

FREEDOM RIDERS

Written by

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x the inc program

SUPER: The following story is based on true events that occurred during political struggles over Civil Rights in the 1960's and current day. Some characters and scenes are invented for creative storyline purposes.

ACT 1

EXT. REXALL DRUG STORE - DAY

MUSIC CUE: "Little Bitty Pretty One" by Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers.

An old 1940s GREYHOUND BUS is pulled off the side of the road in front of REXALL DRUG STORE, while a group of FREEDOM RIDERS shop inside.

SUPER: Anniston, Alabama. May 5th, 1961.

INT. REXALL DRUG STORE - DAY

MARY HAMILTON (21, black with way too much soul for her own good) peruses the products.

CHARLES MCDEW (19, black, the groups father figure) stands watch.

In the candy isle, GENEVIEVE HUGES (20, white and naive) dances, classic white-girl dancing, while reading the ingredients of a ZERO BAR..

Charles comes up behind her.

CHARLES  
How the hell do you know this song?

GENEVIEVE  
(singing along)  
Woah ooo woah ooo woah woah woah

The group joins in and sings.

MARY  
How could you not know?

Each Freedom Rider has their own groove to the song. They are all searching for sanitary napkins for SALYNN MCCOLLUM (19, black, newly woke to her role in the work for her civil rights and annoyed by it).

In another aisle, reveal our hero, the leader of the Freedom Riders, DIANE NASH (20, black, strong, sassy and beautiful) plucks a box from the shelf:

Tampax... 40 Regulars... \$1.59... Economy Package... No Belts No Pins No Pads...

Diane slides into the aisle with the rest of the Riders, dancing and singing along --

DIAN  
Itty bitty little one... got 'em!

Diane hands the box of Tampons to Salynn.

SALYNN  
No, no thank you. I cant do it.

MARY  
What's the prob --

SALYNN  
I've only ever used a Sanitary pad -

Shaking her head, Diane grabs Salynn's arm and takes her to the bathroom.

Genevieve signals for Charles to go to the other side of the store. Charles rolls his eyes but abides.

Diane shoves the box into Salynn's arms as she and the rest of the girls rush into the bathroom together.

The STORE CLERK watches incredulously. Keeps an eye on the bathroom door.

INT. BATHROOM -

Diane pushes the first stall open and pulls Salynn in.

DIANE  
Come here. You have to try.

Diane shuts the stall door.

OVERHEAD OF THE STALL, Salynn sits on the toilet unwrapping the box. The music dies down and cuts to a BROADCASTER on the radio.

BROADCASTER (V.O.)  
A 25-year-old Washington D.C. a  
negro man by the name of Roman  
Ducksworth Jr. was shot and killed  
today.

The girls perk up at the words *shot and killed*.

BROADCASTER (V.O.)

The report states, he was a military police officer stationed in Maryland, He was on leave to visit his sick wife when he was ordered off a bus by a police officer and shot dead. He is believed to have been unarmed.

SALYNN

God! Could somebody please drown out the sound of that God awful news report?

OUTSIDE THE STALL, Diane & crew wait in solidarity.

GENEVIEVE

Yeah, um, so about that song that was just playing... my nanny told me that before Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers were Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, they had a performance to sing for a record deal and the lead singer lost his voice because he was too drunk that night, so Frankie had to take over...

SAYLNN

You're not helping, Genevieve!

Diane and the other girls start to laugh quietly.

SAYLNN (CONT'D)

Could you just run the water please??

INT. REXALL DRUG STORE -

Charles, watching guard, hears the front door chime and peers over the shelves to the front of the store. Concern washes over his face.

He flings the bathroom door open.

CHARLES

Girls we -

ALL THE GIRLS

Get out, Charlie!!

He shuts the door immediately. Peaks over the aisle to check through the front window once more.

CHARLES

Shit. We should have practiced an  
SOS call or something.

He convinces himself to open the door, covering his eyes.

The girls are washing their hands, finishing up.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

...the last thing I want to see is  
any woman going to the bathroom,  
but for whatever reason, y'all  
think --

The girls push past him and exit the bathroom.

DIANE

You need help.

CHARLES

LISTEN! There's an angry white lady  
questioning the clerk at the front  
of the store. We gotta go.

Diane comes to attention.

DIANE

That's all you needed to say.  
Ladies, let's bounce. Stay  
together. Charles, stay with us at  
the back of the group.

They crouch down behind a wall of chips and slowly make a  
break for the entrance.

Salynn accidentally knocks over a row of chips, they hit the  
floor with a faint noise.

SALYNN

(hushed)

Oh shoot! Sorry!

The WHITE WOMAN whips her head around. She's got a heavy  
Alabama hick accent that screams racist bitch.

The Riders crouch down further and stop.

WHITE WOMAN

I know you little "free riders" are  
in here. Come out and show  
yourselves!

They don't move.

She starts scouring the aisles.

WHITE WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Radio just announced a bounty on  
you negroes and I'll be damned if I  
ain't the first to get that reward.

She continues walking through the aisles. Makes eye contact  
with the store clerk, who points to where the Freedom Riders  
are hiding.

WHITE WOMAN (CONT'D)  
I need that 150 dollars, and y'all  
gonna help me get it. Governor  
Walgreens put out a search for  
y'all, so either way, you gonna be  
found. Might as well let me be the  
one who takes your law breaking  
asses...

She PUSHES over a shelf of Zero Bars blocking the aisle where  
the clerk pointed. Everything falls to the floor. No one  
there.

She notices the back door closing. The Freedom Riders are  
gone.

WHITE WOMAN (CONT'D)  
GODDAMN NIG-

MUSIC CUE: "Hit the Road Jack" by Ray Charles.

EXT. CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST -

SUPER: Washington D.C. May 1st, 2020.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O)  
On February 23, 2020, Ahmaud  
Arbery, an unarmed 25-year-old  
African-American male, was fatally  
shot in Glynn County, Georgia,  
while joggin on Holmes Road.

JAMISON (28, Latino queer) waits outside a Porta-Potty as  
CINDI (29, black, queer, tall, full of life) squats inside.

Beyoncé's FORMATION plays in the background.

JAMISON  
Girl, let's go, they playing  
Beyoncé!



CINDI (O.C.)  
I started my cycle, the cramps just  
kicked in, damnit.

JAMISON  
Fuck, I'm sorry that sucks. I have  
an edible, sweetie, come out.

Cindi exits the Porta-Potty. Grabs the edible Jamison is  
holding and pops it in her mouth before moving her purple  
silk MASK from her neck to her face, her eyes peering out  
overtop.

Jamison removes his N95 MASK, bedazzled in cheap rhinestones  
from the top of his head to cover his nose and mouth.

CINDI  
Thank you, love.

JAMISON  
Please wash your hands!

Cindi acts like she's going to grab his face with her dirty  
hands. He dodges her.

CHARACTER  
Estás loca, bruja! (Crazy ass  
bitch)

They both laugh. It's clear they love and know each other  
well.

They grab their signs, large posters attached to sticks. The  
Posters read: "Trump managed to bring back the 1918 pandemic,  
the 1929 Great depression & the 1968 race riots all at once."  
The other reads: "Black Lives Matter" with a big black power  
fist, and "Am I next?" on the back.

The music continues. Cindi sings/screams along.

CINDI  
I like my negro nose with Jackson  
Five nostrils!!

Jamison and Cindi push their way through a crowd. Cindi is  
leading, but they help each other get through.

The crowd is shouting and chanting while the music is still  
blasting.

CINDI (CONT'D)  
This way boo!

They finally settle into a spot at the front of the crowd, beside the LEAD PROTESTER who holds a megaphone to his mouth, also covered with a mask.

LEAD PROTESTOR  
Alright everybody, cut the music  
and the chanting!

No one reacts.

Jamison grabs the megaphone from the protestor, presses the siren button on it, and then uses his loud voice to get the point across.

JAMISON  
HEY HEY, CUT THE MUSIC PLEASE. THIS  
IS IT. Hold the chanting!

The crowd murmurs, relaying this information rapidly. About 10 seconds later, the crowd goes silent.

PAN OUT, they are at a BLACK LIVES MATTER protest. There are about 1,000 people in attendance, most are wearing masks to protect themselves from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Jamison and Cindi are standing face to face with the militarized police squad with their shields held high. The silence rings loud.

Without warning, the police let off tear gas into the crowd.

