

***I, Too, Sing America***

**by**

**Chris Jakob**

ACT IChannel 1: We Welcome You

*Lights up. Performers enter space as a voice-over by jessica Care moore begins. As video plays, they set and disassemble a table. A moment of prayer.*

JCM

"I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I'll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody'll dare

Say to me,

"Eat in the kitchen,"

Then.

Besides,

They'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed—

I, too, am America."

-- Langston Hughes, 1926

*The voices of the performers begin to build on each other, repeating lines from the poem. Maybe in unison at first. Lines become staggered. Their words swell and overlap beautifully (maybe a cannon?) After a moment, music begins under it. (something classical? maybe it shifts into more operatic than jazz tones.) The performers move about the stage (gestures? symbolic.) Sounds of channels changing, clips of news, sports, reality t.v., cartoons increasingly until it abruptly freezes them. Right away they snap into position on their line.*

VIDEO:

PERFORMER 1

We welcome you

PERFORMER 2

We welcome you

PERFORMER 3

We welcome you

PERFORMER 1

For a matter of great importance

PERFORMER 2

a matter of great importance

PERFORMER 3

of great importance

ALL

*I, Too, Sing America*

PERFORMER 2

I sing

PERFORMER 3

You sing

PERFORMER 1

We all sing.

*The performers sing in a beautiful a capella  
harmony. Lift Every Voice*

PERFORMER 1

The United States of America

PERFORMER 2

The land of the free and the home of the brave

PERFORMER 3

The land where we like to sweep things under the rug

PERFORMER 1

Where history is sometimes

PERFORMER 2

Omitted

PERFORMER 1

Sometimes

PERFORMER 3

Rewritten

PERFORMER 1

Sometimes

PERFORMER 2

"Revisionist".

PERFORMER 1

Sometimes. But we are here to speak the truth--

PERFORMER 2

The truth of those who lived

PERFORMER 3

how they lived

PERFORMER 1

what they lived for

PERFORMER 2

how they were perceived

PERFORMER 3

how they are remembered

PERFORMER 1

their truth

PERFORMER 2

their history

PERFORMER 3

in their own words.

ALL

Let's get started, shall we?

*Lights shift. The screen goes static as the the performers become increasingly uneasy in the space, as if out on the open water. As their bodies rock back and forth, they get closer together.*

V.O.

The founding of a kingdom on the slaughter and enslavement of brown & black bodies sounds like an episode of Game of Thrones or a new verse from Kendrick Lamar, right? Unfortunately, it's a key part of American history that makes some people uncomfortable. Slavery. It happened. People owned people and treated them as property. Your history books might like to make it seem like things were "a little rough for a while" and the Emancipation Proclamation was issued and -- poof! -- all was good in the hood. Let me make this clear: our ancestors fought tooth and nail for freedom. Nothing was handed to them but the end of a whip. Slavery was ugly. Slavery is ugly. Slavery still exists in the world and the ramifications can be felt in America today. Also, let me make this clear: we are in the here and now. We are here. We are now. We can make a difference.

*Impeded in the video is this quote. "We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and the future."-- Frederick Douglass*

PERFORMER 1

Due to the number of different tribes, countries and cultures among African slaves kidnapped from their respective homes, an eclectic amount of languages were spoken between them.

PERFORMER 2

How did these people who spoke radically different languages understand one other?

PERFORMER 1

Time, I guess. Just like everything, life always finds a way.

PERFORMER 2

And, I guess not surprisingly, so does language.

PERFORMER 3

And the written word

PERFORMER 2

And dance

PERFORMER 3

And music

PERFORMER 1

And song. Each was used to tell a story.

*SONG: Melody of Spirituals*

PERFORMER 1

This is how they

PERFORMER 2

Us

PERFORMER 3

We

PERFORMER 2

This is how we never forget our history. Now, the span of black excellence has shone throughout the eons and this is our attempt at giving our ancestors thanks.

*Shift. A scene is set.*

Channel 2: Marian Anderson  
Pt. I

PERFORMER 1

It is April 9, 1939. Marian Anderson, an African-American singer, took her place in front of a dozen microphones reverberating out to over one million people at the base of the Lincoln Memorial. An interracial, mostly black, audience of seventy-five thousand physically came to witness her backed only by a piano and armed with a voice that was described as "a rich, vibrant contralto of intrinsic beauty".

