

Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The official journal of the White Privilege Conference. A program of the Matrix Center for the Advancement of Social Equity & Inclusion

Free Land: A Hip Hop Journey from the Streets of Oakland to the Wild Wild West

Written and Performed by Ariel Luckey

©2009

**Volume II, Issue I
February, 2012**

Abstract

Free Land is a dynamic hip hop theater solo show written and performed by Ariel Luckey, directed by Margo Hall and scored by Ryan Luckey. The show follows a young white man's search for his roots as it takes him from the streets of Oakland to the prairies of Wyoming on an unforgettable journey into the heart of American history. During an interview with his grandfather he learns that their beloved family ranch was actually a Homestead, a free land grant from the government. Haunted by the past, he's compelled to dig deeper into the history of the land, only to come face to face with the legacy of theft and genocide in the Wild Wild West. Caught between the romantic cowboy tales of his childhood and the devastating reality of what he learns, he grapples with the contradictions in his own life and the possibility for justice and reconciliation. Free Land weaves spoken word poetry, acting, dance and hip hop music into a compelling performance that challenges us to take an unflinching look at the truth buried in the land beneath our feet.

Ariel Luckey is a nationally acclaimed poet, actor, and playwright whose community and performance work dances in the crossroads of education, art, and activism. Named a "Visionary" by the Utne Reader, Ariel seamlessly weaves storytelling, spoken word poetry, dance, acting, and hip hop music in compelling narratives of personal and political transformation. Born and raised in Oakland, California, he has been a featured artist at the North Bay Hip Hop Theater Festival, the Hecho en Califas Festival, Café Cantante in Havana, Cuba, the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York City, the White Privilege Conference, and the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity. Ariel's hip hop theater show, Free Land, and his first book of poetry and lyrics, Searching for White Folk Soul, have inspired and informed audiences at theaters, conferences, community centers, and classrooms across the country. Ariel sees his community work in the world as an extension of his most precious and important work as father to his two sons.

Downstage left is a barbed wire fence strung between two old wooden fence posts. A lucky horseshoe is nailed to one post. Downstage right is a chain link fence with a sticker reading “Oaklandish” on one of the metal bars. The DJ table is upstage right in front of a graffiti piece that spells out Free Land in block letters. There is a screen upstage center with the Free Land logo projected on it. The DJ spins old school hip hop as the audience enters.

Scene 1: Wild Wild West

Spotlight center stage on frozen Cowboy with guns drawn.

DJ: Kool Moe Dee, Wild Wild West

Dance Sequence: Uprock, Roger Rabbit, Running Man with poses, Robo Cop, Cabbage Patch

{Lip-syncing lyrics verse from Kool Moe Dee}

*I used to live downtown 129th Street
Convent everything's upbeat
Parties ball in the park
Nothing but girls after dark
We chill nobody gets ill
In the place we call the hill
But if you try 'em
That's when they will
Get wild but they don't fight they kill
At the wild wild west
The wild wild west*

memory flashes, memory flashes
old school hip hop jams was the classics
rockin the mic and movin the masses
Kool Moe Dee with the dark sunglasses
back in the day, I mean the later eighties yo
we would play all the songs on the radio
the music started in the heart of New York
then came to Cali in the rhymes of Too
Short

I was just a child but fell in love with the style
coming up to be fresh where the west was wild
everywhere I went I would write my tag
my Moms was always buggin cuz my pants would sag
I would breakdance and imitate the moves from the music videos and all the b-boy crews
didn't know at the time, I was just playin my part
in what became a global movement of the hip hop arts
in the Wild Wild West (we comin from)
the Wild Wild West (yeah, yeah)
the Wild Wild West
yeah!

Scene 2: Elementary School

2nd grade, I was 7 years old when my elementary school had a talent show. This crew of 5th graders came out and lip-synced Kool Moe Dee's Wild Wild West. They had these matching cowboy fits and dark sunglasses and shiny toy guns and the music... It was so fresh! So fly! So dope!

DJ: Salt N' Pepa, Push It

When the 5th grade girls danced to Salt-N-Pepa's Push It, I was mesmerized. The combination of phat beats, quick lyrics and explicit sexuality completely rocked my lil 7-year-old world. That was the beginning of a life-long relationship with hip hop culture. The music, the fashion, the style became the language of my generation. I'm a white boy in Oakland Public school, and my best friends were Latino, Ethiopian and Iranian, but we all learned to call a new car fresh and a cute girl fly. We all raced to the record store after school to see what new cassette singles had just been dropped, with the little cardboard cases. By the sixth grade,

I was getting my hair cut with a flat top and a fade, wearing Hypercolor t-shirts, remember you could breath on ‘em and they’d change the color, rockin overalls with one strap down, going to my homie’s house party to ask a fly girl to do the Humpty Dance...

DJ: Digital Underground, Humpty Dance

...and getting dissed. But I kept dancing...

Scene 3: Camp

And that summer I went to a performing arts camp called Camp Winnarainbow, and there were these 2 kids from Frisco who were also b-boys and we got this little crew going. We would choreograph routines like Kid N Play did, all synchronized and styled out.

DJ: Kid N Play, Rollin with Kid ‘N Play

And we’d perform for the whole camp. It was hella fun cuz they had all kinds of arts: dance, music, circus. But one of things that really stayed with me was the Native American dancing and singing, taught by one of the camp counselors, this Lakota Indian guy, Robert Greygrass. At first my friends and I were like “Boring”, but it was a trip cause, I’d never actually met, like, a real Indian before. And he took us to do a sweat lodge ceremony. Hella tight! I was so hot. It felt like the flesh was dripping off my bones. And the whole time he was playing the drum and singing, and the singing was so beautiful, even though I had no idea what he was saying or anything. I felt so alive. And then we ran out and jumped into the freezing cold creek. AHHH. Super intense. But summer camp is like that, which is why it’s so much better than high school.

Scene 4: High School

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Hip Hop Instrumental, Starts loud as Ariel enters with headphones on, volume lowers when he takes them off.

Psssst, psssst. Hey, what’d you put for number 6?

Yeah, the one about the Sioux War.

Tight. Thanks.

Yo, man. What’s up with Mr. Frenzy’s mean mug today?

Yeah, like we’re supposed to care.

Naw, I just threw it together in last period’s art class.

You know I hate this ish, man, stupid text book busywork. “Define key terms, summarize main events”. This class sucks.

Last week’s test?

I got 82. “Like whatever”. It’s all the same, you know? Cowboys and Indians, settlers and treaties, blah blah blah. Like I’ll ever remember in 10 years “the Homestead Act of 1862”.

Yeah, but I’m not about to be a history teacher so who cares? But hey girl, what’re you doing after school? You need a ride? Tight.

