Nubia?

Written by
Senica Slaton

Copyright (c)
First Draft
Contact information
Plotline:
Sam and her all-female team are currently working on a documentary about excavations done in Ancient Nubia and the controversy around old excavations and the media surrounding Pheoarachs and their racial identity.

Characters:

- Sam, the director; is fascinated with the current pop culture conversations surrounding race and Pheroahs and decides to do a documentary with a diverse excavation team that will give her and her audience more insight into this controversial conversation.
- Georgie: has worked with Sam numerous times and is a major feminist and a proud supporter of the all men suck movement.
- Stephanie is a production assistant who is just trying to lay low.
- Richard or dick, the lead on this project and the main contact person- plans on bringing in a group of good old boys, before Sam threatens to cancel the whole production and he somehow finds 3 other people who are “diverse” to contribute.
- Greg, Richard’s right hand. will never actually lead his own team because he is inherently racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, and everything else; says the worst stuff.
- Aya Salah is a young woman, but the men pronounce it On-ya; a POC woman whose parents immigrated from Old Nubia to America, who worked on this excavation; she is the most honest and dead on the inside.
- Jackson, the young man a couple of years younger than Aya, also worked on the excavation. Dick brings him on convinced that he is gay. He is not. He is in love with Aya.
(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

WE OPEN on the director, Sam (39), sitting in a chair in front of the camera. We see Stephanie (23), standing off to the side with holding a large microphone above Sam's head. And we know that Georgie (37), is behind the camera.

SAM
Are you recording?

Georgie nods the camera yes

SAM
Good. Georgie ask me the question.

Georgie shakes the camera no.

SAM
Georgie! Ugh! Fine. Stephanie ask me the question.

I can't!

STEPHANIE
You can!

SAM
But I'm just a production assistant.

STEPHANIE
Yes. And I have an stubborn camera woman who refuses to have her own voice recorded. So that means its you.

STEPHANIE
Uhhhhh-

SAM
Do you know the question?

Yes.

STEPHANIE

SAM
Great! So ask me.
STEPHANIE
Okay! So, Samantha-

SAM
I only go by Sam. Never call me that again.

STEPHANIE
Okay Sam!

SAM
Now ask me the damn question!

STEPHANIE
Oh, right. Um...sorry. Why did you choose to do this documentary about Ancient Nubia and discovering the cultural, ethnic, and racial identities?

SAM
Well I found that an increasing number of the population, myself included, is confused about what the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt looked like. As I know we are aware, but a lot of our history has been white washed. And it is important to me that we restore these great leaders true identities to them! Which is why I have asked a very diverse excavation team here today to talk about their discoveries with Ancient Nubia! How was that?

STEPHANIE
Great!

Georgie nods the camera yes.

SAM
Wonderful! Now how long before Richard and his team get here?

STEPHANIE
Any minute now!

SAM
Good! I am ready to be done with this project!

May I ask why?

STEPHANIE
Georgie shakes the camera no.

SAM
Working with someone like Richard can be hard.

What do you mean?
SAM
Well...

Georgie shakes the camera no.

STEPHANIE
Like he is a diva?

SAM
In some kind of sense. You know, I think I am going to take some time to my self before they get here. Stephanie come and get me when they show up. Okay?

STEPHANIE
Okay!

Sam walks offstage.

STEPHANIE
What does she mean about Richard?

GEORGIE
He's a straight, white, old man.

STEPHANIE
I still don't understand.

GEORGIE
Sam asked him to bring his diverse team so that why we could just get to know them a little before filming started. He brought four other white guys and claimed diversity because, one was 20, one was Italian, and one was from the south.

Oh.

GEORGIE
Yeah. Not to mention his right hand, Greg, is pretty awful.

STEPHANIE
What do you mean?

GEORGIE
You'll see.

Richard enters with Greg.

RICHARD
Ah, Geogrie! So glad to see you again!

GEORGIE
You too Richard/and how are you doing? Stephanie go get Sam.
RICHARD

Please call me-

GREG

George! How's it going. And Stephanie?

