

**LOST LESOTHO PRINCESS /  
LANDLORD EARS**

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is titled *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*. It consists of an original play of the same name based upon the life-story of the author's paternal grandmother and an accompanying essay titled "Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears: Visibility, Invisibility, Roots and Liminality in the African Diaspora." The play falls under the following theatrical categories: African Diaspora drama, black theatre, western Canadian black theatre, realism, the memory play and to some extent, contemporary existentialism. The essay is a discussion by the author regarding the dramatic, social and political context of the play. The following themes are highlighted: history – pertaining to a collective black history and individual histories and (her)stories, regarding and respecting ones' elders as a link to history and Africa, and notions of commonality and difference within the African Diaspora with attention paid to myths and narratives about what it means to be 'dark-skinned' or 'light-skinned' in various black communities around the world. The methods of investigation were: a study of the drama and literature of the African Diaspora, the dramatic literature of other post-colonial societies and marginalized groups, one-on-one interviews with Rose Landers, whose experiences are represented by Carrie, the main character in *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* and field research at JazzArt - a dance-theatre company in Cape Town, South Africa. The view-point the play lends itself to and the conclusions drawn by the essay are: that black people and black communities need agency and healing, that being of mixed race does not have to equal psychological confusion and that mixed communities, families and cultures have been and will continue to be relevant to the universal black experience and the artistic representation of the African Diaspora. The importance of writing as a form of healing, resolution and revolution for members of the African Diaspora and the importance of authorship of ones' own history is highlighted.

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*This thesis is dedicated to Rose Landers, Joseph Landers,  
Reuben Landers and Tabitha Herrington.*

## **List of Characters / Dramatis personae**

1. **Carrie Lenders** (maiden name McFarlane) heroine #1, short but well-built black lady, born in Cape Town, South Africa. Remi's mother, Yusuf Lenders' wife, Claudia's grandmother, Miranda Malloy's mother-in-law. Her real last name was Mulfana, her African grandfather's last name. Upon his death and because of the prejudice in Cape Town, the family changed their name to one more English-sounding.
2. **Claudia Lenders**, heroine #2, above average height, light-skinned mulatto woman, granddaughter and only grandchild of Carrie Lenders, daughter of **Remi Lenders** and **Miranda Malloy**; contemporary African dancer.
3. **Yusuf Lenders**, light-skinned, good-looking, Cape Malay Muslim. Carrie's husband, Remi's father, Claudia's grandfather; alcoholic house-painter/tradesman.
4. **Remi Lenders**, black man, son (and only child) of Carrie and Yusuf Lenders, first husband (and his only marriage) to Miranda Malloy; jazz pianist and television camera man, father of Claudia Lenders (his only child).
5. **Miranda Malloy**, Remi's Canadian (and only) wife, high-school sweetheart, Carrie and Yusuf's white daughter-in-law, Claudia's mother. Miranda's 2<sup>nd</sup> husband is an African-American Rastafarian with whom she has 5 more children. She was a model, actress, and free-spirited hippie.
6. **Rosette McFarlane** (maiden name Gordon), small, serious-looking white lady, maternal grandmother of Carrie McFarlane, married African Lesotho shepherd and had 7 children with him, the youngest of which was Emily – Carrie's mother. He died before Carrie was born. Rosette's 2<sup>nd</sup> husband was Welsh.
7. **Emily McFarlane**, Carrie's mother, a pretty and frail-looking mulatto woman, had 7 children with 3 different African men. She became sickly and depressed.
8. **Solomon**, his last name is unknown. He is Emily's Xhosa partner and the father of three of her children, including Carrie. Exceptional piano player who worked for Darter's music store in Cape Town.
9. **Aunt Liza**, Carrie's aunt, Rosette McFarlane's sister.
10. **Uncle Philip**, Emily's older brother, mulatto man, Carrie's uncle, a farmer.

11. **Magdaliene “Sissy” Fisher**, Aunt Liza’s pregnant tenant, later Carrie’s mentor in buying property.
12. **Elizabeth**, Carrie’s friend, they go to dances together.
13. **Young man #2**, Yusuf’s friend and later Elizabeth’s date.
14. **Anamummy**, large Cape-colored lady, head cook at big hotel in Simonstown.
15. **Ms. Crowley**, middle-aged white lady, secretary of Mr. Marx’s real estate office in Elsie’s River.
16. **Ralphy**, Remi’s childhood playmate, light-skinned, blue-grey eyes, asthmatic.
17. **Mr. Rubinowitz**, Carrie’s Jewish lawyer
18. **Ambulance driver and attendant.**
19. **Train conductor.**
20. **Young man #2** at dance.
21. **Jasmine**, Claudia’s younger half-sister.
22. **Sissy Goul**, real-life activist and Carrie’s friend.
23. **Man**, apartheid supporter.

**\* The play will have one actor play each of the following multiple roles:**

Claudia, Emily and Sissy Goul

Rosette, Aunt Liza and Ms. Crowley

Miranda and Magdalene “Sissy” Fisher

Uncle Stephen, Yusuf, the Preacher, the train conductor and the light-skinned ambulance driver

## Prologue

*Claudia, (25), a beautiful and delicate mulatto woman, enters and takes center stage.  
She recites a poem entitled **Lost Lesotho Princess**. When the poem has ended, she begins  
to dance as the lights dim.*

Two lone women sitting in the sun  
All the men dead  
Most a' the work done

Many generations gone and given their sweat  
Their blood, their tears  
But it ain't done yet

Trouble's their worst fear  
Spend all their time trying to escape Him  
But He find you anyways  
And hold you down so you can face Him

Us two lone women, we take to feelin' so sad  
Wondrin' why the men passed on  
And counting what we could have had

In the end we have a lot of what They had before  
Acquisitions, colour troubles  
Trials and tribulations galore

Late 1800's to 2007  
That's when I can re-tell  
The stories my granny remembers so well  
My daddy would say "Go on in the kitchen,



Sit with your granny, Talk to her – Listen!”

He was sick of her stories, couldn't hear them no more  
But she never would stop talking  
So I became her repositor

I been with her all my life and will be to her end  
She's my grandparent-relative, my ancestor-friend  
She's passin' on everything she's ever had to give  
Her love and her hate and her stories to re-live

We're two lone women just sitting in the sun  
But soon she'll pass on  
And then there'll be one

So what will I do with all I've been given  
Fall into craziness? I swear I've been driven!  
No.  
I'll make sense where there's none, stand corrected where I'm wrong  
Give respect to my Elder, demand It where I deserve  
Thank God for His Agency  
And drive down this road, expecting the next curve

*Carrie, 95 years old, enters and sits on chair in the middle of the stage and begins to speak her soliloquy. Claudia dances around her grandmother as she speaks of liminality and of life. Claudia dances her grandmother's words in silhouette, she IS liminality herself. Her shadow dancing is a metaphor for the life her grandmother is speaking of—her own life, and the life of many blacks and biracial people living in a white world.*

**Carrie:**

People look at me and they just see black. They don't know I come from white. My grandmother's the one who turned us black. She was named Rosette. Her people came from France. They were Huguenots. She was only as big as a table knife when she was born and they didn't expect her to live. She did. They didn't send her to school because they thought she was going to die. She didn't. When she was fifteen, she went out with her father to herd the sheep. They would stay away days at a time. Her mother would pack them a loaf of bread, some butter and cheese and they would survive on that. They met an African shepherd, working for the white man, of course, and they became friends. He fell in love with Rosette and she with him. There was no apartheid back then. Her parents let her marry him because they thought she would die, anyways. They thought, "Let her have a little happiness, a little taste of love before she goes. What can it hurt?" I'll tell you what it hurt, it made me black, when I could have been white and had all the privileges that go along with being white! She had seven children with the African and when he died she married a Welshman. People used to say she should have done it the other way around. Then we would have stayed white. She had my Uncle Stephen, Uncle Philip, Auntie Liza, Auntie Mini, Auntie Isabel, Uncle Len and the baby Emily – my mother. My grandmother spoiled my mother and made her lazy. My mother had a taste for Africans as well and had eight children from three different husbands, all of them, black. With a black grandfather and a black father, I came out looking like the tribes from the homelands. But I was born right in Cape Town, under Table Mountain. We were never mixed up with the African tribes. I never saw my grandfather and my only memory of my father was sitting at his feet while he played the piano. He was a first-class pianist and he demonstrated the pianos at Darter's, the largest music store in Cape Town. Music is in my family. My son plays piano too. But he plays jazz. I didn't want him to. I sent him to learn classical music with the nuns. He went for a bit, but then he was onto the jazz. I grew up with my grandmother and the Welshman and he treated us like his own. It was his money that fed us. He was a policeman. My mother lay in bed and slept all day. If it wasn't for my grandmother I wouldn't even have the little bit of education that I do. At least she got up in the morning and sent us to school. She pulled me out of school when I was 13. She said that I could read and write and that was all the

education I needed. It was more than she got. I went to work in a hotel washing dishes and the dishes were stacked higher than me. And then I worked my way up to 2<sup>nd</sup> cook and I was a waitress. Then, along came Sissy, who got me started with my properties and I worked myself all the way up until I had 8 properties and I never stopped working to this day. It's only now that I'm resting a bit because I can't do anymore. I did it all for my son, so he could have something when he was without work. I chose a light-skinned Muslim man, but my son turned out just as black as me. That African blood is as thick as tar. It's not very nice to be black in this world. The whites have nothing over for you. Not even a job. They don't think that your children need to eat, too. So I worked very hard to be able to give what I have to my son. My handsome, musical son, who took after my father. Children aren't supposed to die before their parents. But he did and I wasn't expecting that. So all I have left is my granddaughter, my son's only child. And my granddaughter has given me two great-grandsons. She went and made them black like me. Silly girl. And where are their fathers? God only knows. When these Africans disappear you never find them again. My mother was the same. Stupid. She took all Africans and made us black and we had a hard time in Cape Town. My granddaughter's lucky she's got something. She better keep it for them. They're going to need it. It's not easy to be black. It's not easy boy. Anyways, not only did Rosette live, she made it to 97 years old. She raised her children and all of us as well. She didn't spoil us the way she spoiled my mother. Oh, no! We had to work.

### **Blackout.**

*From here on, the first half of the play is set in Cape Town, South Africa. The second half is set in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. The subject of this play is the Colored people of Cape Town, who are the descendants of Africans and Europeans; and how their line carried right through to Vancouver, B.C., Canada. This is a story about the universal black experience and about what it means to be of mixed blood. It is also a story about a family guided by strong women.*

## Act 1

### Scene 1

*1917, Maitland, Cape Town. The lights come up in two large window facades, one stage left and one stage right. In the left window Carrie's father, Solomon, is banging away on a piano. It is jazzy township music. In the right window, Carrie's mother Emily is sitting up on a bed in the throes of labour. A midwife attends to her. Except for the windows, the rest of the stage is dark. A video montage plays against the darkened part of the stage. It represents the outside of the house. On the screen, a little girl is playing and laughing under a water tap that dampens her clothes at first, then soaks her thoroughly, gluing her little dress to her tiny figure. She lets out a sneeze, followed by a cough. Finally we see a trail of snot streaming down from her nose.*

### Scene 2

*A funeral service at the family's American Methodist Episcopal church. The casket at the front is for a small child. Rosette, Carrie (7 yrs.), Emily and Solomon take up the front, left-hand row. Emily weeps heavily and every now and then threatens to faint. When this happens, Solomon holds her up. Rosette faces front looking stern and hardened. Carrie stands straight, the way children do at formal occasions where it is expected of them but tears stream down her face. The Minister preaches...*

#### **Minister:**

Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here today to commemorate the life and tragic death of Jenny Macfarlane. Who among us can give reason as to why such a small soul should leave us so soon? All we know is that she has gone to join our Heavenly Father. Ladies and gentlemen, we don't have to question the state of Jenny MacFarlane's soul (in preparation for her meeting with our Father), for her age makes her perfectly ready to join the Lord. It was Jesus Christ who said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, for it is they who shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven'. On this day we extend out hearts and

our hands to Jenny's family, who we know will be experiencing untold grief, and who will question this day, asking themselves why – for many years to come.

*At this point Emily collapses with grief and Solomon holds her up. Rosette has looked straight ahead, stoically all this time. She then speaks without changing her physical disposition. The lights dim on the preacher.*

**Rosette:**

Perhaps you will pay more attention to her in death than you did in life.

*Choral music is heard and the preacher sways to the uplifting song. Emily tears herself away from Solomon at this point and throws herself on the casket. Carrie looks up at her grandmother, then up to the preacher. Her gaze finally rests on her mother and the small casket.*

**Blackout. End Scene.**

### Scene 3

*A bedroom in Rosette's house. A bed and chair are the only furniture in the house. The walls are covered in faded wallpaper.*

**Solomon:**

I'm sick of these dried up old whiteys looking at me. They all say, "Come and hear this piano! Come and hear this kaaffir play". I can't breathe here, Emily. I need to get back to my homeland, to people who look and sound like me! I love the children, but I'm going.

**Emily:**

Take us with you then! You're not leaving me here with six children, Solomon. I won't survive.

**Solomon:**

And you wouldn't survive for five minutes out in the homelands either. You're a city girl, remember? Your mother will help you. You've got a big family here. I have no one. Besides (*he turns towards the door*), sometimes I think your family would be glad to see me gone. They have African blood but they'd just as soon not recognize it.

**Emily:**

I recognize it! (*She cries through her words now.*) Why do you think I love you so much? Why do you think I had your children?

**Solomon:**

It doesn't matter now. I'm cold. I don't feel loved and I don't love. I'm going.

*Emily cries and cries. Solomon turns and exits, closing the door behind him.*

**Blackout.**

## Act 2

### Scene 1

*One year later. This scene takes place in Rosette's kitchen. Rosette is dressed in a long-sleeved, high-necked black dress. She wears a large, white apron over it tied in a bow at the back. Her salt and pepper hair is pulled tightly back in a bun. Her features are sharp to match her disposition. Uncle Philip arrives at the door, which is already ajar. He is a tall, mulatto man with sharp features and a working man's build. He steps in carrying a large basket of fruit. He has come into Cape Town, as he normally does on Sundays, to sell his fruit at the farmer's market. Uncle Philip, Rosette's son and Emily's brother, owns his own farm in Ceres.*

**Uncle Philip:**

Hello Ma! Hoe gaan dit met jou!

**Rosette:**

Philip! Baie dankie, thank you. How were your fruit sales today? I can see you brought us a nice basket. Well...the children can have one piece each – so we can save some. We can't afford to waste around here.

**Uncle Philip:**

Yes, Ma. *(Pause)*. Everything went good, like usual. *(He sets the basket of fruit down on the old, wooden kitchen table)*.

**Rosette:**

Philip – put that fruit up here on my counter. I'm the boss. I'll give it out.

