

# GOWNSMEN

## CHARACTERS

KARMA	Old Hippie Professor (f)
JAYDEN	Black Student in Whiteface (m)
AIDEN	White Student in Blackface and Afro Wig (m)
EMMA	Fem Hispanic Student (f)
SHON	Butch Asian Student, TA (n)

## SETTING

A room, a wall, a blackboard, seats; upon the blackboard the name, “Professor Karma Moon”; the course title, “America: A Queer Amendment”; the course synopsis, “1960, The Pill; 1961, Freedom Riders; 1962, Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring; 1963, Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique; 1964, Bob Dylan’s The Times They Are A-Changin’; 1965, Free Speech Movement Protest; 1966, National Organization of Women (NOW) founded; 1967, Murder of Che Guevara; 1968, Miss America Protest; 1969, the Weather Underground “Days of Rage”; 1970, the first Earth Day, and Paul McCartney sues to dissolve The Beatles”; drawings of trees, protest signs and rainbows.

## TIME

Early September: First day of classes.

## STYLE

Boring.

## SYNOPSIS

Professor Moon holds class, drones on, students offended, Professor Moon silenced.

## MORALITIES: KEEN OBSERVATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY MORALS

### A Tetralogy of Ten-Minute Plays

Pygmalions

Gownsmen

Thespians

Flutterbys

# GOWNSMEN

## SCENE

Students seated in classroom, anticipating the professor: Enter the frumpy professor.

Karma: All welcome to the session. My name:  
Professor Karma Moon, Chair of  
Belief and Culture Departments.  
Within this course we discuss free speech,  
And implication. I also teach,  
“How Best to Take Marx Seriously”,  
The Platonic view of history,  
and “Feminist Queer Theology”,  
A course on the meaning of God  
In liberated society.  
Here, at our university,  
We believe in enforced diversity  
Without exception, applied to each:  
Please read our “Policy of Manners”.  
Yet here, “Free Speaking in the Sixties...”

Emma: Are you sixty?

Karma: No, well, yes, I am,  
But I mean to say, the “Nineteen-Sixties”.

Shon: Then you should have said “Nineteen-Sixties”.

Karma: You know, the “Sixties”, the decade.

Aiden: Like the “Nineties”.

Karma: No, the “Nineties”  
Were not like the “Sixties”, they were...

Aiden: Were they like the “Zeros”?

Karma: The what?

Aiden: The “Zeroes”: Two zero, zero one...

Karma: No, this is generational.

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- Emma: Like the “X Generation”?
- Karma: No.
- Aiden: We are like the “Why Generation”.
- Shon: No, we are of the “Y Generation”.
- Emma: Really, I always wondered “Why”,  
And all along I’ve been a “Y”.  
Who knew.
- Shon: Apparently, not you.
- Emma: Video games.
- Karma: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, the  
Sixties was the liberation  
Generation. You enrolled,  
You know...
- Aiden: No, don’t know. Needed credits  
In history.
- Emma: Yes, old history  
And Greek history was filled-up.
- Shon: ‘Cuse everyone thought it was sexual.
- Karma: Well, you know, the Sixties too were  
Sexual, and we will discuss  
The Revolution.
- Emma: American  
Revolution?
- Karma: No, well, yes: Yes!  
The Revolution America,  
The new, the true second Founding:  
Abbie Hoffman the anarchist;  
Allen Ginsburg, singer of Howl;  
Timothy Leary, LS and D;  
Jerry Rubin, yip of the yippies;

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Savio of the Counterculture;  
Ms. Joan Baez and Ferlinghetti;  
Lennon, Ono, Ayres and friends  
Of our superlative president,  
Barak Hussein Obama.  
The new, the true Revolution,  
The last, the final solution.  
(Karma clears throat, breathes, speaks.)

*Through all of our history and strife  
The whiteman abuses the other,  
He rapes and he cheats on his wife,  
And lynches our friends and our brothers:  
The whiteman's a liar and cheat,  
Its time for his rule to be over,  
Its time that the other be great  
And take the academy over.*

So: Who is with me!  
(Jayden raises hand; Karma states.)

Aiden: But each one  
You mentioned is white: Right?

Karma: Well, right,  
But that is not the point...

Shon: What's the point?  
(Jayden continues with raised hand.)

Karma: The point is, here our speech is free,  
Here we dialogue liberally  
Without constraint, we speak the truth  
Without the predisposition  
Of racist and sexist traditions...  
(Jayden gently gestures with hand; Karma pauses.)

