



**SHOW WAY**  
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Based on the beloved children's book *Show Way*  
By Jacqueline Woodson  
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Perusal

## CHARACTERS

Toshi Georgiana/Young Mathis (both 11 years old) – Black Female

Toshi's Mother (30's)/Mama (20's) – Black Female

Mathis (18) – Black Female

Trevor (11)/Edwin (18)/Papa (20's) – Black Male

Lisa (11) - Asian American Female

Maritza (11) - Latin(x) Female

Adam (11) - Jewish Male

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

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## Scene 1

In darkness, a single candle lights center stage, held by MATHIS in 1800's slave dress. Mathis circles the stage counter clockwise.

### ENSEMBLE

Oo...

Oo...

(Mathis stops center stage and lifts her candle high. ENSEMBLE HUMS GROW, as behind her, a large colorful floor-to-ceiling QUILT is illuminated. It is made up of squares that depict trees, rivers, stars, people, and moments in history both distant and current.

One square will be highlighted at key points, and will be of a TREE. This will represent the progression through time and history of African Americans via our relationship with reading. The square will first appear as a symbol [TREE only at Opening], then a Tree with the letters "M & E" for Emancipation [Wedding of Mathis and Edwin/"Jump"], then Tree with the word "Free" for Reconstruction [Toshi and Mother Baking Cake from recipe], and then the phrase "Freedom...must be demanded by the oppressed – MLK" for Civil Rights [Grandma

Ann's story.] ONE EMPTY SQUARE SPACE remains open and will be filled at the end of the show. At the bottom center of the Quilt is a large squared off section of scrim, and characters will appear behind it, when lit. The very top and side sections can separate and move away from this central section.

As Mathis holds up her candle, a line of squares along the top of the Quilt are lit up with the faces and names of women. This is the Woodson Family Line of Eight Women, including, at the end, Toshi.)

#### MATHIS

This here is my family tree where you can see the mamas and the grandmama's who came before me, and the ones who've come after. That's *me*. Mathis May.

(Mathis points and a spot comes up on the square of Mathis in the Quilt. The music shifts.)

Right here, is Toshi Georgiana.

(A spot comes up on Toshi's square.)

You haven't met Toshi yet, but you will. There is something important she is going to have to find that was handed down to her from this lady right here, her great grandma. It looks like this...a quilt square that Toshi can find only if she looks with her heart and listens to the past.

A long time ago, both me and my Mama were slaves, owned by people who forced us to work for them and wouldn't let us be

free or even learn how to read. So mama taught me how to use needle and thread to sew special quilts that showed slaves the way to freedom called a Show Way. And oh, I was a strong little girl. And I learned what I needed to do.

## 1 OPENING (Mathis, Ensemble)

(In silhouette, YOUNG MATHIS appears behind the scrim, holding a lamp.)

MATHIS

LONG, LONG TIME AGO  
I TOOK A NEEDLE,  
I TOOK SOME THREAD  
I SEWED'EM TOGETHER  
AND STARTED TO TELL  
OUR STORY...

LONG, LONG TIME AGO  
THE STARS AND MOONS  
AND ROADS I SEWED

MATHIS/ENSEMBLE  
SHOWED PEOPLE THE WAY  
TO FREEDOM AND GLORY.

(Light up on Playing Area. MAMA and PAPA run to their daughter.)

MAMA

Baby, I don't have much to give you.

YOUNG MATHIS

But Mama, I don't want to be sold off! I want to stay here with you and Papa.

MAMA

I know, baby. But there's nothing we can do.

(MAMA hands her a large square of cloth,  
and a large needle threaded with red yarn.)

You take this cloth and some red thread to remember me by.  
Remember what I taught you...

YOUNG MATHIS

Keep the stitches straight.

MAMA

That's right. You can sew real fine. You listen good, you hear?  
Remember what I taught you about the way to put the squares  
together to make a map.

YOUNG MATHIS

To show the way.

MAMA

That's right. To show the way to freedom.

YOUNG MATHIS

But mama—

(Mama hugs her tight.)

MAMA

Hush now. You hold this to your heart to feel back home.

YOUNG MATHIS

Papa!

(Papa hugs his daughter. Young Mathis and her  
parents pull away from each other as if forcibly  
being pulled back.

Papa starts a simple rhythm against

his chest, like a heartbeat, that ends with a small, open-palmed gesture towards his daughter. Mama picks it up. YOUNG MATHIS joins in.

When they repeat it, rhythm becomes more complex. As the light dims on them, the rhythm is continued by ENSEMBLE OFFSTAGE.)

MATHIS (spoken)

It was so hard being taken from my family. To remember them, I started making quilts just like my Mama...big blankets made up of colorful squares that told a story with pictures, because no one was allowed to read or write. I made a hidden map to show which way to run from plantations to be free. This square...