GEORGIE

I will only call you Richard and my name is Georgie, not George. Stephanie is underage, so leave her alone.

GREG

Coulda fooled me with how you dress.

RICHARD

No, I insist! Everyone calls me-

Stephanie enters with Sam

SAM

Richard! Greg! How are you both?

RICHARD

I'm/really doing great Samantha.

GREG

Good. I'm/doing good! Although

SAM

Please Richard call me Sam/I insist!

RICHARD

Well only if you call me*

GREG

Who is that Stephanie/girl?

SAM

I will never call you that, Richard!

GEORGIE

Greg, I told you Stephanie is underage.

*RICHARD

*dick

STEPHANIE

No I'm/not.

RICHARD

Please Samantha, all of my friends call me/dick.

GREG

So you're not underage?
SAM
I will not be calling you that. It is unprofessional.

STEPHANIE
No I am not.

RICHARD
Well I will not be calling you Sam then.

GREG
Then how old are you?

SAM
Please, just call me Sam.

GEORGIE
Not old enough.

RICHARD
Why should I call you Sam, when you won't call me dick?

GREG
Come on. How old?

SAM
Well-

GEORGIE
Leave her alone.

RICHARD
Well, anyways who would do that to a girl?

STEPHANIE
Young.

SAM
What do you mean by that?

RICHARD
Young? That's all I get.

STEPHANIE
Name a girl Sam.

GEORGIE
Stop it Greg!

SAM
Huh?

STEPHANIE
Yeah. Just young.
RICHARD
Well it just feels really cruel to name a girl Sam. That's all Samantha.

GREG
Come on. You can tell daddy Greg how-

SAM
Oh my God! I changed my name! I legally changed my name to Sam! My birth certificate says Sam! My driver's license says Sam! Every single fucking legal document I own says Sam. So just call me Sam! Got it?

RICHARD
Okay. Sorry, Sam.

GREG
Man, woman on their period. So angry.

SAM
I'm going to take a smoke break.

RICHARD
But we just got here.

STEPHANIE
I think we should give her a minute.

GEORGIE
When does the rest of your team get here?

RICHARD
Oh they should be here any minute now.

GEORGIE
Good.

GREG
You must also be on your period.

GEORGIE
And you must be asking for a black eye the way you keep talking.

GREG
Bring it on little lady!

GEORGIE
I thought you men had a code about not hitting woman.

GREG
Good thing you're not a real woman.
Aya and Jackson enter.

GEORGIE

Really?

GREG

What real woman is named Georgie?

GEORGIE

Well this one you/asshole!

Georgie lunges at Greg, and knocks him down but before she has a chance too, Aya and Stephanie pull her off of him.

STEPHANIE

Georgie you can't hit him. We could get sued! And that would piss off Sam even more!

GEORGIE

Just one hit! That's all I need to show him who the fuck the real girl is around here!

GREG

Keep that shit up-

AYA

And I will have to report you to HR again and you will be suspended.

Aya.

GREG

AYA

Greg.

JACKSON

Aya that was so incredible of you.

STEPHANIE

I'm so sorry, but who are you?

AYA

Oh, I'm Aya Salah. I worked on this exacation.

GEORGIE

And you didn't kill him.

AYA

Came pretty close a few times, but sadly no.
Huh.

And I'm Jackson Smith.

Nice to meet you.

Richard I thought we said we wanted more diversity from your team?

Oh yes, well, not that you can tell just by looking at him, but Jackson is gay.

I'm wh-

Yup he's gay. Been gay his whole life.

I always had a feeling.

Oh you've got to be fucking kidding me.

Really Richard? Really?

What?

You expect us to believe that he is gay?

Well yes. You know it's not politically correct to assume someone's sexuality.

Uh-huh.

Sam enters.

Sorry that I needed to step out. It got to hot in here.

Hot flashes.
What?

AYA

You know period systems. You would get them all the time back when we-

GREG

If you say another word I will punch you again.

AYA

*silence*

GREG

Good.

AYA

Hi I'm sorry I don't think we've met. I'm Sam and I'm the director of this project.

SAM

Hi I'm Aya. I was apart of the excavation team.

