



Appendix A – Final Script

Wrong Answer

FINAL DRAFT

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PART ONE

Audience members will gather in the lobby awaiting the official descent into the space. From the lobby audience descension will take them down the stairwell of the actors singing the hymn *This May Be The Last Time*. Once the audience members reach the downstairs lobby, the line enters the space through a metal detector and guards/front of house/ushers directing them to find their seats, the exam will begin soon. There will be scenic design elements suggesting an inner city impoverished school setting and as the audience enters they will hear the sound of a ticking clock.

Ms. Engel will be stage center encouraging everyone to “Find your seat, your exam will begin shortly.” On every seat will be a clipboard with a survey on test perceptions attached and a sharpened number two pencil. Once the house is closed, Ms. Engel will give the following instructions to the audience (reading from an instruction manual): “At this time please turn off or silence all cell phones. The purpose of the exam in front of you is to capture your perceptions on testing. You will have 5 minutes to read the instructions and complete the exam. Please read the instructions on the first page, sign your name and begin.” Ms. Engel will then leave the stage and walk around the room militantly keeping an eye out for cheating and close watch on the clock. At the 5-minute mark a bell will sound, and Ms. Engel will then say, “Time is up! Please pass your exams to the front with the clipboard and number two pencil as it was received.” She will then collect the exams (maybe with help from a stage hand), then exit. The period bell will ring and all students from the cast will filter in and sit close to the tv screens for the filming.

A short film by Firelight Media entitled “Children Left Behind” will be shown. It highlights issues in assessment. The video will happen before the theatrical performance (PART TWO).

PART TWO

Characters

Danaijah (Nay Nay): Junior in high school. Very smart, type A, gets “the system” only enough to excel, but wants to burn it all down. Black female.

Micah (Mikey): Junior in high school. Also, very smart, doesn’t apply himself and knows that the system wasn’t built for him to succeed so there is no good in even trying. Black male.

Mothers voice: omnious mother voice frequently introduced into the space.

Ms. Engel: 11th grade English teacher and test proctor who has competing values about testing. White woman in her late 30s/early 40s.

Dr. Gray: School Psychologist, Black or brown person in late 30s/early 40s, acts as a voice of reason for testing.

Johnny & Jimmy: Danaijah’s Brothers: Fraternal twins who are 2 years younger than Danaijah. 9th graders.

Chorus: Ensemble of dancers for classroom scenes.

Scene 1

Lights come up on stage left to a single bed, night stand and alarm clock. Danaijah is sleeping, and her clock reads 6:29. It turns to 6:30 and the alarm sounds. She wakes up immediately, turns off her alarm. Gets out of bed and stretches.

Danaijah

Ahhh, this is it, this is the day that I prove my worth to this stupid system.

(As she leaves her room to head to the bathroom to brush her teeth)

Mother (voice over)

NAY-NAYYYYY!

Danaijah

HAHN?!

Mother's (voice over)

I KNOW THAS YOU! WAKE YO BROTHAS UP!

Danaijah

Okay, mama. *(under her voice: ..dang..)*

Stops at brothers' room on the way to the bathroom.

Wake ya'll ho asses up, its test day bitchesss!

The brothers moan roasting her under their breath (something like "if you don't get yo im ready for a test lookin ass") unexcited and get back under the covers when she leaves.

This is the day, this the day I'm gonna stick it to 'em...yeah...the man.. The system. Ge ready fa these hands!

Mother's voice

Naija! I'm off to work. Don't forget to fix you and yo brothers breakfast before ya'll set off to school.

Danaijah

Okay mommy - love you! Have a great day at work! *(Goes to kitchen to start wippin' up some bacon, eggs and grits with chocolate milk for breakfast for her and her brothers.)*

Mother's voice

Love you too baby! I'm sure you gonna ace that test.

Danaijah

(in a low voice) You can bet yo ass I will...Jimmy John come get yo breakfast made by Chef-Girl - D

Johnny

Aw man what you made for us today?