(Light comes up on squares with symbols.)

...told them to walk past a log cabin. And this one told them to follow the Northern Star in the night sky. My mama told me to keep the secret safe and pass the story on.

MATHIS (sung)

SHE TOLD ME  
TAKE GOOD CARE  
KEEP IT SAFE  
PASS IT ON...

(LISA, TREVOR, ADAM and  
MARITZA ENTER.)

MATHIS and MARITZA

TAKE GOOD CARE  
KEEP IT SAFE  
PASS IT ON...

MATHIS, MARITZA, and LISA  
 TAKE GOOD CARE  
 KEEP IT SAFE  
 PASS IT ON...

ALL  
 PASS IT ON!

MATHIS  
 MAKE A QUILT PIECE  
 SEW IT TOGETHER  
 WITH A NEEDLE AND THREAD  
 AND LOTS OF LOVE

TAKE THOSE PIECES  
 SEW'EM TOGETHER  
 AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES  
 A SHOW WAY

THAT'S WHAT MAKES  
 A SHOW WAY

ALL  
 MAKE A QUILT PIECE  
 SEW IT TOGETHER  
 WITH A NEEDLE AND THREAD  
 AND LOTS OF LOVE

TAKE THOSE PIECES  
 SEW'EM TOGETHER  
 AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES  
 A SHOW WAY

THAT'S WHAT MAKES  
 A SHOW WAY

(The cast begins a raucous stomp/rhythm dance. After dance ends...TOSHI'S MOTHER ENTERS, dressed in modern T-shirt and jeans, and cradling a swaddled baby in her arms. HUSHED HUMS SUNG by cast under.)

TOSHI'S MOTHER (spoken)

And this special story was passed down to you, my little Toshi, from your great great great great Grandma Mathis May. All your ancestors love you just as much as I do. They are always here with you, watching over you.

(Everyone except Toshi's Mother exits. ENSEMBLE HUMS OFF STAGE as the FAMILY LINE in the QUILT'S segmented set piece, is lit above.)

TOSHI'S MOTHER  
(To Baby Toshi)

FOR ALL OF THEM  
WHO CAME BEFORE  
WE OWE IT TO THEM  
TO DO MUCH MORE  
BE BETTER.

OUR FAMILY LINE  
IS GREAT AND LONG  
I'LL DO THEM PROUD  
AND RAISE YOU STRONG  
LIKE ME.

AND I'M GONNA  
LOVE YOU UP  
LOVE YOU UP

(MATHIS)

LOVE GONNA LOVE  
GONNA LOVE YOU UP

PIECE BY PIECE  
WE PASS IT ON

LOVE YOU UP  
LOVE YOU UP  
LOVE GONNA LOVE  
GONNA LOVE YOU UP

STITCH BY STITCH  
AND MILE BY MILE

LOVE YOU UP  
LOVE YOU UP  
LOVE GONNA LOVE  
GONNA LOVE YOU UP

THROUGH THE YEARS  
WE PASS THEM ON

TOSHI'S MOTHER, MATHIS, and FEMALE ENSEMBLE

LOVE YOU UP  
LOVE YOU UP  
LOVE GONNA LOVE  
GONNA LOVE YOU UP

STORIES OF SURVIVIN'  
EV'RY TRIAL

(TOSHI'S MOTHER EXITS with the  
baby. The quilt separates into  
pieces that reveal a starlit sky.)

FEMALE ENS.	MATHIS	MALE ENS.
LOVE YOU UP LOVE YOU UP LOVE GONNA LOVE GONNA LOVE YOU UP	SHOW WAY... SHOW WAY... SHOW WAY... SHOW WAY...	MAKE A QUILT PIECE KEEP IT SAFE...  SEW IT TOGETHER AND PASS IT ON...
LOVE YOU UP LOVE YOU UP LOVE GONNA LOVE GONNA LOVE YOU UP	(FEMALE SOLO) MAKE A QUILT PIECE KEEP IT SAFE...  SEW IT TOGETHER AND PASS IT ON...	TELL OUR STORIES KEEP THEM SAFE  PUT' EM TOGETHER AND PASS THEM ON
LOVE YOU UP LOVE YOU UP LOVE GONNA LOVE GONNA LOVE YOU UP	MAKE A QUILT PIECE KEEP IT SAFE...  SEW IT TOGETHER AND PASS IT ON...	(EDWIN) LONG LONG TIME AGO...  LONG LONG TIME AGO...  LONG LONG TIME AGO...  LONG LONG TIME AGO...
LOVE YOU UP LOVE YOU UP LOVE GONNA LOVE GONNA LOVE YOU UP	SHOW WAY!	SHOW WAY!
SHOW WAY!		