CINDI  
The fuck are you doing?!

The police push forward, knocking into protestors who try to retreat or stand their ground but choke on the toxic gas in the air.

Cindi trips backward, an officer trips over her and angrily turns and cuffs her. Cindi coughs and squints in pain at the gas she's swallowed.

Jamison tries to pull Cindi away, another officer grabs him and cuffs him too.

JAMISON  
Is somebody filming this?! Get  
your cameras out!!

Cindi and Jamison are lead off toward a detainment bus being filled with other peaceful protestors.

ACT 2

EXT. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CAMPUS -

SUPER: April 24, 1961.

Diane walks through the campus with attitude and poise, carrying a few books and a book bag.

*Diane's voiceovers will appear throughout the series as Diane recalls her memories.*

DIANE (V.O.)

It was the spring of 1961. I attended Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. The first of the Nash family to ever do it. Successfully that is. 'Loudmouth Diane' they called me. They right though. I am loud and I do have a mouth and I am not afraid to use it. Back then, I had no intention of being quiet until the whole world could hear me. So I joined the SNCC; The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. Our focus was on mobilizing local communities in non-violent protests to expose injustice and demand federal action. In other words, we violated the hell out of segregation laws.

Diane continues to walk through campus passing groups of white students and groups of black students. Very little integration.

She approaches a classroom door adorned with a flier:

"Are we really free? SNCC Planning Meeting at 4 pm.."

She opens the door to the classroom, walks in.

INT. CLASSROOM -

Six black students, including Mary, Charles, and Salynn sit in the first three rows listening to the professor. The chalkboard reads, "Freedom Riders" with a list of students signed up.

The professor, JOE GLEN (42, white, stern and proper, trying his best to be "woke") is in the middle of introducing two new white activist to join the SNCC committee.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

And this is Genevieve and James.  
They both worked with the Congress  
of Racial Equality on our last sit-  
in. They will be helping us out on  
the Freedom Ride.

JAMES FARMER (21, handsome and charismatic, heartthrob)  
impulsively stands and pulls Genevieve up to her feet.

The committee applauds for them. Diane shuts the door loudly.

DIANE

Sorry I'm late. Signs say 4, yet  
here we are meeting at 3 o'clock.  
Terrible time to change the meeting  
to.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

Well, it looks like it worked for  
everybody else who made it on time.

DIANE

I didn't say it didn't work for me,  
I just said it's terrible.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

Well, if we were to change the time  
again, what would work best for  
you, Diane?

She ignores his question and addresses James and Genevieve.

DIANE

So, y'all the white folks they sent  
us, huh?

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

Well yes -

DIANE

Well how about a round of applause  
for Professor Glen everybody, let  
him hear it.

A splattering of light applause and laughter and her  
audacity.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

Diane. I don't understand where the  
passive aggressive attitude is  
coming from. This is meant to be  
peaceful. Why are you so angry?

DIANE

I'm angry because I'm a black woman who has suffered from systemic racism my whole life. Do you have any experience with that, Professor?

Her point hits home.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

I'll just be over here.

DIANE

(sotto)

Cracker.

He goes and stands by the door.

Diane walks up to the chalkboard. She grabs some chalk and rewrites up the list that Professor Joe already wrote up. She just wants it in her handwriting.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Our beloved President Kennedy has officially issued a 'cooling-off' period.

Diane writes, "cooling off" on the chalkboard.

Charles raises his hand.

CHARLES

What exactly does that consist of?

James stands and interrupts.

JAMES

It consists of a period of time to allow further consideration of our negotiation.

DIANE

(sotto)

Here we go again, Cracker #2.

JAMES

So President Kennedy basically -

DIANE

Basically he needs more time to make a decision. In other words, our dear president can't make up his own damn mind.

The room murmurs. James sits back down, shut up.

Diane mumbles to herself as she writes on the board.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Why do white people get the easy  
slur? A cracker? That's a delicious  
snack. That ain't offensive enough  
at all.

She finished writing and turns back to the class.

JAMES

I didn't mean to mock -

DIANE

But, ya did, so...

JAMES

I'm sorry, Diane.

DIANE (V.O.)

That was the first time a white man  
every apologized to me, I'll never  
forget it. Boy was different, I  
knew right there. Or at least he  
was trying to be.

MALCOM BOYD (19, black, tall and lanky) stands up to help  
address the situation.

MALCOM

I think now's a perfect time to be  
loud if they're telling us to cool-  
off.

DIANE

Exactly.

JAMES

Right.

\*

Diane shoots James a look.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I said it first.

Tension. Professor Glen jumps in to cut it.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

Let's get to work, shall we?  
Everyone sit in rows as if you are  
on the bus. Two people per row.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN (CONT'D)

Scenario 1: James and Genevieve and all white students with us today will be the Klan members and try to taunt each row.

ANOTHER PROFESSOR appears at the door window, points at his watch, signaling for Professor Joe Glen to hurry up.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN (CONT'D)

Oh, drats. Weekly staff meeting. I better run, can somebody take over for a bit?

JAMES

I'll do it, sir.

Professor, nods, grabs his things and hurried out.

DIANE (V.O.)

I'll also never forget how his white privilege told him he was the natural leader of the group.

Diane looks ready to burst.

INT. CLASSROOM -

MUSIC CUE: "Standing Alone" by The Temptations

The black students, except for Diane, have moved into rows as instructed. Genevieve and the other white students loom over them.

Diane and James are both trying to run the show. They discuss and coordinate drills.

DIANE (V.O.)

The SNCC (pronounced snick) met every other week to organize resistance measures, marches, and sit-ins. This was our first-ever Freedom Ride. So it made sense that every white person involved had an opinion. Fortunately for them in order for the SNCC to get any type of college grants the committee had to be integrated.

JAMES

As Genevieve and I harass and taunt you like the Klan will, remember to attempt to stay strong without violence. Without what?

GROUP  
Without violence!

JAMES  
Okay, Klan members, you're up.

The white students start to yell in the faces of the black students. A few overeager participants bang on desks and kick chairs.

DIANE (V.O.)  
We practiced ways and tactics white folks would use to attempt to get us off the bus. Yelling, screaming grabbing, and even punching. These white people were acting like WE needed to be trained how to stay calm in the face of brutality when my people had been "practicing" this skill since we were dragged from our homes in Africa. James was especially comfortable at prepping us for this part. He was very convincing. Hmm, I wonder why a white man was so good at playing the part of a white man. All the reason I didn't trust no white man back then.

Diane sits at the professor's desk watching the test run, arms crossed.

DIANE (V.O.)  
I, however, did not participate in this bullshit. I stood my ground and brainstormed ideas on how there could possibly be other ways to train the non-violent without actual constructed violence.

MARY HAMILTON (19, black, lover of God) responds to the group yelling at her by singing --

MARY  
"Just like a tree that's planted by  
the water, I shall not be moved"

The room stops the commotion. All eyes on Mary.

JAMES  
Wow. That was beautiful. But it's  
not going to make them listen.  
(MORE)



JAMES (CONT'D)

Remember we need concrete facts and opinions to get them to actually hear us.

DIANE

Wow, what a way to ruin the groove.

JAMES

No it was great, it's just, not all of us can sing beautifully like that.

Salynn intervenes, singing --

SALYNN

I sure can "wade by the water, wade by the..."

ALL BLACK STUDENTS join in.

BLACK STUDENTS

"...water children. Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water!"

As they continue to sing, Professor Glen slips back into the room and looks at the clock.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

Alright everybody. That's it for today. We'll see you all here next Wednesday? Same time?

All of the black students look at their teacher like, did you just interrupt 'Wade in the Water'??

DIANE

No. No, no. Absolutely not.

PROFESSOR JOE GLEN

Okay, Diane, when do you foresee us gathering agin?

DIANE

Not a week from now. We will meet here every day, 'til we start the Freedom Ride. We have one month before we are scheduled to leave. I mean look at the board! We ain't even close to ready. We still need a bus driver, a bus, a route... we need a concrete plan.

JAMES  
Actually I have -

DIANE  
But that's enough for today. Thank  
you everybody, we'll see you here  
tomorrow. 3:30 pm. Thank you for  
all your help, Professor.

Everybody packs up their stuff.

Diane finishes first and leaves, James hurries to get his  
things before following after her.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS -

James catches up with Diane.

JAMES  
Diane, hold on a sec. Listen, I'm  
really not trying to offend you,  
but this is just how we ran things  
at The Congress of Racial Equality,  
and it worked.

