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We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915

Jackie Sibblies Drury



We Are Proud to Present
a Presentation
About the
Herero of Namibia,
Formerly Known as
South West Africa,
From the German Südwestafrika,
Between the Years
1884-1915

Drama, By Jackie Sibblies Drury, Cast; 4m., 2w. A group of actors gather to tell the littleknown story of the first genocide of the 20th century, We Are Proud to Present ... takes place largely in a rehearsal room that descends from collaborative to absurd as a group of idealistic actors-three black and three white-attempt to recreate the extinction of the Herero tribe at the hands of their German colonizers, Along the way, they test the limits of empathy as their own stories. subjectivities, assumptions and prejudices catalyze their theatrical process, Eventually the full force of a horrific past crashes into the good intentions of the present, and what seemed a faraway place and time comes all too close to home. Unit set, Approximate running time: 90 minutes, Code: WG9.

Photos: Soho Rep., New York City, featuring (front cover) Grantham Coleman, (back cover I-r) Grantham Coleman, Lauren Blumenfeld and Jimmy Davis. Photo: © Julieta Cervantes. Cover design: Jeanette Aliq-Sergel.





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By
JACKIE SIBBLIES DRURY



Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois ● Australia ● New Zealand ● South Africa

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(WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT A PRESENTATION ABOUT THE HERERO
OF NAMIBIA, FORMERLY KNOWN AS SOUTH WEST AFRICA, FROM THE
GERMAN SÜDWESTAFRIKA, BETWEEN THE YEARS 1884–1915)

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"We Are Proud to Present ... received its world premiere in April 2012 at Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, Illinois, directed by Eric Ting, Chay Yew, artistic director, Jan Kallish, executive director, and had its New York premiere at Soho Rep., Sarah Benson, artistic director, Cynthia Flowers, executive director. We Are Proud to Present ... was developed at Magic Theatre's Virgin Play Series, San Francisco; the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco; and Victory Garden Theater's IGNITION Festival."

We Are Proud to Present ... received its world premiere in April 2012 at Victory Gardens Biograph Theater in Chicago.

| Cast | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| White Man | Bernard Balbot |
| Black Man | Kamal Angelo Bolden |
| Black Woman | Tracey N. Bonner |
| Another White Man | Jake Cohen |
| Sarah | Leah Karpel |
| Another Black Man | Travis Turner |
| Production | |
| Director | Eric Ting |
| C · D · | |
| Set Design | Brian Bembridge |
| Lighting Deisgn | _ |
| _ | Jesse Klug |
| Lighting Deisgn | Jesse Klug Mike Tutaj |
| Lighting Deisgn Projections | Jesse Klug Mike Tutaj Sarah Pickett |
| Lighting Deisgn | Jesse Klug Mike Tutaj Sarah Pickett Christine Pascual |

The play received its New York premiere by Soho Rep. in association with John Adrian Selzer in November 2012.

| Cast | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Actor 6 / Black Woman | Quincy Tyler Bernstine |
| Actor 5 / Sarah | Lauren Blumenfeld |
| Actor 4 / Another Black Man | Phillip James Brannon |
| Actor 2 / Black Man | Grantham Coleman |
| Actor 3 / Another White Man | Jimmy Davis |
| Actor 1 / White Man | · · |
| | |
| Production | |
| Director | Eric Ting |
| Set Designer | Mimi Lien |
| Costume Designer | Toni-Leslie James |
| Lighting Designer | Lenore Doxsee |
| Sound Designer & Choreographer | Chris Giarmo |
| Video Designer | |
| Props Master | Jon Knust |
| Violence Consultant | |
| Production Manager | BD White |
| Production Stage Manager | |
| Assistant Stage Manager | • |
| | |

Thank you to the following:

Mark Drury, Pat Sibblies, Sandy Shinner, Geoffrey Jackson Scott, Sarah Benson, Caleb Hammons, Raphael Martin, Eric Ehn, Lisa D'Amour, Mallery Avidon, Mia Chung, Joe Waetcher, Michael Perlman and Antje Oegle.

