BLACK FLAG
A short one by Idris Goodwin
Jan 2018 Version
CHARACTERS (2 F, 1 M)

SYDNEY – 19 or 20, Caucasian from Georgia, has an accent.
DEJA – 19 or 20, Black from Detroit, has an accent
HARRY – 19 or 20, Caucasian from North Cali, absolutely no accent

SETTING

A University, today

DEVELOPMENT

Black Flag was first produced Off Broadway in 59E59’s Summer Shorts New Play Series, July 2016
1.

SYDNEY enters a spare dorm room with boxes and bags
She begins unpacking

_______________________________

SYDNEY
(to us)
Fall Semester, late August

_______________________________

Eventually DEJA enters with boxes and bags
They recognize one another
“Hellos” and “Heys”
Do we hug? Hand shake?

They hug

SYDNEY
Finally in the flesh---

DEJA
I know!

SYDNEY
I’m so used to your Facebook picture and now here you are!

DEJA
So good to finally meet you.

SYDNEY
Yes

So, you ready for this!? 

DEJA
Cant wait.

They settle
SYNDEY
Okay roomie. First things first---You mind if I take this side? Just felt right to me.

DEJA
All yours.

SYNDEY
We can always switch after Christmas break—I mean, winter recess

DEJA
You can say Christmas break here.

SYNDEY
You got any more stuff? I can help?

DEJA
Nah I thought I’d start light. Gonna be hitting mom up for them care packages on the regular.

SYDNEY
My mom sent me with everything!

DEJA
Really?

SYDNEY
Oh yeah I got jars of peaches. I got peanut brittle. I got moon pies

DEJA
Lord no. Keep all that away from me.

SYDNEY
(holding a moon pie)
Oh you mean these?

DEJA
Yes I mean those.

SYDNEY
(shaking the pie)
You don’t like these?

DEJA
Sydney
SYDNEY
(making it fly around)
This right here?

DEJA
(snatching it)
Damn you
..
..

So you going to the mixer?

SYDNEY
Yeah. You?

DEJA
I don’t know.

SYDNEY
Oh come on you gotta come. I won’t know anybody there.

DEJA
But wont you meet people? Isn’t that the point?

Sydney has unveiled her Confederate Flag Wall hanging

.....

DEJA
I guess….your mama really did pack everything for you

SYDNEY
She wants to make sure I don’t forget
Says “don’t you get lost out there”
She uh—she’s got a lot of pride.

DEJA
Lot of pride?

SYDNEY
Its where I come from, you know.

.....
…..

SYDNEY
It’s okay right? I mean I know it’s a little---you know, southern girl, rebel flag but---I don’t know you seem like a rebel to me.

…..

DEJA
Your side of the room.

Discomfort lingers like a rich fog
Sydney starts hanging the flag and of course

SYDNEY
Uhm
Would you mind giving me a hand?

…..

SYDNEY
Uh, You know what…. Actually I think I…

She manages on her own

SYDNEY
Hey I saw they have soft serve in that cafeteria. Wanna come down with me?

DEJA
Uhm nah, I got a lot of stuff here

SYDNEY
Okay
You have my number so text me if you change your mind and wanna meet up…

DEJA
Yeah I’ll uh---do that.

SYDNEY
Alright

Sydney exits

Deja looks at the flag
Fall semester, November

---

*Sydney holds a piece of paper*

*Deja enters and immediately senses that something aint kosher*

DEJA

That’s mine.

SYDNEY

It was under my bed.

DEJA

But it’s mine.

SYDNEY

Well I thought It was something of mine.

DEJA

Well it’s not so---

You didn’t read it did you?

*Clearly she did*

DEJA

You shouldn’t have read this. Once you saw that it wasn’t somethin’ of your’s you shouldn’t have read it.

SYDNEY

Well. I did.

So…

DEJA

She says we have to write about what we’re feeling. And what’s on our mind and-- We gotta be honest.
SYDNEY
(holding up the paper)
So this is what you really think?

DEJA
You really shouldn’t have read it

SYDNEY
Its sooooo secretive but you read it to your entire class and your professor!

DEJA
Come on Sydney didn’t you ever think for a second---maybe just maybe I might---be uncomfortable by this?

SYDNEY
But I don’t mean it like that, like in a …

DEJA
It’s your side of the room and you have a right to have whatever you want on your wall

SYDNEY
You said it assaults you.
(reading from the page)

This cross burning it’s confederate history
Into my nightmares...