**Uncle Philip:**

Hmmm... *(His mother's authority stings him. He thinks for a moment, resigns and moves the fruit basket to the counter beside Rosette. She is busy doing the dishes.)*

*Carrie (8 yrs.) runs into the kitchen at hearing Uncle Philip's voice. She is barefoot. She is dressed in her nicest Sunday clothes, which are not all that nice, a worn linen dress with a white pinafore overtop.*

**Carrie:**

Uncle Philip, Uncle Philip!!!

**Uncle Philip:**

Hey now. You little bugger. You're getting big, hey?! *(Carrie is excited but can't show too much affection; so she stands around him, full of nervous energy. Rosette takes a moment away from her dishes to eye Carrie.)*

**Carrie:**

*(Eyes the counter-top and basket of fruit.)* Fruit?!

**Rosette:**

Is that all you can think about – food? Wash your hands. You can have one piece. You can't eat everything in one day! You'll have nothing for tomorrow! *(Rosette moves aside of the sink to let Carrie wash her hands.)* These children must learn to be sparing if they want to have something one day. *(Rosette hands Carrie a piece of fruit.)*

**Uncle Philip:**

And where's Emily? Isn't she up yet?

*(Philip knocks on a bedroom door adjacent to the kitchen. He knocks softly at first, pauses and then knocks loudly.)* Emily?! *(No answer. Philip opens the door, looks in and closes the door.)*



**Uncle Philip:**

What the hell is the matter with her?! Can't she at least empty the fucking chamber pot, seeing as how she keeps all these children here? The least she can do is wake up!! Is that too much to ask? And these poor kids...all the children of Africans. Africans we can't find and even if we could find them – I don't know if we'd want to.

**Rosette:**

*(Gets in his face and shakes her finger at him. He stares down at her.)* Listen, mind your own business, Philip. If you come to visit my house, remember that I'm the boss. And these are my children. Emily's sleeping, that's all. She's probably tired. Now...would you like a cup of tea?

*Awkward silence.*

**Uncle Philip:**

Yes, Ma. *(He looks a bit ashamed. Just then Carrie comes running in. She is relishing in her piece fruit, which is a fig – her favourite. She pauses to ask a question.)*

**Carrie:**

Uncle Philip? How's your farm doing?

**Uncle Philip:**

Very good.

**Carrie:**

Does it make lots of money? Can we visit it sometime?

**Rosette:**

And since when do you talk to grownups? And ask them about their money? I didn't teach you to love money. *(Carrie shrinks.)*

**Uncle Philip:**

*(Looks at Carrie as if he just woke up and really saw her for the first time. To Rosette, regarding Carrie.)* Who did Carrie inherit these big ears from? They even point forward!

**Rosette:**

*(Smiling for the first time at Carrie.)* I really don't know, but you know what they say, don't you? Huis Baas Oore...Landlord Ears.

**Uncle Philip:**

Carrie, a landlord?! I don't know how she'll get there.

**Rosette:**

Neither do I. But if her ears tell true, this little black girl may have some power one day...Power and security.

**Uncle Philip:**

Imagine that. One of Emily's African children, a landlord. *(Laughing, even mocking.)*

**Rosette:**

Stranger things have happened. *(Smiling at Carrie who smiles back.)* Yes, this one here is my little Landlord Ears.

**Blackout.**

## Scene 2

*1924, Rutgers Street, Cape Town. Carrie stands at the door of her great Aunt Liza's house. She's dressed in working women's gear: a mid-calf length skirt, a white cotton blouse and she has on her first pair of shoes – flats which are already well worn-out. Her hair is platted neatly and she carries a rather large purse under her arm. She*

*knocks on the door. Door opens. An old, prim, white lady with an Afrikaans accent stands at the door. Her hair is tight back in a bun. She wears a high-collared blouse with a house-apron over-top.*

**Aunty Liza:**

*(Opens door.)* Hullo Carrie. What a surprise.

*(Carrie stands aside.)* Come in...My, you've turned into a real young lady, work clothes and all.

**Carrie:**

Well, I've just got my first job and this is my day off. I thought I would pay you a visit.

**Aunty Liza:**

Come into the kitchen. I'm just frying fricadelles for supper. You're no stranger. Make yourself a cup of tea. *(Pause. Carrie takes a seat at the kitchen table.)* How old are you now?

**Carrie:**

Fourteen.

**Aunty Liza:**

And what's this job you've got?

**Carrie:**

*(Carrie beams.)* I've got a job washing dishes at the big hotel in Simonstown. It's going very well. They're even training me in the kitchen. Who knows? Maybe I'll move up to cook. One thing my grandmother did, she raised me to be able to work.

**Aunty Liza:**

That's good...Maybe you'll be able to move out of the house then. It's been tough on Rosette housing all of Emily's children.

**Carrie:**

I certainly will, as soon as I'm ready to get married.

**Aunty Liza:**

Have you had an offer yet?

**Carrie:**

*(Looks proud.)* Well there's this old Jewish millionaire that follows me home everyday. They say he owns half of Hermanus. But I don't want him. I don't want a white man, I want somebody colored. So I asked Anamummy to chase him away.

**Aunty Liza:**

Mmmhmmm...

*A very pregnant, light-skinned colored lady waddles into the kitchen.*

**Aunty Liza:**

Carrie, this is Mrs. Fisher. She's renting my downstairs room with her husband. This is my sister's granddaughter, Carrie.

**Carrie:**

Pleased to meet you, Mrs. Fisher. *(Carrie stands up from her chair at the kitchen table.)*

**Mrs. Fisher:**

*(Smiles at Carrie, even looks into her eyes.)* Pleased to meet you Carrie. Call me Sissy – it's a nick-name.

**Carrie:**

*(Carrie smiles and bites her lip.)* O.K. Miss Sissy. *(Carrie eyes Aunty Liza who is flipping her fricadelles.)*

**Mrs. Fisher:**

I overheard that you're working in Simonstown. You must see lots of our troops around there.

**Carrie:**

Oh yes, lots! They come to eat in our dining room on their time off. By the way Miss Sissy, when is your baby due?

**Mrs. Fisher:**

In another three months...

**Aunty Liza:**

Excuse me ladies. I need to get some potatoes from the pantry. *(She exits.)*

**Mrs. Fisher:**

Actually my husband and I are just renting here until we can save enough to buy a place. He's got a job with the Union Castle Line.

**Carrie:**

That's smart of you. I would give anything to get married, have a baby and my own property! That would be heaven!!!

**Mrs. Fisher:**

I'm sure you will, Carrie. You seem like a smart, hard-working girl. I'm positive you'll get all of those things.

**Carrie:**

You think so?

**Mrs. Fisher:**

Everything in life takes time. And patience. But sometimes with a little, you can make a lot. You just have to have the right attitude and be willing to take a chance.

**Carrie:**

Well, they do call me Landlord Ears. Maybe it'll be more than just a joke one day.

**Mrs. Fisher:**

Oh yes, your ears. They do stick out a little, hey? *(She laughs.)* But don't worry about that. Your face is pretty. You're a pretty, smart girl.

**Aunty Liza:**

*(Walks in with potatoes.)* What's all this talk about being pretty and smart? What's going on here, Mrs. Fisher, are you trying to swell this young girl's head? You'll have her thinking she's so pretty and smart, she won't want to work a stitch! *(Pause.)* Time for you to run along now Carrie and tell your grandmother I send my regards.

**Carrie:**

Yes Aunty. *(She gets up to go.)*

**Aunty Liza:**

You mind your job now.

**Mrs. Fisher:**

Come and see us again soon! *(Calling after Carrie.)*

**Aunty Liza:**

Yes, do come again on your day off. *(Carrie closes the front door behind her and Aunty Liza turns to Mrs. Fisher.)* Really Mrs. Fisher! Telling that girl she's pretty *and* smart. You'll fill her head with false hopes. True as that may be, she's very dark – and that

won't be to her advantage. Carrie will have to work hard and be thankful for what she gets.

**Mrs. Fisher:**

Life is full of surprises. She looks like the kind of girl who could make a lot out of a little.

**Aunty Liza:**

Whatever way she looks – she mostly looks African and this is a country ruled by whites. You know that the same as I do Mrs. Fisher.

**Mrs. Fisher:**

I do, Ms. Gordon. Let's hope Carrie can keep her job at the big hotel in Simonstown.

**Aunty Liza:**

Let's hope, for my sister's sake. *(She turns back to her cooking. Mrs. Fisher exits.)*

**End Scene.**

### **Scene 3**

*Summer 1928, Cape Town. Carrie and her friend Elizabeth are at a dance. Big band music is playing. The atmosphere is fun, romantic and exciting. Carrie and Elizabeth stand primly against a wall, holding their handbags. From time to time they smile broadly at the dancing crowd, tapping their toes and snapping their fingers. They eye two handsome, light-skinned men across the room, who eye them back. The young men are coolly smoking cigarettes, as is Elizabeth. The men put out their cigarettes and cross over to the girls.*

**Carrie:**

*(To Elizabeth.) Pretend not to notice. (The two girls suddenly glance around the room, avoiding eye contact with the two young men heading towards them.)*

**Yusuf:**

Hello girls.

**Carrie:**

Hello...*(Silence.)*

**Yusuf:**

Having fun tonight?

**Carrie:**

Lots of fun, thank you. We like dances very much. Who doesn't like dances?

*(Uncomfortable pause.)* Do you do the quick step?

**Yusuf:**

*(Holds out his hand.)* My name is Yusuf. Would you like to dance? The quick step is starting.

**Carrie:**

*(She gets stuck on his name. She thinks, 'Yusuf. He's a Muslim.') Yes, I'll dance. One dance won't hurt. Let's dance. (Yusuf and Carrie begin the quick step. Both are good. Yusuf's friend and Elizabeth begin chatting in the background. All else fades to black as a spotlight remains on Yusuf and Carrie dancing and talking.)*

**Carrie:**

Yusuf, do you have a middle name?



**Yusuf:**

Mohammed. Do you have a middle name?

**Carrie:**

Rose. I belong to the AME church. I'd never leave it.

**Yusuf:**

Yes, you look very firm. *(He smiles. They dance closer. The music switches to fox trot and they take up the rhythm.)* Maybe we can meet up some time.

**Carrie:**

I'm working at a hotel in Simonstown. Training for 1<sup>st</sup> cook. But I'm off on Wednesdays. Where do you work?

**Yusuf:**

I do painting and house construction with my uncle. I have a big family – 12 brothers and sisters.

**Carrie:**

You beat me then. I had 7, but two died. *(Carrie looks down, sad.)*

**Yusuf:**

That's terrible...How?

**Carrie:**

Just unlucky...but I'm trying to be lucky now. Working hard, trying to save my money.

**Yusuf:**

*(A naughty grin on his face.)* Yes, you look very firm. *(The line refers to her disposition, but also has a sexual connotation.)*

**Carrie:**

*Oh, you! (She raises her hand playfully as if to slap him. Suddenly, the lights come on. Elizabeth and Young Man #2 are walking out an exit door. The band music fades out.)*

**Yusuf:**

Look, Carrie, the dance is over. I've got to go. See you on Wednesday in Simonstown.  
*(He kisses her on the cheek and walks toward the exit door. Carrie looks stunned.)*

**Blackout. End Scene.**

## Scene 4

*Early Wednesday morning, 8:00 a.m. It is Carrie's usual day off. However, she stands in the large, steamy, stainless-steel hotel kitchen. She is in her uniform in front of a high stack of dishes. She scrubs thoroughly. The head cook, Anamummy, stands at the counter chopping potatoes. She is a stout, short, tough-looking colored lady. Typical.*

**Carrie:**

*(Angrily.)* Anamummy, you know Wednesday is my day off.

**Anamummy:**

I just asked you for a couple of hours this morning. Just to help with the breakfast mess. That bloody Wednesday girl said she's stuck in Guguletu. Something about the police cleaned out the train for passes. She probably drank her money instead of buying her bus ticket. People always want to tell you a story.

*Carrie has finished her stack of dishes. She tears her hair-net off, takes off her work cover-all and rubber gloves. She hangs them all up on a hook, hurriedly, in exchange for her purse and coat.*

**Carrie:**

See you Thursday Ananmummy!... *(She runs out.)*

**Temporary Blackout.**

*1930. When lights come up again, the backdrop is a picture of an old South African steam-train, preferably with some signage reading COLORED. The stage represents the landing of the train station. Carrie stands in front of the backdrop, as if she has just debarked. She is dressed up in a hat, coat and low pumps. She carries a handbag and has one small carrying case at her feet. A loud-speaker announcement booms, "Elsie's River, Goodwood." Magdalene Fisher enters the platform stage right.*

**Sissy Fisher:**

Carrie, I'm so glad you made it out to see us! Or should I call you Mrs. Lenders now?  
*(Sissy laughs and moves to hug Carrie.)* You look wonderful.

**Carrie:**

*(She holds out her hand, showing off her wedding ring, a simple gold band.)* Thank you.

**Sissy Fisher:**

How was the wedding?

**Carrie:**

It was a great, big wedding. And I paid for it all myself. Except none of my husbands family came. I'm too dark for them. They're Muslims. But my husband loves me and that's all that matters.

**Sissy Fisher:**

I see...That's terrible. But you're right. If your husband loves you that's all that matters.

**Carrie:**

*(Changing the subject.)* Anyways, I came to see you in your new house! You're your own boss now. No more Aunt Liza. *(She mimics her stern Aunt by standing stiffly and bunching up her nose and mouth. Then they both laugh.)*

**Sissy Fisher:**

Save your money Carrie. You can buy a property too. Property will help you. You're a hard worker. I know you could do it. In fact, that's first on my list. Let's go down to the Elsie's River Real Estate office.

**Carrie:**

*(Carrie looks caught off guard.)*

Miss Sissy, I'm not ready yet. I don't have the type of money it takes. *(Pause.)* You know I'm not ready.

**Sissy Fisher:**

I think you're more ready than you know. Come on, it can't hurt to ask. I know the owner, Mr. Marx, and his secretary Miss Crowley is pretty fair. We'll just check on some prices. *(Sissy grabs Carrie by the hand.)* Besides, you and that new husband of yours will need a place to live. *(Carrie giggles as they exit the train station.)*

**Blackout.**

## Scene 5

*Lights come up on what is now the Elsie's River Real Estate Office. The only furniture is Miss Crowley's desk, positioned lengthwise/sideways center-stage with two chairs for clients in front of it. There is also a tall filing cabinet behind her. Miss Crowley is Mr. Marx' secretary (the owner of the real-estate office). She is a middle-aged white lady wearing low reading glasses on a chain and a crocheted sweater over her shoulders. She*

*looks up from her paper-work upon the ladies' entrance. Carrie follows Sissy on-stage. They try to look important in their nice coats and hats, then take a seat.*

**Miss Crowley:**

Mrs. Fisher, how may I help you today? Enjoying your new place?

