

CAN AMERICA BE AMERICA AT ALL?



If you are seeking justice for all who have suffered and for all who have died because of racism, please read! This is a CALL TO ACTION!



Film Clip One:
Dr. King's "I've Been
To The Mountaintop"
speech



Protesters gather in Minneapolis during a rally sparked by the death of George Floyd.
(Photo by Carlos Gonzalez/Star Tribune)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover artwork is a photo of a mural created in June 2020 by painter Fouad Hachmi near Brussels, Belgium.

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Photo Credits: Photo One: Protesters gather in Minneapolis during a rally sparked by the death of George Floyd. Photo by Carlos Gonzalez/Star Tribune) reprinted here under the “Fair Use” provision of Copyright law as it pertains to materials used for educational purposes. Photo two: Photo of five boys sitting atop a Pontiac Silver Streak while waiting for easter Sunday services to begin was taken on Easter Sunday, April 13, 1941, across the street from the Regal Theater in Chicago’s Bronzeville Neighborhood by Russell Lee, a photographer from the federal government’s ‘Farm Security Administration’ and is reprinted here under the “Fair Use” provision of Copyright law as it pertains to materials used for educational purposes.

See next page for **Film Clip Credits**.



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Whenever you come across one of the **nine Raised Fist** icons in the booklet, simply use your phone to scan the image and your phone will come alive with digital extras to enhance your reading experience. Each fist is only part of the trigger. The complete trigger is a rectangle approximately 2.25 inches in height and 4.75 inches in length.

About Device Compatibility

Some devices may not properly display the AR content. AR functionality is dependent on the year, make, manufacturer, processor, storage, speed and/or operating system of the device.

What trigger #2 looks like (actual size slightly larger):

... meaning and implications of Hughes' poem in line-by-line protests across the nation demanding not only justice for those who have suffered and for all who have died because of these racial boundaries and are calling for an end to racism and pain caused by inequality of any kind. Though progress in civil rights for disenfranchised and marginalized groups has been made, there has been much that has not changed at the heart of us who have fought against racism and the effects of it. Far has not been enough. What we are doing today, at

at All” as a call to action. I wrote the poem in three days.

Please rotate your phone or viewing device to a “landscape” position for optimal viewing.



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Film clip one: Opening and closing segment from a photo of the George Floyd mural, a painting by Fouad Hachmi, Belgium; segment of Dr. King's "I've Been To The Mountaintop" speech originally capture by ABC News in 1968; segment of Dr. King's assassination from *AP ShortDocs: The Assassination of MLK Jr., 50 Years Later*, narrated by Warren Levinson.

Film clip two: Bronzeville clip from an interview with Harold Lucas for the documentary *Talking Black in America* (The Language and Life Project, NC State © 2020).

Film clip three: "Wade in the Water" produced and performed by Cynthia Liggins Thomas. "Wade in the Water" 1925 version by The Sunset Four Jubilee Singers.

Film clip four: Photograph shows a flag flown from an upper story window of the NAACP headquarters on 69 Fifth Avenue, New York City, announcing that "a man was lynched yesterday." 1936; clip from *The Great Debaters* released by MGM © 2007; clip of The Legacy Museum and Memorial from Pain and Terror: America Remembers its Past" produced by The Guardian © 2018. Photo collage: 1-The Lynching of Frank McManus, 1882 (Library of Congress); 2- The Lynching of Henry Smith, February 3, 1893, Paris, Texas, Photo by J. L. Mertins (Library of Congress); 3- The Lynching of Henry Smith, February 3, 1893, Paris, Texas, Photo by J. L. Mertins (Library of Congress); 4-front page of Jackson, Mississippi Daily News June 26, 1919; 5-Members of the British arm of the NAACP protest against American violence against blacks, 1930 (Library of Congress); 6-A poster protesting blow torch lynchings which took place while the Wagner Van-Nuys bill was pending before the United States congress, November 29, 1937 (Photo by *Afro American Newspapers*); 7-8-Images of Emmitt Till while alive and as a mutilated corpse in his casket by *The Chicago Defender and Jet Magazine* (© 1955); 9-Protestors demand President Truman take action against lynching, 1946 © Bettmann (Library of Congress); 10- Chris Martinez and others march during a Black Lives Matter protest in east Boston on Saturday June 13, 2020, Craig Walker © The Boston Globe; 11- Photo of Senator Kamala Harris admonishing Senator Paul Rand for blocking the passage of the Dyer anti-lynching bill (Now This News/CSPAN, June 10, 2020). Globe Last 1:20 of audio track: "Hold On" (A Negro Spiritual) sung by DEM Singers (DeMarcus Bolds, Eric Arceneaux, Michael Bryant); uploaded to Youtube in 2012.

