

5.9.17

# **A GATHERING OF SONS**

An Opera

Libretto by Tameka Cage Conley

Music by Dwayne Fulton

Commissioned by Pittsburgh Festival Opera

## **CHARACTERS**

**Victoria**, Victor's mother, 42, African American

**Violet**, mother giving birth to a son, 28, African American

**Lockdown**, cop who profiles and hunts young Black men like Victor, Caucasian

**Victor**, 18, Victoria's son, unjustly murdered by Lockdown

**City**, 32, Violet's husband, also a police officer

**Spirit of Freedom**, the spirit and consciousness of Violet's unborn son

**Doctor in Purple**, delivers Violet's son

**Doctor in Black**, pronounces Victor's death

**Glock**, Lockdown's gun

**Great Father**, Elder of the Sons, also the spirit of Victor and City's father, now gone

**Youngest of the Sons**

### **Chorus I**

**The Speaking Earth**

**The Sky that Can't Stop Seeing**

**The Waters**

**The Blood**

**Medic 1**

**Medic 2**

**911 Operator**

### **Chorus 2**

**THE SONS, (A legion of spirits, all African American men and boys)**

**SETTING**

Present Day.

A cold street, where an officer believes he takes a young Black man's life in secret. But the cover of night does not conceal.

A hospital.

And elsewhere, a place where spirits speak.

*"You can't just fly off and leave a body."*

Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

\*

*"Just because we're magic, it doesn't mean we're not real."*

Jessie Williams, Humanitarian, Activist, and Actor

**Act 1**

**Scene 1**

(Stage Left.)

**LOCKDOWN**

(pointing his gun at VICTOR)

Run!

**VICTOR**

What?!

**LOCKDOWN**

I said...*run!*

*(Victor runs. LOCKDOWN shoots him down, then checks his pockets and retrieves the bag of golden dust. LOCKDOWN is not permitted to see THE SONS gathered at center stage, cloaked in golden robes. Each of THE SONS holds a pouch of gold dust. GREAT FATHER empties the contents of his pouch in honor of the fallen Victor, his son on earth. They release a soulful, woeful “ohhhhh”—a mourning song and a wail, with great harmony, pain, and spirit.)*

*Lights down*

**Scene 2**

*(Center stage. The FOUR SPIRITS gather. THE SONS stand before them. GREAT FATHER, the eldest of THE SONS, steps from the group to address the SPIRITS. THE SONS ARE SILENT OR HOLD A SINGLE CHORD)*

**GREAT FATHER OF THE SONS**

SPOKEN:

Spirits of Sky,  
Water, Earth,  
and Blood...

We have come  
to ask you  
to intervene  
on Earth—  
in our streets,  
in our cities,  
in the hearts  
of police.

(**THE SONS** HUM, AS **FATHER** NOW SINGS)

Great Spirits you know me.  
I am Father  
of **THE SONS**.  
I am he who guides them,  
from the youngest  
to the eldest one.  
And as one, we all hurt.  
And as one, we all cry.  
Our numbers are growing  
shot down before time.

**A YOUTH OF THE SONS**  
SHOUTED:

We know you see  
what they're doing to us.

**A YOUTH OF THE SONS**  
SHOUTED:

How many of us  
will be left if they can  
keep killing us like  
they're doing?

**A YOUTH OF THE SONS**  
SHOUTED:

Don't you see it?

**A YOUTH OF THE SONS**  
SHOUTED:

Don't it make you  
wanna cry?

**THE SKY THAT CAN'T STOP SEEING  
SUNG**

Yes, dearest son, I see.  
I am the Sky That Can't Stop Seeing.  
How much can one sky suffer?  
For all the sons I weep,  
My tears fall like raindrops.  
Who are they to test me?  
I see all the wounds  
and innocent blood.  
I am the Sky that Sees everything.

*(As SKY concludes, thunder can be heard. A storm is coming. Rain begins to fall as SKY weeps.)*

**SKY, WATERS, EARTH, and BLOOD, together**

We know all the names  
of the fallen.  
We know all the names  
of the dead.

**THE WATERS**

I am the Waters,  
I cover most  
of the earth  
All the bones  
that live in me  
got names.  
I am the Waters,  
I fill most of the body.  
Bones left a trail.  
They left a hole.  
They left a melody.

*(A sound like the coming-in of a tide can be heard.)*

## EARTH

I am the Earth.

What business you got with me?

I don't want

young and tattered flesh

in my belly,

Tell me how can I sleep?

There is no rest for me,

There's no compassion.

Toe and limbs

and what remains

of mouth and eyes,

scalp and thighs,

All that is dead pushes

deep inside me.

What business you got with me?

My heart's a wretch with grief and blues,

Please don't bother me,

I have no space, there is no room.

All these young men

murdered deep inside my soul,

dark and cold.

All that is dead

pushes deep inside me.

Oh, ah,

I take it all.

I try to rise,

but gravity hold me down.

I moan.

I take it all.

I try to rise,

but gravity hold me down.

I scream,

but what ears hear?

I scream,

and no one hears me.

**GREAT FATHER OF THE SONS**

SPOKEN

I hear you.

**THE SONS**

together, SUNG

O, Earth! We hear you.

**GREAT FATHER OF THE SONS**

SPOKEN

And because you hear us,  
we ask you to stop one man,  
His name is Lockdown.  
And he just shot one of us.  
Victor,  
who bleeds to death as we gather.

**THE BLOOD**

SUNG

I am Blood.  
I weep in red.  
One moment, a home of skin  
holds me.  
The next moment,  
I lay on the ground.  
I'm spilled on the ground.  
The mothers wail above me,  
as if to will me back  
into their sons.

**GREAT FATHER**

SHOUTED

Yes! As Victor's mother will wail  
to will you back  
into her son.

**THE SONS**

SUNG

We plead for mercy!  
We beg for mercy!

**SPIRITS**

Why do you ask on behalf  
of Victor alone?

**GREAT FATHER**

SPOKEN

We ask for all.  
Victor is my son.  
Our son.

**SPIRITS**

We have heard you.  
We will heed you.

*(THE SONS bow to the knee in reverence. THE SPIRITS return their bow.)*

*End scene.*

**Scene 3**

*(From the second floor of an apartment building, a woman's scream splits the air. Golden light pours from the window as a light is turned on. She is experiencing a painful contraction. Her unborn son will soon come screaming from her. Lights come up on the street below. VICTOR is up against a wall, arms and legs spread wide. LOCKDOWN is patting VICTOR down. This is stop-and-frisk, a kind of occupation of the body. VICTOR cannot move until LOCKDOWN gives words. In his young years, VICTOR has been here before, but somehow, this time is different. LOCKDOWN feels something in VICTOR's pocket. VICTOR instinctively moves to block LOCKDOWN'S roaming hand.)*

**LOCKDOWN**

You got a death wish, boy?

Move your damn hand!

**VICTOR**

You don't have a right to it.

**LOCKDOWN**

I got a right to everything.

**VICTOR**

Not what's in my pocket.  
Please don't take my life.  
I didn't do a thing  
You know I didn't.

**LOCKDOWN**

Move your hand.  
What's in there?  
Is it drugs?  
Admit its drugs!