AYA

Did I tell you that you look pretty today Aya?

JACKSON

Yes. Four times.

AYA

Good. Just checking.

JACKSON

Was?

SAM

Oh, yes I-

AYA

And this is gay Jackson.

RICHARD

Gay Jackson?

SAM

Yes. He is gay. Right Jackson?

RICHARD

I..uh...I..ye...n...I-
GEORGIE
He's not gay.

RICHARD
Don't be ridiculous Geogrie of course he's gay! Right Jackson?

JACKSON
I...I....I-

SAM
Jackson are you gay, yes or no?

JACKSON
N...yes. Yes. Yes I am gay.

SAM
Okay then.

GEORGIE
What? It's obvious he's not gay!

SAM
We have no way to prove that so, as long as he says he's gay then there is nothing else we can do.

GEORGIE
You've got to be kidding me.

SAM
And I believe we are waiting on more person?

STEPHANIE
Uhhh...it looks like a Savannah?

RICHARD
Oh yes! My dear friend Sav! She should be here soon.

GREG
Sav? Who the hell is Sav?

RICHARD
You know? The other member of our excavation team?

GREG
No I don't know, I thought that Aya was the only pu-

AYA
Watch it Greg.

GREG
Child-bearing one on our team.
JACKSON
Yeah, I don't remember a Sav.

AYA
Sav... Sav... Sav... Do you mean Savannah the mues-

RICHARD
A valued member of our team!

JACKSON
Aya you are so intelligent.

GREG
Oh! Yeah! Valued team member.

GEORGIE
Yeah. Okay.

Richard gets a phone call.

RICHARD
Yes... Oh Sav, good to hear from you... yes... oh no... we were really counting on you Sav... well then see you soon...

Richard hangs up the phone.

SAM
I assume that was Savannah.

RICHARD
Ah! Yes! My good dear old friend, Sav!

GREG
I thought I was your oldest friend?

RICHARD
Of course you are! But Sav is right up there.

GREG
No she isn't! You don't even-

RICHARD
Anyways poor Sav has the flu and can't make it! How awful!

GEORGIE
Uh huh.

What a shame.

RICHARD
Yeah. Real shame.
SAM

Georgie cut it out.

GEORGIE

What? Never mind.

SAM

Well anyways we should get started. So this is the diverse team you brought?

RICHARD

Yes! Aya is ethnically Nubian.

AYA

My parents are immigrants who moved from Nubia to America.

SAM

Oh.

RICHARD

Jackson is gay, right Jackson?

JACKSON

Yeah. Gay. So gay. Like so totally-

GEORGIE

We get it. You're gay.

RICHARD

And Greg over there is Italian.

GEORGIE

Is this a joke?

SAM

Italian?

GREG

Yes.

SAM

Like from Italy?

GREG

No. Well. I'm from Jersey. But my great great great uncle moved here from Sicily.

GEORGIE

Oh my God.

RICHARD

And I am a normal all American guy!
GEORGIE Are we pranked right now?

SAM Geogrie stop it!

GEORGIE I'm so serious right now!

SAM As am I! What about Savannah?

Who?

RICHARD This keeps getting better.

SAM Savannah. The team member who just canceled?

Oh, yes! She is a woman.

RICHARD He did not just say that.

AYA No he did.

GEORGIE Oh and she's deaf!

RICHARD Oh my God it got worse.

GEORGIE So much worse.

AYA Aya I think I love you.

JACKSON Aya I think you know her.

AYA I do.

SAM You had a deaf woman be a member of your excavation team?
RICHARD

Yes.

AYA

And he keeps going.

GEORGIE

I don't think he will ever come back from this one.

AYA

You'd be surprised.

GEORGIE

Really?

AYA

Yes. White straight men get away anything and everything. It's ridiculous.

GEORGIE

Eh. Same thing in film.

AYA

So I've heard. The difference is film is much more consumed world wide by the mass population. Archaeology isn't. So while the film and TV and even theater industries get to live out loud and proud on the internet. We are still in the dark ages. Most excavations are hard to fund. And even if they are funded, odds are its by a man or a male dominated team going to excavate. So a lot of the woman, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and the disabled comminutes suffer quietly.