DIANE  
Did it? Cause shit sure isn't equal  
yet, is it? It took me three months  
to make the NCC the SNCC. I made  
this committee what it is today.  
And you single-handedly just  
trampled all that hard work in a  
matter of an hour and 30 minutes.

JAMES  
This isn't just about you, Diane.

She turns her back on him and walks away.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I saw you! On the news last year.

Diane slows her pace.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I saw you sign your Will and  
Testament on the news. You looked  
right into the camera and said "I'm  
just preparing..."

To die.

DIANE

To die.

JAMES (CONT'D)

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I've been studying you for a while  
and I think you're amazing.

A moment of pride before Diane remembers who is pursuing her,  
and starts walking again.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I'm ready to start a revolution.  
I'll do whatever it takes to teach  
the powers that be that it's  
possible, that we can integrate  
without violence. But I can't do  
this without you.

He gets to her. She stops.

DIANE  
You have a television?

He smiles.

JAMES  
You betcha, a color television  
actually.

DIANE  
Wow, your cracker ass daddy must  
have money.

JAMES  
My favorite part was when after you  
signed that Will, on National TV,  
and you dropped the pen and walked  
off.

DIANE  
You remember that?

He puts on his sunglasses and mimics her walk. She finally  
cracks a smile and laughs.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
So how do you know so much about  
me, stalker?

JAMES  
The world will know you.

Diane can't help but be touched, but she snaps back to  
business.

DIANE

Fine. But know I'm not going to take advice from you. You on our ground now. Our way, or kick rocks my friend. I know you think you can relate, but you cannot. Without the foolishness of your people, we'd never be here in the first place. Remember that.

Some of the SNCC members walk past Diane and James. They wave. Diane puts on a fake smile, waves back.

JAMES

I really can help. We've gotta come to a common ground, I have ideas.

DIANE

Either do what we have already worked on or get out. We've been doing fine without you, and don't plan to change that now.

JAMES

Understood.

James gives up, walks the other way.

DIANE (V.O.)

That was the longest time I ever talked to a white man without feeling disrespected. And okay fine, he smelt nice.

Diane thinks, then --

DIANE

Hold on.

James stops in his tracks.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Whatchu got in mind?

Smiling, he's got her. Diane semi-smiles back.

ACT 3

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS PORT AUTHORITY - DAY

James and Diane walk through rows of buses.

JAMES  
Hello?... Hello?... Johnny?

JIMMY (O.S.)  
Better not be them coloreds on this  
lot!

Diane scares immediately. She starts to walk off, but James grabs her arm, making her feel like she's been set up.

DIANE  
Let go of me! First and last time I  
ever trust a white man.

JIMMY MARTIN (41, white, southern and lovable) jumps out from behind a massive commuter.

Diane is ready to run.

JIMMY  
Gotcha!

Diane prepares to fight.

Jimmy extends a hand to shake.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
I'm Jimmy. Used to be Johnny, but I  
had to change my name to keep a low  
profile.

Diane is speechless.

JAMES  
Ahhh geeze Johnny!

JIMMY  
Jimmy, bud, Jimmy.

JAMES  
Okay, Jimmy. You can't go around  
making those jokes to strangers. -  
You changed your name?

JIMMY

If anyone asks, you can say I'm  
Johnny's dumb bother!

James chuckles. Diane does not.

JAMES

Diane, this is the bus driver who's  
willing to help us out.

She's pissed.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It was supposed to be a nice intro?

Diane looks at him like, are you fucking kidding me?

JIMMY

Lighten up kids! Let me start over.

JAMES

Please.

JIMMY

Miss Diane, it's a pleasure. I used  
to work with James and his daddy at  
their body shop. Then I got a job  
at Greyhound, thanks to a black man  
down the road I know. Then James  
daddy called me a negro-lover. That  
was the last day I ever spoke to  
him.

JAMES

No hiding it, dad is a racist. John  
- sorry, Jimmy and I stayed friends  
though. He's an advocate for the  
Civil Rights movement. There's a  
few other bus drivers like him that  
always allow more colored people on  
the Greyhound than the approved  
amount.

Diane loosens up, impressed.

DIANE

Should have started with that.

JAMES

So I gave him a ring, told him  
about the SNCC.

DIANE

And you're willing to help us, sir?

JIMMY  
Absolutely!

DIANE  
Great.

Diane turns to go, tired of this whole escapade.

JAMES  
Wait, Diane. Anything else we  
should go over? Should we talk  
details?

DIANE  
Tomorrow, Georgetown University,  
3:30 PM. Lecture Hall A, room 415.

MUSIC CUE: "You Foolish Thing" by the Ravens.

INT. DIANE'S HOUSE, GEORGETOWN - night

Diane's family is sitting at the table while her mother  
DOROTHY (48, hardworking and strict) serves everybody.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
Again mamma?

DOROTHY  
Again what, Diane?

DIANE  
Black-eyed beans?

Diane's eyes are closed.

DIANE (V.O.)  
Mammas cooking smelled like it  
tasted good. That's why I closed my  
eyes when I chewed.

Her sister MICHELLE (16, thorn in Diane's side) chimes in.

MICHELLE  
I don't mind it.

DIANE  
Kiss ass.

Unable to keep out of it, LEON (50, the fun-loving father)  
breaks his silence after a giant swig of booze.

LEON

When were you going to tell us  
about not attending classes  
anymore?

Diane is shocked, but now understands her mother's attitude.

DOROTHY

I can't even eat I'm so upset.

MICHELLE

I will eat what you can't.

Michelle reaches for her mother's plate. Her mom SLAPS her  
hand immediately.

DOROTHY

Mmmm mmm!

A beat, then everybody helps themselves to the food.

DIANE

We leave next month, I'll be gone  
for about 30 days.

DOROTHY

To where? Where are you going to  
get arrested.

DIANE

Mamma, I'm not and I told you this.

DOROTHY

They will kill you, Diane. They  
will have you murdered.

DIANE

Who is they?

DOROTHY

Don't play stupid.

DIANE

It's not like that. We are working  
with SNCC on campus now. They found  
these white activists to help us  
with the first Freedom Ride. We  
have everything we need so far. The  
only thing we need is some fliers  
printed out, but we not allowed in  
the printing room on campus still.

DOROTHY

Lord help us.



LEON  
I think it's great.

DIANE  
Thank you, daddy.

They share a smile.

DOROTHY  
But to drop out of college for it.  
I don't understand it.

DIANE  
I didn't drop out mamma. I just  
stopped attending some classes and -

DOROTHY  
I don't want to hear it, Diane!  
Just eat.

LEON  
What's the issue, Dorth?

DOROTHY  
Please. Can we just eat? I'm fine.

DIANE  
You are not fine.

LEON  
No, you're not.

DIANE  
When a Black woman says she's fine.  
She's everythang but fine.

LEON  
Baby, why don't you show us exactly  
what you plan to do, might put your  
mama at ease...

Diane smiles, and mouths the words "thank you." He already knows her ideas of the Freedom Riders, as most of them came from him. Diane runs to her book bag, grabs her notebook.

She lays out the plans on the table.

DIANE  
Mamma, just ook. On May 4th we'll,  
start at the Greyhound Port Bus  
Authority. We met with the bus  
driver today. His name is Jimmy.  
He's an activist.

Dorthy raises an eyebrow.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
He is white.

DOROTHY  
UGH.

MUSIC CUE: "You Got What It Takes" by Marv Johnson.

DIANE  
I came to the conclusion today that  
we need *some* white leaders. They  
will help lead the white side and I  
will lead the black side. In the  
end, the goal is to come together.  
So after we load up on the bus,  
we'll head to Alabama...

MONTAGE:

In the following series, camera pans through one set, made up  
of locations all across town, as other Freedom Riders relay  
the same journey to their own families:

CHARLES MCDEW'S LIVING ROOM -

CHARLES  
...Then we'll head to Virginia.  
From there, we head to...

SALYNN MCCOLLUM ON THE PHONE -

SALYNN  
...The Carolinas. I ain't ever been  
there before. And then off to...

MARY HAMILTON AT WORK, FLIPPING BURGERS -

MARY  
...Georgia, stop and get myself a  
peach pie.. then Alabama through  
the Klux country thy gonna love us  
(she laughs) and after Alabama...

