

Rev. 6/23/88 (Pink)
Rev. 6/23/88 PM (Blue)
Rev. 6/30/88 (Yellow)
Rev. 7/13/88 (Green)
Rev. 7/21/88 (Gold)
Rev. 7/27/88 (Buff)

PLEASE NOTE: The following revisions reflect
dialogue changes only.

LEAN ON ME

Shooting script revised by: NORMAN TWAIN

From an original screenplay by: MICHAEL SCHIFFER

PRODUCER: NORMAN TWAIN

#1B SHOOTING SCRIPT 2

LEAN ON ME

FADE IN:

A1 EXT. EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (MAY 12, 1967) A1

SUPER: EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL, PATERSON, NEW JERSEY, 1967.

JOE (O.S.)

What is the origin of our civil rights?

1 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY (MAY 12, 1967) 1

Two white kids leap from opposite sides of the teacher's desk, for a bell. TOM gets there first -- DING! -- ahead of Ellen.

TOM

The Magna Carta!

JOE

No! Can you take it... Ellen!

ELLEN

English Common Law!

Wild cheers... and groans...

ANGLE - ON CLASS

All the girls cheer wildly! The boys all groan. All but one are white. In the back, pacing, is the quizmaster... JOE CLARK, in an afro and dashiki.

JOE

If you ring the bell and don't have the answer, it's minus ten points. Minus ten for the boys. Twenty points -- to the girls!

(lectures)

The Magna Carta was a document... insuring rights to the aristocracy ... vis a vis the king. The people...

(pause)

The people got their rights from the common well.

(pause)

Hence -- Anthony?

ANTHONY

Commonwealth?

JOE

Commonwealth. Ten points for the boys. Next two...

(CONTINUED)

1

CONTINUED:

1

Two more kids get up, to line up opposite the bell.

JOE

Here we go.
(when they do)
Define the word... imbrue.
(spells)
I-M-B-R-U-E.

Silence. Nobody moves.

A KNOCK on the door...

NAPIER

Mr. Clark?

JOE

Yes, Mr. Napier. Come in.

FRANK NAPIER, in an afro, leans in...

NAPIER

Mr. Clark... will your class be
all right without you?

JOE

Kids. Take a seat. Take a seat.

He waits until they are seated... then faces the stymied
class. Silence.

JOE

Copy this down. Imbrue. To taint.
To stain.

(pause)

The cancer... of racism... imbrues
our national character. It stains
the spirit. It taints the soul.
It's a blot, a shameful greasy spot
on the fabric of our national
conscience!

(pause)

Imbrue. To taint. To stain.

(pause)

Thirty words for tomorrow. Quiz.

He goes... to a wave of moans and groans...

2

IN HALL (MAY 12, 1967)

2

Joe's with Napier.

(CONTINUED)

2

CONTINUED:

2

JOE
(sensing something
wrong)
What's the matter?

NAPIER
They're holding a meeting of the
union executive board.

JOE
Without us?

NAPIER
They didn't tell me either. But
let's try to keep it down.

SHOUTS!!!!!!

JOE
(explodes)
Keep it down???? Those no good
bastards sell us out -- of a
union we got started -- betray us
like a bunch of Judases? Hell!
They're not gonna crucify me!!!
'Cause I got the hammer an' nails
myself. I ain't no martyr, Frank
-- you hear...???

NAPIER
Joe...

JOE
Don't contradict me!!!

Doors pop open. Teachers look to see who's carrying on.

JOE
I am sick and tired of weasels
and gutless, spineless jellyfish!

NAPIER
Save it for the meeting.

JOE
Save it? Why? I got plenty,
Frank! I am the Rockefeller of
outrage!!!!

3

INT. FACULTY LOUNGE - UNION MEETING - DAY (MAY 12,
1967)

3

Joe enters the room like a panther.

(CONTINUED)

3

CONTINUED:

3

JOE

What the hell do you think you're doing?

MR. LOTT

We're having a meeting, Joe.

JOE

You're selling me out!

MR. LOTT

Joe... no one is selling you out.

JOE

We can't have an effective voice here -- a say in our curriculum -- be anything but impotent... if we fold every time they threaten us! You wanna talk about this -- then call me in! We have to stick together!

MR. DANLEY

What we have to do is pay our bills.

MR. LOTT

You wanna carry a picket sign? Get your picture in the paper?

There's a newspaper on the table, with a headline: "CRAZY JOE" CLARK Marches on School Board... with a photo of Joe with picket sign.

MR. LOTT

We just wanna work. We're tired of the agitation. This posturing of Crazy Joe.

Joe climbs onto a chair... then up onto the table. Moving pads and papers aside with his feet...

JOE

Posturing! How the hell can you talk about posturing... when you're all bent over -- from kissing posteriors down at the School Board?

Joe sticks his butt into Mr. Lott's face.

MR. LOTT

(stands up)

Who the hell do you think you're talking to? Wanna step outside?

(CONTINUED)

3

CONTINUED: (2)

3

Joe turns to face him, looking down...

NAPIER

Hold it! Hold it!

JOE

You don't have the nerve to fight me. If you had any nerve, you'd be fightin' on my side.

MR. DANLEY

Mr. Clark...

(pause)

I'm afraid that's a moot point.

(disingenuous)

We just found out ourselves... that the School Board has decided ... to grant us our salary increments... if we accept their condition... that you be transferred to School Six...

(pause)

And we agreed.

Silently, Joe climbs down. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out a dollar bill... and walks right up to Danley. He rotates Danley's chair, until Danley faces him. Joe holds the dollar bill against Danley's forehead...

JOE

God bless you. Pay your bills.

Joe lets go. The dollar bill sticks... then falls... as Joe leaves the room. Silence. Napier follows.

3A

INT. HALL (MAY 12, 1967)

3A

NAPIER

Joe!

JOE

They can go to hell. This place deserves exactly what it gets.

MUSIC BEGINS: Soul rock 'n' roll... "(I'm) Outtacontrol!"
TITLE SEQUENCE:

4

INT. MAIN HALL (T) - DAY (SEPTEMBER 7)(DISSOLVE FROM TIE-OFF)

4

SUPER: Eastside High School, Paterson, New Jersey, 1987.

(CONTINUED)

4

CONTINUED:

4

Chaos in a crowded hall. Kids push and shove. Teachers dodge through them, cowed. CLARENCE, a lanky clown, pursues MRS. SANTOS making lewd remarks. KANEESHA, a sweet black girl, tries to fade into the wall, intimidated, as hoods race by her to... (Add LILLIAN) (Add REGGIE)

ANGLE - PIT BULL

is being goaded into a frenzy... as hoods take the bomber jacket from a kid, who is terrified -- screaming with fear.

5

INT. DOORS OF SCHOOL - DAY (SEPTEMBER 9)

5

Banes leans against the fire door, letting in an older man, with a briefcase. The older man opens the briefcase, showing Banes the crack inside. Banes pays him with a wad of cash... takes the briefcase and goes.

The older man checks out the stairway... then heads the other way... not leaving the school.

6

INT. GIRLS' ROOM - DAY (SEPTEMBER 12)

6

A gang of girls shoves CONCHITA into a wall... slap her, then rip off her gold chain and tear her blouse off. Panicked, Conchita races away, out into...

7

INT. HALL - DAY (SEPTEMBER 12)

7

RAMON helps MS. LEVIAS, who wraps up Conchita in her jacket. Together they try to console the girl, who is weeping uncontrollably. KID RAY goes after the gang girls as they emerge from the bathroom... and throws them against the wall, keeping them from getting away ... until one of them socks Kid Ray from behind... and all of them race away.

8

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY (SEPTEMBER 14)

8

Brian Banes (in another outfit) gives a zip-lock envelope full of vials of crack to an older kid and THOMAS SAMS... a clown and would-be con man. Sams thinks he's really cool. He takes off with the older kid. Kaneesha, in the b.g. makes a face. Sams is really pathetic. (Add Lionel, Robert, KID RAY, RAMON)

9 INT. BOYS' ROOM - DAY (SEPTEMBER 18)

9

Hoods yank the porcelain fixtures out and heave them through the windows... spraying the walls with graffiti ... in big red letters: KISS MY DICK. (Add Reggie and Clarence, laughing) (Add Charles Yale)

9A INT. BOILER ROOM - DAY (SEPTEMBER 23)

9A

CLOSEUP: A young girl is smoking crack. She is all messed up. RACK FOCUS: Behind her, Brian Banes is talking to an older black man. They look back at the girl. The older man pulls out his wallet... and hands Banes some money. Banes walks over, takes the crack pipe from the girl... and yanks her to her feet, dragging her over to a mattress in the corner. The older man begins to unbuckle his pants.

10 INT. HALL OUTSIDE AUDITORIUM - DAY (SEPTEMBER 23)

10

A security guard, trying to control things, gets pushed aside and hassled by hoods. MRS. ELLIOT, the music teacher, observes this... shakes her head, yanks her students inside the door... and shuts the door behind her... shutting out the chaos... to work. (Add Ramon, Lillian, Kaneesha)

11 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

11

- A) The inmates are running the asylum. Anything goes in the cafeteria. To one side, an adult is selling a gun to GEORGE, a white kid drug dealer. PANNING ACROSS: An apathetic security guard sees the sale, but looks the other way. He is listening to his Walkman. One kid breaks into the soda machine over by the vending corner... to get the coins from the till... using a crowbar.
- B) BY THE SERVING LINE: FRANKIE, a white kid, walks with a tray. A black hood knocks the tray up, sending the food into the white kid's face. Frankie is afraid to fight, but argues as his two friends come up (one black, one white). A shoving match breaks out... between the three decent kids and three hoods.
- C) As a white teacher intervenes... the black hoods turn on him and start to beat him viciously. The decent kids get overwhelmed, put into headlocks and pummelled... as the fight spreads into a riot. The cages on the serving lines slam down. The security guard walks the other way, as if he hasn't seen a thing... as the white teacher is beaten to a pulp. The hood who started the whole thing smashes his head against the floor repeatedly.

12

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

12

Paramedics race down the hall, with the white teacher on a gurney... and intravenous tubes dangling down. They race by MR. O'MALLEY, who is totally ineffectual. He doesn't even know what happened.

TRACKING DOWN the hall, THROUGH kids, stunned and confused by what has passed them... we reach a group of hoods by a locker, pushing Thomas Sams in a circle. The hoods are led by CHARLES YALE. They jam Sams into a locker, then slam the door, trapping him inside. Sams bangs on the metal in a panic. Kaneesha runs up with Lillian. (MUSIC FADES).

LILLIAN

Hey, you -- Robert! Let him out!

YALE

Who, Sams? He's fine, man... He live in there. He like it.

The hoods walk away laughing. The Girl runs off to get help.

SAMS

Lemme out! Hey! Yo! I can't breathe! It's dark! Yo, man -- hey, bruthuh... yo, hey -- c'mon! Lemme out! Aw, hey... aw, shit...

Security guard walks by. MUSIC RESUMES, BUILDS TO CLIMAX -- "Outtacontrol!" END TITLES: ON LOCKER, with Sams inside... freaking out.

"LEAN ON ME"

MUSIC FADES.

FADE TO:

13

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY (OCTOBER 2)

13

MAYOR DON BOTTMAN faces Dr. Frank Napier, now Superintendent of Schools, and MR. BOB ROSENBERG, the school board attorney, in business suit and cowboy boots. Two mayoral aides observe from the side. The mayor's seal is on the wall. Bottman paces...

BOTTMAN

I got an election comin' up! You spring this on me now?

(CONTINUED)

13

CONTINUED:

13

ROSENBERG

Well, sir... uh, the state report came in from Trenton.. just now, and we... well, actually, see, they ranked the schools, and we were... last. In the state. The whole thing. At the bottom... in the toilet. Sir.

BOTTMAN

I don't believe this... they cannot just take my schools!

ROSENBERG

Yes sir, you're quite right, but no, well, actually, they can. You see, the House passed a bill, to take control, if 75 percent of our students can't pass a minimum basic skills test ... by the end of this school year.

BOTTMAN

How many passed it last year?

NAPIER

About 38 percent.

BOTTMAN

38 percent? What the hell are they doin' down in that school?

NAPIER

They were your appointees, Don.

BOTTMAN

Don't pin this all on me. You're the Superintendent of Schools... We lose control of that school budget -- we'll all be out of a job. What about Seelig?

NAPIER

Doesn't want it. They're not exactly linin' up...

BOTTMAN

Chartain...

NAPIER

Don...

BOTTMAN

Oh, right.

(CONTINUED)

13

CONTINUED: (2)

13

ROSENBERG

What?

NAPIER

They got him on a morals charge.
I finally dumped him last spring.

BOTTMAN

Then who the hell is left? I am
not goin' down the tubes just
because those kids can't pass
some test!

Bottman stands up and walks to the window... to look out
blankly. Upset.

NAPIER

It's a can a worms, Don. The
only kind of person who would
take that job is someone with
nothing to lose. And then why the
hell would we want him? I mean,
I'm sittin' here rackin' my brains
for someone who fits that
description...

BOTTMAN

You're sittin' there, settin' me
up, Frank...

(pause; thinks)

Oh, no... not that guy. No.
No...

NAPIER

It's the only guy I can think of.

BOTTMAN

(turns to window;
to self)

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph...

A GYM WHISTLE BLOWS. LITTLE KIDS SCREAM!

14

EXT. OLD BRICK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY (OCTOBER 2)

14

It is 2:30. The kids are free! A teacher blows her
whistle again as the kids run, see Joe Clark, and slow.
Joe is older. His hair is short. He wears a suit.

JOE

Slow up, Derrick... attaboy.

(CONTINUED)

14

CONTINUED:

14

DERRICK

I am, Mr. Clark...

JOE

Slow down.

Looking up, he sees Dr. Napier approaching with Rosenberg.

JOE

Am I in some kinda trouble? Gotta bring a lawyer? Mr. Rosenberg...

Joe nods, to take the sting out. He likes Rosenberg, a bit.

NAPIER

The mayor called us in... they need a new principal at Eastside High, to get those test scores up. He specifically thought of you.

JOE

Bullshit.

NAPIER

Scout's honor.

JOE

All this time I've been stuck down here... and you come ask me now?

An aide, MRS. HAMILTON, a talkative older woman, walks out as kids keep streaming by.

MRS. HAMILTON

Why, hello, Dr. Napier! I saw your wife the other day... Mr. Clark, before you go... those girls still need that room. They've got their baking class. And you know, Mr. Clark... we continue to find chewing gum under the desks.

JOE

I will make an announcement in the morning. Excuse us, Mrs. Hamilton. Dr. Napier wants to see our new sand box.

