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Brief Summary of Two Characters Who Share Their Stories in Black History In Story and Song

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WHITAKER “BEN” (RUNAWAY SLAVE)

Historical interpreter Jerome Bridges portrays “Ben” a runaway slave born in 1829 and living as a freedman and school teacher in the North one year before the start of the Civil War. In his own words, hear his harrowing story of escape from slavery in the South only to face racial prejudice in the North. As Ben, Bridges reminisces about stories shared with him by his aging grandfather of life for negroes before and after the American Revolution, and even earlier by his great-great-grandfather, who lived to witness the slow but precipitous decline into slavery of the first Africans at Jamestown where the birth of black America began.

EDDIE JEFFERSON REESE (REPORTER, CHICAGO DAILY DEFENDER)

Reporter Eddie J. Reese of the black-owned Chicago Daily Defender is portrayed by historical interpreter Jerome Bridges. As a correspondent for the Defender, Bridges in his role as Reese places himself at the scene of some of the major flash points of the modern Civil Rights movement, beginning in 1955. The Defender, as a northern newspaper founded in the early 1900s, allows Reese to take the lead in covering racial issues affecting the United States in both the North and South, from the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the signing of the Voting Rights Act by president Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1965. Bridges as Eddie Reese illuminates the range of emotions precipitated by this trying time in American history.

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