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Us, Abundantly: From Africa to the Americas

by

Karisma Jay

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts Dance, Hunter College
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Date

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Abstract

This paper is a contextual defense for Karisma Jay's MFA Thesis for the Hunter College Dance Department. It presents a myriad of contemporary dance practices, pedagogical imperatives and ancestral streams that flowed through two iterations of "Us, AbunDantly." One was a multi-hour production of music, song, dance and theater that premiered June 23, 2019 at 6pm at Hunter College's historic Kaye Playhouse. This live production was performed to a sold-out audience of 900 with a cast of over 100 performers ranging from ages 2.5 to 70 years old including and a host of Broadway alumni. The second iteration, "Us, Abundantly (The Film)" premiered on 12/5/2020 at 8:30pm on www.hunterdances.com/karismajay and is an edited, 90-min digital version of the live show.

The research of "Us, AbunDantly" delves into the African Diaspora. And, as such, the research methodology interweaves artistic studio processes with autobiographical collections of dance knowledge and a community of shared authorship. Historically, dances and artistic practices that derived from Africa have for so long influenced the Americas and have been categorically absent in American History textbooks. As an artistic and academic project built upon the fight for civil rights and freedom of expression, the show and this paper testify to the power of collective work and responsibility. The work happens within a continuum of oral histories, community building, academic scholarship and the need to speak truth to power. It is a context/process paper, a thesis defense and a foundation for future study guides and web-series initiatives.

Visit <https://vimeo.com/495457807>

To Madame CJ, General Harriet, Sister Assata, Ms. Sojourner and Mother Mary.

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Artist Statement (To borrow from Claes Oldenburg)

- I am for an art that immediately gets you up on your feet.
- I am for an art that changes the world.
- I am for an art that tells stories of unsung heroes.
- I am for an art that touches, moves and inspires.
- I am for an art that connects to African roots and traditions.
- I am for an art that is authentic and vulnerable.
- I am for an art that is intergenerational and community oriented.
- I am for an art that is all-encompassing.
- I am for an art that is in your face with its boldness and physicality.
- I am for an art that is socially, emotionally and politically relevant.
- I am for Go Big or Go Home.
- I am for Vulnerability.
- I am for Integrity.
- I am for the Individual and the Group

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*“I dance not to entertain but to help people better understand each other.
Because through dance I have experienced the wordless joy of freedom,
I seek it more fully now for my people and for all people everywhere.”*

— Pearl Primus

INTRODUCTION

For the last six years, I have been writing large scale productions dedicated to stories with artistic and social consciousness at their core. In all of my productions, the stage becomes a magical world for the audience to enter. The visual presentations set the tone and mood for each scene and allow the audiences to be transported into a "Broadway in Brooklyn" experience that keeps them wanting more. My thesis work, “Us, Abundantly,” follows this mission with a specific intent to showcase and highlight the dance and rich culture of the African Diaspora with a keen focus on contributing to the world of edutainment.

The first iteration of “Us, AbunDantly” was a multi-hour production of music, song, dance and theater that premiered June 23, 2019 at 6pm at Hunter College’s historic Kaye Playhouse. I conceived, directed, wrote and starred in the work alongside a collection of students, teachers and contributors from the school I founded. This live production was performed to a sold-out audience of 900 with a cast of over 100 performers ranging from ages 2.5 to 70 years old including a cast of Broadway alumni. The second iteration, “Us, Abundantly (The Film),” is an edited, 90-min digital version of the live show that premiered on Saturday December 5, 2020 at 8:30pm on www.hunterdances.com and through Zoom and Facebook Watch Parties.

As scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild suggests in her 1996 Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and other contexts “my purpose is not to valorize Africanisms by comparing them with Europeanist phenomena, but to show the latter dependent

on the former.” (Gottschild 2) Historically, dances and artistic practices that derived from Africa have for so long influenced the Americas and have been categorically absent in American History textbooks. This paper stands as testimony. In the continuum of oral histories, community building, and the need to speak truth to power through pleasurable entertainment and a reimagining of the dance school “recital” structure, I pledge to use this process of reflective and contextual writing to add my story to the field of academic scholarship and to remember the ancestral well from which I draw. In this paper, I will present the myriad contemporary dance practices, pedagogical imperatives and ancestral streams that flowed through two iterations of “Us, AbunDantly.”

BACKGROUND

In “Us, AbunDantly,” the character I portray is Ms. Frances Cress Welsing, also known as Ms. Frizzle. Inspired by the late Ms. Frances Cress Welsing of the Black Supremacist Movement, my Ms. Frizzle is a well-read Afrocentrist and super-cultured champion for the Arts. Ms. Frizzle's sole mission is to creatively and passionately introduce and connect her students (and the audience) back to the rich culture, history and influence of Africa and its descendants. As Ms. Frizzle and her students encountered dances and historic figures from Africa to the Caribbean; Down South to Up North, we brought the community of my Brooklyn-based AbunDance Academy of the Arts and new audiences into an accessible encounter with legacy. (“Our Mission” 1) With her wealth of knowledge and epic theatrical quests via the magic school bus, Ms. Frizzle helps to uncover Africa’s rich contributions and shines a bright light on Africa’s major influence on The Americas.

And, Ms. Frizzle is me.

I have been told that when I was in my mother's womb I would not stop dancing. Before I walked, I danced. At the age of two, I began training in West African Dance in NYC and Guinea, West Africa with Master Teacher Youssouf Koumbassa. (Koumbassa) From 1990-2014, I studied dances while in Guinea, Burkina Faso, The Gambia and Senegal, West Africa. I performed these dances with a full-piece Djembe Drum orchestra while still a toddler. At five years old, I was invited to perform with Koumbassa's New York based African dance company as its youngest member. Many of the dances my students perform in "Us, Abundantly" are woven into the fabric of my life.

While I continued my West African dance training, I also became well-versed in Eurocentric dance disciplines as a dance major at New York City's famed Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. Upon my early graduation from LaGuardia, I continued working within the conventional European aesthetics from school and the African aesthetics I knew from birth. Beginning in 2004, I performed as the youngest member of Ronald K. Brown's *Evidence*, a company dedicated to the preservation and reimagination of traditional Diasporic dance forms. After touring with Evidence, I started to train privately with a Russian Ballet Master before enrolling in NYU's Gallatin School for Individualized Study.

At NYU Gallatin, I developed a concentration on Performing Arts and Pre-Med, and dug deeper into African Diasporic Art and History. Soon after school, I booked a leading role in the off-Broadway musical *Stomp*. To my surprise, the show was filled with many African and Afro-Cuban / Afro-Latina / Caribbean references in the rhythms we played. Inherently present throughout the show was the influence of the Diaspora. As one of two African American female leads in STOMP at the time, it dawned on me that I rarely saw girls who looked like me in the musicals that I loved. Thus, I decided to write stories with characters who looked like. I began

writing shows that told stories of the people of my community and village, all while drawing upon my experiences and evolution as a performer and artist.

I founded AbunDance Academy of the Arts in 2014 following the belief that dance is “traditionally a communal and social activity...It is an integral part of a society’s worldview.” (Welsh-Asante, 19) Initially, AbunDance presented showcases that featured the students’ abilities. Then, in 2015, I moved away from the dance recital format and started writing, directing and starring in our end-of-year productions. With every production I have dreamed into being for AbunDance, I have supported my community’s world view that “dance is a way to keep cultural traditions alive.” (Brown)

For my 2018 production of “DREAM, AbunDantly,” inspired by the hit movie “Dreamgirls,” I wrote an adaptation telling the story of four African American girls who use their platform to champion the fight against racism, segregation, police brutality and cultural appropriation. The story opened with a reenactment of the tragic 1963 bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, where four innocent girls lost their lives. In “Dream, AbunDantly,” those girls were eulogized by a Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. figure who danced while their real life eulogy played in the background. The prior year, I wrote the story “Sister Act, AbunDantly.” Inspired by the “Sister Act” movies, that told the story of a compassionate and successful Broadway star who returned to Brooklyn to infuse the arts into every corner of the borough by opening a community arts center. With a live band, a multigenerational cast and a trained choir consisting of senior citizens from two Brooklyn Senior Centers, we showcased local talent which proved one is never too old or young to participate in the world of performing arts. The year before that, I wrote “Annie, AbunDantly,” an adaptation

of the musical “Annie”¹ to inspire and encourage girls and women of all backgrounds. In “Annie, AbunDantly,” we explored the main character as she matures beyond the orphanage to become the first African - American woman ever to win a presidential election.

In June 2019, after two months of writing the script, I presented my fifth production, “Us, AbunDantly,” an original story, written by me and inspired by the acclaimed edutainment cartoon/book series “Magic School Bus.”² “Us, AbunDantly” tells the story of an inspirational teacher, Ms. Frizzle, who goes against the grain of current educational curricula to promote the goals of Afrocentrism through dance and song. Aligned with Brenda Dixon Gottschild’s defense of difference in her 2003 Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool, Ms. Frizzle echoes Gottschild’s sentiments that “until racism and white-skin privilege are no longer an everyday issue in American life... there is good reason to use a terminology of difference (black dance; black dancing body) that allows us to honor these contributions.”(14) Ms. Frizzle educates her students on the value of celebrating difference and honoring Afrocentricity through reconstructing culture and creating collective consciousness about the African, Caribbean, Latino and African-American histories missing from their textbooks.

When presented with an opportunity for a teachable moment, Ms Frizzle uses her AbunDance Magic School Bus as a history portal. By way of her AbunDance Magic School Bus, Ms. Frizzle transports her students back in time and across the globe for experiential learning experiences. An inspiring story expressed primarily through dance, song and live music, “Us, AbunDantly” is a celebration of the intertwined histories of Africa and the Americas. “Us, AbunDantly” celebrates beloved teachers everywhere who inspire, educate and prepare their students for the future.

¹ <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083564/>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Magic_School_Bus

THE SHOW

In “Us, Abundantly,” I played Ms. Frizzle, an Afro-Latina history teacher, group leader and tour guide of Homeroom Class 5-315. I wrote Ms. Frizzle’s role in response to my curiosity about what the original Ms. Frizzle from the Magic School Bus would have been like if she was Black (and conscious). Apparently, I was not the only who wondered that because Black twitter also called for Ms. Tracee Ellis Ross, a well-known African-American actress to serve as a live action reboot of the long-running series. (Bradley) In “Us, Abundantly,” Ms. Frizzle’s real name is Frances in honor of Dr. Frances Cress Welsing, author of *The Isis Papers* and creator of the Cress-Welsing theory which analyzed, and strived to eradicate, white supremacy. My Ms. Frizzle joins the lineage of Civil Rights activists as she introduces female expertise and leadership to her young students. With flair and even some humor, my Ms. Frizzle constantly goes against the grain of standard education as she educates and empowers her students through the art of experience.