**VICTOR**

Drugs! Ha!  
What I got...  
what I got is magic!  
If you want it,  
you got to kill me.

**LOCKDOWN**

I got a license to do that.  
I can do that. Easy.  
Shoot you.  
Kill you.

*End* you.  
Then *take* what I want.  
Whatever you got is mine.

**VICTOR**

Everything I got is *mine*.

**LOCKDOWN**

You don't have nothing I can't take.  
Even your breath.  
I can take that, too, if I want it.  
And your magic, I'll take that too.  
That's why you niggers  
call me Lockdown.

**VICTOR**

I ain't no nigger!

**LOCKDOWN**

Oh my magic  
Will make you dance.  
So when I say jump, you jump.  
When I say give me what's in your pocket,  
You hand it over. Or I'll shoot you dead.

**VICTOR**

In my pocket there's  
Magic and Power.  
It's *mine*!  
And if you take it,  
It will turn on you.  
It ain't meant for your hands,  
Lockdown.

## LOCKDOWN

You don't have a choice.  
I am your choice.  
I am the answer.  
I am the nightmare.  
*Your* nightmare.  
I'm death to you.  
And life to you.  
You ain't nothing  
but dirt.

*(LOCKDOWN touches his gun.)*

## VICTOR

I was made from dirt,  
like you,  
but I'm greater than dirt.  
I ain't no nigger.  
You can't take nothing from me  
that I haven't given up.  
I was born Victor.  
But I got a new name.  
My new name got shine.  
God gave it to me.  
You can shoot me.  
You can take my breath.  
But only God can *end* me.  
And if you take the magic in my pocket,  
there won't be no mercy for you.  
It ain't yours.  
I'm the only one that can carry it,  
All the Sons and me like me.

## LOCKDOWN

Shut up and turn around.

*(VICTOR slowly turns to face LOCKDOWN who now aims his gun directly in VICTOR's face. LOCKDOWN is now face-to-face with a young man who is afraid but somehow beyond fear. VICTOR's body shivers, but his soul is still.)*

**LOCKDOWN**

You don't believe I'll do it?!

**VICTOR**

Oh, I *know* you will.  
You done it before.  
You *been* walking on bones.  
You *been* killing us.  
and taking our breath.  
I ain't the first one.  
You a murderer.  
You descend from murderers.

*(LOCKDOWN laughs.)*

**LOCKDOWN**

You talk a lot of shit  
for a little bastard  
about to take his last breath.

**VICTOR**

I ain't a bastard,  
and I ain't a nigger.  
Go on!  
If you gonna shoot me,  
shoot me!

*(LOCKDOWN lowers his gun. The sinister grin of a man possessed by the power to kill or not kill, to spare or not spare, spreads across his face. VICTOR's courage baffles and excites him.)*

**LOCKDOWN**

Run!

**VICTOR**

What?!

**LOCKDOWN**

I said...*run!*

*(VICTOR hesitates, then the action of his limbs kicks in, and he is running, not only for his life but also for the lives of so many young, African American men like him who had run for centuries, from slave catchers, lynch mobs, bounty hunters, and corrupt and non-corrupt police officers. LOCKDOWN raises his firearm and shoots. A gunshot reverberates so loudly you can feel it in the bones and beneath the bones. VICTOR goes down. Sirens blare. An ambulance approaches, meant for the woman in labor. Just moments before it arrives, LOCKDOWN runs towards VICTOR's body, still rising and falling with life, though faintly, and rummages through his pockets. He pulls out a black, velvet bag and opens it. The bag is filled with golden dust. The contents of the bag light LOCKDOWN's face with fire. The SPIRITS unleash a terrible moan. Lockdown trembles and releases an "ohhhhhh" so full of fright that we instantly know something is happening to him, something terrible. The ambulance approaches, and LOCKDOWN runs.)*

*Lights out.*

**Scene 4**

*(Downstage center. Medics arrive and are baffled to see VICTOR in the street. There is intensity in their work, faces, and voices as they try to save VICTOR. All SPOKEN:)*

**MEDIC 1**  
SPOKEN

Is that a body?

**MEDIC 2**  
SPOKEN

It's a body!

**MEDIC 1**  
SPOKEN

The call was for a pregnant woman in labor!  
Who is this?

**MEDIC 2**  
SPOKEN

Don't matter who it is!  
Check his vitals!

**MEDIC 1**  
SPOKEN

He's alive!  
He's breathing!

**MEDIC 2**  
SPOKEN

Call it in.

**MEDIC 1**  
SPOKEN

(calling hospital, his voice steady and even, but intense)

We got an African American male,  
about 21, gunshot wound to the low  
back. No spinal injury,  
but he's bleeding out quick.

*(MEDIC 1 and MEDIC 2 put Victor on a stretcher)*

**MEDIC 2**

He looks like a good kid.

**MEDIC 1**

They all look like good kids.  
Hard to look evil when you

Fighting to live.

**MEDIC 2**

Who do you think did this?

**MEDIC 1**

You know who.

**MEDIC 2**

I'm sick and tired of Lockdown, man.  
That dude got it coming.

**MEDIC 1**

I pray it comes quick.

**MEDIC 2**

When it comes, may God have  
mercy on his soul.

**MEDIC 1**

I hope he don't get a drop of mercy.  
Look at this kid.  
Look what he did to him.

**MEDIC 2**

Let's get him to the hospital now!

**MEDIC 1**

I'll call a backup ambulance for the woman.

**MEDIC 2**

Hold on, buddy!  
You hold on!  
As long as you got breath,

you can make it.  
You can pull through.  
Hear me?  
We got you!  
We got you, young man!

*(Medics take VICTOR away. VICTOR imagines God is calling him by his new name. He can barely remember to breathe. Gold glitter that only VICTOR can sense flutters down onto his body from above.)*

*End scene.*

### **Scene 5**

*Lights up in VIOLET and CITY's bedroom. VIOLET works through contractions with breathing techniques and exercises. Her husband, CITY, holds her hand. With the other, he dials 911.*

**CITY**  
SPOKEN

My wife is in labor.  
I called twenty minutes ago!  
How much longer we got to wait?

*(VIOLET releases a scream.)*

**911 OPERATOR**  
SPOKEN

I understand, sir.  
An ambulance is en route.  
Arrival time is three minutes.

**CITY**

Thank you. Good night.

*(CITY hangs up. Addresses VIOLET.)*

**CITY**  
SUNG

They'll be here soon, baby.  
Soon.

I am so proud of you.

**VIOLET**

Can you believe it?  
Our son will be here soon.

**CITY**

*(CITY wraps his arms around VIOLET who bends her body into her contractions.)*

When I met you, I knew you  
would be a great mother.  
Now here we are.  
Nine months, and now  
it's time.

*(CITY plants a gentle kiss on his wife's forehead, as if kissing his wife and his unborn son together. The ambulance can be heard outside. As CITY grabs the packed bag, he nearly forgets—but at the last moment remembers—a photo on the nightstand of him, his father, and his brother, VICTOR. He places a hand on the photo quickly but tenderly. Lights go down on CITY and VIOLET and come up on LOCKDOWN, who is on his knees looking into the shimmering contents of the bag he'd stolen from VICTOR.)*

**LOCKDOWN**

It's his fault.  
Should'a surrendered  
when I said.  
My name is Lockdown.  
When I say move, *move*.  
But I should'a called it in.  
Could'a said, *he resisted arrest*.  
Could'a said, *suspected firearm*.  
Could'a said, *posed immediate threat*.  
Why did I run?  
I don't run.  
But I ran.  
What's wrong with me?  
What did that kid do to me?