PERFORMER 2

Now how did a black woman, the granddaughter of a slave, end up as a beacon of hope for so many people of color?

PERFORMER 1

Our stories never end or begin where anyone would imagine. Marian was born on February 27, 1897 in Philadelphia. John, her father, sold ice and coal. Annie, her mother, though studied to become a teacher was not allowed to do so based on arbitrary laws against blacks therefore, was a caregiver to small children.

PERFORMER 3

Both of her parents were devout Christians and attended church every Sunday. Her aunt Mary, active in the church's music life, noticed the innate gift in Marian and, at the age of six, got her to join the choir.

PERFORMER 2

Before long, a young Marian was making up to five dollars singing all over the city.

*They strike a pose on a soap box.*

*SONG:*

PERFORMER 1

And five dollars were a lot of dollars in those days!

PERFORMER 3

People began to pack spaces to hear the girl with the marvelous voice.

PERFORMER 1

Fast forward: Marian's father died when she was 12.

*Beat.*

PERFORMER 1

The family moves in with her grandparents. They become quite close. Her grandfather, born a slave, dies within a year of their moving...a free man. With the influence of her aunt still giving her strength, she never lost faith in singing. Now graduated from high school, she applies to the Philadelphia Music Academy and....

PERFORMER 2

And?!

PERFORMER 1

....is denied entry.

PERFORMER 2

Why?

PERFORMER 1

Simply because she was black. But do you think this deterred her?

EVERYONE ELSE

I doubt it!

PERFORMER 1

There is something about the pressure that, in time, brings about the best in us all. That's how diamonds are made.

ALL

That's how diamonds are made.

*Sounds of agreement.*

Channel 3: Josh Gibson

PERFORMER 2

Speaking of diamonds, have you ever heard about the Negro Leagues?

PERFORMER 3

My grandfather used to tell me stories about them all the time.

PERFORMER 2

Imagine it--

*The performers shift to watch the screen as if it were a television. The voiceover plays in conjunction with video.*

*VIDEO:*

V.O.

In the late 1800s, due to racism and segregation, African-Americans began forming baseball teams all over the country. From humble beginnings in colleges, businesses and military bases, the official league got its start in 1920. Though segregated from the Major Leagues, these teams were home to some of the best players baseball has ever seen. And someone special, considered by historians to be one of the best power hitters and catchers in league history, the second Negro League player to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1972 and became widely known as "the black Babe Ruth" is none other than--

ALL

Josh Gibson!

*The performers shift.*

V.O.

Gibson was born December 21, 1911 in Buena Vista, Georgia. Mark, Josh's father, was a sharecropper. Things weren't necessarily going well on the farm and Mark found a new job in a steel mill out of state. He moved Josh and the rest of the family to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania when Josh was in sixth grade. By the time he was sixteen, Josh got a job working as an elevator

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT'D)

operator at Gimbels department store-- he was currently in vocational school to become an electrician. When the store formed it's own amateur team he was asked to play third base. That one moment changed his life forever.

PERFORMER 3

Legend has it, in a moment of pure fate--

PERFORMER 2

he was attending a Homestead Grays game--

PERFORMER 1

that was Pittsburgh's professional Negro League team--

PERFORMER 2

and Buck Ewing--

PERFORMER 3

the catcher--

PERFORMER 2

injures his hand midgame and--

PERFORMER 3

get this--

V.O.

Are ya'll done interrupting?

*Silence.*

V.O.

May I finish?

ALL

(shyly) yeeeeeeesssss.

V.O.

Thank you. (clears throat) The team heard Josh was quite the talent and asked him to stand in-- July 20, 1930. And the rest, my friends, is history. Unfortunately, the league wasn't always able to keep as accurate records as they might've liked. Many often found themselves playing semi-pro teams due to an inconsistent game schedule so some information is

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT'D)

skewed a bit. But that didn't stop Gibson from becoming the second highest paid player in black baseball and is even credited with hitting a 580 foot home-run in Yankee Stadium.

Despite all of his accomplishments, Josh Gibson didn't break the racial barrier and join the Major Leagues. Luckily for us, his story has recently gotten a new life in contemporary opera co-produced by the Michigan Opera Theatre and the Pittsburgh Opera: "The Summer King". And it sounds little somethings like this:

*SONG: The Summer King in Winter*

PERFORMER 3

Gibson is one of the G.O.A.T.s!