Act 1, Scene 1 - “Home Room” (*Brooklyn, NY*)

On her first day of class, Ms. Frizzle begins by taking attendance and learns her students’ names are Sojourner Truth, Mary McLeod Bethune, CJ Walker, Assata Shakur and Harriet Tubman. She tells her students they are named after prolific African- American women pioneers and asks them if they know “how magnanimous their names are.” (Jay 3) Only two know anything about their namesakes. Ms. Frizzle decides she must teach them about their lineage. “Repeat after me, Sankofa ... It means to go back and get it. We have to go back to where we come from to find ourselves.” (Jay 4) On the magic school bus, with their seatbelts on tight, the students and Ms. Frizzle are transported back to 15th century Africa, pre-slavery and pre-Transatlantic Slave Trade. Traveling across time zones and timelines, Ms. Frizzle and Class 5-

315 end up in Guinea, West Africa in the middle of a village “bantaba,” also known as “The Dancing Ground,” a sacred space around which the community revolves. (Moore 4)

Act 1, Scene 2 - “Wakanda In Real Life” (*Africa, The Homeland*)

Upon their arrival, Ms. Frizzle and her class watch a village full of people of all ages come alive. As the African King and Queen sit regally upon their thrones, the bantaba ensues with a full Drum orchestra and it is clear why Ms. Frizzle brought her class to Africa. As Pearl Primus, Black Dance Pioneer and Hunter Alum describes:

“Africa is basic, vital! For the investigator it is the source, the well from which she draws inspiration for her creative work. African Dance is complete. It ranges from the subtlest and most lyric of movements to the most dynamic, from the most sophisticated choreographed presentations to the simplest”(Asante 4)

The bantaba begins with the Balafon, “a gourd-resonated frame Xylophone of the Manding peoples of West Africa, found in the Gambia, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali and northern Côte d’Ivoire.” (Gourlay 1) The Djembe orchestra joins in to play the first group’s dance, *Konkoba*. *Konkoba* means forest/jungle and is a dance known as the “rhythm of the good workers.” (Nas 1) *Konkoba* is also regarded as “the rhythm that animates the one who is returning home, and the rest of the village, to dance.” (Nas 1) Two groups perform *Lamban* (griot or historian’s dance), a dance style indigenous to the Old Mali Empire. Not only a social dance, it also relates to history, such as the epics of Sundiata Keita, the powerful king who brought peace to the land. (Cambigue 19) The village cheers as Ms. Frizzle’s class joins the celebration, bringing the elders of the village to the center of the bantaba to participate (and be honored) as well. As the bantaba continues, every member of the village contributes. When the lead drummer from the orchestra signals, all of the adults of the village come forward to execute *Sorsonet*, “an initiation dance for the youth of the Baga people.” (Koumbassa)

The adults open up the circle and kneel down to reveal and honor the elder member of their group. As an elder, she represents ancestral knowledge and what Kariamuwelsh-Asante describes in her 1985 article Commonalities in African Dance: An Aesthetic Foundation, as part of the commonalities of Diasporic dances through “the ancestral connection to Africa through epic memory, and oral tradition.” (71) In this article, a foundational work for a diverse study of dance aesthetics, the author broadly analyzes African dance traditions as embodying seven characteristics of polyrhythm, polycentrism, curvilinear, dimensional, epic memory, repetition, and holism. The elder, imparting her wisdom to the youth, is an homage to the masked dancer usually present in Sorsonet ceremonies and “revered as protector of the village.” (Billmeier 1)

Once the adult ensemble receives the blessing from the elder, more dancing results including a climactic solo from Ms. Frizzle. Now everyone is cheering and exchanging energy as well as their traditions and culture. As the bantaba comes close to ending, the rhythm changes to *Dundunba*, “the dance of the strong Men” and the King and his men begin to dance. (Alpha 2) The men dance last because this is customary in African dance tradition. Once they have finished their sharing, everyone from the village joins the King and his men. The final moments of the bantaba involve all of the groups of the village, from the babies to the elders. As the Djembe orchestra begins to escalate the rhythm, everyone gathers into one tight knit group and with the lead drummer’s signal, the village physically lifts up the young dancer who initiated the very first step of the entire bantaba. She is reaching up to the sky, representing the bright future, as her village is looking up to her reach for the sky.

Act 2, Scene 1 – “Middle Passage 101” (*Atlantic Ocean*)

In the next moment, everyone starts to scream and run out of the way. Colonizers have arrived and invaded the village. They have interrupted the celebratory festivities and begun to

enslave the villagers. Several of the villagers are captured and forced to “chain” together. This represents the beginning of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. A small group of young girls begin to dance amidst the chaos. This dance symbolizes the groups of enslaved people who tried to escape and/or jumped into the Ocean to free themselves and their spirits. Ms. Frizzle and her class get caught in the middle of the capture and end up in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean on a slave ship. While Ms. Frizzle attempts to protect her students from bondage, two streams of red fabric billow across the stage and begin waving up and down to represent the Blood of the Ocean from those who lost their lives during the transport. Thankfully, Ms. Frizzle and her students manage to escape. They are magically transported back to their classroom to process what they just experienced. Their new perspectives of history change them forever.

ACT 2 Scene 2: “Roots” (*Atlantic Ocean*)

Back in the classroom, the group discusses the slave trade against the backdrop of Dixon-Gottschild’s statement that “attempts to eradicate memory act as a roadblock to empowerment, perpetuate a language of silence, enforce a politic of denial, and reinforce past suffering into the present.” (Asante, Digging 6) They detail the horrific conditions and numerical reality of centuries of kidnapping and enslavement. The conversation shifts to contemporary travel and the lack of passports among the students. This leads to another call for the Magic School Bus, as “Roots,” a song by Garifuna artist Andy Palacio of Belize, is heard. Once again, the Magic School Bus comes alive and its dancers begin executing movements “based on the Creole culture” upheld in Belize. (Thompson)

For this trip, Ms. Frizzle takes class 5-315 to the Caribbean circa 17th century where, after being taken from their homeland, some of the enslaved people were dropped off and sprinkled

throughout the Caribbean. She points out the European influences on the architecture of the town's plaza and introduces the students and the audience to their first stop, Trinidad.

Act 2, Scene 2 – “Once on this Island” (*The Caribbean*)

Trinidad

Historically, Caribbean culture, especially in Brooklyn, New York, is often associated with Carnival, a parade with music, dance and masquerade. According to Christopher Curley of AOL Travel, Carnival began in Trinidad and Tobago in the late 18th century when French settlers brought their Fat Tuesday masquerade traditions with them to the island. (Curley 1) Continuing the tradition, Brooklyn's Labor Day Parade, which is the annual Central Brooklyn Carnival celebration, happens in the streets and is often associated with raucous behavior.

In “Us, AbunDantly,” we wanted to specifically dispel any negative connotations with NYC Carnival. To ensure the authenticity of our Caribbean dance tributes, I collaborated with artists who were born there and make art here in NYC that is true to their heritage and history. In the rehearsals for the Trinidadian dance, Candace Thompson-Zachery, of Dance Caribbean Collective and DanceNYC, dispelled negative myths associated with Trinidad and its rich Carnival history through her choreography and mentorship of our students.

The inspiration behind the first section of the Trinidadian dance scene stems from a “deep, spiritual, cultural place,” says Thompson-Zachery. She used David Rudder's 1999 *Shango Electric*, a song that for her “presents the Orisha of thunder in a twenty-first-century setting.” (Lakhan 1) The first section of the song depicts a conversation between Orisha deities, Elegba and Shango, two prestigious African Gods within the spiritual practice of Yoruba. (Lakhan 1) In the song, Shango describes that he has been ignored by his children for so long and he, according to one reviewer, “seeks the new medium of the super-synthesized, frenetic

dancehall as a way to re-enter, and hopefully reclaim” the lost connection to his roots. (Lakhan 1) According to the song, the only way Shango can re-connect is by calling on Elegba, the god of the crossroads, doorways, and portals. Elegba responds and goes on to clear a way for Shango to appear in Carnival in order to “remind people of who they are” and their African roots. (Thompson-Zachery)

In several parts of the “Shango Electric” dance section of “Us, AbunDantly,” dancers use their flags like sticks to pay tribute to the practice of stick fighting which appears in authentic Trinidadian carnival celebrations. The movements of this section include references to Trinidadian Stick Fighting, also known as *Kalinda*.³ In the next section, dancers begin waving their flags and whining their waists. These movements are inspired by *Shango Baptists*, a 19th century group of Spiritual Baptists who upheld both African and Catholic spiritual practices. The *Shango Baptists* acknowledged “Jehovah as the God of Man but also acknowledged the Orisha as the Gods of Nature” and believed in the spiritual practice of honoring and praising their Gods/Orisha. (The Orisha) The musical selection for this section was a song, “Pay the Devil,” from acclaimed Tobagonian artist The Mighty Shadow. “Pay the Devil” is a tribute to one of the masqueraders of Shadow’s Tobago childhood. (“Global Voices”)⁴

Traditionally, dances executed while chanting “Pay the Devil” drew influences from colonial dance steps like the “heel-and-toe,” one of the best known folk dances of Tobago. (Hammond 1) “Us, AbunDantly” dancers execute the “heel-and-toe” and also pay tribute to The

³ “A dance-like spiritistic art form which features martial art moves brought to the Caribbean by African enslaved people, in the latter part of the 17th century, to rid themselves of the trauma of slavery” - Radhica De Silva

⁴ “Abasynia, the protagonist Shadow sings about in the song, wore only black, and, chained to one or two restraining imps, he’d roar at the crowd, opening his mouth wide as if to swallow everyone. People would scatter in fear and other bands would part for Abasynia and his demonic retinue to pass, chanting “Pay the Devil, pay the Devil!” to a furious tattoo drummed on a biscuit pan: *pak-pak-pak pak-pak*”- Global Voices

Mighty Shadow himself, jumping up and down in a line like Shadow used to do in his many performances. The dancers also pay tribute to *Jab Molassie*, also known as the “Molasses Devil,” one of the oldest Carnival characters. (Henry 1) They embody Jab Molassie as a “Blue Devil” in blue jumpsuits to symbolically pay tribute to the “Jab Molassie but instead with a coat of bright blue paint as molasses.” (Henry 1)

The dancers continue in the dance as if they are on the street, lunging savagely at the crowd while “thrusting single fingers in the air to express their demand for money... and retribution for crimes done to them in the past.” (Henry 1) The dancers dance with their hands above their heads and pretend that they have a pitchfork or a chain to embody Blue Devils. The dancers work to not smile during their performance in order to honor the tradition of “taunting the colonizers for the atrocities of slavery.”(Thompson-Zachery)

This embodiment of the Blue Devil references the history behind the tradition that Caribbean people dressed as Devils to remind the colonizers of “how they were treated and painted themselves to make a statement” that honors the enslaved people who used to get dipped in hot molasses.(Thompson-Zachery)

The final section of the Trinidadian tribute pays homage to the celebration of Caribbean pride. Dancing to more joyful songs by Caribbean artists like Kes and Destra, “Us, AbunDantly” dancers highlight the joy of Carnival, the joy of Celebration and the joy of Liberation, waving their flags, expressing their pride and repping their land.

