GOIN' TO CHICAGO

FINAL SCRIPT

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(With James Grossman, George King and Sam Pollard)

c 1994 George King & Associates 372 Glenwood Avenue SE Atlanta, GA 30312 1. EXT: HIGHWAY

The camera PICKS UP a bus moving along the road. A banner, taped to its side, reads: "Greenville Travel Club."

INT: BUS

Some sixty members of the club, sporting reunion T-shirts and buttons, are returning to their hometown in the Mississippi Delta. Their mood is festive, high-spirited. They clearly are eagerly anticipating the events which lie ahead.

Man in Blue Shirt

Oh, I enjoy comin' back.

Lena Vasser

Whoever would have thought the road from Mississippi and back and my homecoming and all of this would have led to sitting on the bus, being interviewed, looking out the window seeing how wonderful, how great God is. Here we have an opportunity that perhaps a lot of people will never get, but the joy is that we are all sharing as Mississippians and trying to say in a nut shell how glad we are from whence we came, we never regretted it.

Viethel Wills

That's right. And I can remember the time when we couldn't even afford to ride on the bus. Now, we can charter our own buses. (Laughter)

Lady in Green Sweatshirt

From the cotton fields to the Sears Building, the tallest building in the world, that's progress, baby, progress.

Lena Vasser

It's something great about going back to your beginnings because whatever was instilled in you when you left there; you carry it with you all your days.

Bus Passengers [sing]

I'll be sittin' up there,

I'll be sittin' up there, Come on up to the front of the bus I'll be sittin' up there.

[We see the "Welcome to Mississippi" highway sign. There is a loud cheer from the passengers.]

Song mixes to title music, "I was Born in the Delta": [Muddy Waters] which establishes then fades under narration.

Well my home is in the Delta Way out on that farmer's road Now ya know I'm leavin' in Chicago And people ya know I sure do hate to go Now ya know I'm leavin' here in the morning Won't be back here no more.

2. TITLE SEQUENCE

NARRATION

THESE BUS RIDERS ARE CHICAGO RESIDENTS RETURNING HOME TO THEIR MISSISSIPPI ROOTS FOR A REUNION. FIFTY YEARS AGO THEY AND MILLIONS OF OTHER BLACK SOUTHERNERS LEFT THE COTTONFIELDS AND JIM CROW WORLD OF THE SOUTH SEEKING FREEDOM AND PROSPERITY IN THE NORTHERN AND WESTERN CITIES. IT WAS THE LARGEST INTERNAL MIGRATION IN UNITED STATES HISTORY. THEIR PURSUIT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM HAS CHANGED THIS COUNTRY DRAMATICALLY AND PERMENANTLY. THIS IS THEIR STORY.

MaeBertha Carter

My name is Mae Bertha Carter. I was born in Sunflower County and I'm 69 years old. I have 13 children.

Koko Taylor

We farmed and raised cattle, chicken, cows, horses, hogs, cotton...That's what my folks were doin', they was sharecroppers. In fact just about everybody I knew at that time was sharecroppers.

MaeBertha Carter

A sharecropper is a person that worked for the landowner for only half. Everything is on the half. My husband, he could 'scribe it better. He said a sharecropper mean that you work twenty years for yourself and twenty years for somebody else.

Dr. Martin

The sharecropper had to pay for the seeds, the sharecropper had to pay for the fertilizer, the sharecropper had to pay for the maintenance of the tractors, had to pay for the gas, had to pay for the fuel, had to pay for the feed for the horses and the mules. And, yet, when the crop was gathered, the sharecropper gathered it all and then the owner took half of that.

Clory Bryant

It was a form of slavery! You know, not just control, it was a form of slavery. You just absolutely worked for your board and keep.

Dr. Martin

My parents and I worked a whole year and my Dad would make three hundred dollars. Some folks make that in a days time now.

MaeBertha Carter

Sometimes I tell ya, I get sad about it. It's sad. Um, then again, I get mad [chuckles]. So there are different kind of feelings. [chuckles] But we didn't have no other choice. We had to do it. We didn't have no other choice.

Mildred Fleming

I was born right down the road, and I look down the road and my mind go back to when you just didn't have anything when you go to school all day without anything to eat. And they would have a turnip patch for the school cafeteria for to cook and that's how we would eat. Sometimes we would go out there in the turnip patch and get some turnips and things and eat them for dinner.

And most times in the winter time we had but three cents to buy one box of milk and by the time we came home, we was so hungry till where we was there to eat, that's what we would eat. But usually it was a pot of beans. But the last year of school my mama was sick, so that meant I had to come home and I had to cook, before I could eat. And your stomach is just tearin' up inside while you tryin' to cook. And you know you can't eat, you can't eat while you're cookin' cause there's got to be enough for everybody else. And now I don't appreciate food very much, but I'm glad I can eat it if I want to.

MUSIC: "Field Holler"

MaeBertha Carter

I didn't get any education at all. I didn't have the opportunity to go to school because when I was born 69 years ago, there wasn't no school houses for the children to go to.

Dr. Martin

During my early childhood, the school system operated for, from seven to eight months and we had what was known as the split session. The school year revolved around the farmers need for the use of students or the children as laborers on the farm.

MaeBertha Carter

That means the black children didn't start school until about the 15th of November, so they could you know - pick cotton. And the white childrens was going to school all the time -they started going to school from September until June.

