Waking Up White: The Search For Black Happiness

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WAKING UP WHITE: THE SEARCH FOR BLACK HAPPINESS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

*Waking Up White (WUW)* is a television pilot written, directed and co-produced by Jason D. Gregory serving as part of his thesis requirements for earning a Master of Fine Arts in the Entrepreneurial Digital Cinema program at the University of Central Florida. The project attempts to answer the question “what if” by placing the main characters in a “fish out of water” scenario. In *WUW* a Black family wakes up White and has 30 days to determine if they’d rather return to their cultural roots or stick with the “new skin” that they are in. Upon awakening to their new reality, the neighborhood that they fled is in the early stages of gentrification and now whatever decision they make not only affects them but also their former community.

*WUW* was produced for $15,000, was shot on location in Central Florida and employed an all Central Florida based cast and crew. This thesis outlines the theories and processes used to bring this project to fruition.
This work is dedicated to those in constant search of Black Happiness.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What If?

In 2015, the idea for Waking Up White sparked from a news program that I happened to watch one evening. There had been another shooting of an unarmed Black male by a police officer. This has unfortunately become the norm for so many people of color, but I refuse to become numb to it. I was upset, yet felt defenseless. As the coverage continued, the camera turned to an older African-American woman that made a profound statement; “This wouldn’t have happened if we were White!” In this woman, I saw my mother, my sister, my grandmother and my wife. This woman represented every grieving mother that had lost a son or daughter to police brutality. I fell asleep with her statement ringing in my head. I’d felt the rage of my entire community and when I tried to explain this pain to my “non-endangered friends”, they claimed that I was taking it too personally or that it was an isolated incident and that not all cops were bad. Some even questioned the actions that led to the young man’s death and I then understood that they did not understand.

The next morning, I awoke with her cries still on my mind. If…what if we were White? Would I be afforded the same opportunities as my White counterparts? As an African-American, I have wrestled with this same question. I have had many situations, both financial and social, where race has come into question and wondered if I would have received the same treatment had my skin had less melanin. I have had situations from where I knew that I was more qualified for a job only to have it given to one of my less, qualified White counterparts to being hired and being the only person of color in the department, and yet still with all of my experience was treated more like a rookie than an experienced rep. You begin to ask yourself if you were hired based on your merits or to help fulfill a quota. Friends and relatives have mentioned similar situations and it has
even been stated that it’s a drawback to affirmative action; a law intended to level the playing field. Although we are now part of the team, we remain on the bench, watching as our White counterparts score and win. I, in no way dream of shedding my Black skin. The life that I have experienced as an African American has given me life lessons that I am not sure my White counterparts will ever receive or even understand. Yet, my curiosity was piqued. I have written several short scripts, pilot episodes and feature length screenplays before and shelved them, but this was something unlike anything that I had conceived before. This was personal. This was not just about my struggle, but those of my parents, their parents and our ancestors. *Waking Up White* would be a way for me to not only discuss the ills that plague my community, but to also bring to light the experiences that I, and other African-Americans have encountered and layer them with stories that I had heard as a child about segregation in the south and the north. *Waking Up White* is a story rooted in cultural identity, perspective, social injustice and their effects on the Black middle class. This would be a story about Black struggle, Black love and how, although faced with adversities, we as a people still strive to attain life, liberty and the pursuit of Black happiness.

**Black Happiness, Interrupted**

I would consider *Waking Up White* to be half narrative and half documentary based on the issues that are discussed; racism, classism and gentrification. And as much as it is about all three, it is also about the Black family dynamic and what does it take to achieve “Black happiness” and prevent “Black rage.” In one scene, Marcus speaks with his son, Junior, and asks him if he is “Black happy.” Junior replies that he was “Black happy” living in Wellsville. Black Happy is a term that I use to describe cultural happiness; a life where we are free to be who we are with no restrictions, no expectations and there is a sense of Black pride. It’s a head nod, a glance, a smile that acknowledges your “skin kin.” They are simple gestures that say “I see you brother, I see you sister” without having to say a word. Black happiness was Black Wall Street
during segregation where Blacks were forced to make something out of nothing. Black happiness is the Obamas for not only the way that they represent the Black race in the face of political racism but also the example that they set as a strong Black family. Oprah Winfrey epitomizes Black happiness for being unapologetically Black and successful. Iconic, Black TV characters, George and Louise Jefferson were the apex of Black Happiness for the way that they “moved on up” and gave Black audiences hope that they too could one day “live in an east side apartment in the sky.” Black happiness is simply a moment where you are surrounded and protected by Black love inside and outside of our world. It is a feeling that is attached to the soul and can only be understood by those connected to the pain of the past. Sometimes that pain can go back centuries and still leave an impression on future generations. An article published in the Atlanta Black Star suggests that “racial oppression has a psychological, multigenerational impact on Black people and leaves a biological and genetic imprint in its victims.” The article further states that trauma is embedded in the DNA and that due to the trauma of our ancestors, “Black people have post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.” (Love)

When we are disconnected from our cultural happiness, which sometimes happens when non-minorities see groups of African-Americans barbequing, selling lemonade on the street to raise money, or even picking up trash in front of our own residence, and decide to call the police, mistrust and Black pain set in. When that pain is not acknowledged it can and will quickly escalate to Black rage because we are once again reminded that the rules are different for us. In WUW, Marcus exclaims to Sheree that he is going to demand better pay and a seat at the table at his job, and she states that she doesn’t want them to look at him as the “angry Black man.” Blacks are quickly labeled as “angry” when our voices are not heard and the pain is dismissed.

In “It’s Called Battered Race Syndrome.” Or, Something Like That, Professor and HuffPost contributor Imani Michelle Scott, PhD., conducted an interview with three notable
African-American mental health specialists and here are some of the findings published in the article:

- African-Americans have anxiety about interacting with White people;
- Stereotypes of the angry Black woman and angry Black man are projections that White people put on us to control and validate their violence against us; and
- There is a fear of appearing weak in a society that only rewards the strong.

If Black pain is the interruption of Black happiness, then Black rage is born from those dismissing that pain. The suffering of our ancestors has been ingrained into our DNA. Hundreds of years of oppression and hurt are handed down from generation to generation and as much as we attempt to break the cycle, there is a constant reminder that we are Black and not afforded the same rights as our White counterparts.

**Un-Equal Opportunities**

Perspective is a powerful tool. It is used to guide, interpret and shape opinions in our personal lives, professional environments, and social settings. Perspective can be used to understand the plight of groups within society or create prejudice, fear and separation. At its core, *WUW* is an examination of cultural identity. In George Schulyer’s Afrofuturistic satire, *Black No More*, his main character would be faced with a similar dilemma. Written during the Harlem Renaissance, the novel introduces us to Max Disher, a Black man who volunteers for a scientific experiment called Black No More that promises to shed his Black skin in hopes of becoming White and what he believes will be, a better life.

Marcus Jenkins, father, husband and main character in *WUW* has no desire to resign his blackness yet he is in search of equal opportunity for himself and his family. He wishes to be free of that he finds to be limitations that come with being Black; the code switching, having to make those uncomfortable feel comfortable, and the economic imbalance. Marcus is a man
who works hard to provide for his family while at the same time eager to climb the corporate ladder. Unfortunately for him and so many African-Americans, it appears that the corporate ladder has been greased with oil. I can relate to the desires that Marcus has for his family. It is the hunger to be accepted as an equal, with equal pay. In *The Road to Zero Wealth: How the Racial Divide is Hollowing Out American’s Middle Class*, a report published by the Institute of Policy Studies, projects that “between 1983 and 2013, the wealth of the median black household declines 75 percent (from $6,800 to $1,700). And the median Latino household declined 50 percent (from $4,000 to $2,000). At the same time, wealth for the median white household increased 14 percent from $102,000 to $116,800.” Marcus feels that he and his wife, Sheree, are making the ultimate sacrifice for their children, son, Marcus Jr. “Junior” and their daughter, Rashida. What he fails to realize is that by taking them away from their cultural surroundings they become outsiders in a world unknown to them.

In *Racial Identity of Children in Integrated, Predominantly White, and Black Schools*, the authors state “White people only as a norm by which to measure other is a narrow view that is acquired by living in a society that perpetuates white norms and by believing that what differs from these norms is deviation” (Dutton et al 42). In school, rarely do they see anyone that they can identify with and it appears that system has been designed to cater to the majority. The children truly feel displaced in an environment where their parents expect them to succeed.

Junior and Rashida are amongst children with generational wealth and connections that have been passed down from generation to generation. Results of the study, *The Asset Value of Whiteness: Understanding the Racial Wealth Gap* were published in the Bloomberg Business Week article *The Big Reason Whites Are Richer Than Blacks in America* and exposes the racial wealth gap amongst the races. Amy Traub, associate director for policy research at Demos and
co-author of the study, states the result is that whites’ wealth advantage – and blacks’ disadvantage-gets passed down from generation to generation. “The money can be used to jump-start further wealth accumulation, for example, by enabling white families to buy homes and begin acquiring equity earlier in their lives.” (Traub inside Bloomberg) Some even have the financial means to find a backdoor to the educational system. Recently, actresses Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman were among 50 people charged in a scandal for bribing their children’s way into college. While most Americans saw this as a gross abuse of power, Black America saw it as another example of White privilege and another example of the uneven playing field.

Although the family cannot afford it, Marcus hopes that by providing his children with “the opportunities that he never had” that they will achieve more in life by having access to the “privilege pipeline.” In the school scenes, all of the children wear the same uniforms and Junior and Rashida must assimilate. At work, Marcus does the same thing in hopes of moving up. He wears khakis, a dress shirt and necktie attempting to fit in with his white counterparts. During production, I made sure to have the children from the private school and the men in the boardroom wear similar outfits to show how generational wealth is moved from the school yard to corporations. While most wealthy, white kids have a pipeline to privilege, the pipeline for most people of color is usually prison. According to an article published October 26, 2017 in http://newyorkschooltalk.org/, “40% of students expelled from U.S. schools each year are Black and 70% of students involved in “in-school” arrests are Black or Latino.”
Family Struggles

*WUW* will show a clear difference in the lifestyles and opportunities of the family before and after the transformation. Although the Jenkins family, has changed its social status they are still on the outside looking in. They live in a predominantly White neighborhood, have one and a half cars, the children are involved in the arts, yet don’t get to do much with it, and the household has recently gone from a two-income household to one due to layoffs. Marcus, who has worked as a project manager for a construction company for the last ten years, and watches as his white counterpart and former mentee receives opportunity after opportunity. His wife, Sheree, was recently laid off, rather replaced, by a younger, cheaper version of herself. The parents were the first to graduate from college, attended Florida A&M University and proudly display their degrees on the wall next to Black Jesus to inspire their children. Their son, Junior, is scrawny compared to other 16-year old’s his age and is a member of the high school band. He wakes up to pictures of Miles Davis, Wynton Marsalis, Terence Blanchard and other jazz greats. Their daughter, Rashida, is a ballerina who dreams of being on the cheerleading squad, nicknamed the Sister Squad, but they don’t have anyone of color. On her wall, she has pictures of accomplished ballerina Misty Copeland, Josephine Baker, Debbie Allen and others. The Jenkins parents are attempting to create an environment of culture to help keep the children grounded and have a constant sense of self.

I have outlined the scenario for the Jenkins family, but this could be the experience for many Black families. I know the feeling of being laid off and wondering how I am going to provide for my family. I’ve chased the dream of living next to the Jones’ only to fall victim to
predatory lending practices. And, although we have never been at risk of losing our home, I have friends and families who lost everything during the recession. There is a saying in the Black community that when the economy is sick, the Black economy catches the flu. It just hits us harder and unfortunately, we may not have the means to rebound as quickly as others. *WUW* will give audiences a deeper insight into Black family struggles as we attempt to see if the grass is truly greener on the other side.
CHAPTER TWO: FROM EMANCIPATION TO GENTRIFICATION

Constructing Identity During Reconstruction

The research conducted showed that this couldn’t just be a story about a present day, middle class African-American family. Although *WUW* is a story that was conceived through personal experiences of friends, relatives, and myself, I still had to find the rich culture and history to create a framework for the series.

I had always imagined that the backstory for *WUW* would start during the 1950’s and 60’s, during the Civil Rights movement, yet the story would start earlier than that. The history of *WUW* would go back as far as 1863, during the Emancipation Proclamation and into Reconstruction. In *WUW*, we meet the town matriarch, Big Mama, who tells the history of Wellsville, our fictitious town. Big Mama represents town historians who passed down stories from generation to generation and kept the history alive. She was the child of sharecroppers, as many were during that time, and her family remained in the south. Once slavery ended, some African-Americans remained in the south for various reasons; it was all that they knew, they didn’t have the funds to move, and/or they wanted to create new opportunities for themselves. During this time African-Americans tried to carve out their own identities in the south and began setting up communities, local governments, businesses and schools. One of those communities, Eatonville, located in Central Florida, where the story of *WUW* takes place.

Established August 18, 1887, Eatonville is the oldest Black incorporated municipality in the country and would be self-governed by free Blacks. In her book, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, author Zora Neale Hurston writes, “Eatonville, Florida is, and was at the time of my birth, a pure Negro town-charter, mayor, council, town marshal and all. It was not the first Negro community in America, but it was the first to be incorporated, the first attempt at organized self-government on
the part of Negroes in America.” (Hurston pg.11) Known as “The Town That Freedom Built” Eatonville’s rich history would become the model for our fictitious town of Wellsville in *Waking Up White*.

**Seeking the Promised Land**

As we move into the 20th century, labor needs up north opened up opportunities for African-Americans and a great migration began to take place. In 1916, a mass exodus started and over one million African Americans migrated to the north searching for opportunity. By the time that the migration ended in 1975, over 6 million African-Americans would leave the south and establish new lives in the north. In WUW, we find that our main character, Marcus Jenkins, Sr., migrated from Wellsville, seeking better opportunities for his family, while his best friend and co-worker, Ali, remained in community, similar to those who stayed in the south.

During both world wars, White men would leave to serve and labor jobs became available, opening up job opportunities for African-American men. Not only were they fleeing for jobs, but also to seek a new life away from Jim Crow laws, which were established after Reconstruction and lasted into the mid-1960’s and reinforced segregation. During her TedTalk, Isabel Wilkerson, author of *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration*, explains “this was the first time in American citizens had to flee the land of their birth just to be recognized as the citizens that they had always been. No other group of Americans has had to act like immigrants in order to be recognized as citizens. This great migration was not a move. It was actually a seeking of political asylum within the borders of one’s own country.”

This was not only a physical move but also one that was psychological. It helped liberate creativity and free thought which helped usher in periods like the Harlem Renaissance, a collection of Black creative intellect and artistry. Also known as the “New Negro Movement” this era produced Eatonville’s own Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, WEB DuBois, James Baldwin,
Langston Hughes and many others. The Harlem Renaissance offered artistic freedom to those who may not have been able to cultivate that talent living in the south.

**I’m Black and I’m Proud**

Those who remained in the south began to prosper as well within their own communities but no matter how many advancements they made in banking, education, and law, they were always reminded that they were colored. Jim Crow laws continued to prevent African-Americans from having the same rights as their White counterparts. In the mid 1950’s, the civil rights movement ignited when the “separate but equal” law was overturned by *Brown v. Board of Education*. Although desegregation was the new law of the land, integration would be opposed by White citizens. Black children would now enter the same classrooms as White children, and Black families would now begin the quest for equal housing opportunities. As the civil rights movement continued to make strides, those who helped develop and mold Black communities, now sought to migrate to White neighborhoods. Those African-Americans that could afford to leave their communities did so and took the power of the black dollar along with them and began building new lives in inner city neighborhoods. At the same time, White citizens began to flee for the suburbs in what was called, “White flight.”