Deja snatches the page back

SYDNEY
Deja.
You don’t think I’m like---one of those dumb redneck assholes you read about or see on--

DEJA
I never called you a dumb redneck

You have the poem in your hands. I never said anything about you.

SYDNEY
This poem is called “To my roommate”

DEJA
It wasn’t --- “to you”, “to you”. It was a free write and in a free write you’re supposed to just---
let all the thoughts fall out of your brain—She says “don’t censor” and---I didn’t.
SYDNEY
I just didn’t realize that— When I put it up--I didn’t even think of it as something---that could be a problem for you.

DEJA
Of course you didn’t

SYDNEY
I don’t mean it as ---it represents, you know, my home and my culture—the good things though --I don’t mean it like---

DEJA
Its whatever okay—your side of the room.

SYDNEY
I don’t want you to be uncomfortable

DEJA
I said it’s whatever.

SYDNEY
Okay---alright

DEJA
Alright?

SYDNEY
Alright.

Some moments
Sydney reaches down, retrieves the final moon pie

SYDNEY
Last one?

Deja considers

DEJA
S’all good. You have it.
3.

_HARRY and Deja burst into the room, each holding red cups, stumbly, tipsy making out_

_They fall into bed_

_They fumble_

_One of the red cups spills!_

_Lights on_

_Harry sees the flag_

Oh

DEJA

Yea

_____________________________________

HARRY

(to us)

Fall Semester, December

_____________________________________

HARRY

( regarding the flag)

Is that--?

DEJA

Yea.

My roommate is from the south and she has a lot of pride.

HARRY

Was this up when you moved in?

DEJA

She actually asked me to help her put it up

HARRY

(chuckle)

..

..
Oh. Really?

Yup.

No.

Yup. First day. She pulled it out of her bag and hung it up.

Ironically?

It’s her side of the room she can put up whatever… as long as its not like gory stuff or porn.

So it doesn’t bother you?

Deja shrugs

Ok.

They start to make out again but--

Look----I know how it looks

Yeah--It looks ….kinda racist.

Her mother gave it to her so she wouldn’t forget, you know where she came from.

Ah…didn’t want her to get lost out here with all these weirdos and God-less heathens.

(fake southern accent)
“Now hunny when you git out thir dontcha go fraternizing with them Ho-mos and A-Rabs “
DEJA
Stop.

HARRY
You can bring this up to the school you know. Tell em you want a different room. I’m for real.

DEJA
(sigh) I thought of that---at first but---

But?

HARRY
It's not ---this is gonna sound like I’m trying to make a pun ---but it’s not so black and white. I see one thing and she sees something else. It’s not clear cut. I see ---slavery obviously but she sees her mama and ---just like---being country and southern

you know you see this flag on like country albums and belt buckles and what was that TV show with the car?

HARRY
I don’t know.

DEJA
My grandpa was always watching it. Something with a car

I don’t know

DEJA
She sees like-----country pride---in a real generic way—it just means, “I’m from the south.”

HARRY
Where they used to enslave African Americans.

You are----too much---

DEJA
Tell me I’m wrong?

HARRY
(breath)
I don’t wanna—–I just got here you know. It’s my first year of college. I worked my ass off. And it’s hard enough just trying to—I mean cant I just go to my classes and parties and just—do I have to be starting a whole thing just because I see something different on her side of the room. I don’t like it. I don’t. But I don’t like a lotta things I see and hear from white folks.

HARRY

No, No, I feel you but—

DEJA

“But” “But” You’re always with that—–Why do you even care? You aint black?

HARRY

Well, Deja, for starters, uh, I hate slavery

DEJA

You sure it’s not some prejudice against southerners? Based on a buncha stereotypes? You just assume they’re all racist and want slavery back? That’s not fair.

HARRY

No but—

DEJA

A flag is just colors and fabric. The meaning changes depending on like, who’s holding it and who’s looking at.

I just gotta make it through this first year and then I can try and get reassigned for some other arbitrary ass reason. But no, I’m sorry, I’m not gon be the black girl —the angry black girl who started some shit over a flag. Especially if the girl who put the flag up is this sweet bubbly girl who is just trying to stay connected to home. Uh uh. It’s gon start a whole thing. People gon be all over yik yak and facebook and putting my picture all over the internet. Giving they opinions and …No---nuh uh---

HARRY

You’ve given this a lot of thought.

DEJA

The brochure aint say nuthin’ about this.

