

READERS THEATER SCRIPT
for
FREEDOM ON THE MENU: THE GREENSBORO SIT-INS
By Carole Boston Weatherford

Based on the children's book by Carole Boston Weatherford,
illustrated by Jerome Lagarigue (Dial Press, 2005)

CHARACTERS

Note distinguishing costumes and/or props

Narrator

Connie (8 years old) - hair ribbon, paintbrush and miniature flag

Daddy - newspaper
also plays Store Manager - badge

Mama - apron and pocketbook

Sister (college student) - white gloves and pillbox hat
also plays Old Shopper - shopping bag
and Clean-up Lady at Lunch Counter - hairnet and dishrag

Brother (college student) - notebook
also plays Man in Straw Hat - straw hat
Student at Lunch Counter - felt hat
Onlooker - sunglasses
Martin Luther King - Bible

One person to play: Aunt Gertie - scarf
Waitress - pencil behind ear, pad
Old Lady Registering to Vote - cane

MULTIMEDIA

Slides will be used throughout the production to capture the mood of the times. Historic photos can be downloaded from digital archives or Google images.

Slides may be projected using an LCD or overhead projector. Sources for photos follow.

Slide 1 & 17: Woolworth building
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/nc1.htm>

Slides 2, 9 & 18: Lunch counter food poster

www.si.edu/i+d/sitins.arc.html (Woolworth's promo from 1960s & whites at lunch counter)

Slides 3-5: Segregation signs

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/ppmsc/00200/00218r.jpg> (theater)

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/ppmsc/00200/00209r.jpg> (colored waiting room sign)

<http://www.historicaldocuments.com/CivilRightsAct1964.htm> (White Trade Only)

Slide 6: Colored drinking fountain

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/ppmsc/00200/00216r.jpg> (drinking fountain)

Slide 7: Martin Luther King

<http://www.northwestern.edu/observer/issues/2003-01-09/mlkday.html> (King preaching)

Slide 8: Voter registration drive (citizens lined up to register)

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/historyofus/web15/features/see_it_now/1940.0143.html

Slide 10: Greensboro 4 sitting at lunch counter

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/nc1.htm>

Slide 11: Newspaper headline about sit-in

<http://www.si.edu/i+d/sitins.v2.4.html> (gif of NCA&T Register)

Slide 12: 1960 style TV set

<http://www.eldocountry.com/Tv/zenith.html>

Slide 13: Pickets in Greensboro

<http://www.greensboro.com/sitins/timeline-state.htm>

Slide 14: Pickets in other cities and/or states

www.umass.edu/pubaffs/jackie/citizenc4.html (student protestors)

<http://www.raleighcitymuseum.org/exhibits/EX12/pic42.jpg> (Raleigh sit-ins)

Slide 15-16: Student protestors arrested and jailed

<http://www.sitins.com/timeline.shtml> (arrest of Greensboro students)

www.crmvet.org/images/imgcoll.htm (3 men in jail; 1 woman behind bars)

<http://www.raleighcitymuseum.org/exhibits/EX12/pic41.jpg> (Raleigh arrests)

Slide 19: Banana split sign

www.smithsonianlegacies.si.edu/popular.cfm

SCRIPT

Slide 1: Woolworth building

NARRATOR: Just about every week, Connie and Mama go shopping downtown. Connie loves having her mama all to herself for the afternoon. Whenever it's hot or they get tired, they head over to the snack bar in the five-and-dime store. They stand as they sip their Cokes because they aren't allowed to sit at the lunch counter.

Slide 2: Lunch counter food poster

CONNIE: Look at that girl eating a banana split. Her purse is almost exactly like mine. Can I have a banana split. Mama?

MAMA: Not here, Connie. I'll fix one at home.

CONNIE: That won't be the same.

Slides 3-5: Segregation signs (theater, waiting room, white trade only)

NARRATOR: All over town, signs tell Connie and Mama where they can and can't go. Signs on water fountains, swimming pools, movie theaters, even bathrooms.

Slide 6: Colored drinking fountain

CONNIE: Everybody I know obeys the signs -- except my Great Aunt Gertie from New York. Once, when she visited us, she drank from a whites-only fountain and said real loud. . .

AUNT GERTIE: I've never heard of colored water. Have you, Connie?

