

FORTY ACRES

THE REPARATIONS PLAY

By Robert Alexander Seventh Draft

Cast of Characters

Sonny Bledsoe An African American corporate attorney. 51 yrs old.

Janet Bledsoe Sonny's mother. A retired professor. 79 yrs old.

Martin Bledsoe Sonny's father. A retired attorney. 80 years old.

Bernadette Hopkins A white class action attorney. 55 years old.

Raymond X The Bledsoe's grandchild. 23 years old.

Setting: The play is set in Hilton Head, South Carolina, in the comfortable retirement home of Martin and Janet Bledsoe. It is the spring of 2002, almost six months after the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

SET DESIGN: The set consists of an upper middle class living room with a wet bar.

ACT TWO; SCENE TWO

LATER THAT NIGHT. LIGHTS DISCOVER SONNY, ALONE IN THE LIVING ROOM. HE IS READING A BOOK. SEVERAL BEATS PASS BEFORE RAYMOND ENTERS, HIGHLY AGITATED.

RAYMOND: Screw these honkeys!!

SONNY: Excuse me.

RAYMOND: What are you doing here? When did you get back in town?

SONNY: I got back today. What are you so upset about?

RAYMOND: I just quit my job.

SONNY: What? Why?

RAYMOND: I'm tired of working for devils...tired of waiting on them hand and foot.

SONNY: Thought you needed that job.

RAYMOND: No I don't. It was just a job until something better came along.

SONNY: And what if nothing better comes along?

RAYMOND: Do you think I'm going to wait tables the rest of my life?

SONNY: I waited tables while I was finishing law school. It's good honest work. There's nothing wrong with being a waiter.

RAYMOND: See...I don't even like the name—waiter.

SONNY: Dad says you're applying to law school.

RAYMOND: That was his idea...his fantasy. Just like working at the club was his idea.

SONNY: Then what is it that you really want to do?

RAYMOND: Don't act like you give a damn.

SONNY: I'm your uncle. I'm interested in what—

RAYMOND: (OVERLAP) Cut the bull. Like hell you're interested.

SONNY: If you don't go to law school what are you going to do?

RAYMOND: I want to do something...positive...something constructive for my people. I've been thinking about the music business...starting my own record label.

SONNY: But you need money to do that.

RAYMOND: I know that. Do you think I'm stupid or something?

SONNY: No.

RAYMOND: I'll find the backing for what I really want to do. I'm going to produce and promote positive hip hop. I'm going to put out stuff that's different from the garbage you hear on the radio. I'm going to make a difference. I want to make music that has a social message. I won't be associated with all of this "bling bling" materialistic crap.

SONNY: But until then, you've got to work somewhere.

RAYMOND: I know that. You're telling me stuff I already know.

SONNY: You are certainly my brother's son.

RAYMOND: What's that supposed to mean?

SONNY: You're a smart kid. Figure it out.

MARTIN ENTERS, VISIBLY UPSET.

MARTIN: Raymond...your manager just called me from the Club House. Why did you walk off your job tonight?

RAYMOND: I'm sick and tired of taking orders from honkeys.

MARTIN: You don't use that term in my house. I went out on a limb to get you that job. Your manager called me and told me what happened. Now you get your butt back there and you apologize for what you did.

RAYMOND: I hate those people who come to the Club House. The drunken golfers—the tennis pros and their students. The idle rich. Old retired crackers. (Beat) I'm done working for whitey!

MARTIN: If you stay under my roof, you are going back to work.

RAYMOND: Then I'll leave. I'll pack my bag and leave now. I'm tired of other people telling me how to live my life. I'll go home to Philly or back to DC. I'll hook up with the Nation. Anything to get away from these devils. You should see them...the way that they eat. They'll eat almost anything...talking with their mouths open...full of food. And they call on me to bring them more water. Ordering me around. All of them smell bad. They're disgusting. Revolting. And I have to stand there and take all their crap from their obnoxious children who can't make up their minds when they order.