GEORGIE

Damn. That must be tough.

AYA

It is. Imagine working with Greg everyday and constantly hearing his mouth.

GEORGIE

He'd be dead.

AYA

He got close a few times. But really. He's being pretty tame right now.

GEORGIE

You're kidding.

AYA

Wish I was.
GEORGIE
He says worse stuff.

AYA
You have to remember that we excavated a site in Old Nubia. Most people there do not speak English. And even then there were no recording equipment around to catch him in the act. We were decently isolated from anyone who would stop him.

GEORGIE
I'm so sorry.

AYA
Yeah. He's the worse. Although Richard is getting pretty high up there.

GEORGIE
You don't call him by his nickname?

AYA
Hell no. I nearly punched him the first time he told me to call him that and we never had that discussion again.

GEORGIE
Huh. So what's with Richard.

AYA
He's chasing fame. That's why we were here. Well at least me. Greg is his right hand and I am assuming that he tried to bring an all white male team, but Sam wasn't buying it was she?

GEORGIE
You catch on pretty quickly.

AYA
Yeah. So he brought me in, the youngest person on the team Jackson, so he could obviously manipulate him, and then there is Savannah.

GEORGIE
Who is Savannah?

AYA
She's a museum curator who specializes in all things ancient Nubia.

GEORGIE
Oh.

JACKSON
I knew you knew her. I know everything about you.
AYA
Yeah she is currently working on getting a lot of pieces back to Old Nubia for the museum collections over there.

GEORGIE
That's crazy.

AYA
Yeah. A lot of the countries around the Mediterranean don't actually have a lot of excavated items. They all have been moved to museums like the Smithsonian or the British Museum.

GEORGIE
That's horrible.

AYA
Yeah. But it's one of the best ways for the public to learn about excavations and the history behind ancient civilizations.

GEORGIE
Why?

AYA
I shouldn't say the best. I should say it's one of the easiest ways for the public to consume archaeology and what we find. What we find is important. And museums ensure that a general public can see it and learn from those civilizations. One only hopes that maybe someone will see an artifact and go home and do some digging around on Google.

GEORGIE
Really?

AYA
Yeah. Even though Google can bring up a lot of misinformation, it's a start. That's also why I am here today.

GEORGIE
Yeah. I would have never guessed you'd be one who wants to sit in front of a camera.

AYA
I really don't. But it is important to me that people hear us out and listen to what we find. Our line of work is important. No matter how messy the industry is. I just wish more people realized its importance.
I wish more people understood too. Truthfully I did not know why this was such a big deal to Sam to do, but now, I get it.

Wanna hear something funny.

Sure.

Savannah doesn't go by Sav.

She doesn't?

Nope. But Richard kept calling her that so she cut contact with him.

Then who was he on the phone with.

Probably her assistant.

Really?

Yeah her assistant is also her translator.

And how do you know Savannah so well?

Richard needed Savannah to look at a few of the first pieces that were originally found to help get funding to do a full excavation, and because she wouldn't talk to him, they hired me.

You're kidding me.

Nope.

Okay then. Everyone sit in a chair and after Geogrie and Stephanie finish setting up we will start the interview. Sounds good?
AYA
Good to me.
RICHARD
Great!
GREG
Good for me good lookin.
AYA
Oh my God.
JACKSON
GEORGIE
Stop.
AYA
Seriously just stop Jackson.
JACKSON
Sorry.
Stephanie and Georgie finish setting up the camera and sound.
SAM
Stephanie, are we ready?
STEPHANIE
Yes ma'am!
SAM
Good. Georgie?
Georgie nods the camera yes.
SAM
Great! So let's get started shall we?

SCENE TWO
We are in the same place where we left off at in Scene 1, but now we are starting the interview portion.

SAM
For starters I would like to thank you Richard Grey for joining us today and for bringing along your team.
RICHARD
No thank you, Saman...Sam for having my team and I join you for this discussion.

AYA
Please remind me Sam what the topic is again?