MRS. HAMILTON

Our sand box? Oh, well, I didn't mean to interrupt. It's good to see you, Dr. Napier...

(CONTINUED)

14

CONTINUED:

14

They move into the playground area, with Rosenberg trailing at a distance.

NAPIER

Look, we've got a chance to make some changes... to stop blowin' smoke up each other's butts... and see if we can turn this thing around.

JOE

What's the matter? Nobody wants that job?

NAPIER

That's right.

JOE

Well, add my name to the list.

He turns to go...

NAPIER

You're bullshit.

JOE

(whirls)

No, you're bullshit! Don't talk to me about savin' those kids -- The mayor wants to save his budget! And you wanna save your ass!

NAPIER

You know, for all your talk... and your 'Crazy Joe' routine... what the hell have you ever done? Nothing. You are nothing but an insignificant man. It's like you were never born! You haven't made a damned bit of difference! And neither have I -- goddamnit! You wanna take that to the grave...???

15

OMITTED

15

15A

INT. EASTSIDE HALLWAY - DAY

15A *

From the same place he left the school, in 1967... Joe walks back into the chaos of the totally trashed hallway. It is empty. His footsteps echo.

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

15A CONTINUED: 15A
 ANGLE JOE *

enraged by what he sees. *

16 OMITTED 16

17 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (OCTOBER 4) 17

(Add MR. WRIGHT, MRS. SANTOS, MRS. ELLIOT, MS. RUIS, MR. RODRIGUEZ, MR. NELSON) *

We PAN ACROSS: the faces of several dozen members of the administrative, security, custodial, and coaching staffs crowded into the room. MR. O'MALLEY, the Vice-Principal, speaks to a silent Joe Clark.

O'MALLEY

We would like to welcome Mr. Clark to Eastside... We have heard so much about you... and tell you what we have done, in anticipation of your arrival... Ms. Levias, your other Vice-Principal, and I have appointed an executive committee... to oversee certain areas where we've noted a need for improvement. Mr. Zirella, for example, has volunteered...

O'Malley's voice trails off, as he sees all eyes on Joe, including those of JOAN LEVIAS, a black woman in her thirties -- the other Vice-Principal of the school, sitting beside him.

JOE

Mr. O'Malley, you may sit down.
 You think you can run this school?
 If you could, Mr. O'Malley... I
 wouldn't be here, would I?

Faint smiles behind O'Malley's back. He stalks the room as he speaks:

JOE

No one talks in my meetings. No one. You just take out your pencils ... and write. I want the names of every hoodlum, drug dealer, and anyone who's done nothing here but tear this place apart -- on my desk by noon today.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

17

CONTINUED:

17

JOE (CONT'D)

Reverend Slappy, you will scour
this building clean. Graffiti
goes up -- it is off the next day.

REV. SLAPPY

Yes, suh. The very next day.

JOE

Detention students can help you.
Let 'em scrub this place themselves.
And tear down those cages in the
cafeteria. You treat 'em like
animals... and that's exactly how
they'll behave.

(to others)

This is my new dean of security...
Mr. William Wright. He will be my
avenging angel as you teachers
reclaim the halls. This is an
institution of learning. If you
can't control it... how can you
teach?

(pause)

Discipline is not... the enemy of
enthusiasm. Mr. Zirella.

A massive white man, in a mustache, MR. ZIRELLA...

ZIRELLA

Yes, sir?

JOE

Mr. Zirella, you're my new head
football coach... with Mr. Darnell
... stand up... please...

(as Darnell stands)

With Mr. Darnell as your assistant.
You know why you're being demoted,
Mr. Darnell?

MR. DARNELL, a strong young black man, is shocked.

JOE

Because I'm sick and tired of our
football team gettin' pushed all
over that field. You can sit down.

(as Darnell sits;
to Zirella)

I want precision! I want a
weight program! And if you don't
like it, Mr. Darnell, you can quit.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

17

CONTINUED: (2)

17

JOE (CONT'D)

The same goes for the rest a' you --
 You tried it your way for years...
 and your students can't even get
 past the Minimum Basic Skills Test!
 That means they can hardly read...
 They have given me less than one
 school year to turn this place
 around -- to get those test scores
 up... so the State doesn't take us
 over, to perform the task that you
 have failed at -- to educate our
 children!

(pause)

Forget about the way it used to be
 -- this ain't no damned democracy
 -- we are in a state of emergency...
 and my word -- is law. There is
 only one boss in this place -- and
 that's me. The H.N.I.C.

The black staff members snicker. O'Malley and the
 whites are confused...

ANGLE ON O'MALLEY AND LEVIAS

Levias explains to O'Malley...

LEVIAS

(whispers; re: Joe)

The 'Head Nigger In Charge'...

18

INT. JOE'S OFFICE - LATER (OCTOBER 4)

18

Joe works out of a small office. He is tacking notices
 to a bulletin board. A KNOCK on the door. Ms. Levias.

JOE

Yes?

MS. LEVIAS

Mr. Clark? Ms. Levias.

JOE

Come in. What can I do for you?

MS. LEVIAS

I wanted to talk to you about the
 meeting.

(CONTINUED)

18

CONTINUED:

18

JOE

Have a seat. How do you think it went?

MS. LEVIAS

In a word... flamboyant, Mr. Clark.

Ms. Levias sits. Joe walks across the room.

JOE

That's a good word. I hope our staff will participate in this spirit of... erudition. A teacher needs an active mind. They haven't learned a thing in years.

MS. LEVIAS

(looks away)

Maybe some of them...

JOE

You disagree?

MS. LEVIAS

(turns back)

It's... the way you were talking to them.

JOE

I don't have time for their sensibilities! They've got a job -- and so do you! To provide some decent role models here, to establish some minimum standards of civilized human behavior!

Joe has walked back to his desk and sits down during:

MS. LEVIAS

We've been working hard to do just that. As Vice-Principal of Eastside, and as a woman, Mr. Clark --

JOE

You mean, as a black woman, don't you, Ms. Levias? Isn't that what this speech is about?

MS. LEVIAS

No, I think I'd just like to ascertain... whether all of this is just an act, or not. And...

(CONTINUED)

18

CONTINUED: (2)

18

JOE

And what...?

MS. LEVIAS

And the more I hear, the more I'm
afraid you don't care what we
think at all.

JOE

That's right, Ms. Levias. If you
have a question... ask it.
Otherwise, Ms. Levias... good day.

He opens a drawer, picks up a stack of papers, then looks
up and out. Stares at her until she stands up and leaves.

MUSIC: "COLLISION COURSE"

19
&
20

OMITTED

19
&
20

*

21

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY (OCTOBER 5)

21

(Add full crews, hoods and girl gang, all teachers)

Total chaos in the auditorium! Kids scream at each other.
They laugh and point. A scuffle breaks out. Teachers
break it up, but otherwise, do nothing. This madness is
normal. As Richard Armand holds court.

LILLIAN

Lookit Richard. He's stuck up.

SALLY

So what? I seen the boy dance one
time? Lemme tell ya somethin'...
the dance he was doin' was dope.
He can have my seven digits.

KANEESHA

The boy is over there. He's not
here... So what are you worried
about it for?

SALLY

That don't mean anything. I can
get up and walk over there.

Simultaneously onstage: Risers are filling up, with
students picked out from the audience, from pink papers
in the Homeroom Teachers' hands.

(CONTINUED)

21

CONTINUED:

21

Meanwhile to one side... as a sexy Hispanic walks towards the stage.

KID RAY

Hey, check it out... Chita.

RAMON

Hey... let her check me out, man...

KID RAY

What's the matter? You afraid of the girlies? Go flash some cash. I'll give you some. Go buy her some stupid gold.

RAMON

Fuck you...

KID RAY

Ah, man, you're a duck.

Mrs. Santos picks out students from her class. From the far end, Sams moves down the aisle.

MRS. SANTOS

Brian... George... Dana... Sams...
They want you onstage. Let's go.
Right now.

GEORGE

(a white kid)

Hey... I'm gonna be a star...

BANES

What they want us for?

As the hoods move into the aisle... Sams continues past the Hispanic girls.

MARIA

Mrs. Santos... what about us?

MRS. SANTOS

What about you? What about me???!!!
Huh? Sit down! I said, sit down!!!

As she's bent forward, almost yelling to be heard, MALIK gooses her from behind... and just keeps walking. Sams passes the girls, reaching the main aisle.

MARIA

Hey, no fair!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

21

CONTINUED: (2)

21

MARIA (CONT'D)

You know -- what do you have to
do around here to get picked for
something? Huh?

(pause)

Hey, who farted?

ANGLE ON SAMS

with an expression of satisfaction after another success-
ful mission. He climbs up.

ON STAGE

The hoods greet him like a pet...

BANES

Hey, Sams... c'mere... my man.
C'mon... right next to me...

Moving past the other hoods...

SAMS

Hey, outta my way. Me 'n' my
man's got to talk...

The hoods all jeer and rough him up. Sams resists them,
punching back... basking in all the attention. But they're
laughing at him too.

ANGLE - JOE CLARK

stops at the back of the room, witnesses the chaos...
then steams down the center aisle -- his bullhorn under
his arm. He nearly gets hit by a thrown object... then
a voice pipes up.

KANEESHA

Mr. Clark?

He turns... doesn't recognize her at first.

KANEESHA

You don't remember me? Kaneesha.

JOE

Right! Kaneesha... how are you,
baby?

LILLIAN

Baby? You know him?

(CONTINUED)

21

CONTINUED: (3)

21

KANEESHA

Yeah...

JOE

We go way back.

KANEESHA

To fifth grade.

JOE

How's it going?

KANEESHA

Oh... okay.

JOE

(writes note)

Just okay? Come see me. My office.
After lunch...

Joe crosses in front of the hoodlums, on the risers onstage. He eyes them as he climbs...

ONSTAGE

300 hoodlums, male and female, black, white, and brown ... smirk at Joe. He moves to the mike and waits. The hoods scrawl graffiti on their seats. They rough each other up.

JOE

(on mike)

I am going to ask these students
on stage... to open with our
school song. Mr. Roland...

Derisive laughter from the hoods. MR. ROLAND plays
"Fair Harvard." But nobody sings.

JOE

(on mike)

Thank you. That is enough.

The music stops. Joe addresses the students below him.

JOE

(on mike)

I want you to take a good look
at these people on the risers
behind me...

PAN ACROSS: the faces of the hoods, arrogant.
Indifferent.

(CONTINUED)

21

CONTINUED: (4)

21

JOE

(on mike; re: hoods)
 These students have been here
 two and three years... and done
absolutely nothing! Out of a
 minimum required one hundred --
 they have less than twenty-five
 credits apiece! They are drug
 dealers and drug users. They have
 taken up space... disrupted this
 school... harassed your teachers
 ... intimidated you... well, times
 are about to change!

(pause)

You will not be bothered in Joe
 Clark's school! Those students
 are incorrigible. Since none of
 them could graduate anyway --

(turning)

All of you are expunged; dismissed!
 You are out of here forever!!! I
 wish you well! Mr. Wright!!!

Mr. Wright leads his security guards onstage. The hoods
 are surrounded. Sams looks stunned.

PUNKS

Hey, up yours! He can't do that... (etc.)

The guards start herding people out -- and dragging them
 out if they have to!

BANES

Hey, man... who the hell are you?!

When a guard grabs him, Brian throws him off...

BANES

I don't need your school, asshole!
 I'm gone into the Air Force, man!!!

Two cops grab him to drag him out. Banes slips out of
 his sweater, breaks loose, and pulls out a wad of cash,
 to wave it under Joe's nose.

BANES

How much you make, man? Huh?
 How much? You sorry-ass bag
 a shit!!!

Wright wraps Banes into his arms, lifting him into the
 air.

(CONTINUED)

21

CONTINUED: (5)

21

WRIGHT

You have the manners of a moron.
Excuse us, Mr. Clark.

They manhandle him across the stage... Muffled shouting O.S... but the hoods are gone. Joe turns back toward the auditorium. The scene has sobered them.

JOE

(on mike)

Next time it might be you.

(pause)

If you do no better than they did...

(pause)

... Next time it will be you!

(pause)

They said this school was dead!
Like the cemetery it was built on!
But we call our Eastside teams The Ghosts! And ghosts are spirits who rise from the dead!
Who defy the very meaning of death!
And, you -- will lead this resurrection... by defying the expectations that all of us... are doomed to fail!

(pause)

My motto is... simple. If you don't succeed in life... I don't want you to blame your parents. Don't want you to blame the white man...

(pause)

I want you to blame yourself. What you learn here will determine the kind of job you will get... the kind of money you will earn... and the respect that you will deserve. I want you to be proud of yourselves!

(pause)

We have a practice exam in two weeks and the Minimum Basic Skills Test on April 13th, one hundred and ten school days from now. If you don't have those basic skills -- you're gonna find yourselves locked out. Locked out of that American Dream... that you see on T.V. -- that they tell you is so easy to get. You are here for only one thing: to learn. To work for what you want.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: (6)

21

JOE (CONT'D)

Because that's the only way you're going to get it! The Only way! The alternative is to waste your time and to fall into the traps out there of crime, drugs, and death. Does everyone understand that?

(pause)

Do you understand me? Good! Then welcome to the New Eastside High!

They stare back, sullen. Silence.

DISSOLVE TO:

WOMEN SHOUTING!

22 INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT (OCTOBER 5)

22

300 parents are up in arms at the expulsion of the students, at a packed PTA meeting. They are led by a hefty black agitator, MRS. LEONA BARRETT. Joe watches from the front, impassive. (Add MRS. RICHARDS)

MRS. BARRETT

What happened this morning is an outrage! Those children belong in school! Not back out on the street! They were here to get an education! Some of those children are smart -- they're just discouraged about their chances out there. What kinda jobs they got waitin' for them? And now what chance do they have?

(pointing at Joe)

He humiliates the black football coach... the man is goin' crazy! He's declared war on his people!

SHOUTS! PTA president MRS. PETERS, moves to the mike.

MRS. PETERS

(on mike)

May I remind you, Mrs. Barrett, that Mr. Clark was nice enough to appear at this emergency meeting after a very trying day. I think we owe him a chance to respond.

She gestures, and Joe rises and walks to the mike. He stares at Mrs. Barrett...

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED:

22

JOE

They say one bad apple spoils the bunch!

(pause)

Well, what about three hundred? Rotten to the core! Some people are pathological deviants! And don't tell me there is no such thing as a pathological deviant -- they cannot be helped!! And as for calling them children... most of the people I kicked out were 18 to 21 years old! They can get an education elsewhere! At an alternate center -- at an adult school -- but not at Eastside High! You're right, Mrs. Barrett -- This is a war!... to save twenty-seven hundred other students -- most of whom don't have the basic skills to pass that state exam! If you wanna help us -- fine! Sit down with your kids, make 'em study at night! Go get your families off welfare!