Film clip five: Initial segment from "Why did George Floyd die? The history of police brutality in the U.S." – BBC © 2020. "Black Lives Matter Movement" created and uploaded to YouTube by GlobalCitizen.org © 2017. Closing film montage: video and montage sequence, marching for Black Lives Movement May 30, 2020 (Christina Phillips for NHPR.org); photo from article by CNN ("Thousands around the world protest George Floyd's death in global display of solidarity") June 1, 2020; photo from LA Times ("False news swirls around Minneapolis officer in George Floyd arrest") May 28, 2020; photo from Newsweek Magazine ("All Black Lives Matter' Mural Painted on Hollywood Boulevard Washed Away, L.A. City Looking for Permanent Location") June 15, 2020. Closing sequence audio: Black National Anthem by Ceresia - Acapella - Black Lives Matter - Lift Every Voice © 2020.

Film clip six: Introductory clip titled *Forty Acres and a Mule* produced by Reconstruction360.org that serves as an introduction to the information on their website; uploaded on the South Carolina ETV YouTube channel © 2019. Photos for photo collage from Library of Congress. Audio: Chris Thomas King - hard time killin' floor blues © 1998.

Film clip seven: Clips of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" Speech produced by *The History Channel* © 2018.

Film clip eight: from the trailer for the movie *The New World*; Newline Cinema © 2005; Excerpted clips from *Colonists and Slaves - America's Immigration History: Part 2* of a 6-part series on immigration in America produced by *The Daily Conversation* © 2014. Excerpted clips from *The European Wave - America's Immigration History: Part 3* of a 6-part series on immigration in America produced by *The Daily Conversation* © 2014. Excerpted footage from *Island of Hope – Island of Tears* uploaded by PublicResource.Org; created by The National Park Service © 1992. Closing interviews -*The Atlantic* at UCLA © 2018.

Film clip nine: from *Origin of the Dream – "Podcast C"* – part of a series produced by CashWorks HD Productions © 2017.

A CALL TO ACTION

Eighty-four years ago, Langston Hushes published his great poem “Let America Be America Again” in the July issue of *Esquire* magazine. Hughes’ poem speaks of the American dream that never was because it did not exist for African-Americans, indigenous people, poor immigrants, in short it did not exist for all lower-class Americans, and in this sense, it was an indictment of American society of the day. But Hughes was also a hopeful idealist, he must have been, for his poem also conveys a sense that the American Dream would soon be realized for all those who were disenfranchised.

That was eighty-four years ago and the dream still does not exist as a reality; it hardly exists as an ideal. So I wrote “Can America Be America At All,” partly as a way to pay homage to Hughes, and partly to reflect on the meaning and implications of Hughes’ poem in line-by-line fashion in light of the wave of protests across the nation demanding not only justice for George Floyd, but justice for all who have suffered and for all who have died because of racism, protests that seem to cut across racial boundaries and are calling for an end to racism period, and a final end to the suffering and pain caused by inequality of any kind. Though there have been tremendous changes in civil rights for disenfranchised and marginalized Americans since Hughes published his poem, there has been much that has not changed at all. What we (and by “we” I mean those of us who have fought against racism and the effects of racism all our lives) have done so far has not been enough. What we are doing today, at least so far, is still not enough.