NARRATOR: Then, Aunt Gertie lifted Connie up so she could take a sip. Connie looked up from the fountain. There was a man looking at her real mean.

MAN IN STRAW HAT: Y'all know better than that!

CONNIE: I started to say, "Sorry, mister," but Aunt Gertie just huffed:

AUNT GERTIE: I'm too old for silly rules."

CONNIE: It was a real hot day, but the man walked away without taking a drink.

NARRATOR: There aren't any signs up in the five-and-dime, but folks still know how it is. Most people Connie knows don't expect change anytime soon. But her daddy thinks different. One morning, he reads something in the newspaper that gives him reason to hope.

DADDY: Dr. King's coming to town.

CONNIE: Who's sick?

DADDY: He's not that kind of doctor, Connie. *(laughing)*
He a minister who's working to make things better for us.

MAMA: So we can go anywhere we please.

CONNIE: Like the lunch counter?

DADDY: Yep, and other places, too.

Slide 7: Martin Luther King

NARRATOR: Later that week, Connie's whole family goes to hear Dr. King preach at the college chapel.

DR. KING: Let justice roll down like water and righteousness like a flowing stream.

CONNIE: I don't really understand his whole speech, but I like his booming voice. It sounds as if he believes God is on our side.

MAMA: Amen!

NARRATOR: When Dr. King sits down, everyone stands and claps for a long time.

(All clap)

Soon after that, Connie's brother and sister join the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Everyone calls it the N-double-A-C-P. Brother and Sister let Connie tag along as they go door-to-door helping people to sign up to vote.

Slide 8: Voter registration drive (boy, school bus)

OLD LADY: *(leaning on cane)* I've never voted in my life. Will I get to vote for the president?"

CONNIE: Yes, ma'am." My brother wants to be president when he's all the way grown."

OLD LADY: Tell him he's got my vote. *(chuckles)*
And to hold onto those big dreams. *(handing over her voter registration form)*

CONNIE: Yes, ma'am, I'll tell him.

NARRATOR: Connie thinks about her own dreams, too.
(Connie gazes at the sky, as if daydreaming)

OLD LADY: Times are changing. *(waves good-bye)*

Slide 9: Woolworth lunch counter promo

NARRATOR: Later, Mama and Connie are shopping downtown. They stop at the snack bar, just like always.

Slide 10: Greensboro 4 sitting at lunch counter

CONNIE: Look over at the lunch counter! We know those four boys!
They're Brother's friends from A&T College.
(Voice quiets to a whisper)

Don't they know they're in the wrong place?

MAMA: *(whispering)* Some rules have to be broken.

STUDENT AT COUNTER: Coffee and a doughnut, please.

WAITRESS #1: I'm sorry, we can't serve your kind. *(wringing her hands)*

NARRATOR: The boys do not budge.

WAITRESS #2: Don't y'all understand English?

CLEAN-UP LADY: *(scolding)* Go on over to the snack bar. Stop making trouble here."

MANAGER: *(tapping his foot and jutting his chin)* They can sit there forever for all I care. *(stamps foot)*

OLD SHOPPER: *(speaking loud enough for all at lunch counter to hear)*
I'm so proud of you. I wish someone had done this sooner.

NARRATOR: The nervous waitresses keep wiping and re-wiping the counter and refilling salt and pepper shakers, sugar pourers and napkin holders. But every time they glance up from their chores, the boys are still there.
Suddenly, the manager comes back with the police. A tall policeman with a club in his hand paces behind the boys.

CONNIE: This is really scary.

MAMA: Let's go, Connie.

MANAGER: *(Shooing everyone out)* The store is closing early today. We'll have this trouble cleared up by tomorrow.

NARRATOR: *(excitedly)* Connie can't wait to tell Brother.

CONNIE: Why'd your friends do that?

BROTHER: If we can spend money at a store it's only fair that we should

be able to eat at the store's lunch counter.

CONNIE: I guess so. Think it'll work?

DADDY: Sometimes it's important just to try. (*rubs his chin*)

NARRATOR: The next day, Daddy shows Connie the newspaper. The headline reads: *Negro Students Stand Up By Sitting Down.*

Slide 11: Newspaper with news of sit-in

DADDY: They sat four hours. (*peering over a newspaper*)

CONNIE: I'd be too hungry to wait that long.