Dude, why’s he trippin’?

No snaps. Eight grade tour of prospective students. Yo, check it out.

Hey, yall don’t want to come to this school, yo. This school’s wack. The classes are

boring, the people are hella petty, they don't even let us go to the bathroom. I mean, just look around and you'll see...

DJ: Music abruptly cuts off.

Naw, I'm cool Mr. Frenzy. I was just sharing my perspective about our fine establishment here with the 8th graders. Oh yeah, my bad, I forgot. Censorship, that's the formal policy, right? See what I mean. They try to tell you what to think, how to act, what to do, how high to ju...

Yeah, it's all good. I know where her office is. I was down there yesterday... Suckas.

DJ: Young MC, Principal's Office

Scene 5: Going to College

I decided to leave high school in the middle of my senior year. I mean I didn't leave completely. I transferred to Oakland Independent Studies. I only needed two classes to graduate and I worked really hard and finished early, in like February, and was done like "Freedom! I'm out. I got four months where I would've been stuck in school and I'm fucking done. I'm "Seven!"

DJ: KRS-One Sample, "Fresh for 1990"

DJ: KRS-One Sample, "You Suckas!"

And then I actually went through this whole healing process just to get over the scars of high school. I slept a lot. I read a lot of books. I smoked a lot of weed. And that was cool, but then I was like, what am I going to do now? I had applied to some schools in the fall, UC Santa Cruz, NYU, just kinda normal do-ta-do-ta-do kinda schools. At some point my Dad gave me a book called Making A Difference College

Guide. It was all about college programs "designed to help you make a positive difference in the world". So, environmental studies, political science, community service, you know stuff like that. That spring I checked out the book and found this school called the Audobon Expedition Institute. It was this traveling cultural and environmental studies program and I was like, "What! You can travel around the country on a bus and get school credit! Hook me up. Like that's what's up. Let me do it." And I applied because I was like, I want my college experience to be as different as possible from my high school experience. One month later, I got an acceptance letter in the mail. This is it. I'm going on the bus.

DJ: Outkast, Rosa Parks

September, I get on a plane and fly to Rapid City, South Dakota. I'm seventeen. I remember, being nervous and hella excited, having no idea what was about to happen. Rapid City is a small ass town, I'm talking, South Dakota, small. With this super dinky little airport, there's like four flights a day type shit, and maybe a gate and a half or something. And I remember getting there, like "Where am I? What am I doing here?"

The way it works is that students fly from all over the country to some predetermined location and then you just wait in the airport parking lot and the bus rolls up.

Slide: The Audubon Expedition Institute Bus

Hella loud, big diesel engine, it's all rigged up with racks on the back. There's a kitchen and a library inside the back of the bus. And there's storage compartments everywhere. It's just like all hooked up to be

our home for three and a half months on the road. We travel every day and camp out under the stars every night. It's like our campus is all of North America.

Slide: Black Hills Landscape

Our first trip was a five-day backpacking trip in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Now, I'm a city boy. I'd never been backpacking before. Most definitely had never in the Black Hills before. But it was fresh cause they had us get ready by learning a little history of the land. Part of the program is that you read books and write papers about the places you're visiting and they had a recommended reading list with books outfitted in the bus' library, so it was dope, it was like right there boom. I choose *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown and *Black Elk Speaks* by John Neihardt. *Black Elk Speaks* is about a Lakota medicine man who lived through like most of the major battles of the Indian Wars. He was there at Wounded Knee, saw the soldiers kill unarmed women and children with his own eyes. *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* is like a history of the Wars from an Indian perspective. It breaks down what happened at the Black Hills. Check it out.

"The Black Hills was the center of the world, the place of gods and holy mountains, where warriors went to speak with the Great Spirit and await visions. In 1868, the Great Father (that's the U.S. president) considered the Hills worthless and gave them to the Indians forever by treaty. Four years later white miners were violating the treaty. They invaded the Black Hills, searching the rocky passes and clear running streams for the yellow metal which drove white men crazy. By 1874, there was such a mad clamor from gold hungry Americans that the army was ordered to

make a reconnaissance into the Black Hills (lead by General Custer). The United States government did not bother to obtain consent from the Indians before starting on this armed invasion, although the treaty of 1868 prohibited entry of white men without the Indians permission."

Scene 6: Harney Peak

Huh. You know, this is the way to learn. I've never read a book like this, I mean, when I'm actually in the place the book is about. It just makes it so much more real. Hiking all day, sleeping under the stars at night, camping on the land, learning this crazy history, it was amazing, just blowing my mind. But I wondered about us being there, as a group of white folks. The land is claimed by the government now, but that treaty still stands.

On the last day of the trip, we decided to hike up the highest peak of the Black Hills, Harney Peak.

Slide: Harney Peak

There was a full moon that night. So we left camp early and walked pretty quickly cause we were trying to make it up to the very top by sunset, cause they say on a full moon night the sun sets and the moon rises at the same time. So we hiked, hella high, really climbed, up and up and up. Finally got up to the top and it was absolutely breathtaking. It was all grays and greens, grays of the granite, green of the trees. Just like cliffs and spires and valleys and 360 degrees, I mean gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous. Beautiful blue sky. And we made it up there just in time to watch the sun set. Incredible colors, the sky was huge, and the moon rose...

Slide: Mountains with Moon

...and we just kicked it up there on top of the world. During the trip I was reading *Black Elk Speaks* and I realized that part of it actually takes place on Harney Peak. So after dinner we got the whole group together and I read the last chapter out loud.

Scene 7: Black Elk Speaks

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Instrumental

“Pointing at Harney Peak that loomed black above the far sky rim, Black Elk said: “There, when I was young, the spirits took me in my vision to the center of the earth and showed me all the good things in the sacred hoop of the world. I wish I could stand up there in the flesh before I die, for there is something I want to say to the Six Grandfathers. If I have any power left, the thunder beings of the west should hear me when I send a voice, and there should be at least a little thunder and a little rain.” It was a bright and cloudless day, and after we had reached the summit the sky was perfectly clear. Black Elk faced the west, holding the sacred pipe before him in his right hand. Then he sent forth a voice.

“Hey-a-a-hey! Hey-a-a-hey! Hey-a-a-hey! Hey-a-a-hey! Grandfather, Great Spirit, once more behold me on earth and lean to hear my feeble voice. You have said to me, when I was still young and could hope, that in difficulty I should send a voice four times, once for each quarter of the earth, and you would hear me. Today I send a voice for a people in despair. At the center of the sacred hoop you have said that I should make the tree to bloom. With tears running, O Great Spirit, my Grandfather – with running tears I must say now that the tree has never bloomed. A pitiful old man, you see me here, and I have fallen away and have done nothing and the tree is withered, Grandfather. Hear me, not for myself, but

for my people; I am old. Hear me that they may once more go back into the sacred hoop and find the good red road, the shielding tree!”