(facing Mrs. Barrett)

Give your children some pride!
Let them get their priorities straight!

Mrs. Barrett is on her feet hollering. But some of the parents agree with Joe, and shout their approval as he plows ahead...

JOE

When Dr. Napier came to me...
Offering this job... I felt the lightning flash. I heard the thunder roll... I felt breakers, dashing -- Swamping my soul!

MRS. BARRETT

We ain't in church, Mr. Clark.

JOE

I fell down on my knees and cried
... 'My God...!'
(pause; wryly)
'... why hast thou forsaken me?'

The crowd laughs.

JOE

And the Lord said, 'Joe, you're no damned good!'

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED: (2)

22

MRS. RICHARDS

Amen!

The crowd laughs.

JOE

And I mean this more than you realize... 'No earthly good at all...'

WOMEN

Amen!!!

JOE

Unless you take this opportunity and do whatever you have to -- and He didn't say, 'Joe, be polite...'
(pause)

To transform and transmogrify this school into a special place! Where the hearts and souls and minds of the young can rise -- grow tall, and blossom -- out from under the shadows of the past. Where the minds of the young are set free! And I gave my word to God!

(pause)

And that's why I threw those bastards out! That's all I'm gonna say!

Uproar as Joe stalks out the door.

MRS. RICHARDS

Let him try to raise a child on my puny welfare check. (etc.)

23

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE EASTSIDE - DAWN (OCTOBER 6)

23

Joe drives up and gets out of his car at dawn. Walking toward the steps, he is intercepted by Thomas Sams.

SAMS

Mr. Clark... I wanted to talk to you, about those kids you threw out yesterday...

JOE

Well...

SAMS

I was one of 'em... but you made some kinda of mistake.

(CONTINUED)

23

CONTINUED:

23

JOE
Mistake?

SAMS
Yes, sir.

JOE
What's your name, son?

SAMS
Sams. Thomas Sams.

JOE
(checks notes)
Thomas Sams... you're a freshman.
You were cutting class and smoking
crack, Mr. Sams. It was no mistake.

SAMS
No, sir. Not me, sir.

JOE
It wasn't you.

SAMS
No, sir.

JOE
Look at me... you think I'm stupid?

SAMS
No, sir.

JOE
Yes you do. You're tryin' to con
a con man, son. You're not even
learning anything out on the
streets. Come with me.

Grabbing Sams by the neck... Joe shoves him through the
doors.

24

OMITTED

24

25

EXT. ROOFTOP - ANGLE ON DOOR - DAWN (OCTOBER 6)

25

Joe walks Sams to the edge of the roof.

SAMS
What you doin', man?

JOE
You shut up, son. Stand still.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED:

25

JOE (CONT'D)

(pause)

I'm gonna tell you something, son. The problem with being a teenager is... you don't know shit. The problem with being a teenager is you think you're smarter than people who have already been down the road you're traveling. You know what I'm trying to tell you?

SAMS

Yes, sir...

Silence.

JOE

Did you go tell your father... I threw you out of school?

SAMS

No, sir.

JOE

What's the matter? You don't have the guts? Huh, boy? You afraid of what he's going to say?

SAMS

He don't live with us no more!
(breaks down and
cries)

I'm sorry, Mr. Clark! I need to get back into school, sir!
Please! I can't go tell my mama I got kicked out of school.
Please let me back, sir. Please!

JOE

Why should I let you back??!

SAMS

I'm gonna do better, Mr. Clark!

JOE

How?

SAMS

By doin' my work!

JOE

What else?

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED: (2)

25

SAMS

By stayin' outta trouble!

JOE

What you been thinkin' 'bout
all this time? Why should I
believe you now???

SAMS

Because I changed my ways!!!

Sams weeps. Joe waits. Then...

JOE

No, you haven't! I don't think
you've changed a thing! Go ahead.
Jump.

SAMS

No, sir...

JOE

If you wanna kill yourself...
do it here! -- right now. You
use crack, don't you?

SAMS

Yes, sir...

JOE

You know what that does to you?

SAMS

No, sir.

JOE

That destroys your brain cells.
It destroys your brain cells!
When you destroy your brain cells
... you're killing yourself.
Now, if you are going to kill
yourself... I'm demanding that you
go on and kill yourself... and get
it over with right now!

SAMS

I don't wanna kill myself, sir...

JOE

Look at me. You're quite sure
about that now, are you?

SAMS

Yes, sir...

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: (3)

25

JOE

All right. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to go back on my own word -- just this once. Because you are just a baby ... and don't have the sense you were born with yet, I'll let you back in school. But you understand this...

(finger on the
boy's chest)

You're not going to get a moment's rest. Do you understand?

SAMS

Yes, sir. I understand, sir.

JOE

You mess up only once -- just once... you're outta here. You understand that?

SAMS

Yes, sir.

Silence.

JOE

All right.

Sams turns and goes. Joe sighs. He didn't jump. Joe stares out over his city.

25A OMITTED

25A *

26 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY (OCTOBER 18)

26

At the entrance to the serving line, Sams is causing a commotion, signifying, carrying on, holding court. He jostles a girl. He turns. He is staring at the face of... Kaneesha. One way love at first sight. She, meanwhile, is looking past Sams, at Richard Armand, in the line, behind Sams. Sams mistakes her shy look away for a response triggered by himself. He hounds her, talking at her down the line, while piling up giant quantities of food upon his tray. (Add Eric in line.)

SAMS

Oooh... hey, don't look away.
C'mon, sugar... check it out.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED:

26

SAMS (CONT'D)

Hey, what say we eat lunch together? What? Ain't you talkin' to me? Listen... you don't want them other guys. I'm the one you want... Check it out... got somethin' you need around here, I'm in tight with Mr. Clark...

As she pays and leaves the line... trying to get away...

SAMS

There's somethin' wrong with my rap.

AT DOOR TO CAFETERIA

Joe enters on the chaotic scene, surveys it, then begins. On shelves... radios marked: Salsa; Soul; Rap; and White Boys Music.

JOE

(on bullhorn)

All right. Quiet down, people. Settle down. Let those who want to eat their lunch... digest. Robert -- get out of here. You had lunch fourth period...

He goes toward white boys, by White Boys Radio.

JOE

You boys all right? You have any problems... let me know.

Robert goes. Joe turns toward Maria, Conchita, and Louisa...

JOE

Hi, Louisa... lookin' mighty fine today... I'd better warn those boys to watch out. You all having any problems?

MARIA

Yeah. I mean, she is... Tell him.

LOUISA

Mr. Clark... how come I gotta take home ec? I wanna take auto shop. I got brothers and sisters, my mother works. I been cookin' for eleven years. Does it look like I don't cook?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

(writes note)

You give this to Mr. O'Malley.
 You know how much mechanics make?
 Seventeen dollars an hour.

Joe spots Ms. Levias across the room... then turns toward a group of white boys, under the White Boys Music radio. Joe stops to stare for a beat...

JOE

What's wrong with this picture?

The white boys blank, then get the joke and start laughing. The kids around them start laughing, too... pushing the white boys in a friendly way.

JOE

You have any problems... let me know.

Down the way, Clarence is wildly romancing a GIRL...

CLARENCE

Ow, baby... you 'n' me -- hey --
 check it out... ooh, goddamn!
 How a about it? You be my lunch.
 Whassay! I'm a hog for ya, baby
 ... how 'bout right now?

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Clarence... Sit down! Get off
 that chair! Get your hormones
 under control.

*
*
*

CLARENCE

Hormone? She ain't no hormone,
 Mr. Clark... She's a nice girl...
 I love ya, baby...

*
*
*

JOE

(arrives; to
Clarence)

Didn't I just see you downstairs,
 with your arm around Clarisse?

GIRL

Clarisse? Quit swattin' me, boy!

*

CLARENCE

Aw, Mr. Clark, you blew it! Baby
 ... I was only with her one time!!
 Aw, shit...

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED: (3)

26

Joe smiles to himself, then comes up on Richard Armand... As Richard is about to sit, having just set down his tray.

JOE

Richard Armand... come here.
I want to build us an atrium...
Come track me down tomorrow.
We'll talk.

RICHARD

Me 'n' Eric'll take care of it,
Mr. Clark. Don't worry, we're on
the case.

Joe turns again...

JOE

Hey, come here... What's your
name?

KID RAY

Kid Ray.

JOE

Nice suit.

KID RAY

I'm just like you -- hey, Mr.
Clark. You got to look the part,
you know? You got to have the
juice. These kids... don't
understand that.

Joe looks at Kid Ray. Joe goes. Then Joe spots a scene before him:

At one table are Kaneesha, Lillian, and Sally, enduring the onslaught of Thomas Sams, who is making time with Kaneesha, by stealing a meatball from her plate. Kaneesha protests. But Sally attacks, beating Sams on the head, trying to get the meatball back, as Sams jumps back to his own table, where he's surrounded by the Playboys and Tanya. They laugh.

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Sams... Put that back.

Sams looks at the meatball in his hands, then puts it back on Kaneesha's plate. The girls groan with disgust ... as Joe walks up, yanks the hat off Sams's head and slams it into his hands -- so that it's covered with spaghetti sauce now.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

I told you... put somethin' in your head -- not on it! And pull your pants up, boy! Show a little dignity. Have some sense...

(to Playboys)

What's he doing here with you boys? You're all seniors. What's he here with you for? You're providing a deleterious influence here.

KENNY

He's my cousin. We're just talkin' about music, Mr. Clark.

JOE

Music, huh? Stand up. All of you.
(on bullhorn)

May I have your attention, please?
I want all radios off! Instantaneously!

CLARENCE

Yo, Mr. Clark... That's my favorite jam!

Teachers on duty, including the assistant football coach, Mr. Darnell, move to the shelves to TURN the SOUND OFF.

JOE

(bullhorn)

I want you people to look at this sloppy, slovenly boy here... as an example of how not to dress! If you look like this, in the mirror, in the morning... find something else to wear!

The other kids laugh.

JOE

Self-respect is thorough-going! It pervades every aspect of your life! Now, to prove to us their self-respect... Mr. Sams and his friends here... you two boys get up... will sing us our school song! Quiet down, people.
Silence! Nobody moves. Let me hear it!

The room grows perfectly still. Kenny and Lionel rise... stare at each other... then begin a weak attempt...

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED: (5)

26

QUARTET
 (tune of "Fair
 Harvard")
 'Fair Eastside... by the...'

Suddenly, in the b.g... Mr. Darnell bends down to pick up a piece of trash.

JOE
 (bullhorn)
 Mr. Darnell! No one is permitted to move, during the singing of our school song!

DARNELL
 I'm just picking up some trash...

JOE
 (bullhorn)
 Report to my office! At once!

The kids are amazed as Darnell, outshouted -- stalks out! Ms. Levias walks out after him, having seen the whole affair.

JOE
 (to the hoods)
 Keep goin'...

QUARTET
 (singing weakly)
 'Fair Eastside... By the side of the... road...?'

They look at each other. They don't have a clue.

JOE
 You have detention for three days each. You can learn that song... or next time you get suspended.
 (on bullhorn)
 That goes for everybody! You will sing that upon demand, or suffer the dire consequences.
 (stalking off)
 Mr. Wright... take care of them...

BELL RINGS, all students rise rushing towards door, dumping trays. Leaving Wright to deal with the six culprits, who are steaming, humiliated... Joe stalks out!

The sound of MOZART, SUNG by the CHOIR...

27

MUSIC ROOM (OCTOBER 18)

27

(Add Ramon, Francis, Angie)

Mrs. Johnson is at the keyboards as the choir is rehearsing under the direction of MRS. ELLIOT... a dedicated, white, competent, talented teacher. When the kids get distracted, Mrs. Elliot gets angry... then turns and sees Joe entering.

MRS. ELLIOT

People! What are you --

(turning)

Oh. Can I help you, Mr. Clark?

JOE

Yes, you may, Mrs. Elliot. I want everyone in Eastside High to learn the school song... and to sing it upon demand... or be suspended. Will you please see to that?

MRS. ELLIOT

Yes, certainly... Mr. Clark.

(turning back

to her choir)

From the top, second bar -- altos...

Elliot gives the downbeat... and the altos hit their entry... followed by the sopranos. Standing there with egg on his face, Joe flares up!

JOE

Mrs. Elliot...!!!

As the choir stops again.

JOE

May I see you in the hall...

He starts out.

MRS. ELLIOT

Mrs. Johnson... would you please pick up at measure 21.

(to chorus)

If you sing like that in New York we will not be invited back.

28

IN HALL (OCTOBER 18)

28

when the door shuts behind them...

JOE

I do not like being ignored like that...

(CONTINUED)

28

CONTINUED:

28

MRS. ELLIOT

I am sorry, Mr. Clark -- if you needed more attention -- but I'm trying to train a chorus!

JOE

And you don't think the school song is important enough to warrant an interruption?

MRS. ELLIOT

The school song is fine... but we were doing Mozart! I was right in the middle of a difficult part! If you want us to respect your work ... you could try to appreciate ours.

JOE

Who do you think you're talking to?

MRS. ELLIOT

A man who seems to be threatened ... if any other adult in this school... does something that the children like!

Responding to Mrs. Johnson warming up the choir: Joe leans into the music room...

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Mrs. Johnson, I want quiet in here. Now!

Mrs. Johnson glares at Joe as he turns away, then silences the chorus.

BACK OUT IN HALL

MRS. ELLIOT

Mr. Clark, I would love to chat ... but we do have a concert next week in New York -- and I'd like to be prepared.

JOE

What?

MRS. ELLIOT

Prepared. You do know what that means? It means you are capable ... ready... and up to your job.

(CONTINUED)

28

CONTINUED: (2)

28

JOE

What concert, Mrs. Elliot?

MRS. ELLIOT

The one at Lincoln Center. We have it every year...

JOE

Till now. Your concert is cancelled.

MRS. ELLIOT

What?

JOE

You do know what that means... don't you? Cancelled?

MRS. ELLIOT

But why?

JOE

For one thing, not informing me...

MRS. ELLIOT

I filed a form, in the office! Maybe you should talk to your people some time!

JOE

And for rank insubordination! You question my competence? My intelligence?

MRS. ELLIOT

Look... I don't want to get into this! You're the one who's come around to bother me! You are a bully! A despicable man!!!

JOE

Well, let's just rectify that. You are finished here. You're fired. Out!

MRS. ELLIOT

You need a psychiatrist!

JOE

Out! Right now!

MRS. ELLIOT

You'll hear from my lawyer!

