Hell Hath No Fury Like a Black Woman in Rage: Re-contextualizing the "Angry Black Woman"

Across Media Landscapes

By

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Abstract

Part research paper, part curated screening, my MIAP thesis hones in on the "angry black woman" trope as a catalyst to analyze how negative ethnic stereotypes in relation to black women have become cinematic themes, and caricature archetypes spanning multiple genres, media formats, and decades. Historically throughout mainstream media, black women have been portrayed through the following stereotypical roles: Mammy/maid, hyper-sexualized/Jezebel, or angry/Sapphire. These tropes, which are primarily synonymous with black women, reinforce negative stereotypes that can be traced back to the 18th-century. This form of representation, or rather, blatant misrepresentation, has resulted in trauma imposed on black women through the cinematic gaze. In the end, maybe we'll find that Black women may have more than a few reasons to be angry.

My curated screening "*The Re-appropriation Will be Televised*" is a short form - film program is a direct response to the current discourse surrounding Black feminist thought, cinematic trauma of marginalized and/or underrepresented groups, and Hollywood's misrepresentation of them. In a moment in time when many women feel their experiences are invalidated or silenced, especially Black women who are part of a subset minority within the greater marginalization of gender discrimination, the films that will be screened will act as a powerful conduit for solidarity, expression, and representation of trauma vs truth. As more Black women curators rise, we are able to re-claim, re-appropriate, and re-contextualize our images.

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Introduction

"I've got to know that I can be free...Can you stimulate my mind?"
- India Arie, Part of My Life[1]

While doing research for this project I was asked on several occasions from women of color within the moving image preservation field if I really wanted to do this…if I really wanted to present and research this topic. A topic that is directly tied to the negative associations, experiences, and stereotypes of black women. Negative associations and bias that many black women in the entertainment industry, academia, and beyond are working hard to dispel today. This prompted me to really think of my "Why". Why am I doing this? Why is this even important? Is this even a topic of relevance in our socio-political media landscape in 2020? And lastly, what qualifies me to be the one to tackle this? Before I dive in, I believe it's important to note that while this thesis is rooted in academic research and theory, it is also personal. For I myself, am a black woman who has personally experienced the negative ramifications of the misrepresentation of the black female image.

Negative stereotypical portrayals of black women have existed since the literature of the 17th and 18th centuries. The characteristics that have later been ascribed to the stereotype of the irrational "Angry Black Women" in particular, can be found as early as the 1900s. I believe that the prevalence of this particular trope in literature, films, television, and other forms of entertainment and media has a direct impact on the way black women's pain, trauma, bodily abuse, passion, and genuine concerns have been deemed irrational, dangerous and disruptive, to this day. The following paragraphs present you with multiple examples of this prevalent issue.

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[1] Lyrics.com, STANDS4 LLC, 2020. "Part of My Life Lyrics." Accessed May 9th, 2020. https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/4667395/India.Arie.

Prior to former President Barack Obama 's Democratic Party nomination a Newsweek article was written stating "that as Senator Obama's campaign becomes more widespread, the public may interpret Michelle Obama's outspoken and assertive behavior as emasculating, acerbic, and domineering rather than a reflection of strength and intelligence[2]. Another example relating to women in politics is when Cal Thomas, a commentator for FOX Television had this to say in regards to Congresswoman Maxine Waters:

> "Look at the image of angry black women on television. Politically you have Maxine Waters of California, liberal Democrat. She's always angry every time she gets on television. Cynthia McKinney, another angry black woman. And who are the black women you see on the local news at night in cities all over the country. They're usually angry about something. They've had a son who has been shot in a drive-by shooting. They are angry at Bush. So you don't really have a profile of non-angry black women, of whom there are quite a few."[3]

A more recent display dating only a few months back is the backlash received by world-renowned tennis player Serena Williams who had the trope imposed upon her after a display of poor sportsmanship [to put it lightly][4]. While I don't agree nor condone the way Williams reacted to the first flag or the additional flag she received for her arguing, which then caused the situation to escalate. I could relate to the frustration, as I'm sure many blacks women or women of color can of getting double the "punishment" and being held to a higher standard than that of their white-counterparts/peers for exhibiting the same form of behaviors.

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[2] Powell, M. and Kantor, J., 2020. After Attacks, Michelle Obama Looks For A New Introduction. [online] Nytimes.com. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/us/politics/18michelle.html> [Accessed 11 May 2020].

[3] "Transcript: 'FOX News Watch,' June 14, 2008". Fox News, 2020. https://www.foxnews.com/story/transcript-fox-news-watch-june-14-2008.

[4] Prasad, Ritu. "Serena Williams And 'Angry Black Women'". BBC News, 2020. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45476500.

In terms of the entertainment industry, specifically within the television landscape, albeit in a more subtle form, the trope has evolved to include the stereotype of "The Strong Black Woman" or "Sister With Attitude" [SWA] and can best be seen in the genre of Reality TV[5]. In a New York Times Article interviewing 35 critically and culturally acclaimed African-American artists on works of art [in any medium] that inspire them, multi-hyphen showrunner, producer, actress, and writer, Issa Rae had this to say about VH1's hit dating reality show "*Flavor of Love*", which debuted in 2006[6].

> "I remember watching it and getting increasingly angry that it was one of the few portrayals of black women in [pop culture]...It was really impactful for me in terms of feeling like, "I have to get up and create alternative images." But I also recognize the impact that it had just in terms of pushing black women's voices to the forefront — I always feel conflicted about that."*Flavor of Love*" influenced me to write the characters that I wanted to see."[7]

Here, Rae is also speaking to the constant state of negotiation black women find themselves in while watching negative depictions of themselves on screen. It leaves many black women in a limbo of being appreciative of the visibility on-screen but questioning if representation for the sake of misrepresentation is worth it. I will be diving more into the black women's cinema watching experience and its relation to Foucault's coins "the gaze" in the last subsection of this introduction.

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[5] Please refer to Chapter 2 of this paper for a more in-depth analysis of the ABW trope on Reality TV.

[6] Rae is specifically referencing Flavor of Love Season 2, Episode 1 "Sumthin's Stinkin' in the House of Flav"[VH1 August,06 2006] when one of the black female contestants was shown defecating on the floor during the elimination session.