Jimmy

Momma said to make us breakfast, bro I'm 'bout make a fast break on this bowl of/

Danaijah

/ay ay ay that's enough. We got all the food groups here for a balanced breakfast to ace the test. Oranges gives you energy, grits stick to ya bones for longevity, eggs and bacon give you the protein to power the muscle *(pocks Jimmy in the head)*.

Johnny

ooooo balanced breakfast

Jimmy

maaaann, you too geeked fa this test. We jus goin today for practice anyway. ..bro who you takin to the dance tho?

Johnny

Oh I was thinkin bout takin Samantha...what about you?

Jimmy

What you think about Isabelle?

improv dialogue about the dance and the girls.

Danaijah

Who's Isabelle? Ya'll gotta get yo mind right and focus on this exam.

Johnny

...But I do hope we do good tho bro. You know we gotta secure that bag to play college ball.

Danaijah

Ya'll betta eat ya food.

brothers improv pocking fun again

Danaijah

Don't disrespect me.

Lights down on kitchen as Nay is giving Jimmy a look of disapproval. Lights up on bedroom stage right. Mikey is sleeping, and his clock read 6:37. He has overslept. And is still sleeping. Snoring even.

Mother's voice

MIKEY!

He is still sleeping and snoring.

Mother's voice

MIKEY.! *Still sleeping.*

Mother's voice

MICAH DERRICK JAMES ROBINSON, YOU BETTA GET YO ASS UP OUT THAT BED THIS INSTANT. DON'T YOU GOT THAT TEST TODAY! YOU GONE BE LATE. GET UP.

Mikey ruffles in bed.

Mikey

5 more minutes ma!

Mother's voice

BOI, DON'T MAKE ME COME UP THERE! AINT THIS TEST SUPPOSED TO GET YOU INTO COLLEGE. YOU WANNA END UP LOCKED UP LIKE YO BROTHA OR NO GOOD LIKE YA DADDY?! GET THAT TAIL UP AND GET YO MIND RIGHT AND READY!

Mikey

huhhhh...

Mother's voice:

WHAT WAS THAT?

Mikey

I said, I'm uuuuuup.

Mikey ruffles to get himself together mumbling under his voice...

damn, I hate this, I hate school, and HATE tests...testing just not the mood like this stupid test wasn't made for me no way. I've taken test after, test after, test and realize theyyyy (*rubs white side of his hand extended in the ai*) just don't want a nigga to succeed. They don't wanna see me out here shinin'. So let me just get ready to take this "L".

Lights down.

End scene.

The bell rings and there is an improved hall scene. The bell rings again, the cast sets up chairs in 5 by 2 rows for the classroom then lineup for march in, dance, then chat/scurry before class (Dr. Gray, Danaijah and Micah exit during this).

Sound: Play "All for us" (fade out start ~0:58) when cast is in lineup

Scene 2

Enter Ms. Engel.

Ms. Engel

Okay, okay. Find your seats and clear your desk. Remember only a number 2 pencil and a calculator can be used on this exam.

Danaijah enters looking pressed and prepped for the day.

Danaijah

Morning Ms. Engel.

Ms. Engel

Good morning, Danaijah. You look like a warrior ready for battle.

Danaijah

You got that right Ms. Engel. I've had a balanced breakfast. Not too heavy that I get the 'itis' but not too light that I can't think straight. I'm ready to grab this test by the balls and show it who's boss!

Ms. Engel

Well, I'm sure you will.

The last of the students filter in and Ms. Engel realizes Mikey is missing.

Ms. Engel (to the class)

has anyone seen...

Mikey storms in with a popart in his mouth.

Mikey

I'm here Ms. E, don't worry about me!

Mikey turns and notices everyone in rows, rather than the circle seating that he is used to.

Ms. Engel

Find your seat Micah.

