

Fall 2020

TIMES STRIKES BACK

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TIME STRIKES BACK

A play by

Nairobi Coleman

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"You have to cherish things in a different way when you know the clock is ticking, you are under pressure."

- Chadwick Boseman

Production details:

TIME STRIKES BACK was originally written by Bard student Nairobi Coleman. This play is open to many different adaptations and mediums.

Virgil	Played by a black boy
Mr Buckner	Played by a black man
Dashane	Played by a black girl
Shanell	Played by a black girl

DIRECTIONS	This play is to be acted out in the proscenium style.
SCENE DESIGN	This design is similar to public school classroom setup.
COSTUME DESIGN	This play takes inspiration from Harlem streetwear.
LIGHTING DESIGN	This play is open to multiple forms of lighting design with the exception of the use of primary colors.
SOUND DESIGN	This play is open to any form of sound design that the director sees fit.
CHOREOGRAPHY	This play is open to any form of choreography that the director sees fit.

Characters:

Virgil

A 17-year old male who is a junior in high school. He is rebellious and resistant to rules and structure. However, he is very radical as a result of his experiences.

Mr. Buckner

A 42 year old high school teacher who is also a professor at Columbia University. He sees his teaching as a duty to his people, rather than as an extra of income.

Dashane

A 17-year old young woman who is a junior in high school. She is often not concerned with the lessons in class, more so on her nails, hair, or overall outfit for the day.

Shanell

A 16 year old young woman who is a junior in high school. She is very studious and plans to pursue her Doctorate degree. She is the only

one of the three students
who wanted to come to
school.

Time: March 9, 2020

Location: 245 WEST 129TH ST. Promise Academy 1 Public Charter
School.

Scene 1.

[Enter 245 WEST 129TH ST. Promise Academy 1 Public Charter School. It is a Monday morning at 7:56 AM. Sounds from the MTA bus ignitions and tire skirts loom in the background. Cars honk as the traffic piles up. Approaching yellow school buses greet the nearby pedestrians. People liter the sidewalk. Parents make one last adjustment to their kids backpacks. Some kids drag their feet while others leap through the main entrance with excitement. High School kids enter through the side entrance, complete with the same mixture of expressions. Security guards secure the premise.

This is what a normal Monday morning at 7:56 AM looks like.

However, lately things have not been normal. Monday morning, March 9, 2020 at 7:56 AM. There are no honks. No tire skirts. No kids. No parents. No people. Buses faintly heard in the background. Just one police car driving down the street. Schools remain open, however most parents opt not to send their kid to their schools due to a highly infectious and fatal virus steadily consuming society. The staff dwindle as more and more refuse to show up to work. The few guards who have no choice but to stand outside. Shortly after, shadows stretching from the distance appear on the ground where the main entrance is. Three shadows.]

Virgil

Yo, this some
bullshit.

Dashane

Nah, you can't be
deadass right now.

Virgil

[Virgil and Dashane suck their teeth.] Yo. I told my
moms man. [Virgil shakes his head]

Dashane

Why not just close the school? [Dashane shakes her
head]

Shanell

Damm like nobody's here. It's like a ghost town. Not
even the secur- oh never mind.

Virgil

Yo Da, look at his face. He know damm well he didn't
wanna be here.

Dashane

Hahaha.

Shanell

Shiid, I'm glad he is. Ms. Christian thought he was
gonna get out of telling me about my scores. The
school ain't shut down, so we're on the clock. [Virgil
and Dashane frown at Shanell]

[Virgil, Dashane, and Shanell enter the building through the main entrance. Usually they are not allowed to walk in from the side entrance, regardless, they nod at the one security guard at the front desk for an ok to continue upstairs to the fifth floor. He lets them. As they make their way to the staircase, they notice how the lobby - that is usually packed with kids and staff around this time - is now deserted. They make a left and walk up the stairs.]

Dashane

You could hear the echo from my shoes.

Virgil

I never even knew this place had an echo.

Dashane

Facts. [Dashane sucks her teeth.] Do ya'll think there's even any class today?

Shanell

It better be.

Virgil

Of course not. Plus I couldn't get to the spanish assignment either, so it's for the best.

Dashane

Bro, it was one worksheet and all you had to do was write and speak your numbers. You literally could have watched Dora and done it.

Shanell

Typical.

Virgil

Typical? The fuck you mean by that?