[7] "35 Top African-American Artists On The Work That Inspires Them". Nytimes.Com, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/19/arts/african-american-art-inspiration.html.

In the same article, Rae goes on to say that in opposition to being adversely inspired by the recent portrayals of black women in reality tv, she has found positive inspiration and motivation through the black female leads produced, and written by showrunner Shonda Rhimes. She states how Rhimes characters showed her that she could create positive worlds for black women that doesn't center around negative tropes. Sadly, even when we [black women] create complex, multi-faceted [displaying characteristics of strength, intelligence, compassion, and vulnerability] positive female protagonists, like Rhimes has done with Olivia Pope [Kerry Washington] in "*Scandal*"[ABC, 2012] and Annalise Keating [Viola Davis] in "*How to Get Away with Murder*" [ABC, 2014], still result in the negative stereotypes that have been ingrained into the media landscape being wrongfully attributed to them.

In a *New York Times* review written by TV critic Alessandra Stanley, Stanley reduces Rhimes' black female protagonist to stereotypical tropes mixed between being an angry black woman who terrifies and terrorizes the people around her and a jezebel who part-takes in adultery. Stanley even goes as far as to state:

> "When Shonda Rhimes writes her autobiography, it should be called "How to Get Away With Being an Angry Black Woman." Her women are authority figures with sharp minds and potent libidos who are respected, even haughty members of the ruling elite, not maids or nurses or office workers. Be it Kerry Washington on "Scandal" or Chandra Wilson on "Grey's Anatomy," they can and do get angry."[8]

A response published in the *New York Times'* opinion pages by Elizabeth Spayd calls out both Stanley and the Times for publishing a review that was "condescending – at best – and

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[8] Stanley, Alessandra. "Wrought In Rhimes'S Image". Nytimes.Com, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/21/arts/television/viola-davis-plays-shonda-rhimess-latest-tough-heroine.html.

astonishingly tone-deaf and out of touch"[9]. Spayd also points to the fact that having this review

published under the Times means these views will reach a national audience and continue to

reinforce these forms of misrepresentation of black women. To add to Spayd's response, what

makes the review even more damaging is that the writer, Alessandra Stanley, is a white woman.

The fact that Stanley is white women, adds a layer in the form of the reinforcement of the

systematic ideologies of oppression that have long plagued black women by our white

counterparts. Thus, leading to my thesis central argument and driving inspiration for my curated

film program, that if we, as black women forgo the work of re-contextualizing, re-claiming, and

re-appropriating the images of our past. The ones rooted in systematic racist ideologies and

ethnic stereotypes, which have proven their longevity and ability to repackage themselves in

different forms, then we, as black women leave room for the people in power [usually white

men] to define those images for us, which in turn, helps shape our identity.

In a cross-disciplinary in-depth study intersecting the fields of anthropology, sociology,

cinema studies, and archiving, I aim to analyze and shed light on how this one particular trope

has become a cinematic theme /caricature archetype spanning multiple genres, media formats,

and decades. I will also be looking at the effect this has had on the cinematic viewing experience

of black women socially, politically, and psychologically and how these factors ultimately play

into the state of black women representation in moving image archives. I plan to achieve this in

three main parts. First, for the remainder of this introduction, I will be laying out the theoretical

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[9]Sullivan, Margaret. "An Article on Shonda Rhimes Rightly Causes a Furor." The New York Times. The New York Times, September 22, 2014. https://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/22/an-article-on-shonda-rhimes-rightly-causes-a-furor/.

framework rooted in black feminist thought, film criticism, black culture criticism and theory, and sociology. For the last subsection of this introduction, I will report on the history of the cinematic gaze from a black woman's perspective.

Part one will introduce the subject of tropes and stereotypes and then give a brief overview of three main tropes that plague black women in the media. From there, I plan to pull examples from films, sitcoms, reality tv, and animation to help me analyze and critique themes such: self-imposed misrepresentation, representation in cinema, and the psychological and social effects of cinematic trauma and misrepresentation. While the bulk of my moving image and sound material will be from the early 1900s to the 1970s, I will pull in examples from the 2000s to the present to help put things in context for how things have improved or remained stagnant.

Part two will begin with the principles and theories that guide my curatorial statement and approach. From there I pay a brief homage to the black women film curators already out in the field doing the work. Lastly, I will introduce my evening short-form film program entitled *"The Re-Appropriation Will be Televised"* that will offer a re-contextualization of the negative stereotypes and tropes imposed on black women by the mainstream media. Moving somewhat chronologically and thematically over the course of the evening the screenings offer a look at blacks in media through short films and television that end up being a juxtaposition between troubling, inspiring and entertaining. It aims to examine not only media created by whites that reinforce negative stereotypes of black women but also what happens when we as black people reclaim those tropes imposed on our images, for better or worse, thus reclaiming our identities and re-defining how we want to be represented across the media landscape.

Theoretical Framework

As I stated in the previous section, this subsection will lay out the theoretical framework which is rooted in black feminist thought, film criticism, black cultural criticism and theory, and sociology that has informed, shaped, and guided this thesis. It was particularly important to me as a black woman that my research is rooted in black feminist, as distinguished scholar and author Patrica Hill Collins states, black women should be both the consumers and producers of black feminist thought[10]. This is mostly because history and feminist canon literature has shown that in the past, any research, theorization, or generalization in regards to the feminist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, have in large been produced through the lens of and for white women. It is with that in mind that I pursue the study of black women. This is especially the case when it pertains to the field of feminist film theory and criticism.[11]

For years, up till the 1980s, black women have been rendered all but invisible in the field, which is a disservice not only black women but also in terms of progression within the field. Black women offer a unique intersectional perspective that is missing from the discourse of the

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[10] Collins, Patricia Hill. Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1990.

[11] Chen, Gina Masullo, Sherri Williams, Nicole Hendrickson, and Li Chen. "Male Mammies: A Social-Comparison Perspective on How Exaggeratedly Overweight Media Portrayals of Madea, Rasputia, and Big Momma Affect How Black Women Feel About Themselves." Mass Communication and Society 15, no. 1 (2012): 115–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2011.569682.

field, which is rooted in the hegemonic societal structures of white power ideology[12] [13].Film

critic Jane Gaines states that using gender and feminist analysis as the entry point to analyzing

oppression reinforces white middle-class values, and keeps one from seeing other structures of

oppression that function ideologically[14].