According to an article published in the December 2013 issue of the Atlanta Black Star, after segregation ended African-Americans flocked to support businesses owned by whites and other groups, causing Black restaurants, theaters, insurance companies, banks, etc. to almost disappear. Today, Black people spend about 95 percent of their income at white-owned businesses with little and sometimes no support from the White community.

**Gentrification**

From 1960 to 2000, African-Americans began another migration. This time, it was coined as “Black flight”; a period when Blacks fled their communities, moved into the suburbs and even
back to the south. This trend would have severe consequences for years to come and initially gave way to gentrification, which has two definitions according to Google: (1) the process of renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste; and (2) the process of making a person or activity more refined or polite.

When those who create, live and work within the community, leave the community, poverty sets in and others come in and begin to change the landscape. Harlem is an example of how gentrification has changed the face of the community. In Whole Foods, Gentrification and the Erasure of Black Harlem, an August 2017 article in TheRoot.com, it mentions that the Black population in Harlem began shifting in the 1970’s and has been declining ever since. And according to an article in theguardian.com, there was once a move by real estate agents to change South Harlem to SoHa. As a military veteran, I have lived in several cities, states and overseas and I always saw the remains of a community that was once thriving and is now a shell of what it used to be. Gentrification has occurred in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Washington D.C, and even in predominantly Black areas in Central Florida. One such area was the neighborhood of Parramore, a historical, African-American community in Central Florida. Where Black businesses, schools, and neighborhoods once stood now have been replaced by sports’ venues, colleges and universities, and upper-middle class housing. A February 2015 article in the Orlando Sentinel mentioned that “Parramore has lost 65 percent of its population during the past half-century and is plagued by deeply rooted poverty. The unemployment rate among its remaining residents is 23.8 percent comparable to that of the Great Depression. Nearly one of every five homes in Parramore is vacant.” (Hudak) During segregation the community thrived due to residents such as Dr. William Monroe Wells, one of the first Black doctors in Orlando, Florida.

In Parramore, there sits a museum named after the iconic leader; the Wells’Built Museum. It lies at the corner of Division Avenue, and both stand as reminders of the past and what could be
lost through changes occurring at a rapid pace. During the days of segregation, Dr. Wells’ hotel was listed in the Green Book, a book that listed “Black friendly” services for African-Americans traveling during segregation, and he provided shelter at the Wells’Built Hotel. According to http://www.wellsbuiltmuseum.com/, the hotel provided lodging for Ella Fitzgerald, Thurgood Marshall, and Jackie Robinson. Dr. Wells also provided entertainment in the South Street Casino for locals and travelers. A February 2019 article in the Orlando Sentinel reported that there were “greats of American entertainment who played at the South Street Casino, on the “Chitlin’ Circuit” (well depicted in the 2004 movie “Ray,” about Ray Charles) included Charles and many others such as Count Basie and Duke Ellington. They all stayed at Dr. Wells’ hotel.” (Dickinson).

Once segregation ended, so did Parramore’s thriving educational and business communities. “The loss of neighborhood schools represented a serious blow to the Parramore community. Many businesses suffered a fate similar to schools. Whites had never patronized them, and the law no longer restricted black businesses exclusively to black neighborhoods.” (Porter 308).
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Wake Up

In February 1988, my mother dropped me off at the movie theater and sped off, leaving me there trying to decide what I wanted to see. I had not heard of any of the titles, but there was one that spoke to me, and I decided to spend my $4.00 on a filmmaker that challenged me to think culturally, globally and to "wake up." It was as if blinders had been removed as I watched Spike Lee’s School Daze. I had not been introduced to the world of a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) nor a film showing people that looked like me dealing with issues such as racism, colorism, and classism. Sure, we had The Cosby Show and A Different World on television, but there was something different about this narrative. It was the political activism, the gritty dialogue, the music and of course, the imagery. At the end of the movie, Spike Lee challenged the audience to “wake up," and I have been awake ever since. From that day, while my friends were trying their best “to be like Mike (Jordan)” my goal was “to be like Spike.” His use of social realism paints an accurate picture of how life was then and is for African-Americans currently. It is and will always be my goal to also bring awareness to social and political issues that affect those who are voiceless and underserved.

As a filmmaker, it is my responsibility to create different perspectives while still holding onto my “truth” as an African-American. While writing WUW, I wanted to bring together the Social Realism that Spike has used in his films coupled with the Magical Realism from Afro-futuristic books such as, Black No More and Pleasantville (1998).

Fight the Power

If School Daze was my alarm clock, then Do the Right Thing (DRT) was my reason for getting up and moving towards my purpose.
The 1989 classic film about racial tensions exploding on a hot summer day in Brooklyn gave White America a glimpse of Black life. In the book, *Spike Lee’s Do the Right Thing*, author Douglass Kellner explains that *DRT* is a film about the black urban experience from a black perspective. “Lee presents black ways of speaking, walking, dressing and acting; drawing on black slang, music, images and style”(75). In his film, Lee uses his main character Mookie to depict the racial tensions and the struggle of a young 20-something African-American male in the ‘hood.

In *WUW*, I will present the struggle on the opposite end; Marcus Jenkins Sr., a 40-something African-American male, has moved his family from its roots in hopes of a better life, but can’t get ahead due to what he perceives to be workplace racism. “Society especially oppresses people of color: not only is their racism and racial hatred among all races and ethnicities, but there is an unequal distribution of power and wealth in the US society, in which Blacks and people of color tend to suffer disproportionately from systemic racial and class oppression” (Kellner 82).

In *DRT*, Lee masterfully showed love for and lack of cultural identity through pictures in Sal’s Pizzeria. Sal was a proud Italian and showed his heritage by posting pictures of famous Italians along the walls of the pizzeria. Although his restaurant was in the ‘hood and was only frequented by African-Americans and Hispanics, he refused to put up any pictures of famous Black people.
While working in corporate America, it was very rare that I saw pictures of successful people of color. I would always look for an immediate connection and a sense of belonging in a new environment. Most of the time I would see pictures of older White men and occasionally a White female. I experienced the same thing in college. While attending Norfolk State University and Virginia State University, it was natural to see images of successful African-Americans. It helped instill pride in the students and let us know that we mattered. Unfortunately, when I completed my undergraduate degree at Virginia Commonwealth University, I was once again confronted with images of successful White men who had buildings erected in their honor. It was just the norm and in order to succeed, I along with other people of color, would just have to focus on our education and hope that we would eventually be the difference for those following behind us.

I decided to put the Jenkins’ children in this type of environment as well. Although the Jenkins’ children see reflections of themselves at home, it is the complete opposite at school. In hopes of providing his children with better educational opportunities, Marcus has enrolled them in a private school and sacrificed the family’s cultural identity. The pictures on the walls inside of the schools, the students and the culture all reflect a life that Junior and Rashida are not familiar with.
People of color have been conditioned to assimilate not only in the work place but also in our language. For example, the way that most African-Americans speak amongst themselves is different than when they are in “mixed company.” As a child, I was constantly told to use correct English, not for the simple reason that it was correct, but for fear of appearing to be uneducated in the presence of White people. But amongst family and friends, I was able to slip back into a more colloquial conversation. Marcus and Sheree would hand these lessons down to their children as well. They do not speak slang outside of the house, and Marcus is quick to correct the children if they slip up but are true to themselves when not in “mixed company.” The family experiences code-switching; what some may call “talking White.” In *Talking White and Living Black: The Art of Code Switching*, Hanifa Barnes explains how W.E.B. DuBois alluded to this theory of duality among Black people in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*. In the article, she discussed how DuBois’ idea of double consciousness of Black existence in European society.

"Code-switching is a more finite theory of DuBois’ thoughts in that the focus is the ability for non-whites to effortlessly transform into “standard” English speech, cadence, and inflection order to assimilate in society. Essentially, a person alternates between different languages, or in my case, different cultural dialects” (Barnes). We see several instances of this before the transformation.

The change is almost a form of passing, like the plot of the 1934 film and the 1959 remake of *Imitation of Life*. In this story, the main character is a fair-skinned African-American who
chooses to leave behind her heritage and pass as White, in hopes of finding more opportunities.

NPR’s Code Switch: Race and Identity, Remixed series examined the legend of passing while discussing the book A Chosen Exile: Black People Passing In White America. In the episode, author Allyson Hobbs revealed a story that her aunt told her about a distant cousin. "She was black, but she looked white," Hobbs said. "And her mother decided it was in her best interest to move far away from Chicago, to Los Angeles, and to assume the life of a white woman." Many African-Americans did this in search of opportunity and a better life, and the Jenkins are no different. Although they now live in White skin, they are still African-Americans passing as White.

Another film that examines “passing” is Pleasantville. While using the magical realism method of filmmaking, the filmmakers catapult their main characters into a show from the 1950’s, shot in black and white. In a scene from the movie, one of the characters begins to turn “Colored”, and quickly puts on makeup to pass as black and white so that she is not shamed by society.
Just like *DRT*, *Pleasantville* has also influenced me due to its content, the colors, and cinematography. In *Color and the Moving Image. History, Theory, Aesthetics, Archive*, Phillip Schmerheim explains that Pleasantville not only explores the metaphorical interrelations of color and emotion but also represents politics of color. “The film explicitly invites comparisons to the history of racial segregation and the conflicts surrounding the US Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. In *Pleasantville*, color thus not only functions as a literal device for the film’s narrative structure but includes metaphorical and political discourse on color as well” (120). With *WUW*, not only do we address segregation, but we also take risks with colors. The African-American family will have muted colors before the transformation and bright colors afterward, to reflect their new perspectives.

Society has had the most significant influence on shaping my thoughts, my fears, and my perspective. In *DRT*, we witnessed a young, black man, Radio Raheem, being choked to death by
the police. The film was released in 1989, yet 25 years later the world watched as police officers killed Eric Garner in the same manner. Same choke hold, same murder, same outcome; not guilty.

In the first episode of WUW, Junior jumps out of the vehicle, throws on his hoodie and heads into a corner store. Unbeknownst to him, he is followed by a police officer and Marcus witnesses this and runs into the store to protect his son. This is a common story in the African-American community; young Black male goes into a store with a hoodie on, cop thinks he is a suspect and follows him, and the young Black male is either frisked, arrested or killed.

_Huffington_ Post published findings from a project by The Guardian that revealed that in 2016, U.S. police killed at least 258 black people. Thirty-four percent of the unarmed people killed were Black males. We have explored this epidemic in the TV series and address how Black families tend to fear those that are supposed to be there to protect and serve them.

Harlem Renaissance

When you speak of a moment in time that accurately captures Black Happiness, it has to be the Harlem Renaissance. Zora Neale Hurston; Langston Hughes; W.E.B. Du Bois; Duke Ellington. These were the rock stars that ushered in a new way of thinking and existing for African-Americans. This all took place in one area; Harlem, NY. Now, some 80+ years later, Harlem is a far cry from the Black royalty that called the borough home. Predominantly Black and Brown cities across America have become victims of gentrification including our fictitious town of Wellsville.

Marcus Sr. is in search of another level of Black happiness, but unfortunately, it comes at a
high cost. Once he saw the opportunity, even if predatory lending practices created that opportunity, Marcus Sr. moved the family from their beloved hometown of Wellsville, where they left behind family, friends as well as their culture. This is like what occurred when segregation ended in the South. Those African-Americans that could afford to move from their communities did so, unfortunately, taking the power of the Black dollar with them. According to an article published in the December 2013 issue of the Atlanta Black Star, after segregation ended African-Americans flocked to support businesses owned by whites and other groups, causing Black restaurants, theaters, insurance companies, banks, etc. to almost disappear. Today, Black people spend about 95 percent of their income at white-owned businesses.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

The Makings of You

Just as Spike did in *DRT*, it was important for me to capture the essence of Black identities. Identity and culture were intertwined so that African-Americans were able to see to a sense of their true selves in *WUW*. The identities of the characters are who they are; the culture is how they live. In the book, Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing*, author Douglass Kellner explains that *Do the Right Thing (DRT)* is a film about the black urban experience from a black perspective. “Lee presents Black ways of speaking, walking, dressing and acting; drawing on black slang, music, images and style” (Kellner p.75).

The medium for *Waking Up White* was originally a feature length screenplay and it was more about a race switch; one family would wake up White while the other wakes up Black. The goal was to see if the two races could exist in different worlds for seven days and if given the chance, would they remain in their new skin or return to their roots. The script was heavy with drama. It discussed not only police brutality, but also racism, classism, and cultural identity. We had budgeted $50,000 to film during the summer of 2018. In 2017, I launched an Indiegogo campaign at the Allstate Tom Joyner Family Reunion during Labor Day weekend. The Reunion was a client and had offered me a booth to help launch my campaign. There would be 20,000 Black folks coming through the event and I was excited to present them with my project. This launch taught me a hard lesson; become a student of the weather and never launch a crowdfunding campaign between two hurricane relief funds. Hurricane Harvey hit in August and there was a big push to raise relief funds at the event and rightfully so. According to a September 2017 article in Complex.com “Harvey demonstrates how natural climate change disproportionately impact people of color.” Our Black community was suffering and needed resources that they did not have. That weekend, along with my wife and a few friends, we
campaigned hard, and managed to raise $200. We continued our efforts throughout the month and just a few weeks later, Hurricane Maria pummeled Puerto Rico. Yet, another minority community would suffer the aftermath of a natural disaster and were not afforded the resources needed to survive and rebuild. I reflected on that word “if” once again, I and felt even more determined to produce the project.

As I continued to revise the feature length script, it was suggested by two of my professors that I consider transforming WUW into a television series. Now, I grew up wanting to “Be Like Spike”, not a TV guy so I was resistant to the idea. I locked myself in my office for three days and came out with the pilot episode and realized that I was much more of a TV guy than I had realized. Since all the research had been done while writing the feature, I just took sections and sprinkled comedy in where I could. WUW took on a new life and I was extremely happy with the outcome.

**Crew Call**

With $2500 that was raised from the Indiegogo campaign, three investors and savings, we had a total budget of $15,000. A little more than $12,000 would be used for production and $3000 for post-production. I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to be a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) because I was able to quickly identify talented students who became part of the crew. I sent out a crew call for department heads and met with several interested students. After several meetings, I truly felt as though I had my “dream team.” I had Julie Walsh, a first-time producer who turned out to be a great partner; my unit production manager (UPM) Carrie Wilson, who I had immediately identified for her accounting skills during my first semester as a GTA; my silent shooter/director of photography, Kevin Garcia; and of course, Alejandro Watson, my 1st Assistant Director (AD) and Sergeant at Arms. Once we had these department heads on board, we shot out a crew call, and I was honored that so many students were interested in working on the project.
Casting Call

While we were still interviewing for additional crew, we also began working with Marco DiGeorge with Truthful Acting Studios. I was familiar with Marco and his eye for talent and was privileged to have him help cast for WUW. January 13, 2018, we put out a casting call and on January 20, we had our first auditions. I was truly blessed with the caliber of talent that came out to audition from the theater and film worlds. We had some of the best talent in Central Florida, which was my goal. I wanted to create a project with all Central Florida cast and crew to show that industry that we have the talent and are ready to create our own opportunities.

We had to make sure that there was great chemistry between the actors for whoever we chose for the Black Jenkins family. During the casting call, we paired up actors who were auditioning for Marcus and Sheree and would rotate them throughout the evening. Since some of the actors were coming from the theater world, they were used to really “projecting” their deliveries and we had to direct them to tone it down. But that was exciting to use because we realized that we were merging these two worlds together. We also paired up child actors who were auditing for Junior and Rashida with actors auditioning for the parents. There were some actors who stood out more than others and we began to form an idea of who would play the Black Jenkins family.