Shanell

That you should actually start caring about your grades for a change and not waste people's time.

Virgil

I ain't wasting nobody's time. They get paid regardless. While we out here forced to do work rather than learn.

Shanell

Wrong. You had all that time to do that assignment and still came up with excuses.

Virgil

Miss valedictorian always got sum smart to say.

Shanell

[Under her breath] And Mr. Hawkings never fails to say sum dumb.

Virgil

What was that?

Shanell

Oh nothing. [She continues on, leaving the other two behind.]

Virgil

Ouuu she gets on my nerves. She has no idea what happens-

Dashane

She gotta point tho V. [Virgil shakes his head and continues ahead, leaving Dashane] What? Come on now. Talk to me. [Dashane tries to catch up to him.]

Shanell

[Shanell is the first to enter the fifth floor and makes a left to their first period class. She enters and with a smile of relief and surprise, she greets the US history teacher, Mr.Buckner, and takes her seat.] Goodmorning Mr.Buckner. [She pulls out her notebook.]

Mr.Buckner

Goodmorning, Shanell.

Shanell

I thought I was gonna have to start teaching myself today.

Mr.Buckner

Never on my watch, lil girl. Although, I thought I was gon' be in the same boat. [Virgil enters the room.]
And good morning to you, Virgil.

Virgil

[Under his breath.] I know he ain't.
You gotta be the only teacher that would pull up during a pandemic.

Mr.Buckner

It is not technically a pandemic yet, and I ain't the only one here. Mrs. Petite is right down the hall.

Virgil

Bro, that's the
princi-

Shanell

[Gasp] No, Ms.
Christian?

Mr.Buckner

And I am not your bro, bro.

Dashane

[Dashane walks in the midst of Mr. Buckner and Virgil's exchange. She is silent at first, then busts

out laughing.] Hahaha. Oh, what did I just walk into?

[Dashane goes towards her seat] Good morning, Mr. Buckner.

Mr.Buckner

Good morning, Dashane-

Dashane

Wait, why are you here?

Virgil

That's what I'm sayin.

Mr.Buckner

[He raises his voice.] Both of you have a seat.

[Virgil and Dashane sit down.] Listen, I came today because it's gon' take more than a lil disease-cold to stop me from giving ya some knowledge. [Virgil and Dashane hisses.]

Virgil

Yo, I swear you sound like my moms.

Dashane

Mines too.

Mr.Buckner

I know I sound like your parents. Cuz they care 'boutcho education. As do I. That's why they dragged yo ungrateful behinds out of bed to get here.

Shanell

My mom actually said I could stay home like my brothers. But I told her I wanted to come. [Virgil and Dashane frown at Shanell.]

Mr.Buckner

Uuuuhh, alright. Now, with that being said, since no one else is here, this will likely be your only class for the day. And-

Virgil

My mom sent me to school for one class?

Dashane

I mean at least it's only one class.

Mr.Buckner

SHHHHHH. Mrs. Petite informed me that this may very well be our last class because ol' Cuomo may shut down the schools. [Virgil and Dashane silently rejoin. Shanell frowns.] So, we're gonna modify the lesson plan a bit to put three lessons into one class period. [Virgil and Dashane] Ya'll kids always got something to complain about, huh? [Mr.Buckner shakes his head] And instead of the usual "Do Now" structure, I'm gon' hold you students up to the standards of young adults in college and we gon' have a discussion based class.

Now, let's get right into it. Open your textbooks to page 36. [Mr. Buckner takes the chalk, fixes his glasses, and prepares to write something.] If you take a minute to read the section, the first lie they tell you is that American history started with the Declaration of-

Virgil

[Virgil Raises his hand.] Ughhhh, Mr. Buckner?

Mr. Buckner

Yes?

Virgil

Since it is discussion based, would we, you know, have a discussion? Like no offense, but you 'bout to get in "Do Now" mood right now.

Dashane

Yeah, I mean not only do we know this already, you just told us that we was gon' talk 'bout the topic, but then you just read from the book anyway.

Shanell

I must admit Mr. Buckner. As much as I appreciate your lectures, I would also like the opportunity for us to help dictate the discussion and gear it to something more directly related to us.

Mr. Buckner

But this is.....[Mr. Buckner regains his composure] Ok.
What would you students like to discuss then? [All
three raise their hands, but Shanell's hand shoots up
the first, and with eagerness. Virgil and Dashane
frown at each other.] Go again Shanell.