Thankfully, this is starting to change. Thanks to black feminist cultural and film critics

such as Alice Walker, bell hooks, Jacqueline Bobo, Patricia Hill Collins, Audry Laude, Djamila

Ribeiro, Brittany Cooper, Jaquline Stewart, Manthia Diawara, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and many

others. Because of them current and future generations of black women now have the necessary

literature to inculcate ourselves feminist film theory that seeks to disarm the current "white

supremacist capitalist patriarchy" that dominates the field. By doing so, these women are

addressing the years black women have spent in constant negotiation, which lies at the heart of

black female film spectatorship in relation to the dominant ideology of the movie-going

experience and cinema itself.[15] [16]

The dominant systematic power structures lead black women spectators to identify with

the black body being displayed on the screen, which Manthia Diawara notes is primarily

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[12] Collins (1990)

[13] Feminist and culture theorist Bell Hooks has used coined the term "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" to describes how the insections of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, and nationalism interlock to impose it's dominating systematic ideologies on culture.

[14]Dunn, Stephane. Baad Bitches and Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films. University of Illinois Press, 2008.(pp. 1-12) Accessed May 11, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt2ttfnn.

[15] Keeling, Kara. "Black Feminist Media Studies." The International Encyclopedia of Communication, May 2008. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecb015.

[16] Dunn, Stephane. (2008)

constructs the black body as an object of entertainment for white movie-goers[17]. This is without

regard for the black body sitting alongside the white spectator in theater, who is subconsciously

and perhaps consciously, negotiating between what Diawara terms "resisting spectatorship" and

"passive identification" between themselves [a possessor of a black body] and the black body

projected on the screen, who may seem faintly familiar at best.[18] [19]

This back and forth negotiation with on screen representation, positions the black

spectator between two worlds. As Baldwin aptly described "not really feeling like one fits in

within the racist systematic social construct of the African American culture of the time, but

knowing one also will never be fully accepted by the larger white structure.[20]" We can connect

what Baldwin's saying back to the idea that as a black spectator who's viewing black images that

were produced under a racist ideological system, oftentimes one is not able to identify with the

imitation of blackness on the screen [mostly in terms of characterization]. While at the same time

we might identify with the complexities and depth given to the white images in terms of

characterization but fail to be able to fully accept or claim the white image as our own, not only

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[17] Manthia Diawara, Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance, Screen, Volume 29, Issue 4, Autumn 1988, Pages 66–79, https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/29.4.66

[18] Dunn, Stephane. (2008), Manthia Diawara (1989)

[19]Stewart, Jaqueline Najuma. Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity. University of California Press, 2005. (pp. 93-113) Accessed May 11, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppd3z.

[20] Baldwin, James, Raoul Peck, Rémi Grellety, Hébert Peck, Samuel L. Jackson, Harry Belafonte, Marlon Brando, et al. 2017. I am not your negro. http://proxy.library.umkc.edu/login?url=https://umkc.kanopy.com/node/542401.

due to abuse that has been inflicted at the reality of white image[21], but because that image also

reads to us as false.

This leads me to my next subsection where I will be diving into the concept of the gaze

and how it relates to the way black women subconsciously or consciously construct their own

identity in reaction to the negotiation and silent exchange of ideologies between the black body

being shown on screen, and themselves as a spectator of film.

The Gaze

"The gaze" was first conceptualized by French philosopher Michel Foucault. The concept stems

from the architectural design of the panopticon and the purpose of its structural formation by

English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham. The panopticon by design is a circular

prison in which prisoners are placed in cells along the circumference, and the guardroom is in the

center of the structure.In terms of purpose, it serves a disciplinary measure in that, in the

guardroom the guard can see every cell and inmate, but the inmates can't see into the guardroom

so the inmates never know if or when they are being watched. This causes the inmates to follow

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[21] In relation to black women specifically Bell Hooks states in her book *"Ain't I a Woman"* (1981) "When slavery ended . . . everywhere black women went they were accosted and subjected to obscene comments and even physical abuse. A Black woman dressed tidy and clean, carrying herself in a dignified manner, was usually the object of mud-slinging by White men who ridiculed and mocked her self-improvement efforts. They reminded her that in the eyes of the White public she would never be seen as worthy of consideration or respect." *"Introduction: The Real Scandal: Portrayals of Black Women in Reality TV." In Real Sister: Stereotypes, Respectability, and Black Women in Reality TV, edited by WARD JERVETTE R., 1-15. Rutgers University Press, 2015. Accessed May 11, 2020.* www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt17rw51m.4.*s*

the rules set in place by the dominating power structures within the prison as if they were under

constant surveillance[22] [23].

        Foucault states the structural purpose of the prison enforces the inmates to modify their

behavior to the point where self-behavior modification, in alignment with the dominant power

structural system, becomes normal. Keep in mind this happens under the "invisible" never

seeing gaze of the dominant power. Thus, according to Foucault, assigning the role of the guard

to that of the "the gaze" and applying it to anyone who is forced to conform to the point of

normalization without full conscious or understanding of their actions, is analogous to how

institutionalized and systematic power structures and ideologies get embedded into societal and

cultural norms.[24] [25] [26]

        In order to ground this back in black feminist thought, I look to bell hooks who states

"The "gaze" has always been political"[27]. In her book *Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the

Movies*[2012]*,* hooks notes that history has always tried to repress black peoples' freedom to

look, to stare, to gaze, going as far back to slavery when black slaves were punished for gazing at

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[22]Ben. "Ethics Explainer: The Panopticon - What Is the Panopticon Effect?" THE ETHICS CENTRE, May 16, 2019. https://ethics.org.au/ethics-explainer-panopticon-what-is-the-panopticon-effect/.

[23] "Panopticon." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, May 4, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panopticon.

[24] Vaz, Angelina. "Who's Got the Look? Sartre's Gaze and Foucault's Panopticism." Dalhousie French Studies 32 (1995): 33-45. Accessed May 8, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/40837004.

[25]"Gaze." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, April 6, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaze.