*(Lights down on LOCKDOWN. Lights up on CITY and VIOLET.)*

**CITY**

I will soon be a father.  
This child will be my son.  
Soon, I will have a son.

*(Lights up on LOCKDOWN and CITY)*

**LOCKDOWN**

I run these streets.

**CITY**

I will protect his life  
like my father protected mine.

**LOCKDOWN**

I run this city.

**CITY**

Only the best for him!

**LOCKDOWN**

They are all the same!

(LOCKDOWN begins to slowly break. He is a man out of control.)

**LOCKDOWN**

I did the right thing.

**CITY**

I will love him more than anything.

**LOCKDOWN**

He shouldn't have crossed me.

**CITY**

I can't wait to hold him!

**LOCKDOWN**

He wanted to die.

**CITY**

This is the start of a new life.  
I am someone's father.

**LOCKDOWN**

I got rid of that scum.  
I did something good  
for the city.

**CITY**

This boy is the greatest thing I've ever done  
with my life.

(Ambulance arrives. CITY leads his wife downstairs, but not before he reaches for the photo.)

*End scene.*

## **Scene 6**

*Lights up on VICTORIA, who hums and sings along to the radio with a bit of "Amazing Grace" She is putting her dinner dishes away. Nearby, is an older family photo of VICTORIA, GREAT FATHER (before his death), VICTOR, and CITY. Happiness radiates from the photo. The phone rings.*

*ALL SPOKEN: (the radio continues playing Amazing Grace throughout the scene?)*

VICTORIA

Hello?

**CITY**

Momma?

**VICTORIA**

City? Yes, baby.  
It's me!  
Is everything ok?  
Is it Violet?

**CITY**

We're headed to the hospital.  
She's in labor.  
Momma, I'm gonna be a daddy!

**VICTORIA**

The finest!  
Oh, oh, City, I'm so happy!  
I'll be there right away!  
Hold on a moment,  
there's another call.  
Hello?

**NURSE**

Yes, is this Mrs. Victoria Power?

**VICTORIA**

Yes. This is Mrs. Power.

**NURSE**

Ma'am, I am calling about your son.

**VICTORIA**

That is nice of you.  
I am speaking to him.  
His wife is in labor.  
I will be there soon.

**NURSE**

I am sorry.  
But there must be some mistake.  
Do you have another son, ma'am?  
He said to call you.  
His name is Victor.

**VICTORIA**

Victor? Victor?  
That's my baby.  
My baby boy.  
What's the matter with him?  
What happened to my baby?

**NURSE**

I'm so sorry, ma'am,  
But I can't give details  
over the phone.  
Please do hurry  
to Mercy Hospital.

**VICTORIA**

(frantically, anxiously, nervously)

Thank you.  
Thank you.  
I'm coming.  
I'm coming now.  
Please, please,  
whatever it is,  
do all you can for him.

*(Victoria clicks the line.)*

**VICTORIA**

City? Son?  
Are you still there?

**CITY**

I'm still here, momma.  
Is everything alright?

**VICTORIA**

(hesitates, wipes her tears)

Yes.  
Yes.  
Everything is fine.

**CITY**

We're almost to Mercy, mom.  
Can you meet us here soon?

**VICTORIA**

(grabs her purse and keys)

Yes, I am headed to Mercy now.

**CITY**

I love you, momma.  
I wish Pop was here  
to meet his first grandson.  
He would'a loved it.  
He would'a loved *him*.

**VICTORIA**

I love you, too, son.  
Soon, you will be a father.  
As great as yours was.  
Bye-bye, my love.

*(Call ends. VICTORIA is faced with the magnitude of the moment: something unknown but clearly tragic has happened to her youngest son, VICTOR, as her eldest son, CITY, prepares to welcome his firstborn into the world. She turns the radio off. She is overcome, at wit's end, tearful but bold and powerful in prayer.)*

**VICTORIA**

SUNG:

Oh, dear God!  
Grant me strength!  
I pray for strength!  
Please Dear God, I am faint.  
I need Thy strength.  
I need Your mighty hand  
to hold me up!  
as I go into an unknown place.  
I ask your blessing Lord.  
Please keep my sons  
and let my Grandson be healthy.  
Let him live to be an old man!  
In Your Mighty Name  
I pray.  
Amen.

*(Victoria is about to turn off the lights, when she senses a presence. Stage right, GREAT FATHER, the spirit of her deceased husband, stands. We see that he is the same man in her photo and the photo CITY takes to the hospital. He walks to her and places his hand atop hers on the light switch. She touches her heart. She looks afraid but also full of peace.)*

**VICTORIA**

SPOKEN:

O Fred, I wish you were here to help me now.

**GREAT FATHER**

SPOKEN:

Remember when we made them together,  
Vicki? I said I would never leave you.  
Though my flesh is gone,  
my spirit is here.

**VICTORIA**

SPOKEN

We miss you, baby.

**GREAT FATHER**

SUNG:

I'm here.

*Victoria dims the light and exits.*

*Lights fade.*

*End ACT I.*

TRANSITION MUSIC?SPIRITS SING?

**ACT II**

**Scene 1**

*Lights up in hospital.*

*(JE is not convinced that we need this scene below and suggests cutting it)*

ALL SPOKEN:

**CITY**

Momma, you're here.  
I am so excited.  
Violet is doing so well.  
I am proud of her.

**VICTORIA**

She's still a ways off,  
the doctor says.  
I'll give you all time  
alone.

**CITY**

Don't you want to see her?

**VICTORIA**

She's got her hands full, son.  
Let her wait in peace.  
It's about to get hard for her.  
You go on back inside.  
Call me when my grandson is born.

**CITY**

Are you sure everything is ok?

**VICTORIA**

Oh, son. You have always  
worried.

Don't worry.

*Pray.*

I love you.

(City senses there is something his mother is not  
telling him.)

**VIOLET**

(screaming)

City!

Get in here!

**VICTORIA**

You better go on back inside.

Call me when the baby gets here.

I'll be right here.

**CITY**

(with quiet urgency)

Momma.

I love you.

Hear me?

I love you.

*Victoria exits. End scene.*

## Scene 2

### **VIOLET**

(Panting and deeply breathing, through birth pains)

*JE: it would aid clarity at the end of the opera if we can introduce the SPIRIT of FREEDOM early, and here would be one option – another would be when he is born, another when his name is mentioned for the first time.*

### **SUNG:**

I can feel you moving  
Through the waters of my soul.  
Oh my son your life is in me,  
And I hear your name rushing  
through the deep and coming flow  
Your life lives outside of me  
And I can almost  
touch you.  
I can't wait to hold you  
You are so holy,  
so holy,  
perfect you are.

### **VICTORIA**

(now in VICTOR'S room, looking down on him, post-operation)

The day you were born  
A bird called your name  
So high  
Like the morning sun appears  
The day you were born  
your name fell on my lips

A fire  
A flame from heaven sent  
Your name was S.O.N  
Your name was S.U.N.  
My Anointed boy my love  
And you are so holy, Victor you are.