WILLIAM E HARBOUR, A WHITE HIPPIE AT THE BAR -

WILLIAM  
...Mississippi! Oooh I can't wait  
to eat me some famous catfish!...

GENEVIEVE AT BASKETBALL PRACTICE -

GENEVIEVE  
...And finally, our last and final  
destination...

JAMES IN THE GARAGE -

JAMES  
New Orleans, Louisiana. Hopefully  
by then, enough word will be out so  
we can have a Freedom Ride in every  
state.

End series.

INT. DIANE'S HOUSE, GEORGETOWN -

DOROTHY  
Sounds stupid to me.

Off Diane's irreverent look.

MUSIC CUE: "Let me Fly" By 1961's Gospel Choir.

INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM

"Let me Fly" By 1961's Gospel Choir continues to play as the  
following montage and Diane's voiceover unfold.

- Professor Joe Glen, James, Malcolm, Mary, and Genevieve  
huddle in the classroom going over the game plan.
- Diane walks around campus discussing the rides to students.

DIANE (V.O.)  
Mamma was right. I did stop going  
to my college classes, but I did  
not drop out. I'm not a failure.  
None of us were. I discovered that  
even the white folks were crucial  
to this mission. We must have  
practiced every worst-case scenario  
to prepare us for the Freedom Ride.  
We must have talked to 100 people a  
day asking for their support or  
donation. What a damn place to ask  
for money. A broke-ass college  
campus. It was time to expand.

INT. BAPTIST CHURCH -

REVEREND TIMOTHY MILES is sitting in a church pew with Diane.

REVEREND  
I'm sorry sweetheart. I don't think  
we can help with that. The church  
has a smaller budget now. I'm just  
not sure how we feel about this  
Freedom Ride.

Beat.

James pokes his head in. Diane ignores him.

DIANE  
Thank you anyway, Reverend.

He spots James in the doorway.

REVEREND  
Who is that?

James is practically falling into the room.

REVEREND (CONT'D)  
Boy get!

DIANE  
Yeah boy, get!

James, speechless, backs out.

REVEREND  
These white capitalist mothafuckas  
tryna take over this buildin'. Not  
in the name of God they won't!

Diane laughs and smiles to herself.

EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH -

JAMES  
What was that?!

Diane smiles at him.

DIANE  
Boy, do not raise your voice at me.

JAMES  
He thought I was a capitalist? I  
don't even know what that is.

DIANE  
Don't matter. He ain't gonna help  
us.

JAMES  
Shoot!

His disappointment is endearing, but Diane doesn't give in.

DIANE  
See you tomorrow.

JAMES  
Wait, do you want a ride?

DIANE  
You drive?

JAMES  
I told you I worked at an auto body  
shop, didn't I? Been working on  
cars since I was 14.

DIANE  
So we've been walking around this  
whole time when you have wheels?

JAMES  
I love walking.

DIANE  
Not all of us walk on wonder bread.

He laughs.

JAMES  
Car's just up the street from  
University.

DIANE  
That's cool. I'mma walk home.

JAMES  
Not alone you're not!

He squats in front of her forcing her into a piggy-back ride.

DIANE  
Woah!

He takes off with her on his back.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
Oh, God!

JAMES  
Holy shit! Diane Nash is on my  
back.

Diane can't control her laughter.

DIANE  
Boy you betta put me down!

JAMES  
Imma take you to the moon girl!

Realizing she's alright, Diane relaxes for the first time.  
She puts out both her arms like she's about to fly.

A 1950s blue El Camino pulls up. A WHITE MAN on the passenger  
side rolls down the window.

WHITE MAN  
Excuse me!

James continues to walk with Diane on his back. Trying to  
ignore the El Camino.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)  
Hey you two! Excuse me, real quick!

DIANE  
Please, just keep walking James.

JAMES  
How can I help you, man?

WHITE MAN  
Yeah. I'm wondering which Highway I  
have to take to find the nigger-  
lovers?

The white man belly laughs.

Diane hops off James' back. Walks faster.

The El Camino stays steady with them walking. The engine  
roars...

JAMES  
You're looking at it!

The El Camino slams on the breaks so that the dirt kicks up.

WHITE MAN  
Dirty fuckers!!

He puts his whole body out the window and spits. Peels off.

Diane and James are silent.

A few beats later.

JAMES

I'm sorry, Diane. I hate people like that, so ignorant! They just infuriate me.

DIANE

I think you handled that beautifully.

He's touched.

JAMES

Man. I wish you could see me fight. Jab-cross... Hook-cross...

He punches a few jabs at the air.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Next Muhammad Ali, but white.

The sun shining brightly as they disappear down the road, James continuing to jab at the air while Diane laughs.

DIANE (V.O.)

The whole thing never phased James. Those white boys could shoot James and I dead in the streets. He didn't care. I loved that.

INT. WASHINGTON D.C COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

SUPER: Washington, D.C. 2020.

A group of Black Lives Matter PROTESTORS are stuffed into a holding cell, full to the brim.

Jamison and Cindi have been locked up for the last eight hours.

Cindi nurses a Rubber bullet shot wound on the right side of Jamison's stomach.

JAMISON

Goddamn! It hurts so fucking good!

CINDI

Oh, babe. I'm so sorry. I think you handled that shit beautifully.

Jamison is holding his side to ease the pain of the wound.

JAMISON

Thank you, girl. I feel stronger  
honestly.

JAILED PROTESTORS

PROSECUTE KILLER COPS! PROSECUTE  
KILLER COPS! PROSECUTE KILLER COPS!

CINDI

I need to get you the fuck out of  
here.

A PROTESTOR with a BLM T-shirt on overhears the conversation.

PROTESTOR 1

The goal is to stay in holding as  
long as possible. The strategy is  
to fill the jails so we can get as  
much national attention. You know  
what I'm sayin'? We want the people  
to focus on the movement. Like MLK  
did in Birmingham.

Another PROTESTOR gets thrown into the cell. He is white. His  
shirt is ripped all the way up. A round of applause erupts  
for him.

PROTESTOR 2

Thanks everybody! Shit's crazy out  
there. I got good news and bad  
news. George Floyd's cop killers  
were indicted today!

ALL

Yes! / No justice no peace!

PROTESTOR 2

Hold up y'all. Breanna Taylor  
killers have still yet to be  
arrested.

PROTESTOR 1

Murdered in her bed, innocent and  
asleep. We won't rest until there's  
justice! We will crowd every  
fuckin' jail cell until she gets  
justice. NO JUSTICE!

ALL

NO PEACE! NO RACIST AS POLICE!

An OFFICER appears.



OFFICER  
Alright, settle down everyone,  
settle down. I got news for you.

The captives listen up, but they don't settle.

CINDI  
Come on man, we're tired as fuck.

OFFICER  
Mam, cool it. All you did was sit  
around for a few hours in a cell.  
You're not tired.

CINDI  
It's been EIGHT hours and I'm TIRED  
of carrying the weight of a black  
woman!

OFFICER  
Okay, okay, all lives matter and  
are tired.

She seethes but holds her tongue.

OFFICER (CONT'D)  
People, listen up. You're the  
luckiest lot of criminals I've ever  
seen. City's not pressing charges  
so you all are free to go. Collect  
your personal belongings at the  
desk on your way out. Come again  
soon - I'm sure you will.

The officer unlocks the holding cell. The protestors funnel  
out, the wounded ones limping. Shaking their heads, murmuring  
slurs, pissed off.

JAMISON  
Un-fucking-believable.

Jamison looks at Cindi. They nod.

JAMISON/CINDI  
NO JUSTICE!

ALL  
NO PEACE!

The protestors continue to chant as they walk out.

ACT 4

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS -

Diane is in the middle of a huddle with Malcolm, Mary, Genevieve and James on a grassy knoll overlooking the campus. An empty podium awaits Diane as she prepares to address a crowd.

DIANE

Alright, I'm getting up there.

JAMES

But professor Joe Glen is supposed to announce you.

DIANE

He late, I'm going. Justice waits for no one. Especially old white people.

SALYNN

Just remember to speak clearly, white people love when you annunciate.

DIANE

I got this, I just gotta get up there I'm too eager.

SALYNN

Take a deep breath. White people love breaths.

Diane steps up to the podium at the middle of a grassy knoll. She takes a deep breath.

GENEVIEVE/SALYNN/MALCOLM

You got this girl!/ We all here for you/ We need you, sis!