[26]Gina Masullo Chen et al., (2012)

[27] hooks, bell. Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies. United States: Taylor & Francis, 2012.

their white slave owners. Some were even killed for it[28]. This lies at the root of the traumatic

abuse black people have endured due to the gaze. These foundational looking relations has led to

the politicizing of the gaze, where by oppressing black people's right to gaze, the slave owners

were reducing black people to a mere object, essentially dehumanizing them[29]. I believe it was

their goal to strip black people of everything that makes a person human in the first place, down

to our free God-given birthright to look. Thus, rendering black people hopeless and faceless,

making it easier for them [those belonging to the dominant white patriarchy], to assert their own

ideology onto that particular group [black people], and rule them.

The above shows that the relationship between politics and ideology are always linked.It

is this cohesion that allows the ideology of the times to seep its way into the culture and present

itself in the form of culture hegemony. The same underlying principle of Foucault's gaze

concept. History has therefore shown us that whoever controls the avenues that create the

ideology of the times, specifically in terms of wages and education, controls the cultural

hegemony. And as we know it's whoever is the head of politics that has control over both of

those things, so I think it's safe to assume that whosoever holds the power politically, holds the

power over the ideology of the people under their political rule, thus controlling the ideology of

their culture as well.

This concept isn't new, these very ideas were presented by Louis Althusser in his essay

"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in 1970. It is this power structure that creates a

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[28] One of the most notable, tragic, and heartbreaking instances of this, is the story Emit Till. Till was a 14-year-old African American boy who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955, after being accused of offending a white woman by looking and whistling at her. https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-death-of-emmett-till

[29] hooks, bell (2012)

system where the subordinates, the laborers, and workers become the exploited class and are

subject to/ thrust into a system of labor to reproduce/carry out the worker set forth by those who

hold authority. In turn, this system sets in place a set of cultural "norms" and dictates the pecking

order within a society. Once this happens the system dictates our social cues, and how we judge

and are perceived by other people. This is how these systems of oppression are able to reproduce

and assert themselves into different world cultural structures "using the same foundational

apparatuses, strategies, and mechanisms of control"[30]. Which, for the scope of this thesis is

"from slavery to the movies".[31]

It wasn't till the invention of visual images, that black people were able to stare back at

their oppressors, and began to develop what hooks refers to as the "oppositional gaze[32]". The

development of the oppositional gaze in black people led to a newfound awareness of the politics

of looking relations—looking at one's self on screen and that of the systematic oppressor, or

"other". Thus, the black body on the screen acts as an "aesthetic and ideological sign associated

with one's socially constructed identity"[33]. This in turn leaves black film spectators to take the

black images on screen at face value, this, film historian Anna Everett has coined as the

transparent segregated text, which reinforces the dominant racial and gender ideologies of the

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[30] hooks, bell (2012)

[31] hooks, bell (2012)

[32] hooks, bell (2012)

[33] Dunn, Stephane. (2008)

time within the invisible exchange taking place between the film spectator and the images on the

screen [34].

The above is important to understand in relation to how black women see themselves in

the portrayals of black women within the media landscape. Media that is fueled, funded, and

operated under the same systems of oppression that Althusser speaks on, which in turn, can be

used as mechanism for reinforcing racist stereotypes of the oppressed group[35], while also

simultaneously and passively assigning identity onto them in relation to positioning the dominant

media portrayals [white people] as the societal standard.[36]

The complex intersectional relationship between black women, identity, dominant

systems and the cinematic gaze can be further understood by taking a look at American social

psychologist, Leon Festinger's social comparison theory (SCT). The theory states that people

have a drive to evaluate themselves in comparison to others in an aim to help determine their

self-worth. Festinger states that people are most likely to compare themselves to people or

groups they believe more closely reflects them[37] [38].This comparison can also be imposed onto

the person through outside systems and structures. For example, the displays of "dominant

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[34]Anna Everett (2015) Scandalicious, The Black Scholar, 45:1, 34-43, DOI: 10.1080/00064246.2014.997602

[35] Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. (1983). Going Up for the Oppressed: The Career Mobility of Black Women Community Workers. Journal of Social Issues. 39. 10.1111/j.1540-4560.1983.tb00159.x.

[36] Gina Masullo Chen et al., (2012)

[37] Festinger, Leon. "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes." Human Relations 7, no. 2 (May 1954): 117–40. doi:10.1177/001872675400700202.

[38] "Leon Festinger." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, February 28, 2020.

beauty ideal" through media could lead to self-evaluation and comparison due to constantly

being confronted with those images both consensual and non-consensually[39].

In relation to social identity specifically, the SCT states that people base their identity in

relation to others based on set attributes which help them place themselves within a particular

group or category of people that will go on to inform attributes of their own identities[40].

Understanding these theories help us see how when black women see negative ethnic

stereotypical portrayals of themselves in the media, it can lead to an assimilation of their own

identity in relation to those negative stereotypes.[41]

A great example of this can once again be seen in hooks book *Reel to Reel*. In the book

hooks states that Hollywood's push for their main leads to continually be casted as a white

woman is in direct alignment with the ideological agenda to maintain a clear aesthetic, socio-

economical and class separation between "ideal" and the "other". This has led black women to

take up the oppositional gaze as an act of resistance against the cinematic gaze of dominant

images, by doing so black women become active critics of the power structures that aim to keep

them as passive spectators. This enables black women to make the choice on whether or not they

choose to identify with either the "ideal" or the "other". They can decide to be neither victims

nor heroines.[42]

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[39] Gina Masullo Chen et al., (2012)

[40] "Leon Festinger." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, February 28, 2020.

[41] Gina Masullo Chen et al., (2012)

[42] hooks, bell (2012)

A 2013 published Nielsen report[43] reported that black viewers tended to watch programs with a diverse cast that is reflective of the black lifestyle and culture even if inaccurately depicted and doesn't align with the viewer's own characteristics. "In other words, black people want to see themselves reflected on television, even if the depictions are distorted and inaccurate." [44]

In his essay entitled "*What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?*" [1993], Stuart Hall states: "Popular culture, commodified and stereotyped as it often is, is not at all, as we sometimes think of it, the arena where we find who we really are, the truth of our experience…It is where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented, not only to the audiences but to ourselves for the first time." [45] It is through the medium of television that the act of looking for Black women has been the most politicized, for it is through television that the misrepresentations of Black women in the form of ethnic stereotypes and tropes flourished. Part 1 of this thesis will serve as a brief journey through the evolution and repackaging of these tropes, with a special focus on the sapphire, otherwise known as "the angry black woman" trope across media genres.