Panama

On the next stop of Ms. Frizzle’s “Caribbean Caravan,” she takes her class to Colonial Panama in the 1800s. Colonized by the Spanish, Panama was (and still is) a hub for African descendants. The first thing Ms. Frizzle explains to her class when they arrive is that the Panama

Canal, a water passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, was built by descendants of Africa. Mainly from Guinea and The Congo, the enslaved people were brought to the Americas by way of the Caribbean. While being forced to build the Panama Canal, African descendants strived to maintain their African culture despite their slave masters' attempts to strip them of their heritage.

Today "Bailando Congo" (dancing Congo) represents celebrating and embracing freedom.(Bowen) In the first scene of the Panamanian dances, choreographed by Francesca Bowen, an Afro-Panamanian dancer/teacher, the "Us, AbunDantly" dancers enter the stage as Panamanian Canal women vendors with products to sell. Almost like independent "food truck" vendors, the women sashay through the Panamanian plaza singing and calling out each of the items they are carrying in their baskets. As they place their baskets down to show its contents, they pick up their skirts and gracefully sway with their skirts from left to right, showing off their "sensualidad" or sensuality. ("Los Congos" 1)

For Panamanians, every detail of their dance traditions, even down to the costuming, is intentional and celebrates the Afro-Panamanian culture. Customarily, the women wear "el vestuario de los Congo", the outfits of the Congo, to celebrate the natural beauty of the Afro-Panamanian woman. Since the Afro-Panamanians of the 1800s were poor, their clothes were made from the scraps that the masters threw away. Thus the "Us, AbunDantly" dancers wear costumes made of various patterns of fabric sewn together. Traditionally, the Afro-Panamanian women wore flowers in their hair to highlight the beauty of nature and the black woman, so the performers also wear flowers in their hair. Furthermore, to commemorate their ancestors who helped build the Panama Canal, they also wear their hair with a part down the middle to pay tribute to the Panama Canal, which parts both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. (Jay 11)

In the second section of the Panamanian scene, a young man enters to portray, “El Rey,” or the King. He wears a customary showy crown, black or tan pants, a white shirt, and a colorful sash. Categorically, the male soloist is dressed to mock the clothing of the slave master. (Bowen) He walks through the crowd trying to select his queen, “La Reina.” (Bowen) As he walks up to the woman he wants to be his queen, she continuously tries to move away from him, playing hard to get. In this scene, “La Reina,” who has the maximum power, embodies “the strong woman who led the exodus” of enslaved Afro-Panamanians to freedom in the 1800s. (“Los Congos” 1) “El Rey” keeps trying to get her attention, court her and/or win her over, getting closer and closer to her as she moves further away. Eventually, she allows “El Rey” to get close to her.

This King and Queen dance, “Rey y Reina,” is always performed within “El Baile de Congo,” Panama’s folkloric staple. As the King keeps trying to get the Queen’s attention, the beat of the drums intensify. Like many African styles of dance, the beat of the drums in “El baile de Congo” is what drives the dance and informs each dancer to add their own flair.

(Bowen) Many of the songs that are usually included in “El baile de Congo” are songs about joy, pain, love and daily life. Accompanied by singers and drummers, the dancers finish the dance at a climactic point where “the magic, the mystical, the religious are intertwined,” moving to the beat of the drums, in a ceremonious fashion to tribute the enslaved Africans of the Congo. (“Los Congos” 1)

Haiti

After their visit to Panama, Ms. Frizzle takes her class to Haiti, year 1791, to teach them about a group of enslaved Africans who demonstrated great strength and resilience. Recognized as “the first black independent country,” Haiti was one of the wealthiest of France’s colonies, and produced huge amounts of sugar and coffee. (“History of Haiti” 1) Depending on enslaved

Africans to provide the labor, the elite took control of the island to “create trade regulations to further their own wealth and power.” (Weil 32) Inspired by the news of French people successfully overthrowing their government in The French Revolution, the enslaved Haitians rose up in revolt in 1791 and declared independence in 1804. (Dessalines 3)

During the first section of the Haitian dances Ms. Frizzle and her class witness *Nago*, a warrior dance, which embodies the strength of the Nagos people from West Africa, choreographed by Nadia Dieudonné, a Haitian Master Teacher/Choreographer. The “Us, AbunDantly” dancers enter with machetes to symbolize the Nagos people’s fight against their European oppressors. (Dieudonné) As they move across the stage, the dancers break the chains of oppression and liberate themselves. The dancers also embody freedom with their youthfulness and vivacious movement quality. Spiritually, the dance physicalizes the strong presence of fierce and fearless orisha, or deities, who were known to be protectors and guardians over the Nagos people in Haiti. The *Nago* dance is one of power and often associated with the Yoruba deity, Ogun. *Ogun*, armed with an axe and sword, was known as the “god of warriors, blacksmiths, and hunters.” (Wigington 1) In Nigeria, *Ogun* was honored for clearing paths with his machete and thus became known as “the orisha who opens the way when it is blocked.” (Wigington 1) Called *Ogou/Ogu* in Haiti, he was often called on by the Haitian people to protect them from their oppressors.

The second section of the Haitian folkloric dances is *Igbo*, a dance honoring the Igbo people of Nigeria, West Africa. *Igbo* performed to the *Igbo* rhythm, pays tribute to the Igbo tribe who, when kidnapped and brought to Haiti, resisted slavery because they would have rather died than remained slaves.” (Dieudonné) Dancers execute *Igbo* with soft knees and constant bouncing of the head and the torso. A staple step that can be observed in *Igbo* during “Us, AbunDantly” is

the swinging of the arms, opening and closing, to simulate the breaking of the chains of slavery. Movements displayed in *Igbo* are lower to the ground and display “more of a low, flat back posture” to honor the elders who broke the chains of slavery in Haiti. (Dieudonné)

Act 2, Scene 3 – “Down by the Riverside” (*Down South, USA*)

Upon their return to their classroom, Ms. Frizzle begins to review with her students the connections found between Africa and the Caribbean. Suddenly, one of her students, Mary, points out that she is not connected to Africa or the Caribbean because her family is from “Down South.” Ms. Frizzle goes on to explain to Mary that, “while we may not have been born in Africa, Africa is born within us; we are more African and Caribbean than we know.”(Jay 13) This declaration inspires the next class trip, Down South.

Cotton Fields on the Plantation

Ms. Frizzle and her class end up in the cotton fields of a Southern Plantation. There are elderly women in rags picking cotton and men and women sitting under cotton trees, singing negro spirituals. Ms. Frizzle’s Magic School Bus embodies the “ history of a people’s faith.” (DeFrantz 23) Dancers execute a dance inspired by Presidential Medal of Freedom and Kennedy Center Honors award-winning pioneer Alvin Ailey’s *I Been ‘Buked* section of “Revelations.” While the Magic School Bus dancers stand in the quintessential starting position of *Buked*, they begin to move “with a sense of drama, with passion and zeal, and what Ailey recalled as ‘menace and funk.” (DeFrantz 23) In the quintessential pyramid formation from *Buked*, the Magic School Bus dancers are dressed in white to represent the purity of the moment. They are led by a male dancer embodying the statuesque poise and majestic presence of Mr. Alvin Ailey. Scholar Thomas DeFrantz, in [Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey’s Embodiment of African American Culture](#), calls Ailey “the most important black American choreographer in the short history of

American modern dance.” (xiii) Using the world’s most widely seen modern dance work⁵, the movements are expansive and impactful. Inspired by one of the most important choreographers in dance history, this moment in “Us, AbunDantly” serves as a vital reminder that social justice can be accessible through thoughtfully crafted dance performances.

In the moments following, Ms. Frizzle and her class join, singing “Down by the Riverside” and “This Little Light of Mine,” with the rest of the crowd. Ms. Frizzle explains to her students that the negro spirituals had “clues embedded within the lyrics” to cue listeners on how and when to escape towards the North Star. (Jay 14) One of the students notices a lot of “white stuff” around and comes to learn that all of the white stuff is cotton, “the fabric of our lives.” (Jay 14) As the singing falls to a low hum, Ms. Frizzle introduces one of her special guests, Ms. Harriet Tubman who guides them towards the North Star via the Underground Railroad. Along their path, Ms. Frizzle and her class notice more white stuff within the embodiment of dancers executing light and airy balletic movements. Onstage, in addition to the clues embedded within the ‘negro spirituals,’ there is also an intentional, unspoken and ironic pairing of the cotton, historically being a symbol of forced labor, with Ballet, a historically European dance tradition that excluded people of color. In a very subtle way, “Us, AbunDantly” uses the dancers as change agents to make a statement against the exclusion of black and brown dancers in Ballet. By casting the young dancers of color as flurries of cotton who execute Ballet and who continuously point towards the North Star, “Us, AbunDantly” insinuates that dancers of color are worthy of dancing in Ballet works and can obtain the brightest Star of All, Freedom.

⁵ <https://www.alvinailey.org/performances/repertory/revelations>

Act 3, Scene 1: "Movin' on Up Yonder" (Harlem, NY)

"From Cotton Fields to Cotton Club"

Back in their classroom, Ms. Frizzle starts singing classic jazz standards to get her students to guess the composer. None of them know of the legendary Mr. Duke Ellington. Ms. Frizzle then decides the next class trip will be to the Cotton Club, during her favorite time in history, the Harlem Renaissance. To guide them "Up North," Ms. Frizzle invites her special friend, a professional dancer in the cast who, with the banana skirt and all, portrays Ms. Josephine Baker, the "quintessential Renaissance woman." (Jay 17) As Ms. Frizzle and Ms. Josephine Baker escort class 5-315 back to the Harlem Renaissance, they arrive at the Cotton Club, year 1923, with a big band orchestra led by Mr. Duke Ellington, in full swing!