I wrote “Can America Be America At All” as a call to action. I wrote the poem in three days, June 28-30. I thought it fitting to present it to the world on July 4th, eighty-four years to the month after Hughes published his poem.

—Peter Damian Bellis



Film Clip Two:
Bronzeville.

CAN AMERICA BE AMERICA AT ALL?

(A line by line reflection on “Let America be America Again” by the great poet Langston Hughes)
by Peter Damian Bellis

Can America be America at all?
Can the dream be reconciled with the past?
Who dreamed this dream of freedom ere the Fall?
How long until we all are “free at last”?

(America never was a mirror to itself.)

America, the promised promise and the curse,
A paradise for lovers of the young and strong
Where many a Congressman quotes Bible, chapter, verse
To blur the line between what’s right and what is wrong.

(Is this what America has become? Or was it always thus?)

I, too, do wish my land was free from riot and from strife,
A land where Inequality did never asphyxiate our hope,
Where false Messiahs did never preach away one single life,
But the suffering is real, a knee on neck, a hanging rope.

(Will the promise of America outlive its death?
Who will speak its glory with their last resounding breath?)

Say, who are they that stumble blind with suffocating rage?
And who are they that hide amongst the thorny foliage?

We are the indigenous martyrs, raped and scalped and left to rot,
We are the children of the separate dead, murdered by the slaver’s hand.
We are the starving farmers who bled our blood into the earth,
We are the disenfranchised multitudes arriving daily from some distant shore—
And finding that America is haven to hot gospelers of little worth,
The lines are drawn, ploughshares and pruninghooks are fast becoming swords.

We are older now, weary and crippled but optimistic still,
Chained to a litany of past failure and regret,
Of hand to mouth, of poverty, of catch me if you can!
Of death, of dying in the streets, of witness to whiteness without end!
Of give me a job! Of forgive us our sins!
Of marching arm in arm with our true friends!

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Film Clip Three:
“Wade in the Water”
produced and per-
formed by Cynthia
Liggins Thomas.



Film Clip Four:
Lynching in America
(WARNING: Video
clip contains graphic
material. May not
be suitable for some
viewers!)

We are the privileged, bleeding our fragility into the air.
 We are the brutalized, our voices police-clubbed into silence.
 We are the hateful, damning lies, the food of our despair.
 We are the caste of serving hands, hopeful, angry, tense—
 Angry still today at those who do but mouth the dream.
 Nothing changes still today—we cannot breathe!
 We are the ones who have fallen far behind,
 Our only freedom is our greatest grief.

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Yes, the dreaming of the dream did give the hopeless hope,
 A New World myth where streets were paved with gold,
 This was always the allure, the shining City on the Hill,
 But truth is darker than the dream, a truth we sold
 On auction blocks without regard to age or creed
 Or wedding rings, this is how we made the land
 And then the lie that each and every man was king,
 A hundred thousand sovereigns to rule o'er shotgun
 Shacks and rotting flats, where both the water and the air
 Do breed disease as deadly as this plague of inhumanity,
 Of White on Black and Black on White and every color in between,
 That festers in our hearts and minds “from sea to shining sea.”

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That festers?

Who said festers? Does anybody need to ask?

Surely not the millions marching in the city streets?
 The millions gassed with tear gas and hurled to the ground?
 The millions who have lost their jobs and cannot get a bite to eat?
 For all the dreamers who still can dream a dream
 And all the anthems we have screamed
 And all the fears that we have shed
 And all the marches we have led,
 The millions who have raised their voice—
 All to resurrect a dream that's now a choice.

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O, can America be America at all—
 A country that has failed at every turn to *be* the dream
 In flesh and blood—and yet the time is now!
 This land that's ours—every woman, man and child—
 Must a legacy of living life reclaim,
 Whose pluck and mettle, whose integrity and shame,

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Film Clip Five:
 Marching for the
 Black Lives Matter
 Protest movement.

Whose labor in each factory or farm or shop or school,
Must gird itself together, but it's something we must choose!

Sure, the ugly naming has begun, the race-baiting, the gaslighting—
Can we steel ourselves against this anti-freedom storm?
From those who like a virus spread calumny and hate,
Can we push back, protect, reject, rebuild, re-*form*—
Is America the goal?

O, yes,
I know what's real,
The America that never was,
Was never the ideal—
Yet it has to be!

How can we survive this road that leads to ruin?
Is there a difference between one killer cop (of many)
Now in jail for forty years and the promise of forty acres
And a mule? A disgraced statue in pieces on the ground
Is not enough. Neither is the act of taking down
A racist flag— A battle won can also be a battle lost.
So we the people must begin to force the change we seek.
The cities, the small-town squares, the fishing boats, the family farms,
The movie houses, the welfare lines, the packing plants, the prisons
And the schools, the cattle ranches, the homeless shelters, the church bazaars,
The downtown drugstores, the strip malls, the endless neon night—
All of this from every state we must unite and make our country
Whole for once, for ALL, and therefore truly free!

July 2020

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Film Clip Six:
The Promise of Forty
Acres and a Mule!

LET AMERICA BE AMERICA AGAIN

(Published in *Esquire Magazine* in July 1936)

by Langston Hughes

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

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Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

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O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

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Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

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I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

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Film Clip Seven:
Martin Luther King's
"I Have A Dream"
Speech.

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
 I am the worker sold to the machine.
 I am the Negro, servant to you all.
 I am the people, humble, hungry, mean—
 Hungry yet today despite the dream.
 Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!
 I am the man who never got ahead,
 The poorest worker bartered through the years.

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Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
 In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
 Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
 That even yet its mighty daring sings
 In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
 That's made America the land it has become.
 O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
 In search of what I meant to be my home—
 For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
 And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
 And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
 To build a "homeland of the free."

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The free?

Who said the free? Not me?

Surely not me? The millions on relief today?
 The millions shot down when we strike?
 The millions who have nothing for our pay?
 For all the dreams we've dreamed
 And all the songs we've sung
 And all the hopes we've held
 And all the flags we've hung,
 The millions who have nothing for our pay—
 Except the dream that's almost dead today.

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O, let America be America again—
 The land that never has been yet—
 And yet must be—the land where every man is free.
 The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—
 Who made America,
 Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,

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Film Clip Eight:
 The Journey to
 America.

Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain—
All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!

July 1936

Let America Be America Again

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Film Clip Nine:
The Dream of
Langston Hughes and
Martin Luther King.