MARTIN: Are you expecting me to feel sorry for you? Well I don't. You're a spoiled brat.

RAYMOND: I'm spoiled? The devils I wait on are spoiled. Well today...tonight I poured a drink on one of them. I kinda tripped on purpose and spilt a glass of tea right on this kid's head. I wanted to laugh out loud when I did it. The kid's old man started yelling at me. I was sorry it was only iced tea. Hot scalding coffee is what he really deserved. That would've served him right for ordering me around like I was a little monkey.

MARTIN: I can't believe you did that.

RAYMOND: Then the manager came over apologizing for me. Offering them a free meal on the house. And he started chewing me out right in front of everybody. So I quit...right there on the spot. I decided I was done taking shit from white folks.

MARTIN: What is wrong with you boy?

RAYMOND: First of all...I'm not a boy. I'm a man.

MARTIN: You're a foolish kid, who's messing up a good thing...walking off your job like that.

RAYMOND: It's a dead end nothing job. I've got a degree from Howard. Waiting tables is beneath me.

MARTIN: (OVERLAP) I went out on a limb—

RAYMOND: (OVERLAP) If you cared about me—why didn't you use your pull to get me a better job? Like interning at a law firm?

MARTIN: Would you have worked for Bernadette?

RAYMOND: No.

MARTIN: Well, there you have it. I'm calling your father.

RAYMOND: (OVERLAP) Call my father! I don't care!

MARTIN: You're no grandson of mine...not with that attitude.

SONNY: How did you grow up to be so angry? You grew up in a mostly white neighborhood and went to a mostly white prep school. How did you become so racist?

RAYMOND: You've got no right to cross-examine me. My father said you were nothing but a whitey loving Uncle Tom.

SONNY: Is that what your father said? I don't believe it.

RAYMOND: Why would I lie to you? My pops was right, there's nothing you wouldn't do for a buck or a chance to sleep with a white woman. You've got no right to judge me. You've got no right to say anything to me--you...cracker loving wannabe white boy. (Beat) Yeah, I said it. Now do something about it.

RAYMOND PICKS UP ONE OF THE GOLF CLUBS IN A THREATENING MANNER.

RAYMOND: Come on you Uncle Tom...do something about it. Yeah. I called you an Uncle Tom. And I'm calling you out. Now what are you going to do about it?

MARTIN: Have you lost your mind? Put that golf club down.

SONNY: So you want to fight me now?

RAYMOND: You don't know what's inside of me. You don't know what I'm capable of doing. You don't know nothing about anything that is going on with me.

SONNY MAKES A SUDDEN MOVE, RUSHING TO KNOCK RAYMOND DOWN. RAYMOND SWINGS THE GOLF CLUB AT SONNY, BUT HE MISSES, AS SONNY DUCKS. SONNY TACKLES RAYMOND AND TRIES TO WRESTLE THE GOLF CLUB FROM HIS HANDS. RAYMOND FALLS TO THE GROUND, BACKWARDS. SONNY POUNCES ON HIM, GRABBING THE GOLF CLUB. THEY STRUGGLE OVER IT BRIEFLY. ONCE SONNY TAKES THE GOLF CLUB FROM RAYMOND, HE PRESSES IT DOWN ON RAYMOND'S CHEST. MARTIN COMES OVER AND TRIES TO GET SONNY OFF OF RAYMOND.

MARTIN: Let the boy up.

SONNY: (OVERLAP) He started it.

RAYMOND: (OVERLAP) Let me go!

MARTIN: You're hurting him. Let him up.

SONNY: He had no right calling me an Uncle Tom. He had no right saying those things to me.

RAYMOND: The truth hurts—doesn't it?

SONNY: Not as much as I'm going to hurt you.

SONNY CONTINUES TO PRESS DOWN HARD WITH THE GOLF CLUB.

RAYMOND: You can hurt me all you want...I won't take it back.

MARTIN: Get off of him, Sonny. Let the boy up.

SONNY: You're not worth the aggravation.