The Cotton Club/ The Savoy

During the 1920s and 30s in Harlem, clubs like The Cotton Club and The Savoy Ballroom were hosting orchestras led by Duke Ellington, who played swing music with such heart and soul that the dancing became a relief from the hard times. Open every night of the week, these clubs were home to many when they were losing their jobs and their actual homes. Upon entering the Savoy, the dance and jazz historian Marshall Stearns described:

"You descended one floor to check your hat and coat at one of several ornate counters staffed by a small army of attendants. Then, you climbed two mirrored flights of marble steps until you found yourself in a teeming crowd at the middle of a block-long dance floor. Directly opposite, a raised double bandstand gleamed with instruments, and one of two bands was up there in full swing." (321)

When Ms. Frizzle and her class get to the Cotton Club, a massive amount of people are all on the dance floor, "dancin' and jumpin'" in "dancin' heaven." (Manning 62) The Magic School Bus comes alive and its dancers and Ms. Josephine Baker execute dances with infinite "gradations of complexity, ranging from the most "social" of social dances to one of the most

dynamic and rhythmically intricate stage dances ever devised,” The Lindy Hop. (Monaghan 124) Then, they invite Ms. Frizzle and her class on a journey not only to “...a building, a geographic place, a ballroom” but to the ‘soul’ of a neighborhood.” (Engelbrecht 3) The “Us, AbunDantly” dancers proceed to showcase highlights influenced by legendary classic tap dance performances from *Sophisticated Ladies* and *Stormy Weather*. All performed to a suite of Duke Ellington songs, movements like the *Shim Sham*, *The Time Step* and *the Charleston* are executed with pure joy and crisp tapping. After riding through time and through Harlem on the Magic School Bus, Ms. Frizzle and her students return to their classroom, as the next lesson awaits.

Ms. Frizzle and her class continue to learn about the Diaspora, identifying the roots of African culture that are ever-present but hidden in their daily lives. From The *Savoy Lindy Hop* of the Harlem Renaissance to dances like *Lamban* from West Africa, Ms. Frizzle’s class sees firsthand that the Diaspora, “although irreverently trivialized in the Western world — perceived by outsiders as uncultivated or lacking structure,” is truly vast, highly sophisticated and very powerful. (Brookner 2) In the end, Ms. Frizzle’s teaching methods are too unorthodox for the Department of Education’s standards and are coined as *too urban*. Her content and methods get her punished and the DOE deputy places her in the Teacher’s Rubber Room for insubordination, leaving Ms. Frizzle’s students to fend for themselves without their leader. The self-knowledge Ms. Frizzle fostered in her students drives their determination to vindicate her. Their desire to continue their education with Ms. Frizzle prompts them to fight for her Freedom. It is their understanding of the resiliency and fight of the ancestors that inspires Ms. Frizzle’s class to push against the DOE Deputy’s decision and protest to “Free the Frizz.” After 180 days of imprisonment and several community meetings and student protests, the Education Administration finally frees Ms. Frizzle and allows her back into the classroom. With her “new

found freedom,” Ms. Frizzle decides to leave the public school system and open her own school where freedom of expression and Black excellence thrive. She develops a safe space where she can continue to instill in her students the value of their roots. At her own school, she can continue taking her students on trips and continue to promote awareness of all the major historical influences embedded in folkloric and ethnic traditions extending back to the age of African antiquity.

Implications for the Future

Just like the original Ms. Frizzle and the Magic School Bus, I plan to make “Us, AbunDantly” a household name for audiences of all ages. My hope is that “Us, AbunDantly” goes from a one-night theatrical production to a documentary under contract, a touring show for schools and universities, a multi-year Broadway show, multi-season TV series, and a multi-volume series of published children’s books. Ms. Frizzle’s lessons in the first and second iteration of “Us, AbunDantly” just scratched the surface of the number of lessons from which students and audiences can learn.

I plan to write more content and extend Ms. Frizzle’s lessons/trips to cover more moments of resilience, strength and expression within African diasporic history. I will add more classroom scenes that discuss times in history where people of the African diaspora helped to shape American history and did not get their due credit. Two examples of this are Irene and Vernon Castle, who usually get all the credit in history for innovating ballroom dance while they were coached by an African-American composer James Reese, and Elvis Presley, regarded as an American treasure, but was heavily influenced by African-American singer, Roy Hamilton. I will even include content on early Ancient Greek Dance which was profoundly influenced by Ancient Egypt. The list goes on.

I will also dig deeper into African culture to show various performance art forms and culture from the continent. I will add more dance sequences from the Caribbean and the U.S. that highlight prominent figures of the social dance scene. I will feature more independent musical artists who helped inspire artists of U.S. popular culture. An added bonus will be a Foreign Language component so that Ms. Frizzle teaches mini-lessons in Spanish, French and select languages of the African diaspora. I will also flesh out Ms. Frizzle's character to add more of her life story to the script and continue to study and research the unsung heroes of the diaspora to broaden my own knowledge of history.

Alongside the script, the show content and this paper, I will also create and curate a study guide/workbook with flashcards for students of all ages to purchase. Eventually, I will synthesize an educational curriculum that integrates all of Ms. Frizzle's lessons into broader academia. My hope is that Ms. Frizzle creates her own textbook filled with all of the history she teaches. As an educator, my mission has always been and will always be a commitment to excellence and - for my students, my audience and my community - an abundance of pride from where we all descend. As a playwright, professor and performer, I will continue to use my voice to give voice to the voiceless. Even during this new normal of quarantine and post-pandemic, I will continue to create Art that teaches about real life and exposes audiences to our African ancestral heritage.

CONCLUSION

...Therefore,...honest American history is inextricably tied to African American history, and...neither can be complete without a full consideration of the other.

Sterling Stuckey

Pursuing my MFA degree has allowed me to immerse myself in the marriage of the traditional and contemporary, while refining my craft within a scholarly context. Throughout my work, the messages and steps I use are not new. I simply curate experiences where the emphasis is placed on cohesive content rooted in relevant and accurate storytelling. The way I tie messages together creates a connection between embodiment and experience that contributes to the growth of the field and American cultural knowledge.

Studying eurocentric techniques and dances of the diaspora helps me connect to a very personal and historically-rooted place within my artistry. I bring myself, my pain and my joy to my work. I use my artistic and choreographic platforms to communicate life messages and do so while preserving and highlighting my love for African, African- American and Caribbean/Latino culture. I use my art to speak out against imbalance and speak up for ancestral identity. I invite my audience into my world and present ideas using a specific vocabulary that blends narrative structures rooted in African aesthetics.

From mainstage concert halls to presentations for grassroots organizations or for elected officials, I have choreographed and performed for and with a variety of companies and organizations, both nationally and internationally. In my many visits to Africa, Cuba, Europe and the Caribbean, I have embraced the opportunities to study and explore the history and complexity of artisans, scholars and master teachers from different parts of the world. Cultural research having always been an integral part of my artistic process, I allow myself an immersion

into the marriage of the sacred and the new. When writing, choreographing, performing a play, my artistic philosophy is to embrace all cultures and the human experience.

All of my work aims to inspire people to use their voices and their diverse stories to contribute to the greater good of society. I produce edu-tainment (entertainment that educates) in an AbunDant way. My work strives to further celebrate African American, African and Afro-Latino culture. My shows create a multi-generation community and dig deeper into the correlations and connections between traditional and the contemporary forms of dance and culture.

With AbunDance, I create productions that truly encapsulate the human experience.

As I re- write the definition of "recital," I introduce our performers to what it takes to be a part of productions infused with relevant stories on grand stages. From toddlers to seniors, our performers learn how to adjust socially and artistically and benefit greatly from the exposure to the artistic process of our large scale productions. Every year that I create, I commit myself to consistently demonstrate the importance of community and the importance of socially-relevant, politically-sensitive, artistic and emotionally-inspiring work.

Whether it is a celebration of black women reaching across generations to achieve their dreams, telling the story of an orphan who is finding her way to a family she longs for, highlighting a lonely billionaire who wants love and understanding, my work tells the human story and teaches lessons which are easy to retain, process and reflect on even after the performance is over. The dynamic musical backdrop chosen for each production is strategically chosen to add more life to the production. Audience members hear a variety of African, Caribbean and African-American songs that highlight the unique and vast influences of the Diaspora. In "Us, AbunDantly," some of the musical selections include negro spirituals like "I've

Been Buked,” Dizzy Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts" and Cab Calloway's "Stormy Weather." Quotes from Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" and James Brown's "Say it Loud, I'(m) Black and I'm Proud" highlight the significance of the Arts to help convey a social justice message to spark change.

An inspiring story expressed primarily through dance, song and live music, “Us, AbunDantly,” is a celebration of Africa and the Americas that continues to remain as insistently and urgently needed within the dance world, the education world and the world in general. "Us, AbunDantly" aims to celebrate beloved teachers everywhere who inspire, educate and prepare students for the future, academically, socially and artistically. "Us, Abundantly” is a show about discovering a sense of self-identity and using history to inform and prepare the next generation. It is about the importance of students receiving a well-rounded and inclusive education, all year-round.

“Us, AbunDantly” has a rich panoply of African diasporic traditions. It was conceived as a celebration of the abundant cultural traditions in which my community of students, from my school AbunDance Academy of the Arts, engage. It is a history lesson built into a live dance concert. The aim was to affirm the African, African American, Afro-Latino and Caribbean experience in the 21st Century through a time traveling narrative on a magic bus ride from classroom to Continent and back again. The work celebrated the potent wealth of ancestral knowledge with a true spirit of Kujichagulia, self-determination. Through the Middle Passage, Caribbean legacies and even the American carceral system, the show’s mission was dedicated to continuing the effort of Molefi Asante, "To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for

ourselves and speak for ourselves."⁶ This production is relevant because we welcome diversity and inclusion and celebrate students from all backgrounds and experiences.

From process to product, I strive to create a safe space for people of all ages to feel welcome and important. With my future works, I will continue to stretch the idea of what dance is. I will create a space where the dances and the rhythms of the diaspora blend seamlessly with other dance aesthetics and art forms to honor history and reimagine what is possible. My work will organically blend bold energy with historical context, emotional tension and clean technique. I will use my clear understanding of my own distinct movement languages and artistic palate to honor legacy while adding my own innovation into the mix. Within the realm of diaspora, I will anchor my work in Africanistic identity without cheapening the content or the message. In the contemporary dance and arts world, I will intricately call forth ancestral spirits to evoke something innovative and cutting edge. If it doesn't look and feel organic, I will not use it.

Similar to Pearl Primus, I am interested in creating works not only to entertain but to serve understanding and self-determination for all of my dance communities "Because through dance I have experienced the wordless joy of freedom, I seek it more fully now for my people and for all people everywhere." (Schwartz i) I will use my stories to help convey timeless educational messages and will continue to spark inspiration and change for many more audiences to come. As I edu-tain, I uplift and serve, AbunDantly!