During the casting call, we also auditioned many actors to play the White Jenkins family. This was more of a physical audition, because there were no lines. We had to see who would provide us with the best reactions to Waking up White having gone to sleep, Black. We did the same thing with the White actors that we did with the Black. We paired them up and rotated them to see who had the best chemistry and best delivery. After day one, we had callbacks, which gave us an opportunity to audition other actors who were not able to attend the first casting call. After this second round, we were more confident in our decisions about the Black Jenkins family as well as the White Jenkins family. Before the night was over, I began making calls offering the
roles to the actors. It was an amazing feeling to hear actors excited about getting the roles and further reinforced that I made the correct career move.

We honestly had no trouble casting for our Black and White Jenkins families as well as most of our secondary characters. Just like my crew, I once again felt as if I had the best of the best when it came to actors in Central Florida. The excitement was building but we did not have anywhere to film WUW. We needed to find a place that would allow us to borrow from their rich culture and history. We had considered Parramore, but with all the construction taking place it would make it impossible to control the set.

**Locations and Production Days**

Less is always better, and we realized that when searching for locations. We had eight locations that we had to scout, and I had seriously considered re-writing the script so that we would only need four. But first, I would put on my locations manager hat and see what could be done.

**Law Firm, Monday, June 4, 2018:** Our location scout, Marjorie Tingle, located this property. It was a counseling center. It was beautifully set up and provided enough rooms for hair and makeup, craft services, and plenty of offices to choose from to convert into a law office. We decided that the best choice was Janie Lacy’s (the owner) office. She was gracious enough to allow us to invade her space for the day and we are eternally grateful. The exterior did not match what we needed for a law firm so we decided to use the exterior of the Eatonville library. This was our very first shoot and the easiest. It was decided that we would shoot this scene to get the crew adjusted to working with one another. We then had our first location move, which was less than 10 miles away.
Black Jenkins Home, Monday, June 4, 2019-Wednesday, June 6, 2019: Carrie and Julie get all the credit for locating this property. It was listed on the Orlando Film Commission website and has been used in several other productions. Although this was the only property that we had to pay for, it was still a great choice based on the location, (Winter Park), the exterior and the number of rooms. Except for the master bedroom, all other rooms were clean and just had a bed and desk located inside. We basically had a clean slate to work with. Our Production Designer, Trevon Coleman and Art Director, Ebony Hobbs, came in and transformed the rooms just as I had imagined them to look.

Wellsville, Friday, June 8, 2019: I was able to meet with the new owner of an historic building in Eatonville that used to be home to Club Eaton. From what I understand it was also part of the chittlin’ circuit and James Brown, the Drifters and Fats Domino had all performed there. Now, it was an abandoned building. We had an idea to create a mural on the exterior of the wall that would identify our fictitious town of Wellsville. The owner gave us his blessing, and once again, our Production Designer, Trevon, created magic. Trevon worked with Forest and Yson Deblois to create a beautiful mural two days prior to filming at the location. The day of the shoot, everything went great and we had our second location move.
Phillips’ Construction, Friday, June 8, 2019: I have a great relationship with the administration at Herzing University. I attended meetings there when I was part of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and had also trained international students on marketing and branding when needed. When I approached them about using their location, they were more than gracious.

Backyard Bar-B-Que, Saturday, June 9, 2019: I had the pleasure of meeting Ms. Louise Franklin and her son, Kelvan. These two are the true fabric of Eatonville. Their historical knowledge of Eatonville helped me fill in the gaps when attempting to create Wellsville. The Franklins’ not only allowed us to use their property for the backyard bar-b-que scene, but they also were instrumental in getting us the locations for the Big Ass house and Big Mama’s house. Their relationships run deep in Eatonville and Maitland and I was so honored to have met them. Although I was grateful to film in this location it was also the day that I dreaded the most. This was the only day exterior shoot and I was extremely nervous about the weather to the point that I studied the Farmer’s Almanac for the last three years, and local weather forecasts. This is Orlando, and we were filming during hurricane season. I was not only risking the production, but also people’s lives on this day. The weather was in the high 90’s with humidity and we were expecting rain. I needed to mitigate my risk as much as possible. From everything that I had read, we would could expect rain anywhere between noon and 2pm so I wanted to get all of the pivotal sequences done by then. If the rain let up later, we could resume filming and get the additional
sequences. And thank God it worked out as planned. Rain crashed down on us around 12:30 p.m. but by then we were finishing up a shot and headed to lunch. Once the rain was over, we threw sand on the ground and finished shooting the scene.

Figure 14. Backyard BBQ

**Store, Sunday June 10, 2019:** During my location scouting, I happened to walk into a convenience store in Eatonville and spoke with the owner, Alex, about the possibility of filming in his location. Originally, we were going to shoot in the early evening, but the beauty of filmmaking is that things do not always work out the way you want them to, and you must get creative. The department heads and I had discussed it and the only time that we could film this scene was overnight; 3am to be exact. We toyed around with the idea of scrapping it, but it was too pivotal to the story.

I called Alex and asked if he would mind giving us access to his store at 3am. I was totally prepared to receive a no and he surprised us all and said yes. I was so glad because it would have caused a delay in filming this scene. He really saved us and I am so grateful. Now, we had to convince the Black Jenkins cast and they were totally onboard.

Figure 15. Night shoot at the store

**High School, Sunday, June 10, 2019:** Julie once again came through with this location. We had attempted to film at Trinity Prep in Oviedo, but once we explained the subject matter to them, the conversations went dead. Julie reached out to the UCF Teaching Center and the engineering building. To our surprise, the engineering building gave us complete access and we could transform the lobby of the building into a private school. The art department really came through
and even looking at the footage now, I forget that this was the engineering building.

Figure 16. UCF Engineering building/school scene

**Big Mama’s House, Monday, June 11, 2019:** Again, had it not been for the Franklin’s we would not have secured this location nor the ‘Big Ass’ house. I was truly humbled to film at this location. When John Singleton wrapped filming Rosewood in the early 90’s, Mr. Alfred Weston purchased one of the homes from the set. The story as I understand it is that his mother was from Rosewood and he wanted to purchase it in her honor. He had it moved to his property and there it sat, in excellent condition. We approached Mr. Weston with our story, and he allowed us to use his slice of movie history for our own production. I still think back on the day that we shot there, and it was probably the “Black happiest” that I had been during the entire production. I was also emotional because I was directing my youngest son, Miles. He was playing young Marcus in a flashback scene and it is still surreal to see him in the project.

Figure 17. Big Mama’s House

**White Jenkins’ Family House, Monday, June 11, 2019:** Our final company move and it was literally about 100 feet away. All we had to do was load up the truck and drive it next door. The owners of this beautiful home are Jeffrey Schrader and Bryan Behling. I still recall the day that I approached them about the possibility of filming at the residence. I knocked on the door and said, “Hi, I’m a friend of Ms. Franklin. I’m a grad film student, I love your house and would love
to speak with you about filming here. May I speak with you further about it?” The look on their faces was classic. They asked to read the script, called me and we had access to the house.

It was our final location and I had to stay focused because I was emotional the entire day. We were filming what would be the opening and closing scenes for WUW and the last thing that the cast and crew needed to see what a grown ass man tearing up. We were also racing against the weather again because while we were getting our exterior tracking shot, it began to rain. Mike Walsh, an Instructor and genius when it comes to rigging, built us a special rig to flip the camera upside down and the end of the tracking shot. But because of the approaching rain, we rushed it a bit and the shot was very shaky. Kevin and I eventually went back out and reshot it which came out even better.

![Figure 18. White Jenkins' Family House](image)

**Music Soundtrack**

We also worked with a local music supervisor who has great national reach and a great ear for music. Gene Culver with Music Drizzle and Kim Williams with OMC Music Group came on board and helped find artists that would create the soundtrack for our project. I still needed a hot track for the second part of the backyard-bar-b-que scene and I was introduced to Marcus Boyd with Boyd Beats out of Atlanta who provided me with a smooth grooving track that would close out the scene.

Having the right music was critical to the success of the production because it helped create the tone. We sorted through tons of music while watching the footage to see if it matched
what was being captured on the screen. When originally speaking with Gene and Kim I explained that there were certain songs that I listened to and influenced my writing and that I really wanted something in the vein of that music. They did not disappoint me.
CHAPTER FIVE: MARKETING, PRESS AND EVENTS

As an advertising executive, I follow a strict rule that I developed: I.C.E. Any project that I develop must be Inviting, Compelling and Entertaining. I have used this formula for many ad campaigns with great success. I followed this same rule with Waking Up White. WUW is a creative body of work and project which requires continuous marketing and advertising. My experience in the advertising business for the last 18 plus years prepared me for this moment. WUW is the largest project that I have worked on to date.

I worked on this project in stages. The first thing that I had to do was identify my target audience and generate interest for this project.

Social Media

I created an online presence to advertise and market my project and encourage people to support this venture. Without a produced product, I just had an idea, but it was necessary to build support for the project. Additionally, I had to provide a platform to direct people to a page that provided more information about the project. I did not want to set up a website until I was certain about the tone of the project. I could introduce the audience to my project via social media, but the website is like a storefront. I did not want to keep changing the format because of indecisiveness. My audience would sense it, and I would quickly lose credibility. I created Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook sites, but depended mostly on Facebook. When dealing with clients, I would typically hire a social media influencer, but that was not in our pre-production budget.

Grass-Roots Marketing

Once my social media was established, I had to create buzz around the project. Before the final version of my script was even complete, I had to go out and begin pitching the idea. I
created business cards with my contact information and social media handles and began attending local film events as well as events that were focused on my target demographic; African-Americans. It was important for me to start with my target audience because I needed to pitch them, watch their reaction, make sure that I was on the right track and bringing truth to the project. I say “watch their reaction” because Black folks will tell you a lot just with their body language as opposed to just a verbal reaction. Those who reacted positively to my pitch also became some of my biggest advocates and shared my social media.

**Merchandise**

To help strengthen my message and turn *WUW* from an idea into a brand, I created T-shirts and slap band bracelets. The T-Shirts were designed as a conversation piece. On the front, it said *Waking Up White*, and on the back, I had the question, "What Would You Do?" with our social media handles. A Black man wearing a shirt that said *Waking Up White* caught the attention of quite a few people. I was constantly stopped, and asked about the shirt, discussed the project and directed people to our social media sites. Some people were hesitant because they felt that the project was too controversial. I understood and thanked them for their time and inquiry.

We purchased slap bands because they are harder to lose than business cards and once you slap them on someone’s wrist they feel like part of the production. They become more invested in the project. We had “Proud Sponsor of Waking Up White The TV Pilot” engraved on the slap bands. I also presented them to each crew member that we brought on board, stakeholders and cast members.

**Press**

The first press that I received was in *The Florida Sun* and *West Orlando Times* newspapers. Again, I started with my target audience. Both publications are Black owned and discuss issues for and about African-Americans. I reached out to one of my strategic partners,
Vasaj Communications, an Orlando-based Public Relations firm and hired them to write a press release about the project. Once the press release was ready, they reached out to both publications, who agreed to publish the release. I posted the press release on social media and used it to fuel more buzz about the project. Friends and those interested in WUW began sharing the project, which generated more interest.

In November 2017, we announced that we were filming in the historic town of Eatonville and press began to pick up from there. During this same time, I met with Ms. N.Y. Nathiri, founder of the ZORA! Festival, an annual festival held in Eatonville that honors Zora Neale Hurston, and we discussed the possibility of screening WUW during the event. January 2019 would mark the 30th anniversary of the ZORA! Festival and 132 years since Eatonville had been established. This also proved to be a significant moment for WUW. Being included in the festival would garner national attention. Once the gesture was confirmed, we immediately posted on several social media outlets, and as word began to travel, we received requests for interviews from local and regional media outlets. It was important to document each milestone on social media because that would continue to build interest in the project during all phases.

Here is a list of media coverage that we received:

**Podcast interview, February 2019** Colorblindpostcast.com

**Monsters in the Morning Interview, February 2019** WTKS, 104.1

**The TJ Chatman Show, January 2019**, Internet Radio

**Arts and Culture, January 2019**, Orlando Weekly, Skin Deep: Local filmmaker creates TV dramedy based in Eatonville, by Nicole Dudenhoefer

**Entertainment Story, January 2019**, Orlando Sentinel, UCF Director Explores Race in “Waking Up White, by Hal Boedecker

**Arts and Culture Story, January 2019**, UCF Today, MFA Student to Screen ‘Waking Up White’ TV Pilot at Zora! Fest, by Nicole Dudenhoefer

**Waking Up White Follow-Up Interview, December 2018**, Afro/Sling TV, “The Low Down with James
Networking Events

NATPE

From the beginning, my goal was to get a production and distribution deal for WUW. I never abandoned that vision. Even on days when it was hard to believe in myself, I had to believe in my product; the brand that I was creating. I worked on several variations of my pitch, depending on the amount of time I was being given with my audience. I had attended several local networking events, but in November 2017, I set my sights on NATPE, (National Association of Television Producers and Executives). In short, NATPE is where TV shows are bought and sold, and I needed to get in front of the decision makers. I learned about the event and the $1500 price tag through FilmFlorida.org. Every dollar that I had was dedicated to production yet I was determined to find a backdoor to this event. I followed NATPE on social media and in November 2017, they announced that they had their first Emerging Producers Workshop. The advertisement was vague and just stated that it was a competition for those who were emerging producers and they were selecting 15 people from across the country to participate. What I did take away from it was that those selected would have free entry into the three-day event. They required a video application and that night I immediately sat down and wrote a script for my submission. A few days later, with the assistance of my producer, Julie, we shot and edited my video application, and I uploaded it to the site. I submitted December 1, 2017, and on December
4, 2017, I received an email from NATPE, announcing that I had been accepted into the program. Once again, I turned to social media to make the announcement, because it is critical to keep your audience informed of your successes so that they become champions of your project. One of my greatest champions and supporters is Rudy McDaniel, Assistant Director of SVAD. I informed him of the achievement and the remaining costs, (room and travel) and he was generous enough to cover those costs since I was also representing our program while at the event.

NATPE proved to be a great challenge because although I had a badge that gave me access to the convention, it did not connect me with potential buyers that I desired to meet. I quickly took note that the bottom of my badge was orange, which represented that I was there as a speaker while those with blue badges, were buyers. There were buyers everywhere, but unfortunately, they were meeting with other production companies or those who appeared to have completed projects. I decided that my best approach was to catch them off-guard, when they were by themselves and see if the old cliché would work. I stood at the bottom of the elevator, waited for someone with a blue badge to walk up, jumped on the elevator with them, and conducted elevator pitches. I did this about 12 times per day, and each time, I would get an immediate reaction. Some of the buyers asked where they could see it, and I would then explain that I was in pre-production and would have it complete by this time next year. I exchanged cards with a few, and others just took my card and headed to their upcoming meetings. I managed to connect with buyers from Hulu, Amazon, Netflix, OWN, BET, small streaming services and production companies and Turner. I took a chance and pitched the Sr. Vice President of Turner Networks without realizing who he was. I was just focused on the blue badge. He gave me his card and asked me to stay in touch to let him know when production was complete.

During my time at NATPE, I also met with our Emerging Producers Workshop, which
was led by Scott Sternberg of Scott Sternberg Productions, a full-service multimedia production company specializing in unscripted programming. Based on the success of our meeting, we formed an unscripted "think tank" called 13 Brains Productions. The production company would develop and pitch unscripted programming to networks and streaming services. Scott has had great success with this genre, having produced reality TV and game shows. After a year together, we developed our first show called Death Dynasty, a reality program about a Black-owned funeral home. NATPE invited us back for a panel discussion about the show and our new production company, which also gave me an opportunity to follow up with the contacts that I made last year.

