

The Bernie Mac Show

Written by

Billiam Coronel

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"It's Not O-Tay"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

ART CARD: "WHO?"

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE

(fakely upbeat)

It's Black History Month, America.
Time to celebrate. Time to educate.
Get y'all up to speed on what we
brought to the table --

(letting down facade)

Oh Hell, I ain't gonna pretend in
front of you people. Bernie Mac is
in a funk. A deep funk -- I don't
even wanna talk about it.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

CHYRON: "DAYS EARLIER"

Bernie is on the air with the DJ team of CLYDE and CHERYL. 4
or 5 other people are in the studio as an audience.

CHERYL

It's The Morning Glide with Clyde
and Cheryl. So Bernie, who's Jordan
gonna be for Black History month?

This question takes Bernie by surprise. He has no idea.

BERNIE

Well.. It's gotta be someone
successful, right? Drug free, sets
a good example for the kids... I
imagine he's gonna be me.

LAUGHTER. Too much...

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Hold up now. I ain't sayin' I'm the
top of the list --

CLYDE

I had you third -- Colin Powell,
every other black man, Bernie Mac.

CHERYL
My list got some white people in
front of you.

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More LAUGHTER.

BERNIE
Go 'head, joke. Truth is the truth.

CHERYL
Black men should emulate you?
Brother, pleese! Our boys go to
the same school. I got the lowdown.

BERNIE
Ain't no lowdown.

CHERYL
Bernie Mac's Guide For Black Men:
"Chapter One -- Stay home while
your wife goes to work."

BERNIE
Oh, c'mon now. It ain't like that.

CHERYL
You play poker, right?

BERNIE
(where's this going?)
I host a game or two. Nothing wrong
--

CHERYL
"Chapter Two -- Gamble, drink and
smoke cigars in front of your nine-
year-old son." You folks writing
these down?

CLYDE
I'd throw you a rope, brother, but
you're sinking too fast.

BERNIE
Too bad she ain't got the facts.
First off, Jordan's only eight. And
he's not my son.

CHERYL
"Chapter Three -- Claim you ain't
your baby's daddy."

Big LAUGHS. Bernie shakes his head in defeat.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE

I hear you out there snickering --
"Oooo, Bernie Mac took a whopping."

(shaking head)

You got it wrong, America. I just
didn't wanna make her look bad. I
could'a come back. Play The Dozens
with the Mac-Man, you better wear
good shoes 'cause you'll probably
be walking home.

(then)

Anyway, that ain't got nothing to
do with nothing. Keep watching.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT DAY

Vanessa is hanging out as Jordan and Bryana watch TV. She's
been suggesting people but Jordan hasn't been inspired by any
of them. Bernie is walking in when he overhears...

VANESSA

Why don't you just be Martin Luther
King?

BERNIE

(making face)

Martin Luther King?

VANESSA

He was a civil rights leader.

BERNIE

I know who he was, smart girl.
Jordan can do better than him.
That's like being a ghost on
Halloween.

BRYANA

I was a ghost.

BERNIE

Yes you were, baby girl. You were a
great ghost.

Bryana smiles and goes back to watching TV.

JORDAN
So who should I be, Uncle Bernie? I
can't decide.

BERNIE
Well, let's think. Who's not
overdone?
(at Vanessa)
Like King.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
(thinks)
How 'bout W.C. Handy?

Bernie waits for Jordan to recognize the name.

CHRYON: A TICKING TIMER COUNTS DOWN 3 - 2 - 1

SFX: BUZZER

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Father of the Blues! What they
teach you kids in school?

VANESSA
(defensive)
I knew it.

BERNIE
Oh, you knew that did ya, Miss
Smart? Okay, here's one 'specially
for you -- Benjamin Davis.

CHRYON: TIMER 3 - 2 - 1

VANESSA
First black general in the army.

SFX: GAME SHOW BELL

BERNIE
(hiding disappointment)
That's right. Good for you.
(then; to Jordan)
You know that?

Jordan shakes his head.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE

The boy don't know his history. No wonder he can't choose. But that's okay. Bernie Mac'll get him all schooled up and educated before you can say

(impression)

"We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock landed on us!"

CHYRON: TIMER 3 - 2 - 1

SFX: GAME SHOW BELL

BERNIE (CONT'D)

(pleased)

That's right. Malcolm X.