Cliff Duwell

I worked in the fields, I started at an early age. You know, most kids at that time started when they could just pick cotton. Could just stand up good, as long as they could pull a lock of cotton out the boll you know. When I got to be about eight or nine years old I was a regular field hand.

Mildred Fleming

If you was tall you could start chopping at about nine. But if you was short you had to wait until you was about eleven or something like that to start.

MUSIC: Harmonica wail

Koko Taylor

And the way we pick cotton is to wear a cotton sack on our back, 'round our neck, and we drag this long sack down the cotton row. And when it get full, we'd empty it, come back and start all over again, you know. And some people was real good, you know, pickin', like, two, three hundred pounds a day, and that didn't apply to me at all. I ain't never been good in the field; I ain't never liked the field. I was in the field 'cause this is what I had to do.

Bernice Thomas

I loved the South in one way, you know, I didn't love that choppin' cotton; that's hard on your back, hard on your hands. I didn't love that cotton work. Mm-mm. Me and my brother used to cry all the time, "Please help us, God. Get us outta here." So He made a way, He made a way. It was hard, but He made a way.

INT: NEW MOUNT PILGRIM MISSION BAPTIST CHURCH, CHICAGO Reverend James McCoy: SINGS...

I know the Lord will make a way Yes He will

HOME MOVIE

6. EXT/INT: GREENVILLE ELK LODGE

The Greenville Club's bus pulls up in front of the Elk Lodge. As the members get off, they are warmly greeted by family and friends - hugs, kisses, much laughter. Inside the Lodge, guests for the reunion are being registered. Former residents of Greenville have returned to their hometown from all across the country.

Viethel Wills (Improvised Voice Over)

Just goin' home means an awfull lot....And Saturday night will be the big dance -- everything will be goin' on!

NARRATION

THE MOVE THAT TOOK THESE GREENVILLE RESIDENTS FROM THEIR SOUTHERN RURAL ROOTS TO AMERICA'S INDUSTRIAL HEARTLAND WAS PART OF THE LARGEST INTERNAL MIGRATION IN UNITED STATES HISTORY. THE MIGRANTS LEFT THE SOUTH IN TWO GREAT WAVES BETWEEN 1915 AND THE 1960'S. BY 1929, POVERTY, AMERICAN APARTHEID AND THE BOLL WEEVIL HAD DRIVEN ONE AND A HALF MILLION AFRICAN AMERICANS TO THE NORTHERN AND WESTERN CITIES. IN THE 1940'S THE SECOND WAVE BEGAN...

7. SIMULATED NEWSREEL I

NARRATION

Movietime News in the Mississippi Delta. The machine Age has finally hit the southland. From Texas to Tennessee robots are rapidly replacing field hands like Mr. and Mrs. Jackson and their ten kids. The Jackson family picks a ton of cotton every day -- one of these mechanical cotton pickers reaps that much in a single hour. Whats going to happen to the Jacksons and millions like them? Maybe some of these folks will end up in Chicago on the line at International Harvester building these sleek new machines that are making their long-time way of life obsolete.

Cecil Jones

Machinery done taken over. My boy be running an 8 row machine out there right now. He can plow 280 acres of cotton a day so what they want with 4 or 5 more other men out there. They don't need them. So that's the reason the rural is like it is now. Machinery have completely taken over.

MaeBertha Carter

I didn't stay out on the farm too long after that. When those mechanical cotton pickers came in was about the time we were told to leave the farm.

Maud Jones

Seemed like all the jobs that came through then, the white had them all and there wasn't anything for the black people to do but still go back to the field. They didn't go to school to cook for a tractor driver, so they just didn't stay here to do it.

MaeBertha Carter

So I had thirteen kids and my dream was for all of them to go to school and get the best education they could get and then move us away from the farm.

Son Thomas

My grandmother raised me up. She always loved the country and I started of farming and I never could make no money out of farming. Every time you make a crop, you come out behind either you clear \$100, so I couldn't live out of that. So my grandmother told me said, "Son, if you move to town you going to have to eat out the garbage can." I said, "Well, next year I'm going to try moving to town and I may have to eat out the garbage can, but I'm going to leave here."

Thomas begins to sing "Highway 61 Blues." The music is interwoven throughout the following sequence.

Y'know 61 Highway..the loneliest road I know,

Y'know 61 Highway...the loneliest road I know, It runs from Chicago, Down to the Gulf of Mexico.

Koko Taylor

When I was 18 years old, I left Memphis, my husband and I. And we got that Greyhound bus up Highway 61, headed north to Chicago. He didn't have no money, and I didn't have no money. We had one box of Ritz crackers that we split between us, was all we had to eat. With no money, nowhere to live, no nothing; we just taking a chance. And I figured, "If he got enough nerve to take a chance with nothin', I have too." So that's what we did.

MUSIC: "Highway 61 Blues" fades up for a verse

Viethel Wills

I came to Chicago on a train.

But I think what I remember most about that train ride, the conductor, when we got to Cairo, Illinois, he said, "OK, you can throw down that 'yes sir' and 'no sir' and say 'yes' and 'no' now." That what I remember mostly about the train ride.

MUSIC: "Highway 61 Blues" concludes.

John Henry Davis

I hitchhiked my way all the way up here. I got one ride with white guy in a car--he was tryin' it out. He brought me all the way to Chicago. I ain't have but \$2. I got here and my sister s'posed to let me stay at her house but she wouldn't let me stay there, then I slept in a car.

