

WOKE CHURCH

a short play by Maximillian Gill

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The Characters

Confessor	Any age, any gender, BIPOC, the confessor on duty at Woke Church, serious about the job
Penitent	Any age, any gender, white, looking for absolution but has a funny way of showing it
Initial Penitent	Any age, any gender, white, around for a minute or two just to set up the premise

SETTING: Woke Church.

TIME: Right about now.

CONFESSOR (any age, any gender, BIPOC) nods to welcome INITIAL PENITENT (any age, any gender, white).

INITIAL PENITENT

Forgive me, for I have sinned.

CONFESSOR

Speak, my child.

INITIAL PENITENT

Well, I have this friend from India, and I went to her place, and . . . and . . .

CONFESSOR

Continue.

INITIAL PENITENT

I actually really like Indian food.

CONFESSOR

Just tell me.

INITIAL PENITENT

I said, "Mmm, do I smell curry?" because I thought I smelled curry, but . . . no, she said she doesn't even cook Indian at home.

CONFESSOR

What was it?

INITIAL PENITENT

Spicy lasagna.

CONFESSOR

Your sins lie heavy, my child.

INITIAL PENITENT

I'm ready for penance.

CONFESSOR

For one week, eat nothing but curry. And not wimpy white people curry.

INITIAL PENITENT

But even Indian people don't eat it that much.

CONFESSOR

Do you want to be absolved of your sins or not?

INITIAL PENITENT

I do. Yes, thank you.

CONFESSOR

Tithe with Venmo, we're a 501 c three.

Initial Penitent exits.
PENITENT (any age, any
gender, white) enters.

CONFESSOR

Oh, no.

PENITENT

Surprise, it's me.

CONFESSOR

Weren't you just here last week?

PENITENT

Yeah, but I screwed up again.

CONFESSOR

Go on.

PENITENT

I have this really, really close African-American friend,
and--

CONFESSOR

Just watch Twelve Years a Slave again.

PENITENT

Okay.

CONFESSOR

What is it with you?

PENITENT

I'm working on becoming an anti-racist person.

CONFESSOR

But you're doing a bad job.

PENITENT

I accept your judgement, and I submit to your guidance.

CONFESSOR

All right. Let's start with, I don't know, stop saying inappropriate things to people of color?

PENITENT

I'm trying, believe me, but I see everything through a white lens and it's just so distorting.

CONFESSOR

Fine. Don't forget to tithe.

PENITENT

Sure. But hey, I was wondering about something.

CONFESSOR

I'm sure there's people waiting outside.

PENITENT

Do you offer a general waiver?

CONFESSOR

Waiver?

PENITENT

Yeah, so I'm good for any more missteps.

CONFESSOR

You have to do penance any time you disrespect a person of color in any way.

PENITENT

Got it, so I guess I'll be back next week.

CONFESSOR

(sighing)

All right, there is something.

PENITENT

Really?

CONFESSOR

It'll cover you.

PENITENT

In what situations?

CONFESSOR

You can ask people where they're *really* from.

PENITENT

Nice.

CONFESSOR

You can adopt slang. You can touch people's hair. You can mangle other languages.

PENITENT

Can I culturally appropriate?

CONFESSOR

Oh, that's a given.

PENITENT

Yay.

CONFESSOR

Even better. Get this.

PENITENT

What?

CONFESSOR

Now, you don't want to overuse this one.

PENITENT

What is it?

CONFESSOR

You can even, on occasion, use racial slurs to express companionship, like we do among ourselves.

PENITENT

Oh wow, that's more than I ever dreamed.

CONFESSOR

Right?

PENITENT

What do I have to do?