Mikey walks to his seat which is upstage stage right. There is a sort of ominous walk that he has to his seat. As he looks around anxiety hits, you can see on his face that he is overwhelmed. When he has made it to his seat an ominous movement starts with the students.

Sound: Play “Anthem” -fade out start ~1:00

At the end of the movement Ms. Engel passes out sealed test booklets as she begins reading instructions for the test to the entire class.

As she finishes reading the instructions **Sound: Play “White Noise/clock ticking”**

Mikey

Tick tock

Sharpened # 2 pencil in hand

Startin’ to feel sweat from ma glands

“Is anybody else hot?!”

Tick tock

That look like my 11th grade Teacher Ms. E

But somethin don’t seem to line up for me

somethin is different

Maybe it could be that she hella scripted

“What’s that you readin?”

“What’s this, whatchu sayin?”

Ms. E is this another game we playin?

Tick Tock

Desks in parallel rows, facing the front.

“What happened to my spot in the group circle next to Johnny and that funk?”

Tick Tock

The energy in here is varied, this air is stale

My heart won’t slow down

I know I’m black, but I’m turnin pale!

Tick Tock

Block to block, bubble to bubble

Skip, erase, pick “C”, make a tree?

This test gonna be the death of me

Lights come back up and Mikey takes his seat.

Ms. Engel

Alright, now that you are finished filling in your personal information, if there are no more questions. Remember you will have 40 minutes to complete this section. Good luck! You may begin.

Choreographed movement of test performance begins lights fade to a spot light on Ms. Engel.

And it is in this moment that I am forced to push my chicks out of the nest and hope that their wings are strong enough to fly

But what if the air is not right...they all have different wings

And faced with foreign terrain ...they will all make different decisions

How do I know they are ready...what does ready even mean?

Readiness is relative.

But that's not what the numbers will say

The numbers will say X amount of students passed

The numbers will say X amount of students are not performing to "standard"

The numbers will say I'm not an effective teacher

The numbers will say that I failed and subsequently my school is underperforming

...I want to do right by my kids...let them achieve in their own lanes

...yet I am pressured by my superiors and my superiors' superiors to test well

...because testing well leads to funding decisions and a better reputation

Here on the ground the work is so.. heavy...

but up at the top they make it seem so ...light.

There are so many components that contribute to their weight, that I wrestle with

...but I'm forced to put a smile on, forget everything that makes my kids unique and

Standardize? This can't be the right answer.

(continues proctor movements)

Sound: Play "White Noise/clock ticking"

Danaijah is working on her exam in sequence with the movement of the classroom. She begins to veer off into her own distinct movement emotting various feelings come up but specifically dignified anger because maybe she is not as prepared as she thought she was. She stands up and walks down stage center.

Danaijah

Trying to put all of us into a test booklet
Is the wrong answer
It's the wrong task for assessing what we've mastered
If you took the time to look inside, you will find
That our mind processes information differently
That there are all these intricacies
That contribute to our views because of our history
Our ways of knowing and interpretations of reality differ
And it makes us bitter that you don't consider our values.
In a nation that claims
"Liberty for all"
"For the people by the people"
"Equality" and "Equity"
In an education system
Where multiple intelligences exist
Diverse learners in the classroom exist
And trends over the years prove
achievement gaps are real
We must believe that one test is best for all?
WRONG ANSWER
But I'm gonna act like its right
To win this fight
And hope I don't lose myself along the way.

Danaijah takes her seat. Spotlight shifts to lights up on the classroom.

Mikey yells, slams his test booklet down on his desk and runs out of class.

music transition with “role modelz” fade out start ~ (0:50)

Scene 3

Stage shifts to (down stage left or center stage) the school psychologist’s office. Mikey runs in, entering from stage left. Dr. Gray is typing on their computer.

Mikey

Man fuck this shit Dr. G! Fuck that test, fuck this school, fuck everything!

Dr. Gray

(sarcastically in response) Hello Micah.