Clory Bryant

We came in my brother's car. It was a new Dodge..and we came in the middle of the night. And he drove all the way. There were no hotels or motels for blacks, so you had to stop on the side of the road and take a nap. And he had worked all the way up until Friday evening on his job. He left there in the afternoon, drove to Arkansas, picked us up, we sold out our furniture and gave away a lot of stuff and rented a trailer and put it on the back of his car and we came. So he was trying to get back to work for Monday and he was trying to drive nonstop and he kept nodding at the wheel. But it didn't frighten me, because I thought you could nod and drive. You know, he drove down there, so I assumed he could take me back. And I always felt so safe with him and my father.

MUSIC: "Bright Lights, Big City" (Jimmy Reed)

Bright Lights, big city. Gone to my baby's head.

Bright Lights, big city. Gone to my baby's head.

Tried to tell your mama, That you don't believe a word I said.

Clory Bryant

Finally we ran into Chicago. I thought that I had reached the Promised Land...

Koko Taylor

We got to Chicago, and I never will, I'll never forget that time when that Greyhound bus rolled up there at 63rd and Cottage Grove, and I saw all the bright lights. I had never saw these many bright lights in my life. I said, "Good God, Almighty, this must be heaven, or that place they talk about Paris, one or the other."

Viethel Wills

I think I was expecting the Milky Way, I really did. I was expecting some Las Vegas that we aint heard about.

FACSIMILE NEWSREEL II

NARRATION

Chicago... "Hog butcher for the world...tool maker stacker of wheat..player with railroads and the nations freight handler."

Poet Carl Sandburg knows his lakeside metropolis well. For nearly a century, millions of impoverished European immigrants carved out new and better lives in this "city of big shoulders." Newcomers still arrive each day but now they're coming up from Dixie! Hundreds of thousands of southern Negroes are pouring into Chi-town, their suitcases loaded with democracy's dreams: freedom and prosperity for everyone.

Unita Blackwell

Most of our people from down in here went to Chicago. It was like they was going somewhere where they had it made. You knew, that if they got away, that one of these days that maybe you was going to go too.

Mildred Fleming

As one got grown, they would leave. All of my family now is in California. The way they did it, the first one left and as the next one get out of school, that one would send for the other one. That's how we all got away from home

Geri Oliver

My aunts were here and my uncles were here and they housed me until I could get a job. So, I always had family around me. Because being born in the South, we are very protective of each other

MaeBertha Carter

My kins people went to Chicago, neighbors went to Chicago and we called it Mississippi, Chicago.

MUSIC: "Chicago Bound" [Jimmy Rogers]

I'm gonna tell you something that you all should know Chicago is the best place you ever could go I'm gonna stay in this town I'm gonna live in this town I'm gonna live in this town Chicago is the best place in the land.

Dr. McKinley Martin

I had kinfolk and friends who had visited us. They would come home to funerals or some reason from Chicago and we'd exchange letters and we used the mail-order houses up there and I just wanted to go to Chicago.

LETTER FROM THE CHICAGO DEFENDER.

<u>Clory Bryant</u>

People had come home on vacations, you know, to funerals, and they had on beautiful clothes and money in their pocket, driving cars, and calling home and talking on the telephone, and I thought gee, they must be rich.

Vernon Jarrett

Every Southerner from the central part of the South knew about Chicago. Chicago was the heaven that you fantasized about.

MUSIC: "Deep Forest" [Earl Hines]

Vernon Jarrett (Voice Over)

Radio had a tremendous impact in terms of making people dream of going North one day.

You heard music comin' from the Grand Terrace Cafe, Earl Hines, Earl "Fatha" Hines. Duke Ellington played here; Cab Calloway played here. Young Count Basie played here. This is where you had the Regal Theater.

Chicago--this was a place where Black people could talk back to white people and could vote.

And also this was the home of the Chicago Defender newspaper...the people in Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, going right down through the Delta, and the Illinois central line, we read the Chicago Defender, and we would also have great dreams and great fantasies about this place, this mecca with human rights and stability and what have, called Chicago.

And of course, much of this was exaggeration, but it was the kind of exaggeration that people needed to maintain hope in this country and in their own lives.

NARRATION

PEOPLE MOVED TO JOIN FAMILY MEMBERS ALREADY ESTABLISHED. IN SOME CASES CHURCHES AND ENTIRE COMMUNITIES RELOCATED THOUSANDS OF MILES FROM THEIR SOUTHERN HOMELAND TO MAKE A NEW LIFE. FIFTY YEARS AGO THE FOUNDERS OF CHICAGO'S NEW MOUNT PILGRIM MISSION BAPTIST CHURCH JOURNEYED NORTH FROM MISSISSIPPI TOGETHER. TODAY, THE CONGREGATION STILL MAINTAINS THEIR SOUTHERN TIES.

Rev. James McCoy (Preaching)

We have spent some suffering days, some trials, tribulations. There has been some shortage of bread. There have been some shortage of meat in our land and country.

We suffered. We didn't have and we worked land that we thought we owned and after a while we found out we didn't own it and all kinds of problems. We would go to town and we had to wait 'till everybody else pass by and then we could walk up on the streets real good, you know. And it was a suffering life. If we walked up to a counter we had to wait until everybody else was gone. And then we could buy whatever we wanted and then paid more than anybody else. And it was always a problem in our way of life. We suffered to get this far.

MUSIC: In a Time like this.

Archival Klan footage.