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[43] Nielsen (2013)

[44] Allison, Donnetrice. Black women's portrayals on reality television: the new Sapphire. 2016. Print.

[45] Hall, Stuart. "What Is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture?" Social Justice 20, no. 1/2 (51-52) (1993): 104-14. Accessed May 11, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/29766735.

Part 1: "Who gave you permission to rearrange me? Certainly not me"- Erykah Badu, Certainly [1997]

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary Stereotypes are defined as "beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people . . . [that] are sometimes over-generalized, inaccurate, and resistant to new information[46]" In her book "*Black Feminist Though*t [1991]", Patricia Hill Collins states that the constant portrayal of African American women in stereotypical roles such as mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients and hot mammas are used to help justify the oppression of black women[47]. This is because the stereotyping of groups of people often lead to the stripping of one's cultural identity in an attempt to homogenize them to the point where the people within the group only become synonymous with the characteristics of the stereotyped versions, thus depersonalizing and ultimately dehumanizing them.[48]

As Jennifer Fuller points out, research on stereotypes is important in the study of how these forms of racist ethnic misrepresentations infiltrate society. By understanding the "how" we can further examine the images themselves, and the social and political contexts in which these images were first created and then reproduced. Fuller goes on to stretch the importance that "we don't see stereotypes as static and that we consider how stereotypes change over time." How they are constantly being reconstructed and repackaged to fit within the frame of the social

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[46] "Stereotype." Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stereotype.

[47]Hill Collins, Patricia. 2000. Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. New York and London: Routledge.

[48] Gina Masullo Chen et al., (2012) & Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory. Basil Blackwell.

context and of the particular medium in which they appear.[49] The reproductions of these racial

and ethnic stereotypes help reinforce and maintain the dominant power structure within society

by intersecting with not only race, but also class and gender. These media driven images impact

the way minorities are evaluated in terms of their "sexuality, sociability, intelligence,

trustworthiness, and socio-economic standing."And since the images historically depict

minorities, particular black people as lazy, uneducated, low-class, low-income and untrustworthy,

these are the attributes that get assigned to black people as a whole. This has led to the dangerous

ideology that black people need to be "controlled, managed, subdued, and perhaps even

incarcerated or unwelcome in everyday day society."[50]

This speaks to the power of moving images, in that they are able to dictate to the

spectator the political and societal standards they should use to self-evaluate themselves against

and/or identify with. It is for this exact reason that black women film spectators have to watch

these images through an oppositional lens, one that allows them to enter a state of negotiation

and critical spectatorship when they are confronted with racist and sexist stereotypes of their

physical and social selves that get dictated to them. In her research professor and author,

Gwendolyn Pough notes that black women do not have the choice nor option to bypass these

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[49] FULLER, JENNIFER. "Gimme a Break! and the Limits of the Modern Mammy." In Watching While Black: Centering the Television of Black Audiences, edited by SMITH-SHOMADE BERETTA E., 105-20. Rutgers University Press, 2012. Accessed May 11, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hj68h.11.

[50] Castañeda, Mari, "The Power of (Mis)Representation: Why Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes in the Media Matter" (2018). Challenging Inequalities: Readings in Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration. 60. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/communication_faculty_pubs/60

states of negotiation when confronted with such imagery for "they are physically marked as Black and female.[51]"[52]

The three main stereotypes of Black women that keep recurring throughout the United States media landscape are the Mammy, the Jezebel, and the Sapphire.

The Mammy: A caricature rooted in old southern nostalgia for an idealized version of antebellum plantation life pre-civil war. To which Patricia A. Turner states are "truly a fictional character" due to the fact in reality, the duties often attributed to the Mammy character, would have been conducted by an enslaved teenaged black woman, and whose physical attributes would be in direct opposition to those attributed to the Mammy. For example, due to the fact that slaves' access to food was controlled by their masters, the slaves, especially the women, were often on the thinner side. Another example is that due to the harsh living conditions and extensive labor slaves were under, most women didn't live past middle-age. Thus, this depiction of the mammy, i.e the post-civil war version of the house slave, as an overweight, older black woman is false.[53]Patricia Hill Collins argues that the mammy stereotype creates the expectation that "ideal" black women (regardless of profession) will be helpful and deferential to whites[54].

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[51] Pough, Gwendolyn D.. Check it While I Wreck it: Black Womanhood, Hip-hop Culture, and the Public Sphere. Lebanon: Northeastern University Press, 2015.

[52] Dunn, Stephane. (2008)

[53] "The Mammy Caricature." The Mammy Caricature - Anti-black Imagery - Jim Crow Museum - Ferris State University. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/mammies/.

[54]Collins, Patricia Hill. Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Well known depictions of the Mammy stereotype in media include: Aunt Sally [1875][55];

Aunt Jemima[1893], Aunt Delilah, *Imitation of Life*[1934],   Mammy, *Gone With the*

Wind[1939], and Nell Harper, *Gimme a Break!*[1981-1987][56].

In more recent years, critically and culturally acclaimed filmmaker Cheryl Dunye has re-

claimed and re-appropriated the negative image of the mammy, by placing the figure in modern

times and queering her, in The *Watermelon Woman* (1996) . Dunye achieves this through the

films main character, Fae Richard, who is attributed with being the first Black lesbian to appear

in film. By embodying the intersectionalities of identifying as both Queer and Black, Dunye's

was able to "disrupt the mammy's legacy in American cinema and culture" thus liberating the

figure beyond the limitations set for the figure by the dominating racist ideologies that stemmed

from slavery.[57]

The Jezebel: Presents Black women as promiscuous and hyper-sexualized. Patrica Hill Collins

states this trope depicts Black women's sexual appetites as at best inappropriate and, at worst,

insatiable. Created as a contrast to 19th-century ideals of piety and virtuousness in white-

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[55] Aunt Sally was a Mammy figure that appeared on cans of baking powder and is considered the earliest depiction of the Mammy stereotype, even predating the more known Aunt Jemina figure which usually gets attributed as the first Mammy depiction.