(CONTINUED)

28

CONTINUED: (3)

28

The door opens... and Mrs. Johnson steps out to see what's wrong.

*
*

MRS. JOHNSON

I heard it... Don't let him get to you that way...

*
*

MRS. ELLIOT

The man has lost his mind!!!!!!

*

TIME CUT TO:

29

INT. MAIN OFFICE - DAY (OCTOBER 18)

29

As Joe passes through, Mr. Darnell rises from the wooden bench and follows him. Ms. Levias intervenes.

MS. LEVIAS

Mr. Clark, can I...

JOE

Not Now!

(Add Mrs. Ruiz... Sams, Playboys and Tanya on bench)

30

INT. JOE'S OFFICE - DAY (OCTOBER 18)

30

A poster reads: "EDUCATION IS CUMULATIVE AND IT AFFECTS THE BREED -- PLATO."

DARNELL

Mr. Clark...

(shutting the door)

Just what was that all about?

JOE

I said nobody moves during the singing of the school song, and if you can't understand that, find yourself some other place to work.

DARNELL

I was picking up a piece of paper!

JOE

And then you contradicted me. In front of my students.

DARNELL

(sitting)

They are my students, too.

JOE

They are my students!

DARNELL

Just what are you trying to prove? I am workin' my ass for you! Took the demotion -- I'm doin' my job! You are just gettin' your rocks off -- by treatin' me like trash!

JOE

No. That's what you were picking up...

DARNELL

Goddamn it give me the goddamn respect you would damn well want yourself... Or I will break your skinny black ass!

JOE

(stands)

You are suspended. As of right now. Get out.

Joe turns his back on Darnell by walking over to the filing cabinet.

(CONTINUED)

30

CONTINUED:

30

Outraged, Darnell dumps Joe's desk full over onto the floor.

Darnell storms out the door. Joe kneels behind his desk, to pick up the debris, when Levias walks in... appalled.

MS. LEVIAS

What is going on here?

Joe's on his knees, picking up the mess.

JOE

Mr. Darnell has been suspended.
Indefinitely.

MS. LEVIAS

You don't have the power to suspend
a teacher.

JOE

Well I can recommend. Get me the
forms.

MS. LEVIAS

Mr. Darnell isn't just a football
coach. He teaches English as well!

JOE

Not any more.

MS. LEVIAS

The State practice test is tomorrow!
Do you have to do this now???

O'Malley enters, upset...

O'MALLEY

Mr. Clark...

JOE

What do you want??????

Ms. Levias waves O'Malley away.

O'MALLEY

Uh... it can wait...

O'Malley backs out. Quickly.

MS. LEVIAS

Do you realize the chaos you've
created? Nobody knows what you're
doing.

(CONTINUED)

30

CONTINUED: (2)

30

Joe pops his head up.

JOE

That's the way I like it.

31

INT. CLASSROOMS - DAY (OCTOBER 19)

31

A) CLOSEUP ON A HAND. It's Sams. He's not getting anywhere. Behind him, younger extras are blowing spitballs at Sams... until Mrs. Santos walks back in.

B) IN ANOTHER ROOM, Clarence reads a girlie magazine. Mr. Zirrella confiscates it... glancing at it as he walks away. Clarence reaches under his desk... and pulls out another one. Worse. Reggie leans in for a look.

Maria, Louisa, and Conchita try hard. Kid Ray has a Walkman on. He's listening to tapes. Joe appears and removes the earphones.

C) Mrs. Santos leans in above Lillian, reading the question on the test. When she sees Lillian, filling in the blank, Mrs. Santos covers her eyes, in pain. The answer is utterly wrong.

D) Levias leans into a classroom, sees Richard breezing through the exam. He looks up, sees her, smiles... sexy, as if to seduce her. Levias deadpans back.

E) Maria, Louisa, and Conchita try hard. Kid Ray takes the test with a Walkman on. Suddenly, beside him Joe appears. He takes the earphones off. Then Joe walks over to lean against the wall, looking at the kids, who are struggling. He is not a happy man.

32
thru
40

OMITTED

32
thru *
40 *

41

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - DAY (OCTOBER 31)

41

Joe is back on the job, surrounded by all those kids he loves... moving toward the atrium.

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Let's go. Let's all keep going...

Let's clear the halls now, people.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

41

CONTINUED:

41

JOE (CONT'D)

Nathalie, don't you belong in Mr. Lee's biology class? Twenty seconds to that bell... Sams. You're in the cafeteria, Lord know why.

(pause)

Try to eat some vegetables for a change, son... lay off the muffins! Get goin'!

Joe continues to...

41A

INT. ATRIUM - DAY (OCTOBER 31)

41A

A tacky, tiny fountain, surrounded by peat moss and ferns, stands in the main hallway.

The fountain is surrounded by students, adults from the community, PHOTOGRAPHERS, reporters, and Ms. Levias. As Joe walks up... Richard Armand is addressing the crowd, in front of a new atrium installation...

RICHARD

We have two groups to thank today ... the black and Hispanic alumni groups... for getting us the sofas and armchairs you can see up and down this hall... that make this school, as Mr. Clark says... a home away from home...

Joe slides in next to Ms. Levias... as Richard continues ... (see speech below):

JOE

Enjoying yourself?

MS. LEVIAS

As a matter of fact...

JOE

The fact of the matter is, I have no results from that practice test.

MS. LEVIAS

They'll send them when they're processed.

JOE

Send them how? By Pony Express? Am I supposed to wait for them?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

41A CONTINUED:

41A

JOE (CONT'D)

Why don't you get down to Trenton... where they're probably rotting on a desk... and bring them back where they can do some good?

Back at the atrium... Richard has been continuing...

RICHARD

And then, all of us would like to thank Mrs. Ray's incredible art class... for this outrageous def dioarama -- not quite the atrium Mr. Clark asked for -- of Paterson. Here's the first submarine, that got built here. The silk mills that went south, when all the money left town... Alexander Hamilton, who built this town, but didn't live long enough to regret it... Of course, Eastside High School -- that's Eric up there... flyin' a kite... and now, for the grand finale...

Richard looks over, to where Joe has been browbeating a distracted Ms. Levias...

RICHARD

Ms. Levias... if you would... our very own... Passaic River Falls. Ladies and Gentlemen... I dedicated this amazing display of demented Eastside ingenuity in the name of our senior class!!!

Ms. Levias, having escaped from Joe, throws the switch. The waterfalls start. The crowd erupts in a cheer. Ms. Levias is surrounded by students. Joe notices... taking Richard aside.

JOE

Good job. How are your studies?

RICHARD

Fine. Mr. Clark... when it's time to apply for college... you think you could write my recommendation?

JOE

Sure. Though I'll have to find words... grandiloquent enough to do justice to your contributions...

(CONTINUED)

41A CONTINUED: (2)

41A

PHOTOGRAPHER

Mr. Clark...

Joe puts his arm around the boy.

JOE

Richard, smile for Mr. Gilbert.
Mr. Gilbert is the chief
photographer for the Bergen Post.

Flash. Then...

JOE

(to Mr. Wright)

I want all those clowns out of
here. Now.

Lillian and Sally come running up.

LILLIAN

Mr. Clark! The cafeteria! Quick!

SALLY

This boy's beating up Kid Ray!!!

Joe and Wright race off with the girls. The
Photographers spot them, follow.

42 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY (OCTOBER 31)

42

Banes is slapping the piss out of Kid Ray.

BANES

You dumb shit stupid spic.

He slaps Ray silly. Ray's weeping. Everyone else is
shouting, but afraid to approach. Till, across the
room:

MR. WRIGHT

(yells)

Let him go!!!

Banes spins, sees the man, pulls a knife, surveys the
room, and races toward the door. A girl, in his way,
gets slashed.

As Banes is about to escape... Sams shoves a table in his
way and Banes goes tumbling over.

When he regains his equilibrium, Joe Clark is blocking
his way. The Photographers rush in. FLASH... till
end of scene.

(CONTINUED)

42

CONTINUED:

42

BANES

Come on, asshole... I've been waitin' for this.

Bam! Joe knocks Banes cold. The kid spins across a table, knocking lunches to the floor.

A stunned silence. Then cheers... led by Thomas Sams, who's been hiding behind Duane and the boys!!!!

JOE

(to Wright)

Get this disgrace to his race on out of here!

(re: Photographers)

All of 'em! Everyone who doesn't belong here I want out! Now!

MR. WRIGHT

(re: Banes)

You already threw this disgrace out once, Mr. Clark...

JOE

And when you get done with him, I want chains on all the doors.

MR. WRIGHT

Yes sir!

43

SERIES OF SHOTS (OCTOBER 31)

43

A) Chains go up on the fire doors all around the school.

B) Padlocks are snapped shut.

44

OMITTED

thru
47

44 *
thru
47 *

48

INT. HALL - ANOTHER DAY (OCTOBER 31)

48

Light traffic in the halls. Joe slows when he sees Kaneesha Carter sitting on one of the new sofas, alone. Down the way, other kids sit together, cutting up. Joe slows. He stops. Takes a breath. Looks down...

JOE

Kaneesha?

(sits)

Hi, baby. Everything all right?

(CONTINUED)

48

CONTINUED:

48

She is too withdrawn and upset to reply. Joe is drawn right into her world.

JOE

Kaneesha? What is it, honey?

(sits)

Y'know... I've know you more than half your life... come on... what is it? How are those grades?

KANEESHA

They're not too good.

JOE

Well, why not? You're a smart girl. You shouldn't be having any problems...

Silence.

KANEESHA

Mr. Clark...

JOE

What...

KANEESHA

I don't have no place to live.

Tears rise to her eyes.

JOE

Where's your mother.

KANEESHA

She don't want me there no more!

Joe sags. Kids pass by...

NATHALEE

Hi, Mr. Clark! What's up?

Joe takes Kaneesha's hand... to lead her toward the office...

JOE

Kaneesha, honey... you come with me. I will straighten this out. Once and for all.

He walks her to the office door, where Ms. Levias is entering...

(CONTINUED)

48

CONTINUED: (2)

48

JOE

Ms. Levias... you know Kaneesha Carter? She's having a little problem at home. Get her file, talk to her, and get back to me.

MS. LEVIAS

Yes, of course, Mr. Clark.

Ms. Levias holds the door for the girl. Joe watches them, heading inside. Then:

49

EXT. BOMBED OUT BUILDING - DAY (OCTOBER 31)

49

Joe's car pulls up outside the horribly run-down building. He and Levias have been arguing. As they climb from the car...

She fumes, but it's no time to continue as they head toward the bombed out building. They are both appalled as they look around... and find the steps to a basement apartment.

49A

INT. HALLWAY (OCTOBER 31)

49A

Joe and Ms. Levias walk down hall; silent, horrified.

50

EXT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - LANDING - DAY (OCTOBER 31)

50

They climb down. He knocks. They wait. They are just about to leave, when...

WOMAN (O.S.)

Who's there?

MS. LEVIAS

Mrs. Carter. It's Joan Levias.
Mr. Clark is with me...

A long wait. It's windy and cold. The door opens.

ANGLE - BARBARA CARTER

has thrown on a dress. She has seen hard times...

BARBARA (WOMAN)

Ms. Levias... Mr. Clark... Please.
Come in...

51 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY (OCTOBER 31)

51

Joe and Levias look around, trying not to. Mrs. Carter is living in a cellar, with furnace pipes and gas meters, a few sticks of furniture and a barren concrete floor. Mrs. Carter closes the door. Joe turns.

JOE

Been a long time, Mrs. Carter.

BARBARA

Barbara.

(pause)

I kept meaning to get up to talk to you.

(awkwardly)

Would you mind if I tried to act civilized... and offered you a seat?

She gestures toward flimsy chairs. They sit. But Barbara keeps moving, nervous. Strung out.

JOE

I found Kaneesha in the hall... Started talking about her grades?

(pause)

She said you don't want her around.

BARBARA

I don't expect your sympathy... But I ruined my life. I know that. It is my business to deal with that. And it's hard enough. It's been hard.

JOE

You were one of my most active parents. Always at the school ... helping out...

MS. LEVIAS

We're not here to pry, Mrs. Carter... but Kaneesha's got a gift -- she has that spark. We have to look after her.

(pause)

Why would she think you don't want her?

BARBARA

I had Kaneesha when I was fifteen. Didn't want no welfare ... so I quit school, worked -- stayed home at night...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

51

CONTINUED:

51

BARBARA (CONT'D)

(pause)

... Never had no life.

(pause)

So when she was old enough to
take care of herself -- or so I
thought -- I ran out to get one.
Fast.

MS. LEVIAS

Is that what you're doing now?

Silence. Barbara sits.

BARBARA

I am just gettin' back on my
feet, y'know? And as I start
to get clean... I can see myself.
For what I am! An' I hate it!
An' just can't bear that girl
to see me like this no more!

(very upset)

When the people from the foster
home came by -- I just thought
it might be the right thing...

(breaking down)

Why would I wanna get rid of
her? I love her more than
myself!

She cries. Neither Joe nor Levias knows what to do.

Levias puts her hand on Barbara's shoulder, then takes
it back. It doesn't help. Joe leans forward, waiting...

JOE

Barbara... Mrs. Carter?

He waits. Silence. Softly...

JOE

What if we helped you find a job?
And maybe a nicer place to live.
Would that help any?

(pause)

'Cause I don't see her makin' it...

(pause)

... without you. Understand?

She weeps. Joe's eyes fill with tears. When he looks
up, Joan Levias's eyes are brimming too.

DISSOLVE TO:

52

OMITTED

52

52A INT. HEARING ROOM - NIGHT (OCTOBER 31)

52A

Behind a short table with three chairs, Frank Napier packs up his papers, as Barrett and the Fire Chief leave the room. There's a long table across the floor, with an open space in between.

Before Frank has packed his things, Joe Clark walks in. Napier looks up. He throws Joe a newspaper across the room. Joe sits on the table across the way, and looks it over. On the front page of the Passaic Evening Post, is a photo of Joe's fight with Banes... and a photo of Mrs. Barrett, with another public attack.

NAPIER

You see that yet?

As Joe looks it over...

NAPIER

Y'know... all of your shit comes down on my head.

JOE

Now, look...

NAPIER

You let me talk! Like you're a big bird. With radar! And I'm tired of gettin' hit!

JOE

Is this my fault?

NAPIER

That is nothing! I've got union lawyers threatening me... There's talk of a walk-out...

JOE

Let 'em. They ain't teachin' worth shit there anyway.

NAPIER

Then it's your job to --

JOE

None of 'em have any personal stake in that school!