⁶ <https://beingyoked.com/kujichagulia-self-determination-kwanzaa/>

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ACADEMY OF THE ARTS

Presents

**Us ,
AbunDantly**

AbunDance Academy's 5th Annual

End of Year June Concert

Written / Directed By: Karisma Jay

The Kaye Playhouse, NYC

June 23, 2019 - 6:00PM

Pre-Set: In the Orchestra Pit, Classroom Set with Chalkboard, Students' Chairs, and a Life Sized Bookshelf. Onstage, Africa Set with Drummer/Band Set Platform Downstage Right. Main Rag In.

ACT I: "Home Room" (Brooklyn, NY)

1:1 - "Sankofa 101"

Cast: Ms. Frizzle and her Homeroom Class 315

Costumes: Purple Fairytale Costume (Ms. Frizzle), White Shirt, Blue Skirts, Red Sequin Sneakers (Homeroom Class 315)

Music/Track: Schoolbell

Lights come up. A loud Schoolbell is heard, Ms. Frizzle is sitting in her Home Room class waiting for the students to arrive. After a few moments, several students start to arrive late. (Stage Right and Left). Ms. Frizzle begins her class.

Ms. Frizzle: Good morning. (*Ms. Frizzle notices one student rushing in late to her seat*). Mm-hmm, (*another student rushes past Ms. Frizzle*) And, Good morning to you. Alright. (*two more students rush in*) Let's get started. Good morning class. (*another student rushes past Ms. Frizzle*) My name is Ms. Frances Cress Welsing. You can call me, Ms. Frizzle. (*the students start looking Ms. Frizzle like she is crazy. They have never heard that name before.*) Yes, I am Ms. Frizzle. I will be your Home Room teacher for this year and I'll be ushering you into a new stream of consciousness, collective work and woke-ness. Lets start by taking Attendance. Mary? Mary Mcleod Bethune?

Mary: Present.

Ms. Frizzle: Hmm...is that right?... Mary? Mary Bethune? Whoa! That's your name? Mary Bethune?

Mary: Yea. So?

Ms. Frizzle: Ok! Don't So, Me. I'm your elder. Beats off and Feet down.

Ms. Frizzle: Assata? Assata Shakur?

Assata: Was good?

Ms. Frizzle: No fitted caps indoors. Harriet Tubman.

Harriet: Yea. But my friends call me Ri-ri, like Rihanna.

Ms. Frizzle: Ok, Riri, I'll be calling you Harriet, got it? Let's, See. Sojourner Truth?

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Sojourner: Yea, that's me.

Ms. Frizzle: You can't make this up! Alright, let's see who's next. CJ Walker?

CJ: Here. And yes, I was named after Madame CJ Walker, one of the first self-made Black Woman millionaire.

Ms. Frizzle: Anybody missing?

CJ: Well, according to my research, Langston, Martin, Malcolm, Lumumba, WEB, Mansa and Frederick aren't in our homeroom anymore.

Ms. Frizzle: Now, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. Langston? Lumumba? Mary, Mcleod?!?! Do you realize how MAGANIMOUS your names are? Uh, hellur!!!! Do you understand whose names you have? Those of our Ancestors! *The students are underwhelmed.* Sojourner Truth was an African-American abolitionist and women's rights activist, born into slavery in Upstate, New York. She escaped with her infant daughter on her back and found freedom at the ripe age of 29. She spoke Dutch and English and passed away at 86 years old. Mary Mcleod Bethune devoted her career to improving the lives of African Americans through education and political and economic empowerment, first through the school she founded, Bethune-Cookman College, later as president of the National Council of Negro Women and then as a top black administrator in Roosevelt's Presidential administration. She was the fifteenth of seventeen children born to former slaves. Talk about perseverance? Talk Kujichagulia!

Mary: Coogi what?

Ms. Frizzle: Kujichagulia, It means Self Determination. These women, matter of fact, All of our ancestors were the REAL DEAL. They were the epitome of beauty, strength and dignity. Direct descendants of Africa.

Assata: I know about Africa. It's a country with mad people who speak African.

Ms. Frizzle: Correction. Africa is a CONTINENT with 54 countries.

CJ: 54 countries

Us, AbunDantly
06.23.19

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Ms. Frizzle: That's correct and there's no such thing as speaking African. There's Afrikaan, Swahili, Wolof, Fulani, Pulaar, Spanish, French, Portuguese and more. Hmm... I mean, by the looks of things, it seems like you all don't know where you come from. Then how can you possibly know where you are going? Repeat after me, SANKOFA.

All Students: SANKOFA.

Ms. Frizzle: Sankofa is a word in the Twi language from the Akan people of Ghana that translates to "Go back and get it". By the sound and looks of things, we are going to have an go back and get ourselves. Hmm, I'd say it's the perfect time for a field trip. We need to go back HOME and see firsthand where we come from.

Harriet: Back Home to the Boogie Down.

Ms. Frizzle: No, Harriet, back home to Africa.

Assata: Ay yo, Ms, Frizzle don't we need permission slips to be taking any field trips?

Sojourner: In my old school, we weren't allowed to leave the school grounds without two weeks' notice.

Ms. Frizzle: Well, honey, brace yourselves. Our class trips are gonna be legendary! And don't worry about permission slips, I have all of that handled!

Sojourner: Please let this be a normal field trip.

Ms. Frizzle: *Ms. Frizzle stands up and exclaims.* Alright, Bus Do your stuff! *Moments go by and nothing happens.* I said, Alright, Bus Do your stuff!

Then, a rumble begins as the African drummers start to play an introduction. Ms. Karisma gives a Vocal cue. Suddenly the Choir appears in the audience and begins to sing "One by One" while a Magic School Bus appears. With yellows, golds, and oranges, the magic bus has a vitality that wows the students. The Magic School Bus comes alive with 5 dancers performing to "One by One". Ms. Frizzle ushers the students onto the bus, coming up the steps onstage left. from the s and the bus begins to ride off towards stage left. Drummers play more and the village scene ensues.

NO SCENE CHANGE

African SET remains onstage

Abundance Adults and Seniors enter and take their places.

Choir:

Ibambeni njalo bakithi
Ninga dinwa
Ninga phelelwa nga mandla
Siya ba bona
Bebe fun' ukusi qeda
One by one
Ngeke ba lunge
One by one
Sizo nqoba
One by one
Ngeke ba lunge
One by one
Ibambeni njalo bakithi
Ninga dinwa
Ninga phelelwa nga mandla
Siya ba bona
Babe fun' ukusi qeda
One by one
Ngeke ba lunge
One by one
Sizo nqoba
One by one
Ngeke ba lunge
One by one
Sizo nqoba
Sizo nqoba
Ngoba thina
Siya zazi
Ngoba thina
Siya zazi
Sizo nqoba
Ngoba thina
Siya zazi
Ngoba thina
Siya zazi
Zobona bayabaleka
Zobon, zobona
Zobon, zobona
Zobon, zobona
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Zobon
Amagwala
Ibala lami
Elimnyama
Ndiya zidla ngalo
Ibala lami
Elimnyama
Ndiza kufa nalo
Ibala lami
Elimnyama
Ndiya zidla ngalo
Kumnandi
Kwelakakith Eafrica

1:2 - "Wakanda In Real Life" (Africa, The Homeland)

Cast: Ms. Frizzle and her HomeRoom Class 315, *Magic School Bus*,
All Levels African, *AbunDance Choir*

Costumes: Purple Fairytale Costume (Ms. Frizzle), White Shirt,
Blue Skirts, Red Sequin Sneakers (Homerom Class 315), African
Costume (All Levels)

Music/Track: *Live AbunDance Percussion Orchestra*

Ms.Frizzle and her homeroom class are in Africa.

Harriet: Yo, Are we in Wakanda?

Assata: No silly, This is Africa.

Ms.Frizzle: Class, Welcome Home!

Everyone: Wow!

CJ: According to my research, we have been transported back to
Africa and back in time.

Harriet: Yo, Ms. Frizzle is like that Back to the Future Guy.

Sojourner: Only She's a She...

Assata: And She's Black.

Ms.Frizzle: Im Black And I'm Proud. Now class, This is the
beautiful country of Guinea in West Africa. The year is 1502 and
this is the way Africa looked before any colonizers showed up
and messed up History.

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Assata: You mean, we're not in 2019 anymore.

Ms.Frizzle: No, Assata and you're not in Brooklyn anymore either.

Mary: I think I'm gonna be sick.

Ms.Frizzle: In Africa, there were Kings and Queens, before our ancestors were forced into slavery.

Mary: What's slavery?

Ms.Frizzle: Lord have us mercy! These textbooks don't teach you all nothing about your history, Do they? Ok, then. Let's start from the top. Africa is a Continent with Many countries. How many?

CJ: 54 to be exact.

Ms. Frizzle: That is correct. Now, in America, we make Africa look like it is small, poor and way behind the rest of the world. But that's not the truth. Full of life, culture and resources - Diamonds, Gold, Delicious Mangoes. Africa is huge and has a huge influence on so many aspects of our lives here in America. The Song, The Dance, The Drum breathe life into us...

The drums start to play and Drummers and dancers start to enter from the audience. We then start to hear the sounds of the homeland. All levels African begin to enter and a village scene ensues. At the end of the Village scene, Colonizers interrupt the celebratory festivities and began to enslave the villagers unexpectedly. Several of the villagers are captured and dragged through the theatre. Once the Magic School Bus exits, the African drums get louder and the village enters from all sides of the stage. Six generations of African Dance groups present. The final group that presents is the men who then invite all of the village to dance together. Their final pose is centerstage with all villagers reaching up.

SCENE CHANGE

African SET exits SR/SL

Caribbean Set enters SR/SL (after Middle Passage scene)

1:3 - "Amistad" (Atlantic Ocean)

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Cast: Ms. Frizzle and her HomeRoom Class 315, *Magic School Bus*, *AbunDancers*, *AbunDance Choir*

Costumes: African Costume (Ms. Frizzle), White Shirt, Blue Skirts, Red Sequin Sneakers (Homerom Class 315), African Costumes (AbunDancers)

Music/Track: *Simba Confronts Scar*

Suddenly the drums start to play frantically and all of the villagers scream, running across the stage. The music track "Simba Confronts Scar" plays and AbunDancers start to perform their Runaway dance onstage. Two young dancers run from one side of the stage to the other carrying large red fabric. The red fabric waving up and down represents the Blood of the Ocean.

Ms. Frizzle and her class get caught in the middle of the takeover and end up in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean on a slaveship. They make their way back to the classroom while the enslaved people, chained together, make their way through the audience. As the AbunDancers start to exit, they form separate lines that dance off the stage and down the stairs into the House.

Ms. Frizzle and her class try to get back to the classroom, they finally escape and make their way back to the orchestra pit.

