

MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM

Levee Monologue

LEVEE: I can say “yessir” to whoever I please. What you got to do with it? Levee got to be Levee! And he don't need nobody messing with him about the white man – cause you don't nothing about me. You don't know Levee. You don't know about what kind of blood I got! What kind of heart I got beating here! I was eight years old when I watched a gang of white mens come into my daddy's house and have to do with my mama any way they wanted. My daddy called me, say, “Levee, you the man of the house now. Take care of your mama while I'm gone.” I wasn't but a little boy, eight years old when them mens come in that house. Must have been 8 or 9 of them and they took hold of her just like you take hold of a mule. My daddy had a knife that he kept for hunting. I'm going to show you how spooked up I was by the white man. I tried my damndest to cut one of them's throat! I hit him on the shoulder with it. He reached back and grabbed hold of that knife and whacked me across the chest with it. (Levee raises his shirt to show a long ugly scar) That's what made them stop. They were scared I was gonna bleed to death. My daddy came back and acted like he done accepted the facts of what happened. But he got the names of them mens from mama. He took off one day. I ain't never seen him since. He sneaked back, hiding up in the woods, laying to get them 8 or 9 men. He got four of them before they caught him, and hung him, and set him afire. My daddy wasn't spooked up by the white man. Nosir! And that taught me how to handle them. I seen my daddy go up and grin in the cracker's face...smile in his face and sell him his land. All the while he's planning how he's gonna get him and what he's gonna do to him. That taught me how to handle them. So you all just back up and leave Levee alone about the white man. I can smile and say yessir to whoever I please. I got time coming to me. You all just leave Levee alone about the white man.