A scant chill rain began to fall and there was low, muttering thunder without lightning. With tears running down his cheeks, the old man raised his voice to a thin high wail, and chanted: “In sorrow I am sending a feeble voice, O Six Powers of the World. Hear me in my sorrow, for I may never call again. O make my people live!”

After I read the chapter, people started cleaning up dinner and getting ready to hike back to camp. I wasn’t ready to go. I felt a weight in my chest. Sadness. Anger. Something I can’t quite describe. And I felt drawn to go over to where the rocks were jutting out, where the edge of the cliff fell off into the valley. And I started walking slowly over there. It was getting dark by now but the moon was up so it was full moon light, everything is silvery rock, just magic, and I walk over to the edge and just as I get there the wind –snap- picks up and its just like –whoosh- super strong and I feel this energy tingling, just electric, through my body and I feel the power of the land and the pain of Black Elk’s loss and I feel so open, just channeling. And I raise my arms, tilt my head back and sing.

Wanka Tanka Wanka Tanka Wanka Tanka,
Hey-ya-ya-ya-hey
Wanka Tanka Wanka Tanka Wanka Tanka,
Hey-ya-ya-ya-hey

Scene 8: Who Am I?

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Who Am I? Instrumental

who am I to be doing this dance
who am I to be singing these chants

who am I to be doing this dance
 who am I to be singing these chants

I'm just a white boy attracted to the color
 disconnected from my roots so I reach for
 another's
 I'm discovering power and beauty in Lakota
 culture
 like the sacred eagle but I feel like a vulture
 dancing on their graves, stealing their songs
 I just want a community where I belong
 and there's something here that I feel in my
 core
 but I can't really call it, haven't felt it before
 wasn't present in my synagogue or in the
 church
 maybe its what I've been looking for, on my
 search
 a spirit, an energy, connection to the land
 but why don't my people have it, I try to
 understand

my family sold their culture for American
 whiteness
 assimilated to make it suppressing what was
 inside us
 changed our names and our language, even
 our religion
 in exchange for the privileges white people
 are given
 but the cost of what was lost can not stay
 hidden
 and now I hunger for spirituality and
 tradition
 and I listen to these songs and I want to sing
 along
 but there's something missing, it feels all
 wrong
 I'm standing in a room filled with empty
 picture frames
 and I don't know the languages, the stories
 or the names
 I can't see my own reflection, nothing is
 clear
 Who am I? What am I doing here?

Where do I come from? And what does it
 mean?
 Is this what they wanted in the American
 dream?
 I need to color in the blank white faces
 fill the void with memories, dates and places
 I'm lost without this knowledge of self
 I'm sick and tired trying to be like
 everybody else
 If you don't have roots than how can you
 grow?
 I'm a dig for the truth, fuck it I need to know

Scene 10: Grandfather

I go to my grandfather, my mom's
 dad, my last living grandparent. All I know
 about his life is the same old anecdotes I've
 heard a millions time, stories of him as a kid
 on the family ranch in Wyoming, riding
 horses, hunting birds, being a cowboy. And
 that's fine, but I need to know more. What
 was really going on? So I ask him,
 "Grandfather, Why did our family come out
 West? This is not where we came from.
 How did we get the land the ranch was on?"

He says his father, my great
 grandfather, brought the family out from
 Missouri and settled the ranch as a
 Homestead, a free land grant from the
 government.

Homestead? The ranch was a
 homestead? A free land grant? But who
 lived on that land before our family?

He says, It was empty.

Empty? Empty? That land wasn't empty.
 It was emptied.

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Empty Instrumental

my ignorance holds me / no one ever told
 me / this side of the story / all I heard was

the guns and the glory / how the West was
won with brave exploring / now I'm
stumbling /
as my image of the truth is crumbling /
feeling dumb and then feeling angry / wanna
scream like the sound of a rifle banging /
he's claiming / this land was empty / I can
see the mentality is tempting / makes it easy
to justify / the crazy violence / the acts of
insanity / to kill and steal you must deny /
your own soul and your victims humanity /
now I plan to read / and learn the real deal /
but understandably I still feel

you can not live a life of freedom and be lied
to
cause still the sickness of the death lives on
inside you

it's time to go back and look / who wrote my
history book / who took / the land away /
from the people who spanned the plains /
who were these families / how did they live /
how did they die / who told me the white
history / why did they lie / I'm confused
about what to do / and how I should move /
it's hard to tell what's true / there's so much
I don't know / so much that's new / am I
prepared for the / changes of character / in
Native America / I want to learn the truth /
but the truth is scarier / my fear is a barrier /
ignorance holds me / you never told me /
this side of the story / all I heard was the
guns and the glory / how the ranch was there
for your exploring

But I never said that to him. I never
called him on it. It's just so personal, so
painful. He wouldn't understand where I
was coming from, wouldn't get that I'm not
trying to hurt him.

I mean, maybe he'd hear some of it,
or at least respect that I have my own
opinions.

But after all he's been through in his
88 years of life on this planet, to have his
own grandson attack him and his way of
life, which is how he'd take it. It would
really hurt him and our relationship. I love
my grandfather. I love him so much. But
we're so different, you know. He's from a
totally different generation, a different
world. Sometimes, some of the things he
says, I mean, he's a republican. And he's
racist. And it's complicated. My grandfather
was just a child when his father got that
land. He did what he was taught to do. He
listened to the Lone Ranger on the radio and
then named his favorite horse Tanto. He
went hunting with his friends and shot
eagles with his bows and arrows. He didn't
know about the Lakota. And he doesn't want
to know now.

But how is anything ever going to
change if we are too scared to challenge our
elders? There's always risk involved. I've
got to say what I believe. It's the right thing
to do, regardless of how he takes it.

But what good would that do really?
I can't change his mind. He's not trying to
change his worldview. And I don't want to
ruin our relationship. He's my grandfather,
the only one I have left.

Free land? Oh.

Empty? Uh-huh.

Okay. Thanks Grandfather.

Scene 11: A Bird Hunter

My grandfather didn't have the
answers to all my questions. But I needed to
know everything I could about my family,
about the ranch, the Homestead Act. I asked
my Mom to pull out all the old family
photos albums. As I was looking through

one, I found a black and white picture of my grandfather as a boy...

