

Prepared for the Sophie site by Professor Cindy Brewer's Winter 2007 German 201 Class: Greg Seppi, Jillian Fritz, Megan Scofield, Rosalie Sharp, Nicholas Estrada, Jamie Elsmore, John Fahey, Ruth Dittli and Jamie Jensen.

How Do You Wash a Negro White?

Theater Play for Children
For the Sake of Negro Missions

by Hedwig Haza

1916

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Characters:

Paul and Leni. Two children about 7 and 8 years old.

Mikundo and Iriza. Two little Negros about the same age.

Choir of small angels.

One taller angel.

(Forest Scenery. In the background as Chapel for the Mother of God. To the side between some bushes is a spring.)

Act 1

(Paul and Leni)

Leni: Oh there are many flowers here! Come let's pick them quickly and bring them to the Heavenly Mother with the sweet Christ Child.

(Continues picking flowers during the subsequent conversation and then brings them to the chapel)

Paul: But that is so much work. And I don't have time. First I want to see How sweet this cake is.
(He sits under a bush, takes out a piece of cake and starts eating.)

Leni: (reprimanding) Must you eat up all your money?! Paul, I can't understand you! Just you wait; your parents will scold you!

Paul: (defiantly) Well, they don't need to see it! No one notices it here in the forest. Don't you dare tell on me!

Leni: Pfui, I can't stand you when you say such things!

Paul: (Jumps up and wants to give her a piece of cake) Wait, I'll stuff your mouth!

Leni: (defending herself) Go, you naughty rascal! I'll never tell on you, but I really don't want your cake!

Paul: (teasing) Leni, tell me why you are saving your monthly allowance? Tell me why? Because picking flowers costs nothing in the forests and fields.

Leni: Oh, I will buy myself something. I really don't know yet, but it will be better than a cake! (Points sideways, astonished) Just look over there! Who is that?

Paul: (After looking in the direction, hides his cake) Two children black as crows! I've never seen anything like them!

Leni: Aren't they like those pictures in the book from Africa?

Act 2

The former Mikundo und Iriza

(The latter come hand in hand, looking around, searching)

Mikundo: Iriza look, a small white brother with a sweet, little white sister!

Iriza: Mikundo, come, let's ask them! (They approach Paul and Leni).

Mikundo: (asking them both) Oh tell us, where might the way to heaven be?

Leni: (amazed) Oh, what a peculiar question! And the answer is probably difficult!

Paul: Tell us, who are you black children and where do you come from?

Mikundo: From Africa! The White Fathers <<The White Fathers is a Roman Catholic missionary society that works in Africa>> told us about heaven, the golden empire. Iriza said: Let's search for heaven! So then we set forth.

Iriza: We traveled on water and on land. We walked for many days until we were tired. Oh, white brother, white sister, we ask: where is the way to heaven?

Paul: (bantering) Ah, what do you want up there? Everything there is bright and pure! The little angels would be frightened by your blackness if you entered there.

Iriza: (reproachful) Oh white brother! (weeping)

Mikundo: (seriously towards Paul) Your hard words hurt me and my sister. Yes, we would like to become pure angels in the golden empire; this is our hearts' desire.

Leni: (to Paul). Paul, you are a naughty rascal! Look how the young girl cries!

Paul: Of course I would rather she were silent! (to Iriza) Agh, I didn't mean to be mean! Be still! We'll still find the way to heaven in the end. We'll ask our dear parents or the Reverend will know too!

Iriza: (still weeping). Mikundo, agh, if the angels are going to fear our dark, black faces then we will go back home and then we will not find the way to Heaven!

Leni: (who had been thinking. to Iriza) Little sister, oh stop crying. Wait, we'll help in this situation. (to Paul.) Come, we'll wash these children here in the cold, clear spring!

Paul: Will we succeed in this task?

Leni: Let's not spare any pain or effort, Let's wash the little blacks until they look like us, both clean and white.

(They bring the negroes to the spring, Paul scrubs Mikundo, Leni scrubs Iriza's face and arms with water.)

Paul: If we had soap to wash with, we would complete this task in no time!

Leni: Agh, where would there be soap here in the still, green forest?!

Mikundo: Oh dear, with you little white hands you will rub my black skin to shreds!

Iriza: (looks at her reflection in the spring) Tell me, doesn't it look as though my black cheek is already a little lighter and whiter?

Act 3

The former characters and a choir of angels behind the stage.
(One hears the song: "Lobt froh den Herrn, ihr jugendlichen Chöre")

Paul: (startled) Hey, whose coming? And bright angel? He will surely scold us! I will hide myself with my naughty sweet cake. (slips behind a bush)

Act 4

(The former characters and an Angel)

Angel: Today I come from the high gates of heaven. Indeed, children, you have heard a choir of angels. We saw what you have done here in this green forest. Believe it, we saw all four of you. Where has Paul gone?

Oh, that naughty little rascal, who teases his sister. He cannot escape the Angel's eyes when he tries to hide himself! You want to accomplish the great work here with effort and diligence. But you will never succeed in washing two little negroes "white!"

Now it is said, in black bodies lives a soul completely hidden. The darkest night reigns within them if they are distant from the Morning of Grace. But when baptism's holy flood washes over them, Christ precious blood encircles them with a brilliance bright. Then they will be like the snow that is white and pure through the faith's mercy. They will find through pain and anguish their path to heaven!

And then comes a host of missionaries, teaching through their faithful courage and converting many Negroes and bring them to God's holy altar. But all the spiritual distress of the Negro cannot be cured. The missionaries lack means and power and bread among their black children. So gladly give a penny often for Africa's missions.

It will bring you blessings from afar, and God will amply reward you!—
So, with your diligence, help the great work come to pass, to wash white the great hosts of blacks. What joy it will bring you!

Iriza: What comfort!

Mikundo: We have hope!

Leni: (gleefully) All of my money, I give it here!
(seizes her purse)

Angel: (amicably) Good child!

Paul: (prominently stepping forward) The stupid cake, now makes my heart so heavy!
(He steps towards the Negro and hands him the sweets.)
Oh!, I was an evil knave, that I ate away all my money. Take my cake as a consolation! I believe that it will taste delicious!

Angel: (amicably) You have made good your error. That is what I call well-behaved, my boy; If given in a spirit a sacrifice, even the smallest gift is deemed great.

Iriza and Mikundo: Thank you a thousand times, for you are good.

Angel: Now stand in a circle, and sing with joyful courage in the noble manner of angels!

Act 5

(Previous characters and the Choir of little Angels enters)

(All encircle the picture of the Mother of God and sing to the Melody “Maria zu Lieben” << an old German hymn >>)

Mary, thou pure,
so noble and so mild,
Look on us, who beseech thee
While encircling thy picture!
What we ask thee,
Tell to thy Son!
He will
Answer thy prayer
From heavenly throne!
Many souls still languish
In the darkest night,
Bound in chains,
Through the Devil's power!
O plead, that they will
From a heavenly source
Be freed from their bonds
To bright rays of light;
In that, they forget
The devil's ridicule
And worship and confess,
The eternal God;
They love him,
That with heartfelt fervor,
For them on the Cross
Spilt his blood;
Through hope they find
From fear and sorrow
Freedom and happiness
In His divine heart!
O, Reach my Soul
The Loving Hand
That Leads the Way
To a Heavenly Land