DADDY: Connie, they didn't really want food. They wanted to allowed to get it, same as if they were white. To be treated fairly.

NARRATOR: By Friday, Connie and her family hear on the news that hundreds more have joined the sit-ins.

CONNIE: The protests are growing!

BROTHER: (*excitedly*) I'm joining the sit-ins.

SISTER: (*calmly*) And I'm going to picket downtown. Tomorrow.

CONNIE: I want to go, too. I'm plenty big enough to hold a sign, and I know I can sit.

DADDY: It's good that you want to help. But, Connie, you're still too young for these things.

CONNIE: I never get to do anything important. (*pouting*)

SISTER: You can help us make picket signs. That's very important.

NARRATOR: Connie gets busy painting a sign. By morning, she has thought of something else that Sister should take to the pickets.

CONNIE: Sister, here's my little flag to carry.

BROTHER: We'll tell you everything when we get home. I promise.

Slide 12: 1960 style TV set

NARRATOR: Turns out, Connie sees the protests on TV. Hundreds of people walk up and down the sidewalks in front of stores, restaurants and movie theaters.

CONNIE: *(excitedly)* There's Sister wearing a hat and white gloves and carrying a picket sign. And that's the back of Brother's head at the lunch counter. My own brother!

Slide 13: Pickets in Greensboro

DADDY: I'm so proud of them.

CONNIE: Me, too.

MAMA: *(worriedly rubbing forehead)* I just pray there's no trouble.

NARRATOR: After a while, Connie watches the news on TV almost as much as Mama and Daddy. One night they are all watching a report on the sit-ins.

Slide 14: Pickets in other cities and/or states

CONNIE: That doesn't look like downtown.

DADDY: Connie, the sit-ins have spread all over the South.

Phone rings.

CONNIE: Daddy! It's Sister. She got arrested at the lunch counter. She's in jail!

Slide 15-16: Student protesters in arrested and jailed

NARRATOR: Sister, who always gets A's in school, who hardly ever gets in trouble, who is what Mama calls "mule-stubborn. Daddy races to the police station, but Sister won't let her family get her out of jail.

CONNIE: (*pleading*) We can't just leave Sister here with the bad guys.

MAMA: She's made up her mind, Connie. (*wiping a tear*) She wants to stay with the other students.

NARRATOR: Connie hears the students shouting:

ALL: Jail, not bail! Jail, not bail!

NARRATOR: The chant echoes off the walls and inside Connie's head. In a few days, Sister comes home.

CONNIE: (*begging*) Promise me you'll stop picketing.

SISTER: I can't do that. (*hugging Connie*)

NARRATOR: Now, instead of shopping downtown, Connie's family orders from the Sears catalog. Mama and Connie leaf through the big, thick catalog together. Mama even lets Connie help pick things out, but it isn't the same.

CONNIE: How long before the sit-ins are over, Mama?

MAMA: Till folks get what they want.

Slide 17: Woolworth Building

NARRATOR: That summer, Mama, Daddy and Connie finally go downtown. When they pass Woolworth's, Connie hears someone shout:

ONLOOKER: (*shout of surprise*) They're serving them!

NARRATOR: Daddy stops so fast that the brakes screech and Mama and Connie jolt forward. They park and run to the lunch counter. They see the women who work in the restaurant's kitchen sitting at the lunch counter. They are all dressed up and eating egg salad!
Connie can't even stand the smell of egg salad, but she stands and watches them eat every bite.

CONNIE: Looks pretty good. *(Connie and Daddy smile at each other)*

Slide 18: Lunch counter food poster

NARRATOR: The next day, Brother, Sister and Connie make a special trip downtown. Brother wears a suit and tie. The girls wear hats and white gloves. At Woolworth's lunch counter, Connie climbs up on a stool right between them.

CONNIE: *(addressing the waitress)* We'll have three hot dogs, three French fries, two coffees, one Coke and one banana split, please.

Slide 19: Banana split

NARRATOR: Sister and Brother sip coffee and Connie twists on her stool while they wait for their meals. Their food soon arrives. As Connie eats, the waitress plops an extra cherry on a mound of whipped cream. Then, she serves Connie's sundae. The waitress still looks nervous, but she smiles at Connie.

CONNIE: *(cheerily)* It was the best banana split I ever had.