SAM
Oh, the intersection of culture, enthetic, and racial identities in Ancient Nubia.

AYA
Oh shit.

JACKSON
Uh oh.

GREG
Good! Because I have a lot of thoughts about this topic.

AYA
No you really don't Greg.

GREG
You don't tell me woman.

AYA
Keep it up while the cameras are going. Let the whole world find out exactly who you are!

*silence*

GREG
That's what I thought.

RICHARD
Yes. As you can see this topic is very...current and um... important to many archaeologist today.

SAM
I can...tell. So maybe let's start with generative question that seems to be plaguing the public right now. Is Cleopatra black?

*silent*

AYA

*RICHARD

*silent*

JACKSON

*silent*
GREG
I am so glad you asked Sam. I have a lot thoughts surrounding this conversation. For starters Cleopatra was-

AYA
Say another word and you will not be able to speak for 6 to 8 weeks when I'm through with you.

*silence*

AYA
Good.

JACKSON
I think it is a shame that Cleopatra keeps getting deduced to her looks. We should be focusing on who she was and what she did, not what she looked like.

RICHARD
I agree with gay Jackson!

AYA
Oh my God. Anyways. This is a really great starting question. You see the Cleopatra racial conversation ties in a lot of Ancient Nubian Pharaohs and their own ethnic, cultural, and even racial identities.

GREG
It does?

AYA
What did I tell you about speaking?

*silence*

RICHARD
You are going to edit this footage, correct?

SAM
Most definitely.

RICHARD
Good.

AYA
As I was saying. A lot of people who are conflicted about this topic are not even aware of how large scale it is. And while I totally understand why my colleague, Jackson.

JACKSON
You amaze me.
AYA
Would assume that it is better to leave race out of conversations like these. It is important to talk about the politics and cultural significance of the racial identity of Pheorohs such as Cleopatra.

SAM
What do you mean?

AYA
Well-

RICHARD
Aya, if I may take over for you.

AYA
Sure. Go right ahead.

RICHARD
When following archaeology and race is it rather complicated.

AYA
To say the least.

RICHARD
For starters with both Ancient Nubia and Ancient Egypt there is a constant question surrounding what the culture was like and what cultures, countries, and ethnicities get to claim that they descend from members of those Ancient populations.

AYA
This especially gets tricky as we think about who were some of the first excavationist for these ancient populations: white western men. And they were not able to remove their basis when conducting these excavations, so a lot of the time they would assume that these populations had pale skin, due to the level of intelligence and how advanced they were. Because it was simply impossible for them to imagine to not be a white person who would have been able to do all that they did.

JACKSON
Aya is so smart and to add on to her point, this stuff plays a role in race science. Which is incredibly dangerous and prejudice science practice that is now becoming more increasingly unpopular.

RICHARD
You see race science wasn't actually real. A lot of men like Samuel Norton, would measure skulls and would claim that you could prove race by the size, shape, and look of a skull.
JACKSON
In case you haven't already picked up on, but this is extremely problematic. A lot of people were incorrectly racially typed, and even more so race is one of the hardest things to prove as an archaeologist.

SAM
So basically race is extremely hard to prove in archaeology, and race science was just making false claims to confirm their own ideas.

AYA
Yeah pretty much.

SAM
But you mentioned something about politics and how it affects countries now?

AYA
Yeah. So when looking at Pharaohs where we don't know what their ethnic heritage is or even their lineage, a lot of countries will fit over whether or not that Pharaoh is from their country or not.

SAM
Oh.

JACKSON
Yeah and then get more challenging for archaeologist. Because most of us just want to find out the truth. While a lot of other people are looking for confirmation bias.

SAM
Greg, you've been awfully silent. What do you think about all of this?

GREG
I believe in race science.

AYA
Here we go again.

RICHARD
Let me say his piece.

GREG
I think that Morton had it right and that we are able to tell one's race based off of their bone structure. The best bone for this is the skull.
AYA
But what he fails to knowledge is the numerous amounts of studies and archaeologist that have come out and said that Morton was wrong.