MARTIN SITS DOWN ALL OF A SUDDEN, GRABBING HIS CHEST AS IF HE WAS HAVING A HEART ATTACK. JANET ENTERS.

JANET: What's all this commotion in here? Martin. What's the matter? Are you all right?

SONNY GETS OFF OF RAYMOND. HE GOES OVER TO HIS FATHER.

SONNY: Dad...are you all right?

MARTIN: I'm okay. I'm just short of breath.

SONNY: Do you need us to call an ambulance?

MARTIN: I'm okay. I can do without all of this fussing and fighting.

JANET: What has gotten into you?

SONNY: He started it.

JANET: You sound like a child. You should both be ashamed of yourselves.

RAYMOND GETS UP, BRUSHING HIMSELF OFF.

RAYMOND: Don't worry. I'm packing my stuff and I'm getting out of here.

JANET: Where are you going to go, boy?

RAYMOND: Don't worry about it.

JANET: You can't leave in the middle of the night.

RAYMOND: I've got friends in the Nation who will take me in.

MARTIN: I thought you were done with that foolishness?

RAYMOND: No. Never. I'm a true believer. I'm going back to DC and I'm going to do what I should've done from the start and that's join up with the Nation.

SONNY: You're a spoiled rotten brat who needs to learn something about respecting other people.

RAYMOND: I'll never respect devils or the race traitors who love 'em. I'm an original Asiatic man. I will bow down to no one.

JANET: Just calm down.

RAYMOND: You know we wouldn't even be here if they hadn't brought us here.

SONNY: Well we're here. Now deal with it.

RAYMOND: Why couldn't they just leave us alone? Why couldn't they just leave us in our rightful place...in Africa? We didn't ask to come over here and take their crap.

SONNY: Your life is better here than it ever would've been in Africa.

RAYMOND: How do you know? I could've been a king over in Africa. I'm nothing here. Here I'm just a waiter...a college educated waiter...stifled by a soft economy. But in Africa I could have been a king. We were once kings—don't you realize that? We were once kings. How do you repair that? You can't repair that. A trillion dollars wouldn't even fix the damage that's been done. I'm not saying don't give us the money. Give us the money, but also give us back our standing. We were once kings and queens. Give me the money and make me a king.

SONNY: You're out of your mind, Raymond. Listening to you is infuriating. What do you want? Do you want to go back to Africa? Is that what you're saying? Allow me to be the first to buy you a ticket.

RAYMOND: Give us our own land here. Give us a state or two and our own economy. Give us Texas. Give us the trillions that we're owed and our own state and then leave us alone. Let us govern ourselves. Let us return to being the kings and queens we once were.

SONNY: Give me, give me, give me! Listen to you whining. For the record...all of us weren't kings and queens. Some of us were slaves in Africa.

RAYMOND: Oh that's a bunch of bull. That's the devil's propaganda. The devil's tricknology.

SONNY: Call it what you want...I know this much...here in America—you're the son of a lawyer and the grandson of a lawyer and the nephew of a lawyer. You've got no right to complain. Nobody owes you anything.

MARTIN: We worked hard and long to achieve integration and you want to throw all of that away.

RAYMOND: Integration is the worst thing that happened to us. It has destroyed the black community. And what have we got left? The illusion that America is the great land of opportunity.

SONNY: My career is not an illusion. Your father didn't pay your tuition with an illusion.

RAYMOND: My father works like a dog defending every two bit no account client in Philly. Most of them never pay him. Most of them are not worth his time. My father is a fool. His practice is a joke. I'll never be like him.

SONNY: That fool still managed to put food on your table and clothes on your back.

RAYMOND: Yeah, well he's about an inch better than the rest of the rich blacks in America—most blacks who got over did it by singing and dancing for Whitey. Or by carrying a football or slam dunking a basketball...all the while trying to maintain a squeaky clean public image...an image that is acceptable to white folks. The cotton field and the tobacco field have been transformed into the football field. We are modern day gladiators on the white man's football field. All of it is so sickening to me. You want to know

where the rage comes from, Uncle Sonny? Well, just open your eyes. (Beat) Look, I'm going upstairs to pack. I'll be leaving first thing in the morning.