Diane nods. Clears her throat and looks at her cue cards.

DIANE

My name is Diane Nash...

Total silence. She reads.

DIANE (CONT'D)

For those who do not know me I'm the founder of the SNCC.

(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)

It's important -- it's necessary to change, grow, and integrate as one race, the human race.

She waits for applause but is met with more silence.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Oh wow, okay. I don't need these notes, I'm just gonna say this from the heart.

Genevieve steps in to help, pops up behind the mic.

GENEVIEVE

Your white ignorance is their black experience!

Diane smiles, takes back control. Ever more bold.

DIANE

What she said! Listen, nobody can give you what you want unless you know what that is! It is time to use nonviolent acts and make necessary changes. We are not going to wait for an elective official to help with the desegregation of... of restaurants, and uh... lunch counters, public accommodations, and and busses, and getting the right to vote! The time is now. I am a human being and so are you. It's now or never. So... Will you join us on this freedom ride? Will you support us? Do you have any resources to contribute? Will you make history on the first ever freedom ride?

A splattering of applause. Diane is proud.

Reveal the audience of five people. Behind them, students are passing by but nobody is really listening except a few who applaud.

DIANE (CONT'D)

That went well!!

GENEVIEVE

Small but engaged crowd! You were excellent, Di.

MARY

Yes, so good.

They all give in to the celebration and congratulate Diane.

WILLIAM E. (22, a white hippie) interrupts as he approaches the stage.

WILLIAM E.

Excuse me, Diane? It's me, William.

The SNCC crew stares at him waiting for more info.

DIANE

(sotto) Oh great, my loud  
ass neighbor.

WILLIAM E.

I'm your neighbor... in the cul-de-  
sac?

DIANE

I know. Hi.

WILLIAM E.

My dad works here. Bob? Tall man,  
blonde hair... the university  
janitor.

ALL

Oh he's so cute/Janitor Bob is a  
legend.

DIANE

Sir, what do you need?

WILLIAM E.

Yes, about those resources you  
mentioned needing...

William looks around to make sure no one is listening.

WILLIAM E. (CONT'D)

Dad and I want to help y'all.

ACT 4

INT. UNIVERSITY CAFETERIA KITCHEN -

In the pantry, cabinets go from floor to ceiling. The news  
blares on the TV. White noise in the background.

William is introducing the SNCC crew to his father, BOB (50s,  
southern janitor, hippie qualities like his son).

BOB

We really love everything y'all do.  
I mean really. We've been following  
your journey since last year when  
you moved from Hall A to Hall B.  
I'm in charge of both halls!

WILLIAM

Tell 'em what you did, pa.

BOB

Well, I'm the one who set up them  
chairs. And put them in a circle.  
And I stacked the extra chairs and  
put them to the side.

DIANE

Thank you for your activism!

James nudges her for being rude.

BOB

I listened in on some meetings and  
I think what y'all are doing is  
just terrific.

WILLIAM

So...

BOB

So we thought we'd like to help,  
if...

DIANE

Why is there an 'if'?

WILLIAM E.

I have a proposition to make.

JAMES

Proposition?

WILLIAM E.

What do you say I come along with  
y'all on the ride, in exchange for  
our help?

MALCOLM

You wanna come with us?

WILLIAM E.

Yeah! What y'all think? That's what  
your speech was all about right?  
Er'rybody equal.

(MORE)

WILLIAM E. (CONT'D)

I believe that too. And it'll so  
fun. I ain't see the world before.

MARY

This isn't a matter of fun William.  
We've been working on this ride for  
months on end.

MALCOLM

You're a party boy, right? Why  
don't cha throw us a party when we  
come home or somethin'.

WILLIAM E.

I'm a lover of people boy. And I'm  
an activist myself. I got a loud  
voice. I promise to always speak up  
for you. That's my strong suit.

The group tries to delay their response.

BOB

William's going to school to be a  
lawyer! This could look pretty damm  
good for him.

DIANE

Thank you all so much for dragging  
us clear cross campus to ask us  
this. We're all gonna need to get  
together and talk about it.

They turn to go.

WILLIAM E.

Pops!

BOB

Wait kids, wait. Before you go, on  
behalf of the University we would  
love to contribute to the freedom  
rides with...

Bob opens up the pantry door.

The pantry is shinning. Snacks are organized beautifully and  
the supply of water jugs and Pepsi look endless.

JAMES

Wow... thank you!

BOB

University never goes through all this stuff anyway. Take what you need.

SALYNN

I wish I knew about all this last year. Shit, freshmen year I was broke and hungry as hell.

WILLIAM E.

We truly believe in what y'all are fighting for. Anything else we can do to contribute to the ride, you just let us know.

JAMES

We're allowed to just take this?

The cafeteria TV comes into focus as a news report gets louder. They all turn their head to watch.

REPORTER

Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney were killed Monday by a Ku Klux Klan lynch mob near Meridian, Mississippi. The three young civil rights workers we're at the forefront of the movement.

The tension is real. Nobody speaks or moves really.

DIANE

Give us everything you have.

BOB

Great! I'll get some trash bags.

SAYLNN

Any Ding-Dongs in here?

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS -

The SNCC crew exists the cafeteria with their book bags full of pantry goods. Charles and James have big black trash bags full of stuff. They move swiftly through the campus.

Another janitor, STEVE (40s, white) notices, whistles from a distance.

CHARLES

Oh, damnit.

They walk faster. Drawing more attention to themselves.

STEVE

Hey!

JAMES

Just keep walking.

STEVE

What you got there?!

DIANE

Act normal, white boys.

They walk faster, almost a run, even less discrete.

STEVE

Hey, stop! Thieves!

Diane, Malcolm, Mary, Salynn, Charles (the black students) start running. Steve follows. The white students try to stop him, but Steve is on a mission. Hollering as he chases them.

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE -

Diane, Malcolm, Mary, Salynn and Charles sit in the Dean's office with their heads bowed. James and William stand in the back. The DEAN (60 and white) scolds the black students only.

DEAN

I still , in my right mind, cannot understand how y'all thought it was appropriate to take supplies from the school.

DIANE

(under her breath)

White men can steal, but black people...

DEAN

What was that?

DIANE

I was just saying we're so sorry, Dean. We misunderstood. It won't happen again.

The dean looks at her, untrusting.

DEAN

Correct, it won't and I personally will see to that.

(MORE)



DEAN (CONT'D)

I'm signing you all up for campus community service. Consider this a warning. James and William, you're free to go. I'm going to need the rest of you to sign this incident report.

DIANE

But they -

JAMES

But we -

\*

DEAN

Not another word. Unless you want to be suspended?

They quiet down.

DEAN (CONT'D)

That will be all. Signatures, now.

The black students sign. The injustice hangs heavy in the room.

Diane stands and exits immediately. The others follow.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS -

Defeated, the group go their separate ways.

William runs to catch up with Diane.

WILLIAM E.

Diane, wait.

DIANE

Leave me alone, William.

WILLIAM E.

Diane please, I didn't know what to do.

Diane stops, pissed.

DIANE

You didn't say a Goddamn thing the whole time we was in there!

WILLIAM E.

I can't get my father in trouble. I didn't want the dean to ask for my last name.

DIANE

You gonna have to come up with a much bigger excuse than that, lawyer boy.

WILLIAM E.

I'm going to fix this. I promise.

Diane is finally fed the fuck up.

DIANE

YOU DON'T GET TO CHOOSE! You do not get to choose when to help and when not to help. I'm sick of y'all. Always choosing when to speak up.

William looks around, nervous they're causing a scene.

WILLIAM E.

Say, come on now. Shh.

DIANE

Oh, now I'm the angry black girl on campus? Always angry and at another white man, right?

WILLIAM E.

No, it's just, I don't want to draw any more attention to us... I got some pot on me.

DIANE

I don't give a fuck! I'm mad, William and I have every right to be! And as loud and aggressive as I want. You got it so easy. We're always going around cleaning up what the white men spill.

WILLIAM E.

I just can't get him in trouble, is all! It's just me and my pops back home. He's all I got.

DIANE

Always choosing when do right or when to use your privilege. We don't get to choose. Who sits where, who eats what.

WILLIAM E.

I... I didn't think of it that way.

DIANE  
Go home, William.

She goes, guilt ridden he let's her.

ACT 4

EXT. DIANE'S HOUSE -

Dorothy is sitting on the porch swing in her work attire, smoking a cigarette and sewing some fabric together.