[56] I feel it's important to note that the character of Nell Harper, played by Nell Carter is more of a Mammy-Sapphire hybrid. This was a result of Carter's push to producers and writers behind the scenes to give the character more depth. While the writers attempt at this still enforced negative racial-ethnic stereotypes, at the time, it was a slight movement forward. Watching While Black:, CH7: Gimme a Break! and the Limits of the Modern Mammy by Jennifer Fuller

[57] Clitha Mason, "Queering The Mammy: New Queer Cinema's Version of an American Institution in Cheryl Dunye's The Watermelon Woman" Black Camera: An International Film Journal 8, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 50–74, doi: 10.2979/blackcamera.8.2.03

womanhood, this negative and false portrayal was used as a way for white men to justify the

sexual exploitation, violence, and sexual abuse of Black women.[58]

The Sapphire: Also known as the "angry black woman (ABW)" or in more recent years, evolved

to be known as "the Strong Black Woman". This stereotype depicts an African American woman

as a loud, verbally abusive, emasculating matriarch. The Sapphire typically shows no

vulnerability and often channels her anger by shouting or criticizing others. Patricia Hill Collins

notes that this trope also represents the "strong matriarch" which is often used as evidence for

African American cultural inferiority since the lack of a dominant father figure seems to illustrate

flawed gender relations. As with the previous two tropes mentioned the origins of this trope can

be traced back to slavery. Black women often worked in the fields alongside men, and often

required to take on the same workload, which in turn required them to be loud, tough, and

resilient. This image of a black woman raising her voice was further propelled by white Southern

women to highlight the contrast between what they theme as the "uncivilized" loud blacks, and

the respectable, morally behaved white women.[59]

Today, in revisiting this trope, some black feminist scholars believe that instead, the

origins of this troop or rather our perception of it is rooted in our own shame. Stating: "If African

American women's position at the intersection of race and gender makes them uniquely

vulnerable to shaming, it may also make them particularly susceptible to the humiliated fury that

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[58] Collins, Patricia Hill (2004)

[59] Collins, Patricia Hill (2004)

shame provokes"[60]. While others state that because more powerful and higher status individuals have "anger privilege" that affords them with the social and structural position to openly express anger, subordinates (in this case, Black women) are often accused of unjustified anger or irrationality if they express anger directly (i.e., toward the person [or circumstance] who made them angry). Thus, she argues that the "angry black woman" stereotype arises from that foundation of negative images and the position of subordination of the Black women that seek to restrain their expression of anger by negatively labeling it.

These images have caused damage to the way people perceive and treat Black women's bodies and have created "dominant notions of a loud, socially uncouth, and even dangerous or violent black female type that upsets public space". In her book "Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies", Bell Hooks (2012) urges us that we must take an "oppositional gaze" toward these type of images of black women. And notes that doing so requires us to critically examine, challenge, and ultimately deconstruct these images. It is with this in mind I constructed the upcoming chapters to examine, challenge and deconstruct these stereotypes across various media genres.[61]

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[60] Norum-Gross, Sarah Liana. Race, Gender & Class 21, no. 1/2 (2014): 362-64. Accessed May 11, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/43496978.

[61] hooks, bell (2012)

Chapter 1: Film

I argue that the roots and origins of the film industry wasn't born out of the motion

picture epics of the 1900's (*Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Ten Commandments* (1923)), but instead, in

the form of the documentary. With the introduction of film and the new technology it produced,

pioneer filmmakers set out to shoot the daily activities of everyday life. This was the first time

people were introduced to the visual representation of moving images. Credited with creating

this type of filmmaking and new technology is the Lumiere brothers, Louis and Auguste. Their

early films showed the lives of people living in the late 1800s. These early films and many others

during that time, typically weren't rooted in fiction or fantasy, but in everyday life (mainly of the

working class). The first films depicted scenes like works leaving and/or entering the factory, a

person sweeping on the street corner, etc. Thus, with the introduction of fictionalized cinema the

lines between if the on screen depictions were rooted in "reality" began to blur.

Fiction films introduced new filmmaking techniques that were adapted by the films

claiming to depict reality, or better yet "creative actuality" as coined by John Grierson[62].When

we think of this as the origin point of fictionalized cinema, it's easier to trace how the dominant

powers [the white patriarchy] were able to gain control of the racially and ethnically charged

messages and ideologies of early cinema. The effects of which still can be seen and felt to this

day. The next section will provide an early example of this as it pertains to the stereotype of the

Sapphire or "angry Black woman".

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[62] Marcus, Laura. "'The Creative Treatment of Actuality': John Grierson, Documentary Cinema and 'Fact' in the 1930s." In Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain, by Bluemel, Kristin.. Edinburgh University Press, 2009. Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 2012. doi: 10.3366/edinburgh/9780748635092.003.0011.

Early Hollywood Race Film: Coon Town Suffragettes

Coon[63] *Town Suffragettes*[1914] is a lost short film produced by Sigmund Lubin and

distributed under his studio the Lubin Manufacturing Company[64]. The film starred Mandy

Jackson, Mattie Edwards, Sam Jackson, and John Edwards and was released on December 28th,

1914. This short played ahead of one of Lubin's feature films, *Father's Temper* [1914]. Due to

the fact it was a short attached to a feature length film, no critic reviews from the film's release

year exist. The one press outlet scholars believed most likely would have featured a review is the

Philadelphia Tribune, an African American owned newspaper during the time. Unfortunately no

releases of the Tribune from 1914 exist today.

The only surviving physical and visual evidence that this film even existed today is a

bulletin advertisement that was endorsed by the Lubin Manufacturing Company, in their press

release bulletin. A digitized copy of this ad press release is stored at *The National Museum of*

African American History and Culture [NMAAHC]. The ad pictured below features a brief

synopsis of the film and the only known existing still from the short. The synopsis listed on the

bulletin reads as follows: "Mandy Jackson, a colored wash lady, attends a white suffragette

meeting and is inspired by their leader. She is determined to start a suffragette party among her

own people. The party is organized with Mandy as their leader, and they start out with a

determination to raid the saloons. They proudly march into the gin mill and clear the place, each

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[63] The word "coon" is an abbreviation of raccoon and was another way white's aimed to simultaneously dehumanize and animalize the characteristics and physical features of black people. The coon was portrayed as a lazy, easily frightened, unintelligent. "The Coon Caricature." The Coon Caricature - Anti-black Imagery - Jim Crow Museum - Ferris State University. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/coon/.