**Sissy Fisher:**

Very much, thank you, Miss Crowley. This is my good friend, Mrs. Carrie...

**Carrie:**

Lenders. I just got married.

**Sissy Fisher:**

She's the niece of my old landlord.

**Miss Crowley:**

*(Looks Carrie up and down.)* I see...pleased to meet you Mrs. Lenders. How may I help you ladies today?

**Carrie:**

*(Sissy prompts Carrie with her eyes.)* Oh me, well, you can't help me today really. I'm a very hard-working person, but today I'm just here to enquire about some plots near my friend Mrs. Fisher, so that one day – when I am ready...

**Miss Crowley:**

*(Interrupting.)* Mrs. Lenders, there is no such thing as not ready. *(She takes off her glasses and looks hard at Carrie, who in turn looks a little surprised.)* How much money have you got in your pocket today?

**Carrie:**

*(Laughs.) This minute?! Only enough to laugh at. (Carrie takes out a 10 shilling note, a tieki and two pennies and slaps them down on the counter.)*

**Miss Crowley:**

*(Rifles through some property listings in front of her, then picks up the 10 shilling note.)*

Well, Mrs. Lenders, I have a nice property you can buy today with this 10 shillings as a down payment, right near your friend Mrs. Fisher here.

**Carrie:**

*(Looks stunned and scared.)* Are you serious, Miss Crowley?! I was really just enquiring today.

**Miss Crowley:**

Well, if you don't want it... *(She goes to give the 10 shillings back.)*

**Carrie:**

Of course I want it – if I can have it.

**Miss Crowley:**

It can be yours. You have to pay on it every month, or the bank has the right to take it back.

**Carrie:**

I won't be late. *(Stunned.)*

**Miss Crowley:**

*(Pushes the left over coin money towards Carrie.)* Take these. They still belong to you.

**Carrie:**

Thank you, Miss Crowley. *(To Sissy)* I owe you. I know it isn't much, but give this to your daughter Iris for pocket money. *(Carrie hands Sissy the tieki.)* I'll save these two pennies for a rainy day. Good day Miss Crowley. *(The two ladies file out of the office, this time with Carrie in the lead, puffing her chest out.)*

**Sissy Fisher:**

Thank you kindly, Miss Crowley.

**Miss Crowley:**

You're welcome ladies, but don't be so thankful to me. It's your hard work and determination that buys you property, not me.

**Blackout. End Scene.**

## Act 3

### Scene 1

*36 years later. The stage has three miniature constructions on it representing the plots of land Carrie has bought and the houses she has built on them. They are placed in a diagonal line beginning upstage right and finishing downstage left. The first has a completed house on it. The second is mid-construction (the foundation is finished and the wood framing has been erected), and the third has only a foundation. Carrie is standing on the middle plot hammering a nail into the wood. Her son Remi (10 yrs.) runs around with his light-skinned, grey-eyed, asthmatic play-mate, named Ralphy. They jump on the foundation of the downstage right plot and leap off again.*

**Remi:**

Come on, you sissy! Can't you even climb a short foundation?! I got up here in a flash! *(Ralphy carefully navigates his way onto the foundation, huffing and puffing. Remi leaps off and lands on his feet. He stops and turns to Ralphy with his hands on his hips.)* O.K. Ralphy, this is no fun. You're just too slow to create any competition. *(Pause.)* Let's go see your dad's new car. I want to ride in it. *(Remi has a devilish look in his eye as he runs off-stage.)*

**Ralphy:**

Wait, Remi! My dad will kill us if we touch his car without asking.

**Remi:**

*(From off-stage.)* Maybe we'll ask then!

**Carrie:**

*(Finally paying attention.)* Remi!!! You listen to Ralphy now. I don't want any bad reports about you or you'll get a real whipping.



**Remi:**

Yes, Ma! We'll be good! Come on, Ralphy!

**Ralphy:**

Wait, Remi...! *(Ralphy puffs along off-stage after Remi.)*

*Carrie's lawyer, Mr. Rubinowitz, enters. He's Jewish. He's dressed in a smart brown suit with waist-coat and pocket-watch.*

**Mr. Rubinowitz:**

Hello Mrs. Lenders.

**Carrie:**

Hello Rubinowitz.

**Mr. Rubinowitz:**

You are one lucky lady, Mrs. Lenders. Looks like your deal at Westcoe Station is going to go through without a hitch. I'm just waiting for the bank to put your loan through. *(Pause.)* There shouldn't be a problem – not with your reputation. You've already had two loans with First National, re-paid in full.

**Carrie:**

Yes, people are getting to know who I am. They *think* they know who I am when they meet me. Just a black lady. But my reputation with property is starting to get around. It changes people's attitudes. They look at me differently once they know who I am and what I've got. It makes them behave a little better.

**Mr. Rubinowitz:**

*(Looks fidgety and nervous.)* Listen, Mrs. Lenders. I have something else I have to talk to you about. *(There is an uncomfortable pause.)* Consarnie's has sent a memo to my

office. They want to expand their factory space. They're building a new type of plane and they need the land your first house is built on. They're willing to purchase it from you. (*Rubinowitz hands paperwork over to Carrie. She reads through it.*) This is their proposal and price.

**Carrie:**

Why would I sell Consarnie my house for this price? It's nonsense. I wouldn't even consider such a low offer. (*Carrie hands him back the paperwork.*)

**Mr. Rubinowitz:**

Carrie, they have the right. It's a large factory operation. The government will back them. They're being diplomatic now, but...they may change their tone if you're difficult with them.

**Carrie:**

(*Mad now, like a cornered rat.*) Rubinowitz, it's not legal! Any owner can refuse to sell. I own the land, don't I? What's the point of owning it if I can't demand the price I want?

**Mr. Rubinowitz:**

(*Caressing her with his words.*) Carrie, you've had such a lot of good luck. And you've got more to come, I'm sure of it. Look what's happened with Westcoe Station. That's prime property! A big step up from these Elsie's River plots. (*Pause. Rubinowitz puts his hand on Carrie's shoulder.*) Let this one go. You don't want any trouble and Consarnie will pay you something for it. Listen to me on this one.

**Carrie:**

Well it doesn't look like I have much of a choice now, does it? You seem to have the situation all thought out. Quite sure of yourself.

**Mr. Rubinowitz:**

Mrs. Lenders, I always do my best for you. I'm the one who's helped get you what you have so far. Why would I want to see you lose it? It's just that this is a big company, that's all. We're talking about Consarnie's, for Heaven's sake. They only make airplanes!

**Carrie:**

Fine, fine! You've made yourself clear. I'll sell. It looks like this property at Westcoe Station came just in time...I'm looking forward to living there. A new neighbourhood will have to get to know Carrie Rose Lenders. That's always something to see. And the house on the second lot is beautiful. All bricks with a fireplace and four rooms! A top place! *(Pause.)* They can take my first place. They won't get me down. And they'll get what's coming to them for not paying me a fair price.

**Mr. Rubinowitz:**

Sure, Mrs. Lenders. I'll draw up the selling paperwork and respond to Consarnie.

**Carrie:**

*(Cuts him off.)* I don't care about that! Pay attention to Westcoe Station. I don't want any problems with that deal. If I need to move on, it better be in style.

**Rubinowitz:**

Leave it with me. I'm sure you'll come out on top. *(Pause.)* Seems to be the way it works with you.

**Carrie:**

*(Carrie is very direct.)* I've worked at being lucky, Mr. Rubinowitz. It didn't start out that way. *(Pause.)* Anyway, you and I both know I need to be lucky. I need it more than most and a hell of a lot more than Consarnie. Otherwise my life will be shit. That's what your life is if you don't have anything – shit. I've seen a lot of that already. Don't need it. Don't want it.

**Rubinowitz:**

Good day, Mrs. Lenders.

**Carrie:**

Good day, Rubinowitz. I am paying you – remember that. I want things done right.

**Rubinowitz:**

*(Looking like he wants to run.)* Yes, I'll get back to you. Good day. *(He exits. Carrie remains standing; legs apart, hands on hips, looking annoyed and tough.)*

## Scene 2

*Lights come up on same. Yusuf walks up, dirty, sweaty, a couple of drinks in him already. He reacts to Carrie's stance.*

**Yusuf:**

Carrie, what the hell are you doing standing there like a sergeant? I'm the sergeant, remember?! Where's Remi?

**Carrie:**

Yes, I remember. We're supposed to be receiving your big one-pound-ten pension. Why don't you see to that? You should get something, seeing as how you got captured by the Germans and I was on my own for four years...

**Yusuf:**

*(Cuts her off.)* Quiet, man. You talk too much. I should get a little more respect around the house for that very reason. Where's my son and where's my dinner?!

**Carrie:**

He's off with Ralphy. He should be back any time now. (*Looking at him warily.*) And supper's almost ready.

**Yusuf:**

(*Cuts her off again.*) I was wondering whether you'd bloody well have supper ready.

(*Angry, grumpy.*) You think this property thing is everything. I want some bloody dinner – and respect! (*He turns and focuses on her.*) And you think you're so smart...My sister saw you downtown the other day, attending one of Sissy Goul's rallies. What are you trying to do, get us in trouble?

**Carrie:**

Oh, shut up! Your dinner's ready and your son will be back in a minute.

**Yusuf:**

Don't shut-up me! You'll get us killed, bloody. It's bad enough you're never at home like a house-wife should be, always wasting time on this property nonsense. Now you want to be a politician?! You know what happens to politicians in this country? They end up dead. Or perhaps you want to join Mandela at Robben Island? I'm warning you Carrie, I've had enough now! My sister said you went right up and talked to Mrs. Goul after her speech. What the hell do you think you're doing?!

**Carrie:**

(*Excited.*) Yusuf, Sissy Goul is going to be fighting Mandela's case. Winnie came and asked her. (*Pause.*) And she wants me to be her assistant.

**Yusuf:**

(*Directly.*) Out of the fucking question. You have a big mouth and a big head and I'm about to bring you right down to size. Get in the house! You're not going to have anything more to do with property or politics. They keep you too busy and I don't give a shit about either of them.

**Carrie:**

At least they don't keep me drunk. (*Yusuf's eyes widen.*) You ought to be grateful I'm making something out of us. What else would Remi have if it weren't for me buying properties?! Your one-pound-ten? And what will happen to him if the laws of this country don't change? I know you don't care because your colour doesn't warrant you to. But ours does. And I've suffered enough, along with every other black person in this country.

**Yusuf:**

Suffer, my backside! You're no Bantu. And you've enjoyed the rights and privileges of every other colored person in Cape Town. You've even lorded it over the Africans! Having them build your houses for a ha' penny. You can't cry pity to me Carrie. I'm married to you, remember? Now get my dinner and shut up about all of this crap. (*Carrie picks up her hammer and nails and heads off-stage right. Yusuf yells out into the evening air.*) Remiiiiiiiiiiii!!!!!! (*Pause. To himself, wittily.*) You'd better get your black ass home. (*He heads off-stage after Carrie.*)

**Blackout. End scene.**

### Scene 3

*A Saturday three weeks later. Carrie walks into the house holding a picket sign that reads: "Equal Rights for Coloreds and Bantus. No More Passbooks. Better Jobs." She is dressed smartly, suffragette style. Yusuf sits on the couch in the living room reading a paper and smoking a cigarette. Carrie sets down the picket sign and begins to take off her coat, hat and shoes.*

**Yusuf:**

I thought you weren't going to join those rallies anymore.

**Carrie:**

I want to support Sissy Goul. Any Colored, lady lawyer gets my vote. Besides, her father, Dr. Goul, was the only Colored man in the Smuts government. They're a good family to keep as friends. *(Carrie makes her way across the living room into the adjacent kitchen where she begins to prepare supper. Yusuf and Carrie can still see each other and the audience can see both.)*

**Yusuf:**

It's not that a person wouldn't understand why you're interested, Carrie. It's the consequences. We have a son too, you know?!

**Carrie:**

But this thing with Winnie and Nelson is probably going to go through. And it looks like I will be doing some of the organizing. *(Pause.)* Sissy likes my accomplishments. She thinks I'm a good person to have on her side.

**Yusuf:**

Forget it, you never listen. *(He goes back to reading his paper, then looks forlornly out the window. Suddenly his eyes widen.)* Carrie, who's that outside?

**Carrie:**

I don't know. What do you mean?

**Yusuf:**

There's a man in a parked car right outside the house. Oh my God. Don't be obvious. I knew it. You never listen.

**Carrie:**

What?!

**Yusuf:**

The Secret Police, that's what. *(He gets up and draws the curtains closed.)*

**Carrie:**

You just said not to be obvious. We're not doing anything wrong in here.

**Yusuf:**

That's enough! No more rallies. And I mean it.

**Blackout.**

## Scene 4

*Sissy Goul (played by the same character who plays Claudia) stands at a podium somewhere near "The Parade" outside in downtown Cape Town. Carrie hands out pamphlets to the crowd in front of Sissy (played by the other characters in the play). Sissy begins her speech.*

**Sissy Goul:**

My fellow South Africans, thank-you for joining me today. I know how much each of us risks by gathering together. Yet we must do something! Something to put pressure on the government regarding the unjust laws of our country. We all suffer under apartheid, whether directly or indirectly. Some of us are made to feel less, while others are made to feel that they are nothing at all. We South Africans not only want to survive, we want to excel at living in dignity. And that means equal rights, equal access to education and jobs for all South Africans. That means helping our brothers and sisters on the front lines of this fight. Speaking of whom, Mr. Nelson Mandela, held across the water on Robbin Island...

*Here and there during Sissy's speech, affirmations from the crowd, played by other members of the cast, can be heard. Shouts like: "Yes, man!", "We won't stand for it,*



*man!", and "We want change now!" At the mention of Nelson Mandela an apartheid supporter appears out of nowhere and yells out.*

**Man:**

Bloody Nelson Mandela is on Robben Island getting what he deserves! Let him rot there!

*The crowd begins to yell at the man who throws something at Sissy Goul. She goes down. The crowd begins to lose composure, crying and screaming. Suddenly, they advance on the man. Carrie, who has been silent until now, is taken up with the rage of the crowd. She positions herself at its head in front of the man.*

**Carrie:**

You hooligan! You low-type white. What have you done?

**Man:**

*(Picks up stick and wields it against the menacing crowd.)* You all back up. I – am – protected! My government protects me. You people can never touch me.

**Carrie:**

You will learn not to do things like this. *(Carrie grabs the man's stick at the other end and begins to wrestle with him.)*

**Man:**

Afrikaaners are in charge of this country, not you bloody monkeys!

**Carrie:**

Not forever. Nothing lasts forever.