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CHARACTERS

Actor 6 / Black Woman

Actor 1/ White Man

Actor 2 / Black Man

Actor 3 / Another White Man

Actor 4 / Another Black Man

Actor 5 / Sarah

All are young, somewhere in their 20s-ish, and they should seem young, open, skilled, playful and perhaps, at times, a little foolish.

SETTINGS

A large space, a gathering place, a theatre:

The Presentation.

In these sections, the performers have an awareness of the audience or at least An Audience. We see glimpses of a Presentation occurring in a theatrical space.

And a smaller space, a private place, a rehearsal:

The Process.

In these sections, we see glimpses of a rehearsal through the 4th wall. The performers experiment without selfconsciousness, rehearsing in the space without an audience, perhaps a bare-bones version of the actual space.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Presentation sections and the Process sections are distinct at the start, but over time Process becomes Presentation, the spaces aren't what they appear to be, and boundaries are broken.

The transitions between these sections should be quick and seamless. Each scene begins in the middle of things, and the play is performed continuously, cohesively, without breaks.

About the punctuation:

A slash (/) indicates the interruption of the next line of text.

A set of brackets indicate that the line can either be spoken or, um, indicated.

Line breaks indicate a subtle, internal shift—not a pause.

A dash is an interruption—either by oneself or by someone else.

About the music:

There is music in this text.

Music and rhythm should exist where they are indicated, and it should be added throughout.

About the time:

One can think of the Presentations sections as glimpses from a longer and complete presentation, one that uses a variety of theatrical styles. I've provided the years, roughly, that each scene is representative of. Or, we could say, the year in which the letter that is being presented was written. Please only use these years if/as they are helpful.

About the violence:

The performance calls for real contact as opposed to realistic contact. Actions that might make an audience wonder how they were done will work against the play. A slap to the shoulder, a loose rope around the neck: these things will feel much more dangerous than elaborate choreography or invisible rigging, in the end.

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Prologue: Intro, Lecture, Lecture/Presentation,
Presentation

(ACTOR 6 enters.)

ACTOR 6. Sorry.

We're all ready?

(ACTOR 6 greets the audience, probably with some warmth and casualness, definitely with some nervousness.

ACTOR 5 hands her a stack of note cards.)

ACTOR 6 (cont'd). Great.

(ACTOR 6 glances at the cards, retrieves a pen and crosses "Greet Audience" off the list.)

ACTOR 6 (cont'd, to herself). Greet audience. Fire speech.

(ACTOR 6 gives the fire speech, complete with cellphone speech, etc.)

ACTOR 6 (cont'd, to herself). Fire speech. Special Announcements.

(ACTOR 6 makes any special announcements. She probably reads them off her papers/cards. If there are no theatre related special announcements, perhaps there is a drink special at a near by bar? A sale at the store down the street?)

ACTOR 6 (cont'd, to herself). Special Announcements. OK.

(ACTOR 6 reads a prepared speech. She also interrupts herself to clarify, talking directly to the audience. The lines that are read are italicized; the parts that are said are not.)

ACTOR 6 (cont'd). Hello. Thank you for coming.

Oh, I already did that.

Welcome to our presentation.

We have prepared a lecture to precede the presentation because we feel that you would benefit from some background information so as to give our presentation a greater amount of context.

Yeah. OK, so, the lecture's a lecture but it's not a lecture lecture.

We made it fun.

Ish.

Sort of.

Anyway.

The lecture's duration should last approximately five minutes.

It might be ten. I'm bad at time.

Because, you know, what's happening is the important thing, it doesn't matter when it happens, or how long it happens for, it's that it's happening. Am I right?

(Nervous laugh.)

This is happening.

(Nevous laugh.)

OK.

In this lecture—Um ... Wait, what?

(She flips through the cards. ACTOR 5 might try to feed her the lines.)

ACTOR 6 (cont'd). OK.

(To the ensemble and the audience at the same time.)

"We" forgot to write in the part "we" agreed "we'd" write about the overview.

So ...

(*To the audience.*)

OK. So, there's like a lecture that's only sort of a lecture and then we did this thing that is kind of like an overview before the lecture, which is before the presentation.

Does that make sense?

OK.

Yeah ...

I think I'm just going to skip some of this stuff, you know, since it seems it doesn't actually say what we all agreed that it should say

Even though we went through a lot to figure out how to do this and introduce it properly, but this introduction isn't what it's supposed to be so ...

This is what we're doing: Lecture, Overview, Presentation. Super fun. Great.

(To herself.)

Skip skip skip.

Helping me to present the lecture to you is our ensemble of actors.

Our ensemble of actors:

ACTOR 1 I'm an actor

ACTOR 2. I'm an actor.

ACTOR 3. I'm an actor.

ACTOR 4. I'm an actor.

ACTOR 5. I'm an / actor.

ACTOR 6. And I am an actor.

ACTOR 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. Hello.

ACTOR 6. I'm also kind of the artistic director of our ensemble, so.

OK.

In this presentation, which has already started, I know, *I will be playing the part of Black Woman.*

I am also black, in real life, which you might find confusing.

Please try to think of it like this:

Black Woman is just the name of the character I'm playing.

This actor will be referred to as Black Man.

This actor will be referred to as White Man.

This actor will be referred to as Another Black Man.

This actor will be referred to as Another White Man.

This actor will—

(To ACTOR 5.)

Actually, we haven't really explained you yet. And they won't get it, so ...

(To the audience.)

Just ignore her for right now.

OK

Another White Man ... because this is true in real life and in this

lecture and subsequent

presentation.

Now, without further ado, we present to you a lecture about Namibia

(A lecture shared by the group: a map, a Powerpoint presentation.)

ACTOR 6 (cont'd). A Lecture About Namibia.

Located in the southern most section of the African continent, Namibia is bordered by:

Angola,

Zambia,

Botswana,

Zimbabwe,

South Africa

and the Atlantic Ocean.

Let me repeat that.

Or—you guys get it: Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah and the Atlantic Ocean.

Some other facts about Namibia.

Namibia's official language is English:

ACTOR 4. Hello.

ACTOR 6. Namibia's Recognized Regional Languages are Afrikaans:

ACTOR 1. Hallo.

ACTOR 6. Oshiwambo:

ACTOR 2. Ongiini.

ACTOR 6. And German:

ACTOR 3. Guten Tag.

ACTOR 6. There is a reason for this. An historical reason.

This is really what the lecture is about.

An Explanation For The Recognized Languages In Namibia. Let us begin with Oshiwambo.

ACTOR 2. Oshiwambo—

ACTOR 6. *Oshiwambo is spoken by a tribe called the Herero:* The Herero:

ACTORS 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 (to the audience, with a helpful smile). The Her-er-oh.

ACTOR 6. Actually, Oshiwambo was originally spoken by the Ovambo people, but we aren't really talking about them at all so ... The Herero.

ACTORS 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. The Herero.

ACTOR 6. Another of Namibia's languages is English—

ACTOR 4. English.

ACTOR 6. English is spoken in Namibia because the English expanded their colonial holdings during World War I—

ACTOR 3. —World War I.

ACTOR 6. That is the reason why English is spoken in Nambia. The third of Namibia's languages is Afrikaans—

ACTOR 1. —Afrikaans—

ACTOR 6. —Afrikaans is spoken in Namibia

because Afrikaans speakers needed to expand their ranches into Namibia

settling permanently around the turn of the 19th century—

ACTOR 4. —that's 1900?

ACTOR 6. 1800.

(The slide is wrong.)

ACTOR 5. [Oh, fuck.]

(ACTOR 5 fixes the slide.)

ACTOR 3 1800

(OK. Now they start to get it together. They're getting into the section that they rehearsed the most.)

ACTOR 6. Around the turn of the 19th century, before Namibia became a German colony:

ACTOR 1. Südwestafrika!

ACTOR 6. —which is the name for the colony in German—

ACTOR 4 Oshindowishi!

ACTOR 6. —which is the name for German in Oshiwambo.

Namibia became a German colony in 1884.

It stopped being a German colony in 1915, when it was taken by the English:

ACTORS 1, 2, 3 & 4. During World War I!

ACTOR 6. —but between 1884 and 1915, when Namibia was—

ACTOR 1. Südwestafrika!

ACTOR 6. —which is where—which is when?—

(ACTOR 5 disagrees with her "when," saying "where.")

ACTOR 6 (cont'd). Which is when we are concentrating today. We have access to:

ACTOR 4. Postcards!

ACTOR 1. Karte!

ACTOR 5. Letters!

ACTOR 3. Stukken van Document!

ACTOR 2. Ombapila!

ACTOR 6.—a cache of letters from German troops stationed in German South West Africa between the years 1884 and 1915.

But before we present the presentation of those letters, we have the overview.

Which we don't have an introduction for. So.

This is going to be the overview.

Or, should we say it?

(The ACTORS agree: "Yeah." or "I guess?" or "Yes, yes, keep going." Etc.)

ACTOR 6 (cont'd). Yeah—let's all say it together.

(A fast-paced cartoonish overview—a romp. They've like actually really memorized this part. They move through it very quickly, at times frantically.

If they have simple puppets/illustrations/costumes, ACTOR 5 made the puppets/illustrations/costumes. There's probably slapstick, a prat fall, some hijinks. The announcement of each year is preceded by a sound: punctuation, the ding of a bell. And with each ding, a brief comic tableau that sums up what was said about the previous year.)

ALL. An Overview of German South West Africa Between the Years 1884 and 1915.

ACTOR 6. 1884

ACTOR 1. Germany is in charge.

ACTOR 3. Sort of. All the tribes are actively not saying they hate us.

ACTOR 2 & 4. Hey, Germany. We aren't saying we hate you.

ACTOR 6. 1885

ACTOR 2. Agreements are reached with tribal leaders—

ACTOR 1. Germany is totally in charge.

ACTOR 2. Well, some of the tribal leaders.

ACTOR 6. 1886

ACTOR 1. Germany is like actually in charge.

ACTOR 3. Germany is telling other people that they're in charge.

ACTOR 1. Germany is like basically actually in charge.

ACTOR 6. 1887

ACTOR 1. The Germans are impressed by one tribe in particular, the Herero.

ACTORS 2, 3, 4 & 5. The Her-er-oh.

ACTOR 6. The Herero.

ACTOR 2. So tall.

ACTOR 4. So muscular.

ACTOR 1. The Germans put—

ACTORS 2, 3, 4 & 5. The Her-er-oh.

ACTOR 1. —in charge of all / the tribes—

ACTOR 6. The Germans put the Herero in charge of all the tribes in German South West Africa.

ACTORS 2 & 4. Hurray!

ACTOR 6, 1888.

ACTOR 2. The Herero are in charge.

ACTOR 3. Sort of.

ACTOR 6, 1889.

ACTOR 1. The Germans are kind of over the Herero.

ACTOR 3. Over the Herero.

ACTOR 2. So childish and ungrateful.

ACTOR 4. So impudent and unwashed.

ACTOR 6. 1890.

ACTOR 1. The Germans put the Hottentots—

ACTOR 3. The Nama.

ACTOR 1. The Nama in control. The Germans give a bunch of Herero cattle to the Nama

ACTOR 3. Herero cattle to the Nama.

ACTOR 2. Which, like sucks.

ACTOR 4. Because the Herero love their cows.

ACTOR 2. We do.

ACTOR 6. 1891.

ACTOR 1. The Germans are sort of over the Hotten—Nama

ACTOR 3. Over the Nama.

ACTOR 6. 1892.

ACTOR 1. The Germans put the Herero back in control.