GREG
I've looked at all the evidence and I believe in race science. Partly because, how will we ever figure out the race of people without it.

AYA
Maybe we don't need to know the race.

GREG
But race is major part of identity and status and culture. How can you say that?

AYA
You talk about how important race is. But you forget to mention that the emphasis we put on race, may not have been the same for ancient civilizations. There is so much to unpack and understand about race and how a civilization treats it, but these are answers we will never have. And that's okay.

GREG
No it's not!

AYA
I wish people would understand that without actual photographs or verbatim text, race is something that is near impossible for archeology to figure out.

GREG
Near impossible, so there is still a chance.

AYA
If we have it on record!

SAM
Okay. How about we move on. What is the cultural or ethnic identity of Ancient Nubia?

AYA
That is a loaded question.

SAM
Really?

JACKSON
Yes.
SAM
Why?

RICHARD
Well you have to take into account where Ancient Nubia was and what it was exactly. Nubia is basically right below Egypt. Their neighborhoods. But at certain times, Nubia was apart of Egypt and the Egyptian Pharos were even Nubian.

AYA
They are best known as the 'black Pharos'.

SAM
Wait. So we do know the racial identity of the Pharos.

GREG
Some of them. Not all. It just depends on which ones we have been able to find the bodies of and excavate and also what we know from record.

SAM
What is record?

JACKSON
Record is written, drawing, or photograph that gives us a first account of what was going on. A great example of record would be the cave paintings from Neolithic times. Or scrolls from Ancient Egyptian or Ancient Greek or Ancient Roman times.

GREG
Anyways. Figuring out cultural and ethnic identity is best done through migration patterns, which can be figured out in a lot of different ways, but one of the best ones being excavation of graves.

AYA
The excavation of graves is one of best finds an archaeologist could ask for. A grave gives you a lot to work with and lot of insight to a civilization. From what they value, how hard it is to be an immigrant, to social status and wealth, and even gender stances.

SAM
Wow.

RICHARD
During this last excavation we were taking a look at 24 units within this tomb chamber. All varying between middle class and upper class elites. We took out the bodies and had them tested to see when their bones were alive.
JACKSON
And interestingly enough we did not find any corelation between Egyptian colonialism in Nubia and how it might have affected the birth of the Napatan State. Instead we found that the Egyptians and Nubians worked together to create a culture and community where they could not only coexist but also interchangeably mingle and marry.

SAM
Wow.

AYA
So to answer your question in simple terms, towards the end of the Egyptian Pharos reign, during New Kingdom, a lot of Egyptians fled to Nubia and the two different people found a way to make it work and lived together, pretty peacefully.

SAM
This is all really fascinating.

RICHARD
Thank you. My team did really well. We all worked extremely hard on this so I am glad that you are interested.

SAM
I really had no idea what I was getting into with this project, but I am glad that I got involved!

JACKSON
Do you have any other questions for us?

SAM
No. Not right now. I think we will call it good for today and I will schedule a time to do this again with you all. I really need to go and do some more research before we continue.

AYA
Okay then I'm out guys. Thanks for having us Sam.

JACKSON
Me too! I'm coming with you Aya.

Aya and Jackson exit.

GEORGIE
You know he's in love with her?

SAM
Oh everyone knows.

GREG
Well goodbye ladies. And Stephanie how old are you again?
STEPHANIE
Too young. Like illegally young

GREG
Never mind.

Greg exits.

RICHARD
Thanks for having us Sam. You have no idea how much it means to us to be able to share our work with the world.

SAM
Of course! I am glad I learned something new! I'll be in touch.

Richard exits.

STEPHANIE
That was a shit show right?

SAM
Oh 100%!

GEORGIE
That was the hardest set I have ever worked on.

SAM
Really rough start.

GEORGIE
Really really rough start.

SAM
But somehow worth it.

GEORGIE
I agree.

STEPHANIE
Huh. Good to know. Are all sets like this?

GEORGIE
In some ways.

SAM
But not in others.

STEPHANIE
Huh. Okay.

Blackout. Curtain.
Bibliography


https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.12524

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10437-021-09453-7

https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197628935.001.0001