John Wiley

I was working at the Army Depot there in Memphis. One day when we was leaving, going home on the bus, a white fellow came up to me on the back of the bus and wanted my seat and I told him I wasn't going to give it to him.

I said, "You better go on up there in the front where you belong." It was segregated there then, see. And everybody on the bus said, "Yeah, let them try to put you off the bus." So the bus driver told him said, "You ought to come up here man, set up here in the front 'cause you going to get in a lot of trouble." I said, "Yeah, he sure gone get in a lot trouble." I was so angry then. I had a switchblade knife in my pocket. I went home and I told my wife I said, "I'm gonna leave here before I get in trouble." And I went the next day and put in my resignation and came to Chicago, and I've been here ever since.

HOME MOVIE

FRONT PORCH of Viethel Wills' family home. She and her husband Odell are reminiscing with her brothers, Lev and R.C., both of whom remained in Mississippi.

Lev Wills

You know, there's places in the North that's more worser than the places here in the South.

Odell Wills

I know that. Before Martin Luther King, it was everywhere. Even in New York. I was wearing a U.S. Navy uniform and I'd go into a restaurant and they would break the plate after I had dinner.

Viethel Wills

Lev stopped right there in Cairo, Illinois, and went there to order some hamburgers and they told him he had to go round to the back and order.

Lev Wills

I went round there and ordered ten hamburgers. And when she fixed them I said, "Y'all eat them." And got in the car and took off. And the whole time I was going down the highway, I was looking back, because I didn't know what they was going to do next. I was looking back!

NARRATION

MIGRANTS USUALLY FOLLOWED THE MOST DIRECT COMMUNICATION ROUTES NORTH AND WEST. FROM GEORGIA AND THE CAROLINAS TO WASHINGTON DC, PHILADELPHIA, BALTIMORE, NEW JERSEY AND NEW YORK. FROM ALABAMA TO DETROIT. FROM THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY UP TO CHICAGO AND FROM TEXAS AND LOUSIANA OUT TO LOS ANGELES AND OAKLAND. BUT FOR ALL THE PROMISE OF URBAN AMERICA, NOT ALL BLACK AMERICANS CHOSE TO LEAVE THE SOUTH.

Maebertha Carter

I felt like we could do better in Mississippi without a education than I could goin' up into a big city without a education.

I always wanted to go to a city, but when I got to that city, I wanna be livin' real good at that city. I don't just wanna be there and that's it. Can't hardly survive.

Mildred Fleming

I stayed six years. OK, the city is not for everybody and I was one of those people that it wasn't for. So I came back to get married here. That was my reason for coming back.

Unita Blackwell

I decided to stay, and in come a group of people in 1964, and we eventually talked about civil rights, and I had found in life what I wanted to do and that was to fight for freedom. And, I'm here and I've been here every since.

Son Thomas

Well the reason I didn't leave going off to Chicago cause I could have been in Chicago recording records on account of my family. I wanted to stay with my family and see after them.

12. INT: ARTIS' BAR, SOUTH SIDE CHICAGO

The crowded club's primarily black patrons are grooving to the music of Billy Branch's SOB Band. Guitar/vocalist Carl Weathersby begins to talk over a slow tempo blues beat laid down by the instrumentalists.

Carl Weathersby

What I'd like to do now y'all is pay my formal tribute to two of the world's greatest men. And, just like me, they just happen to be fellow Mississippians. One of them was born McKinley Morganfield in Rolling Fork; the other one was born Chester Arthur Burnett in West Point, Mississippi. But the world know those men as Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, y'all. Now them fellows, they grew up down in rural Mississippi. That mean that they had to work mighty hard and they didn't get paid very much, you know what I mean. So, they looked North, through Memphis, Tennessee. Came on through St. Louis, Missouri and ended up in Chicago, Illinois, y'all. Like so many of us. It was plenty work but not enough pay, you know what I mean. The only way I can pay tribute to them is to sing about it.

(Starts to sing Howlin' Wolf's classic "Back Door Man" -- hold through chorus and mix under narration.)

AUDIO MONTAGE

When I first came here you could get a job any side of the street you choose.

So if you leave a job on the corner you can get one midway down the block.

RETIRED STEELWORKERS IN THE UNION HALL

Maiden

I had relatives here, they helped me to get a place to live. When I got to Chicago I found out it was really a hub for work.

Lumpkin

At that time Chicago was the best place to find a job. You could go to Ohio or any place like that an around they wouldn't hire like they I'm tellin ya like he say when you come to Chicago you was just about ready to get a job.

Robertson

I had a choice I coulda went to Buffalo, New York, or Detroit but I choose Chicago. It was a gangster town. An I wanted to see what this gangster town looked like.

MUSIC: Billy Branch -- harmonica lick...

Timuel Black

Beyond the steel mill and the stockyard, it was a great manufacturing center. It was the hub of the railroad industry. There were jobs to be found in service industries, in various hotels, and there was an opportunity for those who were entrepreneurs to go into business, who had that kind of aspiration.

Geri Oliver

I was born in Jackson, Mississippi, and I came here in the 40's to go to school and become a medical technologist and mortician...However, the war started while I was here and I got a job at Western Electric and I never looked back because I made more money than I've ever seen in Jackson, Mississippi.

Koko Taylor

I was lucky enough to get a job right away, cleaning house, you know, house cleaning, and this was up on Chicago's North shore side.