Mikey

I told you to call me Mikey. Don’t nobody call me Micah, but my momma when I’m in trouble.

Dr. Gray

Micah is such a great name but hello Mikey. What’s the problem? Shouldn’t you be sitting for your exam right now?

Mikey

This aint cool, man. How the man gone try to judge me from a test booklet. How they gonna tell me to take 40 minutes to answer these math questions that I haven’t even talked about in class? These tests ain’t right. Somethins gotta give.

Dr. Gray

Micah... Mikey...in every aspect of your life you will be tested. In school, at home, on the streets. Will you always plan to run when it gets hard or when you don’t want to do it?

Mikey

I didn’t say it was hard Dr. G, it just doesn’t make any sense to me why they think that some of these irrelevant ass math questions determine whether or not I got the juice. I know and you know that I got the juice. I don’t need these whypipo’s test to tell me that.

Dr. Gray

You're right, but you seem real shaken up by a test that you don't care about.

Mikey

.....mannn Dr. G ...my momma countin' on me to do good on this exam. She think its my ticket to college.

Dr. Gray

Your mom is a wise woman. I understand your frustration, but the test determines your aptitude and potential performance in college. Don't you want to go to college?

Mikey

I mean I think so Dr. G. ..can I tell you somethin'?

Dr. Gray

yeah, anything you know that.

Mikey

...I think my brain is good Dr. G. Like really good, ..I get how these systems work and I'm smart, I consider myself socially and emotionally intelligent. I... I can talk to people.

Dr. Gray

mhnmmm, yeah

Mikey

...but I just don't get how this test measures those aspects within me. I feel like they are trying to measure me with the wrong tools. Like they are mismeasuring me...is that a thing Dr. G?

Dr. Gray

I mean there is certainly implications of using tests for a particular purpose. Testing companies they try to ask you questions on the exam that relate to what you will be tested on in college. But what I am hearing from you is that testing practices here (and maybe globally) don't recognize everyone's voices right now.

Mikey

hmmm, you think my voice matters? We watched this video in class, the history of assessment to get us kind of prepared for battle. Or what I thought. I got to that test and froze. I don't think I can make it in college. Nah, I wanna do something else that don't require those tests. Uhn unn...

Dr. Gray

Mikey, I think you should take a step back and think about the bigger picture here. In every aspect of your life you are going to have to show worth and merit. Show that you have the capacity to achieve and succeed. You will be judged and evaluated against some metric of predetermined existential worth, so you have to get used to it and show up when life calls for it.

Mikey

I feel trapped, like I'm in a jail cell when I am taking that test. I feel like a sacrifice being made to the gods of capitalism in society... (*Mikey stands and walks down stage center*)

My blood the sweat and tears of thousands

Maybe millions of people who look like me

My people.

Who perpetually endure the toxic education system

rooted in multiple oppressive values

related to Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class.

These outcomes, success metrics that supposedly show your value, tell the story;

Developed by power launderers, who position themselves

Purposefully to permit power seekers potential power

Deeming them successful (or unsuccessful) in the launderer's field

Everybody has to prove themselves...."what's your worth?"

I know it sure as hell ain't related to no "systems of equations" or "geometric functions".

This test is telling me to perform my intelligence in a particular way

A way that makes me remove true aspects of myself and "play the game" to be successful

Will my sacrificial lamb be worthy enough Dr. G?

Dr. Gray

That's a choice you have to make for yourself Mikey. Trust and believe that I have had many frustrations and upsets due to feeling unworthy and misunderstood.. A word from the wise, it doesn't get any easier. Yes, we have to play a game that we had no say in the development of but push through. It will be worth it in the end.

