe)  
This is on me!

THREE (Kaidence)  
The only thing of worth to this society that valued his ideas

ONE (spencer)  
HE WAS SHOT BY ONE OF US!

THREE (Kaidence)  
just not from him.

EIGHT (Mya)  
*sings*  
You are good  
You are kind

THREE (Kaidence)  
A nigga!

EIGHT (Mya)  
*sings*  
Don't you let nobody/steal your shine

THREE (Kaidence)  
Just another Nigga!!  
*(beat)*

But to me he was perfection!

ALL

I wish my perception were universal.

*Everyone freezes. Nine walks into Four's spotlight.*

NINE (Na'Shay)

Four you need to rally the people.

FOUR (Amirah)

What!!

NINE (Na'Shay)

When this kind of thing happens we do not just sit on it.

*Everyone begins to gather at Fours spotlight. They all crowd them (four).*

FOUR (Amirah)

I know that! You don't think I know that.

SIX (Bernie)  
(to four)

Well then what's the plan?

EIGHT (Mya)

What are we gonna do four?

*Everyone bombards them (four) with their unanswerable questions and comments. They repeat their lines above repeatedly, directed at four this time. As if asking Four for the solution. Everyone chases them (four).*

*"I sent him out there"*

*"This is on me"*

*"They cannot keep doing this shit"*

*"I know that! You don't think I know that"*

*"How many more lives?"*

*"Like Nah I'm for real done with this"*

*"I know that! You don't think I know that"*

*"It could have been me"*

*“He was shot by one of us”*

*“I wish my perception were universal”*

*“I know that! You don’t think I know that”*

*“How much longer are we expected to put up with this?”*

*“Four you need to rally the people.”*

*Four evades them. They (Four) only responds with “I know that! You don’t think I know that”. After a few repetitions. Four yells out.*

FOUR (Amirah)  
I KNOW THAT! YOU DON’T THINK I KNOW THAT!

*Pause*

NINE (Na’Shay)  
Then we need to move.

FOUR (Amirah)  
This was supposed to be fun. The mission was to portray life, but this is a little too much AS IT IS. This is too real.

NINE (Na’shay)  
Four-

FOUR (Amirah)  
SEVEN WAS SHOT! Not Dhante, not some character, The real person!

NINE (Na’Shay)  
I know and that’s why we need to make a space.

FOUR (Amirah)  
I’m tired of creating spaces  
Why do we have to fit into places?  
Why can’t we just exist in the whole  
I’m tired of pouring into others  
Who’s gonn poor back into my fountain  
When I’m running dry or its runnin dry  
whos gon fill *me* back up with positive affirmations  
I’m running out of ways to say “it’s gonna be okay”  
Can do this no mo

I ain't got no more analogies  
 Where's my release ?  
 Where's my soothing music?  
 Where's my release?  
 I need my ego fluffed  
 Where's my protection?  
 My cathartic exhale  
 WHERE THE HELL IS MY RELEASE?  
 Black joy on stage  
 A game of never have I ever

*Four breaks down. Nine helps them (four) up.*

NINE (Na'shay)

C'mon. It's okay

*They exit.  
Black out*

SCENE 16

*Everyone enters marching in the black.  
They hold signs with popular protest slogans.  
Sirens and a drum beat play loud  
Lights come up.*

NINE (Na'shay)

What do we want!

ALL

CHANGE!

NINE (Na'shay)

When do we want it!

ALL

NOW!

NINE (Na'shay)

What do we want!

ALL

CHANGE!

When do we want it!  
NINE (Na'shay)

NOW!  
ALL

What do we want!  
NINE (Na'shay)

CHANGE!  
ALL

When do we want it!  
NINE (Na'shay)

NOW!  
ALL

Justice for Seven!  
NINE (Na'shay)

JUSTICE FOR SEVEN!  
ALL

Justice for Seven!  
NINE (Na'shay)

JUSTICE FOR SEVEN!  
ALL

NINE (Na'Shay)

People don't be discouraged  
People where is your courage  
People bodies are dropping  
People we have to step in

People we cannot be silent  
People I know we not violent  
But people we must stand together  
Hands up if you hear me yeah

People it's gonna take all of us  
The big and the small and the tall of us  
The dark and the light of us  
No time for divide in us

The revolution ain't pretty  
 Shit, I got scars from the last ones  
 But we've got to do more  
 Than signing petitions door to door

We've got to change some laws  
 Hands up if you hear me yall  
 Don't be discouraged  
 Encourage, encourage, encourage oh

Resilience inside of your DNA  
 It is the milk that we drank as babes  
 People my people my people my people

People of Africa  
 People of America  
 People of Melanin  
 People of the Gospel man

Stand with your people oh

*\*Rapping\**

We shall not die today  
 We stand in unity  
 Show them your smiling face  
 Joy is not forbidden for you  
 Your life it does matter too  
 Oh your just a inch a way  
 If they move the finish line  
 Move it back and say  
 No I am here today  
 This life was ordained for me  
 Freedom Freedom Freedom  
 Freedom Free de de de dom Free de de de dom  
 Fist up if ya stand wit me!

NINE (Na'shay)

Justice for Seven!

ALL

JUSTICE FOR SEVEN!