They look at the flag together a while longer
They drink

HARRY

The boys of Hazzard!
What?

The show! The show you were—

No—no – it was Hazzard ----Hazzard---- Hazzard---

Dukes?

Dukes of Hazzard!

Right
Yup
Yup

*High five*

*Deja just looks at him*

*He grins back*

*Doey eyes ….dumb grins….sexual energy returns*

*But alas….Moment broken!*

*A drunk Sydney bursts in*

*Oops!*

*She tries to back out and closes the door on her own foot*

*She falls over laughing*

Jesus Sydney

(SYDNEY)

(through laughs)

I’m so so sorry …Deja… I didn’t know you were studying … who’s this Dej?
HARRY

I’m Harry

SYDNEY

(getting to her feet still chuckling)

I’m so sorry.

DEJA

Sydney. What you been drinking?

SYDNEY

Just iced tea.

DEJA

Just iced tea?

SYDNEY

It’s from just up the ways
This wonderful place they call Long Island

(laughter)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEJA</th>
<th>HARRY</th>
<th>SYDNEY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oh mi god</td>
<td>No it’s alright</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry Harry</td>
<td>No No I can help you if…</td>
<td>Mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I might have to—</td>
<td>I can just..</td>
<td>No no no…you two…I don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wanna mess things up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney why don’t ya just</td>
<td></td>
<td>I just came to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lay down</td>
<td></td>
<td>uh…uh….what’d I come here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come on just lay down</td>
<td></td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should really…</td>
<td></td>
<td>I’m okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You might wanna get a bucket</td>
<td>I’m okay.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SYDNEY

What’d you say?

Herman?

HARRY

Harry
What’d you say?

I don’t -- What did I say?

Something about a bucket?

Yeah. You just… look pretty messed up

Uhm maybe you don’t know me
But Sydney Blanchard does not puke

Uh huh

Oh God.

Okay
Deja
I’ll call you.

Hey hey hey
No no no
No
Don’t go—I didn’t mean to interrupt
Look I want you two

She goes for both their hands

Come here, damn it.

She makes them hold hands

There.
Lovely.  

She gives them both a hug  
She kisses Deja on the forehead

SYDNEY

Ah!  
I remember what I came for.

She grabs a jar of peaches

SYDNEY

Bye yall

HARRY  
(fake accent)

Bye

DEJA  
(through gritted teeth)

Harry

SYDNEY

What the hell accent was that supposed to be?

I wasn’t doing an accent

SYDNEY

No?  
Sounded like you were trying to parrot me

DEJA

He wasn’t Syd

SYDNEY

I know what a fake southern accent sounds like  
See cuz I come from Georgia  
And when we say bye we say it like how I just said it  
“Bye”  
But you sounded like you were from Texas or something  
You said “Bye” See the difference?

HARRY

Thank you
DEJA
Okay Sydney---Bye girl

SYDNEY
Oh wait…I’m so sorry. Yall want one of these peaches?

HARRY
No

DEJA
No Sydney

SYDNEY
Suit yourself.
(she eats one)
Oooooh little taste of home right there

HARRY
Yup. You got your home all over this place
Peaches and your flag

DEJA
(through teeth)
Stop it

SYDNEY
Whats that Harry?

HARRY
Now she remembers my name

DEJA
We’re gonna go too
Lets all just get out of this room

SYDNEY
No. I think I wanna stay. Right here
Here with you and Harry in my room

HARRY
With your flag

SYDNEY
Yeah and---and your flag
(pointing to his shirt)
HARRY

This is a shirt.

SYDNEY

But it’s a flag. And you’re walking it around everywhere. On your shirt. California Bear revolt all up in everybody’s face! Mine lives right here in my space. In MY private space

DEJA

Calm down

SYDNEY

I don’t like this guy Deja
This guy is a---
He’s a---

DEJA

Syd.

SYDNEY

You can do better than this idiot.

HARRY

Ha!

SYDNEY

Is that right? Idiot!

HARRY

Don’t call me an idiot you drunk—

DEJA

Stop it! Both of you Stop it!

HARRY

Callin me an idiot. Least I aint racist.