NAPIER

And now the Fire Chief was just here -- he says it's illegal to lock those doors... And Mrs. Barrett's organizing the parents ... to try to get you recalled...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

52A CONTINUED:

52A

NAPIER (CONT'D)

Since you insulted them at that meeting -- when you told 'em to get off welfare!

JOE

I didn't mean --

NAPIER

'Cause the fact is -- that quite a few of 'em need it!

JOE

I wasn't talking to all of them... You came recruited me, man! You bailin' out now? The one thing I don't --

NAPIER

Nigger, can you keep quiet???

JOE

You disappoint me, Frank... you disappoint me.

NAPIER

The disappointment here is you. You alienated everybody. Look at you. You got no life. Your wife walked out! I should walk out on you too!

*
*
*
*
*
*

JOE

Go ahead.

*
*

NAPIER

But, I said I would back you up.

*

JOE

That's right. You said that.

NAPIER

Brother... I will go through the fire for you... but this shit you're pullin' now? You are goin' just plain loco! You suspend Darnell? What the hell was that???

JOE

Darnell is symptomatic of the kind of --

(CONTINUED)

52A

CONTINUED: (1A)

52A

NAPIER

He's a good strong black teacher!

(laughs)

Dumped that desk right on top of
your head? Well, right on! Good
for him! Reinstate that man! You
hear me?

(pause)

And then you go fire Mrs. Elliot.
Why? 'Cause she didn't wanna kiss
your ass? Well, I wouldn't
either! How about that?

(CONTINUED)

52A CONTINUED: (2)

52A

JOE

Mrs. Elliot had --

NAPIER

You lost the best teacher we had!
We couldn't get her back if we
wanted now.

JOE

I don't have time for Mrs. Elliot's
problems!!!

NAPIER

Well, maybe you'd better find time --

JOE

We are being crucified by a process
that is turning blacks into a
permanent underclass!!! A permanent
underclass. See, nobody wants to
talk about that. Nobody.

NAPIER

Joe... these personal battles can
lose us the war.

(pause)

Worry about those test scores.

JOE

What do you think I'm --

NAPIER

Listen up... the debate is over.

(pause)

You will write a formal apology...

JOE

I will what????

NAPIER

A formal apology! For your
treatment of Darnell and Elliot --
and for your vicious and thoughtless
insult to the women of our community!
You will kowtow! You will step
and fetch!

JOE

(screaming)

If you think I'm gonna...

(CONTINUED)

52A CONTINUED: (3)

52A

NAPIER

(outshouts him)

It's the way of the world!!! Get used to it! If you're so goddamned hot on discipline... then start by accepting mine!

Frank walks behind the hearing table... to his briefcase.

NAPIER

Because contrary to popular opinion...

(pause)

I'm the head nigger in charge.

Snatching up the briefcase, frustrated, but with the fight all over...

NAPIER

C'mon... let's go get somethin' to eat.

Leading Joe, Frank bangs out of the door.

53
thru
55

OMITTED

53 *
thru *
55 *

56

EXT. EASTSIDE HIGH - MORNING (NOVEMBER 8)

56

A media circus outside the main doors. A film crew from a TV station has been brought by FIRE CHIEF GAINS, with DEPUTY CHIEF ALONZO. They try to enter the school, but are blocked by Mr. Darnell, with Mr. Wright. Kids watch.

DARNELL

You don't get in. And that is that.

Joe exits the school with Ms. Levias.

CHIEF GAINS

He has no right to lock those doors! And I have a duty to inspect this plant!

JOE

(arriving)

This is not a plant, Chief Gains. This is my school! You wanna get in?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

56

CONTINUED:

56

JOE (CONT'D)

You will apply for permission,
like everybody else! You and your
T.V. friends here!

(waves the bat)

You had to bring them, didn't you?

Joe points with a baseball bat in his hands.

CHIEF GAINS

What the hell is that for?

JOE

They used to call me Crazy Joe?
Well, now they call me Batman!!!

Joe waves the bat overhead. The kids cheer. The TV crew
pushes in. Joe plays it to the hilt.

JOE

(to Gains)

I got thugs and drug dealers tryin'
to get in here... you might be one
of 'em! How do I know? Mr. Darnell
... you take over.

(hands him the bat)

It's good to have you back.

DARNELL

You never should have kicked me
out to begin with.

JOE

I understand your side.

Joe poses with Darnell, shaking hands... then Darnell
raises the baseball bat above his head, to the cheers
of the assembled kids... and for the benefit of the TV
crew, moving in for a closer shot.

JOE

(to Darnell)

All right... show's over. Get rid
of these clowns.

Joe moves inside with Ms. Levias... as Darnell and Mr.
Wright start to clear the steps.

57

INT. DOORS TO HALLWAY - MORNING (NOVEMBER 8)

57

JOE

Everybody back to class.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

57

CONTINUED:

57

JOE (CONT'D)

Mr. O'Malley. Let's get back to work. Get these people back to class.

Joe reaches the top of the stairs and continues down the hall with Ms. Levias.

MS. LEVIAS

You're playing right into his hands! That was the fire chief...

JOE

You know what he's sayin' right now? 'That black bastard can't throw me out!' You know where he's sayin' it?

(pause)

Out in the parkin' lot!!!

MS. LEVIAS

But, Mr. Clark -- a baseball bat? Is this the image you want to project?

JOE

If they got me those emergency doors -- the kind that when you open them an alarm goes off -- like the white schools have... I wouldn't have to chain 'em!

MS. LEVIAS

Those doors cost a fortune. We don't have enough for books.

JOE

Tell the Mayor that. Call up the Federal Government. Tell 'em to send us more money!!! Don't worry about what I'm doing! Why don't you do what I asked you to do? Where are those test scores I told you to get me?

*
*
*
*
*

As Joe peels off from Levias, he intercepts Kid Ray... his face still bruised and swollen from the fight. They walk down the hall together.

KID RAY

Hey, Mr. Clark...

(CONTINUED)

57

CONTINUED: (2)

57

JOE

Ray, hey... Where you been the last week?

KID RAY

I was sick.

JOE

What was that altercation about?

KID RAY

Alteration?

JOE

(to a passing student)

Hey! How ya doin'. Good to see you.

KID RAY

What are my pants too tight?

JOE

That fight with that drug dealer, son... and don't get smart with me.

KID RAY

Hey, hey, Mr. Clark... I already had enough shit from this.

They stop.

JOE

Why did he come to get you? You dealin' drugs in my school?

KID RAY

Mr. Clark... we don't need to get into this... I came here to tell you something. I don't know if I'm cut out for this. School and all ... you know? I got things I wanna do. I just came to say goodbye.

Joe shakes his hand.

JOE

You mean you're dropping out on me.

KID RAY

Not dropping out, just moving on.

JOE

Ray. You'll be dead in a year.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

57

CONTINUED: (2)

57

JOE (CONT'D)

You hear what I'm sayin' to you?
You'll be dead in a year.

KID RAY

Mr. Clark, I gotta go.

They stare at each other. Joe lets go of Ray's hand and Ray walks away.

58

OMITTED

58

*

Sound of a HUMAN BEAT BOX.

59

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING (NOVEMBER 8)

59

ANGLE ON floor: Old sneakers come INTO VIEW... PAN UP TO: Thomas Sams, walking with the Playboys and Tanya, doing his human beat box thing. The Playboys signal, then duck into the boys' room -- hanging him out, alone. The last guy in pulls Tanya in with them. When Sams realizes he's alone... he turns to head in after them. But before he gets to the door...

JOE (O.S.)

(on bullhorn)

Sams! Freeze...

Sams freaks. He stops. Joe walks up on him...

JOE

Where you runnin', Sams? And how come you don't have a book in your hand?

SAMS

Aw, man, you know... I got lunch, then gym, then the teacher said I don't need no book, 'cause --

JOE

What'd I let you back here for?

SAMS

To get a education.

JOE

Right. And how can you learn if you don't read. When we get report cards, huh?

(CONTINUED)

59

CONTINUED:

59

SAMS

Next week. Mrs. James said
I's gettin' a B.

JOE

There... I knew you were smart.
Now, you know.

SAMS

I knew that, Mr. Clark... I'll
see you around, okay?

He tries to walk away... but...

JOE

Sams. Come back here. Now, let's
go see what you got in here.

Joe nods toward the boys' room. Sams' face drops. They
enter...

SAMS

You don't want to go in there. It
stinks, man.

60

INT. BOYS' ROOM - MORNING (NOVEMBER 8)

60

Joe sees the Playboys, looking guilty...

JOE

My, my my... my little songbirds.
Let's hear it. The school song.
And this time if you don't get it
right, you're suspended for ten
days each. Let me hear it.

Pause, then...

SAMS

All right, fellas. Let 'im hear it.

The Playboys launch into...

... an incredible, up-beat, doo-wop version of the
Eastside school song! This ain't "Fair Harvard" anymore
... but a syncopated, part soulful tune!

PLAYBOYS

(harmonizing)

'Fair Eastside... by the side we'll
stand.

And always praise thy name...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

60

CONTINUED:

60

PLAYBOYS (CONT'D)

To ever... Lend our hearts and hands...
To help increase thy fame.
The Honor... of old Eastside High brings forth our loyalty;
So...

Joe cuts them off...

*

JOE

That's enough! Who taught you that? Answer me! I know you didn't do it yourself. Sams...

*

SAMS

(intimidated)

Mrs. Johnson.

JOE

Mrs. Johnson.

SAMS

Yes, sir.

JOE

All right! All a you! Let's go!!!

Pushing Lionel, Craig and Charles ahead... he grabs Robert and Sams by their necks... and marches them out.

61

OMITTED

61

62

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY (NOVEMBER 8)

62

where MRS. LAURA JOHNSON is working with her choir. The choir finishes singing.

MISS JOHNSON

Okay, now just remember. We need intonation, phonation, accuracy and pitch...

(hits key)

This is your note!

In bursts Joe -- holding Robert and Sams like a pair of scrawny chickens... with a hundred kids piled up behind. Silence.

JOE

Mrs. Johnson...

(CONTINUED)

62

CONTINUED:

62

MRS. JOHNSON

Yes sir.

JOE

These hoodlums told me something
I cannot believe! Was it you who
changed the school song like that?!

SAMS

Mrs. Johnson, I swear I didn't...

JOE

Let let her answer!

MRS. JOHNSON

Well, you know... the kids did
think it was a bit boring...

JOE

So this was your idea.

MRS. JOHNSON

Yes it was.

JOE

(pause)

I want everyone in the school to
learn that song! In English and
Spanish! Immediately! Take a bow,
Mrs. Johnson! You have rewritten
our alma mater!

Joe leaves. Miss Johnson and Sams hug. When he spins,
she slaps his butt. Playboys cheer and slap hands.
They all come together.

62A INT. HALLWAY - DAY

62A

As Joe bursts out of the music room, a grand smile on
his face... (Add Santos, Darnell.)

MUSIC BEGINS...

The school song as sung by the Playboys... picking up
just before where it got cut off...

PLAYBOYS (O.S.)

So cheer for dear old Eastside High...
Lead on to victory...

As Joe floats down the hall, as happy as we've ever seen
him, nodding to students, slapping hands... smiling at
teachers, who note this, amazed... the MUSIC CONTINUES...

(CONTINUED)

62A CONTINUED:

62A

PLAYBOYS (O.S.)

Oh, break it down, now...

They do the gospel breakdown... and build to soaring improbable chord, a triumphant doo-wop finale as... the score carries Joe on a cloud into...

62B INT. MAIN OFFICE - DAY

62B

Joe is still beaming as he enters...

MS. LEVIAS

Mr. Clark...

Joe doesn't even hear her...

MR. O'MALLEY

Mr. Clark...

Joe stops at his door... and turns. Levias stands by Mr. O'Malley. She has an envelope in her hands.

MS. LEVIAS

Mr. O'Malley brought this up from Trenton.

Joe drifts back. She hands Joe the envelope. He reads the return address:

INSERT

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
225 West State Street
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0500

JOE

Did you open this?

MS. LEVIAS

No, Mr. Clark. I thought you'd want to read it first yourself.

Joe stares at O'Malley and Levias... then tears open the letter and removes the test scores. Joe's heart falls to the floor.

A MINOR CHORD. The Eastside alma mater as a dirge...

CLOSEUP - PRINTOUT

We read:

(CONTINUED)

62B CONTINUED:

62B

To: Joe Louis Clark
Principal, Eastside High School
Paterson, New Jersey 07501

Re: Minimum Basic Skills Test
Practice Test Results:

Required passing score: 75%

EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL score: 33%

JOE

I had to wait this long to get
this? Next time I order you to
get me something... you'd better
damned well go get it yourself!!!

He slams the letter down on the desk, then slams into his
office as...

Once again, the EASTSIDE ALMA MATER is scored underneath
as a dirge.

Levias picks up the letter to read. O'Malley, looking
over her shoulder, reads the bad news too.

63
thru
72E

OMITTED

63
thru
72E

72F INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY (NOVEMBER 30)

72F

A SHARP BLAST of a WHISTLE, as the boys and girls basket-
ball teams leave the court, dispossessed... 300 faculty
members are just about lined up in 10 rows of 30 teachers
apiece. When they settle in their rows... (Add Sams,
Richard, Eric)

JOE

(on bullhorn)

You all lined up? Quiet please...

(pause)

I'd like the first three rows...
to take five paces forward.

They do.

JOE

(on bullhorn)

All right. Now, turn around.

Mr. O'Malley walks in late.

(CONTINUED)

72F

CONTINUED:

72F

JOE

Mr. O'Malley -- come here! What's the excuse?

Joe walks. They meet halfway.

O'MALLEY

Ah, I had this stack of forms I was filling out, looked up -- I forgot what time it was. Mr. Clark, what can you do?

Ignores O'Malley. Pacing the rows...

JOE

(to all teachers)

How many hours a week do you spend preparing a lesson plan? How often do you stay after school to give these children the extra help they need?

Returning to O'Malley...

JOE

This is a prime example of the inefficiency and apathy that is destroying this school.

The basketball players snicker.

JOE

But, Mr. O'Malley... I cannot believe you are as bad as you appear... so I am going to give you a chance to revitalize your image. I want a student peer tutoring program... let's see if they can help themselves... Lord knows your teachers aren't doing the job.

(turns)

Ms. Levias...

MS. LEVIAS

Yes, Mr. Clark...

JOE

I want remedial reading on Saturdays. I'll need volunteers at regular pay. We can't afford overtime.

(CONTINUED)

72F

CONTINUED: (2)

72F

MRS. SANTOS

Mr. Clark... the problem isn't our pay... but how to get them in on Saturdays, when they don't even show up now!

JOE

You go to their homes. Talk to their folks. If they can't read, they can come in, too. The only way to get anywhere is to get them all involved. The same goes for all of you! It is time to get involved.