(then; adding)

I could'a come back if I wanted.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Bernie and Jordan are standing in front of the cabinet that houses Bernie's CD collection.

BERNIE

Can't talk about black history without coming around to music --

JORDAN

I can be Michael Jackson!

Bernie looks into the camera.

SFX: BUZZER

BERNIE

I think better someone from the old school. Maybe The Duke.

JORDAN

John Wayne?

BERNIE

Yes, Jordan. I'm suggesting you go as a white Republican cowboy for Black History Month. Duke Ellington!

(reconsidering)

(MORE)

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 Second thought -- too obvious. He's
 another King.
 (searching CDs)
 Miles Davis...John Coltraine... Ah!
 Here we go -- Thelonious Monk.

Bernie puts in a Monk CD and cranks it up. They listen for a few moments. Bernie is really getting into it.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 Listen to that. My man here used to
 play with Dizzy. See, Monk was all
 about "It's not the notes, it's
 what's between the notes" -- Why
 you making faces?

JORDAN
 (wincing)
 I don't like it.

BERNIE
 (annoyed)
 Whatdaya mean don't like it? Man
 invented bebop! How can you not --
 Get outta my sight. You heard me!

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE
 I made a mistake. Monk's a little
 advanced for an eight-year-old. I
 see that now. But make faces? The
 cat was a pioneer!
 (then)
 "So that's why Bernie Mac is acting
 all sour -- Jordan don't know his
 jazz."
 (annoyed)
 Got it all figured out, don't you,
 America? Well, you wrong again.
 It's comin'. Be patient. Lord! You
 worse than the kids.

CUT TO:

INT. KIDS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

CHRYON: "DAYS LATER"

Bernie enters and finds Jordan playing in his bedroom.

BERNIE

Your Aunt Wanda says you ain't
picked yet. Show's in two days,
boy! Whatcha waiting for?
Christmas?

JORDAN

It's hard to pick, Uncle Bernie.

BERNIE

It ain't hard. You making it hard.
Just choose someone. Who do you
like?

Jordan shrugs.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

You telling me of all the blacks in
history you can't think of one you
want to know more about?

Jordan shrugs again.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

That's good. Just do that. Maybe
you'll get an A in shrugging.
(new rule)
Here's the deal -- you pick someone
by dinnertime or you ain't eating.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE

Bernie Mac can't use food as
punishment? Why not? It ain't like
it's child abuse.

(unsure)

It ain't, right?

(no going back)

Well, if it is, arrest me then. You
saw the boy -- Lazy. Unfocused. I
had to put a fire under his butt
somehow.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - THAT EVENING

Wanda is finishing setting the table for dinner. Bernie and
Vanessa are already there.

WANDA
(yelling)
Bryana! Jordan! I said dinner's
ready!

Bryana comes running in.

WANDA (CONT'D)
Where's your brother?

BRYANA
Finishing his costume.

Bernie and Wanda look at each other with pleasant surprise.

WANDA
I guess he picked somebody.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFSSIONAL

BERNIE
(victorious)
Everybody see that? Show it again,
'case they missed it.

QUICK REWIND TO:

BERNIE
You pick someone by dinnertime or
you ain't eating.

QUICK FAST FORWARD TO:

WANDA
I guess he picked somebody.

BACK TO CONFSSIONAL

BERNIE (V.O.)
Tough love. You saw it in action,
America. And it works. Don't coddle
your kids. Withhold food. When they
grow up into motivated adults
they'll thank you for it. And
you'll thank yourself.

CUT TO:

BACK TO KITCHEN SCENE

BERNIE
(to Vanessa)
Whoever he picked, say it's a good
choice. You hear me? Even if it's
not. Don't need to be undermining
his confidence.

VANESSA
So it's okay to lie?

Bernie stares at her. Before he can respond...

JORDAN (O.S.)
You guys wanna see my costume?

Jordan enters wearing a wild wig, big pants with suspenders
and a red striped shirt.

JORDAN
(performing)
Hey everybody! I'm Buckwheat. O-
tay!

Silence. The family stands there with their mouths open.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE
That's what I'm talking about.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

ART CARD: "WHO?!!"

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

Bernie stares into the camera, repeating the same word over and over, trying to make some sense of it.

BERNIE
(over and over)
Buckwheat.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - THAT NIGHT

The guys are playing poker.

KELLY
Buckwheat? Why doesn't he just go
as the guy who posed for the lawn
jockey?