It's simple. CONFESSOR

Tell me, please, tell me. PENITENT

Just stop giving a shit. CONFESSOR

What? PENITENT

That's it. CONFESSOR

And I won't be cancelled? PENITENT

Nope. CONFESSOR

Seriously, you'll report back and let them know I'm good? PENITENT

Report back to whom? CONFESSOR

I don't know. (evasive) PENITENT

No, tell me. CONFESSOR

I'm just assuming. PENITENT

So you think a bunch of us get together and rule on stuff like this? CONFESSOR

Not saying that . . . but do you? PENITENT

Like we all get in a room and hash it out? CONFESSOR

Right? PENITENT

We don't do that. CONFESSOR

Okay. PENITENT

It's all virtual now. CONFESSOR

What? PENITENT

We do it over Zoom. CONFESSOR

So you'll tell them? PENITENT

Sure. CONFESSOR

Awesome. PENITENT

Hmm. CONFESSOR

What? PENITENT

This was a test. CONFESSOR

What kind? PENITENT

Sort of an Abraham and Isaac thing. CONFESSOR

Oh, so you follow a Judeo-Christian religious tradition? PENITENT

CONFESSOR

It's cultural literacy. I was testing to see if you really didn't care, and you fell for it.

PENITENT

Uh oh.

CONFESSOR

That's right. If you stop giving a shit, you may as well put on a white sheet and Sieg Heil.

PENITENT

Hey, that's not cool.

CONFESSOR

Leave. Now.

PENITENT

You really don't want me here, do you?

CONFESSOR

You think?

PENITENT

I know I'm committing a micro-aggression by revealing my whiteness in your space.

CONFESSOR

That's not it.

PENITENT

Then what?

CONFESSOR

Every time you come back, I feel like a failure.

PENITENT

Oh, right, and I represent a culture of white achievement that makes you feel like you're less than.

CONFESSOR

That captures it.

PENITENT

Sorry.

CONFESSOR

Happy for your growth. Now get out and don't come back.

PENITENT

All right, but I'll have to report this to my people.

CONFESSOR

Your people?

PENITENT

Yup.

CONFESSOR

You mean white people get together and go over white stuff?

PENITENT

You don't have to believe me.

CONFESSOR

Like what?

PENITENT

Well, last week we had a seminar on dancefloor tactics. How to use enthusiasm to compensate for a lack of rhythm.

CONFESSOR

You convinced me.

PENITENT

Be careful, you could get your non-profit status revoked.

CONFESSOR

You can't do that.

PENITENT

You don't think white people have that kind of power over your life?

CONFESSOR

Right, I guess you can do that.

PENITENT

So work with me. Let's fix racism.

CONFESSOR

I don't think that's possible.

PENITENT

Not with that attitude it's not.

CONFESSOR

Do you know that's a really white thing to say?

PENITENT

See, that's why I need you. Come on, this is your job.

CONFESSOR

Okay, I really, really hope you mean that it is literally my job, as in because I work for this place it's my job to help you be less racist.

PENITENT

Of course.

CONFESSOR

Because if you're implying that it's on us to fix racism for white people, that's a different thing.

PENITENT

No . . . Well, maybe a little.

CONFESSOR

Excuse me?

PENITENT

Do you really see us white people getting this done on our own?

CONFESSOR

All right, I took on this job because I wanted to make a difference and help people like you move beyond all your punishing waves of white guilt. But I did not sign up for this shit. All of you want your racism-free certificates but you don't want to do the work.

And holy fuck, how stupid can you be? Do you hear the stuff that comes out of your mouths? You want me to judge you on your intentions not on your words, but how do you expect me to ignore all the condescension, pathetic offers of alliance, and truly desperate performative wokeness? You wish you had skin like mine, you think I'm a genius because I can speak your damn colonial queen's English better than you can, and also you never, ever see color. Well, what do you think this is? It's right in front of you, look. I'm so over it. I'm ready to give up on this

whole stupid thing. Because you will never get there.
You're hopeless.

PENITENT

Wow, that's a lot.

CONFESSOR

Deal.

PENITENT

Not only did you speak your truth, you just dismantled my
faith in the healing powers of white empathy. Really,
that's just a chef's kiss.

CONFESSOR

Wait, you sound like you actually enjoyed that.

PENITENT

It was brutal, but it was good. Wow.

CONFESSOR

Okay, we're done.

PENITENT

See you next week.

CONFESSOR

So you're telling me you want to get in some weird co-
dependent cycle where you come in and I abuse you just so I
can take a swipe at white self-satisfaction for the sake of
a little endorphin rush that ultimately does nothing to
move the needle on the larger issues of systemic racism?

PENITENT

Works for me. You?

CONFESSOR

Yup.

PENITENT

Cool.

End play.