With the project now in post-production and the trailer and website established, I reached out to my network/streaming service contacts only to receive the "unfortunately; we are unable to review unsolicited projects. Thank you for your interest." I received that from everyone, except Turner Networks. Unfortunately, the Sr. VP would not be able to meet with me but introduced me to his Executive VP, who agreed to a conference call after NATPE 2019. At this time, we have had our conference call and several email conversations.

In January 2019, I returned to NATPE, where we released the trailer for Death Dynasty, and I went back to tracking down buyers. During both trips to NATPE, I applied for and received $300 in the form of a Graduate Presentation Fellowship. For NATPE 2019, I also applied for the Nicholson School of Communication and Media Award, which provided me with $500 to help with travel and hotel.

My 2019 trip was not as fruitful as 2018, but I still managed to meet with a few production companies who took an interest in WUW and offered opportunities for distribution deals. As tempting as that was, I needed a production deal along with distribution.
ZORA! Festival

During the same month, I was fortunate to have three screenings of a work-in-progress edit of *WUW*. The Mayor's office allowed us to use town hall for the screenings and although we could only fit 60 seats in the room, each event was filled. This also provided us an excellent opportunity to have a test audience and see how people felt about the project. We received great feedback, which we took into consideration while working on our final edit. What we did realize was that there is a market for WUW, we just had to get the project in the right hands. During the event, Mayor Cole also awarded me with a proclamation, which was unexpected and much appreciated. It was confirmation for me that I was taping into something bigger than I was.

Director’s Guild of America (DGA)

A few days after the ZORA! Festival, I was on a plane with Professor Tony Major and other UCF students headed to the 2019 DGA awards. I was honored that Professor Major had included me and I gave me the chance to attend the panel discussion as well as the awards ceremony. Although there was a lot of energy in the room, I quickly realized that this was not the event to pitch *WUW*. Those in attendance were there for those projects nominated, not to hear about another project. Sometimes you have to feel the pulse of the room and not push your agenda but appreciate the moment. I sat back, met some of my filmmaking heroes, including Spike Lee, took in the experience and felt even more determined to make an impact.

It is important to understand that I had to really "hustle" for my vision. No one is going to knock on my door and say "Hey, I heard you have a project called *Waking Up White* just sitting on your shelf. Can we buy it?" That’s not going to happen. You have to bet on yourself, build yourself and your brand at the same time.

Film Festivals

Since *WUW* is a television pilot and not a short film, we are limited with some of the film
festival outlets. Therefore, we searched for festivals that had a television pilot category. We also sought out festivals that had a multi-cultural or African-American focus. Based on those two criteria, here are the festivals that we submitted to:

- **BronzeLens Film Festival**
- **Montreal International Black Film Festival**
- **Charlotte Film Festival**
- **Brooklyn Film Festival**
- **Universe Multicultural Film Festival**
- **Atlanta Underground Film Festival**
- **Nashville Film Festival**
- **Los Angeles Diversity Film Festival**
- **SOHO International Film Festival**
- **DC Black Film Festival**
- **Portland Film Festival**

As of this writing, we have been selected for the Universe Multicultural Film Festival located in Los Angeles, California. Unfortunately, due to the cost of travel, I will not be able to attend, but James Taylor, who played Officer Eaton, now resides in LA and has offered to attend the event in my absence.

We will continue to seek out additional film festival opportunities. Unfortunately, due to post-production limitations, we were unable to make the deadlines for major festivals such as Sundance, Tribeca and Cannes, South by Southwest (SXSW) and Cannes. The goal is to create enough buzz that we receive an invitation to these festivals next year.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Black to the Future

There is something spectacularly beautiful about being Black. Being Black means embracing the culture, the pride, the struggle, the pain, the faith, the victory. We (Black people) have overcome so much, so often and continue to persevere. *Waking Up White* began as a thesis project but ultimately became a journey of self-reflection. My goal was to explore the cliché that the grass was truly greener on the other side. Yet what I realized was that while looking at someone else’s grass you tend to forget to water your own. I encountered many individuals that I would never have the opportunity to meet had it not been for this project. From my professors, cast and crew that nurtured my work to my adopted family of Eatonville that helped feed my soul.

In the project, the character Big Mama says to Young Marcus and Young Sheree “*you children are the future of Wellsville and you need to realize right now how important community is. Community is family and if we ain’t got nothin’ that’s all we got.***” Our happiness comes from our community and those that help water it. I do not know what it was like to experience the Harlem Renaissance, a community of Black thought, fashion and music, but I know that it feels like I am traveling back in time whenever I sit with the residents of Eatonville.

Future Opportunities

As discussed earlier, *WUW* has been submitted in several film festivals and as I wait to hear about those opportunities, I am still constantly promoting the project. I hired a new graphic designer to revise the poster and while working together, we developed five posters. For one week, we released one poster per day to continue to create excitement and to also fuel more energy for the trailer. These posters have also caught the attention of local and regional filmmakers. As of today, I am just building on those relationships with the hope that something
I tackle many issues in WUW and continue to create outlines for future episodes. When/If I receive a production deal, I will be able to present a series Bible to the producers and hire other writers with new voices for the project.

Investing in the Future

I have been honored to participate in the MFA program at UCF and I cannot think of a better way to show my appreciation than to give back. I have been hired to teach screenwriting in the English department, which will also present me with opportunities to introduce those students to film production. My goal is to expand their film knowledge and film world by providing them with on campus and community opportunities. Additionally, as the recently elected president of the Orlando Urban Film Festival, I’d like to create networking opportunities for the Black Orlando community. Some of those opportunities include screenwriting workshops with proven TV and screenwriters, director’s workshops with credible director’s and producing workshops with content creators. Just like our ancestors, we have an obligation to cultivate and grow the next generation of community leaders and help them on their journey to finding Black Happiness.
APPENDIX A: BUDGET
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**12105 GENERAL OVERHEAD**

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**12107 Craft Services**

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Total Fringes

| Sales Tax | 6.5% | 343 | 22 | 22 |

Account Total For 12100 $4,142

S3,996      5.146  -4%

TOTAL OTHER 4,142

CONTINGENCY 1,891

TOTAL ABOVE-THE-LINE 50

TOTAL BELOW-THE-LINE 6,117

TOTAL ABOVE-AND-BELOW-THE-LINE 6,167

TOTAL BELOW-THE-LINE-OTHER 5,832

GRAND-TOTAL 12,000

50
APPENDIX B: FILM/EQUIPMENT RESERVATION
### Equipment / Facilities Reservation

**# 5804**

**Jason Gregory [ID 636]***

- **Univ of Central Florida - Film Department**

**Reserved Equipment / Facilities**

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<td>Sennheiser EW100 Wireless Receiver</td>
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<td>Mic, SGH-6</td>
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Total Replacement Cost of Equipment: $145,570.
Disclaimer: By signing this contract, you agree to all equipment and facility policies posted in the UCF/NSCM Film Program's Production and Exhibition Handbook. You are responsible for any and all missing and damaged equipment while it is in your possession. All replacement costs are subject to change, including those not currently listed.

User Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Equipment Room Staff Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Reservation printed 3/11/2019 9:42 am
Reservation made on 5/29/2018 1:54 pm by Kristina League
Reservation revised on 7/13/2018 10:31 am by Kristina League
APPENDIX C: CASTING AND CREW CALL
WAKING UP WHITE
CASTING CALL

Production title: Waking Up White
Union / Non-Union: Non-Union
Production Type: Student
Project length: TV Pilot (45 minutes)
Project format: 16:9 HD
Posted on: Saturday, January 13, 2018
Production location: Orlando, FL
Production Company:
Company website:
Director: Jason Gregory
Producer: Julie Walsh
Casting Director: Marco DiGeorge
Audition Location: 5542 Hansel Ave, Orlando, FL 32809
Shooting Location: Central Florida
Email: wuwtvpilot@gmail.com
Compensation: No

KEY DATES

Auditions:
Saturday, January 20th, 2018 12:00 PM – 6:00 PM
(Please note all auditions will be given a specific time within this window. Send email with headshot, resume and preferred time slot - every 10 minutes)
Call Backs: Sunday January 28, 2018 12:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Shooting Starts: June 4th, 2018
Shooting Ends: June 10th, 2018

Synopsis:
A Black family wakes up White and has 30 days to determine if they’d would rather return to their roots or stick with the new skin that they are in. As they awake, the neighborhood that they moved away from begins going through gentrification.
Character BIOS

[MARCUS JENKINS, SR.] [GENDER: MALE] [AGE: 40s-50s] [ETHNICITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN]

Quick witted, slightly egotistical to obtain materialistic needs for the sake of his families’ reputation.

[SHEREE JENKINS] [GENDER: FEMALE] [AGE: 40s-50s] [ETHNICITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN]

Simply natural, she possesses great discipline, and is compassionate and empathetic for the wellbeing of her children and husband.

[MARCUS JENKINS, JR.] [GENDER: MALE] [AGE: AROUND 16] [ETHNICITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN] [BUILD: THIN]

Fresh-faced and naive. Despite his longing for social acceptance, he is good-natured and tries to stay positive. Plays an instrument.

[RASHIDA JENKINS] [GENDER: FEMALE] [AGE: AROUND 14] [ETHNICITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN] [BUILD: SHORT]

Quick witted like her father and although she is youthful, her curiosity drives her intelligence.

[ALI JONES] [GENDER: MALE] [AGE: 40s-50s] [ETHNICITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN]

Marcus’ best friend and frat brother. He and his wife are the heart of Wellsville and by any means necessary will fight to keep it from being gentrified.

[DEVINA JONES] [GENDER: FEMALE] [AGE: 40s-50s] [ETHNICITY: PUERTO RICAN] [BUILD: SLIGHT LIMP]

Strong Boricua who lost her leg fighting in Iraq, and alongside her husband will fight to keep Wellsville from being gentrified.
EXTRAS AND SPEAKING ROLES WANTED
This is a nonpaid UCF MFA thesis project.

ADDITIONAL CASTING
FOR “WAKING UP WHITE”

Speaking and/or On Camera Roles
Young Sheree – African American Female, 10 – 12 years
African American Male, 10 – 12 years old

Seeking 30 EXTRAS
Child extras – 10 – 14 years old; Adult Extras – ALL AGES

WHEN
Saturday May 19th, 2018
2pm - 4pm
WHERE
Eatonville Library

For details & information contact...
wwutvpilot@gmail.com
786-382-8801
www.facebook.com/WakingUpWhite/
WAKING UP WHITE

TV Pilot - CREW CALL

UCF MFA – Thesis TV Pilot

Seeking a Director of Photography...
Seeking a Production Designer...
Seeking a 1st Assistant Director...
Seeking a Production Coordinator...

Seeking department heads for a UCF MFA thesis project – series pilot entitled, Waking Up White. This is a non-paid, graduate student project.

Interviews: Sunday, January 21, 2018, Noon-6p
Location: UCF/SVAD Soundstage, 12405 Aquarius Agora Dr, Orlando, FL 32816
Located in the Nicholson School of Communications building

Please email two preferred times for interviews and production reel/portfolio. PLEASE PUT THE POSITION THAT YOU ARE APPLYING FOR IN THE SUBJECT LINE. IE, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Production is June 4th-10th, 2018. Must be available for production AND pre-production meetings February – June.

LOGLINE
Waking Up White: A Black family wakes up White and has 30 days to determine if they would rather return to their cultural roots or stick with the new skin that they are in. As they awaken to their new identities, the multicultural neighborhood that they left behind is in the beginning stages of gentrification.

For all inquiries and interviews, please contact, wuwtpilot@gmail.com.
APPENDIX D: SAMPLE LOCATION AGREEMENTS
LOCATION AGREEMENT

Set(s) ____________________________

Scene Number(s) ____________________________

Date of Agreement ____________________________

Project Representative: ____________________________

Project Representative Address:

125 Oak Tree Ct.

Coral, FL 33768

Project Representative Phone Number ____________________________

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

1. I, the undersigned owner or agent, whichever is applicable, hereby irrevocably grant to ("Project Representative"), and its agents, employees, contractors and suppliers, the right to enter and remain upon and use the property, both real and personal, located at ____________________________, (the "Property"), including without limitation, all interior and exterior areas, buildings and other structures of the Property, and owner’s name, logo, trademark, service mark and/or slogan, and any other identifying features associated therewith or which appear in, on or about the Property, for the purpose of photographing (including without limitation by means of motion Project, or videotape photography) said premises, sets and structures and/or recording sound in connection with the production, exhibition, advertising and exploitation of the project tentatively entitled _____________, the "Project".

2. Project Representative will utilize the location commencing on the _____________ day of _____________, 20__, subject to change because of weather conditions or changes in production schedule, and continuing until the completion of all scenes and work required.
LOCATION AGREEMENT

Set(s)  Jeffrey and Janine's Big Ass House, New Jersey's Shore

Scene Number(s)

1, 36

Date of Agreement  April 9, 2016

Project Representative:  Jason Carey

Project Representative Address:

Project Representative Phone Number  813-617-9267

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

1. I, the undersigned owner or agent, whichever is applicable, hereby irrevocably grant to ("Project Representative"), and its agents, employees, contractors and suppliers, the right to enter and remain upon and use the property, both real and personal, located (the "Property"), including without limitation, all interior and exterior areas, buildings and other structures of the Property, and owner's name, logo, trademark, service mark and/or slogan, and any other identifying features associated therewith or which appear in, on or about the Property, for the purpose of photographing (including without limitation by means of motion Picture, or videotape photography) said premises, sets and structures and/or recording sound in connection with the production, exhibition, advertising and exploitation of the project tentatively entitled (the "Project").

2. Project Representative will utilize the location commencing on the     9      day of    Jun   , 20    subject to change because of weather conditions or changes in production schedule, and continuing until the completion of all scenes and work required.
APPENDIX E: REHEARSAL SCHEDULE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WAKING UP WHITE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE</th>
<th>2018 3:00PM - 6:00PM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REHEARSAL1_SUN05/2018</td>
<td>REHEARSAL2_SUN05/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview: Marcus, Junior, Rashida, Sheree, Interviewer</td>
<td>Backyard BBQ: Sheree, Devina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex as Marcus, Sarah as Sheree</td>
<td>Essex as Marcus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean as Junior, Wanda as Devina</td>
<td>Sarah as Sheree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shardell as Rashida</td>
<td>Eddie as Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah as Sheree</td>
<td>Shardell as Rashida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan as Interviewer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eddie and Ali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene / Shot#</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1 / Shot 1: WS</td>
<td>Tracking house left to right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1 / Shot 1: WS</td>
<td>Tracking house left to right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2 / Shot 2: MCU</td>
<td>Fish bowl + family portraits, girl runs by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2 / Shot 2: MS</td>
<td>Girl from right to left through living room and disappears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2 / Shot 4: MS</td>
<td>Boy runs left to right through living room and disappears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2 / Shot 5: MCU</td>
<td>Parents come out of room and freak out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Storyboards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Page #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director:</td>
<td>Producer:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Scene / Shot:
- **Scene 2 / Shot 6**: WS
  - All four in camera, screaming and pointing at each other.