...Of colonial...of...okay,  
(To Jayden.)

Please speak your piece...

Emma: Peace, "Sixties", I

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Get it.

Karma:                   And you are.

Emma:                    I'm *Ay-mah*.

Karma:                  Welcome, Emma.

Emma:                   No, I'm *Ay-mah*.

Aiden:                  Hispanic for Emma.

Shon:                    Rich Cuban.

Emma:                  Yes, my experience is Cuban.  
My perception is attributional  
Ambiguity.

Shon:                  She perceives herself stigmatized  
And protects her self-esteem by  
Attributing negative feedback  
To prejudice: Don't call her "Emma",  
Say "*Ay-mah*".

Karma:                  As I was saying,  
*Ay-mah*, our course is in free speech,  
"The Sixties", the Days of...of...yes?  
(Jayden continues with raised hand.)

Shon:                  He is waiting for permission.

Karma:                  Permission?

Shon:                    To speak.

Karma:                  Well, speak up.

Jayden:                 Um, speaking freely, should I call,  
Pardon me, should I address you  
As Karma or Professor Moon?

Karma:                  Whatever suits ya, man.

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- Jayden:            Alright then,  
                      Professor Moon: Professor Moon,  
                      I must register a protest on  
                      The portrayal you present of  
                      My people.
- Karma:             Man, its all for love:  
                      Power to the African,  
                      The Negro, the Panthers, the struggle...
- Jayden:            But I am white.
- Karma:             You are black.
- Shon:              But he is white, says so.
- Karma:             You're black.
- Jayden:            I am,  
                      I have self-categorized, I have  
                      Reassigned...
- Karma:             No need to kiss-up  
                      To the man, be free, be yourself,  
                      Be emancipated.
- Jayden:            Professor  
                      Moon, I am not a homosex-  
                      Ual, I do not to the man  
                      Kiss up or in any other way  
                      Go down.
- Karma:             Crazy, no, I meant to say...
- Emma:              Whoa! Jayden's pref-rence is his choice...
- Shon:              Even if the wrong one.
- Jayden:            Crazy?
- Emma:              That's a hurtful label, Karma.
- Karma:             But I didn't...

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Shon: But you did.

Aiden: Panthers?

Karma: No: I did not mean  
To say that Jayden was gay, I  
Only meant to say that he needn't  
Submit to the white authority.

Emma: You have labeled Jayden crazy.

Karma: Well, as I was about to say,  
Free speech...

Shon: You are white.

Karma: But I  
Am female...

Emma: *Speech is not free: We pay  
For what we say, in many ways.*

Karma: ...A woman.

Aiden: So am I. And so,  
Your point is?  
(Karma chagrined, dumbfounded.)

Shon: Aiden's flexible.

Aiden: I have an excellent swing.

Shon: Women's golf.

Aiden: The varsity.

Emma: Jayden is waiting.

Karma: Waiting?

Shon: Yes.  
Waiting for your apology.

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Karma: My apology.

Jayden: Yes, please.

Karma: For what?

Shon: The insult, the racial epitaph.  
Jayden complains that the social  
Influence of whites is subject  
To invisibility and  
Is diminished, much like an un-  
Touchable of caste society.

Karma: What?

Shon: Television commercials.

Karma: What?

Jayden: Television commercials. You  
Have seen television commercials.

Karma: Yes, of course I have. And so?

Shon: So, prejudice, discrimination.

Karma: What?

Jayden: They make my people look like fools,  
Especially white men like me.

Karma: Like you?

Shon: The white men.

Karma: But he is...

Shon: But she is...no, just kidding.

Karma: O,  
Jayden, I apologize, ours  
Was a generational mis-  
Understanding.



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Jayden                    Apology  
Accepted, Professor Moon.

Karma:                Thank you, Jayden, I'm okay,  
You're okay, you don't need a shrink.  
Jayden: Can't get any smaller, huh?

Emma:                Did she just say that?

Shon:                 Yes, she did.

Karma:                Jayden?

Shon:                 That was insensitive.

Emma:                I don't believe it.

Aiden:                Calling him out.

Karma:                What did I say?

Shon:                 You just don't get it.

Karma:                Is he going to cry?

Jayden:                I don't cry.

Emma:                There, there, Jayden, it's okay.  
                              (To Professor Moon.)

                              How could you?

Karma:                How could I, what?

Shon:                 About his white shrink.