[64] Lubin founded the Lubin Manufacturing Company in 1902 in attempts to capitalize on the success he had with his touring minstrel shows and other studios' race films. Lubin became one of the prominent producers of early Hollywood race films. His films often featured white people in blackface, black actors portraying negatively associated stereotypes. Minor, Steve. "S. Lubin Optician, view02, 21 S 8th St, Philadelphia, PA, USA." Flickr. Yahoo!, May 31, 2017. https://www.flickr.com/photos/sminor/34850701262/in/photostream/.

suffragette gets her husband and marches him out. The coon police are summoned but that is

soon subdued. The husbands are then put to work and the militant colored suffragettes proudly

claimed their first victory."

THE LUBIN BULLETIN

LUBIN FILMS

COON TOWN SUFFRAGETTES
Written by — ARTHUR D. HOTALING

MANDY JACKSON, a colored wash lady, attends a white suffragette meeting and is inspired by their leader. She determines to start a suffragette party among her own people. The party is organized with Mandy as their leader, and they start out with a determination to raid the saloons. They proudly march into the gin mill and clear the place, each suffragette gets her husband and marches him out. The coon police are summoned but they are soon subdued. The husbands are then put to work and the militant colored suffragettes proudly claimed their first victory.

CAST

Mandy Jackson . . Mattie Edwards   Sam Jackson . . . John Edwards

FATHER'S TEMPER
Written by EPES W. SARGENT

JOHN BULL has a temper. He's not a large man, but has a temper that would fit a giant. He breaks up housekeeping on the slightest provocation. Bess, his daughter, is engaged to Joe Judd. When father is approached on the matter he excels his best previous efforts. That doesn't bother Joe any and he decides to cure the old man. The next day Joe brings a gang of workmen down to the house and when father arrives so many queer things happen to him he thinks he is going mad. When Joe again asks for the girl, father, now a beaten man, gives his consent.

John Bull . . . . James Levering   CAST   Ben Bull . . . Raymond McKee
Mrs. Bull . . . Julia Calhoun   Bess Bull . . . Frances Ne Moyer   Joe Judd . . . Jerold Hevener

Split Reel, Released Saturday, February 28, 1914. { "Coon Town Suffragettes." Code Word BOBBY. Length about 400 feet. "Father's Temper." Code Word BACON. Length about 600 feet.

[65]

     In his retrospective on Lubin film's film historian Kevin J. Wetmore described the film as

"A comedy that dealt with a group of bossy mammy washerwomen who organize a militant

movement to keep their good-for-nothing husbands at home." I believe it's important to note that

Wetmore is a white male.

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[65] Photo courtesy of NMAAHC

Given that Lubin's studios were located in Philadelphia, PA, some film historians and scholars deduce that the inspiration for the short came from a Philadelphia Tribune article from March 2, 1912, that reported on a suffrage meeting run by a local African American teacher at a local baptist church. According to historians, the article stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the progress made by Black women and they want to attain suffrage rights. The article also notes that Mary Winsor, president of the Pennsylvania Limited Suffrage Association was in attendance, there's no indication on whether or not she was there in support or opposition of Black women's campaign to earn voting rights.[66]

What makes Coon Town Suffragettes significant is that it marks the first cinematic appearance of what became known as the sapphire stereotype. The men in the film are described as being emasculated at the hands of their domineering masculinized wives. Film historian Donald Bogle in his book *Tom's Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*[1990] writes of the early Hollywood race films like Coon Town Suffragettes: "African Americans in these racial "comedies" were portrayed as "subhuman creatures" good for nothing more than eating watermelons, stealing chickens, shooting crap, being loud, or butchering the English language."[67]

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[66] Fry, Jennifer Reed, Susan E. Klepp, Elizabeth R. Varon, and Randall M. Miller. 2010. 'Our girls can match 'em every time': The Political Activities of African American Women in Philadelphia, 1912-1941. Temple University Libraries. http://cdm16002.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p245801coll10/id/61373.

[67] Bogle, Donald. 1990. Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks: an interpretive history of Blacks in American films. New York: Continuum.

Chapter 2: Television

In his book *Blacks and White TV: African Americans in Television Since 1948*, author J. Fred MacDonald notes that the beginning of television was working to change the dehumanizing depictions of blacks that the film industry was creating. Many saw the medium of television as an opportunity to move away from roles such as slaves, servants and "coons". Examples of this effort can be seen in the first seasons of late 1940's variety shows, like *The Ed Sullivan Show*[CBS, 1948]. Here, black performers were invited to appear and perform musical numbers, what is significant in these early episodes is that this was the first time in media blacks were allowed to appear on-screen with their white-counterparts dressed as equals. They often wore evening gowns and tuxedos for their guest appearances. [68]

What was even more groundbreaking about the opportunities television offered blacks during the medium's early years, was that it allotted a space for black women to not only be heard, but seen. Predating both Sullivan and *The Jackie Gleason Show* [CBS, 1949], *The Ethel Waters Show* [1939] debuted on NBC. Waters was the host and star of this one-hour variety show. This made Water the first black female to ever appear on TV, and the first [male or female] black person to have their own show. Sadly, it was canceled only after one episode. In his book MacDonald states that this was because "TV executives and advertisers feared alienating the white consumer," due to racist ideology that had normalized the racial ethnic stereotypes as the

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[68] MacDonald, J. Fred. Blacks and White TV: African Americans in Television Since 1948. United States: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1992.

only roles appropriate for blacks to portray.[69] The stereotypical roles seen in film and radio were quickly re-manifested through the television medium . Those most common for African American women on television were the "Mammy," the "Sapphire" and the "Jezebel." [70]

Sitcoms: Amos n' Andy [Sapphire Stevens, Ernestine Wade]

What differentiates the Sapphire trope from that of the Mammy and Jezebel, is that the Sapphire trope became fully realized and flourishes through the medium of television. This traces back to the television show *Amos 'n' Andy*[CBS, 1951].

