



CHICKEN GEORGE AND HIS FAMILY

**SHOW NO. 5 --** Chicken George, who has taken a wife and now has children, is sent off to England to pay his owner's debt, with the promise that he will return a free man. Seventeen years later, when George returns home, he finds his son Tom, now a blacksmith and married himself, serving as head of the family. Chicken George's freedom is deeply resented by two viciously racist bothers named Evan and Jemmy Brent. When the Civil War begins Tom is recruited -- and cruelly mistreated -- as smithy for the Army.

A hell-raising, fun-loving sporting man is 35-year-old Chicken George, easily spotted by his ever-present derby hat and long-flowing scarf, and acknowledged everywhere as the finest trainer of fighting game cocks in the South. Chicken George does not know Massa Moore is his father and Moore never acknowledges it, so the two of them -- sharing the same interests and dreams -- have a free and easy relationship. After many carefree years, Chicken George has married the straitlaced, Bible-quoting Matilda, and they have several children.

When Nat Turner's rebellion sets Virginia countryside ablaze, Massa Moore treats his trainer like all other slaves, someone never to be trusted. Chicken George's mother, Kizzy, isn't surprised. When Chicken George threatens to kill Massa Moore, she tells her son that Moore is his father.

Moore promises that if Chicken George goes to England with him and beats Lord Russell in a cockfight, Moore will set him free.

At the fight, Moore accepts a \$10,000 bet and loses. Moore does not have \$20,000 but Lord Russell accepts George's service for a few years as payment.

The slaves are sold, except for Kizzy. When George returns in 1859, he stops at the plantation and finds his mother is dead.

Finding his family in North Carolina, Chicken George instills a measure of pride in them because he is a free man. He is now a grandfather: Tom has several children.

Chicken George is not allowed to remain in the state as a free man. He offers to become a slave again, but his family sent him away. Leaving, he vows to come back and free them all. Just before leaving he reminds his son, Tom, of the family heritage, that they are descendants of a proud African man named Kunta Kinte, who was son of Binta and Omoro Kinte, who called a river Kamby Bolongo, who was captured when he went into the jungle to find wood for a drum.

**SHOW NO. 6 --** The Civil War is over but freedom has a bitter side-effect, as most people seem interested only in using and abusing the emancipated Blacks in the same old way. Chicken George and his family are constantly harassed by hooded night-riders and exploited by men such as Evan Brent and a carpet-bagging Senator until finally, in a move that will truly affect generations to come, they move to start anew in the tiny town of Henning, Tennessee.

Out of nowhere, Chicken George suddenly reappears. He is home again. During the war he fought on the Union side. Since receiving his release from the Army he has been working his way back home. He used his Army pay to buy land and they will pay for the rest while farming it.

As the dawn light breaks over the distant hills, the caravan begins its journey to the promised land of Tennessee. In the lead wagon is Chicken George, wearing his distinctive derby and long-flowing scarf. As the caravan of free Black people crosses the valley, Chicken George begins to recite the familiar family litany:

*"And the first one from our family to come to this country was the African. His name was Kunta Kinte and he called a river Kamby Bolongo. He was captured when he went into the woods to make a drum . . . and later married Bell . . . and their child was a girl names Kizzy, who was my mother . . ."*



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