Ollie Lee Brooks • Jimmie Montel Sanders • Kevin Bajoie • Ritchie Lee Harbison • Tashii S. Brown • Ricky DeAngelo Hinkle • Michael Ricardo Minor • Quintine Barksdale • Rayshaun Cole • Patricia Spivey • Ronnie Ledesma • Muhammad Abdul Mahaymin • Naeschylus Vinzant • Mark Roshawn Adkins • Kaldrick Donald • Mahlon Summerour • Sherida Davis • Trey Ta'Quan Pringle Sr. • Vernicia Woodard • Wendell Celestine Jr. • Yolanda Thomas • Yvette Smith • William Alfred Harvey III • Warren Ragudo • Vernell Bing Jr. • Ryan Twyman • Leroy Browning • Leslie Sapp III • Balentine Mbegbu • Chinedu Valentine Okobi • Abdul Kamal • Emanuel Jean Baptiste • Adam Ardet Madson • Adam Trammell • Bishar Hassan • Cortez Washington • David Felix • Cimarron Lamar Lamb • Charley Leundeu Keunang • Craig Demps • Ernest Satterwhite • Ervin Edwards • DeJuan Guillory • DeRicco Devante Holden • Albert Davis • Ireatha Lilly • Alfred Olango • Allen Desdunes • Andre Horton • Andre Larone Murphy Sr. • Anneson Joseph • Anthony Antonio Ford • Anthony Dwayne Harris • Anthony Marcell Green • DeOntre L. Dorsey • Antonio Garcia Jr. • Elijah Glay • Antonio Johnson • Antwun Shumpert • James Leatherwood • Artago Damon Howard • Botham Shem Jean • Jason Moland • Jacorey Calhoun • Geraldine Townsend • Dajuan Graham • Deravis Caine Rogers • Jesse Jesus Quinton • Kevin Higgenbotham • Keara Crowder • Julian Dawkins • Joshua Harvey • Micah Anthony Key • Maurice Holley • Montez Dewayne Hambrick • Alexander Jamar Marion • Amir Brooks • Anthony Bartley • Antone G. Black Jr. • Aries Clark • Brandon Jones • Blatay McDuffie • Cameron Tillman • Cedrick Chatman • Charles D. Roundtree Jr. • Christopher Alexander Okamoto • D'etrick Griffin • Dalvin Hollins • Deion Fludd • Denzel Brown • George V. King • Isaiah Lewis • Jeremy Lake • Jimmy Atchison • Kionte DeShaun Spencer • Lavon King • Mansur Ball-Bey • Mark Anthony Blocker • Marquez Warren • Quanice Derrick Hayes • Raynard Burtin • Robert Dentmond • Tawon Boyd • Thomas Yatsko • Tyre King • Vonderrit Myers Jr. • William Chapman • Willie Sam • Willie Lee Bingham Jr. • Zikarious Flint • Trayvon Martin • Eric Garner • John Crawford III • Michael Brown • Ezell Ford-Dante Parker • Michelle Cusseaux • Laquan McDonald • Tanisha Anderson • Akai Gurley • Tamir Rice • Romain Brisbon • Jermain Reid • Matthew Ajibade • Frank Smart • Natasha McKenna • Tony Robinson • Anthony Hill • Mya Hall • Phillip White • Eric Hariss • Walter Scott • William Chapan II • Alexia Christian • Brendon Glenn • Victor Manuel LaRosa • Johnathan Sanders • Freddie Blue • Joseph Mann • Salvador Ellswood • Sandra Bland • Albert Joseph Davis • Jonathan Ferrell • Darius Stewart • Billy Ray Davis • Samuel Dubose • Michael Sabbie • Brian Keith Day • Christian Taylor • Keith Scott • Troy Robinson • Assham Pharaoh Manley • Felix Kumi • Keith Harrison McLeod • Junior Prosper • Lamontez Jones • Patterson Brown • Javier Ambler • Dominic Hutchinson • Anthony Asheford • Alonzo Smith • Tyree Crawford • India Kager • La'Vante Biggs • Michael Lee Marshall • Jamar Clark • Richard Perkins • Nathaniel Harris Pickett • Benji Lee Tignor • Miguel Espinal • Michael Noel • Jordan Davis • Kevin Matthews • Bettie Jones • Quintonio Legrier • Keith Childress Jr. • Janet Wilson • Randy Nelson • Jordan Edwards • Antronie Scott • Wendell Celestine • Amadou Diallo • Renisha McBride • Sean Bell • David Joseph • Calin Roquemore • Oscar Grant • Dyzhawn Perkins • Peter Gaines • Torrey Robinson • Darius Robinson • Kevin Hicks • Corey Jones • Mary Truxillo • Aiyana Jones • Freddie Gray • Terrance Crutcher • Demarcus Semer • Willie Tillman • Terrill Thomas • Sylville Smith • Alton Sterling • Philando Castile • Paul O'Neal • Alteria Woods • Aaron Bailey • tephon Clark • Antwon Rose II • Pamela Turner • Dominique Clayton • Atatiana Jefferson • Botham Jean Christopher Whitfield • Mubarak "Mubi" Soulemane • Eric Reason • Michael Lorenzo Dean • Breonna Taylor • Ahmaud Arbery • George Floyd • Manuel Ellis • Rayshard Brooks • And the countless Black lives that have been lost who have not been named . . .