They started me of cleaning house at five dollars a day, and that's a long way from three dollars a week! [laughs]

John Wiley

I would leave here at 7 o'clock in the morning. I would get downtown at 7:30. And I would be the first one up on the elevator at Sears Roebuck, and I would open up the 8th floor and I would work around in the mailroom until the mail come and then I would distribute the mail around in the different sections. And I would work there until 3 o'clock in the evening. At 3 o'clock in the evening, I'd walk to the post office and work 8 hours and when I get off from the post office, a fellow would bring me home every night and my wife would be standing in the door when I got home. And I would eat a snack and go to bed. I done that for 25 years, working two jobs.

Timuel Black

There was a saying, as I remember, that my dad used to laugh about. He said, "You know, I had a job for a guy, and the guy said, 'You do?' Bring me the job and let me look at to see whether I want it or not." There was another expression, if you can't make it in Chicago -- you can't make it anywhere.

FACSIMILE NEWSREEL III

NARRATION:

Thousands of marchers strut their stuff down Grand Boulevard, the main stem of Chicago's South Side...Bronzeville -- the Harlem of the heartland...Its the annual Bud Billiken parade, the brainchild of Chicago Defender publisher Robert Abbott. A day when Bronzeville's four hundred thousand citizens pay tribute to their community and their accomplishments with style and pride. Here's the champ Joe Louis...the South Side's world class hero...and these are some of the newer stars the Fultz quadruplets -- with big smiles and waves for all the happy homefolks. For at least one day a year its a chance to celebrate the achievements of Chicago's exploding Negro population.

Zedrik Braden

Bronzeville was a kind of symbolic name in - not only was a name, it was a way of life that described the whole of the southside.

MUSIC: Reprieve -- Deep Forest [Earl Hines], mixes under..

Geri Oliver

Anybody and everybody was on 47th Street. Our late mayor lived here. Our late congressman lived here and so at the corner of where South Center Department Store, there was a professional building where all the doctors, dentists, lawyers and Indian Chiefs were.

Tim Black

We had businesses, insurance companies; we had churches, where Black pride was regularly preached,

Geri Oliver

Whoever you wanted to emulate, you had your peers right here.

Zedrik Braden

The Chicago Bee. The Chicago Defender. Those institutions grew up around 35th and 33rd streets.

Vernon Jarrett

People read the Chicago Defender to find out what other Black people were doing in other parts of the country. This was where you, you were introduced to your great scholars and all of the success stories that were left out of the white media.

MUSIC: Reprieve -- Deep Forest [Earl Hines], mixes under ..

Geri Oliver

People have lived in Chicago all their life and never been to the loop. Because anything and everything that you needed for whatever your existence was -- you could find it here on 47th Street.

Clory Bryant

And there was all kinds of shoe stores and dress stores and men's shops and movies and lounges and nightclubs. And oh, my God! I had just never seen anything like this and it was just fascinating.

Tim Black

There was no feeling of loneliness, or even oppression in our community, though we had more than our share of poor people. We had great deal of hope that whatever the maladies where, they would be overcome.

NARRATION

AS BRONZEVILLE'S NUMBERS SWELLED, SO THE GREAT MIGRATIONS CREATED URBAN BLACK COMMUNITIES IN EVERY MAJOR AMERICAN CITY; WATTS, EAST ST. LOUIS, AND HARLEM. THE GREENVILLE TRAVEL CLUB HAS CHAPTERS IN FOURTEEN CITIES ACROSS AMERICA THAT MEET EVERY YEAR FOR THIS REUNION.

HOME MOVIE

GREENVILLE TRAVEL CLUB REUNION DANCE

We see a montage of Greenvillians who have migrated all over America reunited at the dance. A lot of hugs, hi-fives, shared memories, and dancing. On the track Hank Ballard and the Midnighters perform, Lets Go, Lets Go, Lets Go!. Viethel Wills improvises V.O.

NARRATION: LETTER

Vernon Jarrett

If you were in the real estate business, you could become a rich man overnight, if you owned a considerable apartment dwellings. You could take say, a six flat building and turn it into a 12-, if not an 18-, apartment building. This is when we saw the rise of the kitchenette,

Koko Taylor

Wasn't nothin' fancy...its just a one room. And you sleep in that room, you eat in that room, you do everything in that room 'cept go to the bathroom. So they called 'em one room kitchenettes. Yeah, stayed there a long time.

John Wiley

Everybody was living in kitchenettes when I got here. Black people didn't have no homes here at all. They were living in kitchenettes and I would come in one of them kitchenettes and you couldn't turn around in the kitchen. And I thought that was awful when I had been living in houses all my life, and with plenty of room.

NARRATION

THE KITCHENETTES WERE INFAMOUS FIRETRAPS -- OFTEN LANDLORDS OF THESE TENEMENTS WERE DEMANDING TWO AND THREE TIMES THE RENT THAT AN APPARTMENT WOULD GO FOR IN CHICAGO'S EXCLUSIVELY WHITE GOLD COAST NEIGHBORHOOD. BUT THINGS WERE SOON TO CHANGE

18. MONTAGE

Archival footage and stills of black soldiers in combat during World War II. The sequence makes clear their major contributions and sacrifices in the armed struggle against fascism. A song from the period I'm A Soldier by the Soul Stirrers plays underneath the images.

Timuel Black [Voice Over]

After World War II, some of us returned with a new vision of what the world ought to be like; I was one of those.

When I left to go to the Army, in the early part of 1943, the South Side of Chicago had something like 225-250,000 people. When I returned, that number had doubled.