SYDNEY

You don’t even know me
You don’t even know me

HARRY

I know what this is (gesturing to flag)

DEJA
Sydney, maybe you just wanna calm down—he wasn’t

**SYDNEY**
Oh don’t gimmie that DEJA! You’re the first one who started this crap!

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<tr>
<td>You’re turning everyone against me</td>
<td>Don’t yell at her!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making me out to be some kind racist. I’m not.</td>
<td>You’re the one who is so insensitive—bringing the flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My best friend in high school was black</td>
<td>You are a racist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And my track coach was black</td>
<td>You have a racist mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A racist?</td>
<td>That’s what you have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re the one talking about race--</td>
<td></td>
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**SYDNEY**

AHHHH!!!
I’m not a racist!

*Sydney suddenly gets sick—dry heaves

*Deja and Harry just look on concerned

*And sure enough Sydney vomits peaches
4.

DEJA
(to us)
Spring semester, early January

Sydney and Deja in the room.

SYDNEY

Over the break… the winter recess…
My whole family. Cousins and Auntyies we meet up in uh—Stone Mountain Park
Just outside Atlanta

We have this tradition you know
Day after Christmas we always go up there and have a picnic
Catch up with each other

Its real nice. Trees. Lots of land
And of course—big old plantation house
And a museum about the plantation house
Where they tell you the stories about the old times
How things used to be

And then there’s Stone Mountain.
There’s an actual Stone Mountain right there staring down at you
And chiseled into the side its got like all the civil war guys
Jefferson and Stonewall and Robert E

We grow up hearing about these guys like they’re saints
our whole lives. And you know, I mean, really my family is not…

Anyway, so we’re at the park and there’s this other family ---really there’s a lot of family’s out there that day but there’s this one that I keep over hearing

Two guys really

And one of him say that it was right there on that Stone Mountain
was where the Klan…
They jump started the Klan there.

Like the second coming
They met there on Stone Mountain
They don’t share that fact with you in the old plantation museum

And these guys were talking about….  
Action  
How these guys weren’t afraid to act  
And how Dylan Roof  

DEJA  
The South Carolina shooter?

She nods in the affirmative

SYDNEY  
They were saying how they thought  
he was just a mixed up kid  
And they don’t agree with murder but  
Didn’t he have some balls  
He wasn’t afraid to take some action  

DEJA  
OhmiGod

SYDNEY  
Yeah and I just---wanted to walk over there and say a million things to them  
But I was ---look I’m not gonna lie to you Deja and pretend like  
A lot of these so called liberal kids here do…

I’ve heard shit like it before

But what really really—hit me

They started complaining about how  
After Roof, killed those people, they took the flag down  

DEJA  
(pointing to it)  
Your flag?

SYDNEY  
Yes, this flag.  
They took it down in South Carolina

And these guys  
Kept saying  
“they better not try and do that here in Georgia”
That “Big eared Sum bitch Obama better not try and take my flag”
And it just kept going from there

And I swear Deja
I thought about you
And that night with that….Harry

DEJA
He’s not so bad

SYDNEY
Whatever, I know you guys are .. “boo’ed up” now
But I thought about what happened here in this room
And that poem your wrote
How you wrote
“its arms blocking off history from evolving past its scars”

My mama gave me this so I wouldn’t forget her and how she raised me

But now when I see it ….all I see is those guys
Talking about Dylan Roof
And “taking action”
And
God Deja….it’s time

(a breath)

Its got to come down.

DEJA
(gesturing again)
Your flag right here?

SYDNEY
Yes.

DEJA
Good.

Sydney looks at the flag

SYDNEY
But---Can you help me?

DEJA
How?
Help me….take it down

DEJA

Help you take it down?
or take it down for you?

SYDNEY

I know you don’t want this here
Every day —You gotta be thinking “Ugh. I just wanna yank that damn thing”

DEJA

Sydney

SYDNEY

And I get it now.

DEJA

Sydney

SYDNEY

Do it. Take it down. It’s okay with me

DEJA

But it’s not okay with me.

SYDNEY

But I--

DEJA

Wait wait---just listen

I don’t wanna take your flag down for you

See if I take it down for you then the story is:
It came down because you have a black roommate.
Because your black roommate was uncomfortable

But It should make you uncomfortable too! It should make ….anybody uncomfortable

I want you to want to take your flag down

I want those guys in Stone Mountain Park, to want to take it down. I want---
Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay

It has to be you

DEJA

... Sydney faces the flag Cant move

SYDNEY

Why can't I bring myself to move? Why does it hurt when I try…

DEJA

It’s like you told me

It’s where you come from

It’s pride.

Deja touches her shoulder Exits

Sydney just looks at the flag, trying to move

Lights out

End of play