Diane approaches, not in the mood to deal with her mom's judgement, hoping she's in a good mood.

DIANE

Hi mamma.

DOROTHY

Dinner's just about ready.

Diane pauses a moment but Dorothy does not look up from her sewing.

DIANE

My day was great, mamma. Thanks for asking.

Dorothy scoffs as Diane storms in the house.

INT. DIANE'S HOUSE -

Dorothy walks in while Diane wipes away a tear. She serves Michelle and herself. On tonight's menu, black eyed beans, four places are set.

Diane sits down to eat.

DOROTHY

Excuse me, did you pray over this food? Put your fork down, girl.

MICHELLE

Can I do grace, mamma?

DOROTHY

Yes, baby.

MICHELLE

Our father who art in heaven, we give thanks for the pleasure of gathering together for this occasion. We give thanks for this food prepared by loving hands.

(MORE)

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

We give thanks for life, the freedom to enjoy it all, and all other blessings. As we partake of this food, we pray for health and strength to carry on and try to live as you would have us. This we ask in the name of Christ, our heavenly father. YES, I DID THAT!

Dorothy and Diane share a smile and a laugh - that was just too cute not to.

DIANE

That was perfect, sis.

Michelle smiles. They continue to eat in silence.

DIANE (V.O.)

Mamma's silence was dangerous. How someone could speak 10,000 words without even speaking I'll never know. As much as I hate when she talks too much, I also love it when she talks to me. I spent hours trying to translate her silence. I could just never be that quiet when I'm angry.

DIANE

Can I be dismissed?

Dorothy waves here dismissal.

Diane jumps up to clean her plate.

Leon enters through the door. Kisses Dorothy.

LEON

Good evening, my Queens.

He kissed Michelle on the head, gives Diane a hug. His scent of moonshine lingering behind him.

LEON (CONT'D)

Now Diane, before you go running off. I've been fixing to get you something special. Mr. Montgomery left me the keys to the mailing room. With a little help from his assistant, we managed to make you up some of these.

He pulls out a stack of paper fliers. It reads:

"First annual Freedom Ride of Washington D.C. 1961. Do you want to be the change?"

DIANE

Aw, daddy. I love it! Everyone'll love them, thank you.

DOROTHY

Where's the contact information?

LEON

Damnit! I knew there was something. I was gonna call your mother to ask you but I didn't want to ruin the surprise. Shoot.

DIANE

Daddy, they're perfect. Truly. That's what a pen is for. I'll add time and location here at the bottom.

Diane grabs the stack. Kisses him on the cheek. Runs to the phone and dials up James.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE / DIANE'S HOUSE -

James' dad FRED (46, white, town drunk) answers, angry.

FRED

Hello.

DIANE

Hi, I'm looking for -

FRED

Who is this?

Diane changes up the tone in her voice to sound more white.

DIANE

I'm looking for James, we're working on a class project?

FRED

Hold on a minute now.

He calls out,

FRED (CONT'D)

BOY! The school is calling you.

James sheepishly takes the phone from his dad.

JAMES

Hello?

DIANE

Hi, this is... Kathy from class. I need you to meet me outside in five.

JAMES

Kathy? I don't know a Kath-

Diane switches back to her normal voice.

DIANE

It's me, nimrod.

JAMES

Oh! Kathy! Hey...

James lets the cord of the phone take him around the corner into the other room.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Diane, are you crazy? He would kill me if he knew a black girl was calling the house.

DIANE

Not scared of your drunk racist, pops, James. Meet me outside okay, its time we spread the word.

FRED (O.S.)

You got a little girlfriend there? Hope she got big ol' lips. I could use some big ol' lady lips around my big ol' cock.

JAMES

Oh my god.

DIANE

Wow, charming. See you soon.

Diane hangs up the phone disgusted. Her family watched this whole interaction.

MICHELLE

What just happened? Why you pretending to be white?

Diane runs to grab her coat and slips on her shoes.

DIANE  
Politics baby girl. Gotta go.

DOROTHY  
Go where?

LEON  
Give 'em hell, sweetie.

Diane exits out the front door. She walks, then runs, then skips down the street.

EXT. JAMES HOUSE -

Diane hides behind the car in the garage.

DIANE  
Oh Jamesyyyy!

James rushes out the garage door laughing.

JAMES  
You are crazy. You know that? I know you're not scared of my dad, but I am. Hop in.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Well, I am... hop in.

Diane gets in James' car, she presents the fliers.

DIANE  
Look at this, my daddy graciously got us fliers. So imma need you to take this pen and write on every flier -

Diane hands James a pen.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
To help support the Freedom Rides donate \$1 or anything you were planning to throw out already, we will gladly take off your hands. Arrive at the campus parking lot at 8 AM on Monday May 1st to see us off and then -

JAMES  
Stop stop. I'm not going to write all of that on every flier!



DIANE  
And why not?

JAMES  
It's way too much and girl, I am  
not your slav -

DIANE  
My what?

JAMES  
Oh my god, I'm sorry, nothing.

She pokes him in the ribs jokingly.

DIANE  
Boy, what do you know about slaves?

JAMES  
Nothing, that's why I stopped!

DIANE  
Yea okay, putting some writing on a  
flier was the least of any slave's  
daily task.

JAMES  
I know.

DIANE  
Oh massa, what a privilege for you  
to turn the voices of your  
ancestors on and off.

He squirms uncomfortable.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
Okay, calm down, I forgive you.

JAMES  
Thank God. So, if we're going to  
leave fliers at people's doors we  
might as well tell them face to  
face. Meet the people, y'know?

DIANE  
Well, obviously door to door does  
not work in my favor, Sir Master  
James.

JAMES  
You're right... how about, if it's  
a black home, you can approach. If  
it's a white home, I'll approach.

DIANE

Divide and conquer, to unite and  
conquer, I like it. Let's do it,  
tomorrow after our SNCC meeting.

They're startled by the sound of something CRASHING as James' dad stumbles through the garage. He's about to slide the door up.

Diane ducks down in the seat.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Shit!

JAMES

We're not waiting until tomorrow,  
we doing this tonight.

They SKURRT off.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. -

SONG CUE: "I Heard it Through the Grapevine" by Marvin Gaye.

MONTAGE:

- James and Diane take turns going door to door
- Most doors slam on their face.
- Diane enters the church looking for donations, the reverend gives her a stack of Bibles.
- Malcolm is in rehearsal with the church choir. He takes a stack of fliers from Diane and passes them out.
- The Freedom Riders go around campus with collection boxes. Some of the professors donate.
- Students and professors protest the freedom riders.
- More SNCC group meetings. The chalkboard reads: "Freedom Ride in two days."
- They venture back through the neighborhoods canvassing.
- A few neighbors happily donate.
- Football practice. A black coach looks amused. He yells for the rest of the team to huddle up. He explains to them who the freedom Riders are. They all cheer. They jump up and down in a circle huddling around the riders. Truly a triumphant moment.

Some of the teammates give the riders their Jerseys off their backs. The coach grabs everything they have to give, first aid, water jugs, and blankets.

- The Freedom Riders walk down the street with bags of blankets, pillows, boxes, fruits, and canned foods.

- The Riders organize their goods back in the classroom. The white board reads "Freedom Ride, one day".

END MONTAGE.

ACT 5

INT. CINDI'S HOUSE -

SUPER: Washington, D.C. 2020.

After the protest, Cindi and Jamison enter the front door of her very disheveled studio apartment dropping their belongings all over the floor.

CINDI

That was amazing. Fuck yes.

JAMISON

Fucking amazing.

CINDI

Time to change the world and the people in it. I protest every day of my life until justice is served if I need to.

JAMISON

We bitch. We.

CINDI

Oh yeah? Are you ready for it?

JAMISON

Me? I am king of change!

Jamison punches the air in excitement.

Cindi opens up her laptop, displaying what she was watching earlier. Fox News. Real TOMI LAHREN footage plays.

TOMI LAHREN

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, died in Minneapolis, Minnesota, when white police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck. Why do I have a strange feeling that Black Lives Matter Organizers have no idea about this man's excessive history of drug abuse and armed robbery.

JAMISON

Drug abuse and armed robbery... so they killed him?? The hell you watchin' this for?

CINDI

Don't get it twisted, I can't stand her ass.

Cindi turns up the volume and sits at her desk.