*(The man takes a hand and pushes Carrie off the stick. He swings it in front of him once, causing the crowd to back up, then runs.)*

**Crowd:**

Get him!!! *(They run after him off-stage. Carrie stays. She goes over to the podium and leans over Sissy, lifting her head.)*

**Carrie:**

Somebody help!

**Blackout.**

*Carrie stands at the entrance to her house. Her clothes are crumpled. She holds her picket sign upside down. A secret policeman stands to the side against a street pole, lighting a cigarette but clearly eyeing her. Carrie looks over to him, then enters the house. Yusuf sits on the couch, paper beside him. Carrie throws down her sign and cries while taking off her coat, hat and shoes.*

**Yusuf:**

We must leave South Africa. It's time to sell the properties and leave.

**Carrie:**

Where should we go?

**Yusuf:**

England, New Zealand, Australia or Canada.

**Carrie:**

Sissy Goul's niece is in Canada. A place called Vancouver.

## Act 4

### Scene 1

*The next part of this play is about the family Carrie's son Remi creates in Canada. However, it is bitter-sweet because it is set when Remi is dying. Vancouver, Spring 2003.*

*The stage is divided in two by a door that divides Claudia's West End apartment (stage right) from the building hallway (stage left). Claudia, (25 yrs.), lies in bed, depressed and crying. She wears her pyjamas. Her mother Miranda walks on stage left, pauses apprehensively, then knocks on the door.*

**Miranda:**

Claudia...(knocks again). Claudia, I know you're in there. Open up. I mean it, open up now.

**Claudia:**

*(Looks shocked, then panicked. She gets up and goes to the door. The knocking continues. Finally she unlocks the door but leaves the safety latch on which allows it to open about three inches.)*

Mom?!...How did you get past the intercom?

**Miranda:**

Someone was leaving. They let me in. Now open up, come on.

**Claudia:**

Well, I'm not feeling that well...How come you didn't call first?

**Miranda:**

What are you talking about, I've been calling you all day and you know it. Now open up this door and stop playing games, Claudia, I mean it. (*Miranda pulls on the door handle.*)

**Claudia:**

O.K., o.k., hold on a second. (*Claudia unhooks the safety latch and Miranda bolts through the door like a ton of bricks.*)

**Miranda:**

What's going on in here anyways? You look like you've been in bed for days. Aren't you supposed to be visiting your Dad?

**Claudia:**

(*Stubbornly.*) Well I haven't been.

**Miranda:**

Why not? I'm sure he needs to see you. Besides, the kids and I are going for a walk on the beach. They're all downstairs. We came to see if you wanted to come with us... and then you could head to your Dad's after.

**Claudia:**

I don't think so. There's no point anyway. He won't eat anything I cook and he won't hardly talk.

**Miranda:**

Well you need to get him to a doctor then! (*Urgently.*)

**Claudia:**

He's been to the doctor. He's not getting any better. I don't know if he will. (*Claudia starts to get back into bed.*)

**Miranda:**

Well Claudia, what are you gonna do? Hide in your bed, feeling sorry for yourself? Remember, it's not you that's sick, it's your Dad. You're going to have to put yourself aside right now and do whatever you can to help him. I know it's not easy but come on!

**Claudia:**

*(From bed.)* What do you know about how hard it is or isn't? You're not even seeing him. You're not helping with this. And when you were sick, he didn't help with you. Neither one of you gives a shit about each other. I don't even know why you guys had me. Probably just to ruin my life.

**Miranda:**

Listen Claudia, cut that shit out. I've got enough responsibility. I'm still looking after five kids here. And we did not have you to ruin your life. We loved you and we did our best for you. And you're doing well today. So cut this self-pity shit out. It's not becoming. And stop making this about you. Your Dad's really sick and you need to do what you can to help him. *(Long pause.)* Now, are you gonna come with me and your brothers and sisters and see your Dad, or what?

**Claudia:**

*(Lashing out.)* Yeah, *your* five kids. *They're* your responsibility. *They're* the ones you care about. You had me first and you and my Dad did a terrible job. You behaved horribly.

**Miranda:**

Claudia! *(Warning in her voice.)*

**Claudia:**

*(Carries right on.)* Then you have five more with the biggest asshole-loser you could find and now you're taking great care with them. Thank God you *care* about them.

**Miranda:**

Listen Claudia, I've had enough of this shit. I didn't phone you to be abused. You're in a negative head-space and you better get out of it, cause it won't do you any good. You better grow up.

**Claudia:**

Yeah, I did grow up, unfortunately, with you and my Dad and that asshole you call your second husband. My Dad and his horrible temper, kidnapping me and talking bad about you and him all the time. And the both of you having a million kids without a penny to your name. And storing me at his other wife's house whenever you had another baby when I was supposed to go to my Dad's house. Did you ever ask me if I wanted to go there? Did you ever stop to think there was something improper about that? Did my Dad ever consider the illegality of kidnapping me from school and not letting me call you when it wasn't his day to come and get me? Or the fact that I could be crazy by now from all the emotional scarring he's caused me? No, neither one of you thought about anything, it seems. And now neither one of you can be held accountable for any of it or even talked to about it, because one of you is dying and the other one has too much responsibility taking care of the five kids she actually happens to care about! (*Claudia is hysterical by now.*) No, I don't wanna go over and see my Dad not eating anything and dying and there's nothing I can do about it and I don't wanna see you and my five brothers and sisters. NO-I-DON'T!!!

**Miranda:**

Listen Claudia, cut this fucking shit out! That's your father that's sick and he may live, you don't know. But you certainly aren't helping him by moping around your apartment - the one your Dad's mother helped you buy, I might add, and feeling sorry for yourself. No one's ever bought me a God damn thing. You've had way more help than I've ever had from your Dad's family. You're their only grandchild! You've had your education paid for, vacations, lots of shit. These kids haven't had any of that. My parents are dead and Joseph's parents have tons of grandchildren and haven't helped us with a thing. So

count your blessings and don't curse yourself by acting like a demonic bitch while your Dad is suffering. And don't disrespect your own Mother. I've worked damn hard to take care of all of you kids.

**Claudia:**

(*Changes.*) That's your problem. You think I've had too much. So you've tried to make me pay for it. You just used me to help take care of those five kids.

**Miranda:**

I needed your help, damn right. I didn't have any help and you were the oldest. I helped my parents plenty and when they died they didn't leave me anything and I didn't expect anything.

**Claudia:**

Your parents were drunks and prescription pill addicts and you were the *youngest* of five kids, which means by the time you came around most of the hardship of raising you guys was over. Your older brothers and sisters have horrible memories of your parents.

**Miranda:**

That's their choice. My parents were beautiful, creative people. They did their best and I love them for it. They passed on their creativity and their good genes and I've been surviving on my own since I was 18.

**Claudia:**

Your parents were dysfunctional and irresponsible. You and my Dad are dysfunctional and irresponsible and now that you've gotten through fucking my life up, I probably will be too. (*Pause.*) You should have given me to my Dad. At least they wanted me.

**Miranda:**

And let you grow up solely around him and your grandmother and their fascist South African bullshit?! No way. You're my daughter and that indoctrination ends with them.

I've said that from the beginning and I maintain it. You'd be even more of a fucking bitch than you're acting like right now if you'd grown up in that house.

**Claudia:**

At least they could afford me and didn't go around having more kids than they could feed.

**Miranda:**

I fed you guys. I fed you good too!

**Claudia:**

You were on welfare!

**Miranda:**

So what?! That's my business. We'll see if you can do better with your kids. We'll see.

**Claudia:**

Well if I can't I'm not having any.

**Miranda:**

That's your choice. You haven't gotten there yet. In the mean-time, you better get off your ass and do something to help your Dad, or he *will* die. And stop raggin' on me. It's not my fault he's sick, it's not yours either. Sometimes people just get sick! This is not the time to be blaming anybody.

*(Claudia is crying now.)*

**Miranda:**

You're the best thing that ever happened to your Dad and he knows it. He's very proud of you. You've gone further than he or I ever did with your education. We aren't perfect and we probably did act crazy. But we love you and we did our best. We both come



from crazy backgrounds. But so what? (*Miranda comes over to Claudia and holds her face in her hands so that Claudia must look straight at her.*) That's why you're so creative. Look at all your so-called *normal* friends. What are they doing? Nothing. They're boring and un-resourceful. (*Miranda lets go of Claudia's face.*) Now what are you gonna do today? Just get dressed and come with us to the beach...and then go see your Dad. O.K?

**Claudia:**

(*Pause.*) O.K.

**Miranda:**

Get up and get dressed now. I'll be down in the lobby with the kids. Don't take too long, o.k.? They'll be getting antsy by now. (*Miranda heads to the apartment door and opens it.*)

**Claudia:**

O.K. (*Miranda exits out the door and closes it behind her.*)

**End Scene.**

## Scene 2

*Later that evening at Claudia's dad's family home in Point Grey. Claudia sits on a chair in Remi's room. It is the only other piece of furniture besides his bed. Remi lies sick in a hospital bed in the same bedroom Yusuf lay sick in for 19 years. It is really a study and very small with two book shelves built into the walls, two small stained glass windows and a fireplace façade. Remi and Claudia look at each other but also look away intermittently during this scene.*

**Remi:**

Where've you been?

**Claudia:**

I've been sick.

**Remi:**

I might have to let go.

**Claudia:**

What do you mean?

**Remi:**

I don't know if I can keep fighting. I might want to give up soon. I might just have to let go.

*Claudia looks hard at him. There are so many things she wants to say. He knows and he stops her.*

**Remi:**

I'm getting tired now. I can't talk much more. It's good that you're doing your Masters. And you need to get a watch 'cause you've got a problem with time. *(Pause.)* O.K., get out of here now and let me get some sleep. *(Remi turns his face towards the wall and closes his eyes.)*

**Claudia:**

O.K. Dad. *(Claudia gets up and kisses him on the exposed cheek.)* I love you.

**Remi:**

O.K.... Close my door, will ya? *(Claudia goes out shutting the door behind her.)*

*(Temporary blackout. Claudia appears in spotlight downstage right.)*

**Claudia:**

The next time I returned to the house on 11<sup>th</sup> and Alma, my Dad was being rushed to St. Paul's Emergency for an overdose of his cancer medication. He was incapacitated. They pumped his stomach and then he was overwhelmed with pain. They shot him full of morphine. He finally calmed down. And died. (*Pause.*) I was there. My Granny was there. My Mom and Joseph were there. My dad's adopted sister Candice came at the end and tried to take all the credit. Finally we were all together.

**Blackout. End Scene.**

## Act 5

### Scene 1

*Lights come up in the same spot. The stage has been transformed into the beautiful foyer and living room of a house near UBC. It is around 6 p.m. in January 2006, Vancouver. Claudia opens door. Her eyes are wide with fatigue. She throws down a heavy bag with costumes, shoes and make-up spilling out of it. Carrie sits in the big armchair in the living room with her feet up on the ottoman. She wears her pyjamas and rests her elbow on one of the arms with her head in her hand. She wears a scowl on her face. Jasmine sits on the couch beside Carrie eating a bowl of yogurt.*

**Claudia:**

OH – MY – GOD. I'm tired.

**Carrie:**

Don't take the Lord's name in vain. You're just punishing yourself if you do that.

**Claudia:**

*(Under her breath.)* Please don't start.

**Jasmine:**

Hey sis, how was your dance practice?

**Claudia:**

It was great. We're finally getting somewhere with Leitia's piece. It's all about urban life; how we move too fast, don't have time for each other. *(Matter-of-factly.)* We associate and come together without even noticing.

**Carrie:**

*(Under her breath.)* What's this 'sis' talk about? *(Now a little louder.)* She's not your sister. *(Louder still.)* These people are not your family, not your father's children.

**Claudia:**

What are you talking about? We have the same mother. We are *so* sisters. You had sisters and brothers from different fathers. They were still your sisters and brothers! *(Frustrated.)* Why would you say that?!

**Carrie:**

*(Dismisses Claudia's point.)* Well anyways, thank God you're here... Your son hasn't eaten a thing. I even had to tell them to give him some milk. Poor child. You see *(Carrie points to Jasmine), they* eat everything. They have all the luxuries. They never take a break from eating. And the poor child has nothing. *(The sound of children playing is heard in the background.)* Granny's boy! Good boy! Sweet boy! Poor little baby... *(Miranda enters room with loud, fast footsteps, looking livid with Carrie.)*

**Miranda:**

That's my grandchild. You shut up about him! He's perfectly fine. Shut your filthy mouth! *(Miranda gets closer to Carrie.)* I've given him plenty to eat today. I'm sick of your trying to cause trouble all the time. You had your grandchild. *(Motioning to Claudia.)* This one's mine, so mind your own business and SHUT UP!

**Carrie:**

You shut up. You go to hell you low-type-white-whore. You're already in hell. *(Miranda hovers over Carrie's chair now, with the blue veins in her temples bulging.)* Look at the man you've got. Siss, man! I wouldn't have him if he were the last man on earth. My son wasn't perfect but he was clean and careful of his company. Up until the day he died, he was particular. He never brought low types to my house.

**Miranda:**

Ya, and he was a violent, abusive, hateful asshole who hated your guts and you bloody-well killed him off with your poison tongue.

**Carrie:**

*(Taken aback.)* You shut up, you bloody bastard! I made a big mistake living with you. You and your lazy husband and your lazy, hungry children.

**Miranda:**

Likewise! I made a huge mistake living with you. I should never have let you lay on my couch for 6 months after Remi died. You acted like an angel at my house. But you've been a witch ever since we got *this* house.

**Carrie:**

*We* didn't get this house! *I* bought this house. And I thought you people might appreciate it. But instead you do practically nothing for me and where's my rent? I don't even see it!

**Miranda:**

Fuck your rent! I'm not a renter. I was Remi's wife and I never got anything from that marriage. And you treat my husband, these children's father – like a kaffir!

**Carrie:**

*(Incredulous.)* A kaffir! I'm black too.

**Miranda:**

You didn't treat the so-called *pure* blacks in South Africa very well. You used them to build your houses, just like the rest of the coloreds and the whites. You think you're better. And you starved and hit your two adopted daughters. Why don't Candice and Emma talk to you? Where are they now, Carrie, when you really need them? How come

we're the only ones around? I feed my children and nobody's fat around here. You're the fattest person in this house.

**Carrie:**

You're a bloody liar. Be careful, God is watching you!

**Miranda:**

Ya, well, he's watching you too and you're going to have to answer for all of the shit that you've done.

**Carrie:**

*(Slowly.)* Yes, you're a very *honest* woman.

**Miranda:**

*(Slowly, deliberately.)* Yes – I - am. *(She begins to back up from Carrie's chair.)*

**Carrie:**

We were very poor. We never had all these luxuries. My grandmother did what she could for us, otherwise we would have starved. And it was good enough. *(Digging.)* And she taught us not to *steal* and *lie*. And to *work* for our living.