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Bird Hunter Instrumental

Slide: Bird Hunter

he clutches a bow and arrow
a ten year old bird hunter
at the edge of a field on the family ranch in Wyoming

one hundred and sixty acres of Free Land
a gift from the government in 1918
a homestead in america
270 million acres of stolen Native American land
10% of the United States
given to white people
for free

first the army invaded with fire arms and fire water
burning death across the plains
followed by waves of white settlers crashing across the continent
to civilize the newly claimed country
pushing the border of white territory west with the God-given right to manifest destiny
my grandfather
an ignorant but direct benefactor of monumental genocide

with a fence a shack and a dam
in five short years my family settles the land comes to claim ownership with title in hand

when I look at the black and white picture of my grandfather
I see the image that's visible
but for the first time I also see the legacy that's buried out of sight
my family's roots deep within the blood-stained soil of American history

And then I realized
my grandfather hunted rabbits and birds on the same land where U.S. soldiers hunted Native American men, women and children.

Scene 12: Hunting

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Hunting Instrumental

Dance Sequence: A young boy hunting birds with a bow and arrow transforms to a flying eagle transforms to a soldier riding a horse shooting at Indians.

Scene 13: Research

One night I woke up shivering in a cold sweat. A crazy nightmare. I was being chased across the plains by soldiers who looked like me. The questions were haunting me. Who lived on that land? What happened to them? I needed to know. So I kept digging. I figured out the ranch was in Johnson County, Wyoming. So I called up the County Records people and asked 'em to do a search for any Homestead land patents with my great grandfather's name. Two and a half weeks later, I find a large manila envelope in my mailbox, open it up and take out a copy of the original land patent my great grandfather filed to get the ranch.

Slide: Homestead Land Patent

Trip out. It's like, the real document. This little piece of paper holds so much history.

The patent had the exact coordinates of the ranch. I busted out a map, did some quick calculations and figured out it was just southwest of Kaycee, Wyoming, in the heart of the plains. I looked again, and realized, that was only 100 miles from the Black Hills. Lots of tribes lived in that area, the Arapahoe, Northern Cheyenne, the Lakota. Now that I had the exact location, I could look for specific events, dates, people. I jumped online and plugged into some search

engines. Oh snap! There was all kinds of information. Not only was that land not empty, there were hella battles all over the plains. The three tribes formed an alliance to defend their land and fought against the white's invasion. It says here that in 1876, two years after Custer discovered gold in the Black Hills, the tribes defeated the Army at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Slide: Little Big Horn Battle

After that, the government made it official policy to hunt the tribes down and either kill them or send them to the reservations. And then I found it. Within ten miles of my family's ranch is a National Historic Site. The Dull Knife Battlefield. This is it. This is what happened on that land, the story no one ever told me.

Scene 14: The Dull Knife Battle

DJ: Ryan Luckey, The Cost of Free Land

Tall Bull
Walking Whirlwind
Hawks Visit
Burns Red
Four Spirits
Walking Calf
Crow Necklace
and all those whose names were lost or forgotten
who died in the battle of Chief Dull Knife
fighting for their freedom
against the United States Army
November 25, 1876
rest in peace

from the darkest depths of night, comes a
hint of light
shivering thru snow in a world of winter
white
just before dawn when a day is born

in Powder River country in the Little Big
Horns
if you listen close, you can hear it in the
wind
the whisper of spirits the distant cries of men
come with me to the bitter end of life
at the clandestine campgrounds of Chief
Dull Knife
nestled in a valley of sage and evergreen
trees
herds of horses, fire pits and tipis
families sleeping the sun begins to rise
as the morning quiet is murdered in
deafening surprise
storming thunder of hoofs and battle cries
war songs echo as the first bullet flies
US soldiers riding out of hiding guns
blasting
attacking the Cheyenne village in fast action
total chaos the tribe awakes in
the warriors shaken stumble from their tipis
naked
with ammo in one hand a rifle in the other
people running up ravines behind the rocks
to take cover
a young girl runs to the hills until the sudden
thud
of a bullet ripping thru her chest spills her
blood
she falls in the mud screams in agony and
torture
the last thing she sees a horse galloping
towards her
a battling warrior charging for the soldier
who shot her
cause the young girl was his daughter
the father aims his rifle just as a bullet tears
thru his torso
he feels his life go he silently slips from his
horse slow
the slaughter of war knows no remorseful
the troops hunt men, women and children
the valley stinks with the stench of killing
(scratch) the cost of Free Land

(scratch) can you imagine the cost of Free
Land

(scratch) Free Land

as the morning sun light is shattered by the
gun fight

Chief Dull Knife's men defend their groups
they shoot and the troops of General
Mackenzie

people screaming frantic in the frenzy
thru the woods past the river survivors run
for their lives

while the army burns the village and their
winter supplies

with surprise on their side the soldiers ride
to prevail

force the tribe to flee deep into the
wilderness trails

that night the temperature plummets to thirty
below

they huddle in the snow hungry dirty and
cold

the frost biting their bodies hurting the old
men and women

they kill some ponies put their hands and
feet in 'em

then in the night 11 babies freeze to death,
11 babies

11 babies freeze to death in the arms of their
mothers

with no food no shelter no cover they suffer
the Cheyenne walk and walk thru the
mountain range

every step in pain with the ghosts of the
slain

the icy storms makes it hard to stay on track
as many die from the cold as in the army's
attack

but a desperate few by sheer force navigate
their course

thru the snowy trails to the camp of Crazy
Horse

their arrival draws on intertribal

help of the Lakota to support their survival
the last of the tribe struggle to stay alive

with no supplies they have to make a
compromise

that spring they surrender at the Robinson
Fort

blood on the white man's hands in the
Indian Wars

if you listen close you can hear it in the wind
the whisper of spirits the distant cries of men

If that battle hadn't happened and the
Cheyenne weren't kicked off their land, my
family would've never gotten the ranch.
And my grandfather's life would've been
totally different. And then so would my life.
It's so crazy how a single event in history
can completely change the course of our
lives but it's not like I think about that all
the time. I mean, who wants to think about
how their family benefited from something
so horrific? The battle, it's so intense. I
don't think I can ever think of the ranch in
the same way again. I need to go there, be
on that land, find the ranch and the
battlefield, see for myself the place my
grandfather grew up, find my roots.

**DJ: Roots Sample, "It's the R to the
double O to the T S and... To the roots I
get deep."**

Scene 15: Going to Wyoming

I talked with my Mom about a trip to
Wyoming. She was down to go, so I called
up my grandfather. He hadn't been to the
ranch in over 60 years, didn't even know
exactly where it was anymore. I told him I
was getting deeper into our family history
and wanted to see where he grew up. He got
excited and started making plans, so the
three of us set a date and got ready to go to
Casper, Wyoming.

DJ: Randy Houser Sample, “Welcome to the Wild Wild West.” mixed into Dr. Dre Sample, “Now let me welcome everybody to the Wild Wild West.”