TOMI LAHREEN

... Was this Racism, or are the Black Lives Matter group just trying to bring race into the picture again? Whatever happened to all lives matter?

CINDI

Watching this helps me see where these backward people's current mindset lies, so I can plan our next move. She puts me in the mindset of war. War for our people. I won't stop until this bitch can't film an episode because our chanting is too loud outside the Fox building.

JAMISON

I don't think a Black Lives Matter protest is gonna help Fox News see the issue here my sis.

CINDI

That's why I watch this boo. Brainstorming. Trying to come up with a revolution here. Protesting is great, but what else can we do? I has to be huge.

JAMISON

Hmmm, let me check Insta for inspo.

He pulls out his phone and swipes up, swipes up.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

I love how active people have become on here. And if they not, unfollow! Oh damn, get this, cops aren't wearing their uniforms to and from work because they're afraid someone will attack them. Wow can you imagine that.

(MORE)

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Living with a constant fear of  
being killed by a complete stranger  
because, to them, you look like a  
threat. Poor cops.

They laugh.

CINDI

Welcome to our world, pigs!

Cindi opens up the fridge. Nothing special. The freezer --

JAMISON

Otter Pop please.

She grabs two, hands him one.

He falls back onto Cindi's bed and gazes up at her wall,  
decorated with heroes: MLK, Oprah, Michelle Obama, and a  
gigantic poster of the 1961 Freedom Ride. The poster features  
the bus from the opening scene and a group of young  
students...

It's DIANE NASH and her CREW: James, Salynn, Charles, all of  
them. They're on the road, somewhere in the south.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

This, this the shit I'm talking  
bout. Need to try to change the  
world like people did.

Cindi looks at the poster, looks back at Jamison.

CINDI

These people? Try?? Do you not know  
them? Call them by their names! The  
Freedom Riders and they did change  
the world with their courage.  
They're the fucking example.

JAMISON

Right. I know them. They wrote  
about freedom. On a bus.

CINDI

Riders, babe. Riders. A group of  
multi-racial activist who traveled  
across America promoting  
integration in the 60s.

JAMISON

So it has nothing to do with  
Hillary Swank's Freedom Writers?

They laugh.

CINDI  
With the path we currently on...  
They otta start up another Freedom  
Ride.

JAMISON  
They? Why not us? And why not RIGHT  
THE FUCK NOW?

Cindi's eyes widen.

CINDI  
Well, damn, that's it!

JAMISON  
Freedom Riders of 2020 baby!

Close up on the poster of riders brings us back to...

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS PARKING LOT -

Family and friends of the Freedom Riders gather around the bus as they prepare to leave. Some city folks have gathered to pay their respects for the ride.

Charles gets dropped off by his mother and father. They are proud of their little activist.

CHARLES  
Bye mama, bye pops. I love y'all.  
I'll call you as soon as I get to a  
phone.

CHARLES' DAD  
We sure are proud of you , son.

Charles' mom gives him a big, tearful hug.

Genevieve and her mother roll up in a nice brown Cadillac.

Salynn's parents, classy and distinguished intellectual types, hand over her crisp duffle bag.

SALYNN'S MOTHER  
What's the house number again?

SALYNN  
555-616-5424

SALYNN'S MOTHER

Good girl. You call us if I need to  
bail you out of jail.

James walks up with his bags and a box of stuff. No one  
accompanying him.

Mary appears behind him, also alone. She sings in James' ear.

MARY

Blue moon, I saw you standing,  
alooooone.

JAMES

Ha-ha, didn't see you there.

MARY

Unsupportive parents too, huh?

JAMES

I told my dad I'm joining the KKK  
on a road trip. Only way he'd let  
me go.

MARY

Yikes, that is dark. Clever, but  
dark.

Malcolm's mother dusts off his blazer's lapel. He holds a  
bible.

MALCOLM'S MOTHER

Read the bible everyday, baby.  
Please. Let the story of Jesus lead  
you to what is right.

MALCOLM

Yes, m'am. God bless you and may He  
bless our trip. God is good!

MALCOLM'S MOTHER

All the time!

Last but not least, Leon drives up with Diane. Michelle is in  
the back seat. Still sitting in the car, Diane and her family  
look out at all the hard work she's done. Everyone showed up.  
Moments go by they take it all in.

DIANE

I wish mamma could see this.

MICHELLE

You know she wanted to be here, she  
just wasn't feeling good.



Diane nods. It's not true, but she nods anyway.

LEON

Sorry to hurry you, baby, but I  
gotta drop your sister off at  
school before work.

DIANE

I love you, daddy. I'm gonna call  
you as soon as I get to a phone. I  
love you sis.

Michelle holds up a fists, Diane does too. She gets out of  
the car, and watches her sister and father drive off.

Diane goes to join the group when she see's Dorothy looking  
lost, holding a brown paper bag.

Diane hurries over.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Oh, mamma, you came!

DOROTHY

Diane... you did all this?

Diane looks at the crowd. Nods. Proud.

DORTHY

Before I forget, this is on behalf  
of your father and me.

She pulls out a container of black-eyed beans. A beat.

They laugh.

DIANE

Mamma, you shouldn't have. Really.

Diane takes it and hugs her mom.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I love you, thank you for coming.

DOROTHY

Be safe, my girl. Oh - one more  
thing.

She takes a fabric that's been tucked beneath her arm and  
hands it to Diane. A hand sewn banner for the side of the  
bus, the same fabric she's been working on all week.

DIANE

I don't know what to say.

DOROTHY

Baby, listen to me. Don't ever let someone tell you th'you can't do somethin' that you know in your heart is right... Not even your mamma.

Diane throws her arms around her again, overcome with love.

Suddenly, Willam E. comes running up with his bags.

WILLIAM E.

Diane! Diane! I talked to the Dean, told him it was all my fault. He erased the warning off all y'all's records. Please, please let me be a Freedom Rider.

Diane looks to her mom, who nods her approval.

DIANE

Okay Willie. You can come.

WILLIAM E.

Yeeeehawww!

DOROTHY

Hello William. You best watch over my Diane.

WILLIAM

You know my name?

DOROTHY

I know all the neighbor's names. I ain't sleepin'. Come, take an end of the fabric.

William does. Together they unfurl the banner. It reads "FREEDOM RIDERS" in big red font. The same banner from Cindi's poster.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS PARKING LOT -

Wide shot of the old 1940s Greyhound bus, the banner is hanging on the side. The Freedom Riders are gathered outside.

Jimmy addresses the crowd of parents and friends still standing by.

JIMMY

I'm Jimmy Martin. I've been working for Greyhound bus lines as a driver for about three years now. I'm all in. If you promise to be all in with me now, I believe there's nothing we can't do.

The riders clap and cheer.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I shaved my beard last night, and put on some glasses I haven't worn in years, so if they ask for anybody named Johnny Martin tell them I'm his dumb brother.

The riders laugh. Jimmy a step up onto the bottom step of the bus.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Well, alright then. I'd like to welcome y'all to the first-ever Freedom Ride.

Diane interrupts Jimmy. She is carrying a duffle bag and a brown paper bag.

DIANE

Thank you, Jimmy --

JIMMY

Call me Driver.

DIANE

Yes, driver. Thank you. Hi, everyone. It's an honor to be here. Time to PUT THESE MOTHER FUCKING BIGGOTS IN THEIR PLACE!

The freedom riders laugh and cheer in excitement.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Before we get on the bus, I invited our resident photographer Melvin, to snap a few photos for the University paper.

MELVIN (18, black photographer for the student paper), aims his camera as Malcolm rushes on the bus wanting to be the center of attention. Melvin snaps the photo.

INSERT:

*Historical mugshot from original real life Freedom Ride amongst our fictionalized characters.*

MELVIN

I'll take individual shots as you get on the bus. Could you please step up and tell me who you are so I can document you correctly for the Newspaper?

DIANE

Thank you, Melvin.

MELVIN

Good luck to you, my sister.

Diane smiles at Melvin as she jumps up on the bus, smiling for the camera. Melvin snaps a photo of Diane. Diane yells through the window.

DIANE

James, get your ass up here.

James picks up his bag from the ground and steps on the bus.

JAMES

Well, I guess I would like to dedicate this ride to my father. A raging alcoholic, racist, bigot and Klan member.

James flips off the camera. Melvin snaps the photo.

Mary rushes up, smiles.

MARY

Mary Hamilton!