MARTIN: No. In the morning you're going to the club and you're going to beg for your job back.

RAYMOND: I'm going to go and get my last check, but I'm not begging them for nothing.

MARTIN: Say you're sorry to your Uncle Sonny.

RAYMOND: No.

SONNY: I wasn't expecting an apology.

RAYMOND STARTS TO LEAVE, BUT STOPS.

RAYMOND: You know, with my SATs, I could've gone to any university I wanted to. I could've gone to Harvard, Yale, Penn or Princeton. I was even accepted at Stanford. Do you want to know why I went to Howard? After being one of only three blacks at prep school I was dying to go to a black college. You see, I know this much about America...long before there was a Michael Jordan or a Tiger Woods—there was O.J. Simpson. O.J. Simpson was their boy. He was the greatest Uncle Tom of them all. He could do no wrong in the eyes of white America. He had it all. He had ceased being black--that is until his ex-wife...a white woman turned up dead.

SONNY: Is there a point to this?

RAYMOND: I saw how white America turned on O.J. Simpson. They abandoned him in his moment of need. Putting O.J. on trial was the equivalent of accusing Tiger Woods of murdering a white woman.

SONNY: You're really stretching to make a point.

RAYMOND: I just know that half of white America was ready to hang O.J. (BEAT) When Simpson was on trial...all black men were on trial. Why do you think so many of us jumped for joy when the verdict came back—not guilty?

MARTIN: I know I did.

SONNY: O.J. beat the system. What does this have to do with you and your rage?

RAYMOND: The Simpson trial started during my freshman year at prep school and the verdict came back when I was a sophomore. I jumped for joy! I was elated, ecstatic when the not guilty verdict was handed down. But my excitement didn't go over too well with my classmates. My white classmates looked at me as if I had killed Nicole Brown Simpson. The rest of my time there, was a living hell. My nickname became O.J. See, I was a running back on the football team my sophomore year, when suddenly my teammates stopped blocking for me. Well needless, to say I didn't play any more sports the rest of my time there. I hated them and I hated being there. I hated being the only black in every class I sat in. They always wanted to know what O.J. had to say about this or that. What did O.J. think?

SONNY: The Simpson trial made you a racist? I'm not buying that.

RAYMOND: And I wasn't selling it. (BEAT) I'm not trying to make any claims about the guilt or innocence of the man. I just know that most of white America believes he did it...and he had become one of their own. Deep down inside they don't trust us. So why should we trust them?

SONNY: I feel sorry for you...everything with you is black and white. The world you live in is so small.

RAYMOND: That's just the way it is with me. I'm not asking you to like it. Just deal with it.

RAYMOND EXITS.

SONNY: What just happened here? (BEAT) Do you believe that kid? That boy needs to grow up and get over it. (Beat)

MARTIN: Why were you trying to hurt that boy?

SONNY: You saw how he was threatening me with that golf club.

MARTIN: You shouldn't have provoked him.

SONNY: I didn't provoke him. He was being menacing. I felt threatened.

MARTIN: He's just a kid. You shouldn't have let him get to you.

JANET: We have never had any violence in our home before.

SONNY: Eddie and I fought all the time growing up.

MARTIN: Now that I do remember.

JANET: You hate your brother...don't you?

SONNY: Why would you say that?

JANET: Because you're taking it out on his son.

SONNY: It's always Eddie this and Eddie that. You never give me credit for nothing. I thought I was the oldest son, but around here...I'm an afterthought. I'm always the last to know...anything.

SONNY STANDS AND HEADS TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR.

JANET: And where are you going?

SONNY: Out. I need some air.

SONNY EXITS.

MARTIN: I'm calling Eddie. I need to let him know about the problem we have on our hands with his son.

JANET: You call Eddie. I'm going to have a word with Raymond.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

END OF SCENE.