Karma:                About his...  
Oh, come on, he's black, he ain't got  
A shrink.

Aiden:                O, I've seen: He does.  
                              (Jayden starts to cry; Aiden stretches out, confidently.)

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Karma: He does?

Shon: He does.  
(Jayden cries louder.)

Karma: As I was saying,  
Free speech.

Shon: Best to leave it alone.

Jayden: *Just because I am a shrink  
It does not mean that I am pink;  
I 'm a strong man through and through  
And I am just as good as you.*

Emma: Better?

Jayden: A little...I did not mean...  
(Jayden whimpers.)

Oh...

Emma: I know.  
(To Professor Moon.)

So much for your free speech, professor.

Karma: No, you all misunderstand.

Students: We do?

Karma: Yes, the current generation.

Aiden: There she goes generationing  
Again, its like a theme or something.

Shon: She'll probably assign a paper  
On her hippie-dippy-dom.

Karma: Children, students, scholars, colleagues,  
We are in this all together,  
United we can make things better.  
I hope that you can understand

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The logic here, follow the strand...

Aiden: See, there, the white authority  
Implying the inferiority  
Of my grand and kinky strands.  
A micro-aggression.

Students: Micro-aggression.

Emma: Micro-aggression, if ever  
There was one.

Aiden: Well, I never.

Karma: I never intended to imply.

Jayden: Professor, spare us your lies.

Karma: Come on, Aiden is Aryan,  
(Students, incredulous, stare.)

Caucasian: Blue eyes, blond hair.

Aiden: Again about my hair.

*Wooly, kinky, nappy, curly,  
Spiraled, twisted, frizzed, unruly:  
My mane, my proudest attribute,  
Symbol of my Afro roots.*

Karma: It's a wig.

Shon: He identifies  
As black. Let him speak.

Emma: I'll speak.  
Aiden, may I speak for you?

Aiden: Yah.

Emma: The nappy-headed hos and bangers  
Reject the standard of white beauty,  
The beaut is "I'd" by the beholder,

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And Afro beauty is much bolder...

A unifying diasporic.

(Students in silence stare, then after a while...)

Students: Well?

Karma: Well, what?

Students: An apology.

Karma: For his wig?

Emma: For in-sens-i-tiv-  
It-ty.

Karma: Really?

Shon: Apologize.

Karma: Aiden. Shon. I ah-pol-o-gize.

Emma: Trigger warning.

Students: Trigger warning.

Shon: Trigger warning: What about my eyes?

Karma: Your eyes?

Shon: Do you despise the Asian  
Because we have a high IQ,  
Higher, so much higher than you.

Karma: No, I...

Shon: So, I'm sexualized  
By your dominant culture.

Karma: ...The Sexual Revolution...

Shon: So, I'm a Japanese print, am I?

Karma: Oh, no, that's not what I mean, I,

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Why, I marched for liberation,  
It was a bomb, you...

Emma: Trigger-warning.

Students: Trigger-warning!

Karma: No, I am being  
Straight.

Students: Trigger-warning.

Emma: Safe-space.

Students: Safe-space!

Jayden: Inclusion.

Emma: Cultural  
Appropriation.

Aiden: Conversation.

Shon: What's to do with Professor Moon?

Karma: I...

Students: Quiet!

Aiden: She's good?

Emma: I think so.

Jayden: But culturized to bad things.

Students: Yes.

Shon: A discriminatory mind-  
Set.

Students: Yes.

Shon: Problematic.

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Students: Yes.

Emma: Yet,  
She wants to be better, yes?

Shon: Yes.

Karma: I..

Students: Quiet!

Emma: She is not malicious.

Shon: Merely an old woman.

Karma: I am not...

Shon: Quiet!

(Singing while students attach collar and leash to Karma.)

She can be reeducated  
*At the knee.*

Students: *At the knee!*

Shon: *At the knee*  
*I shall suffer her with pleasure,*  
*At the knee*  
*I shall kindly take her measure:*  
*Let my hand go where it will*  
*I shall with love dispense the ill*  
*At the knee.*

Students: *At the knee!*

Shon: *At the knee*  
*Her privilege shall be discharged.*  
*At the knee*  
*I'll shame the words from where they are,*  
*At the knee.*

Students: *At the knee!*

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Karma: But I...  
(Shon tapes Karma's mouth shut.)

Shon: Quiet, Karma, come with me.  
(Leads Karma by leash toward exit, turns and says...)

See? For old dogs...

Students: New tricks!

(END OF PLAY)