He turns to the larger group...

JOE

I want you, all of you people standing over here to raise both hands in the air, over your heads. I am asking that you raise your hands.

Confused, they slowly comply. When all their hands are up.

JOE

You people with your hands in the air represent the 70 percent of our students who just failed that practice exam. Keep them up, please... Mr. Frank... thank you.

(pause)

Now you have a hint of the kind of hopelessness and shame that makes those failing students throw up their hands at the thought of facing a world, for which you have not prepared them. You have the merest sense of the despair they feel, when left to the mercy of the streets... and you have assumed the posture of those of our students who will end up -- because you failed to educate them -- staring down the barrel of a gun.

The basketball players no longer laugh. Joe has gotten through.

RAP MUSIC BEGINS... "TAKE NO PRISONERS."

72G INT. ART ROOM - QUICK CUTS - DAY (DECEMBER 1)(93 DAYS TO TEST) 72G

- A) A slash of bright primary paint, brushed onto white paper.
- B) A hammer descends, driving a nail into a wooden frame.
- C) More paint, a different color.
- D) Colored ink is squeezed on a silk screen frame.
- E) OMITTED *
- F) The silk screen frame is lifted. Beneath it, printed on a T-shirt, we see "Take No Prisoners" again.

A72H INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

A72H *

More hammer blows on a big wooden frame, which is lifted up by Joe and full crew, to reveal:

"BASIC SKILLS TEST
in (X) Days
TAKE NO PRISONERS"

72H INT. HALLWAY - DAY (DECEMBER 15)

72H

Posters read 83 days to exam. Theme is: Christmas. Kids wearing "Take no Prisoners" T-shirts put posters on the walls, under the eyes of Joe and Mrs. Ray. Joe, standing tall, holds a poster up, to be taped.

Down the way, Kaneesha is painting a mural: "Beat the Beast. The BST. Pass the Basic Skills Test." She is working with a roller. Sams is under the ladder trying to peer up under her dress. She looks down and sees him. Sams smiles up with his sexiest look. Kaneesha paints his face.

72J INT. CLASSROOM - DAY (FEBRUARY 14)

72J

Posters read 40 Days to exam. Posters on bulletin board indicate Valentine's Day. A banner reads: "Join the Student Tutoring Program." O'Malley is assigning students, in pairs. Kaneesha waits, intimidated. O'Malley, reading names off a list, directs her eyes toward Richard. The two kids' eyes meet.

72K INT. FAST FOOD JOINT - NIGHT (FEBRUARY 14)

72K

Maria sits by the drive-in window.

(CONTINUED)

72K CONTINUED:

72K

There is nothing going on. She's studying. The headlights of a car approach. She keeps on studying. The CAR HONKS its HORNS. Maria is lost in her studies until the manager walks in, and hits her shoulder, to get her to work.

72KA INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

72KA

Louisa is under car changing oil and studying.

72L INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY (MARCH 1)

72L

The boys' basketball team, with cheerleaders, is riding down the road. A coach is walking the aisles, making sure that all of them are studying.

72M INT. MAIN HALL - DAY (MARCH 3)

72M

Clarence descends the ladder, having set the numbers in place on the main poster that reads 92 days till exam.

Halfway down, Joe spots him. Joe eyeballs the sign, then glares at Clarence, who backs up the ladder, explaining ... then reaches behind and switches the numbers, so now they say 29. Clarence descends trying to get Joe to laugh. When Clarence is down, Joe goes.

72N OMITTED

72N

A72P INT. CAFETERIA - DAY (MARCH 4)

A72P

Posters read: 28 Days to exam. Joe walks in on a study hall. The kids are actually studying. Richard is helping Kaneesha. Lillian and Sally eye them. Joe looks all around the room. He turns to Mrs. Johnson and nods. She nods back. Joe turns and goes.

RAP SONG ENDS...

72P OMITTED

72P

72Q INT. GYMNASIUM - CLOSEUP - PAIR OF FEET - DAY

72Q *

Jump on the hardwood floor. A jump rope turns -- double-dutch -- around them.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

72Q

CONTINUED:

72Q

As the CAMERA PANS UP: another girl jumps in, and we see Lillian and Sally, jumping double-dutch. A chant is heard, fading into the background, as...

GIRLS

(chant)

Hookie player, one-two; Jump, one-two; turn, one-two; kick, one-two; split, one-two; hopsyie, one-two; sizzle, one-two; Hey, concentration, where have you been? Around the corner and back again. Stole my money; stole my honey; poppa got a nickel; momma got the pox; so come on, baby, let's slice the ice... Slicey, one-two-three-four-five! Slicey, six-seven-eight-nine-ten! Hey, everybody, gathered on the mountaintop. Bop, bop, two up. Bop, bop, two back. Bop, bop for the turn around... We hate Nixon, We hate Nixon, one, how ya doing? We hate Nixon, two, how ya doing? (etc.)

We TRACK PAST a pick-up basketball game that is part of a chaotic gym class... TO where Clarence has drawn a crowd, doing his impersonation of Joe.

CLARENCE

(mimics Joe Clark)

All right... attention, people... move to the right of the hall. Let's go, people!

(turns to a boy)

Yeah, hey, how ya doin'?

(then to a girl)

Well, Francesca, darlin'... come here. Come here. How's your sister doing?

Clarence, who basically ignored the boy... is all over the girl, FRANCESCA -- cracking the other kids up -- because Joe does seem to like the little ladies...

FRANCESCA

I'm afraid she broke her leg, Mr. Clark...

CLARENCE

Oh, she broke her leg? That's good. That's good.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

72Q CONTINUED: (2)

72Q

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

Now, if you have any problems... I mean, any problems, darlin'... come see me in my office. Here... Sams! Whatever you're doing -- stop it!!

Clarence mimes scribbling a note and hands it to the girl, then whirls...

CLARENCE

All right, people... settle down over there... Clarence! Get your hormones under control!

As the kids scream with laughter...

RACK FOCUS: behind Clarence... Joe Clark appears. He has heard it all.

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Clarence...

Clarence jumps a foot.

CLARENCE

Ab-ab-ab...

JOE

Francesca, c'mere... Is he like me? Does he have the juice? He doesn't have enough juice to do me. Does he? Tell the truth...

FRANCESCA

No way.

The kids roar. Joe does, too.

JOE

Clarence... report to my office!

Clarence looks sick.

JOE

Got ya, didn't I?

FRANCES

He got ya good, Clarence.

*
*

The kids scream with laughter as Joe moves on with a smile... past the basketball game and back to...

The jump rope girls, who have changed their chant...

(CONTINUED)

72Q

CONTINUED: (3)

72Q

As one long rope is twirled... and kids jump in under it, one by one... all the kids of our full crew... Maria, Louisa, Lillian, then Ramon, Richard, even Sams...

GIRLS

(chant)

How you learn the alphabet? Be on time. School bell rings at a quarter to nine! All in together, girls -- how you like the weather, girls? How you learn the alphabet? Be on time. How you spell Eastside? Eastside pride. How you spell Joe Clark? He's on time... J-O-E-C-L-A-R-K... All in together, girls. How you like the weather, girls? All in together. (etc.)

As the kids jump in one by one... Joe watches until he jumps in, too! And the kids looking on go wild...

LAST SHOT

shows all the kids of our full crew. Two of them turn the rope. As many as possible jump with Joe, who towers over them, smiling. The rest just cheer them on... as the jumping heads bob up and down.

GIRLS

(chant)

All in together, girls. How you like the weather, girls? All in together, girls. How you like the weather, girls? (etc.)

JOE

All right -- keep it goin'. Who's gonna mess up? Won't be me! Sams -- keep jumpin'. Don't give up...

FADE TO:

73

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON (APRIL 4)

73

A meeting is underway between members of a parents' coalition led by Mrs. Barrett; Fire Chief Gains and Deputy Chief Alonzo (both in uniform); three of the Mayor's aides; Mayor Bateman himself; and Mr. Rosenberg, representing Joe. (Add Frank Napier, Mrs. Richards.)

(CONTINUED)

73

CONTINUED:

73

MRS. BARRETT

He can't even get 'em past that test!

BOTTMAN

I thought we had settled all this...

MRS. BARRETT

You mean, capitulated? Given up?
(re: a coalition member)

Mrs. Richards here had her son kicked out -- denied his education! We lost that one... but we didn't give up. And now with the doors chained over there -- that school is a fire trap! And your fire chief agrees...

CHIEF GAINS

That son-of-a-bitch is laughin', Don.

NAPIER

The man has a legitimate problem! How's he keep drug dealers out of his school, if their buddies push open the exit doors and just let 'em walk on in???

CHIEF GAINS

Look, Don, I've been hounding you for months, if a fire broke out and a kid got hurt -- an' Christ, they're gonna get trampled -- they're a bunch of savages down there... We could both go to jail. By statute we are legally --

BOTTMAN

Okay! I get the picture!
Everybody outta the room. Please?
I wanna talk to Mrs. Barrett.

All but Barrett get up and leave. She glares at Gains as he goes. The door closes.

BOTTMAN

I apologize for his choice of words.

MRS. BARRETT

I don't like none a' you people.

(CONTINUED)

73

CONTINUED: (2)

73

BOTTMAN

Then let's cut through the formalities... and find out what you want.

MRS. BARRETT

Clark.

BOTTMAN

Head on a plate. Just like that.

MRS. BARRETT

You think I got an attitude? Well, lemme just tell you what I think. I know why you like Clark. He's a guard dog. Does your dirty work. Keeps the black folks in line. That's fine. But you gotta get re-elected.

(pause)

I got enough folks lined up with me... to give you a damned hard time. And I will go get more! I will organize. I will beat the streets...

BOTTMAN

Unless I...

MRS. BARRETT

... Appoint me to the school board ... so I can kick his black ass out. Or else we'll just take you with him!

*
*

Silence.

BOTTMAN

Always glad to see a citizen partake of the democratic process.

MRS. BARRETT

My job's gonna be easy. You ain't too popular to start!

Silence.

BOTTMAN

All right.

(giving in)

I'll sic the fire chief on him. Will that satisfy you?

(CONTINUED)

73

CONTINUED: (3)

73

MRS. BARRETT

Yes. That's a month before the school board election. I intend to campaign over his dead body.

*

BOTTMAN

And you'll come out publicly... for me.

MRS. BARRETT

It will be my pleasure.

74

INT. BATHROOM STALL (CITY HALL) - DAY (APRIL 4)

74

Mr. Rosenberg is seated, reading the Paterson paper, his pants down around his ankles. He shuffles the paper, reads on.

*

75

INT. BATHROOM (APRIL 4)

75

Bottman is washing his hands at the sink. A FLUSH. Reflected in a mirror, Gains emerges from a stall.

*

*

CHIEF GAINS

That Barrett is a bitch on wheels, huh?

*

BOTTMAN

Smart. She's smart.

*

Bottman leans against the sink as Gains washes his hands too.

*

*

CHIEF GAINS

She got your number, didn't she?

(pause)

When am I supposed to do this?

Bottman looks around, to make sure no one else is in there. He even bends over to check the stalls, peering under the metal dividers.

ANGLE - BOTTMAN'S POV - UNDER STALLS

Nothing. No one.

BACK TO SCENE

satisfied they're alone...

(CONTINUED)

75

CONTINUED:

75

BOTTMAN

Right now we'd just disrupt things.
Give him another week to prepare
for that test, then catch him with
those chains on... we nail him.
Make her happy.

CHIEF GAINS

Politics. What a business. *

BOTTMAN

Same as yours. Just puttin' out fires. *

Gains turns off the water. They go. *

76

INT. BATHROOM STALL - DAY

76

The newspaper across his lap -- his feet are splayed out,
up against the stall door -- Rosenberg's pants hang down
from his ankles! *

He has been there the whole time. He has heard. The
problem now is getting back down, without somehow falling
in! As he tries to accomplish this... *

FADE TO:

77

INT. EASTSIDE HALLWAY - DAY (APRIL 5)(6 DAYS TO EXAM)

77

Joe exits the door with Rosenberg and Napier. Joe is
laughing at what he's been told. Rosenberg trails him
like a puppy.

ROSENBERG

Uh, so there I am, with my feet up...

JOE

You're lucky you didn't fall in,
and drown.

ROSENBERG

Yeah, well, uh... very funny...

Napier and Joe share a laugh. Then...

Joe passes four white boys... *

JOE

Dr. Napier... four of my white
boys. *

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

77

CONTINUED:

77

JOE (CONT'D)

This is the superintendant of schools. The school song. Let me hear it.

(as they stare at each other)

Let's go.

FRANKIE

Aw, Mr. Clark...

JOE

Lemme hear it.

WHITE BOYS

(off key)

Fair Eastside... by thy side we'll stand... and always praise thy name.

To ever lend our hearts and hands
To help increase thy fame.
The honor...

JOE

That's enough! I can't stand it!
Don't you ever listen to yourselves?
You go see Mrs. Johnson! Tell her
you need some emergency help!

He gives them a note. They go.

NAPIER

Some things you just can't teach.

JOE

Bad singing is not genetic.

They arrive at Kaneesha and Richard, on a sofa, studying. Knees pressed together. Sign: 7 Days to Test.

JOE

How's it going, Kaneesha?

KANEESHA

Fine, Mr. Clark.

RICHARD

She picks this up real fast. I guess she just needed some personal attention.

Kaneesha slugs him. Joe starts off again...

(CONTINUED)

77

CONTINUED: (2)

77

JOE
(while walking)
How's your mother?

KANEESHA
She say to say hello! She got
a new job, Mr. Clark!

Joe spots Lillian and Sally at the phone...

JOE
Why aren't you girls studying?

LILLIAN
The phone's broke. My baby's sick.
I gotta call my mother.

JOE
That's what happens when you go lay
up with the boys. That baby comes,
they're gone! They don't wanna
hear about it.

(pause)
Come on with me. You can call from
the Guidance Office. When are you
girls gonna wise up?

LILLIAN
Mr. Clark... I ain't ashamed a'
my baby.

JOE
No one's saying you should be.

LILLIAN
An' she ain't ashamed a' me! When
she looks up at me, Mr. Clark, she
don't think I done no wrong.

SALLY
She isn't a criminal, just because
she made one mistake.

JOE
That mean you wanna make one, too?

SALLY
No, sir! Uh-uh. No way.

JOE
That's good. Go on in. Make
your call.

The girls enter the guidance office, then...

(CONTINUED)

77

CONTINUED: (3)

77

ROSENBERG

Now, Joe... in this meeting --

Joe is accosted by four Puerto Rican kids... Maria, Louisa, Ramon, and Conchita.

