

Type Of Material: SP

Title: Akeelah and the Bees

Number Of Pages: 116

Author: Doug Atchison

Draft:

Genre: Drama

Submitted by:

Circa: Present

Agency/CO:

Submitted to: Larry Weinberg

Analyst: Cosmo Kramer

Location: Crenshaw, California

Date: February 2, 2005

Elements:

Log Line: An 11 year old girl from the dark trenches of East LA turns out to be a spelling prodigy.

Comment Summary: Quite a prolific story. It touches the heart of the reader in every way. Solid well developed characters that compliment each other very well. Setting is believable, and makes Akeelah more of a hero then she proves herself to be.

Structure: Good

Characterization: Good

Dialogue: Good

Story Line: Good

Setting: Good

Budget: ____ **High** ____ **Medium** ____ **Low**

SYNOPSIS: 11-year-old Akeelah Anderson lives in Crenshaw, Ca. She's a child who is gifted, but stunted by her lifestyle in the not so nice part of East LA. The Principal of Crenshaw Middle School takes a particular interest in building Akeelah to her full potential. Mr. Welch brings in a close friend, UCLA Professor and fellow Spelling Bee winner Dr. Joshua Larabee (no pun intended...I don't think) Once Akeelah can prove how serious she is about the bee's Dr. Larabee agrees to train her for the National bee in Washington DC.

Akeelah at first rejects the offer of preparing for these competitions. She fears that the students will call her a "Nerd" and "freakin' braniac" even more often than they already do. As Akeelah watches more televised spelling bees, she realizes how much she wants to participate and make it to the top. In that realization she agrees to study with Dr. Larabee and meets her match. Dr. Larabee is a man who can outsmart her for the first half of her studies but Akeelah soon catches on to him and they become an unbeatable team.

Akeelah's mother Wanda is quite the unsupportive mother. She is closed minded with the bees and believes Akeelah does not deserve to participate due to her failing grades she has received in the past school year (keeping in mind Akeelah did skip a grade) Keisha is Akeelah's 17 year old sister who is a mother of her own. She is one that is hard like her mother but also is there for her sister when she needs her most at her first bee. Akeelah's brother Terrance is a gangster, and a "Boy from the hood." Though Terrance does have a heart, and tries to help Akeelah as best he can. One of the strongest familial influences Akeelah has is her brother Devon. He is a member of the armed forces, and is a responsible human being. Devon seems to be the only family member that knows Akeelah and knows that she is gifted at heart, and treats her with the respect she deserves.

As the plot thickens Akeelah grows fond of Dr. Larabee, who turns into a mentor and more importantly a father figure for her. We later learn about Dr. Larabee and his past, as it becomes an important roadblock that Akeelah runs into. Dr. Larabee teaches Akeelah everything he knows about spelling and the tactics she needs to win.

As Akeelah performs on the spelling bee circuit, she meets kids from all across the LA county area. One student who makes a huge imprint on her life is Javier, a Hispanic boy from Woodland Hills. Javier is an inspirational character to Akeelah and helps her get through the tough times that the bee circuit gives her. Another student who inspires Akeelah is Dylan. Dylan is an Asian student also from Woodland Hills. Dylan comes from a bit of a different background. His father drills him all day so that he can win the national bee. Dylan came in second 2 years in a row and his father will stop at nothing to force Dylan to win this year. Dylan eventually lets his guard down and teams up with Akeelah at the national bee to be the first pair to win the national.

Akeelah learns herself as she embarks upon this journey. She proves to her mother that she can do anything she puts her mind to, as well as gains the utmost respect from her fellow students at Crenshaw Middle School. She becomes an inspiration to the rest of her

community, and respects herself for pulling through something she would have never dreamed she could do.

COMMENTS:

Can we change the title to make it sound more appealing? While *Akeelah and the Bees* is ok, it sounds like a horror film featuring wild African bees as the source of terror.

I like how the reader can see the emotions that each character gives off. To me that is very important. The stronger they are on screen the more touching and powerful the story will be.

I also liked how Terrance and his “homie” were willing to help Akeelah when she was down in the dumps about losing her coach. Terrance’s friend was quite supportive in pushing Terrance to help his little sister.

Can we learn more about Wanda sooner than later? She is left a mystery and then all of a sudden opens her heart to the audience.

Overall I enjoyed the script. This is one I would gladly see in the theatres (so long as it is not marketed like most of the urban comedies/dramas we see today) the story was written well and has nicely developed characters. The author should be proud of his accomplishment.