SCENE CHANGE

Caribbean Set enters SR/SL (after Middle Passage scene)

ACT II: "Roots" (Atlantic Ocean)

2:1 - "Middle Passage 101"

Cast: Ms. Frizzle, Homerom Class 315

African Queen Costume (Ms. Frizzle), White Shirt, Blue Skirts, Red Sequin Sneakers, African Headwraps (Homerom Class 315), Caribbean Folkloric Outfits (Magic School Bus)

Music/Track: *Roots* (Magic School Bus)

Ms. Frizzle and her class are back in their classroom. They had quite the first field trip.

Assata: Ay yo, Ms. Friz, what happened back there?

Ms. Frizzle: Middle Passage dear. The Atlantic Slave Trade to be exact. Dating back to 16th century, Europeans took African people Us, AbunDantly

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and enslaved them, transporting them across the Atlantic Ocean, to the Americas and beyond.

CJ: But, we were having so much fun in the village, dancing and singing. The African King and Queen were so Pretty, so Regal.

Harriet: Hashtag, goals!

Sojourner: Those Colonizers ruined everything.

Ms.Frizzle: Good Observation. The colonizers forced Kings and Queens of African villages to be their slaves, meaning they had to work hard for Free, ninety-nine. The colonizers captured the enslaved people and treated them like animals instead of human beings. Placed ball and chains on their wrists and ankles, took away their clothes and separated them from their families.

Sojourner: Oh no!

Ms.Frizzle: Tight-packing...

Harriet: What's that

Ms. Frizzle: The enslaved people were forced onto ships and had to lay in rows on top of one another, with one person's head at the feet of the person beside them.

Assata: Naw, that's not cool.

Ms.Frizzle: Au contraire, Madame Shaka. It was actually very cool/cold on the ships in the middle of the ocean. The enslaved people were naked, poorly fed and highly mistreated.

CJ: That sounds horrible.

Ms. Frizzle: And they didn't understand what was happening because they didn't speak` the languages of the colonizers.

Mary: Because the colonizers didn't speak African?

Sojourner: There's no such thing as speaking African, remember?!

Maya: Oh right. There isn't.

Harriet: It's not right! Wasn't the unfair treatment of the enslaved people against the law??

CJ: According to my research, current estimates are that about 12 to 12.8 million Africans were shipped across the Atlantic over a span of 400 years.

Harriet: 400 years!

Ms. Frizzle: Yes, 400 years of being sold and shipped off to various places all over the world including Caribbean colonies like Trinidad, Barbados, Panama, Jamaica, Haiti and more.

Assata: Yo, I have family from sweet, sweet T&T.

Ms. Frizzle: Have you ever been?

Mary Mcleod: I bet she doesn't even have her passport. *Some of the students laugh out loud.*

Ms. Frizzle: Hmm, how many more of you don't have your passport? *All but one raise their hands. They are embarrassed.*

Ms. Frizzle: O...K... Let's see. The wheels on the bus go round and round. Round and Round. Round and Round. The Wheels on the bus go round and round. *Ms. Frizzle starts humming and soon the rumble of the Magic School Bus is heard. The Magic School Bus appears.*

Mary Mcleod: FIELD TRIP!
The Magic School Bus now is playing Caribbean Music.

Sojourner: I should have stayed home today.

Ms. Frizzle: Come along class.

Mary Mcleod: I wonder where we are going today? Africa, again? The Bottom of the Atlantic Ocean?

CJ: Been there. Done That. We're World Travelers, Now.

Ms. Frizzle: Seat belts everyone!

NO SCENE CHANGE:
Caribbean Set stays

2:2 - "Once on this Island"

Cast: Ms. Frizzle and her HomeRoom Class 315, *Magic School Bus*,
All Levels Caribbean, *AbunDance Choir*

Costumes: African Queen Costume (Ms. Frizzle), White Shirt, Blue
Skirts, Red Sequin Sneakers, Headwraps (Homeroom Class 315),
Caribbean Costume (All Levels), Caribbean Costume

Music/Track: Roots track, Trinidad track, *Live AbunDance*
Percussion Orchestra

As Ms. Frizzle and her class board the Magic School Bus, Roots music can be heard while the Magic School Bus comes alive. They are on their way to the Caribbean. First stop, Trinidad. When they arrive, the children are being handed Sorrel and flags, Ms. Frizzle is handed a Shandy. Level II/IIA is standing onstage getting ready to perform a Trinidadian tribute. Level II/IIA begins to dance. Once they finish, AbunDance Adults start dancing down the aisles and onto the stage. At the end of the dance, Ms. Frizzle speaks.

Ms. Frizzle: Class, welcome to Trinidad circa 17th century. After being taken from their homeland, the enslaved people were dropped off/sprinkled all along the Caribbean. Some were brought to this very country, to this very port, many, many years ago. You can see the European influences on the architecture of this plaza. This is the town plaza. Every Caribbean country has one.

Level IA begins to dance.

Ms. Frizzle: Now, we are in Colonial Panama, 1800s. Colonized by the Spanish, our people built the Panama Canal, a water passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean. To commemorate their hard and sometimes unpaid labor, the women wear their hair with a part down the middle to represent the part between the oceans.

Level IIB/III begins to dance. Once they finish, they exit. Ms. Frizzle and her class make their way back to the classroom.

2:3 - "Down by the Riverside"

Cast: Ms Frizzle, Homeroom, *Magic School Bus*, *AbunDance Choir*,
All Levels Ballet

Cast: Ms. Frizzle and her HomeRoom Class 315, *Magic School Bus*,
AbunDance Choir, Levels II, IIA, IIB/III Ballet, *AbunDance Choir*

Costumes: Panamanian Costume (Ms. Frizzle), White Shirt, Blue
Skirts, Red Sequin Sneakers, Head-wraps (Homeroom Class 315),
Ballet Costume (All Levels), White Lyrical Dresses (*Magic School Bus*)

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Music: "Look Down Lord", "The Prayer", "I'm Here" (All performed LIVE)

Ms. Frizzle is back in the classroom with her class.

Ms. Frizzle: Wasn't Haiti beautiful? Does anyone know what makes Haiti so significant?

CJ: Well, according to my research, The recorded written history of Haiti began on 5 December 1492 when the European navigator Christopher Columbus happened upon a large island in the Americas that later came to be known as the Caribbean. The island was inhabited by the Taíno, and Arawakan people, who called their island *Ayiti, Bohio, or Kiskeya (Quisqueya)*.

Ms. Frizzle: Very good, Madame CJ!

Harriet: Ayo, Ms. Frizz. My gran-mère is actually from Haiti and she told me that there was slavery in Haiti but the Haitians revolted.

Ms. Frizzle: Oh yes. Monsieur Toussaint L'ouverture led the Haitian Revolt in 1791 after the French and Spanish Government had been enslaving Haitians and profiting off of Haiti's sugar and coffee resources for more than 100 years. Inspired by the message of the French Revolution, Haitian slaves rose up in revolt in 1791 and became officially independent in 1804. They took their FREEDOM from their oppressors.

Harriet: Yasssss, Sak passe. Naboulet!!!!!!

Ms. Frizzle: Sak pas contente? Embacké

Mary: But Ms. Frizzle. I'm just black. My family is from Down South. We don't eat Ricen' Beans and Callaloo. We eat Black Eyed Peas and Rice with Collard Greens.

Ms. Frizzle: Hmm, au contraire mon frere. While we may not have been born in Africa, Africa is born within us. We are related. When the enslaved people were transported from the Americas, they were shipped Down South and stripped off their Caribbean and African traditions. You my dear, are more Caribbean and African than you know.

Mary: I am?

Ms. Frizzle: Oh yes! We all share similarities within our cultures. Rice and Beans, for instance. Every African and Caribbean country has it, eats it and serves it. Even if, they call it beans and rice, sometimes. Same thing applies to Plantain, which is pronounced Plan-tin, by the way. Or platano, as my Abuela says.

Sojourner: Your Abuela?

Ms. Frizzle: Si, Señorita.

Harriet: You Speak Spanish?

Ms. Frizzle: Por supuesto! Et Je parle un peu de Francais aussi.

CJ: You sho is schmart, Ms. Frizzle.

Ms. Frizzle: Is that a Southern accent, I detect. It's time for another field trip, class!

Sojourner: Not again! In my old school, we didn't go on so many field trips.

Ms. Frizzle: We are going Down South. Cinturones todos. Seat belts, everyone.

*The Magic School Bus arrives and takes the students Down south..
The choir starts to sing "I've been Buked"*

I've been buked and I've been scorned
I've been buked and I've been scorned
Children
I've been 'buked and I've been scorned

Gonna lay down my burdens
Down by the Riverside
Down by the Riverside
Down by the Riverside
Gonna lay down my burdens
Down by the Riverside
Down by the Riverside
Down by the Riverside
Steady War No More.

This Little Light of Mine.
I'm gonna let it shine.
This Little Light of Mine.
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I'm gonna let it shine.
This Little Light of Mine.
I'm gonna let it shine.
Let it Shine
Let it Shine
Let it Shine

Ms. Frizzle and her class are in the cotton fields. There are elderly women in rags picking cotton. They take a seat under a cotton tree.

Ms. Frizzle: The enslaved people were very strategic and very talented. The negro spiritual songs they sang had clues embedded within the lyrics.

Sojourner: I read once that enslaved people used to sew quilts and sew codes into the quilts with codes explaining how they were going to escape.

CJ: They also braided rice and corn into their cornrows, get it?

All: Rows, Corn. Cornrows!

Ms. Frizzle: Whenever you heard the words "Going up Yonder" it meant escaping to Freedom. "Laying down Burdens" meant revolting against the slavemasters.

Sojourner: What's all that white stuff?

CJ: According to my research, it's not white stuff, it's Cotton, the fabric of our lives.

Sojourner: I only wear Polyester!

CJ: As I was saying, Cotton is a plant with prickly qualities. The enslaved people would spend days and days picking it in the very, very hot cotton fields.

Mary: How do you pick Cotton?

Assata: With your hands, silly!

Ms. Frizzle: Unfortunately, picking cotton was very hard and very painful. From babies to Elders, every enslaved person was forced to pick it and beaten if they messed up the product. Class, meet the real Harriet Tubman.

Harriet: Hey that's my name.

Ms. Frizzle: You mean your namesake. Ms. Harriet Tubman started the Underground Railroad.

Mary: We're going on a train.

Harriet: No, the Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes and safe houses established in the United States during the early to mid-1800s, and used by African-American slaves to escape into free states, Canada and Nova Scotia with the aid of abolitionists and allies who were sympathetic to their cause.

Ms. Frizzle: Follow the North Star, Class.