**Miranda:**

Shut up about your grandmother! She sounds like an old bitch. Just like you. She's long gone and I don't want to hear about her. This is my household. My daughter. And that's my grandchild you've been saying didn't get any milk today when he damn well did so! So stay out of it. *(Silence.)* You had a free hand with Claudia and you put me through hell. You had your turn and it's over now...Get ready to go to Candice's house.

*Carrie, in her pyjamas and slippers, struggles to get up from the chair and exits downstage right to her room. She speaks as she goes and continues to do so from her room off-stage.*

**Carrie:**

Yes, I'll get out of your house. I have no place here. I just have to *pay* for everything.

**Miranda:**

*(Still onstage.)* I pay too! Shut up about paying. We all pay! You're not the only one who pays! You're obsessed with money. It's your God. That's why your relationships are so fucked up.

**Carrie:**

*(From her room off-stage.)* I'll get out of your house!...and I'm going to get my money back too. I'm going to get a good lawyer! You can't get away with this – not paying rent. Everyone pays rent! What makes you think you can live for free?!

**Miranda:**

I don't live for free! I pay bills. And I'm not a tenant! I'm your family and I'm looking after you in your old age. You old, bloody bat! How did I get so lucky?!

**Carrie:**

Nobody looks after me! I look after myself. You're too dirty and lazy and deceitful to look after anybody.

**Miranda:**

Oh, man!!!

**Carrie:**

You just give me a plate of food, that's all. Leftovers.

**Blackout. End Scene.**



## Scene 2

*One hour later. Carrie sits in the big armchair in the living room, wearing her 20-year-old raincoat and her 30-year-old straight-haired wig which looks like a dead animal on her head. Her huge, black purse sits on her lap and her blue overnight bag is beside the chair.*

**Carrie:**

Yes, I'll get out of your house. I don't bother anybody. I just sit here. It's my money that pays the mortgage here. But *I'll* get out of *your* house. You'll see what's going to happen to you – and your son too! Poor child. He's a nice boy. He doesn't even get anything to drink or eat if I don't see to it. They're killing him, that's what they're doing. You better open your eyes and wake up before it's too late. And if they want me out – what are they going to do to you? You take the Devil's side?! Hmph! You'll see! They'll have you out too – and that little boy. Poor child.

**Claudia:**

*(Walks into living room from upstage left with her coat on, putting on her last shoe.)*

Shut up!!! You're a crazy, old lady and nobody – nobody – is interested in what you have to say. Get ready to go, because you're getting out of here, and we're glad!

**Carrie:**

GO – TO – HELL! You're already in hell...that's why you look the way you do. You can't even get a decent man. You have to go to the jungle to get a man! As black as I am, I would never go to the jungle to get a man.

**Claudia:**

*(All the while going on and off stage, assembling her purse, combing her hair, getting ready to leave. Carrie has been ready for about 15 minutes now. Alternately, Claudia is so flustered that she looks completely disheveled by the end of this speech instead of ready to go.)* Go to hell yourself!!! And you don't have to go to the jungle because you

*are the jungle! Now get ready to go. You're going to Candice's and thank God because I need a break from your mouth. Your mouth can kill people. That's why my Father's dead. You killed him with your evil mouth. And now you're trying to kill me. Just shut up. And get ready to go because you're GOING!!! (Claudia disappears off-stage again, looking for something she needs to get ready.)*

**Carrie:**

*(Projecting.)* You don't even care about your own child! You've made him jet black! You don't even care how he suffers, as long as you can run around with these monkeys! I may be *old, black and ugly* – but I had good offers. From beautiful men, with nice, sharp features. Doctors if you please! Five of them! Not monkeys!!!

**Claudia:**

*(Appears in middle of hallway, ready and clutching her car keys. She steels her eyes and bares her teeth. She speaks slowly.)* You have no education and every time you open your mouth, it shows.

**Carrie:**

You're right. I don't have any education. But I don't go around looking for monkeys and making it hard on my children.

**Claudia:**

Now let's go before I go to jail for killing you...It's not worth it. Hopefully you won't live much longer.

**Carrie:**

*(Heaves herself up and motions for Claudia to carry her heavy purse. Claudia grudgingly takes the purse and gives Carrie her other arm to lean on without looking at her. They make their way towards the front door. Carrie projects loudly.)* I can out-live you all! You better be careful. You'll all die before me!

**Claudia:**

You wish!

**Carrie:**

Look at Candice's aunt. God punishes from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation... You better be careful. Your sins can fall on your children and your children's children.

**Claudia:**

*(Throws the front door open.)* Is that why my Dad's dead? *(She looks Carrie straight in the face.)* Maybe you'd better think about what you've done. I'm the last relationship you've got left – and you've almost killed every last drop of love I ever had for you.

**Carrie:**

What did I do? I just sit here all day. I don't bother anybody. What did I do? I'll get out of your house.

**Claudia:**

It's your mouth. You use your mouth to hurt people. You just can't shut your mouth. And it kills love. *(They step out the front door and Claudia closes it behind them.)*

**End scene.**

### Scene 3

*Claudia enters and takes her position a little left of center stage.*

**Claudia:**

When people see me, if they see me, they always gotta ask me a lot of questions. And if I'm with my family, they really ask questions. They know I'm black but it's like they don't want me to be. When I was little, I would run ahead and ask the bus driver to hold the bus for my granny, cause she couldn't run fast. When she would get there, huffing

and puffing, the people on the bus's eyes would pop out that she was my granny, 'cause she's dark black and I'm just a little golden. When I went to ballet and told this lady in my class that my father was black she said "Well you wouldn't even have to tell anybody." And "I dated a colored fellow once." What is this, I thought, *Imitation of Life*? I don't feel any different than my granny. She is as much a part of me as I am of her. Her colour made mine and way back, mine made hers. I know what you're going to say. What about your white mother? Don't you feel like her? And the answer is Yes! I feel a lot like her, she's my best friend. But she's an Irish Canadian who swears she was black in a past life. She's had two black husbands spanning 35 years, has 6 black children and her family likes to say (in jest) that 'she's the only black person in the family'. Needless to say, I've always felt more black than white; mostly because I've always known that I could *be* black but it was too late (genealogically) for me to be white. That just isn't the way the world works. But I looked a little too white to be black. Nevertheless, I knew who I came from, woke up with them every morning and went to bed with them every evening.

*Vancouver, six months later. Carrie, now 95 years old, sits up on a stretcher in the back of an ambulance. She is being attended to by a Caucasian ambulance attendant. She is on her way to Saint Paul's Hospital. Downstage, Claudia (age 28) sits up front beside a light-skinned, black ambulance driver.*

**Claudia:**

I may look high-yellow, but today the black in me *will* come out.

**Attendant:**

Can I take your blood pressure Carrie? Is it all right if I call you Carrie?

**Carrie:**

Yes dear you can do whatever you like. And while you're at it, will you please tell me why I am in this ambulance.

**Claudia:**

*(Projecting into the back.)* You know perfectly well why. If you want to act crazy at home, throwing tantrums like a little child, then you can go to the hospital and be with other crazy people. Sane people live at home with their families and you're not acting sane!

**Carrie:**

Those people are not *my* family! They're your family and they were supposed to pay rent. Where's my rent? I haven't even seen it! You're the only family I have left – you and your little boy. I am surprised at you!

**Claudia:**

That was not the deal! They *are* my family and they are *not* renters. They live in the house in exchange for helping to look after you. And it is not *your* house. It's *our* house. We all live there together!!! That's my mother and those are my brothers and sisters! And you cannot just do anything you like! You act crazy and *you* will be the one to leave. You're gonna land yourself in an old-age home, you'll stay there and you will deserve it! You have pushed me too far!!

**Carrie:**

*(Scoffs.)* Crazy! I'm not crazy. I'm perfectly fine. Wait 'til I'm a hundred, then I'll get crazy. They think they can do what they like, that's why I'm here. They don't even pay rent! I have to pay. Bloody bastards. They're going to get theirs. *(Carrie is yelling. The attendant prepares a sedative, (needle), to calm her down. She is unaware.)* You don't do bad things to people who are good to you and expect to live long. I've seen it before. Look at Ethel and them. I was good to them too. I've been good to everybody. And they repay me by stabbing me in the back. But that's o.k. They just go – one by one. They just drop like flies. I just leave them in God's hands. No, man, it doesn't pay to be deceitful. You pay in the end. But let them do what they like. *(Raising her voice and projecting up to the front seat.)* You want to take the Devil's side against your own granny that's been good to you, you go ahead. You just go ahead and see where you

land. You'll land in the shit, that's where. Just like Candice's aunt. (*She catches the spirit.*) I'll go right through it, though. Jesus had to go right through being crucified on the Cross. And for what? For righteousness? God will carry me through! I just hand my enemies over to the Lord and watch them drop like flies. (*The ambulance attendant presses on her shoulder here and gives the needle. From here on in her speech slows down.*) One by one. I don't even have to do anything. I just let the Lord punish them for me. That's why I've lived so long. God has blessed me with a long life because I've been good to everybody. I've never done wrong to anybody and anybody who says I have is a bloody liar. Bloody bastards.

**Attendant:**

Alright Carrie. Your blood pressure is 35 over 86. Pretty good for your age.

**Carrie:**

(*Slowly falls asleep.*) Of course it is. Nothing wrong with me, man. These people *want* something to be wrong with me. They want me to be crazy, so they can have the loot. *And my own granddaughter* – taking the Devil's side. She ought to be ashamed of herself. I would never treat my grandmother that way. Never in a million years.

**Blackout.**

**End Play.**

## **Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears: Visibility, Invisibility, Roots and Liminality in the African Diaspora**

The thing that has led me to write the play *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* is the life I have lived and the people that I come from. This preface places the play in context with that body of literature and performance known as the African Diaspora. It is also the best way to introduce myself to its readership and frame the events that led to the play's birth. I was born in Vancouver, B.C. on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1976 at Grace Hospital to a black, South African father and an Irish Canadian mother. My father was either the first or second black student to arrive at Kitsilano Secondary School (where my mother and her other siblings attended). My father's family were the first black family to join St. Philip's Anglican Church at 27<sup>th</sup> and Dunbar (where we are still members), and so there was an idea of novelty to the whole experience. Vancouver in the 60's and 70's (as it has been described by my mother) was not the teeming hotbed of competition you find today but, rather, a more spacious, laid-back environment where the art scene, free love and inter-racial marriage were just getting started. To their credit, my parents were a part of all that; my father was a well-known jazz musician in the city, as well as a self-taught camera-man and musical director for BCTV for 30 years. My mother's family is amazing; she is the youngest of five children whose parents moved to Vancouver from Saskatoon in the 50's. She enjoyed a 10-year career as the top model in Vancouver and travelled to Paris, Milan and other destinations to walk the runways with Iman, Beverly Johnson and others of her era. Her mother and father were extremely young when they had their kids (I believe 18 and 22 respectively), and, though very creative and loving, had terrible troubles with alcoholism and prescription pill use. Their father, Clyde

Herrington, was the founder and editor of *Beautiful BC Magazine* and *Northwest Territories Magazine*. All of my aunts and one uncle on my mother's side are tall, slim, beautiful and multi-talented. They have grown up in Victoria and Kitsilano and reside in both these places to this day. The home my South African family purchased on the Kitsilano/Point Grey border some 40 years ago (and where two of its members have died), is still in our possession and I am raising the next generation of African Canadians there – my two young sons whose fathers are Ugandan and Togolese. The 31 years of my young life have been fraught with drama, massive successes and dangerous failures. I happen to know we are no ordinary family and I am no ordinary person. I was spiritually driven to write this play and I hope I will be driven to write others. One may find it interesting, or even troubling, that I talk about my family members more than I talk about myself. This has always been the case. When I was a child and someone would ask me what I thought about something, I would answer by saying, "Well, my father thinks this and my mother thinks that." The person would usually say, "But I want to know what you think!" I couldn't answer. I have always been a kind of biographer of my family's opinions, a repository of their memories, histories, religions and viewpoints. Now, I have become a repository for some of the documented experiences and opinions of the African Diaspora. It is because I am in the middle. My mother named me her 'golden girl' after my colour. This golden girl is a little more reserved than her parents, quieter than the 'white' or 'black' opinion. This golden girl has always been determined to make sense out of all the nonsense, to create something beautiful and useful out of what has been handed down to me. If you sense an element of superiority to my tone, you sense right. I have always thought I would do things in a better, more civilized way than my parents or



grandparents. Thankfully, I have been knocked down off of my pedestal one failure and success at a time. Finally, I am grateful for the education my family fought for me to have, both academically and artistically, through which I have created and participated in cohesive works of dance, theatre and literature that describe my identity. This is the way I have chosen to exercise my identity, through hard work in the fields of art and education. I have chosen to exercise my mind and body into an instrument of my own representation. I hope to take all I have been given and funnel it through myself to create something new, creative, useful and healing to myself and others of my generation. In my ten years as a performer, student and academic, my interest lay in the contemporary expression of the African Diaspora, as I recognize myself as one of its members.

*Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* is very personal to me in that it is biographical and autobiographical, though I use dramatic licence. The play attempts to capture the life story of my paternal grandmother, Rose Landers, born Carrie MacFarlane in Cape Town, South Africa in 1910. The beginning of my sojourn into theatre and the birth of this play was the death of my father, Reuben Landers. Before his death, my only passion was dance. Though every child begins life with four grandparents (whether dead or alive), Rose Landers has been my grandparent, strong other-mother and a matriarch to both sides of my family. As she is my only grandparent in this way, so am I her only grandchild. She has been with me, close to me, all my life and I think I may have been with her all of her life as I look just like her mother, Emily, and often think I might have been her in my last life. The play is about my relationship with my grandmother, and therefore, my relationship to my South African heritage. It was written in an attempt to honour and give weight to the real lives and deaths of those people the characters are

based on. I speak primarily of my father, who died far too early and painfully, and my grandmother. This play was written as a source of healing and as a way to commemorate the lives of my ancestors as so many plays about families are.