*They all stand with their fist to the air.  
Blackout.*

SCENE 17

*A hospital room. An empty bed. Na'Shay leans over the bed. A monitor beeps.*

Son NA'SHAY (Nine)

Yeah ma DHANTE (SEVEN)

*Dhante walks towards the bed. He stands beside it.*

Did I fail you? NA'SHAY (Nine)

What? DHANTE (SEVEN)

It's okay you can be honest with me, I really wanna know? NA'SHAY (Nine)

Ma.. DHANTE (SEVEN)

NA'SHAY (Nine)  
Cuz I..I may have gotten caught up in tryna shield you from reality. To protect your innocence and joy. Maybe I was protecting myself. I don't think I wanted to accept that I brought you into this world and have no control over how you leave it. How you move in it. How others perceive you moving in it. How your joy could be seen as a threat. The very presence of YOU being a weapon. I don't think I wanted to accept that...accept that the fox news narrative of unarmed black man SHOT DEAD!...could almost be your story. Cause it wasn't your story, until now. Not my son. No, not MY son. Son, can you be born again? Can I put you back in my womb and birth you again? Cuz I wanna do it right this time. I wanna be strategic. I think I got lost in thinking if I just put you in the right schools. Right clothes. Right activities. Keep you in the right place at the right time. Maybe you'd be spared, Maybe the problem is MY right time was also THEIR right time, like hunters waiting in place for a kill. What I would give to have known that the battle grounds have become the convenience stores, parks, school yards, even your own damn home. How to shelter you from shelter? I may have coddled you. Raised you like a king on an open chess board. Have I coddled you son? Have I done this?

...No ma. This ain't on you.

DHANTE (SEVEN)

Then who?

NA'SHAY (Nine)

*Dhante walks out to the audience. He stares.*

The bystanders

DHANTE (SEVEN)

Who?

NA'SHAY (Nine)

*Dhante points out to the audience. NA'SHAY follows his gaze. She looks out at them as well.*

Oh...do they know?

NA'SHAY (Nine)  
*(with immense passion)*

I'm not sure..They may have thought it was a performance.

DHANTE (Seven)

*(beat)*

But son can we really blame them?

NA'SHAY (Nine)

Maybe not this time. But this should be the only setting where they watch what happened to me and not get involved. THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE.

DHANTE (Seven)

*Dhante walks back to the bed. He gets in bed. The beeping turns into one steady note.  
Dhante dies. Na'shay cries.*

NOO! Nooo!

NA'SHAY

*Lights fade*

## SCENE 18

*Everyone comes out on stage. Except Seven.*

FOUR

Umm....okay and then we fade to black.

TWO

I'm sorry but I just think the play shouldn't end like that.

ONE

Here we go again.

ONE

Two look-

FOUR

No wait, let's hear her out.

TWO

It shouldn't end with Dhante dying.

FOUR

Because?

TWO

Because Seven didn't die.

*Seven roles out in a wheelchair.*

SEVEN

That is true.

Four runs over to him and hugs him. They hold on to him tightly.

SEVEN  
*(to four)*

I'm okay. I'm okay.

ONE

Okay, yes but many black people have been murdered due to racialized violence.

FIVE

It's important to share those stories yall.

TWO

That is true and I would never want to make light of those stories but isn't there something hopeful about having survived one of these situations. Isn't there power in that? I mean seven is living proof. Don't we want to share the message that we as a people are resilient. Don't we want to inspire people to get up and make change in the end. How can we motivate them if we strip them of their joy? They know this shit is real, they see it enough everyday on the news and social media. Don't want to give them hope. Especially the black people sitting in the audience. Because what are we doing this for?

THREE

For us

FIVE

For us

ONE

For us

TWO

Exactly.

THREE

I say we end with a dance party. Soul train style.

NINE

I agree but I also say we collect money and we donate it to a black charity or cause. We make real change, if we're gonna tell them to go out and make real change.

SIX

I like that Idea.

FOUR

So it's set.

FIVE

Before we do all that. I got a question for Four.

FOUR

Yeah

FIVE

Did we do it? Did we put on a black play?

SIX

Yeah, did we do it?

*Everyone murmurs in agreement.*

FOUR

I actually don't have the answer to that.

TWO

What! Hold up cause I know I didn't spend this whole time/ working on lines.

ONE

Seriously Four!

*Everyone gets rowdy.*

FOUR

Alright alright calm down. I don't have the answer but..ABP does.

NINE

Who the hell is ABP?

FOUR

*(calling out)*

Hey yo ABP!

*ABP walks out on stage.*

ABP

That would be me.

*Everyone looks at them.*

TWO

What kinda name is-

ABP

It's more like an alias or title. A black playwright, A B P.

*Everyone ohhs*

ABP

I gave four this mission to give to all of you. Because I wanted to create a space for black actors to have conversations about blackness. And to portray life as they see it. All in the aim of answering the question, What is a Black Play? But what I have learned is that. There really is no answer to what is a black play? Because blackness can not be put into a box, it's far too rich. And if you wanted a play that had every idea of what it means to be black, a play befitting of calling

itself A Black Play, that play would never end. A black play cannot be defined, There are no boxes to check off. A black play just is.

FOUR

Hm

FIVE

I am so unsatisfied with that answer but I'm not mad about it.

THREE

Yeah cuz whatever we did make. We did it together yall.

*Everyone agrees.*

FOUR

Now let's get our joy on!

*A really good song comes on.  
They all dance, soul train style.  
After bows  
The ONE and NINE should stand at the  
doors collecting money. All proceeds should  
be donated to a black charity of the  
productions choice. '*

*END*