W.B.
You're gonna stop him, right? Set
him straight?

BERNIE
(dumb question)
What do you think? I woulda done it
already but I hadda calm down.

Chuy throws in some chips to raise. He and the rest of the
guys "see" Chuy's raise.

CHUY
Sure you wanna stop him? I wanna
hear that radio woman rag on you
some more: "Chapter Four -- Honor
Buckwheat."

The guys LAUGH.

W.B.
That's right! Her son goes to the
same school. She'll be there.
(to Bernie)
Brother, she'd never let you hear
the end of that.

They LAUGH more. Bernie suddenly realizes the enormity of the consequences if that situation were to occur. He takes his cards and prepares to leave...

BERNIE
(worried)
I gotta talk to Jordan.

KELLY
Now? What are you worried about?
You said you're gonna stop him.

BERNIE
What if I don't get the chance?
Suppose I die before the game ends?
(re: table stuff)
Cigars, beer nuts... I could be a
walking aneurysm --

W.B.
Then we'll tell him. C'mon! Finish
the game.

No way. Bernie is way too worked up for logic anymore.

BERNIE
Y'all might get too busy making
funeral arrangements and forget.
Next thing you know, people be
showing up at my grave in dance
shoes.
(exiting)
Sorry. Can't take the chance. The
entire Mac reputation is at stake
here.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE
Now hold on, America. This ain't
about me. You know that.
(showing card hand)
Four to a flush on Fifth Street. If
Bernie Mac only cared 'bout Bernie
Mac would he throw in with a hand
of this potential?

CUT TO:

INT. KIDS' ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Jordan sits on the side of the bed listening to Bernie's passionate sales pitch...

BERNIE

King was a great man. And you know what I've realized? I was wrong before. Nobody's gonna pick him. See, they all scared everyone else is. That means you could be the one
--

VANESSA (O.S.)

I guess it is okay to lie.

We REVEAL Vanessa is in the doorway to the hall. Bernie didn't know she was there. She turns and walks away. Bernie quickly exits after her.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Bernie rushes out of the bedroom and catches up to Vanessa.

BERNIE

Hold up, Nessa! How'd I lie?

VANESSA

You said he could pick anybody.

BERNIE

I said anybody but Buckwheat. You didn't hear that part 'cause you were too busy talking back.

(off her look)

Go ahead. Smirk. This might not seem important to you but we Macs don't do things to embarrass our race.

VANESSA

What about your comedy act?

BERNIE

Good one. That's real funny. I oughta pop you between the eyes. I know, they'd probably put me in the penitentiary, throw away the key. I'd never see daylight ever again but you know what? It just might be worth it.

Bernie turns and walks back to Jordan's bedroom.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 (into camera)
 That was just a bluff. I'd never
 actually hit my kids.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 Big Mamma brought me up better than
 that. Okay? So don't be calling
 nobody.

CUT TO:

INT. KIDS' BEDROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Bernie pulls up a chair and sits across from Jordan for a heart to heart talk.

JORDAN
 Why can't I be Buckwheat? He's
 famous, he's funny... He's like
 you, Uncle Bernie.

Bernie looks into the camera.

SFX: BUZZER

BERNIE
 Okay, I'm gonna lay it out for you
 now.
 (realizing)
 Got your inhaler?

Jordan pulls out his inhaler and shows Bernie.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 What about the bathroom? I don't
 want no "Uncle Bernie, I gotta go"
 in the middle of this.

JORDAN
 I'm okay.
 (reconsiders)
 No wait.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE OF BATHROOM - A MINUTE LATER

Bernie is standing outside the bathroom door. He looks into the camera and taps his head indicating "I'm smart."

CUT TO:

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

As before. Bernie is taking it slowly so Jordan can follow and learn what he's teaching him.

BERNIE

Nowadays we can portray everyone on TV, right? Doctors, lawyers... everybody. But back then all the blacks on TV were forced to act dumb, play only stupid parts. That helped create a stereotype that all of us were like that. It was insulting. So you see? What Buckwheat did was wrong.

JORDAN

But you just said they made him act like that.

BERNIE

He should'a quit. Other black actors did. It wasn't until enough of us refused to play along that things changed. That's why Buckwheat is a bad role model. That's why he'll never be funny to a lot of us.

Bernie looks into the camera. He's proud of his explanation. He's about to get up when...

JORDAN

The Wayans Brothers act dumb like that?