MARIA

(feisty)

Mr. Clark, we got us a problem.

RAMON

How come you always leave us out?

JOE

Leave you out of what?

CONCHITA

Everything.

LOUISA

Everything is always for the black kids.

MARIA

Yeah, the gospel chorus? For the blacks! Football -- for the blacks! Basketball -- blacks! It's everything for the blacks!

LOUISA

Are we really part of this school?

JOE

Well of course you are. I'm really messin' up. You should be proud to be Hispanic!

MARIA

We are! That's not the point!

LOUISA

The point is you're ignoring us.

MARIA

And we're getting ticked off.

JOE

I don't blame you. You'd make a good lawyer with a mouth like yours. Where you going to college?

MARIA

I wasn't thinking about it.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED: (4)

77

JOE

You start thinking about it,
right now! Come on in my office.
We'll talk about this...

KIDS

Thank you, Mr. Clark.

77A INT. MAIN OFFICE (APRIL 5)

77A

They push through a mob of kids and parents.

KIDS

#1 Mr. Clark...
#2 I gotta leave school. I need
a pass...
#3 Mr. Clark...

JOE

(to P.R. Kids)
Go wait for me in there...

Ms. Ruiz exits...

MS. RUIZ

Your daughter called.

JOE

I'm busy.

He and Rosenberg push through the mob, inside.

78 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM (APRIL 5)

78

Administrators, aides, and security guards are crowded
into the room. Joe enters with Rosenberg. He sits.

JOE

I called you all here today...
Because Dr. Napier has some
important news for us.

NAPIER

Well, uh... my spies have informed
me that the mayor has told the
fire chief to catch Mr. Clark with
those chains on.

JOE

(to his guards)
I'm counting on you to protect me.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

78

CONTINUED:

78

JOE (CONT'D)

If you see the fire chief coming
... You stop him at the gates.
Then get on the walkie-talkies...
and call in, 'code ten!' Understand?

PAN ACROSS the faces of the guards, confused...

JOE

We'll repeat 'code ten!' on the
intercom... All teachers and guards
have keys that unlock the exit doors
and everyone will go unlock their
doors! Is that understood? Good.
That's all...

(rising to go)

Guards... resume your posts.

As Joe and the guards start out the door, trailed by
Rosenberg...

MS. LEVIAS

Mr. Clark... I have the progress
report on the reading program...

JOE

(still heading out)

Good.

MS. LEVIAS

We are running out of time! I
thought you might want to hear it.

Joe turns, sarcastic.

JOE

Yes, I wanna hear it! An' I wanna
hear the kids in my office, and
Mr. Rosenberg -- and Dr. Napier.
I want to hear it all! But I
can't be in ten places at once!
So maybe my vice principal... can
do something without me, for once!

Joe and Levias stare at each other.

JOE

(to Napier)

Let's go.

They leave. Levias is so upset, she can't even speak when
he's gone. The other teachers try not to stare at her...

79
thru
83

OMITTED

79
thru
83

83A

INT. MAIN HALL - NIGHT

83A

Joe heads from his office, up the main hall, toward the T.

ANGLE - MAIN HALL - DOWN THE T

Ms. Levias exits the stairwell and heads for the T.

ANGLE - JOE

hears footsteps, sneaks a look, sees who it is -- and turns to go.

MS. LEVIAS'S POV

As Joe turns his back to her.

MS. LEVIAS
Mr. Clark! Wait up, please...

*

AT THE T

Joe stops. Turns to face her.

JOE'S POV

Ms. Levias approaches.

AT THE T

She arrives.

JOE
Can I help you with something?

MS. LEVIAS
Yes -- you can transfer me.

JOE
Where?

MS. LEVIAS
Out of here!

*

83B

OMITTED

83B

*

83C

INT. MAIN HALL - NIGHT

83C

JOE

You know, this doesn't surprise me one bit.

(pause)

I have sensed resistance in you since our very first meeting.

MS. LEVIAS

That alone does not mark you as the most perceptive of men. You are an egomaniacal windbag.

JOE

What???

MS. LEVIAS

You like to whip people who can't fight back! I thought I could deal with it. Because I had a father, in the same kind of pain -- that makes you such a bastard! But I was wrong! Life is much too short! I won't endure you any more!

JOE

Endure me?

MS. LEVIAS

The only reason I haven't walked out -- and half the staff along with me -- is because those children need us here! You're so busy talking discipline -- you forget to educate!!!

JOE

Is that right? Then what have I been doing???

MS. LEVIAS

You cleaned it up! That's fine! But that's the easy part! These students wanna be helped! They've worked their hearts out for you, Joe! Done everything we've asked of them! Believed those things we told them! But I feel sorry for them.

(pause)

They're not ready to take that test!

(CONTINUED)

83C

CONTINUED:

83C

JOE

What are you talking about? I
have done everything possible to --

MS. LEVIAS

I! It's always I! There are
three hundred teachers on the
faculty here! You do not do it
all alone!

JOE

I don't have to listen to these
accusations...

As he turns to go...

MS. LEVIAS

You will listen! You will stand
there and you will listen!!!

He stops. Pauses. Turns.

MS. LEVIAS

For the past seven months, you've
been flappin' your mouth, but you
haven't learned a thing. You
haven't seen what's so painfully
obvious here...

JOE

I see what I --

MS. LEVIAS

No, I'm talking now! Let me
finish!

(pause)

Everybody here may not like you as
a person... or approve of your
methods...

(pause)

But we all applaud your efforts.
You've created an atmosphere...
where we can teach --

(pause)

But what you don't understand is...
the very same people who support
you are the ones you are beating
up! You never even take the time
to say 'Thank you' -- 'Kiss my
foot!' -- You just step on their
necks -- you degrade them! You
turn them into...

JOE

Ms. Levias, what do you want????

(CONTINUED)

83C CONTINUED: (2)

83C

Joe has crossed back to Levias, to stand right in her face...

MS. LEVIAS

I want you to get this straight. Most of the people who work in this school are in it with you.

(pause)

They care about those kids -- this fight! They take it home at night the same as you! They are part of those children's lives! Your thoughtless cruelty hurts, Joe -- there isn't one of them that deserves it -- and they are sick of it! And so am I!

Levias whirls and goes... leaving Joe watching. He's been stung.

83D OMITTED
thru
89

83D
thru
89

90 INT. AUDITORIUM (APRIL 13)

90

(Full crew and teachers.) We PAN AROUND the room, which is packed with juniors and seniors. Silent. Waiting. Tense. Down by the piano... Joan Levias is watching.

ON STAGE

Joe sits in a wooden armchair. Immobile. Revealing nothing.

Then slowly Joe rises... and walks to the microphone -- dead center at the front of the stage. He waits until the room is still.

JOE

(at microphone)

In one hour you will take an exam -- administered by the state to test your basic skills... and the quality of education at Eastside High.

As Joe continues... he taunts the students, inciting them, pointing a finger -- accusing them.

(CONTINUED)

90

CONTINUED: (A1)

90

JOE

And I want you to know... what
the people out there think about
you and say about your chances!
They say: 'You are inferior!'

Shouts.

JOE

They say, 'You're nothing but a
bunch of niggers and spics and poor
white trash!'

The students are incensed! They holler back!

JOE

'Education is wasted on you!'

(CONTINUED)

90

CONTINUED:

90

Shouts.

JOE

'You cannot learn!' 'You're lost!'

The auditorium is in an uproar.

JOE

(shouting)

And I mean all of you!

(pause; then

quietly)

I want all white students -- to
stand up... Now.

The white students are freaked -- all 20 to 30 of them. The blacks and Hispanics are furious. But Joe's about to cool them off. He waits...

JOE

(softly)

These are my white children. They are the same as you! They've got no place to go. Or they'd have run out on us -- a long time ago -- like everybody else did!

(pause)

But they couldn't! And so they are here! In Eastside High! Like all of us! You can sit down.

(pause)

Do you get the point, people! Has it sunk in yet? We sink! We swim! We rise! We fall! We find our fate together!

(pause)

It took the help of a friend...

(looking at Joan

Levias)

... for me to understand that.

(pause)

And now I've got a message for the people out there -- who've abandoned us! And written you off!

(shouting)

Can you hear me?

KIDS

Yes!!!

JOE

Can you hear me????!!!

(CONTINUED)

KIDS

YES!!!!

JOE

Good! YOU ARE NOT INFERIOR!

Cheers!

JOE

Your grades may be! Your schools may have been! But you can turn that around... and prove those bastards wrong -- in exactly one hour! When you take that test! And win!!!

Loud cheers! He waits for quiet.

JOE

Now maybe I have failed you. Let you down somehow...

A few kids shout "No!"

JOE

It will not have been the first time...

(pause)

But you're not doing this for your teachers, or me... you are doing it for yourselves.

(pause)

So if your mind starts wandering ... Knuckle back down! Concentrate! Remember what's at stake... and show them what Eastside High is about...

(pause)

... A spirit... that will not die.

Silence. They are transfixed. Joe nods to Ms. Johnson, who climbs onstage to the mike.

She stands with her hands on the microphone stand, rocking to pick up rhythm. A hushed expectation settles on the crowd. The kids wonder what is coming, until she begins in a throaty a capella:

MS. JOHNSON

(singing again)

'Deep... deep in our hearts...
We all have pain.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)

We all have sorrow...
 Though... if we are wise...
 We know that there's...
 Always tomorrow.'

She blasts out -- joined by 2,000 little voices!

MS. JOHNSON

(singing)

'LEAN ON ME!

When you're not strong...
 I'll be your friend.
 Someone to carry on.
 Though... we won't be long...
 We're all gonna need...
 Somebody to lean on!
 You just call on me, brother...
 When you need a friend!'

KIDS

'We all need somebody... To lean on!'

MS. JOHNSON

'I just might have a problem...
 That you'll understand!'

KIDS

'We all need somebody...
 To lean on!'

They are on their feet! Rocking! Clapping! All the kids we know: Sams, Lionel, Robert... with a line of Puerto Ricans... swaying sideways back-and-forth! Joan Levias has tears in her eyes. Joe jumps down with the kids!

MS. JOHNSON

(singing)

'If... there is a load...
 You have to bear...
 That you can't carry.
 I'm right up the road.
 I'll share your load...
 If you just call me!'

MS. JOHNSON AND KIDS

'LEAN ON ME!

When you're not strong...
 I'll be your friend.
 I'll help you carry on...
 For, it won't be long...
 Till I'm gonna need...
 Somebody to lean on!'

(CONTINUED)

90

CONTINUED: (4)

90

The whole auditorium is rocking -- to the back of the balcony! The look on Joe's students' faces... as the main refrain repeats once more... is what this is all about.

SLOW FADE TO:

91

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY (APRIL 13)

91

(Full crew.) Kids are taking the state exam. Pencils are moving furiously. Brows are knit with concentration.

When Sams, lost in a daydream, starts staring out the window... his buddy Craig knocks him in the head... and gestures: get back to work! Sams wakes up, remembers where he is... and thanks Craig, silently. He really does want to do well.

92

QUICK CUTS - ALL AROUND SCHOOL (APRIL 13)

92

We see all the kids we know, doing the best they can.

93

INT. FIRE STATION - DAY (MAY 23)

93

*

(NOTE: May 22nd has been changed to May 23rd.)

*

MRS. BARRETT (V.O.)

How long am I supposed to wait???
You boys are playin' with the wrong
female...

Mrs. Barrett rants and raves. A few men lounge about. Chief Gains is getting reamed.

CHIEF GAINS

I've gone over there four times.
But I still have to catch him!

The Mayor enters, having been called...

CHIEF GAINS

Thank God... Don. Will ya talk
to her?

MRS. BARRETT

I thought we had made a deal!

Bottman grabs her arm to pull her aside...

BOTTMAN

You really don't have to broadcast
that...

(CONTINUED)

93

CONTINUED:

93

MRS. BARRETT

I've got a school board meeting tonight... and enough votes to get him out, if I can swing Mrs. Phipps. And I think I can. Now, to do that... I need proof, and to have that -- you have got to move on him...

BOTTMAN

We have tried to do that...

MRS. BARRETT

Bullshit. I have made promises of my own. I have got people linin' up with me right now... and if I can't deliver any better than you ... my credibility'll be shot. Now, I don't issue idle threats, but --

BOTTMAN

Don't then. I don't wanna hear it.

(calls)

Chief Gains...

(when Gains arrives)

Mrs. Barrett was promised some action. It's time to go get a court order... to get you past those guards.

94

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY (MAY 23)

94

*

Halfway down, in the seats, Kaneesha is crying, with Lillian beside her, trying to comfort her, although nothing is being said. There's nothing really to say. Kaneesha's been crying for a while.

In b.g., Joe leans in and spots them.

JOE

What are you two doing in here?

They straighten up, trying to act like nothing is wrong. But they are caught. Joe descends toward them.

JOE

What's going on?

(arrives)

What's the matter here? Lillian?

LILLIAN

You'll have to ask her.

(CONTINUED)

94

CONTINUED:

94

JOE

Kaneesha... what is it? Richard
giving you a difficult time?

Kaneesha weeps. Joe sits, realizing it is no joke.

JOE

Tell me. What is it?

KANEESHA

I got pregnant!
(cries)
Don't be mad at me, Mr. Clark...

JOE

Have you told your mother?

KANEESHA

I can't!

JOE

Is Richard the father?

KANEESHA

He say it's not his! But I know
it is! I ain't been with no
other boy before!

She cries even harder.

JOE

Lillian... could I please talk to
Kaneesha alone?

Lillian touches Kaneesha's shoulder, to comfort her and
say goodbye... then goes. Silence.

KANEESHA

I never meant for this to happen!!!

She cries, falling against Joe's chest. He holds her:

JOE

You know, lots of these girls get
pregnant... and bring a baby into
this world... to prove they can
accomplish something.

(pause)

But they're trying to prove the
wrong thing. You have a lot more
alternatives. You don't have to
settle for that.

(CONTINUED)

94

CONTINUED: (2)

94

KANEESHA

I'm scared! I don't know what to do!

JOE

I'll tell you what we'll do... We'll have your mother come to school... and put our heads together... and together we will help you decide what's best for you to do.

(pause)

You trust me, don't you -- right?

The auditorium doors burst open. Mr. Wright races in!

MR. WRIGHT

Mr. Clark!!!

Joe takes the time to finish with Kaneesha...

JOE

(to Kaneesha)

All right, then... tomorrow morning. Eight o'clock. I'll call your mother myself.

MR. WRIGHT

(arrives)

The Fire Chief! He got past the gate!!!

Joe leaps up -- grabbing Wright's walkie-talkie!

JOE

(on walkie-talkie)

This is Joe Clark!