They give a bunch of Nama cattle to the Herero.

ACTOR 3. Nama cattle to the Herero.

ACTOR 4. Which is sort of stealing.

ACTOR 2. But they were our cows to begin with.

ACTOR 6. 1893.

ACTOR 4. The Nama fight the Herero.

ACTOR 2. The Herero fight the Nama

ACTOR 1. The Germans take the cattle—

ACTOR 3. —take care of the cattle—

ACTOR 1. —care for the cattle—

ACTOR 6, 1894.

ACTORS 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. Tenuous Peace.

(Tableau: Tenuous peace. Smile: ding!)

ACTOR 6. 1895.

ACTOR 1. The Germans decide to build a railroad into the interior.

ACTORS 1, 2,3,4 & 5. More resources for everyone.

(Tableau: Fiscal success. Bigger smile: ding!)

ACTOR 6. 1896.

ACTOR 1. We are building that railroad.

ACTOR 3. We are building that railroad.

ACTOR 2. We are building that railroad.

ACTOR 6 1897

ACTOR 1. We are failing.

ACTOR 3. We are failing.

ACTOR 2. We are building that railroad.

ACTOR 6, 1898.

ACTOR 1. We are really failing.

ACTOR 3. Not good.

ACTOR 2. We are building that railroad.

ACTOR 6. 1899.

ACTOR 1. We are fucked.

ACTOR 3. So fucked.

ACTOR 2. We are building that fucking railroad.

ACTOR 6. 1900.

ACTOR 1. German settlers are getting poorer and poorer—

ACTOR 3. —and madder and madder, and the German government—

ACTOR 1.—is getting madder and madder, and poorer and poorer.

ACTOR 3. Because of the fucking railroad.

ACTOR 2. We are building that—

ACTOR 6. 1901.

ACTOR 1. Germany tinkers a little with the law.

ACTOR 3. If you are German and a cow wanders on to your land:

ACTOR 4. It's yours!

ACTOR 3. If you try to take a cow from a German and you aren't a German:

ACTOR 2. You get hanged.

ACTOR 1. Problem solved.

ACTOR 6. 1902.

ACTOR 1. Germany tinkers a little more with the law.

ACTOR 3. If you are German and you see land that doesn't belong to a German:

ACTOR 4. It's yours!

ACTOR 3. If you contest a German land claim and you aren't German:

ACTOR 2. You get hanged.

ACTOR 3. If you are German and you see cattle on the land you have just claimed:

ACTOR 4. The cattle are yours!

ACTOR 3. If you steal cattle from a German and you aren't German:

ACTOR 2. You get hanged.

ACTOR 6. 1903.

ACTOR 4. The Nama rebel against German rule.

It doesn't end well.

ACTOR 3. But it does end quickly.

ACTOR 6. 1904.

ACTOR 2. The Herero rebel against German rule.

ACTOR 1. The Herero are taught a lesson.

ACTOR 3. The Herero are made examples of.

ACTOR 1. The General Issues The Extermination Order.

ACTOR 6. 1905.

ACTOR 1. The General Issues The Extermination Order.

ACTOR 3. The Germans imprison thousands of Herero in labor camps.

ACTOR 6. 1906.

ACTOR 1. The General Issues The Extermination Order.

ACTOR 3. The Germans force thousands of Herero into the desert.

ACTOR 6. 1907.

ACTOR 1. The General Issues The Extermination Order.

ACTOR 3. The Germans erect a wall to keep them in the desert. ACTOR 6. 1908.

The Extermination order has been issued.

The labor camps have closed.

Eighty percent of the Herero have been Exterminated.

Those that survived the camps

were used as a source of unpaid labor by the German settlers.

And in this way, the German regime continued:

1909

1910

1911

1912

1913

1914

1915.

And then. And only then do the English intervene.

ACTOR 3. World War I.

ACTOR 6. And there you have it.

A history of German Colonial Rule in Namibia.

(Big finish: The formal beginning to the presentation.)

ALL. We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884 and 1915.