Micah

I know my worth Dr. G. I know what I am capable of. These test people and the government think they got it all figured out. They can tell me who I am by putting me in a box based on how I score on some exam that doesn't measure my true worth. I'm sure based on what they are asking me in there on that test that I will be labelled in a score group that "needs improvement", not even make it to college and continue to struggle like all Black people do in America. *(He gets up to leave.)*

Dr. Gray

If you give up and believe that, you are letting them win you know. You can't let them win. Letting them win keeps you enslaved. So what your exam doesn't work out, there are other pathways to success. Choose the path of resilience, the path that Black people, our people, have walked on since we were dragged here against our will.

Micah

Aight, I hear you Dr. G. Imma head out. *(He exits.)*

insert music transition

Scene 4

By the time Micah makes it back to class time is almost up for the exam, some students are finished and ready to leave. Danaijah is still there working, there is 7 minutes left on the exam.

play “air freshener” stop by 0:30

Ms. Engel

Okay class, pencils down in 7 minutes. Try to start thinking about a powerful finish!

There are about two students still testing plus Danaijah. One of the students looks up at Micah as he walks back in. He can see the discontent on his/her face.

Ms. Engel

Micah where have you been you’ve missed your entire exam?

Micah

In Dr. Gray’s office Ms. E. You know this test wasn’t made for me.

Ms. Engel

Micah this test is important for your future. You can’t just leave when you feel like it.

Danaijah

DONE! *(She walks her test booklet to the front of class.)* With one minute to spare!

Ms. Engel

(Accepting Danaijah’s test booklet.) Thank you Danaijah. I’m sure you killed it.

Danaijah

I know I did Ms. E *(flips hair or pantomimes flipping hair. then she walks out.)*

Ms. Engel

(Turning back to Micah) Now, you, mister, will need to go straight to Dean Crogg's office. We need to figure out what to do with you.

*Micah hangs out irritated then when **bell rings** he is fumbling through his back pack. Danaijah returns, she has forgotten her backpack*

Micah

huhhhhhh *(He walks out.)*

Micah is met by Danaijah in the hallway.

Danaijah

You know the test wasn't that bad Mikey. If you just applied yourself.

Micah

Easy for you to say Nay, this shit is a cake walk in the park for you.

Danaijah

That metaphor doesn't make sense, but I see what you tried to do there.

Micah

Everybody can't perform for the whites like you can Nay. It's a real gift.

Danaijah

Boop, boop! Haters gone hate, have fun in the Dean's office.

They separate she heads to her locker and he heads to the Dean's office. She runs into the twins.

What up lil uglies *(She puts her arms on their shoulders)*, how'd ya'll do on the exam today?

Jimmy

That test was trash.

Johnny

Yeah, why you so happy Nay.

Danaijah

Cuz I know I KILLED IT baby bro. Like I can feel it in my bones. With these test scores, I can go to Yale, No Stanford, No HARVARD.

Jimmy/Johnny:

Yay, for you. (*sarcastically*)

Johnny

I mean you right it wasn't that bad.

Jimmy

but the whole experience was trash.

Johnny

yeah throw the whole test away.

Jimmy

like the anxiety in that room gave me anxiety

Johnny

and we don't get anxiety,

Jimmy

ever.

Danaijah

welp good thing you have two more years to get those emotions in check. Don't worry, big sis got you. It's handled. (*flips hair or pantomimes flipping hair.*) ***insert music transition "Diva"***

Jimmy/Johnny

Greeeat. (*sarcastically*)

improv about the girls they mentioned at breakfast this morning as they exit

Student (PJ)

Hey Danaijah you know we getting our test results today.

Danajah

What?! Let me get home!

reprise classroom dance of students getting test results

Scene 5

In Danaijah's room

Mother's voice

NAIJAH!

Danaijah

Yeah, mah!

Mother's voice

You got some mail, I think its yo test results, want me to bring it/

Danaijah

/comingggg...!!

Running out of her room the scene changes and she runs straight into Dr. Gray's office with test results in hand hysterical.

Danaijah

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, noooooooo....

Dr. Gray

Good morning Danaijah.

Danaijah

Dr. Gray something aint right! Something is not right. I just...look at this!

She passes Dr. Gray her score report, Dr. Gray understands her disappointment.

Dr. Gray

Ahh, I see. This must be hard to/

Danaijah

/Dr. Gray what did I do wrong? I studied, I pay attention in class, I ask questions. Where did I miss the mark? With this score, I will never get into Harvard.

Dr. Gray

Danaijah, please know that this test score does not define you and this is not the end for you.

Danaijah

How do you know that? All these systems do is fail people like me and this is evidence of that. This test was supposed to be my ticket to college. To a better life for me, and my family. This seems like the end. I should just get my drive thru voice ready.

Dr. Gray

Come on, there's nothing wrong with blue collar work, but do you really want to work in a drive thru for the rest of your life? Do you believe that's part of your destiny?

Danaijah

My destiny? I don't know where to start with a response for that, but I know where I've come from and I know that statistics show I should be pregnant now (or in the next few years), working at a drive through getting public aid.....until this morning I refused to be that statistic. I ain't nothing special with a score like that.

Dr. Gray

Throughout life it is important for us to have moments of clarity, milestones, they keep things in perspective for us. Think of this test and this score as a milestone, regardless of what it looks like you cannot give up on the race.

Danaijah

So, what I'm hearing is that this is not completely my fault? So maybe the test is crap, yeah that's what it is.

Dr. Gray

Well, testing companies do a lot of work to make sure tests are fair for everyone. So when you say the test is crap, I'm not completely sure that is a valid statement. The purpose of the test is to measure your readiness for college .

Danaijah

Dr. Gray, I am ready for college. This test got me fucked up. You know I think they got the purpose all wrong.... (*she steps down stage*)

Depression is what I feel after receiving my score

Oppression comes to mind as I think of the implications

Seems like dog whistle politics these tests

“To determine which student’s the best”

It aint me! rarely is it me or even people who look like me

Let’s put the whistle down

And call a spade, a spade

The way that these tests are made

Got my people feelin’ played

We been fighting since our ancestors stepped foot on this soil

Not just physically but against principalities

Engrained in systems, organizations and institutions

We fought for our freedom

We fought for our rights

We fought to integrate into THEIR systems

Because when we tried to thrive on our own they shut it down!

But they still want to keep us in chains (*pause.*)

The purpose of this test is subjective to the examinee

For the elite maybe it does measure your college readiness

But for black people it’s a shackle

Few can actually set themselves free and be liberated

But must take caution because with liberation comes separation from those who remain shackled

So we must continue to fight...for justice.

Dr. Gray

Well put Danaijah, but where do you see this going? Where do you see this fight taking place?

Danaijah

We need a new test Dr. Gray that measures ME. All of me and my melonated complicated self. There's just too many factors that contribute to who I am and how I make decisions in life that maybe this test is missing.

Dr. Gray

ha, you sound like Micah.

Danaijah

wow, Mikey, actually formed an intelligent argument?

(Micah enters Dr. Gray's office.)

Micah

I heard somebody say my name, ya'll session over Dr. G?

Dr. Gray

Mikey we were just talking about your love for the exam.

Micah

Mannn, I hate that test. It's stupid and does a poor job measuring me and all of my intelligences.

Danaijah

huh, I'm impressed, maybe you are right Dr. G.

Dr. Gray

It may be good for you all to share your experiences with each other. You never know what will come out of building community.

The look at each other, shake hands.

Danaijah

You right Dr. Gray cuz it takes a community! We need to change this test right Mikey? It needs to represent all of our voices. The voices of you, you, you and you! Its time for us to come together as democracy suggests and make a better test. We breakin down walls and breakin all the rules. In a minute we all are going to literally write our suggests on the walls and there's questions to ask for you too. But first...we rippin this test to shreds. Come on rip it with me!

Micah

Literally pick up that exam and rip it to pieces everyone!

play "Before I Let Go", lights down

End scene, End Part 2.