I found out that I was accepted into the MA program at the Department of Theatre at UBC just before my father died. He was very happy, proud and relieved. He proceeded to let go of his immense pain due to a long fight with cancer and gave in to death. I now realize that this was a very difficult decision for him and one I believe he had privately contemplated. I think he felt confident, at last, that I would have some success in my chosen field of the arts; a field he had greatly opposed my being in, though he and my mother had both been artists themselves. Perhaps that is exactly why he was opposed; he knew the beating I was in for. He may have finally felt that his investment in me, his only child, would pay off even if he would have to receive the benefits from the after-life. And finally, I believe he gave up on trying to out-live his mother. Evidence of this fact happened one day during his illness when an Irish fisherman-friend of his dropped by to bring him some fish. When I arrived at the house, my father motioned for me to come close to where he lay and said quietly, "There's a piece of fish that Mick brought by but it doesn't smell right to me. I'm not trying to be mean or anything, but we'll give it to your grandmother. We already know she's not human. She can't die." All I could say was "Dad!!!" Sadly, he may have been right! My grandmother is almost 100 years old and now lives in a seniors' residence in West Vancouver. She and I are the last ones left of the South Africans, save for two adopted daughters who live in North Vancouver and Winnipeg. Her relationship with these two girls has always been tenuous. I miss my father and my grandfather dearly. However, I seem to have gotten them back

again (a pattern in our family), as my first son looks and acts exactly like my father and my second son looks exactly like my grandfather. I take them to visit my grandmother once a week and she looks at these little men with awe. They are mini-versions of the men who have left her behind and they light up these last years of her life. These days, life is good.

The play *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* is influenced by and banters with several literary works from the African Diaspora, as well as academic articles of the same genre, contained mostly in an anthology titled *Black Theatre*. These literary and theatrical texts and academic articles contain arguments and themes that parallel, preface and frame the play, *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*. This play is another piece of African Diaspora literature and, as such, I liken it to those stories which attempt to put the calamitous, deeply tragic, painful and hilarious events that are the black experience into something notable, worth-while, legitimate and even gainful. The literary texts which have been the most influential in the process of writing *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* have been Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Gayle Jones' *Corregidora*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* and Maishe Maponya's *The Hungry Earth*. Two other plays (outside the realm of African Diaspora literature) which have been influential and have thematic content in common with *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* are Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* and Morris Panych's *Vigil*. For the remainder of this preface I will speak about *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* with regards to theme, theatrical style and genre – all within an Afro-centric framework. I will

also create a perspectival proximity for these themes in relation to the literary works I have mentioned and the academic articles I have yet to introduce.

The critical arguments and/or themes I have chosen to address in *Lost Lesotho Princess* are:

1. The relationship of the African Diaspora to the dominant white society and vice versa. The play addresses this relationship in two ways:
  - a. psychologically/socially/politically
  - b. genealogically

The topic of inter-connectedness and inter-relatedness to the dominant white society is common to literature of the African Diaspora. This topic is at the forefront, thematically, in *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, not by intent but simply by recording my family history. I like to think of this play as a Canadian version of *Roots*. Alex Haley thought it important to record the generations before him as examples of legitimate African, African-American and American history. I have written *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* in the same way. I see the recorded life of my grandmother, our relationship and our whole family as an important piece of South African, Canadian and, potentially, even Irish - history. However, the plays' most relevant and contemporary contribution would be its addition to that diverse body of people, literature, art and politics referred to as the African Diaspora. In *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, each ethnic group is tied to the other by blood. This genealogical inter-connectedness forces characters to interact where they might otherwise choose not to. I refer here to Carrie and

her Aunt Liza. This theme appears in other African Diaspora literature, such as *Corregidora*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *For Colored Girls* and to some extent *The Piano Lesson*. Gayle Jones' heroine in *Corregidora* speaks of her Portuguese and African ancestors. In her mind's eye (and in her womb), she judges each ancestor according to their deeds. Though her Portuguese great-grandfather, Corregidora, was guilty of heinous crimes against her own great-grandmother (his African slave), he nevertheless occupies a prestigious place in the heroine's ancestry, memories, history and physical appearance. This is the subject of the novel *Corregidora*: the documentation of a painful, mixed race ancestry. It is also a documentation of American slavery, just as *Lost Lesotho Princess/ Landlord Ears* is a documentation of South African apartheid, Canadian immigration, interracial marriage and the reality of being of mixed heritage. In both instances, the problem of racial discrimination is made more difficult and painful because the discrimination and persecution of whites against blacks and vice versa has been documented within a family setting. It is Carrie's own great aunt Liza and her uncle Stephen that set themselves apart from Carrie, and underestimate her. When Aunt Liza and Uncle Stephen speak about Carrie, they convey the message of the racist state known as the Republic of South Africa - one that would relegate Carrie and other dark-skinned South Africans to a life of little education or agency, as well as hard labour for a lifetime. The relationship between the two ethnic groups is navigated by way of their single history and the continual ebb and flow of their creolised, or racially mixed, culture and family. In the play, as in life, it is only Carrie's genealogical relationship to the dominant white society that allows her to rise above this harsh destiny. Those genealogical relationships shared by blacks and whites, together with their accompanying mental and

material burdens/gifts, are what make up the double-edged sword of guilt and responsibility known to many light-skinned blacks. As the recipients of the first bits of education, monetary wealth and social respect in colonial and now post-colonial societies, they have had to decide all along how to define themselves, how to behave and play their part in black society as well as in white. It is no great surprise, then, that light-skinned blacks are the heroes and heroines of much African Diaspora literature and make up a great many of its authors and educators. This reality, history and literary subject is fraught with beauty, truth, lies, a wealth of problematic narratives and, as with everything, room for plenty of growth and improvement.

2. A second theme contained in the play *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* is the idea of ancestor worship or a type of respect and recognition given to your ancestors and elders.

The purpose of such ancestor/elder worship/recognition is three-fold. Relating the tales of one's ancestors is a way of remembering them; in the process of that remembering you are enacting the art of story-telling - which relates to performance - and once you have finished remembering by telling the story, whether literary or oral, you have made a piece of history. Throughout the dynamic, albeit turbulent, history of the African Diaspora, remembering one's ancestors by telling their tales and having the right to authorship in the documentation of the histories and (her)stories of the African Diaspora have become of the utmost importance to its members from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This notion can be directly applied to myself and the play I have written about

my paternal grandmother, Rose Landers, who was born in 1910 in Cape Town, South Africa to a Colored mother and an African father and who is alive to this day. For those members of the Diaspora born outside of Africa, a notion of ancestor worship/recognition takes on a whole other meaning. For those of us, like myself, who know that they are African but were not born there, it is only the recognition that their ancestors were born on its soil, coupled with the fact that all human life began there, that endows the African continent with a kind of authority that is magical, mystical and powerful. Our ancestors are our link to the continent and all its wonders. If we are questioning or searching for a way to contextualize our identity, we may tend to feel that the very land and birth-place of our ancestors will hold answers for us. Does it? Will it? In what way? How? How do we reconcile this somewhat idyllic notion of identity-healing for ourselves when Africans, on the continent, are dealing with their own set of troubles, problems and quest for healing? I enacted this tie to the 'motherland' when I visited Cape Town, South Africa with my grandmother in December 2001. Although my grandmother and father had been back to Cape Town periodically since immigrating to Canada, this trip was to be my grandmother's last and my first. During the preparation and journey I felt all of the weight, excitement and importance of escorting my grandmother back to the land of her birth for the last time (she was 91 years old then), and the anticipation of discovering my roots with the soon-to-be meeting of all my South African relatives. I had also arranged to do some research at JazzArt (a multi-ethnic dance-theatre company whose works depict contemporary South African society), in preparation for writing my play *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*. After my father passed away and I began the MA in Theatre at the University of British Columbia, I knew that my thesis project would be

an original performance work of some kind - a play really, that would include the sum of my talents and fieldwork in contemporary African performance. Up until this point, this fieldwork had consisted mainly of 10 years of dance, dancing for choreographers Laura Monteiro (an Afro-Brazilian choreographer based in Vancouver), and Zab Maboungou (a Franco-Congolese choreographer based in Montreal). My new challenge would be to learn the history, devices and techniques of writing, performing and analyzing theatre. To that end, I am very grateful to the Department of Theatre at UBC. I also wanted to incorporate my love and secret hobby of spoken-word poetry, of which I have written about 50 poems. At the same time that all of this was percolating, I was busy making arrangements for my grandmother's and my trip to South Africa. I asked a South African lady who had been giving classes in the Gumboots dance (and other South African dances) at Laura Monteiro's studio, The Afro-Bahia Dance Studio, to recommend an Afro-contemporary dance company in Cape Town where I could do research. She recommended JazzArt. I contacted JazzArt via the web and got in contact with the Artistic Director Alfred Hinkel who said, "When you arrive in Cape Town, just come down to our studios." What I found going on at JazzArt in Cape Town was beautiful, amazing, disappointing, everything I expected and nothing I expected. More than anything, it was chillingly 'normal' with respect to everything I already knew about class, rehearsal and performance, when it came to dance.

The same can be said of meeting the South African people, particularly my family on my grandmother's side (the former Cape Coloreds from her mother's side) and the Cape Malays on my grandfather's side. My grandmother's father disappeared when she was very young (sometime between the age of 3 and 6 probably), so she never knew her



Xhosa family. This has been very sad for my grandmother, and for me, because she definitely looks like them and would have benefited from their presence in her life. Unfortunately, the socio-political climate in South Africa at the time of my grandmother's birth and during apartheid did not encourage Colored people to look up their African ancestry. In fact, they spent most of their lives trying to erase its tracks, hoping to forget they were African at all. This was one of the hardest realities of my childhood; my South African family did not feel they were African. Their relationship to their identity was based on those things which made them Colored and gave them privilege over so-called 'pure blacks' - their European and Cape Malay roots. As one can imagine, I completely rejected this as my father and grandmother looked nothing but African, particularly by Canadian standards. I felt completely African, though I came out looking just like my Cape Malay grandfather who did not seem to give a hoot about race and looked at the rest of us as if we were crazy when the subject came up for discussion. We were all at odds with each other when it came down to 'how black' we really were. My father would say to me, "You're just pro-black." And I would think, "Well yes, I am," though not out loud.

Approximately six years after the One Man One Vote Election in South Africa which ousted the officially racist apartheid government from power and elected the relentless freedom fighter Nelson Mandela, my mind was swirling with fantasies of new South African performance spear-headed by *free* and *enlightened* Africans. However, there is something called 'real politic', referring to what is actually going on on the ground, and I found my fantasies were reality but in real life it looked nothing like it did

in my dreams. As I wrote earlier, it looked much like a scene I had seen earlier in Vancouver and Montreal, only now it was in Cape Town.

JazzArt has quite a long history as a politically conscious dance-theatre company. During apartheid, they practiced what was called 'resistance', meaning they refused to use any government-run theatres for rehearsal spaces. It is only since the dissolution of apartheid that the company has been rewarded with a beautiful government space in downtown Cape Town, inhabiting the same building as the Cape Town Opera. They have also maintained their status as a multi-racial company, offering scholarship and salaried positions to Cape Town's - and its surrounding communities' - most at-risk youth, most of whom are former Bantus and poor Coloreds from the townships. The company now has funding from the South African government and is regarded as a national treasure. It was not hard to see why. Taking company class, interviewing Mr. Hinkel and the company members was a beautiful experience. They were warm and giving to me and I will surely pass on a copy of my play and this commentary to them.

What I found at JazzArt is what I found in the process of writing my play; that is, the more things change, the more they remain the same. I was immediately shocked to find that the Artistic Director was a white man. However, as time went on, both in my research at JazzArt and my visit to South Africa, it did not seem unusual at all. This is not to say that I believe the Artistic Director of JazzArt should be white but rather that each person in the company occupied their position for reasons based on merit and on their contribution to the common goals of the company. My research at JazzArt led me to conclude two main reasons for its being: one, to create contemporary performances which

reflect the many aspects of South African life and two, to provide training and out-reach to a wide variety of South Africans in the field of dance theatre.

Mr. Hinkel had a way of getting what he wanted from the dancers by employing various characteristics. Sometimes firm, sometimes demanding, friendly and even encouraging – his main focus was achieving excellence in the dance and conveying the type of discipline it would take to achieve that excellence. Whatever the recipe, it worked and ensured a performance-worthy product from a group of dancers whose common thread was their difference. They came to rehearsal with varying circumstances based on their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as socio-economic levels. This fact probably presented great obstacles, and even danger, during apartheid. However, it could not be considered easy even six years into the majority-rule government. My observations and interviews with the company members revealed many layers, the first being a talented and hungry pool of dancers whose performance of group-created pieces was moving, beautiful and riveting. However, there were noticeable gaps in the communication, both verbal and physical, between company members with less in common. Many of the African dancers brought a rich, traditional dance background with them, not based in studio training, while they struggled with personal problems including family issues, transportation difficulties and the dangers presented by the South African streets. I would grab bits of this kind of information through nuances, remarks Mr. Hinkel would make due to a company member's late arrival or total absence - and my one-on-one interviews.

The greatest thing these young dancers had in common, in my assessment, was their youth, their unified title now as just South Africans and their choice, or opportunity,

to come together in the same space and dance in celebration of and about themselves. My most common interview question was, “How do you feel dancing with all different ethnicities and how do you see yourself?” The first part of the question was usually answered in a relaxed manner, bordering on indifferent approval. However, the answer of one young man formerly classified like my father’s family, Colored, to the second part of my question, hit me in the heart. He said, “I used to be called Colored but not anymore. I am a New African.” I have written my play *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* in the same vein as other New Africans who are taking a part in their own culture-making: for healing, for political change, to gain legitimacy through excellence in my field of interest and to be included in the ranks of great individuals doing great things - like Nelson Mandela and that young dancer, who, once identifiably fragmented by the apartheid regime by being labelled Colored, now proudly re-names himself a New African.

3. An exploration of the African Diasporic device of combining everyday life, spirituality and art, both as inspirational material with which to create works of art and as a subject or theme contained in the works themselves.

When members of the African Diaspora hearken back to their African roots, they are putting together the pieces of the puzzle that make up their identity. When we speak about theatre and literature, Africa can be looked to as both a source of original theatre and as an inspiration for the creation of new theatre and literature of the same genre. It is

equally important to note, that, in this process of looking back to Africa and creating new works, there is a very real middle-space that has existed almost since the beginning of man. Marta Morena Vega discusses two cultural instances of this middle-space in her article titled “The Candomble and Eshu-Eleggua in Brazilian and Cuban Yoruba-Based Ritual.” in the anthology *Black Theatre: Ritual Performance in the African Diaspora*. Vega gives a very in-depth analysis of the spiritual culture from the Yoruba people, which has been enmeshed into the spiritual culture of Brazilians and Cubans, beginning when African slaves were transported to these places during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. On this topic, Vega says, “The seamless vision of art as part of sacred life is essential to the creative expression of Africans in the Diaspora” (Vega 158). This relationship between everyday life, spirituality and art is thematically persistent in all genres of contemporary black performance. In the genre of theatre, it is highlighted in works such as *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, by Ntozake Shange, a play in the form of a ‘choreopoem’ in which the private confessions of black women are notated with words that flow into poems that flow into dance and is a play. In August Wilson’s *The Piano Lesson*, this triad is heavily symbolized by the piano that sits in the family’s sitting room. The family’s history, its elders and ancestors, have been carved into the very wood of the piano. In this case, the painful history of slavery does not allow the caged bird to sing. So important and haunting is the family’s story to the eldest sister, that she will not allow anyone to play the piano. Neither will she allow the piano to pass out of her possession. The piano is a symbol of pride, history, pleasure, pain and artistic achievement.