Level II performs their Ballet. Then, they exit as Level IIB/III enters. *Level IIB/III begins Ballet as two members of the AbunDance choir sing "The Prayer" (Live).*

AbunDance Choir Duet: **(singing)**

I pray You'll be our guide
And watch us where we go
And help us to be wise
In times when we don't know
Let this be our prayer
When we lose our way
Lead us to a place
Guide us with Your grace
To a place where we'll be safe
I pray we'll find Your light (I pray we'll find Your light)
And hold it in our hearts (and hold it in our hearts)
When stars go out each night (stars go out each night)
Remind us where You are (remind us where You are)
Let this be our prayer (let this be our prayer)
When shadows fill our day (when shadows fill our day)
Oh Lord, lead us to a place, oh my
Guide us with Your grace (guide us with Your grace)
Give us faith so we'll be safe
A world where pain and sorrow will be ended
And every heart that's broken will be mended

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And we'll remember we are all God's children
Reaching out to touch you, reaching to the sky
We ask that life be kind (we ask that life be kind)
And watch us from above (and watch us from above)
We hope each soul will find (we hope each soul will find)
Another soul to love (another soul to love)
Let this be our prayer (let this be our prayer)
Just like every child (just like every child)
Needs to find a place
Guide us with Your grace
Give us faith so we'll be safe
Needs to find a place
Guide us with Your grace
Give us faith so we'll be safe
Songwriters: David W. Foster / Tony Renis / Carole Bayer Sager /
Alberto Testa

*Level IIB/III exit and Level IIA/II enters. Level IIA/II exits
toward the North Star (Stage Left). The track "Bid Em In" plays
and AbunDancers perform. Main Rag In.*

SCENE CHANGE

Cotton Fields Set Strike SR/SL

Cotton Club Set enters SR/SL

**INTERMISSION
(15 minutes)**

Pre-Set: Cotton Club set with Main Rag Out.

Act III: "Movin' on Up Yonder" (Harlem, NY)

3:1 - "From Cotton Fields to Cotton Club"

*Cast: Ms. Frizzle, Homeroom 315, Magic School Bus, AbunDance
Choir, Josephine Baker, All Levels Tap*

Costumes:

*Music: "Take the A Train", "Salt Peanuts", "Cotton Club Stomp",
T'Ain't What you do", "Jumpin' Jive"*

Ms. Frizzle: *Ms. Frizzle's starts singing Duke Ellington. Ring
a Bell?*

All: *Nope.*

Ms. Frizzle: *My goodness. No one knows that little ditty, eh?*

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Mary: Diddy?

CJ: Puff Daddy.

Ms. Frizzle: And not P. Diddy either. Ditty, DITTY means song. And that song is a classic jazz standard by the legendary Mr. Duke Ellington. He was one of the greatest African- American and American composers of the 1930's. Class, imagine if you will, it's Harlem circa 1935 and we are at the legendary Cotton Club.

Ms. Josephine Baker enters.

Ms. Frizzle: Ooo, class We have a special guest. Ms. Josephine Baker, everyone. She's the quintessential Renaissance Woman and she's here to take us back to my favorite time in history. The Harlem Renaissance. Single File Everyone!

*Magic School Bus enters and dances to Cotton Club Stomp.
Level IIB/III, II, I, IA, IIA performs.*

SCENE CHANGE:

Cotton Club Set Strike SR
Motown Set enter

3:2 - "Midnight Train to Detroit"

Cast: Ms. Frizzle, HomeRoom 315, Magic School Bus, AbunDance Choir

Music: Motown Medley

Mary: Ms. Frizz, wasn't Harlem fun? We met Josephine Baker, we saw all of the tap dancers, Cab Calloway and his orchestra.

Sojourner: And the legendary Duke Ellington.

Assata: I can't believe we got to Stomp at the Savoy.

Harriet: Those sophisticated ladies were so glamorous.

Ms. Frizzle: Now class, there's one more place I think we should go. Have you heard of Dr. Martin Luther King?

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AbunDance Choir "Glory" singing walking across the stage.

Choir: One day when the glory comes
It will be ours, it will be ours
Oh one day when the war is won
We will be sure, we will be sure
Oh glory (Glory, glory)
Oh (Glory, glory)

ALL: Yes!

CJ: Well, according to my research, he had a dream that one day we would all be free.

Ms. Frizzle: Nice work CJ! Everywhere he speaks he sure does have a word to deliver.

Sojourner: Isn't he in Montgomery with Ms. Rosa Parks and the Freedom Riders.

Harriet: Yea, Ms. Rosa Parks is protesting against the injustice she faced when she was forced to sit in the back of the bus just because of the color of her skin.

Assata: That's black girl magic right there.

Ms. Frizzle: Dr. King is headed to Selma, Alabama marching for the rights of our people.

Assata: And we're going to join him?

Ms. Frizzle: Yes we are and Yes we can!

CJ: It is very important to stand up for change.

Ms. Frizzle: That's right CJ. To the bus everyone.

Magic School Bus appears and they start to get the bus going but the bus is broken down. AbunDance Choir "Can't give Up Now" singing walking across the stage.

Choir: I just can't give up now
I've come too far from where
I started from
Nobody told me
The road would be easy
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And I don't believe He's brought me this far
To leave me

Harriet: Ms. Frizzle is everything alright?

Ms. Frizzle: Uh yeah, yeah of course, everyone just stay on the bus.

Ms. Frizzle and CJ gets off the bus to check it out

CJ: Ms. Frizzle, Ms. Frizzle. Let me take a look. I am a mechanic on the weekends afterschool.

Ms. Frizzle: Is that right?

CJ: Mm-hmm. OK, There seems to be a problem with the alternator and by the looks of it, your Magic Fuel Gauge is on E.

Ms. Frizzle: How do we fix it?

CJ: We need a Magic School Bus Mechanic.

Ms. Frizzle: Uh ok, Plot Twist Everyone. To the Soul Train!

Magic School Bus stays in place, broken down. The Magic School Bus dancers begin to dance to Soul Train Intro. Motown Bus Depot Set enters and so does the AbunDance choir, dressed in Mechanic outfits. Once Magic School Bus Dancers exit, Motown Medley (live w/ track) begins.

Smokey (singing):

Baby, let's cruise away from here
Don't be confused, the way is clear
And if you want it you got it forever
This is not a one night stand, babe, yeah
So let the music take your mind, whoa
Just release and you will find
You're gonna fly away, glad you're going my way
I love it when we're cruisin' together
The music is playing for love
Cruisin' is made for love
I love it when we're cruisin' together

Ms. Frizzle: Hello there. My name is Ms. Frances Cress Welsing and this is my History class. Our Magic School Bus has broken down and I'm wondering if you could help us fix our bus.

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Smokey (singing):

Talk to me, so you can see
Oh, what's going on

Ms. Frizzle (singing):

What's going on

Smokey (singing):

Yeah, what's going on

Ms. Frizzle (singing):

Ah, what's going on

Smokey (singing):

Yeah, what's going on

Ms. Frizzle (singing):

Ah, what's going on

Ms. Frizzle: Listen. Mr. Smokey, I really need to get my students back to school. You're singing like we have all the time in the world. Can we get to it already? How much is it going to cost?

Smokey (singing):

I don't need no money.
Fortune or fame
I've got all the riches baby
Any man can attain
(Stevie joins in) I'd guess you'd say what can make
Me feel this way.
My Bus

Ms. Frizzle (singing): My Bus

Smokey (singing):

My Bus
Talking 'bout Your Bus.

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Smokey, Stevie and Ms. Frizzle (singing): My Bus

Smokey: It's no sweat, little lady. We gon' have my smooth brother Stevie take a look.

Stevie: Here I am, baby. Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours.

Frizzle: Let me guess. Your last name is Wonder.

Stevie: You got it! Stevie Wonder of Motown at your service. Alright now step aside and let me check out your ride.

Stevie takes a few moments to wriggle some things and manages to fix the bus.

Stevie: Alright. You're all set.
Isn't she lovely?
Isn't she wonderful?
Isn't she precious?
Less than one minute old
I never thought true love we'd be
Making one as lovely as she
But isn't she lovely made from love

Frizzle: Ok ok, Does everyone sing around here?

All: Yup Pretty much.

Frizzle: So Mr. Smokey. How much is this going to cost? I'd like to settle my bill.

Smokey: You talkin' Square Biz?

Frizzle: Yes (singing)

I'm talkin' Square Biz to you, baby
Square, Square Biz
I'm talkin' love that it
Square, Square Biz
I'm talkin' Square Biz to you, baby
Square, Square Biz
I'm talkin' love that is
That is, that is Square Biz

Im talking Square Biz
I'm talking Square Biz to you

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Im talking Square Biz
I'm talking Square Biz to you

Im talking Square Biz
I'm talking Square Biz to you

Im talking Square Biz
I'm talking Square Biz to you

Stevie: Isn't she lovely?

Smokey: Baby let's cruise away from here.

Ms. Frizzle: Square Biz. Square Biz

Baby

Ms. Frizzle: Well gentleman, it's been a great day had by all. Thank you for your hospitality here at Motown Magic Bus Depot. Alright, class. Seatbelts everyone!

Ms. Frizzle shakes hands with Mr. Smokey and Mr. Stevie. Ms. Frizzle and her Class make their way back to the classroom.

SCENE CHANGE:

Stage goes black
Prison SET from SR

3:3 - "Progress Report" (Brooklyn, NY)

Cast: Ms. Frizzle and her HomeRoom Class 315, *Magic School Bus, All Levels Caribbean, AbunDance Choir*

Costumes: Black Panther Costume (Ms. Frizzle), White Shirt, Blue Skirts, Red Sequin Sneakers (Homerom Class 315)

Music/Track: N/A

Bus is fixed and they are back in the classroom. Ms. Frizzle has joined the Black Panther Party.

Ms. Frizzle: Now class, before there was Wakanda Forever, there was a group of African Americans, let's call it like it is, Black folk who took pride in the color of their skin and their ancestry. They got fed up with being marginalized. They were sick and tired of all of the isms and schisms and decided to fight for the rights to freedom. They celebrated Kwanzaa- not Christmas. Juneteenth, not Fourth of July and definitely nobody's Columbus Day. We must stand and lift every voice and

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sing. We must rise up against our oppressors. Central Park Five, Emmitt Till, Eric Garner, how much more can we take?

DOE Deputy: Umm.. Excuse me, Ms. Welsing. And exactly what do you think you're doing? Where's your unit on Christopher Columbus? Your lesson plans on American History? I checked the records and your students' score from the State Exams are not in the system. Have you been implementing the Curriculum Standards? You have been under surveillance for quite some time. Your methods are ineffective. There are rumors that you have been taking students on unauthorized trips out of the building without the parental consent. Your bulletin boards have way too much urban content. Your insubordination will not be tolerated and is against the law. To the Rubber Room!!