#### Scene / Shot:
- **Scene 2 / Shot 7**: MCU
  - Man looks over at White Jesus on the wall.

#### Scene / Shot:
- **Scene 2 / Shot 8**: POV
  - White Jesus on wall.

#### Scene / Shot:
- **Scene 2 / Shot 9**: ECU
  - Man screams, camera zooms in, mouth and face to black.

#### Scene / Shot:
- **Scene 3 / Shot 10**: POV
  - Marcus through LCD panel.

#### Scene / Shot:
- **Scene 3 / Shot 11**: WS
  - Marcus sitting on couch on right and camera crew on left.

---

APPENDIX G: MUSIC CONTRACTS
MUSIC RELEASE FORM

I, Marcus Boyd (Composer/Musician), who composed/perform and/or own the copyright(s) to the music track(s) entitled:

When Love Calls

I agree to allow Jason Gregory/Gregory Media Group (Filmmaker/Production Company), to use my work in the production entitled Waking Up White (Film Title).

As compensation for my performance/composition in Waking Up White (Title of film), I have received credit in the production (Description of payment for appearance/performance) from Gregory Media Group (Production Company).

I, the COMPOSER/MUSICIAN, own the sole and legal copyright to the described work, and hereby agree to the use of this work in the promotion, production and distribution of the FILM without further compensation.

I understand also that any and all proceeds from the film are the property of the Jason Gregory/Gregory Media Group (Production Company).

I am 18 years or over: YES [ ] NO [ ] (indicate by checking yes or no)

Marcus Boyd
Composer/Musician (Print Name) Composer/Musician (Signature)

Parent/Guardian if Minor (Print Name) Parent/Guardian if Minor (Signature)

Composer/Musician (Address)

State Zip Phone

Jason D. Gregory
FILMMAKER (Print Name) FILMMAKER (Signature)
SYNCHRONIZATION LICENSE AGREEMENT

This License Agreement entered into as of the 17th day of January, 2019, is made between Chantae Cann ("Artist") e/o OMC Music Group/Music Drizzle ("Licensor"), and Jason Gregory of Gregory Media Group, LLC ("Producer"), its successors, sub-licensees and assigns regarding below as follows and pursuant to the mutually negotiated standard terms and conditions, attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference:

Licensor: Chantae Cann e/o OMC Music Group/Music Drizzle 6345 Point Hancock Winter Garden, FL 34787 Attn: Gene Culver 407-683-0314 info@musicdrizzle.com

Producer: Gregory Media Group, LLC 125 Oak Bend Court Oviedo, FL 32765 Attn: Jason Gregory 813-817-9287 wuvtvpilot@gmail.com

Program: “Waking Up White Pilot”

Work: “Beauty Speaks” by Artist Chantae Cann – Courtesy of Ropeadope

Licensor Ownership/Control: Composition 100%

License Fee: Grátis

Territory: Worldwide

Term: Perpetuity

Media: All Media, excluding theatrical (as defined in the Standard Terms)

Usage: Background Vocal (Promotional use pending distribution – fee & backend TBD upon financing)

Timing: :31 seconds

Network: For screening & pitching purposes only – Network Pending distribution

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

Chantae Cann ("Artist")

By: ____________________________

Date: January 17, 2019

Gregory Media Group, LLC ("Producer")

By: ____________________________

Date: 2/10/19

Licenser Initials: ___

Page 1
APPENDIX H: MARKETING AND PRESS
UCF director explores race in 'Waking Up White'

MEA Student to Screen 'Waking Up White' TV Pilot at ZORA Fest

'Waking Up White': The Power of Shurooq's New Series

About the Writer/Director/EP
APPENDIX I: BTS PICTURES
APPENDIX J: PITCH DECK
ONE HOUR DRAMEDY SERIES

WAKING UP WHITE

Created by Jason D. Gregory
WAKING UP WHITE

LOGLINE
A Black family wakes up White and has 30 days to determine if they'd rather return to their roots or stick with the new skin that they are in. As they awaken to their new identities, the multi-cultural neighborhood that they moved away from is in the beginning stages of gentrification.

"I want equal opportunity. I want a seat at the table with the White boys" – Marcus Jenkins Sr. Marcus Sr., Sheree, Marcus Jr. and Rashida are interviewed by a documentary film crew about their Black experience living in a White neighborhood. To their surprise, they wake up White the next morning with new identities while also finding out that their entire history has been erased. At the same time, Wellsville, the old neighborhood where they grew up, fell in love, and raised a family, is being gentrified. Both the Jenkins and Wellsville are on the verge of losing their cultural identities.
INFLUENCES

(1989)
INFLUENCES

(1934)

(1959)
INFLUENCES
(1989)

OUR SONS SHOULD NOT DIE BECAUSE THEY ARE
WBB
WALKING WHILE BLACK
S.O.S. (SAVE OUR SONS)!
INFLUENCES
CREATING WELLSVILLE
CREATING WELLSVILLE

WELLS + VILLE

WELLSVILLE
WELLSVILLE

THE HISTORY

Wellsville is a fictitious town within the city of Orlando. Established in the early 1900's during segregation, Wellsville was a hub for African-Americans and the town thrived from Black owned entertainment, financial and farming markets. Once segregation ended, those African-Americans who could afford to move out, fled taking the power of the Black dollar with them. Wellsville represents a number of African-American cities across the country that used to flourish. The residents that remain are a part of the past and present, but due to gentrification, may not be part of the future.
The Wellsville of today is a distant memory from what once was. Frames still stand from buildings that housed Black banks, clubs and grocery stores. Only memories remain of the rich culture that once built the town. Drugs, poverty and crime have forced many residents out. Although Wellsville is a low income community, it is rich with multi-cultural members from all walks of life. Those who remain are the true fabric of the community and attempt to revive and rebuild their town.
WELLSVILLE

THE FUTURE

With the growth of downtown, there has been renewed interest in Wellsville. Real estate investors are looking to expand and create a new part of downtown called “SoWe”, short for South Wellsville. Most of the homes in Wellsville are being rented, and as interest continues to increase so do the monthly leases, thus displacing most of the residents. The face of the community quickly begins to change. The old bones of yesterday will soon be transformed into the high rise apartments, vegan grocery stores and yoga businesses of tomorrow. The town that once housed and developed a community will be stripped of its cultural identity.
WELLSVILLE

THE LOCATION
CASTING

“Waking Up White”
Casting Sign-In
Please Enter Quietly
CASTING
Marcus Jenkins Sr.


Marcus has been a project manager at Phillips Construction for the last ten years. He is constantly seeking opportunities to advance his career. Marcus made the decision to move his family out of Wellsville for better living and an A+ school system. Unfortunately, that lifestyle has put him and his family in a financial bind and has to find a quick resolution.

Forthright and quick witted, with a high-minded spirit. Slightly egotistical to obtain materialistic needs for the sake of his families' reputation. His power lies in his passion and impatience to implement basic human rights. Wants to exceed social expectations in life.
(WHITE) MARCUS JENKINS SR.

HISTORY


Marcus has been a Sr. project manager at Phillips Construction for the last five years. He graduated from Ivey league colleges with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in liberal arts. Marcus is German American and his good looks, charm and generational connections landed him a job at Phillips Construction. Marcus has always lived the good life and so has his family. He believes that everyone has the same equal opportunity, they just have to know how to take advantage of it.
SHEREE JENKINS

FEMALE. 40-50. Black.

Sheree is a paralegal who is being laid off after working for an attorney for seven years.

Non-materialistic and a simplistic woman. She possesses great discipline, but is compassionate and empathetic for her husband and children’s well being. Self reliant in her own and her families’ emotional and survival needs. She does not have time to waste and prefers to keep her business to herself.
(WHITE) SHEREE JENKINS

HISTORY

FEMALE. 40-50. White Cuban.

Sheree graduated with a bachelor’s degree and went straight into real estate, where she has become one of the top agents in Central Florida and recently opened her own firm. She is of Cuban descent, though no one would know it at first glance, and she speaks fluent Spanish. Sheree and her husband have more of a business arrangement rather than a marriage. Over the years their competitive nature has torn them apart, but as a power couple, they always seize opportunity when it presents itself.
MARCUS JENKINS JR. (JUNIOR)


Fresh-faced and naive. Despite his longing for social acceptance, he is good-natured and tries to stay positive. Junior misses the Wellsville community and still has hopes that they will eventually move back.
Marcus Jenkins Jr. (Junior)

History


Marcus is every teenage girl’s dream. He is also the captain of the football, basketball, lacrosse and even the chess team. Thanks to his girlfriend, Lily, he is able to achieve academically. But he does not feel that he lives up to his image. He is hiding his dyslexia from his parents in fear of ruining his family’s image.
RASHIDA JENKINS


Quick witted like her father and although she is youthful, her curiosity drives her intelligence. Rashida is a great dancer and secretly dreams of being on the Sister Squad; a high school cheer team. But there’s just one problem; they are all White.

Rashida is the head of the Sister Squad; a high school cheer team. She personally hand picked the squad which consists of daughters of some of her mother’s clients. Rashida looks healthy but suffers from an eating disorder, in an attempt to keep up with the Kardashians.

Ali is Marcus’ best friend and frat brother. He also works alongside Marcus at Phillips Construction. Also a product of Wellsville, he and his wife, Devina, moved back to the neighborhood after she was medically discharged from the military. Ali is Marcus’ voice of reason and believes in rebuilding Wellsville and keeping the community together. Ali is Wellsville at its best and its worst, but will never leave and will fight to keep its history alive.
DE VIN A J ONES


After many fights in middle school, Sheree and Devina became the best of friends and became sorority sisters. Devina was in ROTC throughout high school and college and upon graduating, entered the military as an officer. Unfortunately, she was injured during the war and was medically discharged. She along with her husband are the heart and soul of Wellsville and keep their doors open to who ever needs their assistance.
BIG MAMA

FEMALE. Late 60's-Early 70's. Black.

Big Mama is the history of Wellsville. She was the Mother to all in the neighborhood and kept the history alive through quilts. She appears in flashbacks to help reveal information about other characters and Wellsville. And, viewers only see her hands.
OUR FABRIC
OUR FABRIC

WAKING UP WHITE

CAST

BLACK LIVES MATTER

A.JA-GERED VISION
CREW

Jason Gregory
Writer/Director/Executive Producer

Julie Alexandra Walsh
Producer

Kevin Garcia
Director of Photography

Kelly Brownrigg
Script Supervisor

Alejandro Andrews-Watson
1st AD

Carrie Wilson
UPM

Anthony DeCario
Gaffer

Briget Colina
Storyboard Artist

Trevon Jakaar
Production Design

Dylan Thompson
Sound/Audio

Aaron Hose
Editor
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND SUPPORT!
Waking Up White Synopsis
By Jason Gregory

The Jenkins family is interviewed by a documentary film crew about their life as the only Black family in a White community.

Mother Sheree and the kids, Junior and Rashida, comment on how they enjoyed living in the multi-cultural community of Wellsville and didn’t want to move. Father Marcus quickly interjects and says that the move was what was best for the family based on the school and lifestyle. Unbeknownst to Sheree, this is a plan by her husband to get some cash to prevent them from losing their home.

Marcus walks the film crew out and begins begging for them money. He learns he must wait thirty days to receive payment for doing the documentary. Afterward, Marcus gets a certified foreclosure letter, opens it, and stuffs it in his pocket, with plans to hide the information from his wife.

That evening, Marcus is lying across the bed and attempts to discuss the interview with Sheree. She directs him to speak with the children and he reluctantly exits, leaving the letter on the bed. He returns to find Sheree reading the letter. She confronts him, hands him her wedding ring, and demands that he sell it to save the house.

The next day their lives spiral out of control as Sheree, a paralegal, is replaced at her job by a younger, lighter version of herself. Marcus arrives home to make amends with Sheree but finds her in an alcohol relapse. He quickly comes to her aid and she tells him what happened. Marcus promises her that he’ll make everything right again.
At work, Marcus discusses the issues with his frat brother and co-worker Ali. While the two talk, a meeting takes place in a nearby conference room and the presenter unveils a sign that says SoWe. The presenter notices them watching and quickly closes the blinds. Marcus and Ali try to figure out what’s happening and what SoWe is, but then more important matters get in the way.

The next morning, the family travels to their old neighborhood of Wellsville and ends up at home of their best friends, Ali and Devina Jones. They join in on the backyard barbeque. The Jenkins’ previous home, now boarded and surrounded by overgrown grass, looks abandoned with a FOR SALE sign in the front yard. Marcus and Sheree reminisce about the good times, but Marcus will never return to the old neighborhood.

On their way home, the family stops at a convenience store where Junior is followed by a cop. Marcus rushes inside before anything bad can happen. He exchanges words with the officer before he and Junior leave.

Upon returning home, Ali calls Marcus and shares some shocking news: a neighborhood kid was shot at the store they just left.

Marcus has a conversation with Junior about being a young black, man and how to conduct himself around the police.

Later that evening, Marcus promises Sheree that tomorrow will be a better day for the entire family.

The next morning, the family wakes up and realizes...

That they’ve all become White!

They all freak out. As the chaos ensues, a sign is put up in front of a Wellsville sign that says:

“SoWe. A new community is being built just for you”.
APPENDIX L: SCRIPT
WAKING UP WHITE

PILOT

THE MAKINGS OF YOU

Written by

Jason D. Gregory

Based on the short film, Waking Up White, by Jason Gregory

Copyright © 2015, 2018
BLACK SCREEN:

SCREAMS ring out!

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW JENKINS HOME-DAY

TRACKING SHOT of a beautifully landscaped yard with plush green grass and a big ass house sitting right in the middle of it. As we come to the edge of the house the world flips upside down.

SCREAMS continue and become more erratic as other VOICES join in.

INT. NEW JENKINS HOME-LIVING ROOM-DAY

High end bedroom furniture matches the high end exterior of the house. Large room, big windows for all of the sunlight to come through.

A fish bowl sits on an end table, with pictures of a WHITE FAMILY OF FOUR in the background. The FISH jumps out of the water and lands on the table as...

WHITE RASHIDA, 14, tall and thin, dashes across the living room, dressed in pajamas.

WHITE RASHIDA

Ahhhhhhhhhhh!

Seconds later, a YOUNG WHITE MALE, 16, also tall with an athletic build, hauls ass in the opposite direction. Also in pajamas.

WHITE JUNIOR

Nooooo! Nooooo!

Then distant screams ring out from another room and get louder as they reach the living room.

WHITE MARCUS JENKINS, SR., mid-late 40's, perfect teeth, perfect athletic build, perfect hair, is screaming with or rather at WHITE SHEREE, early 40's, curly, flowing hair, model-type.

White Rashida and White Junior run into the living room and they all jump at the sight of each other, continue screaming as if it's a conversation.
WHITE RASHIDA
Ahffffff!

WHITE JUNIOR
Ahffffff!

WHITE SHEREE
Ahffffff!

WHITE MARCUS
Ahffffff!

ALL TOGETHER
Ahffffff!

White Marcus looks over on the wall and notices a picture of a White Jesus and really loses his mind!

On his scream, we

FADE TO BLACK SCREEN

SUPERIMPOSE: THREE DAYS EARLIER

SFX: RATTLING AND FUMBLING

MARCUS (O.S.)
I took a couple film classes in college. Let me help you out.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Mr. Jenkins. We can get it. Just leave it a...

MARCUS (O.S.)
Got it.

INT. JENKINS HOME-LIVING ROOM-EVENING

MARCUS JENKINS, Sr., balding, beard with a little salt and pepper, stocky build, is staring into the lens of a camera and trying to adjust it.

He gets up and backs away from the camera with the lens pointed on him. He takes a seat on a couch.

MARCUS
See. I'm a jack of all trades.

Pull back from camera view, to reveal the Jenkins' living room.
Modest furnishings, with family photos on the table in front of Marcus. A picture of Black Jesus hangs on the wall also. Directly behind him on the wall is a quilt-like art work.