BERNIE

(beat)

That's a different discussion.

JORDAN

What about Martin Lawrence? You laugh at him. I've seen you.

Bernie looks into the camera again. This might not be as easy as he hoped.

BERNIE

(struggling)

Yes... But see.. We know Martin doesn't have to act like that. So it's okay.

JORDAN

But if it's not insulting for him to act like Buckwheat, how come it's not okay for Buckwheat to act like Buckwheat?

Bernie, frustrated, tries to formulate an answer.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE

Help me, America. The boy's not gettin' it. Buckwheat makes him laugh. That's all he knows. And get this --

(leaning in)

He still wants to portray him!

(worried)

I know! He can't show up at school with his hair all... and his teeth all...

(determined)

I gotta put the kibosh on this. Make him decide not to do this. I need to find the words.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

BERNIE

Because I said no, that's why!

Jordan is on the verge of tears.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Now let's learn this -- "I have a dream." C'mon, say it! What are you pouting for? Martin Luther King don't pout.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Wanda is already in bed. Bernie is in his robe getting ready to join her.

BERNIE

What was I supposed to do, Wanda? I had to put my foot down.

WANDA
You made him cry, Bernie.

BERNIE
Oh, c'mon. The boy cries if his
bath water gets cold. He'll be
fine.

Bernie takes off his robe and joins her in bed. She's gonna
have to tell him eventually...

WANDA
I told Jordan he can be Buckwheat.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

Bernie stares into the camera, trying to stay calm.

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE

CHYRON: TICKING TIMER 3 - 2 -

WANDA
Now let me just say my piece before
you start spinning out here --

CHYRON: 1

BERNIE
This is gonna be on the radio,
Wanda! Thousands of people, telling
their friends. And their friends.
You know how that telephone game
works. Pretty soon word on the
street is "Bernie Mac's doing
Buckwheat on Broadway."

WANDA
So this is about you?

BERNIE
This ain't about me.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE
(adamant)
This ain't about me, America.

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE

BERNIE
(determined)
I'll sit the boy down again. I'll
talk slower this time, maybe use
some puppets --

WANDA
Telling him didn't work.

BERNIE
Vanessa was undermining me. Check
this out -- she told him it was a
good choice!!

WANDA
Just saying "no" is only gonna
drive him away from learning about
this. We have to give him the space
to discover things for himself.

BERNIE
Wanda, we're not talking Don King
or Clarence Thomas here. We talkin'
Buckwheat! The boy is gonna be
Buckwheat!

WANDA
Look, I don't like his choice
either. But this is an important
topic. I think a few jokes at our
expense is worth it if it makes
Jordan crack open some books and
learn about it.

(then)
There. I said my piece.

She shuts out the light.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BERNIE'S BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

The shot is from the ceiling, looking down onto the bed.
Wanda is asleep. Bernie is staring into the camera, trying to
figure things out.

FADE OUT:

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

ART CARD: "DUE"

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL - SATURDAY MORNING

BERNIE

I got a good woman. Wanda's smart. I could force Jordan to portray someone else but then what did he learn? That Bernie Mac is mean? What kinda lesson is that? No, Wanda's right -- this topic is too important for Jordan not to learn. And it appears he's gonna have to do it the hard way -- through personal research.

(tearing up)

And public embarrassment. I don't wanna go tonight. Please don't make me go.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - BREAKFAST

The kids and Bernie are all eating cereal.

BRYANA

Can I go to the library and do research too?

BERNIE

No, baby girl. That's Jordan's job. You're gonna stay home with me and learn a new game called "hide the valuables."

Wanda enters holding the Buckwheat costume.

WANDA

Jordan, what was your costume doing at the bottom of the clothes hamper?

JORDAN

(shrugs)

I didn't put it there.

Wanda looks at the others.

VANESSA
Don't look at me.

BRYANA
I can't reach the hamper.

BERNIE
(to Bryana)
You can reach it.
(to Wanda)
She's lying. I seen her. Stands on
that little bench near to the
toilet --

WANDA
(to Bernie; stern)
I wanna talk to you. Alone.

Wanda exits into the hallway.

BERNIE
(calling after her)
Soon as I finish my cereal.

Bernie quickly pours a little more into his bowl.

WANDA (O.S.)
(firm)
Now!

JORDAN
(snickering)
You're in trouble.

BERNIE
You better hope you drown in that
milk before I get back.