William E. and Genevieve exchange a look like, let's go up together. Melvin motions for them to get in close.

WILLIAM

I'm William E. Harbour, but call me Big Willie.

GENEVIEVE

Genevieve Hughes, here to fight for equal rights!

They both run to the back of the bus chanting 'Freedom for all!'

Lastly, Salynn, and Charles. Melvin motions for them to take a picture together. They introduce themselves to each other.

CHARLES  
I'm Dr. Charles McDew.

SALYNN  
OH, Doctor Charles? Well, alright  
then. You can call me First Lady,  
Salynn.

They laugh. Myles snaps the photo. They run onto the bus.

MUSIC CUE: I'M MOVING ON by Ray Charles.

INT. BUS - LATER

The Freedom Riders are settling down in their seats. It's loud and exciting.

Diane stands up to interrupt the chatter. They all listen with smiles and anticipation.

DIANE  
LISTEN Y'ALL. I can't believe this  
is happening. I'm just as excited  
to be here as you all are. Driver,  
I'm honored to have you drive us to  
freedom. I had my doubts this would  
even work, not that I let any of  
you see it! And then I met James,  
and Gen, and William. I'll never  
forget the day they came into the  
meeting, white as can be. James  
kept interrupting me that day. Kept  
on blurting out. I thought for sure  
he was just another cracker.

They all laugh. She smiles at James.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
Looking around this bus, seeing our  
colors all together fighting for  
what is good and true - equality is  
shining bright right here on our  
bus. I'm so proud. It's because of  
y'all I am here. I stand by you.  
Thank you for allowing me to make  
history with you, and you sure as  
hell couldn't do it without me!

WILLIAM E.  
Speech!! SPEECH!

DIANE  
That was my speech damnit!

SALYNN  
Cracker James!

Everyone laughs and applauds as Diane pulls up James.

JAMES  
It's going to be hard to top that.  
But y'all, I know we can do it. We  
have to be brave. We cannot be  
afraid of going to prison or being  
jumped or even murdered. As soon as  
the word gets out, they will have  
us arrested immediately. Remember  
to smile, and pose with dignity,  
show them they have nothing to be  
afraid of, "except fear itself!"

MARY  
THAT'S RIGHT!

DIANE  
Well said, Jamesy. Driver? Let's do  
this thang.

Jimmy salute her through the review mirror and they're off.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C.

The city of Washington D.C. zooms past the windows.

INT. BUS - LATER

Everyone chit chats, the energy is calm but positive. William  
E. stands.

WILLIAM E.  
I got three bottles of Whiskey and  
some pot. Who wants some?

Pretty much everybody raises their hands.

William smiles. He grabs the goods and starts to walk down  
the bus aisle. He takes about four steps down the aisle  
before he Jimmy has to slam on the breaks to avoid hitting  
something.

He immediately falls to his ass but keeps the bottles up high  
enough so they don't break.

WILLIAM E. (CONT'D)

We good!

Cheers and laughter from everyone.

WILLIAM E. (CONT'D)

How about everybody comes to me  
instead?

MUSIC CUE: "Midnight Flyer" by Nat King Cole.

Diane's voiceover plays over a MONTAGE of bus joy.

DIANE (V.O.)

I had always hated white people. My neighbor Mr Ryan was the first. I was 6 years old and he was basically dead. He had to be like 96. I could never understand him with his slurry drunken words, but for whatever reason when he got to phrase "porch monkey you better watch your back! You and your coon nigger father", I understood that part completely. It was like he spoke with perfect diction when it had to do with my family and how we made him feel. I woke up about twice a week to him yelling outside our door. Daddy had to put Billie Holiday on the record player every night to drown out the sound of white men who had trouble sleeping due to the color of our skin. It was from that moment on I promised myself, God, and daddy; that I would never find myself in the arms reach of the white man. And then I met James. And everything I was trying to teach about equality really hit, what matters is in the heart, not on the skin. Though, I admit he looked pretty damn good on the outside too.

- Melvin snaps a photo of Diane, and James joking with each other.

- William is getting drunk in a row by himself. Everybody keeps coming back for refills. He's the life of the party.

- Mary teaches Genevieve how to dance to the song.

- Flirting, Charles touches Salynn's leg, she slaps him.

- Hours of travel passing and the setting change from city to rural Alabama. They continue to party and enjoy each other. As it gets later into the night, each rider slowly starts to fall asleep.

- Mary and Will share a row. Her feet are up on his bus seat. His feet are up on hers.

- Salynn sleeps on her side. Backpack under her head for a pillow. Blanket wrapped around her body.

- Mary, Genevieve, and Charles all share the back row of the bus, pretty uncomfortable, but fuck it.

DIANE (V.O.)

When that bus took off, I had no idea how things would turn out, but I knew for sure, I was with all the right people to make a change. Love, peace, and justice were our fight and it felt like we could win over anything.

- Diane and James share a seat. Diane sleeping on her side.

- The bus drives toward the rising sun.

END MONTAGE.

INT. BUS - MORNING

SUPER: Anniston, Alabama. May 5th, 1961.

Jimmy stops the bus. We see through the bus window we're stopped at a dusty drugstore in some dusty town.

JIMMY

Morning everyone! Bathroom break.  
And if any of y'all need anything  
from the drugstore, now's the time.

Everyone is waking up.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Come on, come on! Rise n' shine!

He gets out to relieve himself.

Salynn wakes up. Realizes she's just started her period. She wakes Diane, who is still asleep next to James.



SALYNN

Diane, I forgot my sanitary napkins.

DIANE

I don't have one, I use tampons.

SALYNN

Ew, my mother would never let me use one of those. She says they take your virginity.

James stirs.

JAMES

Who's tampon and why is he taking your virginity?

DIANE

Come, Sal. It's time you're introduced to modern feminine luxury.

She gets up and leads Salynn off the bus to the drugstore.

EXT. BUS - REXALL DRUGSTORE PARKING LOT

Jimmy settles against the bus to smoke. Watching over the store while the riders are inside.

Across the way, a group of white townies step outside the local breakfast spot. They point and talk about the indiscreet bus.

A car drives slowly by, windows down, radio blasting. GOVERNOR WALGREENS's voice fills the air through the speakers

GOVERNOR WALGREENS

We are in search of a group of negro college students traveling on a Greyhound bus through the city. Word is some white students are joining them on this foolish journey. This act is extremely prohibited and as your Governor, I will be issuing a bounty reward. They call themselves the "Freedom Riders", and they are believed to be armed and dangerous.

A bold white townswoman (the one from the opening) exists the breakfast spot and pushes through the small crowd gathered gawking at the bus.

WHITE TOWNSWOMAN  
Move your asses, I have a bounty to  
collect.

She goes to Jimmy.

WHITE TOWNSWOMAN (CONT'D)  
What the hell we got going on over  
here?

JIMMY  
Noting to see here, m'am.

WHITE TOWNSWOMAN  
My ass! I just heard about this  
from Governor on the radio. Where  
them negroes be?

JIMMY  
Just leave us be, woman.

WHITE TOWNSWOMAN  
The hell I will, nigger lover.

She spits at his feet, then hurries inside as the other  
townspeople approach the bus.

Jimmy throws down his smoke and squares up.

INT. BUS -

CLOSE UP on James, fallen back asleep.

The sound of banging/scraping and racist slurs from outside  
wake him up.

James opens his eyes, and sits up quickly. He looks out the  
window to see a horrific scene of racism.

The collection of townspeople have turned into a mob  
surrounding the bus.

James glances around at the other riders looking scared,  
locked inside the bus. He looks for Diane, she's gone.

JAMES  
Where's Diane??

Out the window he see's Diane and the riders rushing back to  
the bus.

EXT. BUS -

The sound of a gun cocking in the hands of a white man - it's Jimmy.

JIMMY

Don't test me, you hicks.

James joins Jimmy, shocked to see him holding a gun, and squares up to the mob, holding them back.

JAMES

Stay back!

Other white students get off the bus and form a human wall.

Diane ushers the black riders run behind them and onto the bus.

The mob pushes in further. Jimmy let's off a shot in the air and they back off.

With everyone safely on the bus, Jimmy, gun still pointed at the angry mob, backs in and closes the door.

Banging and shouting continues as Jimmy peels off.

DIANE (V.O.)

I would love to tell you that was the only time something like that happened on our Freedom Ride, but we all know that's not true.

FADE TO BLACK.

End of episode.