A CAMERAPerson is behind the camera continuing to set it up; an AUDIO Person runs over to connect a lavaliere onto Marcus. The INTERVIEWER is sitting in a chair across from Marcus.

INTERVIEWER
Ok. Mr. Jenkins, can we please test the mic.

Marcus breaks out singing.

INTERVIEWER (CONT’D)
Just...Just. You know what. We are good.

MARCUS
I told you. Jack of all trades.

INTERVIEWER
I wasn’t thinking “of all trades” but ok. Alright. Can you please say your name and age into the mic?

MARCUS
Marcus Jenkins Sr. Forty five and fly. You know I went to FAMU. Graduated top of my class-

INTERVIEWER
Thank you.

CUT TO:

Each family member mic’d up. Through camera screen. RASHIDA, 14, long braids and short, grabs her shirt and speaks into the mic.

RASHIDA
Rashida Jenkins. Fourteen.

INTERVIEWER
It’s ok sweetie. You can just lean in.

RASHIDA

JUNIOR, 16, scrawny kid with glasses bigger than his face
JUNIOR
Marcus Jenkins Jr. Sixteen...and a half.

Flashes a big smile and tries to wink.

SHEREE JENKINS, mid 40's

SHEREE
Sherree Jenkins. Can we hurry this up? I have to prepare for a case in the morning.

INTERVIEWER
Um. Yes ma'am. Your age?

She shoots her a look.

SHEREE
You don't ask a black woman her age.

INTERVIEWER
My apologies, Mrs. Jenkins. We appreciate you participating. What led you to this social experiment? The opportunity or the money?

SHEREE
Money? What money?

MARCUS (O.S.)
Cut! Cut!

INTERVIEWER
Mr. Jenkins. You can't yall cut. Don't pull that chord ou...

Screen goes black.

BACK TO:

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)
Ok. Mr. Jenkins. Please stay focused.

MARCUS
Sorry. I tripped. Got big feet. Don't work right sometimes.

Snaps his fingers with both hands.
INTERVIEWER
So, how does it feel being the only
African-American family in this
neighborhood?

MARCUS
I’ve worked hard to be able to
provide this life for my family.
You know, Dr. King once said—

RASHIDA
It’s ok. I guess.

JUNIOR
I’d like to see some other black
people. At least at my bus stop.

SHEREE
It’s ok but I don’t see what was
wrong with Wellsville. That’s our
home.

INTERVIEWER
So do you feel as if you are
missing out on something?
Culturally?

Sheree looks over at Marcus.

MARCUS
What we lack in the neighborhood,
we get from church.

INTERVIEWER
So, you attend an all black church?

SHEREE
Only on Christmas and sometimes
Easter.

Sheere stares at Marcus and he looks over at Black Jesus on
the wall and throws up the Black Power fist.

INTERVIEWER
Ok. I’ll move on to the next
question. If there was one thing
that you could have most in the
world, what would it be?

RASHIDA
Well...I like to dance. So, I’d
like to be a cheerleader, I guess.
MARCUS (O.S.)
Do that dance for her baby-girl.

INTERVIEWER
No need Mr. Jenkins.

JUNIOR
To have friends?

INTERVIEWER
More friends?

JUNIOR
No. Friends. And...a girlfriend.

SHEREE
I guess to be acknowledged and appreciated.

MARCUS
I want opportunity and not just regular opportunity. I want equal opportunity. I want a seat at the table with the White boys.

INT. JENKINS HOME-LIVING ROOM-LATER

The crew is cleaning up their equipment and the Interviewer and Marcus are off talking.

INTERVIEWER
Thanks so much for allowing us to interview you and your family today. And please apologize to Mrs. Jenkins if we upset her.

MARCUS
Yeah. She get like that if she don't eat. Listen, when do I get the...

Sheree walks by.

SHEREE
Mmmmmhhhhmm.

MARCUS
Love you boo.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
(to Interviewer)
When do I get the $2500?
INTERVIEWER
Again, in about thirty days.

MARCUS
I can’t wait thirty days. I was just thinking maybe I could get half now.

Snaps his fingers with both hands again.

INTERVIEWER
I wish I could but I don’t make that call. But I promise you that soon you’ll get exactly what you’re looking for.

MARCUS
Yeah. Right. Ok. Thanks.

INTERVIEWER
We’ll be in touch.

The crew leaves and as Marcus closes the door behind him, a DELIVERY PERSON knocks. Marcus swings the door back open.

DELIVERY PERSON
Got a delivery for Marcus Jenkins.

Marcus looks over at his family and signs the form barely looking at it. The Delivery Person exits. Marcus closes the door, opens the envelope and stuffs it in his pocket.

EXT. JENKINS HOME-NIGHT
Two story home, with early 2000 vehicles in the driveway. Neighborhood is quiet.

INT. JENKINS HOME-BEDROOM

Modest bedroom. Desk tucked in the corner. Family pictures across the dresser. Exercise machine covered with clothes. On the wall above the bed is another piece of quilt-like artwork.

Marcus is laying across the bed, eating a big slice of cake, while Sheree sits at a desk, working on a laptop.

MARCUS
So how are you feeling about the interview?

Sheree is lost in her work and doesn’t respond.
MARCUS (CONT’D)

‘Ree?

SHEREE
I’m sorry. Yes, baby. How should I feel? I still don’t understand why it was so important to you.

Marcus leaps up off of the bed, places his plate on the dresser and starts waiving his hands around like he is on stage and giving a speech. He also doesn’t realize that the envelope and some spare pocket change has slipped out of his pocket and onto an imprint in the bed where he was chillaxin.

MARCUS
Because we are creating history. We are leaving a legacy. Leaving proof that we were here.

SHEREE
We’re Black, Marcus. That’s proof enough. Maybe you should check with the children.

MARCUS
Why?

She stops and turns around.

SHEREE
Why not? Did you listen to what they said?

MARCUS
I heard them.

SHEREE
But you didn’t listen? Our children feel like outsiders in this community. And frankly, so do I.

MARCUS
I just want the...

SHEREE
I know. The best for our family. But maybe “this” best is not for our family.
INT. JENKINS HOME—JUNIOR’S ROOM

Band awards from Central Florida High School lace the walls. Clothes, dirty and clean, are scattered everywhere, including on top of a trumpet case, sitting next to the window. Pictures line a table on the other side of the window.

Marcus enters and pulls the head phones off of Junior and sits on the bed.

JUNIOR
Yeah Dad?

MARCUS
Hey son. Junior, are you happy?

Junior nods yes.

MARCUS (CONT’D)
Black happy?

He nods no.

JUNIOR
I was Black happy in Welleville.

Marcus looks around the room.

MARCUS
You know when I was growing up, I had to share my room with two brothers and a dog. And the dog always got the bed.

JUNIOR
I know, Dad. You’ve told me this story before.

MARCUS
I’m just trying to give you a better life than what I had.

Junior just nods. Marcus kisses him on the top of his head.

JUNIOR
Goodnight Dad.

Junior puts his head phones back on and goes back to playing his game.

Marcus stares at him and then pulls the door closed. Then opens it back up, wide open.
INT. JENKIN’S HOME—RASHIDA’S ROOM

Purple decorates the walls with a princess bed and purple comforter to match. Along the walls are pictures of famous dancers like Debbie Allen, Misty Copeland and Josephine Baker. Along a desk are dance and ballet awards, next to photos of Rashida dancing.

Rashida lays across her bed, watching dance moves on her laptop when

SFX: KNOCK KNOCK

RASHIDA

Come in.

Marcus slowly opens the door and peeks inside.

MARCUS

You ok baby-girl?

RASHIDA

I’m alright Daddy.

He begins to close the door and then pauses

MARCUS

Shida-baby. Are you happy...living here?

RASHIDA

Sure. Why wouldn’t I be?

MARCUS

I’m just...just checking.

He walks in, kisses her on the forehead and begins to exit when

RASHIDA

I could be happier living back next to Auntie Devina and Uncle Ali.

Marcus drops his head, exits and quietly, pulls the door closed behind him.

INT. JENKINS HOME—BEDROOM

Marcus walks in and you can feel the freeze coming off of the wall. It’s about to be a cold night in the room.
MARCUS
Those kids don’t know how good they have it. They’ve got everything and...

He looks over at Sheree, who is sitting on the bed next to the pocket change and an empty envelope with Sheree reading a letter. He quickly checks his pockets, realizing they’re empty and tries to make a break for the door.

MARCUS (CONT’D)
I forgot to check on the dog.

SHEREE
Shut the door.

He drops his head again, closes the door, and snaps his fingers.

MARCUS
Whatcha reading ’Ree?

SHEREE
A story about how we’re going to be homeless. Marcus why didn’t you tell me about this?

MARCUS
Oh, they just trying to scare us. Ain’t nothin’ gonna happen.

Sheree flashes the letter to him and he looks away.

SHEREE
A foreclosure notice Marcus! And the third one apparently. We’ve got thirty days! Thirty days to save a house I don’t even want!

MARCUS
I got this baby.

SHEREE
Oh you got this? All you got is this letter.

MARCUS
I got a plan.

SHEREE
Was this little film crew part of your plan?
MARCUS
Yeah. And I'mma talk to Brian and
Mr. Phillips tomorrow about extra
work or even a promotion.

Sherree tosses the letter on the bed, pulls off her wedding
ring and hands it to Marcus.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
'Hey, watchu doing?

SHERREE
Sell it.

MARCUS
I can't do that.

SHERREE
Damn it I said sell it. I won't have
our family homeless because of your
experiment.

Marcus reluctantly takes the ring and then looks over at a
wedding photo and family pictures on the dresser.

EXT. JENKINS HOME-DAY

Middle class neighborhood. Neighbors grass perfectly
manicured and bright green, except in front of the Jenkins
home. Green mixed with some brown patches in it.

INT. JENKINS HOME-KITCHEN-DAY

Fairly modern kitchen. New appliances. Pictures of kids cover
the refrigerator.

Junior and Rashida are ready for school with book-bags on and
Marcus is chasing behind Sherree.

MARCUS
'Hey. Let me talk to you real
quick. 'Hey?

SHERREE
You, or rather the bank, said
enough last night.

By now, Junior and Rashida are eating breakfast snacks and
sitting at the counter.

Sherree pulls a lunch bag out of the top cabinet, opens the
fridge and pulls lunch items out and puts them in the bag.
MARCUS
Look. I'm sorry. Is that what you
want to hear?

SHEREE
That's a hell of an apology.

MARCUS
Can't we talk about this more?

Junior and Rashida sit and watch them go back and forth.
Rashida notices that Sheree isn't wearing her ring.

SHEREE
I've got nothing else to say to
you.

RASHIDA
Mom, are you and Dad getting a
divorce?

Marcus and Sheree both look towards the kids.

SHEREE
Shida-baby, why would you say that?

RASHIDA
'Cause you're not wearing your
ring. Auntie Candice stopped
wearing her ring and then her and
Uncle Charlie got divorced.

JUNIOR
Yeah. But now Richie has two houses
to go to. And at least one is in
Wallsville.

Sheree stops packing her lunch, walks over and sits down next
to them.

SHEREE
Listen to me. Family doesn't dip out on family when it gets hard.
Bare me? What did Big Momma always say? Go on.

JUNIOR/RASHIDA
Family is all you got when you ain't go nothing else.

MARCUS
Don't. When you don't have anything else.
Sheree shoots him a look and looks at the wall.

**SHEREE**
That's right. There won't be any divorces in this house. At least not today.

Marcus pulls Sheree's ring out of his pocket, goes over to the sink.

**MARCUS**
Oh, baby. Here's your ring right here. You left it by the sink.

He walks over to Sheree, lifts her hand up and slips it on her finger. He goes in for a kiss and Sheree walks away and grabs her lunch bag off of the counter.

**SHEREE**
Let's go kids. I'll drop you off today.

Junior looks up at Marcus, walks past him and shakes his head.

**JUNIOR**
I'mma rethink this girlfriend thing.

Rashida walks up and wraps both her arms around him.

**RASHIDA**
She still loves you Daddy.

**MARCUS**
Thank you baby-girl. And who loves you?

**RASHIDA**
You do.

He kisses her on the forehead.

**MARCUS**
Alright. Off to school. Have a great day.

Rashida runs off, leaving Marcus alone with his thoughts.

**EXT. CENTRAL FLORIDA HIGH-DAY**

LOTS OF PREPPY KIDS walking around. Privilege oozes from some of them.
MINORITY KIDS including Junior and Rashida are sprinkled in. Both are walking slowly up to the front door of the school.

JUNIOR  
I hate this school.

RASHIDA  
It's not that bad.

JUNIOR  
Can you stop being a glass half full kind of person for once?

RASHIDA  
Look. At least we don't have to share books now.

They hear a SHRIEK and look over and see the Sister Squad; a cheer squad that consists of 5 UBER-WHITE teenage girls in tight cheerleading outfits.

JUNIOR  
Don't they have anything else to wear? I swear they must sleep in those outfits.

Rashida doesn't respond. She looks at their long hair and skinny waists, and begins twisting her braids. She begins to fantasize walking with them. They all walk in unison, with Rashida in the middle. KIDS pull out their cell phones and begin taking pictures of them as they pose, laugh and continue walking.

Junior smacks her hand from her hair and brings her back to reality.

RASHIDA  
They're not so bad.
INT. CENTRAL FLORIDA HIGH-HALLWAY-DAY

Sports posters on the wall. KIDS rushing to classes. Rashida walks slow, watching everyone and stops at the Sister Squad trophy case. She looks at their headshots on the wall and then at the trophies in the case.

SFX: BELL RINGS

Everyone races into the class while Rashida is still daydreaming.

TEACHER

Rashida? It’s time for class.

Rashida breaks her trance and rushes through the door.

INT. CENTRAL FLORIDA HIGH-JUNIOR’S CLASS-DAY

Class is full of WHITE STUDENTS, again with minorities sprinkled in. Junior is in the middle as they all recite the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE. Junior drops his hand and just stands there until it’s over.

EXT. LAW FIRM-DAY

Boutique law firm in Downtown Orlando.

INT. LAW FIRM-DAY

Small boutique office. A few office doors are open. Sheree is in one of them, flipping through files. ATTORNEY JANET FULSON, late 50’s/early 60’s, approaches her.

ATTORNEY FULSON

Good morning Sheree.

SHEREE

Oh. Hi Attorney Fulsom. Sorry. I was a little late. Had to drop the kids off.

ATTORNEY FULSON

That’s ok. How’s that file coming along?

SHEREE

Good. I just spoke with Mrs. Lee and she agreed to the $60,000 settlement. That’s four this month!
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SHEREE
Oh. Hi Attorney Fulson. Sorry. I was a little late. Had to drop the kids off.

ATTORNEY FULSON
That's ok. How's that file coming along?

SHEREE
Good. I just spoke with Mrs. Lee and she agreed to the $60,000 settlement. That's four this month!
ATTORNEY FULSON
Great work Sheree. You’ve been such an asset to the firm.

SHEREE
Been? Why are we talking in past tense? I’m present. I’m right here.

Sheree hands the file to Attorney Fulson and as she does, a BLACK WOMAN, early 20’s, thin and model like, walks in.

JAY
Is this my new office Janet?

Sheree looks sideways at both of them.

ATTORNEY FULSON
Um...Sheree. Do you have a quick minute?

Just then all of the other doors in the office slam closed.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Junior is in one classroom practicing on his trumpet with his TEACHER pacing back and forth.

Rashida is in a ballet studio dancing while the members of the Sister Squad look on. Some in disgust, some in delight.

Sheree walks out of the law firm with her box and looks back at the new girl settling into her old office.

As Junior’s tempo increases, so do Rashida’s dance moves.