Ms. Frizzle gets arrested.

Assata: Ms. Frizzle!!!! What's happening?

Ms. Frizzle: Not to worry class. Everything is going to be ok.

Ms. Frizzle goes to Jail and gets sentenced to life. Ms. Frizzle is escorted off.

NO SCENE CHANGE

Act IV- "Redemption Song"

4:1 - "Substitute Sistren"

Cast: Sis. Marley, HomeRoom Class 315, *AbunDance Choir*
Costumes: Tie Dye Costume (Sis. Marley), White Shirt, Blue Skirts, Red Sequin Sneakers, (Homerom Class 315),
Music/Track:

Students are sitting in their classroom. With Ms. Frizzle gone, things are very different

CJ: It's not right what happened to Ms. Frizzle.

Sojourner: Not at all!

Mary: Now, what are we going to do? Who's going to teach us about us?

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Assata: I'm so mad that this is happening. We need to do something.

While the students are talking, a new teacher enters and stands in front of the class.

Sis. Marley: Greetings young ladies. I am your Substitute Teacher, Sistren Roberta Ernesta Marley. Not to be confused with my third cousin on mi fadda's side, the legendary Robert Nesta Marley, who you probably as Bob. We are going to pick up right where you left off with Ms. Welsing.

Assata: Don't You mean Ms. Frizzle?

Sis. Marley: No. I mean Ms. Frances Cress Welsing. And please raise your hand when you address me.

Harriet: Yo, this lady is buggin'.

Sis. Marley: Excuse me, young lady, there are no bugs in here.

Mary: Well then you're trippin.

Sis Marley: We don't take trips. That's precisely what got Ms. Welsing in prison in the first place. Trust me, mi one, mi no have no interest in leaving this school with any of you. And make me remind you, there's no calling out in my class. Today's lesson will be on Poetry. Now turn in your books please to page 30 and let's get started. We will be learning "Dis Poem" by Mutabaruka. Giving all di praise to King Selassi, Rastafari, Diamond, Silver and Golden Krust, all things considered.

ALL: Ugh!!!1

Sis Marley: WAIT, WAIT WAIT Hold on a minute. We are going to start with the Marva Collins creed. Like her students, you will memorize it and recite it daily. So listen carefully. Society will draw a circle that shuts me out. But my superior thoughts will draw me in.

Sojourner: Oh my God. This is so boring.

Harriet: Ms. Frizzle's class was poppin' This class is a dub!

CJ: Period!

Mary: Why do we have to learn this poem anyway?

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Sis Marley: Hmpf! You wanna know why you have to learn dis poem. You want to know why you have to learn dis poem. In the infamous words of Muta Buraka:

dis poem
shall speak of the wretched sea
that washed ships to these shores
of mothers cryin for their young
swallowed up by the sea
dis poem shall say nothin new
dis poem shall speak of time
time unlimited time undefined
dis poem shall call names
names like lumumba kenyatta nkrumah
hannibal akenaton malcolm garvey
haile selassie
dis poem is vexed about apartheid rascism fascism
the klu klux klan riots in brixton atlanta
jim jones
dis poem is revoltin against 1st world 2nd world
3rd world division man made decision
yes dis poem is a drum
ashanti mau mau ibo yoruba nyahbingi warriors
uhuru uhuru
uhuru namibia
uhuru soweto
uhuru afrika
dis poem shall survive u me it shall linger in history
in your mind
in time forever
dis poem is just a part of the story
his-story her-story our-story the story still untold
dis poem is no secret
dis poem shall be called boring stupid senseless
dis poem is watchin u tryin to make sense from dis poem
dis poem is messin up your brains
makin u want to stop listenin to dis poem
but u shall not stop listenin to dis poem
u need to know what will be said next in dis poem
because
dis poem is to be continued in your mind in your mind
in your mind.
Songwriters: Mutabaruka / Allan Hope

All students: Whoa...That was Deep.

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Harriet: Sis. Marley, Come back, Come back.

Sis. Marley: Listen pickney. This revolution will not be televised. You must emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind.

CJ: Hey that Bob Marley's song.

Sis. Marley: Me and Bo go way back a yard to Trenchtown.

Mary: Hey, Can you help us free Ms. Frizzle?

Sis. Marley: Well, you're in luck. In true Jamaican fashion, Me have two tree jobs dem.

CJ: What else do you do?

Sis. Marley: Something else I do, I am UFT District Representative. Unlimited Freedom for Teachers. That means I Get Up and I Stand Up for the Rights of Teachers.

Sojourner: Yess!!!

Harriet: So you'll stand up for Ms. Frizzle?

Sis. Marley: I'll do my best. First, we need to get in contact with some people.

Assata: Like Who?

Ms. Frizzle: The AP, DOE Deputy, NYPD ...

Sojourner: And the Sheriff?

Sis. Marley: Mmm...no, no no darling. Us Marleys don't vibe with Sheriffs too tough. You know Come on ladies. Forward and Fiyacka. Let's Free the Frizz. Free the Frizz.

The students follow Sis. Marley chanting "Free the Frizz" with Protest Signs up onto the stage and Off. Level I/IA Ballet takes their places.

SCENE CHANGE:

Stage goes black

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Prison Set enters

4.2 - "Orange is the New Black"

Cast: Ms. Frizzle, Level I/IA Ballet

Costumes: Blue jumpsuit (Ms. Frizzle), Level I/IA Ballet (Ballet costume)

Track: I'm Here

Ms. Frizzle is sitting in her jail cell. There are two prison guards standing at her cell.

Ms Frizzle: (singing)

I don't need you to love me

I don't need you to love

I've got-

I've got-

I've got my sister, I can feel her now

She may not be here, but she's still mine

I know-

I know she still love me

Got my children, I can't hold them now

They may not be here, but they still mine

I hope

They know I still love them

Got my house, it still keep the cold out

Got my chair when my body can't hold out

Got my hands doing good like they s'posed to

Showing my heart to the folks that I'm close to

Got my eyes though they don't see as far now

They see more 'bout how things really are now

I'm gonna take a deep breath

Gonna hold my head up

Gonna put my shoulders back

And look you straight in the eye

I'm gonna flirt with somebody

When they walk by

I'm gonna sing out

Sing out

I believe I have inside of me

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Everything that I need to live a bountiful life
And all the love alive in me
I'll stand as tall as the tallest tree

And I'm thankful for every day that I'm given
Both the easy and hard ones I'm livin'
But most of all, I'm thankful for
Lovin' who I really am

I'm beautiful
Yes, I'm beautiful
And I'm here

At the end of the Ballet Dance, Level I/IA exit.

SCENE CHANGE:

Stage goes black
Prison Set Stays
Hip Hop Set Enters

4.3 - "Freedom is Coming"

Cast: Ms. Frizzle, Sis. Marley, Homreroom 315, All Levels Hip-Hop, AbunDance Choir
Costumes: Blue jumpsuit (Ms. Frizzle), Level I/IA Ballet (Ballet costume)
Track: Hip-Hop IIB/ III Track, Hip-Hop IA/II/IIA Track

Ms. Frizz is sitting in her jail cell. Student protestors and Sis Marley and the community enter and start chanting "Free the Frizz" Adult Dancers start performing to Ring The Alarm. More Jail Cells are added to the stage. Level IIB/III Hip-Hop begins performing. Students continue chanting "Free the Frizz"

Harriet: We the students of Ms. Frizzle's Homeroom Class 315 are here today to protest her wrongful imprisonment. We will not sit in classrooms where we learn things that aren't beneficial to us. We are the future, the next generation. We will thrive only with teachers like Ms. Frizzle. Without Ms. Frizzle, we wouldn't know who we are. If we're sitting in classrooms learning about things that we don't need, are we really learning? We want our voices to be heard. We will not be silenced because of DOE standards and unrealistic objectives. We are standing up for what is right Ms. Frizzle should not be arrested just because she wasn't teaching us from the textbooks. She was teaching us about real life and exposing us to who our ancestors were and who we are! Who are we? The Future. Who do we want? Ms. Frizzle. Who

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are we? The Future. Who do we want? Ms. Frizzle. Free the Frizz! Free the Friz!

Hip- Hop IA/II/IIA is second. By the end of second Hip-Hop piece, the DOE deputy enters and releases Ms. Frizzle. The DOE deputy and police officers exit, wheeling the cell off. The protest worked.

4:4 - "This is Us"

Cast: Ms. Frizzle, Sis. Marley, Homreroom 315, All Levels Hip-Hop, AbunDance Choir

Costumes: Blue jumpsuit (Ms. Frizzle), All Levels Hip-Hop (Hip-Hop costume)

Track: "Optimistic" (live)

Everyone is so excited that Ms. Frizzle is free.

Ms. Frizzle: Ago.

All: Amé

Ms. Frizzle: Community. Thank you. Thank you Thank you. Thank you for all of your help. You used your intelligence, your resources and each other to fight against this injustice. You fought the good fight and it worked. We have prevailed. As an educator, my mission has always been and will always be for you, my students, my community to have a wealth of knowledge, a commitment to excellence and an abundance of pride in where we all descend. We are our ancestors' wildest dreams. We stand on the shoulders of giants who have sacrificed blood, sweat and tears for us to have our education, our heritage and most, importantly, our Freedom. We are who we are because of who Mary, Sojourner, Madame CJ, Harriet and Assata were. As long as we keep our heads to the sky, we can win.

Keep, keep on
Never say die
When in the midst of sorrow
You can't see up when looking down
A brighter day tomorrow will bring
You hear the voice of reason
Telling you this can't never be done
No matter how hard reality seems
Just hold on to your dreams
Don't give up and don't give in
Although it seems you never win
You will always pass the test

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As long as you keep your head to the sky
You can win as long as you keep your head to the sky
You can win as long as you keep your head to the sky
Be optimistic
If things around you crumble
No, you don't have to stumble and fall
Keep pushing on and don't you look back
I know of storms and strive
I been around them all of life
Just think ahead and you'll be inspired
To reach higher and higher.
You'll always do your best
If you learn to never say never
You maybe down, but you're not out.
Don't give up and don't give in
Although it seems you never win
You will always pass the test
As long as you keep your head to the sky
You can win as long as you keep your head to the sky (you can
win child!)

You can win as long as you keep your head to the sky
Be optimistic
Don't you let no body stop you
Be optimistic
You can win, yes
Never say die.

KARISMA: THANK YOU SPEECH (All Cast and All Students & Backstage
Volunteers onstage)

END OF SHOW

Approximate Runtime is 2:30 with one 15 Minute Interval.