**VICTORIA, VIOLET, & CITY**  
(OVERLAPPING)

The day you were born,  
I said your name.  
I was touched,  
Anointed.  
Your name was holy  
Holy, holy, holy.

**VIOLET**  
(breathing and pushing through birth pains)

Your name  
is a world  
being born.  
Holy!

**CITY**

You are doing so well,  
sweetheart.  
Breathe.  
Breathe.  
That's it.  
Perfect!

**VICTORIA**

When you were born,  
You were a world.  
And that world was light.  
And holy.

**VIOLET**

It hurts!

**CITY**

That's because he's coming,  
baby.  
He's almost here.  
We'll get to hold him soon!  
Focus on that.  
See him here,  
in our arms.

**VIOLET**

So much pain!  
Like two mountains  
Crashing inside me.  
This pain is not holy.

**VICTORIA and VIOLET**

This pain is not holy!  
This pain is not holy!

**VICTORIA**

Breathe, Victor, breathe!

*(Scene switches to the other side of the stage. DOCTOR IN BLACK moves his hand to VICTORIA's shoulder. She pulls away.)*

**DOCTOR IN BLACK**

I'm so sorry for your loss.

**VICTORIA**

What loss?

**DOCTOR IN BLACK**

Your son is gone.

**VICTORIA**

How dare you  
say that to me?  
My son is not dead!

**DOCTOR IN BLACK**

I'm so sorry.

**VICTORIA**

No! You must  
save him.  
Save him!  
Save him!  
Please.  
I'm begging you.  
Do *something*.  
Something!

**DOCTOR IN BLACK**

We did all we could do.

**VICTORIA**

How hard did you try?

**DOCTOR IN BLACK**

Ma'am, we did all we could.  
There was too much blood lost.  
It was too late.

**VICTORIA**

(instantly turns her attention away from DOCTOR IN BLACK)  
SUNG (UNACCOMPANIED?)

Oh, Victor.

My son.  
Please oh God.  
Please.  
Don't let him leave me.

**DOCTOR IN PURPLE**  
**(to Violet)**

SPOKEN:  
Your son will be here soon.  
Push! Now Breathe!  
Push! Now Breathe!  
One more deep push and...

*(Violet screams a long scream in this, her final push.)*

**VICTORIA**

SUNG:  
Death is unholy.  
What was mine  
is now dead.  
My child,  
my baby boy  
is gone.  
Oh, God!

**VIOLET**

**OVERLAPS:**  
Son!  
I feel you coming  
into your own world.  
God, help me to breathe!

**DOCTOR IN PURPLE**

Your son is born!

*(VIOLET releases a scream as her son is born. VICTORIA screams as she accepts her son is gone. Together, their mother-screams light and scorch the air with the high energy of love and sorrow. JE: this is a second possible point to introduce the SPIRIT of FREEDOM.)*

**VIOLET and VICTORIA**

My son,  
my son.  
You are the world.  
My son,  
My son.  
There is no greater day  
than the day  
of your birth.

**VICTORIA**

Today, I lost you!

**VIOLET**

Today, you were born!

**VICTORIA**

God help me,  
you are gone!

**VIOLET**

God has blessed me!  
you are here!

**VICTORIA**

God rest your soul!

**VIOLET**

God has blessed my soul!

**TRANSITIONAL MUSIC ?**

*(JE: previous scene shows Violet giving birth onstage; next scene assuming it follows directly may require Violet largely to remain on her bed since she has had no time to recuperate – it would suggest Mark would need to adjust the staging from the way it was done in workshops...)*

**VIOLET and CITY**

Our son is born!  
Our son is born!  
Born today our son is born!

**VIOLET**

What should we name him?  
What do you see  
in his sweet, brown face, what can it be?

**VIOLET and CITY**

Our son is born!  
Our son is born!  
Born today our son is born!

**CITY**

He so new to the world,  
But I can see his strength.  
His power.  
I can feel his tiny fist  
In my hand.  
Unstoppable.  
No end  
To his kindness.

**SPOKEN**

But he ain't weak either.  
He got a big heart.

**SUNG**

And smart—he's so smart,  
Violet.  
Our boy...he feels like  
A king to me.  
Can't nothing or no one  
Hold Him or keep Him down.

**VIOLET**

What name should we give  
A child like this?

**CITY**

Only one name.  
Freedom.

*(JE this is a third possible point to introduce the SPIRIT of FREEDOM.)*

**VIOLET**

Freedom.  
What an honor,  
To meet you.  
Promise is around you,  
You're a wonder,  
And I am honored  
God chose me  
To be your mother.  
Though I feel  
You also chose me.  
And for that,  
I am grateful.  
I'll do all I can  
To make your life  
So beautiful and bright  
Like warm hugs and soft kisses  
Warm cookies,  
I'll sing you to sleep every night.  
My dear, precious heart,  
you're perfect.

**VICTORIA**  
SPOKEN:

Victor, don't leave me.  
You can't leave your mother.  
Son, what happened to you?  
Who did this?  
I want the name of who did this  
To my son.  
I want it now!

*(VIOLET, CITY, and VICTORIA sob over their sons. Lights down on VIOLET, CITY, and VICTORIA)*

*End scene.*

### **Scene 3**

*(Lights up on LOCKDOWN who has fled to an alley by the will of the magic he holds that has taken hold of him. He cradles his gun like a lost man would and speaks to it, expecting to be comforted.)*

#### **LOCKDOWN**

You are the only one  
who knows me.  
You lead me to do  
The things I must do,  
Serve, protect.  
Kill.  
What would I do  
without you?

*(In a move that looks like madness, LOCKDOWN removes some of the golden dust from the pouch and sprinkles it on his gun. Magically and without warning, GLOCK stands before LOCKDOWN in human form. LOCKDOWN cannot believe what he sees. He looks around, searching for an answer, a reason, but GLOCK looms, greater than a shadow. His power is great. His vengeance reverberates through LOCKDOWN'S trembling soul.)*

#### **GLOCK**

Lockdown!  
I can't do nothing til you do.  
I got more soul than you.  
I know the damage I do.  
I know my blue.  
One, two, three, shoot, and poof,  
somebody hurt or somebody gone.  
Like that boy you just killed.

When you buck, I buck too.  
When you puff up,  
I puff up.  
I puff too.  
The shock of me fill the room.

My dear Lockdown... you've killed so many in my name  
A crying shame  
The pain  
Killer Lockdown  
The Power I have is in you  
There's nothing I can do

### **SONS**

Ohhh!

### **GLOCK**

Bullets fly, pop, pop, pop!  
Young men die, you can't stop.  
I hear the wails  
But what can I do  
You can kill, without being punished.  
You hold me tight  
Tighter than a woman murderer  
I'm done with you.

*(Chorus of SONS starts to hum menacingly. GLOCK turns to walk away while LOCKDOWN appears to have seen a ghost. )*

### **GLOCK**

But before I go,  
There is something you should know.  
We've been together for so long  
Lockdown, it's over.  
Shoulda left his magic in his pocket

Now Victor's gone...  
Once again you've gone too far.  
So long my friend, it's over now.  
Farewell Lockdown.  
*they* ain't done with you.