MR. WRIGHT

I already called it in!

JOE

(ignores him;
on walkie-talkie)

All aides report to your stations!
The enemy is here! Unlock those doors! Code Ten!!!

As Joe races Wright up the aisle...

MR. WRIGHT

The doors all got unlocked, Mr. Clark...

(CONTINUED)

94

CONTINUED: (3)

94

They are met by Fire Chief Gaines... deputy chief Alonzo ... and two Paterson cops. With them is Mrs. Barrett.

CHIEF GAINES

Mr. Clark... you are under arrest.

JOE

What for?

CHIEF GAINES

Basically, for bein' an asshole... but, specifically for conspiracy to violate the fire code... and violation of the fire code, Section F-502.1

JOE

You'll never made it stick.

CHIEF GAINES

Oh, no?

Gaines has a pocket tape recorder in one hand, and a walkie-talkie in the other. He pushes the RECORDER PLAY button...

JOE

(on tape recorder)

Code Ten! Code Ten! This is Joe Clark! All aides report to your stations! The enemy is here! Unlock those doors! Code ten!

GAINS

Cuff him.

The Cop handcuffs Joe... then leads him into...

95

OMITTED

95

95A

INT. HALL - DAY (MAY 23)

95A

Joe is led away, in cuffs. Students (full crew) watch aghast. Ms. Levias approaches...

CLARENCE

Hey, Mr. Clark... what'd you do?

As Levias arrives...

(CONTINUED)

95A CONTINUED:

95A

MRS. BARRETT

(to Clarence)

Nothing. He's done nothing here
 but mystify you with his personal
 brand of snake oil! You go home
 and tell your parents... there's
 a school board meeting tonight...
 and we are gonna vote him out!

CLARENCE

Ya bitch! Hey -- vote on this!!!

As Clarence grabs his crotch...

JOE

(to Levias)

You're the acting Principal now.
 I trust you to do as I would
 myself.

The cop leads Joe through the doors.

96
 thru
 101

OMITTED

96
 thru
 101

102 INT. JAIL CELL - DUSK (MAY 23)

102

Joe sits on the bunk, inside. Napier and Rosenberg talk
 to him through the bars.

NAPIER

We're gonna have to go. The
 school board meeting's about to
 start. Looks like Mrs. Phipps
 is gonna fold.

ROSENBERG

Have you thought about a new line
 of work? Perhaps an exciting
 career in electronics?

Joe glares.

ROSENBERG

Just a little joke. I'm going.

He goes. Napier and Joe are alone. Joe looks at him,
 through the bars.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

NAPIER

I've got no complaints. As far as I'm concerned... what you did down there was a miracle. There's a light in those kids' eyes that was never there before.

(Napier is overcome)

You can't feel bad about this...

Napier has tears in his eyes. Joe gets up to comfort him. They hold each other through the bars...

JOE

(laughs to himself)

I teach those kids to stay out of jail...

(pause)

Look at me.

(pause)

I'm fine. Go home to Margaret.

Silence. Napier turns. He goes. Joe sits down on the bunk again. He is alone.

102A
thru
102D

OMITTED

102A
thru
102D

A102E INT. KANGAROO COURT - HEARING ROOM - DAY

A102E

All our worst fears are realized. School board members face a room full of citizens. Mrs. Barrett holds the floor. We PAN ACROSS: the faces of the school board members -- eleven, plus Mrs. Barrett. Napier and Rosenberg sit in the middle. The Mayor, with his aides, observes.

MRS. BARRETT

And now, my last point, Mrs. Phipps ... the one that tips the argument, is: he has failed at his professional task. We brought him in to save our school, from a takeover by the State. That was the mandate from our mayor! But the test scores on the practice exam were 35 percent below passing -- and there's no way that's gonna change! Maybe if we dump him now -- and get a new principal ourselves...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A102E CONTINUED:

A102E

MRS. BARRETT (CONT'D)

... show the State that we're doing something... we can pre-empt the takeover -- but only if we get him out before those final test scores come back! After that it'll be too late! This board won't have any power, it'll be nothing but a rubber stamp!

(pause)

Mrs. Phipps... those are the facts. I appreciate your personal loyalty ... but he's let our children down. And our loyalty should be to them.

Angry shouts. Napier gavels them down.

ANGLE - MRS. PHIPPS

looks pained and cowed.

MRS. BARRETT

I would like to bring this to a vote!

NAPIER

May I have order! Order! Please!

B102E INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

B102E

Joe lies on his bunk. He hears a distant SOUND... not discernible at first. Then he rises to walk to his barred window. Standing on the edge of the bunk, he leans out to get a look.

102E EXT. JAIL CELL WINDOW - DUSK (MAY 23)

102E

His joy blooms from within. CUT TO Joe's POV...

102F EXT. FRONT OF COURTHOUSE - DUSK (MAY 23)

102F

Marching around the corner and massing up in the square ... is a sea of Joe Clark's students... chanting...

KIDS

Free Mister Clark! Free Mister Clark!
Free Mister Clark! Free Mister Clark!
Free Mister Clark!

They block traffic, filling the courthouse steps.

A102G INT. KANGAROO COURT - HEARING ROOM - NIGHT

A102G

With the meeting still in an uproar... a cop comes to whisper to Rosenberg, who races to a window, to look out.

Rosenberg strolls back toward the head table...

BOTTMAN

I think we have heard enough debate... it is time to call the question.

ROSENBERG

Uh -- Mr. Mayor... I, um, uh... hate to interrupt this process... but... it seems that Mr. Clark's students... have assembled outside in an exercise of their, uh, First Amendment rights?

BOTTMAN

What? How many of 'em are out there?

ROSENBERG

Well, um, uh... all of them... sir.

B102G OMITTED
thru
102K

B102G*
thru
102K

102L INT. JAIL CELL (MAY 23)

102L *

The Mayor enters the room by the cell. Joe lies on the bunk, on his back, a smile on his face, tapping his foot to keep time with the chants outside...

KIDS (O.S.)

Free Mister Clark! Free Mister Clark!

A cop unlocks the jail cell, then leaves. Mayor Bottman walks in.

MAYOR

We're in a tight spot here.

Joe keeps bouncing his foot to the chant.

(CONTINUED)

102L CONTINUED:

102L

MAYOR

I'd like to enlist your help.
Not for me, or you... for those
kids. They're emotional. They're
all jacked up. You've got to send
them home.

JOE

I don't have to do anything...
but be black and die.

102M EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - NIGHT

102M

KIDS

Free Mister Clark! Free Mister
Clark! Free Mister Clark! Free
Mister Clark!

NEW ANGLE

Police vans arrive with cops spilling out and setting up
stations around the periphery of the crowd.

*

*

*

102N INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

102N

BOTTMAN

Let me put it this way. First:
I wanted you to succeed. Don't
think I wanted anything else.
But I know you're a realist, Joe
... so think about what would
happen... if a riot broke out,
and the cops went in and had to
clear that square.

(pause)

I'd have law and order on my side.
So the only people who'd get hurt
... are your kids, Joe...

103 EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - NIGHT (MAY 23)

103

Mrs. Barrett is on a bullhorn, but the mob of kids is
shouting her down...

MRS. BARRETT

(on bullhorn)

Children... listen to me. People,
please... you must all disperse
and return to your homes.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

103

CONTINUED:

103

MRS. BARRETT (CONT'D)

Your presence here is helping no one. We are trying to do what's right!

Clarence climbs up amidst the shouting and gestures for the bullhorn...

CLARENCE

All right, y'all -- listen up. Let's give her a chance to talk. She might have something to say, all right? So let's all chill out and settle down and listen to the bitch, okay?

(hands back bullhorn)

They're all yours...

The kids jeer her as Clarence rejoins them.

MRS. BARRETT

You can call me what you want... But the simple fact is that Mr. Clark has broken the laws of this state and exposed you all to grave danger. Chaining those doors is criminal. Why do you think they call him 'Crazy Joe'?

SAMS

Cause y'all don't understand him.

MARIA

He chained those doors to keep out the drug dealers! To make us all feel safe!

A103A INT. CITY HALL ENTRANCE - NIGHT (MAY 23)

A103A

With the Mayor leading the way... Joe is led to the door.

KIDS

(outside)

Free Mister Clark! Free Mister Clark!

Joe stops in the shadows... as Rosenberg collars the Mayor to bring him up to speed on the situation. Joe observes the crowd....

(Through the following sequence, INTERCUT Joe listening to the students who are unaware of his presence.)

(CONTINUED)

A103A CONTINUED:

A103A

RICHARD

The thing that you don't understand
is... Mr. Clark believes in us. He
created an --

KANEESHA

He don't believe in you!!! 'Cause
you don't even take care a' your
responsibility!!!

The girls all turn on Richard...

Mrs. Barrett continues to the crowd...

MRS. BARRETT

Despite what he himself believes...
Mr. Clark is not Eastside High!

KANEESHA

Mr. Clark is not only Eastside High...
Mr. Clark is our father! He's the
only father that some of us that
don't have fathers know! You don't
know a thing about Mr. Clark!!!

ANGLE - JOE

is incredibly moved by what the kids are saying. They
are jeering Mrs. Barrett...

MRS. BARRETT

People... people... just hear me...
the school board is meeting right
now... and I promise you... we will
get you what Eastside High deserves!
A good principal!

SAMS

We don't want a good principal!
We want Mr. Clark!!!

KIDS

(cheer)

Free Mister Clark! Free Mister
Clark!

ANGLE - JOE

takes a deep breath, and sadly starts down the steps.

When the kids see him... they roar...

But he takes the bullhorn from Mrs. Barrett... and holds
it above his head... as a signal for them to quiet down.

As they start to settle...

103A EXT. DOWN ADJACENT STREET - NIGHT (MAY 23) 103A
More police arrive.

Ms. Levias's CAR speeds down and SCREECHES to a halt,
next to the reinforcements.

She gets out and races through the crowd.

A103B EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - NIGHT (MAY 23) A103B

JOE
(on bullhorn)
People... listen up. I am going
to insist... that everyone here
go home... and let the laws of
the land prevail...

KIDS
No!

A chant begins to build... that even Joe cannot control.

KIDS
No! No! No! No!

ANGLE - ALL AROUND CROWD

As they chant "No!"... their angry defiance grows
threatening.

ANGLE - COPS

get nervous.

B103B EXT. RACING THROUGH THE CROWD - NIGHT (MAY 23) B103B

Joan Levias desperately tries to reach the front.

103B EXT. STEPS - NIGHT (MAY 23) 103B

Joe looks over at Napier. The Mayor is standing next to
him. The Mayor nods for Joe to continue, Mrs. Barrett is
standing with them too.

JOE
(on bullhorn)
People... I have told you...

Bursting through the crowd...

MS. LEVIAS
Mr. Clark!!

She fights up next to him on the steps. The students see
her and cheer...

(CONTINUED)

103B CONTINUED:

103B

JOE

I thought I left you in charge of these children...

MS. LEVIAS

Mr. Clark... here, read this. Read this now!

JOE

Is this what you call accepting your responsibility?! I thought we were...

MS. LEVIAS

Joe Clark -- read it. Read it.

She descends the steps to join the kids. Joe looks at the letter in his hands...

INSERT - CLOSEUP ON RETURN ADDRESS:

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
225 West State Street
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0500

BACK TO JOE

He takes the open envelope and reads it as the kids keep chanting...

KIDS

No! No! No! No!

Then Joe raises both his hands and signals them to quiet. They've been chanting long enough. They quiet down to listen to what he has to say...

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Dr. Napier... it is my duty... it is my privilege and my honor... to report to you that the students of Eastside High... have passed the Minimum Basic Skills Test!!!!

An incredible mighty roar from the crowd. Joe looks down upon the kids, then when they start to quiet... turns behind him...

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Mr. Mayor...

(CONTINUED)

103B CONTINUED: (2)

103B

The Mayor walks down to join him, thinking all is well...
Joe turns to him, still on the bullhorn.

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Mr. Mayor... On behalf of myself
... and the students of Eastside
High... you can tell the State to
go to hell!!!! You still wanna
fire me now?

As all his students cheer... and the Mayor's smile leaves
his face. Behind him, Mrs. Barrett goes...

JOE

(on bullhorn)

Joe Clark is not going anywhere!!!
These scores aren't high enough!!!
We still have work to do around
here!!!!

An unbelievable din... as the students celebrate their
triumph...

JOE

(on bullhorn)

People... Ghosts... listen up!!!

(pause)

Are you ready? All right! We got
the juice!!! Let's do it! So all
these people can hear it! And know
what Eastside High is all about!!!

(pause)

Are you ready, Ghosts?????????
Let me hear it!!!!!!!

Joe holds his arms above his head... taking the hand of
Ms. Levias... swaying, to count off the downbeat, then...
Sams runs up the steps to hug him... as...

All his students join in too... with Napier moving down to
join with Levias and Joe...

As the kids of Eastside High School... sing the school song
in the night... hands clasped, overhead:

KIDS

(sing)

Fair Eastside by thy side
We'll stand, and always
Praise thy name...
To ever lend our hearts and hands
To help increase thy fame...

(CONTINUED)

103B CONTINUED: (3)

103B

Joe starts down the courthouse steps... where he is engulfed by his students... who are glowing with a pride, that nothing in their lives has equalled...

*

KIDS

(continue singing)

The honor of old Eastside High
Brings forth our loyalty...

Joe, the Pied Piper of Paterson, marches into the night... with the students forming up and following behind in a joyous moonlight procession...

KIDS

(continuing singing)

So cheer for dear old Eastside
High
Lead on to victory...

104 OMITTED

104

105 LAST SHOT - ANGLE ON JOE (MAY 23)

105 *

surrounded by the kids who love him...

(CONTINUED)

105

CONTINUED:

105

KIDS

(sing)

So cheer for dear old Eastside
High...
Lead on...
To vic-to...
Ry!!!!!!!!!!!!

KIDS

(holler)

Hoot! Hoot! Hoot! Hoot!
Hoot! Hoot! Hoot! Hoot!
Hoot! Hoot! Hoot! Hoot!

CREDITS BEGIN:

MUSIC BEGINS:

A studio version of "LEAN ON ME" with major artist and kids.

106

EXT. GRADUATION DAY - DAY

106

Joe, in cap and gown, hands diplomas to the kids in the film.

Under each kid as he or she appears, we see the name of the character, and the name of the actor who played the role, with the high school the actor attends.

The LAST SHOT shows Joe Clark, played by Morgan Freeman... with Morgan's High School listed too.

Joe Clark is looking out at the kids smiling, beaming with pride.

FREEZE FRAME.

CREDITS ROLL...

MUSIC FADES TO...

THE END