I have just such a piano in my house which belonged to my South African-born father, Reuben Landers. He was a very important influence in my life. The character based on him in *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, Remi, may seem understated but that is mostly because of my need to capture the events of that period in my family's history, as well as my father's personality and the nature of our relationship. My father was a very talented jazz musician and a successful performer on the Vancouver jazz scene from his arrival in the late 60's until the time of his death. The piano was an extension of his hands. It was wholly enmeshed into his everyday routine, his personality, his persona, his reputation and his feeling about what it meant to be South African and then an ex-South African, turned Canadian. It was as though every time he sat down at his piano and played, he conjured up a piece, a memory, of his life in Cape Town.

The play also notates the tradition of excellent piano players in my grandmother's family, beginning with her Xhosa father, Solomon. My grandmother's only memories of her father are as a small child, sitting at his feet while he played the piano, and the fact that he demonstrated the pianos for customers at Darter's, the biggest music store in Cape Town, at the time. I, too, spent countless hours during my childhood sitting in the piano room at my father's family home, listening to him play. He would call me in, from whatever I was doing, to listen to his newest creation. Incredible as it may seem, I found it boring. I just wanted to dance and my father hated dancers and singers. Simply put, I come from a family of divas who hate being up-staged!

This middle-space continuum of everyday life, spirituality and art documented in Vega's article, as it relates to Africans in the Diaspora, is an important theme, cutting

across various artistic genres of contemporary black performance. I have a spiritual and artistic affinity with the Brazilian culture and people because it is the place where I began my career and study of Afro-contemporary dance. I was very lucky to meet Laura Monteiro, in 1997, and begin dancing with her. She is one of the smartest, most talented dancers, choreographers and artists I have ever met. I only regret that Vancouver has not offered her the support she truly deserves. I say this because when it comes to presenting Afro-Brazilian dance in a contemporary context, Ms. Monteiro has the education, the background, the clear vision and the feeling to be able to present that genre of performance in its best light. As a young dancer of the African Diaspora, I had only ballet, modern dance and a lot of what might be called 'African feeling' under my belt when I met Laura. There was a group of us young dancers to whom she dedicated a great deal of her time, endowing us with a proper education in the field of Afro-Brazilian dance. This included a knowledge of the Yoruban/Brazilian gods and goddesses known as the orishas, their particular dances, spiritual attributes, purposes and position in the Candomble and Catholic religions. Laura also had a propensity for being able to segue the Afro-Brazilian dance tradition into contemporary dance and a theatrical performability. I believe she was able to do all of this because of her education and experience in this same field in Brazil. Ms. Monteiro came before me, as a New African, a black Brazilian and an artist who has her own vision for the representation of contemporary Brazilian society and members of the African Diaspora as a whole. I do believe that I would not be where I am today without the opportunity to dance in her company, The Afro-Bahia Dance Company, and hope that other Afro-contemporary

dance companies will be available for young dancers right here in Vancouver, B.C. because they are needed.

Similarly, and yet very differently in terms of style, was my time spent dancing in Zab Maboungou's company, Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata. I have had the privilege to dance in two companies spear-headed by strong, educated and intellectual women with a very clear vision of the representation they wanted for members of the Diaspora through the medium of dance. Ms. Maboungou's rejection of Western contemporary dance forms in order to present Afro-contemporary dance is both noble and truthful to her art-form. She, too, took the time to teach Central African dance with such clarity and good technique so as to highlight the very contemporary nature of African dance. I believe anyone who has ever seen her work is left admiring it, and Ms. Maboungou, because of its beauty, simplicity, difficulty and truly contemporary African personality. It is because of my time, roughly 10 years, in these two companies, that I left the field of dance for more education in the performing arts. I knew I wanted to do more than be a dancer in someone's company, even if they were great artists. I had ideas I wanted to develop regarding the representation of the African Diaspora. I wanted to be able to incorporate my experience in dance with theatre and to expand my knowledge and potential for performing, creating and writing dramatic works.

My MA advisor at UBC, Stephen Heatley, often asked me the following questions during the writing process of *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*: Who is this play about? From whose point of view is it written? The answer is that it is autobiographical. The events and characters come from my own story-memory and the characters are based on my relatives. The play is a documentation of my family history. The process of



writing *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* was the process of working to situate myself and my relatives in our socio-economic and political environments. It has been a process of confirming, creating and healing my identity. It is also an act of bravery and has taken an immense amount of courage – the courage to air my dirty laundry. The play is one of African, European, Canadian, feminist and world (her)story. I dare, alongside other black female writers, to be brave. It is not easy to live outside the box and to try to make art by describing your existence - in all its layered complexity - in a way that may be simply understood by an audience. One example of this bravery is seen in the work of African-American playwright Adrienne Kennedy and in the way that Paul K. Bryant-Jackson writes about Kennedy's play *Beethoven*.

Bryant-Jackson's article, "Kennedy's Travellers in the American and African Continuum," also contained in the anthology *Black Theatre*, places *Beethoven* in both a Western canon and an African one, prefacing the play as an autobiography. Bryant-Jackson does so (and very daringly I might add), by citing Absurdism and Transcendentalism as two theatrical genres Kennedy employs in order to place the work in a Western theatrical cannon. However, the author primarily categorizes *Beethoven* as an example of autobiography and of matrilineal Diaspora literature, in order that it should not be held up to the same scrutiny as other works which claim to be Absurdist or Transcendentalist (Bryant- Jackson 274-276). African Diaspora theatre and performance art reflect its various cultures. *Beethoven* is a perfect example. It is a combination of all of these theatrical genres; it is complicated, fragmented and packed. The same can be said about *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*.

(It is) the capacity to survive and aspire, to be contrary and self-affirming across continents and generations. It names the strength and beauty we pass on as friends and

lovers from foremothers to mothers and daughters allowing us to survive radical cultural changes and be empowered through differences. Matrilineal Diaspora defines the links among Black women worldwide enabling us to experience distinct but related cultures while retaining a special sense of home as the locus of self-definition and power. (Chinsole in Bryant-Jackson 282)

The African Diaspora experience is so full of different cultures and traditions. This creates the multiple memories that end up inhabiting the identity-space of just one individual. Bryant-Jackson has the courage to highlight this complicated fact when speaking about Kennedy's play, *Beethoven*, wherein lies the continuous interaction of differing cultural signifiers, operating in the same story-line in the life and mind of its main character, Suzanne Alexander.

When Kennedy's characters move on the African continuum, everything that composes them travels as well. For example, Sarah brings the Duchess of Hapsburg (who is also Bette Davis in *Juarez*) into the jungle. As a result the images of the self (or selves) accompanying the central characters are travellers on the continua as well. Thus the images exhibit African-American, Aframerican, African, European, and European-American features and contribute to the conflict! (Bryant-Jackson p. 276)

Looking to Africa for sources of theatre and inspiration, I found Maishe Maponya's *The Hungry Earth* both enthralling and useful in terms of developing my own story about South Africa. This play, written in 1979, captures the core political issues of unrest surrounding black South Africans and the apartheid state. These were the treatment and living conditions of black South Africans as a direct result of the white South African domination of the precious resources in that region, particularly gold and diamonds. Maponya tells a story about black mine workers from their point of view, as well as from the point of view of the African soil itself, if it could talk. *The Hungry Earth* is another example of that African Diasporic device of combining the everyday, the spiritual and the artistic. Throughout Maponya's dramatic account of South Africa's

shameful political circumstances in 1979, its readership can hear the Gumboots dance, the call and response of the mine workers' songs and the cry of 'the hungry earth'. Those same dances, songs and cries are the subtext for *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*; they belong to my grandmother's history, psychological and genetic make-up, and therefore to mine as well. The story of those mine workers is one tale of the African Diaspora and of South African history, while my grandmother's and mine is another, now becoming part of Canadian history. It seems, then, that members of the African Diaspora born and/or living outside of Africa have both a physical and emotional relationship to the African continent. How much, then, do the artistic endeavours, relationship to identity and sources of healing depend on a harkening back or re-union with Africa for members of the Diaspora?

Harkening back to Africa has been very important to me over the years on an imaginative, practical, emotional and physical level in terms of figuring out who I am, how I would like to live my life, who I would like to meet, what kind of vocation I would like to have, the type of relationship I wished to have with my African family and, yes, as a source of inspiration for the play *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*. This quest for identity and healing via an artistic medium is symbolized by Claudia's character in the play. Though Claudia cannot solve many of the personality and cultural clashes that exist within her family, the play denotes the way in which she dialogues with these issues by framing them in the context of community as she does her Afro-Caribbean dancing. Another similarly fanciful, young, black, female character is Penny in Addena Sumpter-Frietag's *Stay Black and Die*. Ms. Sumpter-Frietag's truly black Canadian story is beautiful and inspiring. I really felt a sense of camaraderie with this play and its author.

*Stay Black and Die* is absolutely contemporary and yet its reader is whole-heartedly transported to Winnipeg in the 1950's, never to leave until a tear falls on the last page. Sumpter-Frietag brings her mother's voice to life, as well as the Nova Scotian community from which she comes. Both plays are examples of African Diaspora theatre as well as African Western Canadian theatre.

It is true that artists and works of art by members of the African Diaspora do hearken back to Africa for inspiration and original source material; however, this is just one component of the creative process. It is so important to remember every year that has gone by since people began to migrate from their indigenous environments (including forms of trade, exploration, slavery and colonization), creating a wealth of mixed or 'creolized' cultures all over the earth. Many, if not all, members of the African Diaspora reside in communities where African culture is most definitely embedded into their own particular black culture. It is embedded into mine here in Vancouver, B.C. and was in 1950 in Winnipeg for Addena Sumpter-Frietag. *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* is encased by Africa at its back, works of the same genre that will be written after it, and it was spawned in all that watery middle-space of the triad of everyday life, spirituality and art, common to so many cultures throughout the African Diaspora. In terms of this continuum, it never was and always is.

4. Another theme running through much of the academic banter and literary emulations of the black experience is the very 'visibility' of the black body.

Black people are born, educated, live, work and die in the societies, communities and countries about which 'their literature' is written. They have no choice but to see and be seen; to walk those various streets and to interact with the other characters that reside there. The question of visibility asks what happens to black people as they go through the motions of everyday life. Are they incorporated into the political sphere and can they become victims of persecution even if they attempt to 'mind their own business', 'cooperate with the system' and 'stay out of trouble'? Many of the academic commentaries and literary works by members of the Diaspora shout a resounding "Yes!!!!" Their authors write in such a way as to emphasize the unavoidable fate of political interaction and witness to injustice that can and will befall each one of the African Diaspora's members. These works describe the black body as being innately and unavoidably political. Amanda Denise Kemp's article, "This Black Body in Question," contained in the performance studies anthology *The Ends of Performance*, is a personal question and answer with regards to the very visibility of the black body in the societies in which members of the African Diaspora live. The title of Ralph Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man*, combined with the tumultuous experiences the hero faces, clearly through no fault of his own, highlight the black body as a receptacle for political injustice. The fast-paced onslaught of action surrounding the hero in *Invisible Man* makes him a target for victimization, not because he is ill behaved but because of the inner mechanical workings of the society, in fact the world, in which he lives. *Invisible Man* is a painful sling of arrows at the heart of humanity, a heart that hopes for justice and a concept of fairness to prevail. Ellison's viewpoint in the novel is so clear; it is that the only way for the tirade of abuse and disenfranchisement to cease for the hero is to take his body out of

sight. The *Invisible Man* is not at all invisible; he is ultra-visible in the way that he is a site/sight for punishment and at the same time his identity as an individual is erased because he is allowed to be punished and hurt for no reason and through no fault of his own as he strives to do good. The society in which he lives denies him a name, making him a 'black body in question' (Kemp).

As the author of *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, a member of the African Diaspora and someone affected by the work of these other writers, I have chosen to write a story that I know firsthand about what can happen to you when you are born black. The heroine, Carrie, is the 'black body in question'. This story has been told to me over and over again by my grandmother because it happened to her. The way my grandmother tells it is this: When you are born black you face a lot of hardship all your life. It is better to be born white. I was always told that I had it better for a number of reasons but mostly because I looked white. I never liked that story. It felt rude, harsh and uncomfortable. I never wanted to be a contributor to that narrative and always wanted to find some way to break it down so that it did not make sense any-more to anyone – particularly to my grandmother. I did not want her to feel that way. But the truth is that at 98 years old, through all her successes and failures, she holds that view of the world to be true and perhaps always will. It breaks my heart and I do not want my children, who are much darker than myself, to grow up with that opinion. That is why I do the work that I do, both in the field of Afro-contemporary performance and as a member of Vancouver's black community. It is the reason I have written *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*; so that I can have some control over the way black people are

represented and so that I will have done my part as a member, albeit a very light-skinned member, of the African Diaspora.

In all three texts, the black body is the basis for theoretical, psychological, social and political discussion with regards to its (re)presentation. A discussion on the visibility of the black body highlights issues of representation, agency and physical presentation. The texts provide scenarios that are real, remembered and theoretical, about what happens when the black body physically appears in conjunction with other human bodies of similar and different ethnicities. In both *Invisible Man* and *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, the physical truth of 'being black' propels unwanted incidents simply by virtue of a black body appearing in the public sphere. The (anti)hero of *Invisible Man* puts an end to the problem of 'being black' by going underground. He physically removes his black body from the public sphere. In *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, the heroine combats her bleak/black reality by finding a way into a seat of power in her society; in other words making herself part of the power structure that would hold other 'black bodies in question'. As a Colored property owner in Cape Town during apartheid, Carrie would have been privy to the same badly exploited black labour force (to build her houses) as the white population. The two methods used for solving the question of oppression for blacks in *Invisible Man* and *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, exile and co-option respectively, are simply survival tactics and in being so do not offer opportunities for healing or change, either for the heroes of these two stories or the societies from which they come. Ellison's writing is a statement about the bitter treatment of blacks in American society. Is Ellison saying that all African Americans should exile themselves from the United States of America? That

is the subject for a lengthy discussion. However, there is one fact about *Invisible Man*; it is a strong political statement about the treatment of the average man or woman of African descent in America. The opinion of that statement is that this treatment is not good, neither is it 'good enough,' and as all literary works intend, this one, too, works to affect change in the minds of its readership through the shocking picture it paints. The solutions to the torment of 'being black' for the hero of *Invisible Man* and the heroine of *Lost Lesotho Princess* are not optimum. They provide a reprieve from the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' (Shakespeare), and a solution to some of the problems faced by these characters. However, they are temporary solutions. The real solution for members of the African Diaspora seems to be in the process of writing itself - just as Ellison's work has affected me, so will my work affect the next generation and so on. It is the process of contemplation; of picking up the pen, (which is mightier than the sword), and speaking about where you come from, what you see and where you think you are going that provides a form of documentation, history and the possibility for positive political reform. This process is the healing and the happy ending that so many stories about the African Diaspora may not provide.