Marcus ends his song at the same time that Rashida completes her last ballet move.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. PHILLIPS CONSTRUCTION—DAY

Marcus is taking his time getting out of his car as he watches BRIAN MURPHY, white male, late 30’s/early 40’s, jump out of his 2017 model vehicle. Brian is on his cell phone and approaches the building, when Marcus quickly walks up to him.

BRIAN
Ron. The timing is right. We need to do it like tomorrow.
MARCUS
Hey, Good morning, Brian. Can I speak to you right quick? Just a second.

Brian pulls the phone away from his ear.

BRIAN

MARCUS
Peace. That’s cool. Hey B...Look I know you and Ron are working on something hot right now. I wanna help.

BRIAN
Not sure what you’re talking about Marcus.

MARCUS
I see you guys in there. I know it’s something big. And look, you’re in shit up to your elbows with this highway construction project. Let me at least help with that. Come on B.

BRIAN
You know what. Anything for my old mentor.

Brian hits his car clicker for his 2017 model vehicle.

SFX: BEEP BEEP

BRIAN (CONT’D)
I’ll talk to Ron today. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to get to a meeting about a “secret project” that we’re not working on.

Brian walks away and then turns back to Marcus.

BRIAN (CONT’D)
Hey Marcus. Stay awake bro!

He throws up the Black Power fist and just like that he walks off.

MARCUS
It’s...it’s not stay awake. It’s stay woke.
Just then, ALI JONES, mid 40's, walks up behind him and begins clowning him.

ALI
Ahhhh Frat. You got clowned.
(imitating Brian)
Stay awake bro!

MARCUS
He doesn’t know, Ali. When’s the last time you took him to a Black people meeting.

Marcus and Ali enter the building.

INT. CENTRAL FLORIDA HIGH-HALLWAY-DAY

KIDS everywhere and Junior is looking at them sideways, when he sees, LILY, White, 16, baddest chic in the school, sitting in the corner, huddled up with her BOYFRIEND. He stops in the middle of the hallway and watches them giggle and laugh with each other and imagines their conversation.

LILY
Isn’t it great being White?

BOYFRIEND
Yes. We have everything we want.

LILY
All but one thing.

BOYFRIEND
What is it? I’ll get you whatever you want. My privilege can get you anything.

LILY

She turns and looks at him and says his name.

RASHIDA (C.S.)
Junior! Junior!

He comes out of his trance and sees Rashida standing there. She takes out a napkin and wipes some drool from the corner of his mouth.

RASHIDA (CONT'D)
Here’s half empty. Not gonna happen. I can’t take you no where.
She walks off and Junior drops his head and walks past Lily and her boyfriend, still laughing and talking.

INT. PHILLIPS CONSTRUCTION—DAY

Glass offices sectioned off with sliding curtains if they want privacy. Dead center is Brian’s office who is leading a presentation with OTHER WHITE MEN seated at a table including RON PHILLIPS, late 50’s/early 60’s, owner of Phillips Construction.

Marcus and Ali look through the conference room window. They can’t hear anything but Brian has his audience’s full attention and they all start clapping.

Brian notices Marcus and puts the Black Power fist back up.

ALI
This muthafucka here.

MARCUS
As long as he gets me on one of these projects he can throw up whatever he wants. I need to get at that table and make that change.

ALI
You don’t pass old man Phillips brown paper bag test. As a matter of fact, I hear he uses a clear zip-lock bag.

MARCUS
I need that job, frat.

Ali goes back in to his cubicle.

ALI
Why you hard up for money all of a sudden? Ya’ll got that big ass house you bought last year and I know Sheree is killing it at the firm.

Marcus gets quiet.

ALI (CONT’D)
There you go with that constipated look again. I can always tell when it’s about to go south when you look like you gotta shit.

Ali wheels his chair across the aisle.
MARCUS
We ‘bout to lose the house.

ALI
What? You ain’t been there long enough to lose it.

MARCUS
Remember that mortgage deal?

ALI
Tell me you didn’t do that deal? Tell me you didn’t do what I told you not to do?

MARCUS
I wanted the house and that was the only way I could get it.

ALI
But not at 20 percent interest. I told you that bank was full of shit. Look, we boys. How much you need? I got you.

MARCUS
Four grand.

ALI
I ain’t got you. Damn. How far behind are you?

Marcus slowly holds up three fingers.

MARCUS
Three months?

Brian, Ron and the other guys are still celebrating in the office. When Ali and Marcus look up, they close the curtain.

ALI
Look, ya’ll still coming thru for the cookout tomorrow?

MARCUS
I don’t know. Don’t feel much like getting out.

ALI
Come over, get some hood love and have a good time. Between you, me, Sheree and Devina, we’ll figure this out.

(MORE)
ALI (CONT'D)  
Besides, I got a house right across  
the street from me that’s been  
vacant for about a year. The last  
guy that owned it was an asshole  
but I’m sure the right owner can  
fix it up.

The celebrating continues and all we see are their  
silhouettes against the curtain. Brian is tossing money in  
the air and the men stand and applaud. Ali and Marcus just  
shake their heads.

EXT. JENKINS HOME-NIGHT  
All is quiet in the neighborhood.

INT. JENKINS HOME-LIVING ROOM  
Marcus comes through the door with a dozen roses, looking a  
bit disheveled. Rashida is in the living room watching  
television and doing homework.

MARCUS  
Hey ‘Shida. Where’s your mother?

RASHIDA  
I think she’s upstairs. It’s been  
pretty quiet up there.

Marcus heads for the steps when  

RASHIDA (CONT'D)  
Daddy wait.

Rashida jumps up, walks over to her Dad, adjusts his collar,  
spreads the roses out a bit and kisses him on the cheek.

RASHIDA (CONT'D)  
Don’t worry Daddy. It will be  
all right. You’ll fix it.

MARCUS  
Thanks baby-girl. I hope so. Your  
mother is the best thing that ever  
happened to me.

RASHIDA  
I know. That’s why she’s my momma.
INT. JENKINS HOME—BEDROOM

Marcus enters a dark room, dimly lit by candles coming from the bathroom.
Sobbing is coming from the bathroom.

INT. JENKINS HOME—BATHROOM

Marcus runs in and finds Sheree sitting on the bathroom floor, with a half empty bottle of wine and a full wine glass.

MARCUS
'Ree, no. No, no no.

Marcus drops the flowers on the floor, drops down next to her and holds her.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Don't go back there. Don't.

Sheree continues to cry.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I'll figure it out. I'll fix it.

SHEREE
You can't. You can't fix this.

He holds her tighter.

SHEREE (CONT'D)
I got fired today.

MARCUS
What? Fired? This isn't about the house? Thank God. I mean, baby, I'm sorry.

SHEREE
Seven years. Seven fucking years I helped build that firm and they just tossed me out. I was the only paralegal they had for three years. And before I could leave, they pranced this young bitch in my office. Still hittin' their quota!

She grabs the glass and starts gulping down the wine. Marcus grabs it from her.
MARCUS
Don’t ‘Ree. This ain’t the answer.
Look, we’ve been through worse.

SHEREE
No we haven’t. I don’t have a job.
We don’t have a house. We don’t have money.

MARCUS
We’ll figure it out. We always do.

Marcus lays Sheree’s head in his lap, strokes her hair and begins singing to her.

SHEREE
If you could fix those notes you’re breaking that would be great.

They laugh and Marcus continues stroking her hair.

EXT. DIVISION STREET-DAY

ANGLE ON DIVISION STREET SIGN, WITH DOWNTOWN ORLANDO IN THE BACKGROUND.

A BLACK KID, tween, crosses over Division Street and the sounds of the city fade into the background as WE HEAR KIDS LAUGHING AND PLAYING AND MUSIC BLASTING.

He turns the corner and WE SEE a WELCOME TO WELLSVILLE sign.

EXT. WELLSVILLE PARK-DAY

WE FOLLOW the kid as he continues to ride his bike into a neighborhood, drops his bike and joins in playing basketball with other KIDS.

Junior is playing basketball also. Rashida is hanging with her HOME GIRLS. The basketball rolls over to her.

JUNIOR
Quick. Give me the ball ‘Shida.

Rashida eyes the hoop, shoots the ball and sinks it.

TEEN
Yo! ‘Shida got next. I’m on her team.

JUNIOR
Stop showing off ‘Shida!
Junior goes back to playing ball.

Block party taking place. Low income BLACK neighborhood but what it lacks in money it makes up for in character. KIDS playing and dancing, ADULTS out socializing, playing cards and trying to dance along with the kids. WE FOLLOW A LINE OF PEOPLE with paper plates and at the end of that line is Ali, with an apron straped to his waist and a FAMU logo'ed chefs hat hanging off the side of his head, serving up food off the grill.

MARCUS
Nice form baby-girl!

Standing to the side grubbing on a hamburger is Marcus. Ali continues serving the line.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Damn good burger, Frat.

ALI
Just 'cause you left the neighborhood don't mean the good cookin' did. You know Devina got that Mac-N-Cheese you like.

MARCUS
She put her foot in it, didn't she?

ALI
Frat, all way up to the ankle.

Marcus takes another bite and scans the neighborhood.

ALI (CONT'D)
Miss it don't you? You can't get this out there living next to Mr. White folks.

MARCUS
Better school. More security. I don't have to keep checking my doors at night.

ALI
Yeah but if you don't pay that note you not gonna have a door to check.

SFX: LOUD SLAM ON A TABLE

LORNA (O.S.)

BONES!
LORNA HILL, late 50’s, attorney, slams down some dominoes on a table, playing against some YOUNG 20 somethings.

ALI
Uh, Attorney Hill. You might wanna take it easy on them. You might have to represent ‘em one day.

LORNA
I’m giving them this ass whoopin’ now so they’ll know what to expect if I do. This is how we do it in the ‘Ville baby! Pay up.

The 20 Somethings push in their plates of chicken wings and get up from the table.

Ali and Marcus direct their attention over to a table where Sheree and DEVINA, Ali’s wife, Boriqua, early 40’s, with a limp, are setting food out.

ALI
Devina told me Sheree lost her job.

MARCUS
She ain’t exactly lose it. They gave it to some young attorney. Probably work longer hours for shorter pay.

ALI
Those are the times we’re livin’ in brotha.

Last PERSON gets served and walks away.

Sheree and Devina walk over with plates of Mac-N-Cheese. Ali puts his utensils down and rushes over to Devina.

ALI (CONT’D)
Let me get that baby.

DEVINA
Papi, I’ve got two good legs. One just happens to be Army issued. I’m ok.

Ali puts burgers on their plates and they all sit down at a table next to the grill.

DEVINA (CONT’D)
So, Marcus. Sheree tells me you signed the family up for National Geographic.
MARCUS
What?

SHERSE
Talking about those White folks you had interviewing us. (To Devina)
Girl, do you know they asked me how old I was.

DEVINA
No they didn't. And you didn't cut them?

MARCUS
I thought it would be a good way to leave a legacy for our family.

SHERSE
And get some quick money.

Marcus looks over at a dilapidated house, with high grass and a FOR SALE sign in the front yard.

ALI
That's your legacy right there.

MARCUS
What? Naw. We're good.

SHERSE
We are? 'Cause I'm good back at 225 Wellesville Blvd.

Attendees began to SCREAM as they all look over and see GREG WILSON, late 30's, early 40's, disheveled, unkempt hair and unshaven, with a camo jacket on snatching food from the attendees.

GREG
Put it down! Don't eat it! The Russians are poisoning us! They're trying to get rid of us.

People begin to run from him. Ali moves towards him when Devina cuts him off.

DEVINA
I got this.

Devina moves over to Greg and stands right in front of him.

DEVINA (CONT'D)
Marine. Attention!
Greg tries to compose himself, snaps to attention and salutes.

GREG
Gggggoooodddd afternoon, Captain.

DEVINA
What’s the issue Sgt?

GREG
Just trying to protect the civilians from the chemicals, Captain.

DEVINA
Marine. You have done your duty. The civilians are safe. You have made your country proud.

Greg begins to tear up and begins to sing the Marine Corps hymn. After he finishes, Devina salutes him and walks him off.

MARCUS
I see nothing’s changed.

ALI
Just the weather. Ain’t been right since he got back.

Marcus takes a seat to wolf down his burger when...

TREY WILLIAMS, 16, 6’5, built like a baby Lebron approaches them.

MARCUS
Where the hell did the sun go?

Marcus looks up and sees Trey.

ALI
Marcus, you remember Trey.

MARCUS
Trey who?

ALI
Lil’ Trey, Ty’s boy.

MARCUS
This ain’t lil Trey. How’d you get so damn big? What ‘chu eatin?
ALLI
All this good food right here.

TREY
What’s up Mr. Jenkins. It’s good to see you back on the block. I’ve missed seeing Junior and Rashida.

ALLI
Yeah. Trey’s getting looks already from schools to play ball. And his gpa is....what is it now Trey?

TREY
4.2, Mr. Jones.

ALLI
Yeah, 4.2 And that’s from the same school me and you graduated from Frat. Looks like he’s about to break some of those ball records you set too.

Ali gets up and piles three hamburgers on Trey’s plate. Marcus eyes Trey and grabs two more burgers also.

TREY
Thanks Mr. Jones. Appreciate it. Good seeing you again Mr. Jenkins.

Trey leaves and heads over to the other kids. Him and Junior dap each other up and it’s clear to see that they are excited to see one another.

ALLI
Junior and ‘baby-girl don’t laugh like that with them new neighbors or at that new school do they?

Marcus bites down on his burger as he stares at Junior and Rashida having a good time.

Devina walks back up.

DEVINA
If things don’t work out with your new bestie Brian and your reality tv crew, you can always come back. Your house still sittin’ there. Your daddy put every dime he had into buying that house. There’s your legacy.
SHEREE

Yup. Preach Mamita!

A BLACK CAR WITH DARK TINTED WINDOWS ROLLS UP. Everyone pauses. Out jumps OFFICER WILL Eaton, white, late 30’s/early 40’s, and his partner, OFFICER MIKE TRIPP, Black, early 20’s.

Ali frowns his face as Officer Eaton walks up to him and looks him square in the eye and they are nose to nose.

Officer Tripp looks nervous and puts his hand on his belt.

ALI
Can we help you Officer?

OFFICER Eaton
The only thing you can do for me is make sure that damn burger got plenty of mayo and pickles on it.

Ali and Officer Eaton bust out laughing and dap each other up. Officer Tripp looks relieved and removes his hand from his belt.

Everyone greets Officer Eaton.

ALI
What up Will? I like that new ride.

OFFICER Eaton
Just got issued earlier this week. All of us got ‘em. Makes is easy to sneak up and snatch a burger!

ALI
I see you got fresh blood witchu?

OFFICER Eaton
Yea. Everybody, this is Officer Trip. Fresh out the academy.

MARCUS
Look like he fresh out the suburbs.

ALI
Yeah. You not from around here are you?

OFFICER TRIPP
No...no, sir. I’m from Winter Park.

SHEREE
Or Bel-Aire.
OFFICER EATON
Yeah. Ole' Mike here, went to
private school, then some fancy
Ivey league school and decided he
wanted to serve his community.

DEVINA
As a cop? He looks a little
nervous. You might wanna give him a
slingshot til he gets right with
the neighborhood.

OFFICER EATON
Mike'll get used to everybody soon
enough.

The basketball rolls over to Officer Eaton and he picks it
up.

OFFICER EATON (CONT'D)
Ali, two burgers says I sink it
like I did against you and Marcus
to win State finals.

MARCUS
There you go brining up old shit. I
cought a cramp and you got a lucky
shot.

Officer Eaton shoots and sinks it. Ali takes two burgers off
of Marcus' plate, puts them on another plate and hands it to
Officer Eaton.

GIRL runs up with a cell phone and tries to snap a picture.

ALI
Hold on baby.

He jumps up fixes his chef's hat.

ALI (CONT'D)
Yo! Picture time! Let's go.

BOOGIE, a small kid on a big wheel rolls up with a cowboy hat
on. He aims his finger at Ali, and Ali puts his hands up. The
kid pulls the trigger and Ali pretends to be shot, bends down
and forms the kids gun finger into a fist.

ALI (CONT'D)
Boogis. Make this your first and
last time with a gun. I need you to
grow up and take care of the
neighborhood!
Gives Boogie and pound, picks up him up and calls everyone over.

ALI (CONT’D)
Yo! Come on.

Music continues to play as everyone runs over and jumps in the picture with Ali, Marcus, Devina, Sheree, Junior and Rashida in the center.

ALI (CONT’D)
On three. Wellsville! One, two, three!

ALL TOGETHER
Wellsville!

Picture snaps and FREEZE on photo.

EXT. WELLSVILLE PARK-NIGHT

Night creeps in and a few are left at the party. The hood is up on Marcus’ car with Ali under it and Marcus in the driver’s seat. Ali has a tool box sitting next to the car tire.

ALI
Alright Frat. Give it some gas.

Marcus steps on the gas and nothing.

Devina and Sheree stand-by watching the men be men.

DEVINA
Ya’ll gonna be here all night.

SHEREE
D, I hope so. I do not want to go back to that house.

DEVINA
How are the kids doing?

SHEREE
They’re not.

Junior is still playing basketball under the street lights with a few neighborhood kids including Trey. Rashida is hanging with a few friends and doing cheers.

SHEREE (CONT’D)
They just shut down when they come home.
DEVINA
Do they know about the job yet?

SHEREE
No, but I can’t keep it from them for long.

DEVINA
Look mama. It happens to all of us. Hell. I lost my job and a leg.

SHEREE
I know D. How are you?

DEVINA
You know. The military was good but you can’t fight a war with one leg.

SHEREE
Still getting nightmares?

DEVINA
Nothing that a little Xanax can’t help.

Ali and Marcus are still at it.

ALI
Try it again.

Marcus floors the gas and nothing. He hops out of the car.

MARCUS
You sure it’s the battery? Maybe it’s the alternator.

ALI
You think I don’t know a dead battery when I see one?

Devina and Sheree rolls up their sleeves.

DEVINA
Come on girl. Let’s get ya’ll home. This has gone on long enough. You know what Big Mamma used to say.

DEVINA/SHEREE
Let man be man, ’till they need a woman to come fix it.

They laugh as they head over to the car. Devina walks over to the hood and Sheree gets in the driver’s side.
Ali and Marcus just stand by and watch. Devina pulls a hammer out of the tool box, bangs on the starter.

DEVINA
Hit it ‘Ree.

Sheree cranks the car, gives it some gas and it starts right up. Without looking over, Devina hands Ali the hammer and walks past Marcus.

Ali and Marcus on opposite ends look around the hood.

ALI
Or it could be the starter.

SHeree
Alright kids. Let’s go.

Streets lights are the only thing lighting the street and WE HEAR the constant sound of basketball.

SHeree (CONT’D)
I said let’s go.

And then SWOOSH...

JUNIOR (O.S.)
Stop showing off Rashida?

Rashida and Junior slowly make their way to the car and hug Ali and Devina.

JUNIOR (CONT’D)
Bye Uncle Ali, Auntie D.

ALI
Keep workin’ on that jump shot Junior. It’ll fall in there some kind a way.

Rashida holds on to Devina tight.

RASHIDA
Auntie D, can I please stay with you?

MARCUS
Alright ‘Shida. Come on now. We got to go.

DEVINA
Mira. You are more than welcome here whenever you want for as long as you want.
RASHIDA
Yes ma’am.

INT. CAR-NIGHT
They all load up in the car and Rashida and Junior stare out the back window and wave goodbye to everyone as they drive off. Marcus looks in the rearview mirror as the neighborhood disappears in the distance.

EXT. STORE-NIGHT
The car pulls up to a corner store.

MARCUS
I forgot we outta laundry detergent. Better get it here before it gets too late.

As Marcus goes to turn the car off, Sheree quickly grabs his hand.

SHEREE
Starters don’t always start back up.

MARCUS
You right. Hey Junior. Run in there right quick and pick up some laundry detergent.

Marcus reaches in his pocket and pulls out a few dollars.

RASHIDA
Daddy, can I get some chips?

MARCUS
Sure baby-girl. Junior get some chips for you and your sister.

JUNIOR
Alright Dad. Be right back.

Junior, now wearing a light jacket with a hoodie, grabs the money, hops out the car and just before he enters the store he throws his hoodie on.

A song comes on the radio and Marcus turns it up and begins to sing to Sheree and she leans over to peck him on the cheek.
SHEREE
We’ll get through this.

MARCUS
There’s the woman I fell in love with.

Marcus looks in the rearview mirror and Rashida gives him a thumbs up. Behind her, he sees a POLICE CAR pull up.

He then looks over at his driver’s side mirror and watches the POLICE OFFICER exit the car. He heads into the store and Marcus keeps his eye on him, all while still humming the song. Marcus notices that once the Police Officer is in the store, he quickly walks to the back where Marcus assumes Junior is.

MARCUS (CONT’D)
Hey baby. I’ll be right back.

SHEREE
Now what? I told you not to eat all of those burgers. And grab some head-ache medicine while you’re in there.

Marcus jumps out and runs into the store.

INT. STORE-NIGHT

Marcus enters quickly, spots Junior grabbing some chips and the Police Officer walking towards him. Marcus runs up to his son and snatches the hood off of his head.

MARCUS
Hey Junior. Come on. What’s...what’s taking you so long? We’ve gotta go.

Marcus spins him around and drags him through the aisle.

JUNIOR
Sorry Dad. I still need to get laundry det...

MARCUS
Don’t worry about it. We got enough clean clothes at the house.

Junior heads up to the counter and Marcus turns to the Police Officer.
MARCUS (CONT’D)
Gotta get this kid to move faster.

POLICE OFFICER
Might need your “boy” to learn to
move with more purpose.

MARCUS
I’ll be sure that my “son” is more
careful where he makes moves.

POLICE OFFICER
You do that.

Marcus exits with the Police Officer still staring at him.

INT. JENKINS HOME—LIVING ROOM
All enter the house in a funk. Marcus is on his cell phone.

MARCUS
Ok. Thanks Ali. Appreciate the
info. Later.

Hangs up and rushes over to the television and cuts it on and
they all watch.

ANGLE: TELEVISION SCREEN
At the bottom of the screen it says POLICE SHOOT UNARMED
BLACK TEEN.

SHEREE
What’s up? Everything alright?

MARCUS
Naw. Ali just told me that a cop
just shot a kid in the old
neighborhood. That’s exactly why we
don’t need to live over there.

JUNIOR/RASHIDA
Awww Dad. Come on!

SHEREE
Wait a minute now. That’s an
isolated incident.

MARCUS
I’m just sick of this shit. Ali’s
gonna pick me up tomorrow so we can
start protesting at the precinct.
(MORE)
MARCUS (CONT'D)
We get shot for walking while black.

SHEREE
Ya'll go on up to bed. I'll be up in a minute.

JUNIOR/RASHIDA
Yes Mom.

SHEREE
Don't harmonize with me.

JUNIOR/RASHIDA
Yes Mom.

MARCUS
Um yeah. Junior. Hang back for a minute.

Sherree shoots Marcus a look and he looks away.

Sherree and Rashida exit.

JUNIOR
Yeah Dad?

MARCUS
Junior, I need to talk to you about what happened at the store tonight.

JUNIOR
I'm sorry Dad. I was trying to hurry up.

MARCUS
Not that. Junior. Look, as a black male, sometimes you're gonna be profiled and I need you to be aware of that.

JUNIOR
I know. I'm tired of hearing about it. I already know this.

MARCUS
But you didn't see it today and that could be your life. You have to always be aware of your surroundings. And you can't wear hoodies inside the stores.

JUNIOR
But Dad. That's not fair.
MARCUS
It’s not, but it is what it is. And as your father I have to make sure you are safe when you leave out of this house. Unfortunately, you have to make “them” feel comfortable, that you’re not a threat. You understand?

JUNIOR
Yeah Dad. That’s why I just want to go back to the old neighborhood. At least there I knew who to look out for.

MARCUS
Did you just see on the news what happened in the old neighborhood? I can’t take that risk. Go on up to bed.

Junior drags his feet and heads up the stairs.

MARCUS (CONT’D)
Hey Junior.

Junior pauses waiting for more of the lesson.

MARCUS (CONT’D)
Love you.

JUNIOR
Love you too, Dad.

Marcus returns to watching the news.

INT. JENKINS HOME-BEDROOM

Sherree walks out of the bathroom already in her night clothes. Marcus sitting on the bed.

SHERREE
Is everything alright?

MARCUS
No. It’s not. Tomorrow starts a new day for me. For us. I’m gonna talk to old man Phillips instead of Brian and demand that new project.

SHERREE
You’re serious?
MARCUS
I deserve it, baby. We deserve it.
Cops following Junior, you get
fired, and I'm not sure what's
happening with 'Shida. Those White
guys golfing with the money that
could pay the power around here.

SHEREE
Ok babe, I just don't want them to
label you as the angry black man
when you talk to them.

MARCUS
I've got every right to be angry.
I've been passed over time and time
again. I deserve a seat at that
table. And we deserve to live just
as good as they are.

SHEREE holds Marcus and starts consoling him.

SHEREE
If that's what you think is best.
I've got your back.I gotchu!

On Marcus’ look,

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. BIG MAMA’S HOUSE—DAY (1981)

Neighborhood kids are playing in the front yard. Some jump
rope. Others play tag and basketball.

On the front porch is BIG MAMA, late 60’s, rocks in her
rocking chair and weaves the quilt like art, humming. WE NEVER
SEE HER FACE. Only her hands and the quilt. A hand mirror
with a brush and comb lay next to her on an end table.

Young voices CAN BE HEARD arguing.

A YOUNG SHEREE,11,long pigtails and a YOUNG MARCUS,11, lil’
afro with oversized glasses begin to argue with each other.

YOUNG MARCUS
We playin’ house. I’m the man. Me
and Michael Jordan on the same team
and you stay home with the babies
Sheree.
YOUNG SHEREE
I ain't staying home with no babies
Marcus. I got me a job like Claire
Huxtable. I'mma lawyer. Now you
stay home with the babies.

By now a GROUP OF KIDS has formed a circle around them.

YOUNG MARCUS
You can't be no lawyer. Look at
your hair. Don't no lawyers have
little pigtails.

He grabs one of her pigtails

YOUNG MARCUS (CONT'D)
Here lil piggie. Here lil piggie.

Young Sheree looks around and sees everyone laughing, turns
and swings on Young Marcus. He hits the ground, everything is
silent and Young Sheree starts crying and runs in the house.

Young Sheree runs up the steps and bolts right past Big Mama
who doesn't move. She grabs the door and

BIG MAMA
Shut that door and come here 'chil.
Get over here now.

Young Sheree slowly lets the door go and makes her way over
to Big Mama.

YOUNG SHEREE
Yes, Big Mama?

BIG MAMA
What wrong wit you 'chil?

YOUNG SHEREE
Marcus was picking with me and
called me lil piggie and said I had
to stay home with the babies.

BIG MAMA
You fussin' 'bout some make
believe? Look here.

Big Mama picks up the mirror and shows Young Sheree her
reflection.

BIG MAMA (CONT'D)
You see any lil piggies? Well? Do
ya?
YOUNG SHEREE
No Big Mama.

BIG MAMA
No, cause ya ain’t no lil piggie.
Don’t matter none what he say. What matter is what ya answer to. Look here.

Big Mama puts the mirror down and points to a woman on a quilt.

BIG MAMA (CONT’D)
You see this woman here? Now her husband founded Wellsville, but guess who the town folk listen to?

YOUNG SHEREE
Her?

BIG MAMA
That’s right. He founded it but she run it. Ya hear me? She run the store, the clinic and the city hall and still raised her churin. That’s my grandmother and she built Wellsville into a big town.

YOUNG SHEREE
Wow! Her husband let her do all of that?

BIG MAMA
Listen here. You don’t let no man tell you what you can and can’t do. You got just as much rights as he do.

YOUNG SHEREE
Yes Big Mama.

Young Marcus can be seen standing behind a bush, trying to eavesdrop.

BIG MAMA
I can see your white socks boy.
Get over here Marcus.

Marcus immediately runs over to them staring at the floor as he approaches. He has a big not by his eye where Sheree socked him.

BIG MAMA (CONT’D)
Don’t look at the floor.
He pops his head up, glances over at Young Sheree and then Big Mama.

YOUNG MARCUS
Yes, Big Mama?

BIG MAMA
Now look here. This chil got just as much rights as you. Ya’ll come from the same community, got the same schooling. You got to look out for each other and know who you are at all times. Ya hear?

YOUNG MARCUS
But Big Mama...

BIG MAMA
Don’t interrupt me, chil. You chirun are the future of Wellsville and you need to realize how important community is now. Community is family and if we ain’t got nothin’, that’s all we got.

YOUNG MARCUS
Yes, Big Mama.

Sheree cracks a smile.

BIG MAMA
You too ‘Ree.

YOUNG SHEREE
Yes, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA
Now ya’ll apologize to each other and don’t let me here no more foolishness again.

YOUNG MARCUS/SHEREE
Yes, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA
Don’t harmonize on me.

YOUNG MARCUS
I’m. (2 beats) I’m sorry Sheree.

YOUNG SHEREE
I’m sorry for punching your eye out Marcus.
Big Mama goes back to weaving, and as Young Marcus and Young Sheree hug each other, WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW JENKINS HOME-DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Morning arrives. The Sun rises, the water sprinklers pop on, neighbors are out walking their dogs. But this is a new neighborhood. Bigger house, bigger yards, bigger cars.

Suddenly WE HEAR a high pitched scream from a GIRL, then a BOY.

INT. NEW JENKINS HOME-BEDROOM-DAY

BLACK SCREEN:

Loud screams still being heard. Marcus is slurring his words and still coming out of his sleep.

WHITE MARCUS SR. (O.S.)
What in the hell is going on? Who’s screaming and why’s it so damn dark in here?

A White hand removes a sleep mask from his face.

WHITE MARCUS SR. (CONT’D)

Who put these panties on my face?

He’s trying to focus his eyes and scans the room from left to right, noticing pictures of White people in frames on the wall, new furnishings, a different color on the wall and then his eyes land on a WHITE WOMAN, late 30’s/early 40’s, long hair, thin, trembling and staring at him with fear, next to him in the bed.

WHITE SHEREE
Ahhhhhhhh!

WHITE MARCUS SR.
Ahhhhhhhh!

A young White Rashida runs into their room screaming and crying. They all SCREAM!

Then behind her White Junior runs into the room and they all look at each other and SCREAM.
On the dresser is a note, next to a clock that says WELCOME TO YOUR NEW LIFE JENKINS FAMILY.

EXT. WELLSVILLE—PARK—DAY

Their screams are faded out by the sound of construction and SOMEONE pounding a sign into the ground in front of the “Welcome to Wellsville” sign.

ANGLE SIGN:

“WELCOME TO SoWe (PRONOUNCED SO-WE). A LUXURY COMMUNITY IS BEING BUILT JUST FOR YOU!”

WHITE SHEREE (O.S.)
Marcus! What in the hell did you do?

WHITE MARCUS SR. (O.S.)
‘Ree. I’m sorry. I can fix this!

FADE OUT.
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