## LOCKDOWN

They? What they? Who are they?

## CHORUS OF SONS

We are one,  
from the youngest  
to the eldest.  
We are one  
And as one  
We are hurting  
Day by day  
Our numbers grow

as our brothers come to us  
Much too soon  
One after another  
Worse than dogs.  
Shot down by you.

## GLOCK

One thing I can tell you  
you should have left Victor alone  
Why'd you take Victor's magic  
It's too late  
No going home for Lockdown.

## CHORUS OF SONS

We are one,  
from the youngest  
to the eldest.  
We are one  
We are hurting  
Daya by day

Our numbers grow.

*(GLOCK exits slowly. Spotlight on LOCKDOWN. He trembles. Lights fade.)*

*End Act Two.*

## **INTERMISSION**

### **Act 3**

#### **Scene 1**

*(Lights up in hospital, on VICTORIA, who is sitting in the corridor.  
CITY comes to tell her his good news.)*

**CITY**  
SUNG:

Momma, our son is here.  
We named him  
Freedom.  
Momma?  
What is it?

**VICTORIA**  
SPOKEN

City.  
I can't.  
I...

**CITY**  
SPOKEN

Momma, you gotta tell me.  
Please let me help you.

**VICTORIA**

Heaven help *us*!  
It's your brother, baby!  
Somebody...  
Somebody shot Victor,  
son, and he's gone!  
Victor...Victor is gone.

**CITY**

(sobs and breaks)

Momma, no.  
Nononononono.  
Please, no.  
Oh God!  
Oh God!

**VICTORIA**

I'm so sorry, son.  
I'm sorry.

**CITY**

**SUNG**

Momma, can you believe this?  
How could this be?  
First, we lost Daddy.  
Now, Vic.  
Vic told me how bad  
he wanted  
to be an uncle.  
Momma, he told me  
to name the baby  
Freedom.  
How could we lose  
them both?

**VICTORIA**

No, they're still with us.  
they haven't left.

And we've got  
Violet and Freedom.  
We're a family, son.  
Even in death,  
we are still blood!

*(MEDIC 1 and MEDIC 2 enter. They see VICTOR has died. They hang and shake their heads.)*

**CITY (SPOKEN)**

Momma. I'm going to find out who did this.

(to the Medics)

Who brought him in?

**MEDIC 1**  
ALL SPOKEN

We are so sorry.  
We found him.  
We brought him here.

**MEDIC 2**

We thought he would make it.  
His heartbeat was weak,  
but strong enough to survive.

**CITY**

Do you know who  
might've done this?

**MEDIC 2**

Can't say for sure, but...

**MEDIC 1**

We think it was Lockdown.

**CITY**

Lockdown?  
Lockdown from the 4<sup>th</sup> precinct?

**VICTORIA**

Do you know him?  
This...this...

SUNG

*Lockdown?*

**CITY**

SUNG

Lockdown! I've seen him a few times  
on the block.  
If he did this he will regret it.  
Oh yeah.  
Momma, he will regret it.

**VICTORIA**  
(OVERLAPPING)

Son, listen to me.  
You are a father.  
You've got a son.  
You named him Freedom.  
Think about your baby.  
Think about your wife.

**CITY**  
(OVERLAPPING)

I know cops like Lockdown,  
Momma. They think they can do  
what they want  
and kill who they want  
cause they got a badge.  
Well guess what, Lockdown?!  
I got a badge, too,

you soulless bastard!  
You killed my brother!  
I feel it inside, Momma.  
I know he did it!  
I know it was him!

*(CITY exits in a fury. VICTORIA crouches and prays. The MEDICS seek to comfort her.)*

*End scene.*

## **Scene 2**

*(Spotlight on LOCKDOWN. This is not a precinct. He is in a hole. Perhaps his mind has manifested this hole from his soul, which is unraveling. Or this is LOCKDOWN's life, a happening. Or this is his spirit in a supernatural world, while his physical body languishes in the stink of an alley, where he is hiding out like a coward because the essence—the life—he has stolen from Victor is powerful beyond measure and will not allow him to be any other place than in this dank, dark place where even the law is not on his side, because LOCKDOWN is no longer just a cop who killed a young Black man. He is now a human stripped of all things except his actions, which he will now face like a man meeting his death.)*

### **LOCKDOWN STARTS OUT ALL SPOKEN**

Where am I?  
What place is this?

*(Lights up on the chorus comprised of THE SPEAKING EARTH, THE WATERS,  
THE SKY THAT WON'T STOP SEEING, and THE BLOOD.)*

### **THE SPEAKING EARTH (SPIRITS ALL SUNG)**

Why do you ask  
what place this is?

### **SKY**

You are the one  
who made it.

### **LOCKDOWN**

It's dark.  
My face is warm,

but my fingers are cold.  
What have you done  
to me?

### **THE WATERS**

This place is the place  
for those you killed

### **BLOOD**

a place  
of darkness and dust,

### **BLOOD, WATERS**

a palace of decay  
and bruising quiet  
that stings.

### **LOCKDOWN**

This place hurts!  
Somebody help me!

*(WATERS Rushes to LOCKDOWN as if to strike him. WATERS stands over him, and it is as if LOCKDOWN is fighting against a giant wave. He struggles to stand. He pushes against an invisible force that only he can feel, as if pushing against the full rage of an ocean.)*

### **THE WATERS**

It hurts because it is crushing you.

*(As WATERS ceases to speak, LOCKDOWN sinks to his knees.)*

### **THE SPEAKING EARTH**

Lockdown!  
I am earth.  
And you're in a box  
you made for black men.  
Black boys and black girls.

Lockdown  
I am the earth  
crushing that box,  
which means,  
I am crushing you.  
Crushing. I've been patient.  
And I can't take no more.  
When y'all turn old and gray,  
I take you in.  
I be a resting place  
for your mothers, fathers, ancestors  
But the young?  
All too young.  
The men, women, and children,  
all too young,  
are dying,  
from you hands  
your gun  
Lockdown  
Your gun.  
I've been patient.  
I've had enough  
You must be stopped  
I had enough of you  
Can't take no more  
You won't kill another black boy again!  
I don't want  
what remains  
of their bones in me.  
I ache.  
My heart's a wreck  
from grief.  
I am tired.

### **WATERS, SKY, BLOOD**

Lockdown, Victor's sons  
will not walk the earth.  
When you shot him,  
you shot them!

**LOCKDOWN**  
SPOKEN

How do I get free from this place?

**GLOCK**

When you weak, Lockdown, I'm weak.

**THE WATERS**  
SUNG

This dark place is made from what's inside you.  
You have no mercy so there is no mercy for you.

**THE SKY**

You have sown wickedness.

**THE WATERS**

You have sown judgment.

**THE BLOOD**

You have sown cowardice.

**THE EARTH**

You have sown death.

**ALL FOUR SPIRITS**

You have sown fear  
You have taken  
what was not yours  
to take.

**LOCKDOWN**

Please, anything—  
anything to get free  
from this place.

I am thirsty.  
It hurts to move.  
What can I do?

**GLOCK**

See? They ain't done with you yet.

**LOCKDOWN**

What can I do?

**GLOCK**

I can't do nothing till you do.