I’d never been to Casper before and really had no idea what to expect. So I jumped back online, checked out google and wikipedia and learned some crazy ish. Okay first of all, Wyoming is the least populous state in the country. They got hella land and like, three and a half people. The city of Casper’s like barely an eighth the size of Oakland and it’s the hometown of Dr. Evil,

Slide: Dr. Evil with the face of Dick Cheney

ahemm, I mean, Dick Cheney. The main business there is the energy industry, mining and drilling for oil. Coincidence?

Slide: The Energy Industry

And if you’re planning to hike around, they warn you to always wear boots because the prairie dogs out there carry the bubonic plague. I’m not making this up. But it’s also where my Grandfather’s from, so we kick it in Casper for a couple days, visiting the landmarks of my grandfather’s childhood. Then we drive out to the ranch, an area the locals call the Lucky Flats.

Slide: The Lucky Flats Landscape

DJ: Clint Eastwood Sample, “You gotta ask yourself one question. Do you feel lucky?”

The prairie stretches for miles with rolling hills across the horizon. The Wyoming sky is huge. My grandfather’s like a tour guide, showing us where everything was, his parent’s and grandparent’s houses,

Slide: Black and White Photo of the Ranch, Circa 1924

the garden, the barn. My Mom and I ask questions, listen and look. My grandfather’s juiced to be here. He loves remembering the golden years of his youth. Growing up I heard all his adventure stories about the ranch, like the time he was thrown from his horse and almost broke his leg or when he barely escaped a twelve-foot rattlesnake. Every time he visited us in Oakland he would proudly point out the old coffee table with the ranch’s cowboy brand on it.

Slide: F Bar L Brand Burned on Wood

F Bar L, with the L backwards to kinda make a square. F Bar L cause my great grandfather’s name was Frank Lucky.

Slide: Black and White Scene of Horse Branding on the Ranch

I remember seeing a picture of my grandfather and some of the cowhands branding a horse.

It always tripped me out, how they would stick the metal brand in the fire until it was scorching hot and then sear the image, F Bar L, into the flesh of their livestock, burning their name into the body of the animal. It’s fucked up when you really think about it, claiming another living being as your property. Part of the same mentality that you can own land, carve it up into little parcels of private property. It’s just a messed up way of looking at the world, that land, animals, even people are just a resource to be owned and exploited.

To finally be on the ranch feels like a gift, to get a glimpse of the world that shaped my family. And no matter how I feel about it, this is a part of what I’m what made

of. The next morning my Mom and grandfather get on a plane and head back home. I have another day and a half to explore. The first thing I do is come straight back to Luckey Flats.

Being alone here feels different. I have time to sit and really feel the energy of the place. It's hella hot. Why did I decide to come here in the middle of July? But even with the heat there's a stillness in the air. I feel overwhelmed by so much space, so much history. I walk around and try to find traces of the ranch, where the houses might have left an imprint in the earth. My great great grandfather died here, while tending the animals in the barn. I try to feel his presence in the rustling wind through the grass. I go over to the rental car and put on one of my brother's beats. I need to move...

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Time Travel Instrumental

Dance Sequence: Exploring the Land, Seeing Spirits, Time Travel, the Battle

Scene 16: Dull Knife Battlefield

Slide: Dull Knife Battlefield Landscape

Dull Knife Battlefield, just up the road from Luckey Flats. Here it is after all this time. The land is beautiful. The Powder River runs right through the valley next to open meadows and twinkling stands of cottonwood trees. On the south side there's a huge red cliff and on the north the grey face of Fraker Mountain. I had called ahead and arranged to meet the family that lives here, Dale and Deidre Graves. They're a couple about my age and have a baby boy just a few months younger than my son. Dale grew up right here in this valley and is a real cowboy. And Deidre's a journalist. We drive through the valley and they show me the exact spot

where the soldiers attacked the tribe and the different trails the Cheyenne used to escape.

Slide: National Historic Site Stone Monument

They take me to see the stone monument that marks the valley as a National Historic Site and then over to where their ranch is nestled in the trees. As we drive down to the river, I tell the couple about my family's ranch down the road and about my theater project back home. They tell me that just a couple months after the battle went down in 1876, a white man moved into the valley. White folks were so hungry for the land. A few years later, Dale tells me, his great grandfather filed a claim for a Homestead in this valley. And they kept it in the family and here they are, still living on the land. Man, it's a trip how parallel our lives are in a way. Both of our great grandfathers got these ranches, but while they kept theirs, my family lost ours in the Depression.

Yo, what if, instead of being born in the heart of Oakland, I was born in the super cuts on a ranch in Wyoming? If not for some twist of history, could I have been a cowboy?

DJ: Kool Moe Dee, Wild Wild West

Slide: Dull Knife Battlefield Landscape 2

After several hours of driving and talking and walking around the valley, I felt like we were old friends. Dale needed to go tend his horses so Deidre walked me back to my rental car. While we were walking, she asked me more about my theater project and if there was anything she could see or read. I offered to share the song I had written about the Dull Knife battle. I put my brother's instrumental on in the car and as the beat

kicked in, I closed my eyes and fell into the rhythm of the lyrics.

DJ: Ryan Luckey, The Cost of Free Land Remix

(scratches)
the cost of Free Land
can you imagine the cost of Free Land

Up until then, the valley had been quiet, still. But as I flowed, I could feel the wind pick up with an energy swirling around us. There was a tension in the air. Each word felt different here, like it was written for this moment.

Deidre and I were silent for a minute, feeling the weight of what happened. I could tell it meant a lot to her too. I thanked her and asked her to thank her husband for opening up their home to me. We exchanged emails and a hug and I watched as she walked back to her house carrying her baby son in her arms. I knew it was almost time to go but I had one more thing to do. I grabbed my backpack and took out a bundle of tobacco and a stick of white sage and walked over to the edge of the river.

Slide: Powder River

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Tobacco and Sage Instrumental

I sat quietly for a while, breathing and listening to the sounds of life in the valley. Then I presented the tobacco and sage to the land and to the spirits of the land. I prayed that the spirits of the Cheyenne who were killed here rest in peace. I asked for their permission to tell this story and for their blessing for my family's healing, my people's healing. As I raised my eyes, I felt their presence in the trees above me. I

walked back to my car, my heart heavy with emotion and the weight of history.

That afternoon I boarded a plane and headed back to Oakland. Even though I was only gone five days, it felt like a lifetime.

DJ: Biggie Smalls Sample, "I'm going going, back back, to Cali Cali," mixed into The Coup Sample, "Oakland, California, 94610"

Scene 17: Coming Home

AHHH, it feels so good to be home, I missed my family so much. There really is no place like home. I was born and raised in Oakland.