*A beat.*

EVERYONE ELSE

what.....?

PERFORMER 3

The Greatest of All Time.

EVERYONE ELSE

OOOOOOOOH!

PERFORMER 2

Don't get me started on the original G.O.A.T.:  
Muhammad Ali. My momma told me--

PERFORMER 3

If we have time. Wait wait wait-- what about Marian Anderson? How did she end up in front of the Lincoln Memorial?

Channel 4: Marian Anderson  
Pt. II

PERFORMER 1

Though she was told by the woman behind the counter at the Philadelphia Music Academy that "we don't take (the) colored"--

PERFORMER 2

Oh no she didn't.

PERFORMER 1

Oh, yes she did. Despite that, Marian continued to hone her instrument with private vocal tutors. Her big break came when she entered the New York Philharmonic's singing competition and--

ALL

She won first prize!--

PERFORMER 1

-- a chance to headline her own performance in New York City! To which, she gained overwhelmingly positive reviews. She even got to perform in Carnegie Hall.

PERFORMER 3

So, she must've become famous right after that.

PERFORMER 1

Not exactly. Things were a bit different before the internet.

PERFORMER 3

There was a time before the internet?!

*Everyone laughs a bit.*

PERFORMER 2

BEFORE the internet news could only spread so quickly, let alone music. The racial climate in the U.S. didn't really help with that either. After much consideration Marian decided to go study in Europe for a number of months before making her debut there at

*A video projection begins of a map showing a plane leave from NYC to London*

Wigmore Hall in London in 1933. That moment sprang her career and launched her to:

*The video continues showing the following locations:*

PERFORMER 1

Scandinavia where she met

PERFORMER 3

pianist Kosti Vehanen who was from

PERFORMER 2

Finland. He became her accompanist and vocal coach for some time. Through her tour she also met impresario

PERFORMER 1

Sol Hurok who was from

PERFORMER 2

Russia.

PERFORMER 3

Hurok became her manager. Why are these people important to her story? Simple connections, acquaintances, friends, experiences from all over the world, helped shape who she was. With a bit of a push from her new manager, she returned to the states with what became an acclaimed national tour.

*SONG: Die Forelle (Schubert)*

PERFORMER 2

So we've got Josh Gibson knocking it out in baseball and Marian Anderson singing her face off but what about women in sports?

PERFORMER 3

I can't say we have as many women as men in the professional sports scene but you better believe the ladies are representing. Female athletes of color such as Gabby Douglass and Simone Biles--

PERFORMER 1

The gymnasts that tore it up during the 2016 Olympics--

PERFORMER 3

to Ibtihaj Muhammad--

PERFORMER 2

OH YEAH! She rocked it in the 2016 Olympics fencing in a hijab. Mattel even created a Barbie in her likeness!

PERFORMER 3

--to the bad ah--

ALL

SHHHH! Shut your mouth!

PERFORMER 3

What? I'm just talking about the dynamic duo Venus and Serena Williams.

*Video appears of them slamming the ball, scoring over and over again. A list of their awards and acolytes appear and fast forward.*

PERFORMER 2

One athlete who truly broke barriers, with a style all her own that caused a stir in the 1988 Olympics, where she won four gold metals and one silver, and still holds the title as fastest woman in the world is best known as Flo Jo: Florence Griffith Joyner.

Channel 5: Flo Jo

*VIDEO:*

PERFORMER 2

While she did earn her metals some twenty years after the civil rights movement, race still played a major role in her world. Playing into the patriarchy and stereotypical, offensive ideas of what women in sports should look like, some were even shocked by her level of femininity.

PERFORMER 1

"How can she run with her nails that long"--

PERFORMER 3

"with her hair that way"--

PERFORMER 1  
"wearing that".

PERFORMER 3  
To which she politely responded:

*A clip of Flo Jo plays saying: "It isn't about what you wear, it's about about what you believe you can do".*

PERFORMER 2  
And she must've thought highly of herself because Flo Jo moved like lightening.

*Cut to clips of Joyner winning 100m and 200m.*

PERFORMER 2  
I told you she was fast! She ran as if she were leaving her haters in the dust. Literally. It takes a lot for a woman to not only exist but thrive in a man's world.