Many of the young men who returned and got married had to live with their parents for a period of time. So we began to look for new places to live, to break out of the old Black Belt, the old ghetto.

ARCHIVAL NEWSREEL FOOTAGE

Oliver Ming & wife

I'm a World War vet. I have attempted to purchase housing within the area of which I work -- I have been unsuccessful.

Mr. Canson

On one occasion I was told by the salesman of a large real estate company, "Mr. Canson, you appear to be a reasonable man. Let's be frank with each other. If I were to sell you a house in one of those areas, I'd be out of business inside of thirty days."

Vernon Jarrett

During that same period, you had a type of exploitation that went on for years, maybe you still see remnants of it, where the mortgage companies got together with the insurance companies, and the construction industry, and a Black person, regardless of means, education or reputation, simply couldn't get a mortgage.

Slate 518

On your deed, you would see a restrictive clause in there, prohibiting the sale of the said property to anybody not of the Caucasian race. And they began during the World War I era, that migration to Chicago to keep neighborhoods exclusively white and exclusively black.

MUSIC: No restricted signs up in heaven." [Golden Gate Gospel Quartet]

John Wiley

Chicago was segregated worse than it was in the South when I got here. I found a no cab drivers black, I found no bus drivers black, I found no truck drivers black, and I had been seeing all that down South. So I figured I done come to a segregated place worse than I left.

Viethel Wills

We don't rent to Blacks. We don't rent to Negroes. That's what they said at that time. It wasn't blacks. We don't rent to Negroes.

And I went to somewhere one day and somebody asked where did I live. And I told them I was living at 71st and Harbor, they didn't even believe that I lived in that neighborhood. But it just changed that quick because you know once blacks start moving in, then the whites are gone.

John Wiley

And they moved out, they moved out. Everytime one colored person moved into a neighborhood, they all would sell out. They would move out and go to the suburbs. You know, they all go to the suburbs.

Christine Houston

My father was always a pioneer. He was the first black to have his own scavenger business. He was the first black to have his own produce business. And after he'd break um in he would go on off to something else. So he made good money. And he remarried. And he married a lady who was inspired to live in a nice house, in a nice neighborhood. And we were the first blacks to move into a neighborhood called Park Manor.

Vernon Jarrett

A blockbuster was considered the first black person to move into a previously all-white block. And the idea was, that the very presence of that first black face was going to create a hysterical reaction out of the residents who would try to escape because of real estate broker who's telling them: "If you don't hurry and get out, your property is going to be lowered in value the longer you stay."

Ruth Wells

Realtors would move in a black person with a lot of children. And ah so therefore if they the people the white in the neighborhood who already live there, would see all these little kids, black kids running around. And they didn't like that.

So people are frightened if they worked all their young lives to buy a home. I would have been frightened too,

And they didn't give em very much for the houses, but ah but they went up the price sometime double price when they get ready to sell to the black.

[VIDEO GRAPHICS: Chicago black neighborhoods expand]

NARRATION

WITH THE LAKE ON ONE SIDE AND CICERO, BRIDGEPORT AND OTHER BASTIONS OF WHITE RESISTANCE ON THE OTHER, BLACK CHICAGOANS SEEKING TO MOVE OUT OF THE CONFINES OF THE SOUTH SIDE GHETTO HAD ONLY ONE OPTION -- THEY WENT FURTHER SOUTH, CROSSING FIRST 63RD. STREET, THEN 75TH AND EVENTUALLY BEYOND 90TH.

Tim Black

We went South, and it was almost a block-by-block advance -like the fighting in Germany -- taking street by street. And it was almost as violent as when I was in the army.

ARCHIVAL NEWSREEL FOOTAGE

Clark family assaulted in Cicero, IL. National Guard called out. [Original newsreel voice over used.]

Christine Houston

I will never forget. It was in 1950. I was a teenager, I think I was a junior in High School.

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Well the second or third day after we moved in I was standing at the kitchen sink washing dishes. And I had anticipated a problem but so far we hadn't had one. And all of sudden a rock was throw through the kitchen window and wizzed past me, glass shattered all over me, at the same time I heard the rock come through the living room window. Ah I hit the floor. My stepmother ran in and started cutting lights out and I crawled to my bedroom as I crawled I heard the shot gun blast. And I assumed that they were now shooting at us. And and we were all going to be dead for moving into this all white neighborhood.

Ruth Wells

When we moved in the trouble started, I mean really started.

There was a meat market about a half a mile from the house, and I was going up there to buy some meat. And they saw me coming. There were about, oh eight or ten that spreaded themselves across the sidewalk.

Christine Houston

I just knew someone was going to be killed that night. And in fact I did not realized that my father had anticipated that this would occur.

Ruth Wells

So I walked up to the crowd as though I didn't see em. And I took my elbow, and start my way through, like that. And they stepped back, after they found out I wasn't going to run. But I certainly wanted to run....

Christine Houston

So my father was prepared and evidently he was the one at the window doing the shooting. Of course he didn't injure anyone. He was really shooting to let them know that this was our home, and they could not make us go. And we weren't afraid. And I was afraid. I was terrified.

Ruth Wells SL 707-1 & ?

But I knew I had to make it through here today alone, or I'm not goin to make it. And I knew had to live there. So I just took a chance and I went through. Made me brave.

New Mount Pilgrim Mission Baptist Church Choir sings: Amazing

NARRATION

GRADUALLY THE AFRICAN AMERICAN NEIGHBORHOODS OF THE SOUTH AND WEST SIDES EXPANDED UNTIL BLACK MIGRATION INTO THE CITY FINALLY SLOWED AND BLACK AND WHITE RESIDENTS FORMED AN UNEASY TRUCE.

HOME MOVIE

A POPULAR FISHING HOLE, NEAR GREENVILLE, MS.

We see familiar members of the Greenville Travel Club on a fishing expedition. It is a quiet pastoral scene. Little is said.

FACSIMILE NEWSREEL IV

NARRATION

There's little room at the inn these days on Chicago's South Side. Overcrowded housing in America's largest Negro neighborhoodis forcig the federal government and the city fathers to take bold steps.

Mayor Daley

This project represents the future of a great city. It represents vision....

NARRATION (CONT.)

Massive new Public Housing projects are rising from the infamous slums and tenements. Plans had called for scattering these projects around the city, but many white neighborhoods wouldn't have them. So Mayor Daley has decided to built up rather than out. The result clean modern housing in 20 story blocks like Cabrini Green or the Robert Taylor Homes seen here.

With over a thousand southern Negroes -- many without skills, still streaming into the Windy City every week, the folks in Bronzeville need all the help they can get.

Clory Bryant

There was a shortage, really a bottleneck on housing in the City of Chicago, because so many people had migrated from the South to come here during the war. And of course, they didn't go back and housing was very much in demand. So I was able to get an apartment in Cabrini Green.

It was like a little town, a little small town. We used to get to bed at night and leave the front door open. This was the attitude and the way that people lived in Cabrini at that time.

Timuel Black (Voice Over)

The first people who moved in Robert Taylor were relatively young; it was racially mixed but very mobile.

Clory Bryant

We had school teachers, we had secretaries, policemen, you know. These are the kinds of people who inhabited Cabrini in the early days. And these people banned together to try to really make it a place to live.

Viethel Wills

I moved to the Robert Taylor Homes. It was one of the nicest places you'd want to see when I first moved in there. But after being in there a while it changed. Its just too many people together.

NARRATION

FOR THE FIRST RESIDENTS, PUBLIC HOUSING PROMISED RELIEF FROM OVERCROWDED, POORLY-MAINTAINED DWELLINGS. THE PROMISE WAS SHORT-LIVED. BY THE 1960'S, GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AND INCREASING NUMBERS CONSPIRED TO RE-INVENT THE GHETTO -- THIS TIME AS A WAREHOUSE FOR THOSE WITHOUT INCOME, EDUCATION, OR EMPLOYMENT.

Timuel Black (Voice Over)

The mayor, Richard J. Daly, through city council, instituted a policy through CHA that once you reached a certain level of income with a certain number of members in the family you had to move.

Clory Bryant

I could say many reasons why I left Cabrini, but I think if I wrapped them all up, I would simply say it served its purpose.

It was meant to be a bridge - to get you over. No housing

project should ever be a place for people to come and live until they die.

Maxwell Street market: A blues band plays: Downhome Blues

NARRATION

DURING THE 1960'S AND '70'S, ANOTHER BLOW DIMMED THE DREAM OF THE SOUTHERN MIGRANTS AND THEIR CHILDREN EMPLOYED IN THE BLUE COLLAR AND MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES. THE JOBS THAT HAD BROUGHT THEM NORTH IN THE FIRST PLACE WENT SOUTH.

ARCHIVAL NEWSREEL WITH NARRATION

The pens and the alleys are quiet now at Chicago's Union Stockyards. At least you don't hear the sounds of the cattle and hogs, but you do hear the sounds of the wrecking crews already at work tearing down this one-hundred-and-six year old landmark. Friday was the final day of trading at Chicago's Union Stockyards and a lot of livestock traders and livestock industry people from around the midwest came to pay tribute to an industry that brought world-wide fame to Chicago, and was one of the founding industries of this major metropolitain area.

RETIRED STEELWORKERS Lumpkin

Ya see the big thing here was packing houses. Big stockyards in Chicago that was the whole backbone of the you goin' outside ya see the whole business around it. They moved out to. They moved west. An all the packin houses an all the stockyards left there. And then the steel mills went.

Robertson

Twenty-seven hundred us workin there when it went down. An all us loss them job. An then I had about almost thirty years there myself. An I was fifty-two years old. An when you reach the age of fifty-two ya then go look for another job ya ain't goinna get it. They say you're too old.

I cried. I had all that time out there an at my age, I didn't think I was goin ta look for another job in my whole lifetime. I thought I was home free. Yeah I cried, cause it worried me. I know I couldn't get another like that. Not with my education.

NARRATION

THE STEEL MILLS, STOCKYARDS AND MANUFACTURING PLANTS THAT HAD DRIVEN CHICAGO TO BECOME ONE OF THE INDUSTRIAL CAPITALS OF THE WORLD CLOSED. BETWEEN 1965 AND 1990, CHICAGO LOST HALF OF ALL ITS MANUFACTURING JOBS.

Clory Bryant

Industry left this area. The stockyards. Swift, Army, Cudahie, ya know. All of those those, this was the backbone for Chicago.

Geri Oliver

No one had work. And the people who did have work, they were scared to walk the streets with the have nots. Fear is what created what you see out there as 47th Street today.

EXT./INT. CABRINI GREEN HOUSING PROJECTS

MUSIC: Three rap artists from Cabrini Green perform an improvised rap on life in the projects.