Slide: Welcome to Oakland Sign

DJ: Tupac Sample, "Straight outta Oakland California where we sparkin on ya," mixed into The Movement and Too Short Sample, "Where you from? Oakland. Tha Town. Oakland." mixed into The Luniz Sample "Where you from? Oakland."

My parents live here. All my people are here. I can read my life story in the streets of the city. My son was born a half-mile from my parent's house. And just last year, my parents helped my wife and I buy our own house. You know, with the baby coming and everything, we were trying to get ready, like that's possible. It was time for some big changes. So we went through the whole process, getting a loan and signing all the papers. And then we had this house, and a little piece of paper saying we owned it.

Slide: Home Title

Crazy right? Cause here I am now, back from Wyoming, tripping off the parallels. How I own land in Native America, just like my great grandfather. He had a title to the Homestead,

Slide: Homestead Land Patent

I have the title to my house.

I now know the history of the ranch and that land in Wyoming, but what went down here, in Oakland? Who lived on this land? What happened to them? I've lived here my entire life, gone through 16 years of formal education and still don't know jack about the indigenous people of this land. Like what's up with Ohlone Park

Slide: Ohlone Park Sign

or Shellmound Street?

Slide: Shellmound Street Sign

There's all these references to Native Americans but they're so easy to not pay attention to, just fading into the background. But something changed back there in Wyoming. A door was opened that I can't close. And now I can't go back. I can't pretend I don't know what I know. And I need to find out what happened here in my hometown.

Scene 18: The Shellmound Story

I walk from my house four blocks to the border of Emeryville, through the brand new gentrification condos, past the train tracks, over to the Bay Street Mall.

Slide: Bay Street Mall Logo

At the intersection of Shellmound Street and Ohlone Way, I stop and look

around. 360 degrees of development, all built in the last ten years. It all has that new plastiky-kinda feel, like it's a Disneyland set or something.

Slide: Interstate 80 Rush Hour

250,000 cars drive by this spot on Interstate-80 every single day. I've driven through here thousands of times. But I've never stopped to really look, to really see the land below the city. What's down there?

Down there (scratch) down (scratch) down down (scratch) down down.

like a DJ scratching archival records
I dig in crates of the past
searching for the perfect beat
like geologists reads rocks to tell time in reverse
this land holds history carved in its flesh
stories submerged in its structure
starting at the surface and digging down
into the unknown history of my homeland
digging down
digging down
digging down

DJ: Ryan Luckey, The Shellmound Soundtrack

2007

I stand on this land
this shopping mall owned and operated by
Madison Marquette
easy to forget where I am in the glittering
glass of american gluttony
shiny and new and on sale
400,000 square feet of retail
bananarepublic-bankofamerica-
barnesandnoble-victoriasecret-oldnavy-
h&m-thegap

Slides: Flashing Images of the Stores

284 apartments 82 townhouses 16 movie
screens 230 hotel rooms 2000 parking spaces
adjacent Ikea
thick slab of pavement over earth packed
hard and heavy
dead in the screaming silence of the past
digging down

1999

down beneath sidewalk and street
mall construction disturbs buried bodies
Ohlone ancestors sleep for thousands of
years
wake up to the sound of blaring bulldozers

Slide: Bulldozers Removing Ohlone Remains

scraping their souls into steel boxes
some bones so toxic they feel like rubber
so drunk off chemical cocktails they're
handled and disposed of as toxic waste
others buried in unmarked mass graves
hundreds removed from their resting place
to create space
for the foundation of the new mall
city council calls desecrated cemetery
progress
and stonewalls local Ohlone and community
members who demand respect for the dead
corporate officials play their game to win
offer losers a fake 50-foot Shellmound

Slide: Fake 50-foot Shellmound

filled with white washed history
adding insult to injury
saying nothing about Ohlone burials
nothing about the hundreds of bodies
already removed nor the thousands that
remain, nothing about the vibrant Ohlone
community alive today
digging down

1981

Slide: Abandoned Sherwin-Williams Paint Factory

amidst rusty industry and economic decline
this land's assigned federal designation as a
Brownfield
soil fully saturated with hydrogen sulfide-
arsenic-lead-DDT residuals-and-
petroleum hydrocarbons,
the ground bubbles with acid as volatile
heavy metals seep into buried bones
bleed through Temescal Creek
run red into the Bay
muddy water poisoned before I was born
digging down

1924

this land is sold to Sherwin-Williams paint
company

Slide: Sherwin-Williams Logo

their Cover the Earth Logo depicts a paint
bucket
pouring blood red paint over blue green
globe
suffocating the planet
as business men drive steam shovels

Slide: Steam Shovels Destroy Shellmound in 1926

clawing and ripping the largest Shellmound
down to ground level
archeologist notes 692 bodies found and
haphazardly destroyed
arrowheads-knives-spearheads-mortars-
pestles-ceremonial pipes
all devoured by hungry metal mouths
crunching through hundreds of years of
history
Shellmound material calcium rich from
shells and bones

used to pave Oakland Berkeley streets

Slide: Dwight Way

College Avenue, Dwight Way, Interstate-80
white people pave their modern roads with
bones of Ohlone ancestors
paving the roads with bones
walking on a people's history without regard
digging down deeper still

1876

the year Custer was killed
and blood rained down on the Dullknife
Battlefield
an entrepreneur established an amusement
park

Slide: Shellmound Park Sign

Shellmound Park
with horse track-carousel-trainstation-
bowlingally-shootingrange-restaurants-bars-
and-a-dancepavilion

Slide: Dance Pavilion From the Bay

placed directly on top of the Shellmound
wealthy white people flock from big city
across the Bay
to dance polkas, Irish jigs, and fast waltzes
on the graves of Ohlone men women and
children
literally dancing on Ohlone graves
drunk and dancing on their graves
until prohibition slows the stream of
amusement seekers to a lonely trickle
Ohlone land littered with broken beer bottles
and empty bullet shells
digging down