Carrie's ascent into the powerful position of a property owner provides limited solace from the unfair politics of her government. In the end, a similar notion of exile is invoked as in *Invisible Man* as Carrie and her family must leave South Africa due to her political involvement in the movement toward equality for all black South Africans. This is very similar, thematically, to *Invisible Man*, whose hero's involvement in a black power organization is the final thing that leads to his exile from American society and to a life underground. *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, "This Black Body in



Question” and *Invisible Man* locate the black body as the site of visible and cultural difference, making it the launching pad for their authors’ stories about the African Diaspora. In *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, this theme is expressed by telling Carrie’s life story. Carrie’s story is the story my grandmother told me about what happened to her as a black woman with special attention given to the way she was treated by members of her own family, as well as the way the South African politics of her time categorized her. Those politics, which determined the way South African society operated, are personified by the character of Mr. Rubinowitz, Carrie’s Jewish lawyer. Rubinowitz is likened to the Boss in *A Raisin in the Sun*. Both can be considered minor characters; indeed in *A Raisin in the Sun* the Boss is never even seen, yet he wields great power over the life of the plays’ main character. Both Mr. Rubinowitz and the Boss symbolize the direct oppression inflicted on blacks by the formerly racist government politics of the Republic of South Africa and the United States of America.

5. This section addresses the lives of mixed blacks with a focus on the narratives surrounding ‘light-skinned’ blacks and how this subject relates to the idea of liminality and being ‘invisible’.

*Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* takes on themes and issues of colour prejudice including gradations of blackness and their accompanying narratives both inside and outside of the black communities in Vancouver, B.C. and Cape Town. Both communities are represented by the microcosm of the family. Influential texts on this subject are Gayle Jones’ *Corregidora*, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching*

*God* and Morris Panych's *Vigil*. With the exception of the last example, much of the hardship faced by the heroines of these novels and of the play *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* are directly tied to their particular 'shade of black'. This re-occurring theme of high visibility and simultaneous invisibility is a two-sided coin, an endless quagmire in *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* and other texts from the African Diaspora which highlight the political nature of the black body. In these texts, the black body is noted as being highly visible as it appears in the various societies of the African Diaspora where there is a history of either slavery or colonialism, and, by its very visibility, can be victimized through the denial of basic human and civil rights. Therefore, the theme of visibility of the black body is presented mainly as a material one, while the political assessment of the denial of civil rights towards blacks becomes more of a social and psychological argument. This dialogue is present in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and the performance article by Amanda Denise Kemp titled "This Black Body in Question." Each of these texts works to paint a picture of the particular society the author is writing about. Their commentary details the politics of a society that renders the black body political beyond its *control* or *choice*. If black is the farthest point from white and bad is the farthest point from good, then the description of each is based upon its opposition to the other. Therefore, when other characters besides the hero or heroine speak about 'the black body in question' (Kemp), react to it, and insist upon defining that body, those characters reinforce the political make-up of the society they inhabit. The dialogue between 'the black body in question' and the other characters in the text builds (or perhaps in these cases documents, commemorates or historicizes) a

narrative about what it means to be black and to be white. Necessarily, this narrative will also give rise to ideas about what it means to be every colour in-between.

Though it may seem logical that the societies documented in these texts would only facilitate rigidity and inhibit change, the opposite effect can also be found. The existing definitions of members of the African Diaspora in their various societies are ever changing, growing, multiplying and *mixing*, causing these definitions to splinter, as well as be tested for their credibility. In every citizen, an imperfection to the master narrative is found and subsequently written about by authors of the African Diaspora. Such circumstances defy an absolute definition of people or the politics under which they live; one that says that black is the farthest point from white and that good is the farthest point from bad.

An important part of this topic, and one presented in *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, is whether being of mixed race, i.e. a 'light-skinned black', gives you a greater propensity for inhabiting a liminal space, or in contrast, achieving success or happiness? When I use the term 'liminal' I refer to its use in the field of performance studies to mean 'in-between' or on the margins of society (McKenzie 166). If we conclude for a moment that being 'light-skinned' does give one a greater propensity for inhabiting a 'liminal space', what then, is the relationship between one's shade of black, inhabiting a 'liminal space' and being invisible? And *to whom* are these liminal characters invisible?

Theatre and Performance Studies professor Joseph Roach writes about multi-racial people, in particular the 'black Indians' of the United States together with their tradition of folklore and ritual performance in the form of carnival in his book *Cities of*

*the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. Roach's research on the carnival of African Americans who also have Native American ancestry defies the normal categorization of American citizens. The photographs Roach includes are shocking to the eye; what appears to be a group of African-Americans are dressed up in Native American regalia as they parade through the streets, publicly assuming their Native American identity. The photographs may strike most people as odd, as if the photograph is of a masquerade, a farce, even a joke. The photograph defies what American society allows for in terms of identity and those properties which are thought to belong to an African-American identity or a Native American identity. Yet, for these 'black Indians' there is nothing out of place. The African-Americans the viewer sees partaking in Native American dress, custom and a show of pride in identity are doing so because they are, in fact, Native Americans. Just as it has been 300 years or more since the first Africans touched the shores of North and South America and the Caribbean as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the same amount of time has passed (including the propensity for interaction) between those Africans, the various First Nations groups and European settlers of the same regions. In the play *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*, I take on the fact that it is the reality of many members of the African Diaspora, particularly in places like Canada, the United States, the Caribbean and many South American countries, to be as much white as you are black. Many people of European descent in the New World are as much First Nations, of Asian or African descent as they are European. In Brazil, it is common to be equal parts European, indigenous Indian and African. To be a member of the African Diaspora in any of these places is to be part of a 'creolized' culture: a mixed culture that combines the traditions of the ethnic groups that make up a particular society.

This is the reality of identity for members of the African Diaspora from these parts of the world and many others. However, it does not mean that people have given up on categorizing themselves ethnically. We are not at the point yet when people no longer want to be called African Canadian, Chinese or First Nations. There are very few people who consider themselves evolved enough, simply to consider themselves 'multi-racial' or 'multi-national'. It sounds very mature, rational and well thought-out. However, it can leave one feeling cold. It signifies a detachment from one's roots, as if one's ethnicity could easily be replaced by another on a person whose history has been shuffled like a Rubik's cube. A few people have tried going this route and have been the subject of public ridicule. The pro-golfer Tiger Woods comes to mind, when the American media took time to consult various opinions from the American public regarding Wood's decision to use a more ambiguous label than African-American.

The next question then becomes: Does being a multi-ethnic person discredit you from laying claim to any one ethnicity legitimately? My answer here is a resounding, "No!" In this day and age, multi-ethnic individuals may finally have the opportunity to approach, contribute and define their relationship to their identity in a way that is honest and suitable to them as well as to impact larger, more homogeneous ethnic groups. This becomes very important in circumstances where people of mixed ancestry make up a large portion - in some cases more than half - of a particular ethnic community. The contribution of people of mixed heritage is particular, special and politically beneficial to notions of equality, inclusiveness and civil rights. Many of the political and literary heroes of the African Diaspora are mixed race individuals. Angela Davis, Malcom X, Langston Hughes and Zab Maboungou come to mind; and the heroines in Zora Neale

Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Gayle Jones' *Corregidora* offer an intimate look into the life and mind of the 'light-skinned' members of the African Diaspora.

The idea of a liminal space, with reference to its use in performance studies, can be described as an 'in-between' space or a space on the fringes of society; definitely not main-stream (McKenzie 166). This is an important idea for the field of performance studies as it works to broaden the scope and definition of what can be considered performance, necessarily including much more than the established genres of theatre, dance, music, etc. Similarly, many of the subjects and subject matter of contemporary theatre and performance can be described as inhabiting this 'liminal space'; in a case where the people and the subject(s) are not easily categorized according to established norms because their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc., may not be homogeneous, or they may fall under the category of a disenfranchised or minority group, or both. Performance studies and many other fields study the social and economic ramifications of inhabiting a 'liminal space', locating oneself or being located on the fringes of society or belonging to a disenfranchised or minority group. One of the most notable ramifications and one touched on thematically in Claudia's monologue in *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* and in Morris Panych's play *Vigil* is whether such persons become 'invisible' to members of the dominant society. Neither white, black, gay, straight, man or woman, they do not properly belong to any one category and thus the reality of their very existence is questioned. Though it may seem unusual to note, Oprah Winfrey dedicated one of her shows this past year to this very subject. Winfrey interviewed different 'bi-racial' children who testified to feeling 'invisible' at school and

amongst their peer group. They said that no one played with them and that they had no friends; that people around them seemingly did not notice them. Panych's play *Vigil* is about just such a character, though colour is not the defining factor. Instead, Panych raises issues about the narratives and norms surrounding sexuality and class and how these factor into one's public persona as well as one's propensity for being socially accepted and included. All of these issues spiral out of control in the mind of the main character, Kemp, as he plays out 'what could have been' and 'what never was' on an old 'aunt' that is not really his aunt. Panych runs through the list of ingredients needed to fulfill the North American Dream of friendship, career, family and community on someone whose inability to be properly categorized renders him ineligible for this dream, and Kemp really does dream about it.

*Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* pinpoints the feelings of liminality and invisibility experienced by 'light-skinned' blacks in both the dominant white society as well as in black society through the character of Claudia. Just as there are myths and narratives about being 'blue-black' (it is common to hear black people say "He was so black he was blue!"), equivalent narratives exist about being 'mulatto' or 'light-skinned'. These narratives belonging to the cultures of the African Diaspora stem from the history of the 'house Negroes and field Negroes' and 'passing for white,' notions pertinent to South African society particularly during apartheid, and are also the subject of the classic American movie, *Imitation of Life*. The multiple histories of the African Diaspora, the circumstances out of which these narratives were both created and perpetuated, have in common their traditions of colonialism and slavery which subjugated blacks economically, physically and sexually. *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* comments

directly on this subject. The overall effect of the play suggests that ‘we’, meaning black people, white people and everyone in-between, need healing. Racism and colour prejudice, including these narratives associated with one’s shade, are extremely damaging. They separate members of the same family, valuing one individual over another on the basis of something no one has control over – the colour of their skin. They cause people to try to take control in unhealthy ways; mostly by trying to disassociate themselves from the colour which is considered to be bad, which has classically and historically been black, by trying to breed it out of themselves or their children and by placing unrealistic expectations on those whom they feel have already been successfully (en)lightened! Colour prejudice creates generational dysfunction and pain, misunderstanding and self-hatred. *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* documents the real history of one family within the African Diaspora spanning five generations, including its genealogical history, its emotional and spiritual history and the responsibility felt by the youngest generation for its contemporary healing.

I hope to contribute something new and original to the existing body of African Diaspora literature by delivering a story that is truthful, particular, layered and complex. *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears* raises the question: Did all of this really happen, is it still happening and what does that mean for us in the African Diaspora? Most of the engagement in literature for a reader happens when the writing envelopes you in a way that makes you feel like you are actually there. Anyone who has ever felt this way while reading or, in the case of theatre, while watching, knows that it makes one feel both excited and fearful. One element a writer uses to bring about this effect is writing what they know. When there is no question that a writer totally knows their world, that they



come from that world and that there is nothing they cannot explain about that world (in some way or another), the reader believes and when they believe they can be influenced. That is what every writer wants to do: to influence the minds of their readership, to impress them and impress upon them some information of a particular nature. Essentially, the writer wants to achieve a level of excellence and they must do this by producing a finished and, hopefully, insightful and provocative piece of work.

Eric Sundquist states that the primary reason *Invisible Man* was so successful and influential when it was published in 1947 was “the author’s proximity to the story he told” in his book, *Cultural Contexts for Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man* (Sundquist 7). *Invisible Man* is a historical account of political ideas; a summation of African American history during the first half of the twentieth century and the revelation of what can and did happen to a deep-feeling, young, black man on his way to realizing himself. “Ralph Ellison and his invisible man were the protagonist for his time” (Sundquist 7). Due to this fact, *Invisible Man* actually becomes a type of historical documentation for African American history. This is what I have hoped to accomplish by writing *Lost Lesotho Princess/Landlord Ears*. Just as the protagonist in *Corregidora* is the repository for her great-grandmother’s story (and essentially her family history), I have been the repository for my grandmother’s story and my family history. My grandmother, Rose Landers (born Carrie MacFarlane), was born in pre-apartheid Cape Town, South Africa in 1910 to a half-French, half African mother and an African father. She immigrated to Vancouver, B.C., Canada in 1967, already a senior citizen, and lives here to this day. She has been as difficult as she has been helpful. I have loved her and hated her. I have loved and hated our history and I have loved and hated myself.

My grandmother has been telling me her stories ever since I can remember, mostly because she is obsessed with what happened to her and a little bit crazy because it did. She also has a real flair for drama, so between her and my mother, I come by it honestly. The only difference between my grandmother and me is the direction I have taken, and been free to take, my creativity, talent and the stories that I hold. Everyone suffers and I am no exception. However, the kind of suffering my grandmother endured in South Africa, including the degree to which she and other blacks were denied agency and opportunity as well as the social and psychological abuse perpetuated on them by an officially racist government, will hopefully never be repeated. I have a Jewish friend whose mother is a holocaust survivor. Trained as a medical doctor, she is now debilitated from interrelated physical and emotional pain. She is avoided and misunderstood by the rest of her family and a source of emotional pain for her own daughter. My grandmother parallels this woman in some ways, though she is certainly not debilitated. Instead, she is as tough as ever. She has fought like a lion to get what she wanted or thought she needed, to improve her circumstances, and has never stopped fighting. She loves but her good intentions are often over-shadowed by a vicious tongue that cuts into those close to her. Her tongue remembers all of the humiliation she bears on account of her colour, and although her colour is no longer a source of humiliation but, rather, of pride and survival, she has been operating in defensive mode for so long that her gear-shift is stuck. She now resides in a posh rest-home in West Vancouver, where she carries on a romance with a white gentleman and imagines that it is the purpose of every one of the rest-home's staff to sabotage their relationship because of this man's status, wealth and what it could mean for her future (and mine as she likes to remind me)! She is 98 years old and her

boyfriend is 95. In reality, she is much wealthier than he and marches along like a soldier while her companion is, literally, on his last legs. Of my South African family, her husband (my Cape Malay grandfather) has died, her son (my father the 'black, Arab, Jew' as he liked to call himself) has died, and she and I are the Last and Lost Lesotho Princess(es).

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