PERFORMER 1  
And yet we continue to persevere.

PERFORMER 3  
Okay.

PERFORMER 2  
On the other side of that coin was Jessie Owens.

Channel 6: Jessie Owens

*VIDEO: The projections fast forward when mentioned in script like a VHS.*

PERFORMER 3  
The seventh son of a sharecropper and grandson of a slave, he was born James Cleveland in Alabama in 1913. His family always called him J.C.

PERFORMER 2  
Hey J.C., did you finish your homework?

PERFORMER 1

If you don't get down here right this minute, J.C.,  
I'll be on my way up! Don't make me do it.

PERFORMER 2

Sweet dreams, J.C.

PERFORMER 1

J.C.

PERFORMER 2

J.C.

ALL

J.C.!

PERFORMER 3

When he was nine the family moved to Cleveland, OH and  
on the first day of school the teacher said:

PERFORMER 2

"Okay everyone-- stop it Sarah. Everyone-- Larry,  
please leave Charlotte alone. Class, I'd like to--  
everyone please look this direction, thanks. Class.  
Class. Class!"

*Everyone snaps to attention.*

"Class, please welcome our newest student (gives up  
searching for their glasses, squints at paper):  
Jessie? Yep. Jessie....yep."

ALL

(dryly) "Hiiiiii Jessie."

PERFORMER 1

And the name just stuck. Nothing like a new name in a  
new place to change how you see yourself.

Fast forward: In 1928 Jessie broke his junior high  
school's record for the high jump, clearing 6 feet--

*A scale is shown on video.*

PERFORMER 3

He could jump over me, y'all. In junior high.

PERFORMER 1

--and almost 23 feet in the long jump.

*The performers create the distance in the space.  
They're minds are blown.*

PERFORMER 1

This was just the start. Jessie was talented, no one would deny that but it's persistence, practice and patience that really transforms someone into a true marvel. Jessie was no exception.

Fast forward: he is married and, though having earned a scholarship to Ohio State University, had to work up to five jobs. At one time.

PERFORMER 2

night elevator operator

PERFORMER 1

just like our friend Josh Gibson. He also worked as

PERFORMER 3

a waiter

PERFORMER 1

pumped gas

PERFORMER 2

worked in the library

PERFORMER 3

and even worked as an assistant

PERFORMER 1

all to take care of his family and put himself through college.

Fast forward: it is 1935 and Jessie is on the cusp of the Olympics. He broke multiple records at the Big Ten Championship in Ann Arbor, MI. This year, as major shifts were taking place world wide, the Olympics took place in Germany.

*The video begins to take us on this journey as well.*

PERFORMER 1

It may be a story for another day but if you know nothing else know this guy.

*Hitler appears on this video.*

PERFORMER 2

This guy.

PERFORMER 3

This guy.

ALL

This guy.

PERFORMER 1

This guy held the belief that whites, those of the "Aryan race", were "superior" to everyone else. It didn't matter if you were black

PERFORMER 2

Brown

PERFORMER 3

Asian

PERFORMER 2

Gay

*Beat.*

ALL

Jewish.

*Beat.*

PERFORMER 1

Any and everyone was a threat.

ALL

The ego.

PERFORMER 1

And no one stopped him.

ALL

Fear.

PERFORMER 1

And it sounds crazy today, right?

ALL

Right.

PERFORMER 1

How could someone like this gain any momentum?

ALL

Ignorance

PERFORMER 1

Ego. Fear. Ignorance. With this and a platform, this insane man amassed not only a politically appointed position of power, withdrew from the Disarmament Agreement and the League of Nations, shifted Germany to a one-party system, revoked citizenship to German Jews but he also used the press and his army to suppress critics, soon bringing about World War II and one of the largest genocides in recorded history.

PERFORMER 2

Hitler wanted the Olympics to feature the "new Germany", barring "non-Aryans" from competing on the German teams. He wanted to showcase the power of Nazism and "white supremacy".

PERFORMER 3

And in the face of all of this

PERFORMER 2

And in the face of all

ALL

In the face

PERFORMER 1

And in the face of Hitler himself, Jessie did the unthinkable:

*Video shows Jesse during the games?.*

PERFORMER 1

He became the first American track & field athlete to win four gold medals in a single Olympiad. Don't come for anybody because of their background. Everyone is capable of greatness.

PERFORMER 2

Booyaaaah!!! In yo face, Hitler!

*They dab. [but not fareal because the kids didn't like it.]*

Channel 7: George Shirley in the House!

*A Skype jingle snap the performers into the next channel.*

*A small state of confusion.*

PERFORMER 3

Ah! I almost forgot. I arranged a video interview with a living legend: George Shirley.

PERFORMER 2

He was Detroit's first black high school music teacher

PERFORMER 3

the first African-American member of the U.S. Army Chorus

PERFORMER 1

the first black tenor to win the Metropolitan Opera Auditions

PERFORMER 2

and the first African-American tenor to sing under contract at the Metropolitan Opera.

PERFORMER 1

George Shirley has appeared in over eighty operas all over the world. Today, he is on the music faculty at the University of Michigan and holds the title of Joseph Edgar Maddy Distinguished University Emeritus Professor of Voice."

*George appears on screen.*

*We work in a way for the performers to interact with the video and viceversa ala Jurassic Park and then the interview begins. The text can be written for the interviewee post-interview-footage.*

*After interview:*

PERFORMER 3

We are so fortunate to have had you speak with us today. Thank you! Let's give George Shirley a round of applause. Bye George!

ALL

Bye George!

Channel 8: Florence Price

*Symphony No. 1 in E Minor is gently heard at first. The performers are instantly transported to the next channel. That place may feel differently for each of them but either way they are there. As the music becomes louder, sequential movement begins to emerge. Tableaus, shadow work against the the screen using the table.*

*As the voice-over and video begin, the music gains a bit in volume. The text should start at a normal pace and speed up a bit until it gets to the last lines. It ebbs and flows.*

V.O.

the waves pull Us under

or

maybe it is Us

who are diving into the depths.

We

are

here.

twisting and turning.

boughs and bodies break on con-quested shores.

the rising

writhing wiggling of

witnessing

our

own

existence

and yet

We

can never

choose

fear.

Symphony No. 1 in E Minor. it's composer is Florence Beaurice Price. A brilliant woman, born biracial in Little Rock, Arkansas April 9, 1887. Though it was surely difficult if not outright dangerous for others in her situation, her family was well respected in their community.

Her mother, also named Florence, was a music teacher and deeply influenced her at an early age. Music was in her soul. age 4: first piano recital. age 11: first published composition. age 14: graduated high school at the top of her class and enrolls in the New England Conservatory of Music with a major in piano and organ.

To avoid prejudice, however, she pretended to be Mexican. Florence graduated with honors in 1906.

She moved around a bit. Teaching in Arkansas before moving to Atlanta, landing the gig as head of the music department at Clark Atlanta University. She got married and moved back to Little Rock. Florence was building a career and home for her family until racism reared its ugly head. A lot of racially charged events happened in Little Rock but a local lynching prompted her to move to Chicago in 1927.

For some time she blossomed, studied all of the city. Sadly, her and her husband divorced. Now a single mother to two children, Florence moved in with a student and friend, Margaret Bonds. Margaret was a pianist and composer as well.

Why bother to bring that up at all? Florence surrounded herself with creative people, those who she connected most with. Who else did Florence befriend around this time? Langston Hughes and Marian Anderson! They lifted each other up, like a wayward ship at sea.

Florence and Margaret both earned national recognition when they entered compositions into the Wanamaker Foundation Awards. Florence won first prize with that hauntingly beautiful tune, *Symphony No. 1 in E Minor*. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra premiered the symphony on June 15, 1933-- making her the first black woman to have a piece played by a major orchestra.

Music has the power to transport us somewhere. Somewhere else. Somewhere safe. Just let it take you away.

*SONG: Excerpt from Four Encore Pieces for Baritone*

PERFORMER 1

You see, a movement was coming into focus.

PERFORMER 2

It started long before

PERFORMER 1  
We think

PERFORMER 3  
No one really knows who started it.

PERFORMER 1  
We know

PERFORMER 2  
We don't know how it'll end

PERFORMER 1  
But we are

PERFORMER 2  
we are

PERFORMER 3  
we are

ALL  
Hopeful.

PERFORMER 1  
And that's something.

Channel 9: Marian Anderson  
Pt. III

PERFORMER 3  
Florence Price was friends with Langston Hughes and  
Marian Anderson. WHUUUUT?! Can I be friends with  
Beyoncé and Michelle Obama already?! PLEASE?!

PERFORMER 2  
Let's stay on task. So, what happened next with Marian  
Anderson?

PERFORMER 1  
Well, she went back to the states. Across Europe, she  
had a massive following. People couldn't help but be  
drawn to the woman who was said to have had a voice  
"heard once in a hundred years". America, however  
was--

PERFORMER 2

is--

PERFORMER 1

hung up on the idea of race and she wasn't allowed to stay at certain hotels or eat at certain places. When she had nowhere else to stay, guess who took her in.....

ALL

EINSTEIN!

PERFORMER 1

Albert Einstein not only thought highly of Marian professionally but he even hosted her in his own home. They remained friends until his death in 1955.

In 1939, Marian was denied the opportunity to perform at Constitution Hall in D.C. by the Daughters of the American Revolution. The school board even banned this international star from performing in a high school auditorium.

ALL

Segregation.

PERFORMER 1

That's when the NAACP,

PERFORMER 2

the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,

PERFORMER 3

along with half a dozen other organizations

PERFORMER 1

amassed signatures in the form of petitions and protested the department of education at large, thousands of members resigned from the DAR, including the First Lady of the United States:

ALL

Eleanor Roosevelt.

PERFORMER 1

Stating:

PERFORMER 2

"I am in complete disagreement with the attitude taken in refusing Constitution Hall to a great artist ... You had an opportunity to lead in an enlightened way and it seems to me that your organization has failed."

PERFORMER 3

So what happened?

PERFORMER 1

The First Lady persuaded the President to arrange, through a series of discussions, a performance on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial for April 9, 1939-- Easter Sunday.

*The performers move into position while the featured singer takes the stage.*

*SONG: My Country 'Tis of Thee (with video); Ave Maria*

*The projection overlays on the singer. They begin to lip sync Marian Anderson. The audio fades as the singer joins her live. Almost a duet. It is as if the energy is passed down to the singer through to this very moment. Maybe we even update the song a bit or have a beat of freedom. Everyone applauds and cross back.*

PERFORMER 1

You see, every moment, every struggle,

PERFORMER 2

every triumph and failure, laugh and tear, birth and death,

PERFORMER 3

every story -- mine, theirs and yours.

PERFORMER 1

are importants and led us to this very moment.

PERFORMER 2  
Our stories.

PERFORMER 3  
Our lives.

ALL  
Intertwined.

PERFORMER 1  
This isn't something to be ignored or rushed though.  
The importance. Of this. moment.

*Breath.*

Channel 10: We, Too, Sing  
America

PERFORMER 1  
Well, that seems to be all the time we have for today.

PERFORMER 2  
We hope you can join us again.

PERFORMER 3  
And we hope you learned a ton along the way. I don't  
know about y'all but all of these stories make me feel  
like we can do anything we put our minds to.

ALL  
Because we can.

PERFORMER 3  
And so can you.

*Sounds of channels changing, clips of news,  
sports, reality t.v., cartoons increasingly  
until it abruptly freezes them. Right away they  
snap into position on their line.*

PERFORMER 1  
We bid you adieu

PERFORMER 2  
We bid you

PERFORMER 3  
We

PERFORMER 2  
You

PERFORMER 3  
Adieu. And we thank you for being here

PERFORMER 1  
For a matter of great importance

PERFORMER 2  
a matter of great importance

PERFORMER 3  
of great importance

ALL  
*I, Too, Sing America*

PERFORMER 2  
I sing

PERFORMER 3  
You sing

PERFORMER 1  
We all sing.

*The performers sing in a beautiful a capella  
harmony.*

PERFORMER 1  
The United States of America

PERFORMER 2  
The land of the free and the home of the brave

PERFORMER 3  
The land where we like to sweep things under the rug

PERFORMER 1  
Where history is sometimes

PERFORMER 2  
Omitted

PERFORMER 1  
Sometimes

PERFORMER 3  
Rewritten

PERFORMER 1  
Sometimes

PERFORMER 2  
"Revisionist".