Bernie begrudgingly heads into the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Wanda is already fuming as Bernie comes around to meet her.

WANDA
(re: costume)
You tried to hide this! I don't
believe you!

BERNIE
Baby, you need to apologize. That's
a terrible thing to accuse a person
of.

WANDA
Swear you didn't hide this.
(re: camera)
And remember, America is watching.

Bernie looks into the camera. He lowers his head in shame.

WANDA (CONT'D)
That's what I thought.
(firm)
Bernie, like it or not, Jordan is
performing tonight. And we are
going to suck it in and support his
efforts.
(sotto)
Stupid as they may be.

BERNIE
(glimmer of hope?)
What?

Wanda gets strong again. She admits nothing and exits.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - LATER

Bernie is on the phone, in the middle of a conversation.

BERNIE
..You know how it is -- people get
sick and cancel. Maybe they might
need someone last minute --

WANDA (O.S.)
Who are you talking to?

REVEAL Wanda standing there. Bernie hangs up immediately.

WANDA
Do I have to dial Star 69?

BERNIE
(cornered)
It was my managers. I was making
sure they weren't trying to book me
on some last minute gig tonight.
'Cause I couldn't go. Right? Even
for big money?

Wanda just keeps staring at him. He obviously knows the answer himself.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 (breaking)
 Do I have to go? Let me stay home with Bryana. There could be a race riot. She's too young to witness that kind of ugliness.

Wanda continues to stare at him. Bernie sees she's not gonna back down. He looks into the camera. After a few beats...

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 (into camera)
 She's still staring, ain't she?

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - THAT EVENING

The entire family is driving around the parking lot of Jordan's school, looking for an empty parking space.

BERNIE
 Looks like we might not be able to find a space. That's a shame.

CUT TO:

WIDE SHOT: looking down from a CRANE onto the parking lot. We see their car passing multiple empty spaces.

CHRYON: ARROWS POINT TO "SPACE" "SPACE" "SPACE"

BRYANA (O.S.)
 There's one, Uncle Bernie.
 (then)
 You passed it.
 (then)
 There's another one!

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE

BERNIE
 I'll drop you guys off and find a space near the exit. 'Case we have to get out fast.

Wanda rolls her eyes.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Yeah. Make faces. I notice you wore your running shoes.

The kids and Wanda get out. Wanda sticks her head back in the window.

WANDA

(warning)

I'm not going through this alone. I better see you inside.

BERNIE

(annoyed)

What do you think, Wanda? I'm just gonna drive off?

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONFESSIONAL

Bernie sits in the now parked car, holding a hip flask.

BERNIE

I could just drive off. Tell Wanda there was a hit and run. What? I'm not supposed to rush someone to the hospital if they bleeding?

(to victim)

"Sorry. Bernie Mac can't save your life. Gotta watch his nephew prance around in a wig reciting ebonics."

(re: flask)

It ain't what you think. This is root beer.

He takes a swig and wonders if we bought it.

CUT TO:

INT. DAMIEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

The room is full. Parents and their extra kids are milling about, finding seats. Hanging on the wall near the door is a statue of Jesus.

Bernie enters wearing dark glasses and his collar pulled up. He hangs back, trying not to be noticed. Vanessa spots Bernie and points him out to Bryana.

BRYANA

(loudly waving)

Over here, Uncle Bernie, over here!

His cover is shot. Some people turn around and notice him including CHERYL from the radio station. She crosses over.

CHERYL

Bernie Mac! It is you. You left so quick after the show, I didn't get a chance to say thanks. Letting me get all those laughs in a row like that -- I know you could'a come back.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE

Ha! "Could'a come back." Case closed!

(then; serious)

How much to buy her silence? Whatdoya think? Grand? Buck and a half?

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE

BERNIE

Cheryl, we gotta talk about something --

CHERYL

Let me get this out of the way first 'cause it's business -- Clyde and I are doing a special simulcast on Tuesday morning. Something like forty-five stations around the country. We wanna do that same thing with you again except over the phone. You around?

CHYRON: FLASHING "There's the opening!"

Bernie realizes this is his chance to fix things...

BERNIE

Tuesday morning? I'm around. But it's gonna cost you a big favor --

The house lights flash a few times, signaling the show is about to begin.

CHERYL

Oh! They're starting.
 (crossing out in hurry)
 Whatever it is, tell me Tuesday.
 We're call you live from the studio
 around eight. And you better pick
 up, Bernie. Don't leave us hanging.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

You think I was rueless before, you
 don't wanna hear me when I'm really
 pissed.

