
Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix

GLOSSARY xv

INTRODUCTION

"I think this anthropology is just another way to call me a nigger."

Othman Sullivan xix

A NATION WITHIN A NATION

"Black men have no country, but they are a country in their hearts."

Joseph Langstaff

HANNAH NELSON: *"We are a nation primarily because we think we are a nation."* 3

HARRIET JONES: *"Sometimes I wonder if there are any other Americans besides us."* 10

JOHN OLIVER: *"That man has got his country and we are our country."* 14

THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY

"I'm not saying 'Yessir' to no damn cracker."

Jonathan Melton

RUTH SHAYS: *"When you don't know when you have been spit on, it does not matter too much what else you think you know."* 27

GRANT SMITH: *"In many ways I was more of a slave than most of my black ancestors."* 39

CAROLYN CHASE: *"Many people say our people are unpredictable."* 51

HOWARD ROUNDTREE: *"There is nothing on this earth as low and lazy and cowardly as a cracker."* 59

MABEL LINCOLN: *"I am a hard woman because I have had a hard time out here."* 64

THE MANY SHADES OF BLACK

"Too many blackfolks are fools about color and hair."

Mabel Lincoln

ERICA ALLEN: *"He looks as white as any white person, but you'd better not tell him that unless you are ready to go to war."* 73

ANGELA MCARTHUR: *"One reason the whole thing is so hard to deal with is that nobody really talks about it."* 76

CELIA DELANEY: *"It's sex and color that present the most difficulty, right?"* 83

ROSA WAKEFIELD: *"I don't trust anybody who would deny their color like that."* 87

CLINTON BANKS: *"I think that is rotten of them to lie to a blind man like that!"*
91

THE MOJO AND THE SAYSO

"The business of white men is to rule."

Jackson Jordan, Jr.

JACKSON JORDAN, JR.: *"The white man must pretend to know more than he does, but we must always show less than we know."* 95

PORTER MILLINGTON: *"Whitefolks are how folks and blackfolks are what folks."* 102

ALBERTA ROBERTS: *"The biggest difference between us and white people is that we know when we are playing."* 105

SIMS PATRICK: *"There are two kinds of whitefolks. A few live like they want to and the rest try to live like their big boss leaders."* 109

BERNARD VANDERSTELL: *"The power to do one thing is never the power to do all things."* 114

THE WELFARE SIEGE

"You cannot walk the streets without running into something bad."

Maynard Brown

JANET MCCRAE: *"We need to get up, not just get over."* 121

MELVIN GABRIEL WILMOT: *"These whitefolks is evermore giving people things they cannot use or do not want."* 127

HATTIE LANARCK: *"I thank God that I don't need anything from the white man."* 130

GILBERT LANARCK: *"You can't just take anything this man hands out, because he has a hundred different kinds of chains."* 132

KENNETH SIMMONS: *"You push enough for the white man and you get a Cadillac out of his small change."* 134

SEX AND WORK

"Hard work don't have a thing between its legs."

Nancy White

NANCY WHITE: *"When you lose control of your body, you have just about lost all you have in this world!"* 143

CLIFFORD YANCY: *"One thing about Cal'donia, if she don't want you, you are out of luck because that thing between her legs is hers and hers alone."* 157

MABEL JOHNS: *"He was a man and I was a woman, so we didn't neither of us have to raise the other."* 166

MAY ANNA MADISON: *"I can handle black men; what I can't handle is this prejudice."* 170

TURN

"I'm twenty-four, but sometimes I feel much older because the things I believe in are the old ways."

Margaret Lawson

YULA MOSES: *"Christ warned us by his life and death, so who am I that I should not warn my daughter by my life?"* 179

JOSEPH LANGSTAFF: *"If you teach your children to be fair and honest only some*

of the time and only to some people, you are really telling them that the truth is unimportant.” 183

EDITH BAKER: *“I feel like something heavy just rolled off my chest.” 188*

AVIS BRIAR: *“In high school they told me that it was the wonderful world of work and my father told me, ‘Shug, it’s a bitch out there.’ ” 190*

MARGARET LAWSON: *“A junkie generally has to mess up the people he can— that means his mother or his sisters or his brothers.” 194*

ELLEN SAUNDERS: *“My daughter listens to me sometimes, but I listened to my mother all the time.” 200*

JANICE SAUNDERS: *“Now, how is having a lot of fatherless children for the white man to half support going to help us?” 204*

ESTELLE O’CONNOR KENT: *“I always wanted my mother to be proud of me, but I never really turned out to be nothin’.” 206*

MORE THAN MERE SURVIVAL

“You got to live it the best you know how.”

Cora Sumter

VELMA CUNNINGHAM: *“All these doctors want to do is cut you or starve you.”*

219

SETH BINGHAM: *“Right now, every day is just something you got to get through.” 223*

JOHNETTA RAY: *“I’m no respecter of churches in the same way that the Lord is no respecter of persons.” 227*

GORDON ETHERIDGE: *“God is the baddest ass in the firmament!” 230*

ELLA TURNER SURRY: *“Some people are the horse shit of the earth.” 236*

GLORIA MELTON: *“A faithful person means more than anything else in the world!” 256*

JONATHAN MELTON: *“I have learned to stop feeling sorry for myself, I think.”*

267