**THE SKY THAT CAN'T STOP SEEING**

Oooh!  
You must hear from us all  
what you have done,  
you and all the ones like you.  
You must answer for you  
Than just yourself,  
For your fathers before you.  
Though he appeared  
to be one,  
Victor was many.  
He had a nation inside him.  
When you killed him,  
you killed all the generations,  
a nation,  
his seed you destroyed!

**GLOCK**

One two three! Shoot! Poof!

**SKY**

You must hear from us all  
what you have done,  
you and all the ones like you.  
Lockdown you were so wrong,  
You killed the song

Of Life from an angel.

**GLOCK**

Shoot! The bullets fly! Pop pop pop!

**SKY**

All of Victor's unborn sons and daughters  
forever will never enjoy my blue sky  
You and your fathers have killed  
and killed without measure  
for pleasure  
and money  
and power  
for year and years  
and time upon time.

**GLOCK**

You did what you had to do!

**SKY**

You must hear from us all  
what you have done,  
Oooh!

**LOCKDOWN  
SPOKEN**

I did what I had to do.  
He refused to obey  
my order.  
I can't take it back.  
Who are any of you  
To judge me?  
Who are you?

**GLOCK**

When You're weak, Lockdown, I'm weak.

*(All four SPIRITS, together, in booming power akin to thunder and the most brutal of rains.  
LOCKDOWN lays prostrate on the floor.)*

We are Fleshless.  
We have never been bone.  
We have power  
from On High.  
Only God is greater.  
You are not merciful,  
and do not deserve mercy.  
We have the right,  
and we will  
judge you  
and your deeds  
as we please.

**GLOCK**

They ain't done with you!

**LOCKDOWN**

I'm hurting!  
I'm hurting!  
Isn't that enough?

**GLOCK**

You're weak, Lockdown

**THE BLOOD**

But you aren't bleeding.  
And though you hurt,  
you aren't sorry.  
You're still alive.  
Me?  
I got no body of my own.  
How much of me must spill  
Before the beating heart  
of the world cries, *Stop!*

Did you think of me,  
Lockdown, when you shot  
that boy down?  
Did you think of blood  
in his body  
pouring and pouring  
out, killing him,  
from its pouring?  
Lockdown, do you feel  
what is happening  
to *your* blood now?

### **GLOCK**

Hear me hum, Lockdown

*(LOCKDOWN begins to frantically pat and rub and scratch his limbs.)*

### **LOCKDOWN**

My blood is hot!  
I can feel it boiling  
inside me  
like water!

### **GLOCK**

Hold me tight, Lockdown, tight like a woman!

### **THE WATERS**

What do you know  
about the depth  
of waters and tides?  
You feel hot liquid  
in your veins,  
and all you can think is  
Water!

But you don't know  
a spirit deep  
and swallowing  
as mine.  
I hear the songs  
of the dead,  
rotting within me.  
Can you hear the new song  
of the dead, Lockdown?

### **ALL FOUR SPIRITS**

Lockdown, hear the songs  
Of the dead!  
Hear Victor's song!

### **GLOCK**

The shock of me fills a room! The bullets fly!

*(VICTOR appears before LOCKDOWN, who screams in horror and shock.)*

### **VICTOR**

I wanted children  
of my own.  
I longed to be like my dad.  
He left us too soon.  
But before he left,  
he gave me what you  
took from me, Lockdown.  
He gave me the magic.  
The magic that connects me  
to those who came before me  
and who is to come after me.

### **GLOCK**

You should've left that boy's magic in his pocket.

*(CHORUS OF SONS starts to hum menacingly on top of VICTOR)*

You took my magic but look!  
I'm still here!  
But without a body,  
I remain... as a spirit.  
I am a Son in the spirit.  
But I will never have sons  
in the flesh.  
You took that from me,  
Lockdown.  
You chopped me down, (CHORUS could repeat each of these last lines after Victor)  
like I was a tree.  
My generations will never be.

### **GLOCK**

You shoulda left Victor alone.

*(THE SONS gather around VICTOR.)*

### **THE SONS**

We were his seed.  
We are his seed.  
Some of us  
will never be.

### **VICTOR**

You took my future sons from me!

*(Physically broken and battered, LOCKDOWN is overcome by the sight of VICTOR and THE SONS. He breaks down to his knees.)*

### **LOCKDOWN**

I did not think of your blood.  
I did not think of your heart.  
I did not think of your eyes.  
I did not think of your lungs  
or your breath.  
I did not think of you  
or your seed.

Now, I am here,  
being crushed for what  
I did.  
I wish I could go back!

### **THE SPEAKING EARTH**

It' too late to go back.

### **THE WATERS**

The ones you killed  
are no longer  
on earth.

### **THE SKY**

Even if they walk the earth,  
like Victor,  
they walk as spirits.

### **ALL FOUR SPIRITS**

You took their flesh,  
their bone,  
and their bodies.

### **GLOCK**

You a cop. So you can kill.

### **LOCKDOWN**

I can feel the life  
leaving me  
like light.

### **GLOCK**

Hold on to me. Hold on tight!

## LOCKDOWN

I am asking The Speaking Earth  
And the Waters  
To stop pressing me.  
I have apologized.  
What more can I give?  
Dear Spirits,  
I want to live!

*(Lights up on a chorus of elder, middle aged, young African American men and boys, called the LEGION OF SONS. They are dressed in all manners of clothing, from suits to uniforms, from surgical caps to hard hats, to tattered fabrics that look like the garments of the enslaved. They are VICTOR's kin, both departed and unborn, including THE GREAT FATHER and THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM who is also there as one of them, but does not speak or sing. The sight of them overcomes LOCKDOWN. Their power is enormous. Their presence occupies the full stage, occupies a power beyond the natural world. They are spirits. They are ancestors. They are gatekeepers. They are angels. They are named, and yet they are unnamed. They are one. They know misery but no longer feel misery. Their number and their power overwhelms LOCKDOWN, and you see he has become a different man now that he is come face to face with not just one man he killed, but many.)*

## GREAT FATHER

We breathe  
from another place.  
Not on earth.  
But we breathe.

## THE SONS

We breathe  
from another place.  
Not on earth.  
But we breathe.

SOLO

We watch.

SOLO

We pray.

SOLO

We stand guard.

GREAT FATHER

We pass down

the seed.

**THE SONS**

We pass down  
the great force  
of life.

That magic  
was ours.  
You claimed it  
as yours.

**GREAT FATHER**

You killed our son.

**THE SONS**

You killed his sons.

**GREAT FATHER**

He was our pride.

**THE SONS**

And you took his life.  
You broke his body,  
And you took his life.

**SOLO**

You pulled a trigger

**THE SONS**

And took his life.

**SOLO**

You called him nigger

**THE SONS**

And took his life.  
You called us nigger,  
When you took his life.

**GREAT FATHER**

You low, Lockdown.  
You low as the devil.  
Confess, all you did.

**LOCKDOWN**

I killed a boy.

**GLOCK**

You a cop so you can kill to no end.

(EARTH: Wordless lament/wailing; LOCKDOWN continues:)

I wounded the earth.  
I killed many men.

**GLOCK**

One boy was 17.

(SKY Wordless lament/wailing)

**LOCKDOWN** continues

I wounded the sky.

**GLOCK**

Another was twelve.

(BLOOD Wordless lament/wailing; LOCKDOWN continues)

I wounded the blood.

**GLOCK**

Another was a father of three.

(WATERS Wordless lament/wailing; LOCKDOWN continues)

I wounded the waters.  
I wounded Victor  
With my words.  
Then I used my gun  
To make me big.

**GLOCK**

When you puff up, I puff up!

**LOCKDOWN**

I used my badge  
To make me high.  
So high,  
I felt like God.

**GLOCK**

When you buck, I buck!

## LOCKDOWN

I shot Victor down  
And I took the magic  
That gave him life.  
I got no light  
In me.

## FOUR SPIRITS

(Wordless lament/wailing grows into an angry chorus; then LOCKDOWN shouts on top of them:)

Deliver me  
From me!  
Forgive me  
And all men  
Like me  
For taking a life  
Because we could.  
We failed to be brothers.  
We failed.  
We failed.

## GLOCK

(ON TOP OF LOCKDOWN'S SPEECH ABOVE)

You hold on to me! Hold on!  
The only power I got is the power in you!  
What can I do!  
I'm done with you.

*(Lights down on LEGION OF SONS and the FOUR SPIRITS. LOCKDOWN now stands in the place where he shot VICTOR; GLOCK in disgust turns away from LOCKDOWN. Lights up on CITY who has returned to the scene to collect evidence. CITY spots LOCKDOWN.)*

**Act III Scene 3**

## CITY

(aiming his gun at LOCKDOWN)

Lockdown, freeze!  
Stay where you are!

**LOCKDOWN**

(disoriented; GLOCK however is intrigued - another gunman...)

Who are you?

**CITY**

I am the night,  
And I am the fury,  
And I'm a cop!  
You shot my brother, Victor!

**GLOCK**

(Enjoying CITY'S wish to do murder)

Ohhhh, sometimes I hum....

**LOCKDOWN**

Yes, I shot him.  
But I didn't kill him.  
He's still...*here!*

**CITY**

But I just saw him,  
And he's dead,  
you lying piece of crap—

**LOCKDOWN**

(interrupts him)

I swear I saw him!  
I was down below,  
In a place that was crushing me,  
It made my blood boil.  
And Victor came to me,  
And I told him  
I was sorry.  
He's dead  
but he's not gone.

**CITY**

Do I look like I give a damn  
Where you were?  
Or what was crushing *you*?  
I wouldn't care if it killed you.  
Don't tell me nothing  
About my brother  
Being dead but not gone  
When he ain't breathing.

**GLOCK**  
(to CITY)

The shock of me fills a room.  
You a cop so you can kill to no end.

*(LOCKDOWN realizes he's still got the pouch filled with golden dust and pulls it from his pocket. VICTOR reappears with LEGION OF SONS and GREAT FATHER.)*

**CITY**

Where did you get that?  
That belongs to my brother.

**LOCKDOWN**

I want to give it back to him.  
I'm so sorry.

**CITY**

But He's dead!  
You killed him.  
Give it to me!  
Lockdown, give it to me!

*(LOCKDOWN gives the pouch of dust to CITY. CITY reaches into his pocket and removes an identical pouch, also given to him by his father.)*

**THE SONS**

*(one by one, overlapping with Lockdown's speech below, starting quietly then getting louder, each one shouts out their names and ages accusingly at LOCKDOWN CITY slowly raises his gun and aims it at LOCKDOWN*

**GLOCK**

You a cop so you can kill! You hold on to me!

**LOCKDOWN**

*(Under threat for his life, SUNG:)*

I lay down in shame.  
I plead for mercy,  
For a way back to light.  
Let me find a way  
To make it right.  
Have mercy on my soul!

**GLOCK**

*(Urging City on)*

You can kill!

*(Music builds to a great climax as CITY prepares to shoot. GREAT FATHER, VICTOR and the silent SPIRIT OF FREEDOM advance on CITY; FATHER lays a hand on CITY's shoulder, FREEDOM stands between CITY and LOCKDOWN, in front of the gun, VICTOR motions CITY to lower the gun; CITY slowly does so. All the music ends. Silence reigns.)*

**CITY**

*(SPOKEN over silence)*

Lockdown, you are under arrest  
For the murder of my brother,  
Victor Power and God knows  
who else you killed.  
I'm taking you in.

**GLOCK**

*(In disgust, exiting)*

I'm done with you.

*SONS, FATHER, VICTOR AND SPIRITS come crashing in with a chorus of triumph mixed with lamentation; an act of justice has taken place, a moment of resolution. They sing together as*

*they raise up and acknowledge the SPIRIT OF FREEDOM. Meanwhile LOCKDOWN hangs his head in despair then surrenders his wrists. CITY arrests him and leads him to his police car.)*

**GREAT FATHER/SONS/SPIRITS**

We are one  
from the youngest to the eldest.  
As one we hurt.  
We watch.  
We pray.  
We pass down  
the great force  
of life.

*(Transitional music. The scene changes to Violet's room in the hospital. CITY comes in.)*

**Act III Scene 4**

**VIOLET**

ALL SPOKEN OVER ORCHESTRA:

Your wife and your brand new baby boy missed you.  
Are you done with work?

**CITY**

My work is done for tonight.  
But there's something I have to tell you

**VIOLET**

Tell me now, City.

**CITY**

It's Victor, baby.  
It's our little brother.  
He's gone.

*(VIOLET covers her mouth, speechless and pained.)*

**CITY**

Baby?  
Did you hear me?

**VIOLET**

I heard you.  
I'm so sorry.  
What happened?

**CITY**

He was murdered, baby.

**VIOLET**

Oh my God!  
I'm so sorry.  
He'll never meet...

**CITY**

I know.  
He'll never meet Freedom.  
But at least I got the guy that did it.

**VIOLET**

Make him pay.

**CITY**  
(SUNG)

He's a cop.  
A *white* cop.  
I went there to shoot him.  
My plan was to find him and end him.  
But I remembered the night  
Our daddy gave us these pouches  
With golden dust.  
He said for the rest of our lives,  
We would be connected  
To each other and to our children,  
And to our children's children,  
Forever and ever across time.

There will be no end to us  
As long as we remember  
Who we are.

Violet, I wanted to kill him.  
I did the right thing.  
So I arrested him.

## VIOLET

You did the right thing, my love.

*(VIOLET and CITY shine love into FREEDOM'S face, as if beholding a shooting star. Stage right, VICTORIA weeps silently over the body of VICTOR. Upstage Center THE SONS appear, with GREAT FATHER and SPIRIT OF FREEDOM in their midst. An unsettling energy lights the air, as THE SONS hum/sing a low, haunting melody. Neither VIOLET nor VICTORIA nor CITY can see them. Yet the baby Freedom senses them. CITY takes his bag of dust and slowly sprinkles some onto the baby. SPIRIT OF FREEDOM steps forward from the Legion of Sons, as a young boy. He is beautiful and regal. He glows like a king.)*

## Scene 5

## FREEDOM

No one is above me but God, just God.  
And my mind is boundless.  
My spirit can fly.  
More vast than the oceans,  
Taller than the mountains.  
I'm a universe of nerves.  
I feel everything.  
I can see beyond your finite mind.  
And I've been here  
beyond the edge of time.  
Yet I'm not real but I feel pain  
All suffering and shame.  
Now who is to blame?

I can see into the skins of people  
I feel their warm blood rushing  
In my spirit

I do not want this  
Bleeding and evil world  
This place where you humans  
Kill eachother

You can keep this bleeding heart  
And you can keep this homeless flesh  
Keep all your dying  
I would rather live  
Forever.  
with out a body  
than suffer with one.

*(SPIRIT of FREEDOM steps upstage, still watching the Baby Freedom, but now removed from him. The cordless machines that monitor baby FREEDOM's heart rate and blood pressure beep. JE suggests these be written into the musical score. DOCTOR IN PURPLE enters with a few nurses. They frantically work to save FREEDOM's life.*

**CITY**  
(SPOKEN)

Wait!  
Wait!  
Hold up!  
Wait!  
No!  
What's happening?  
What's going on?  
What you doing to my son,  
Man?  
That's my son!  
That's my son!  
Wait!  
What's all that...?  
What's that beeping?

*(The baby Freedom's monitor flatlines. The SPIRIT of FREEDOM turns and rejoins the The Legion of SONS. The four SPIRITS take up a quiet wailing on top of the SONS' ominous*

*humming. VIOLET wails. Her spirit is praying, but she cannot speak a word. The doctors and nurses are overcome.)*

What's wrong with my son?  
Somebody better tell me  
Right now  
What's wrong with my son!

### **DOCTOR IN PURPLE**

(Over a sudden silence)

SPOKEN:  
Your son is gone!  
I'm so sorry.  
We did all we could.

*(VIOLET screams and pulls FREEDOM to her. The SPIRITS resume their wail, and the SONS continue to hum.)*

### **CITY**

He was fine.  
Just a minute ago.  
He was looking at me in his eyes.  
It was like he  
was talking to me.  
Telling me of his life.  
About all the things  
He would be.  
He can't be dying.  
He was just born!  
Oh, how could this be?  
Freedom, don't leave!  
There ain't no way.  
Please Freedom,  
don't die.

*(Lights low on VIOLET and CITY, and up on VICTORIA and VICTOR. SPIRIT OF FREEDOM approaches them. VICTORIA cannot see FREEDOM, but senses a new warmth in the room. All four SPIRITS start to sing or chant in support of what FREEDOM is going to do. FREEDOM sprinkles gold dust on VICTOR's shoulders, forehead, and chest. FREEDOM closes his eyes, and VICTOR's monitor beeps. His heart rate increases. The blood that was frozen in his veins now runs free and warm. FREEDOM has passed his life into VICTOR. The four SPIRITS' singing reaches its high point, then abates; FREEDOM steps back.)*

**VICTOR**

Momma?

**VICTORIA**

Victor, Victor,  
You came back  
To us!  
Praise God!  
Praise God!  
My son is alive!

**VIOLET**

My baby?  
Where's my baby?  
Who took him  
from me?  
Give him back!  
Make his heart beat again!  
This is not real.  
I can't believe it.  
I won't believe it.  
I refuse.  
I refuse.  
I refuse!  
FREEDOM!

*(CITY, overcome, holds his wife and kisses her. He grabs the bag of golden dust, now multiplied in contents and strength, and in act of faith and desperation, sprinkles it onto the baby Freedom. VIOLET looks bewildered. For several moments, nothing happens. The spirit of FREEDOM, still with VICTOR and VICTORIA, senses he is being returned to his infant's body. He and VICTOR see each other. Each man touches his heart. FREEDOM returns to join the chorus of SONS. Instantly, the monitors begin to beep, and baby Freedom cries. VIOLET and CITY are overcome with joy.)*

**VICTORIA**

Victor, you have a nephew.

**VICTOR**

I know.  
His name is...

**VICTOR, VICTORIA, VIOLET, CITY**

Freedom!

*(Spirit of FREEDOM appears before CITY and VICTOR.)*

**FREEDOM**

I did not want this flesh. □ My life was mine to give. And I chose. □ Why did you bring me back?

**CITY**

You are my son. □ You are from my seed. I saved you because □ I love you! □ How could I let you go without a fight?

**FREEDOM**

I only wanted to be spirit. Never flesh. Never bone. □ Never blood. Never breath. □ Why bring me back □ to a life of pain and harm?

**VICTOR**

There is more to life than pain and harm, sweet Freedom. I been on the side of life as flesh.

*(Spirit of FREEDOM appears before CITY and VICTOR.)*

**FREEDOM, VICTOR**

And I was on the side of death as spirit. Alive, I can hold my mother. Alive, I can smell the rain. Alive, I can be an uncle and take you to the park. Alive, I can have my own sons. One day, I will be spirit again. Until then, I breathe! I live!

**FREEDOM**

What if I don't make it □ to be a father? What if the harm of the world brings me down? □ What if I like living too much and something tries to come kill me when I'm young?

**CITY**

The Spirit of the Sons watches over us. □ You don't have to be spirit before your time, Freedom. The spirit is part of you, □ but it's in you, too. □ Spirit is who you are. □ One day, you will be spirit □ again. □ But first, you got to live. □ You got a *right* to live.

**FREEDOM**

When I was spirit, □ nothing could hurt me. □ Tell me what I got to live for, if I could be shot down?

**CITY**

Live for yourself. You are enough. Live for your name: freedom!

**CITY, VICTOR**

There is more to life than pain and death and fear of death.

**VICTOR**

I was gone. But Freedom, you gave me life again. So I give my life back, in service to you.

**VICTOR □**

Nephew, I will protect you!

*(In a great act of humility, VICTOR kneels before Spirit of FREEDOM.)*

**CITY**

Son, I will protect you!

*(CITY kneels before Spirit of FREEDOM)*

**FREEDOM**

Father. Uncle. □ I will watch over you, as you watch over me.

*(Spirit of FREEDOM looks down at his uncle and father. He then touches each of them on the head, as if blessing them. Spirit of FREEDOM joins THE SONS.)*

*(JE OFFERS UP FOR CONSIDERATION: this ending feels very abrupt and doesn't make use of all the forces and resources we have onstage. I suggest Dwayne comes up with music which builds to a great hymn of affirmation, which all would join in group by group until all are singing together, and which builds to a climax to end the opera. I have pasted in below some possible excerpts from various characters' existing text to stimulate some thought on this – or Tameka could write us some new text?)*

## **FREEDOM**

No one is above me but God.  
My body is a small form.  
But my mind is boundless.

## **LEGION OF SONS, GREAT FATHER**

We are one  
from the youngest to the eldest.  
As one we hurt.  
We watch.  
We pray.  
We pass down  
the great force  
of life.

## **VIOLET and VICTORIA**

My son is born, my son is born  
Is born today, my son is born.  
You are the world.  
My son,  
My son.  
There is no greater day  
than the day  
of your birth.

## **VICTORIA**

The day you were born  
A bird called your name  
High as the sun  
In the morning  
I heard your name,  
I heard your name.  
Your name was Son  
Your name was Sun

## **FOUR SPIRITS**

We are Fleshless.

We have never been bone.  
We have power  
from On High.  
Only God is greater.

*End.*