1850

the story expands

Shellmound land part of territory colonized
into California

Slide: Gold Rush

Golden State feeding gold rush seething
with 300,000 forty-niners gold
rushing to mine rivers bleeding gold
immigrant greed speeds Native genocide
disease and murder explode like gunpowder
as state leaders pay white militias \$1 million
to hunt for Native scalps
\$5 a head
over 4000 Native children kidnapped and
sold into legalized slavery
San Francisco Bay economy swells
exponentially
as the Shellmounds scream in silence
digging down

the land passes hands from US to Mexico
from Mexico to Spain
digging down,

1769

Slide: Mission Dolores

father junipero serra stabs the earth with
spanish flag pole
european invaders establish mission system
slavery for Ohlone manual labor
kidnap and convert children to save their
souls from a christian devil
Ohlone backs broken by guns and bibles
survival wrung like water from stone
a people's home gutted and burned
beaten bloody and bruised bodies
women raped by spanish soldiers
fatal diseases surge in waves of widespread
death

death
down
down
down

in this hole
 I've been digging for so long I'm tired and
 cold
 my body aches with the pressure
 my hands are blistered and bloody
 it's so hard to open my eyes the truth is so
 ugly
 so many layers of pain my heart's numb
 stunned by the reality of what we've become
 our humanity lost in a culture of violence
 while the status quo is entrenched in
 sickening silence
 this is my home
 but nobody told me
 about the history of genocide against the
 Ohlone
 about the toxic waste sites or the dead eco-
 system
 I was searching for my roots because my
 ignorance was prison
 but this knowledge is so hard to bare
 to learn my world's built on suffering and
 nobody cares
 and what can I do
 I'm just one person
 and I'm not sure that I have the strength to
 deal with this hurting
 my heart is breaking
 to see my home stripped naked
 they destroyed and violated everything I
 hold sacred
 and my life is implicated
 who am I to live here
 just another white man who profits from
 oppression severe
 I don't know what to do
 it's such a deep contradiction
 and I can feel the path beneath me heating
 up with the friction
 but I can't ignore the voices that's been
 calling
 the choices that I'm making and the work I
 got involved in
 crawling on my hands and knees
 digging in the dirt
 desperate for a way to heal this legacy's hurt

this history's so heavy like bones of lead
 my heart is broken open that's why this
 poems red

look
 here I am on this land I'm
 just a man but my hand has been dug here
 I call my home where I live I find love here
 yet this earth is stained
 gravestones and concrete – is it worth the
 pain?
 I dig back in time and search for names
 but I can't reverse the gains of my family
 the hurts and the blames
 the curse and the shame
 I thirst for change
 from the plains to the coastal range
 from cointelpro to A.I.M.
 cowboys and Indians war games
 it's more of the same
 the horror remains
 from Wyoming to West Oakland to Iraq
 soldiers ordered to bang
 you can't be neutral on a moving train
 nothing but full accountability and justice
 will soothe the pain
 my life-blood-bone-flesh won the west
 colonial conquest destiny manifest
 the U.S. army pressed and mounted war
 how many innocent people murdered and
 unaccounted for
 how many known dead
 so my family could homestead
 my history is bleeding
 that's why this poem's red

are you prepared for the
 changes of character?
 do you claim area in Native America?
 my life in
 white skin privilege
 my Great Granddaddy's profit was wrong
 and mine still is
 my village
 built on haunted ground where they killed
 kids

raped the women, burned the buildings and pillaged
 how many known dead
 so my family could homestead
 my history is burning
 that's why this poem's read

down
 down
 digging
 down
 down
 down
 deeper into the dark
 when the Christian calendar does not mark the year
 when seasons cycle with acorn harvest and animal migration

Slide: Oak Tree Silhouette in Sunset

a time when birds darken the sky with their wings

Slide: Grizzly Bears

grizzly bears and antelope roam through rolling hills and redwoods

Slide: Sea Otters

sea otters swim in the crystal blue bay encircled by the Shellmounds

for thousands of years the Ohlone have lived here
 where the complex ecology of land and water
 brings an abundance of food
 shellfish

Slide: Shellfish

a central staple for the Ohlone
 mussels-clams-oysters-crabs-
 gooseneckbarnacles-abalone

gathered in wicker baskets
 cleaned and cooked and eaten
 shells discarded on the ground accumulate over time into mounds
 hundreds of years of shells
 layers of life and death

Slide: Ohlone Ancestor

the Ohlone buried their dead here
 bodies covered in red ochre
 buried with precious possessions
 abalone ornaments, elk bone whistles,
 bundles of raptor talons,
 buried in fetus position
 next to their families
 shellmound cemeteries
 sacred sites

this Shellmound was the biggest around the bay
 over 60 feet tall, 350 feet diameter
 bigger than a city block
 built by generations of shells, bones and bodies
 earth and rock and plants packed together
 like puzzle pieces
 while the people collect acorns in autumn
 hunt deer in the spring,

Slide: Spring River in Forest

weave baskets of willow and fern root
 sweat ceremonies in temescals and sing to the spirits of the trees
 family clans and community councils weave the web of relations
 a civilization too subtle for European eyes
 called dirty, savage, diggers
 who don't know God

but here
 at the bottom of this hole
 I think I can finally see
 how the layers of dirt in our eyes blind us
 how genocide becomes normalized

and the people become lost
and the truth forgotten

their descendants walk among us
their names secret our landscape
a street, a park, a dusty plaque on the wall
we deny their presence and exploit their
memory
as we live upon their land

Slide: Sunset on the Bay

but if you listen close, you can hear it in the
wind
the whispers of spirits, the echoes from
within

And now I've heard them, seen for
myself my homeland's haunting history.
And this history has made the reality of
today, which has got some serious problems.
The violence in the city, the wars, global
warming, the sickness in people's heads and
hearts, man, seems like everybody's crazy.

**DJ: Zion-I Sample, "It seems like
everybody's trippin, or is it me, being
normal nowadays it'll drive you crazy."**

And no wonder, when you think
about what happened here, the legacy of the
land we live on. But what can I do about it?
I mean, it's good to know about or whatever,
but now that I know, I feel like I should do
something. I want to be a part of making
things better, but how? How can I take
action and really be effective?

Scene 19: Bear Butte

Slide: Bear Butte Landscape

I start at Bear Butte, South Dakota.
There's an open invitation to a prayer camp
at the base of Bear Butte, the powerful
mountain shaped like a sleeping bear. It's a

super sacred site to dozens of tribes across
the plains. Native folks have been going
there for thousands of years to vision quest,
fast and pray. This time, they're praying for
a different reason.

Slide: Broken Spoke Biker Bar

Jay Allen, a corporate developer
wants to build a biker bar, strip club and
outdoor rock-n-roll amphitheater right next
to Bear Butte as part of the annual Sturgis
Biker Rally.

Slide: Sturgis Rally, Downtown Sturgis

The rally brings hundreds of
thousands of bikers to the area for two
weeks every summer to ride, drink and
party. A coalition of Native tribes is working
to stop the development and protect Bear
Butte cause they say the biker's noise and
light degrade the sacred site and interrupt
their people's prayers. So they're hosting a
prayer camp and asking folks to come out
and support. And Bear Butte is in the Black
Hills, less than a hundred miles from my
family's ranch, sacred to the Northern
Cheyenne and Lakota.