BERNIE

Hold up, Cheryl -- Listen --

Too late. She's already lost in the crowd as everybody
 scrambles to their seats.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

BERNIE

(desperate)
 Ten grand. Okay, twenty! I'll write
 the check now. Look! I got two
 forms of ID here...

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE

Bernie stands there before the statue of Jesus hanging by the
 entrance.

BERNIE

(to statue)
 If you're thinking 'bout sending
 floods and famine, now'd be a good
 time. Just sayin'.

Bernie apprehensibly makes his way to his seat.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - BLACK HISTORY PAGEANT

INT. SCHOOL STAGE - STREET

A crudely painted picture of a street from the mid-1800s
 hangs from the scenery rod above. A GIRL wears a plain dress
 with a scarf around her head.

HARRIET TUBMAN

I'm Harriet Tubman. I helped free 300 slaves by way of the secret Underground Railroad. It wasn't really a railroad and it wasn't really underground. That's how we kept it secret.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL STAGE - NORTH POLE

The backdrop is just a white piece of paper. A BOY is wearing a heavy parka and snow shoes.

MATTHEW HENSEN

I'm Matthew Hensen. I discovered the North Pole with Admiral Peary but almost nobody knows I was there. Which is weird. I was the easiest one to see in the pictures.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL STAGE - LABORATORY

The backdrop is a chemistry laboratory. A BOY wears a white lab coat and has a mustache.

GEORGE W. CARVER

If not for me, George Washington Carver, there would be no peanut butter or peanut brittle or peanut cookies or Charlie Brown...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL STAGE - AIRFIELD

A GIRL wears an old aviator's helmet and goggles.

BESSIE COLEMAN

I'm Bessie Coleman. I was the first black woman to earn a pilot's license. At first they didn't think women should fly planes because they knew we'd land to get directions if we were lost.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL STAGE - LINCOLN MEMORIAL

A GROUP of students are wearing dark suits and hats. They all have a thin mustache drawn on their top lips.

GROUP
We're Martin Luther King and we
have a dream...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL STAGE - FISHING POND

Jordan, wearing his Buckwheat costume and holding a fishing pole, walks onstage.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

Bernie is in his chair wearing a raincoat and holding an umbrella.

BERNIE
(praying)
Come on floods. Come on famine.

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE

JORDAN
(as Buckwheat)
Hey, everybody. I'm buckwheat.

The adults in the audience GASP.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
(as Buckwheat)
I'm goin' to play with my buddies,
Alfalfa and Spanky over at the
clubhouse.

The kids in the audience LAUGH. CHERYL turns and catches Bernie's glance. She shakes her head and smiles devilishly. She's loving this. Bernie turns back, more worried than ever.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
(as Buckwheat)
Later we's all a'goin' fishing.
Please don't tell the hookie
officer. O-tay?

The kids LAUGH even more while the adults skirm. Bernie and Wanda slump down in their seats. Then Jordan takes a step forward.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
(real voice)
Buckwheat was only a character I played. In real life my name was William Thomas.

Bernie and Wanda look at each other. What's he doing?

JORDAN (CONT'D)
I was in ninety-three episodes of OUR GANG which was later called THE LITTLE RASCALS for TV. It was hard being a black actor back then because a lot of times the work was insulting. Butterfly McQueen got so tired of playing stereotypes she stopped acting altogether. Still, there were a lot of great actors like Lincoln Perry and Willie Best.

Jordan takes off his wig.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
Although I was just a kid, some people say I set a bad example. But I don't see how. I acted silly and talked funny but I didn't curse and I didn't steal. I just played with all the other kids and we had a good time. Which made the people watching smile. How is that setting a bad example?

The camera catches the faces of various audience members as they intently listen...

JORDAN (CONT'D)
In the nineteen sixties Doctor Martin Luther King said he dreamed of a day when black kids and white kids would play together without caring about the color of their skin. Maybe it wasn't a dream. Maybe he was just remembering an episode of THE LITTLE RASCALS he saw when he was a kid.

Jordan, now done, walks offstage.

SLOWLY FADE TO:

INT. BERNIE'S DEN - CONFESSIONAL

Bernie just looks at the camera but doesn't have the words. A proud smile sneaks out. After a few beats...

SFX: GAME SHOW BELL

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE