

CHARACTERS

NAIMA SHAKUR

Thirty-something militant black activist a la Angela Davis. Formerly Shelly Norfleet, who has cut all ties to her family and small home town. Despite her chosen lingo, her education is obvious.

MOIRA ABERNATHY

Thirty-something white, bleached blonde, large breasts. High school friend of Shelly's. Liberal and missing her friend of many years.

STUDENT CHORUS

Female and Male; 18-20 year olds. Can be onstage, but may be prerecorded or offstage.

SETTING

The Ranking Chapel on Howard University's campus in Washington, DC.

COSTUMING

Typical of late 1960's. Very wide bell bottoms (males and females), halter tops, mini-skirts, chunky heels, dashikis, afros, brass and carved wooden jewelry. No hippie or flower child fashion except perhaps angel or peasant blouses over pants.

It is a warm spring evening in 1969 on the campus of Howard University (Washington, DC.) Onstage is the inside of Rankin Chapel, a small facility that seats a congregation of about 400. Upstage are the chapel's stained glass windows. It is evening and the setting sunlight coming through the windows casts a warm but fading glow over the room. The chapel is empty.

In front of the windows in semi-darkness are the members of the STUDENT CHORUS frozen in angry positions: faces contorted, fists clenched, pointing, laughing, etc. As the lights come up, they begin to move slowly and murmur intensely and angrily, but quietly as if from far away.

From outside (offstage,) a woman [MOIRA ABERNATHY] screams, and gradually, individual CHORUS voices are heard getting gradually louder as if approaching.

FEMALE 1

What the hell is she doin' here?

MALE 1

Get off our campus, honky!

FEMALE 2

Git your dog smellin' white ass out of here.

MOIRA

(offstage; breathless from running) Please leave me alone. Please! Ow!!

MALE 2

"Leave me alone." Yo' white daddy ain't never left my black ass alone, cracker.

MOIRA

(crying hysterically) I haven't done anything. Please, please...Please.

We hear MOIRA's approaching, running footsteps outside.

FEMALE 1

Bitch sounding like James Brown. "Please, please, please."

The front door rattles, opens, and MOIRA ABERNATHY bursts in and closes the door behind her. MOIRA is slim, in her thirties, with large breasts, long, straight, dyed blonde hair and a cut on her forehead. There is some blood on her face and blouse. She is terrified. She desperately looks for a way to lock the door and holds it closed when she can't.

MALE 1

Come back out here, bitch.

FEMALE 2

We need to go in and drag her narrow ass out.

MALE 2

I ain't dragging nobody out of a church.

FEMALE 1

Rankin isn't a real church, and what it mean anyway, brother? Jesus ain't never done shit for us but keep us enslaved.

MALE 1

Right on, sister. 'Cause I feel like offing me some white girl right about now.

The CHORUS creeps forward menacingly. MOIRA looks around desperately and hides between the pews. The crowd gets louder and more threatening, and the door rattles once again. Another female voice, that of NAIMA SHAKUR, is heard.

All of the following CHORUS lines and NAIMA's first line are simultaneous.

MALE 1

Ought to just kill her.

FEMALE 2

I hate whities.

FEMALE 1

We don't need to hurt her
just get her off our campus.

MALE 2

We can't take her out of a church.

NAIMA SHAKUR

My people.

The door bangs open, but instead of a chorus member, NAIMA SHAKUR enters holding up her

hands to silence and calm the crowd. The CHORUS quiets some.

NAIMA SHAKUR

My people. Brothers, sisters, hear me, please.

The crowd sees her. There is an awestruck tone to the murmurs now. It's like Stokely Carmichael or Angela Davis has arrived.

FEMALE 1

Look. Look who it is?

MALE 1

I *heard* she was speaking here tomorrow night.

NAIMA backs up into the doorway, so that we see in profile a woman (30's) with a huge afro, wearing dark granny sunglasses, an African dashiki, camouflage pants, and combat boots. The actor may play this facing the audience.

NAIMA SHAKUR

Please, hear me for a minute, my people. Let me speak. Now I know all kinds of bullshit is going down. You feel like even after everything that's happened on campuses across this country, including this one, nobody is listening to you. I know you royally PO'd that it's whities wandering around Howard's campus like they own the joint.

CHORUS

(*Some throw up a "power" fist or applaud.*) Right on, sistah! Say that!

NAIMA SHAKUR

And I feel where you comin' from. 1968 done come and gone, Malcolm's dead, Martin's dead, and here we are a year later with the same ole shit goin' down. The school administration and Tricky Dick n' em up the street on Capitol Hill, they act like they deaf. And with ears the size of Nixon's, you'd think he could hear an alien piss on the moon.

The CHORUS laughs.

NAIMA SHAKUR

Seems like the only time they ready to listen is when we burnin' *something* down or beatin' *somebody* up.

FEMALE 2

You ain't nevah lied!