Shanell

Well, I would like to discuss the historic conditions
of our society that allowed this new virus to slowly
ruin our society.

Mr.Buckner

[Intrigued] How so?

Shanell

[Shanell continues] The US is behind in education and
even more so for our people and this virus has already
allowed further disproportionate damage to us and our
learning. Look. There's no one here. This isn't even
getting to whatever Cuomo shutting down schools.

Virgil

Yo, she loves school. [Virgil and Dashane laugh.]

Mr.Buckner

SHHHHH, Virgil. I agree. Education for us should be a
top priority and I agree that education and resources
should be more readily available and accessible for
us.

Shanell

On the contrary, Mr. Buckner. Isn't it accessible enough? What I meant by damage is that the virus gives black families an excuse not to send their kids to school and to settle for mediocrity, further making black people content with being the victim all the time.

Dashane

WOOOOOO!!!!!! How are black people trying to be mediocre when there is a virus that's killing people?

Shanell

The people who were dying were already gonna die in a couple of years anyway. Other than that, I don't see anyone else dying for getting it. You said it yourself, Mr. Buckner. This virus is exaggerated.

Shanell

The US is just lazy.

The problem is black

people can't afford

that luxury and we

shouldn't be able

Mr. Buckner

I didn't say that.

to. Next thing you
know, they'll be
payin' us to stay in
our houses so we can
get fat.

Dashane

[Outraged] Wrong. So we could pay bills when we can't
leave the house dummy. V, you heard this shit?

Mr. Buckner

Language!

Virgil

Yea, since you became a republican?

Shanell

Oh, please you're one to talk. You're a junior 'bout
to be a senior and couldn't do a page-

Virgil

Yo, respectfully, you don't know shit about me or what
happens in my life, so don't ever presume to know what
I could or couldn't do. Yeah, I know I don't always do
my homework, but I can't do school work at home.

Instead I inherited my parents' responsibilities and
be a dad to my siblings. The sh-things I see on a

daily would leave all of you traumatized. You'll never understand. So it must look nice, ya'll judging me from ya lil pedestals. [Virgil shakes his head] What's crazy is that I can't leave cuz Im always gonna have niggas to take care of one way or another. So fuck school. {Shanell and Dashane are silent.}

Mr. Buckner

[Ready to reprimand him for cursing, he stops.] You raised your hand earlier. What did you want to discuss? Is there something you want to get off your chest?

Virgil

I wanted to talk 'bout police brutality and how the US doesn't seem to care. I wanted to talk about how I know that the corona is bad and niggas need help, but NIGGAS been needed help. NIGGAS get hunted. Where were they? [He takes a deep breath.] Like a year ago, I was in this deli on 07 with my baby bro. We just left the park after playin' ball and we was hungry and thirsty. He's in there looking for snacks and I'm thinkin if I wanna sandwich or not. The whole time I can feel the deli guy's eyes on me. I see him a couple times lookin', but I'm mostly minding my business, especially since there are cameras, so I know I didn't

steal shit. Whole time, I didn't notice this nigga called the cops on me. Talkin 'bout I took sum. When they got there, they pulled me outside and said I heard one of them talkin' sayin' I fit some description. He grabbed my arm so hard, and then he slammed it against the wall. In front of my brother.

Dashane

Is that how you broke your hand that time?

Virgil

He let me go with a warning. Said "Don't let me see you here again." So I didn't go back. But from time to time and even today, I still see that same guy around my block. Almost like he following me. This wasn't meant to be no feelings circle, but there are times when we are in class and I hear that cop and.....How am I supposed to protect my brother from that? Or from our house? I feel so powerless, man, and nothing, especially school, helps. It even seems like a distraction. {Dashane and Shanell hug Virgil.} And then you got this corona, I feel like I can't even spare the pain for it.

Mr. Buckner

Wow.

Shanell

I'm so sorry for calling you lazy and mediocre. I never knew. I just thought... it's just that those traits remind me of my dad and....

Virgil

[Virgil interrupts] Hey, it's fine. I feel it.

Mr. Buckner

[Holding back tears.] So Dashane, you had your hand raised earlier too. Or do you wanna react to that?

Dashane

[Taking a short pause and shaking her head.] At first I raised my head because I didnt wanna be left out. But now, I think I wanna talk about mental health.

THE END