PERFORMER 1  
Sometimes. But we are here to speak the truth--

PERFORMER 2  
The truth of those who lived

PERFORMER 3  
how they lived

PERFORMER 1  
what they lived for

PERFORMER 2  
how they were perceived

PERFORMER 3  
how they are remembered

PERFORMER 1  
their truth

PERFORMER 2  
their history

PERFORMER 3  
in their own words.

ALL

Let's make a difference, shall we?

*Performers maybe start the piece, jessica joins  
as a solo and they join together for certain  
moments while movement happens.*

*We, Too, Sing America: voice-over and poem by jessica  
Care moore*

JCM

With the flag at half mast

What will we stand for in this hour?

What honor left in this land of the

Free

?

How do we matter, and who's

listening to our voices.

Maya Angelou's Caged Bird on repeat

This morning.

Some of us didn't just wake up

Some of us knew that our ancestors built

the railroads. The blood- salt of

These crystal mines, and the concrete poured

Into these streets.

How we will explain to our children

This was America.

50 years after

riots burnt down our cities

Who will speak for the unborn

The new women in black the me too  
Whistles blowing the truth  
Inside a bitter cold. We, moving  
The globe, turning history on its axis.  
Indigo as the Atlantic  
Sun kissing the politics of the day  
How will we survive this dialog  
Of walls, travel bans, religious and class divisions  
& tales of  
Two million cities and not enough  
Food for our children  
?  
Who's hands will claim the victory  
Who will touch the wet graffiti bricks  
Skyscrapers replacing the pyramids  
There is honor in hard work  
There is no honor in blind patriotism  
Jesse Owens was an eagle  
And our eyes are still on a sparrow,  
Waiting for our stories to land on  
On a ring of giant uprooted trees.  
Some of Billie Holiday's strange fruit never ripened  
Never able to grow into manhood  
Emmett Till was a boy, a poplar tree flower,  
and so was Tamir Rice and Michael Brown.

Josephine Baker was a Phoenix , an empress  
forced to use back doors  
Of rich bloated theater houses of indifference  
Colors are necessary  
The gold fist of Tommie Smith in the 1968 olympics  
blues is the color of a Nina Simone  
Song. The resistance pitch of our collective pain  
A John Coltrane blue train, A Lee Morgan holy ghost  
Trumpet  
Miles Davis Electric Red  
Black is the color of my true loves  
hair  
The frontline women of names we will never know  
The ones we must remember. Rosa, Coretta. Fannie.  
Sojourner. Betty. Harriet. Ida  
B.Wells.  
The voices of the men who will never come home from  
war  
The wars that plague our own neighborhoods  
The sound of a water hose, a weapon against a body  
Of people.  
The sound of silence swept under an audience  
Swept under our children  
Forgotten in the history books.  
Who else but you to find them  
To resurrect their stories

The same revolutionary  
way Alice Walker came for Zora Neale Hurston  
We must not be afraid to dig deep for equality  
Our planet should be a welcome center for humanity  
a 24 hour shelter for our homeless  
Everyone deserves a peaceful place to sleep, to dream  
aloud,  
To imagine their future.  
I am young, but my bones remember everything  
We are the ancestors blink in the eye of future storms  
We examine this moment and know we must do more  
This land is my land  
This land is your land  
We are the buffalo and the black elk  
We are the baton holders  
The bended knee risk takers  
Who raced across racial barriers  
Who climbed up flag poles  
And tore down confederate statues  
This is current news.  
We walk with the tenacity of Thurgood Marshall  
& the awesome poetic wonder of Ali  
We, taking back our time, with Maxine.  
Butterflies bursting from a cocoon of possibility  
We, too, speak of freedom in the 21st century

We are a caged bird, born again free  
We are the four little girls who will never again sing  
We are the metaphor for survival  
An aaron douglas shadow headed east  
An elizabeth catlett bust  
sculpted from bronze beauty and genius  
We are Kaepernick's bravery & the power of Serena's  
Right  
Wrist  
We are Eric Gardners last breath  
We are  
All  
we have  
left  
These hands  
These voices  
These colors  
These stories  
Those light ones, those dark ones,  
Those dreamers, those indigenous,  
Those yellow ones, those red ones  
Those young ones, those old ones  
Our bodies  
Our hearts  
Our minds

We, too, Sing, America

We, too, Sing. America

Are You

Listening?

*Curtain.*