Ronald McLauren

You don't want to be over here too long 'cause this is the wildest part of the southside. It ain't good for y'all.

Jean McLauren

This is the ghetto, it is. I would tell anyone not to raise their children in Robert Taylor.

This is one of the highest crime areas. It is. Do you know, a lot of people couldn't come from where I came from, as a kid, to come down here? They can't cope because they couldn't keep with it, you know. You got to be a hard person to live in Robert Taylor. If you come here being a wimp, you're gonna be treated like a "simp". So, if you come here and can't, don't keep you manhood up, they'll make you a little boy. So, I feel like I have had this part of my life; now, I got to move on a little farther. I have to go back to where I started. And that's not Mississippi. [Laughs]

EXT: CABRINI GREEN COURTYARD

A group of young teenagers are discussing life in the projects.

(Do you ever visit down South? So, what's it like down

there?)

1st. Boy on Terrace

You don't have to worry about, you can walk down on the streets and sit on your porch all night. You ain't gotta worry about nobody shootin', or worry about goin' to the store and gettin' robbed. And it don't be that crowded; you don't gotta worry about all the cars. It's like just sittin' out, be like a vacation.

Boy in Blue Sweater

I just want to get out of here and live my life.

(You can't live your life here)

Mn-nn. Too much violence like he said. People get hurt around here too much.

GIRL 1

When I grow up, told, I promised my momma, when I grow up, I'm 'on be livin' in a big house. I'm'a have one child.

GIRL 2

I ain't gonna have none.

GIRL 1

And I ain't gone be livin' around drugs, alcohol, or either, um...

BOY 3

Yeah, right!

GIRL 1

...um, kidnappers or babykillers or rapers.

GIRL 2

You can't stop that.

GIRL 1

Yes I can, 'cause when I grow up, I'm'a be the president,

Zedrik Braden

I dreamed that I could be anything that I wanted to be if I trained myself and prepared myself. And I was fortunate. I had backing. Now we have so many barriers. We are beginning to wonder in some quarters about the dream.

NARRATION

THE STORY OF THE GREAT MIGRATIONS CONTINUES TO THIS HOUR. FOR SOME, THE JOURNEY NORTH REALISED THEIR AMERICAN DREAMS AS THEY BECAME THE CORNERSTONE OF A NEW BLACK MIDDLE CLASS. FOR OTHERS, THE DREAM REMAINS DEFFERED.

Viethel Wills

Chicago has been good to me, because I've had a very decent living here. I had a business, "Flowers by Vi" My business was very successful..so this has certainly been my Promised Land.

Clory Bryant

After the children were all adults, well not adults, but out of school anyway. I went back to school and graduated college. That was one of my ambitions. I worked in a professional way for the last twenty, twenty-five years. That's a long ways from a cotton picker.

Bernice Thomas

I think some o' my dreams come true by believin' on God, as'in Him for help. I can say some of my dream come true.

It really couldn'ta been no more bad than it was in the South.

Tim Black

Those who went to the University of Chicago with me, and I was the only Black person in my program, not only made it higher but made it faster to the top of the academic ladder. So, if one wants to compare me with the other Black folk, yes, I made it. But if one wants to compare me with the "American Dream," and the, the equality of opportunity, no, I didn't make it. I'm in the middle of it, uh, and at the end of my life, I'm still at the middle of it.

28. CUT TO: Aerial shots over Chicago take us back out of the

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projects and eventually into Vernon Jarretts office

Vernon Jarrett (Voice Over and Sync at end)

Black people, you must keep in mind, have never had optimum circumstances anywhere in this country. So, everything is relative. It's the most segregated city in the world, and I've seen as much racial animosity as I think I've seen anywhere, but at the same time, the confluence of our numbers with our history, makes for the probability of victory

Miss Debbie sings: Chicago

HOME MOVIE

The reunion is over. The Chicago members of the Greenville Travel Club bid farewell to friends and family. The bus pulls out and heads North.

29. MUSIC AND CREDITS Ride on Red Ride On [Louisiana Red]

Man In Baseball Cap

If I had an opportunity to go back to the South, I'd go back and live, you know, where, it's like I said, a lot of my friends and relatives down there, they own their own brick houses, down there. They ain't like no run-over shacks no more; they got their own places down there, nice cars, and you know, decent things down there now.

Young male (Mound Bayou, MS)

I want to get away. I want to get out 'cause I know I can do something for myself. Seeing uncles cousins right back here --they graduate with a degree and they'r right back here doing nothing. I just don't see it. I want to get away from it.

Viethel Wills

Folks ask me now, "When are you going back to Greenville to live?" A lot of my friends and things are returned right there in Greenville. And I always tell them, and they look at me and laugh, I tell them, "I'd rather be a lamp post in Chicago than to be a bed of roses in Mississippi!

Mr. Jackson

I think what few years, hopefully, I have left, that I'll enjoy some fishing and probably some traveling. And well, the South is where we are originally from, and its real peaceful down there.

John Wiley

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I got some good friends that moved back down there now. I wouldn't really live back down there no more -- there's nothing to do. I told them, I says. "They take the sidewalks in here at 6.00 o'clock in the evening and they ain't got nowhere to go and nothing to do.

Mound Bayou youths

I'm thinking about going to Las Vegas, Nevada.

Maybe Michigan or Indiana ...

and for me Hawiaii ..

THE END