Slide: Protect Bear Butte

As soon as I read the invitation, I
knew I was going to go. This was meant to
happen.

Exactly ten years after my first trip, I
get a plane and fly back to Rapid City, South
Dakota.

Slide: Welcome to Rapid City Sign

I'm 27 now. I've seen and done a lot,
learned a lot in the last ten years. But I'm
still nervous, and hella excited, having no

idea what's about to happen. I don't know anyone in South Dakota but I'm ready for something new.

Slide: Bear Butte Prayer Camp

The camp was amazing. During the week I was there, I slept out under the stars, attended the prayer circles, learned the history of Bear Butte and went into town to talk to the bikers and pass out flyers.

Slide: Passing Out Flyers in Sturgis

I worked hard, pitching tents, washing dishes, moving supplies. Before the trip I had raised \$150 and was able to buy extra tents and food when needed. And I shared the story of my grandfather's ranch and the Dullknife battle. The whole time felt sacred. Everything we did was in the shadow of Bear Butte and the land held us.

Side Slide 53: Bear Butte Sunset

One morning someone announced there's a prayer walk coming to Bear Butte. A prayer walk is an old Native tradition, where people walk and pray sometimes for hundreds of miles to a sacred site. Roger Zoss, a direct descendant of a Yankton Sioux Chief, and his best friend Joey Myers, were walking from eastern South Dakota almost 400 miles to Bear Butte. They were walking 30 miles a day, in midsummer South Dakota sun. I'm talking hot, like 105 in the shade kinda hot. 30 miles a day, day after day after day, for 12 days, praying the whole time.

At first all we could see was a small dot on the highway horizon. Then the camp leaders went out to greet them and walk them into camp, stopping four times to pray in the traditional Lakota way. Roger was carrying an american flag wrapped in white

sage, eagle feathers, and prayer ties of tobacco. We all gathered to welcome them and then sat down to a phat feast of steak, salad, biscuits and gravy. After everyone was settled, Joey stood up to speak. I was surprised to realize he was a white guy, rocking a Harley Davidson t-shirt, big sideburns and long hair. He said he felt honored to be able to walk with Roger. He talked about how hard the walk was, the long days and nights on the road, the doubts and fears, the sore muscles, but the whole time he was praying for a better world and growing inside. "I'm not Native," he said, "but it really meant a lot to me to be able to do this walk, to support Roger, and pray with him." A Native man and a white man, two best friends, walking together in prayer, reinvigorating an ancient tradition, it was beautiful. I felt honored just to be able to witness part of their journey.

Scene 20: Maybe

Slide: The Plains

Once I was there in South Dakota, I saw the potential. There is so much work out there to do, some many people fighting for justice that really need help. And there's a million ways to make a difference. My journey isn't over. Really, it's just begun.

DJ: Ryan Luckey, Maybe Instrumental

But I see the full circle now the potential to come all the way around to the beginning, to ask the questions, to learn the truth, to reach out and build relationships, to offer a hand, to walk, to pray.

after all the bloodshed, generations of war
after all the broken treaties, the lies and
brute force
after 500 years of colonization

the broken backs and heart attacks that built
 this nation
 we stand on stolen land
 with the past in our hearts and the future in
 our hands
 are we prepared for the
 changes in character
 breaking the barriers in Native America
 how can we carry the legacy and move
 forward
 as builders, teachers, artists, healers,
 warriors
 I offer this prayer to reclaim our humanity
 in the name of my family
 this is a testimony of one man's journey
 this is a taste of water for our history
 burning
 this is a prayer, a call to action, a confession
 for all of my people on both sides of
 oppression
 for the generals, the soldiers and civilians
 for the grandparents, the parents and the
 children
 for the Ohlone people and the Northern
 Cheyenne
 for the people living in Wyoming and
 Oakland
 for the kids on reservations and the kids in
 the burbs
 for the kids in the ghettos and rich kids who
 can splurge
 for the children of the slaves and the slave
 masters
 for the victims of genocide and its
 benefactors
 for every single human being caught in the
 mix
 faced with generations of problems to fix
 I don't have the answers, probably neither
 do you
 but if we look at it together, we'll get a
 better view
 and if we ask the questions and dig for the
 truth
 we might find the power that comes from
 our roots

and maybe, just maybe
 maybe we can make this world less crazy
 maybe, we can turn this thing around
 maybe we can stand together on common
 ground
 maybe we can raise our children to
 understand
 that we need a place of healing for the
 people and the land
 call it free land, cause the people are free
 and the land is liberated from the chains of
 property
 and the people's liberated from the chains of
 poverty
 and our souls are liberated from the chains
 of history
 life is a mystery we do the best we can
 every day a chance to practice being better
 humans

I don't have the answers, probably neither
 do you
 but if we look at it together, we'll get a
 better view
 and if we ask the questions and dig for the
 truth
 we might find the power that comes from
 our roots
 and maybe, just maybe
 maybe we can make this world less crazy
 maybe, we can turn this thing around
 maybe we can stand together on common
 ground
 maybe we can raise our children to
 understand
 that we need a place of healing for the
 people and the land
 call if free land, cause the people are free
 and the land is liberated from the chains of
 property
 and the people's liberated from the chains of
 poverty
 and our souls are liberated from the chains
 of history
 we're free, got to be free
 we're free, got to get free

The End

Credits

Free Land: A Hip Hop Journey from the Streets of Oakland to the Wild Wild West

Written and performed by Ariel Luckey, featuring DJ Sake One, directed by Margo Hall and scored by Ryan Luckey. Illustration by Octavio de la Paz and light design by Jim Cave.

Premiered on May 1, 2009, at La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, California
 Performed on April 9, 2010, at the White Privilege Conference in Lacrosse, Wisconsin
 Performed on October 8, 2010, at Berkeley Rep Theatre, produced by SpeakOut

Free Land is a National Performance Network Creation Fund Project co-commissioned by La Peña Cultural Center in partnership with The Matrix Center/White Privilege Conference, and the National Performance Network.

The Free Land Project (FLP) produces dynamic hip hop theater performance art, keynotes, workshops, forums, educational materials, and cultural events throughout the United States. Since its founding in 2005, FLP has developed, produced, and premiered Ariel Luckey's hip hop theater solo show, *Free Land: A Hip Hop Journey From the Streets of Oakland to the Wild Wild West*, along with the accompanying DVD and Curriculum Guide. FLP also curates the annual cultural arts event **Thangs Taken: rethinking thanksgiving** in the San Francisco Bay Area. Thangs Taken brings Native and non-Native artists, activists, and communities together to engage in a critical dialogue about the impact of Thanksgiving and the history it represents on our communities through visual and performance art.