Amos 'n' Andy originally debuted as a 15 minute radio sitcom produced by NBC on WMAQ in Chicago in 1928, before being bought by CBS in 1943 and extending it's broadcast to 30-minutes. Adopting ethnic stereotypical dialect and character traits derived from the blackface minstrel tradition of the 1800s, *Amos 'n' Andy* creators Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, voiced the title characters. Gosden played Amos who is described as "an earnest and hardworking young black man", and Correll played Andy who was described as "Amos's more worldly friend." The show's central plot surrounded whatever schemes or trouble Amos and Andy found themselves wrapped in week to week. *Amos 'n Andy* soon became the longest-running radio sitcom in history. Due to its popularity and high ratings, the radio program was adapted to a television sitcom, but this time with casted with black actors. Actors Alvin Childress

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[69] MacDonald, J. Fred. Blacks and White TV: African Americans in Television Since 1948. United States: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1992.

[70]   Allison, Donnetrice (2016)

and Tim Moore were cast in the roles of Amos 'n' Andy. It followed the same premise as the

radio show. The TV show debuted in June of 1951.[71]

It is this switch from radio to television where the character of Sapphire Stevens, played

by Ernestine Wade, is introduced. Sapphire was the wife of George 'Kingfish' Stevens, who was

played by Tim Moore. The character of Sapphire was constantly depicted in a hostile and

"nagging" state. She displayed characteristics of aggression and masculinity. Any plot that

featured the married couple always included a scene where Sapphire was yelling at her husband

with motions of head-turning, finger-wagging, and hands-on-the-hips. This is the origin of the

namesake, Sapphire trope, which is referred to as the "angry Black woman" trope. Even though

the show only lasted two years before getting canceled in 1953[72]re-runs remained in syndication

on television for almost two decades after cancellation.[73]

Sociologist Sue Jewell noted that the Sapphire image is directly dependent on the

presence of a Black man; "It is the African American male that represents the point of contention,

in an ongoing verbal duel between Sapphire and the Black male ... (His) lack of integrity and use

of cunning and trickery provides her with an opportunity to emasculate him through her use of

verbal put-downs".[74]This take on the Sapphire character trope hint's that it's only due to the

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[71] "Amos 'N' Andy." Television Academy Interviews, March 20, 2018. https://interviews.televisionacademy.com/shows/amos-n-andy.

[72]The show was mainly canceled due to protest and pressure from the NAACP on CBS that if they didn't cancel the show they would organize a boycott against the show's sponsors costing them a lot of money.

[73] Watkins, Mel. "What Was It About 'Amos 'n' Andy'?" The New York Times. The New York Times, July 7, 1991. https://www.nytimes.com/1991/07/07/books/what-was-it-about-amos-n-andy.html.
"Amos 'n' Andy." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, May 5, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_'n'_Andy.

[74] Jewell, K. Sue. From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy. London: Routledge, 1993.(p. 45)

existence of the stereotype of the "coon", which is attributed to black men in early racist literature and Hollywood race films, that there's a space for the Sapphire trope to form. One can read this as a justification for the characteristics that the Sapphire displays in order to compensate for the lack of intelligence and complexity given to her male on-screen counterpart. These black men depicted were essentially useless and played as a "fool", and at times childlike. The Sapphire is usually left cleaning up the aftermath of whatever their male on-screen partners got into, leaving her with double the work.

Offering an opposing take on the Sapphire, bell hooks in her essay entitled ""*The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators"?*"[1992][75], states that at its core the image of Sapphire is the image of "the female as inherently evil." She goes on to say this "She was a bitch —nag. She was there to soften images of black men, to make them seem vulnerable, easygoing, funny, and unthreatening to a white audience. She was there as a man in drag, as a castrating bitch, as someone to be lied to, someone to be tricked, someone the white and black audience could hate." She goes on to discuss the difference in the acceptance or rejection of the Sapphire image between older and younger generations of black women.

For most of the older generation, this was the first time they saw a black actress on the screen, the first time they saw any slither of representation of the black female body regardless of its inaccuracy. They hadn't yet learned to take the oppositional gaze , so they found themselves in negotiation while watching. On one hand many of them could identify with Sapphire's daily problems and frustrations, but rejected that her reactions to these problems were broadcasted to

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[75] hooks, bell. "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators". 1992. pp. 115-131.

white audiences, leaving her image to ultimately be defined by them since they rest at the top of

the power systems that control the media landscape. Thus, leading to the association of black

women as "bitches", "angry", and "nags". So for them to be able to enjoy seeing images of the

black female body on the screen they had to "buy-in" to the racist ideologies behind them.

In his 1961 article for Esquire Magazine,James Baldwin speaks to what I believe lies at

the core of the duality of views between Hooks and the older generation. In the article Baldwin

states: "All roles are dangerous. The world tends to trap you in the role you play and it is always

extremely hard to maintain a watchful, mocking distance between oneself as one appears to be,

and oneself as one actually is. Because prime time images of us [blacks] were so rare, each

image became precious, [and] involuntarily bore the burden of representing the race."[76]

Animation: Tom & Jerry [Mammy Two Shoes]

There hasn't been much academic research conducted on ethnic representation in

animation, and this is even more true when it pertains to women representation in general, but

especially women of color. Which is unfortunate because for many of us, cartoons are our entry

point to not only moving images, but also cinematic representations of ourselves. This

introduction usually occurs when we are at a young age. An age when we are beginning to form

and shape our identities. Forming the way we view ourselves, while simultaneously, and often

subconsciously learning or taking in, the identities imposed on us through these images.

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[76] Baldwin, James. "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy Norman Mailer: Esquire: MAY, 1961." Esquire. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://classic.esquire.com/article/1961/5/1/the-black-boy-looks-at-the-white-boy-norman-mailer.

Numerous studies have shown the social and cognitive impact mass media can have on children,

and the role it plays in the development of their values[77].

     I feel confident in saying that everyone who reads this paper has seen at least one episode

of the beloved children's shows "*Tom and Jerry*"[MGM, 1940]. A cartoon about the rivalry or

better yet frenemy relationship between Tom, a house cat, and Jerry, the mouse. Tom and Jerry

was created by William Hanna & Joseph Barbara , a duo better known as HannaBarbera, in

1940. The show was produced and distributed under MGM studios. What many of us probably

overlooked or didn't consciously pick-up on due to its somewhat subtle nature, is the racist

stereotypes and characterization of the maid character, named "Mammy Two Shoes" - later

referred to just Mrs. Two Shoes after receiving backlash from civil rights groups like the

NAACP.[78]

     Mammy Two Shoes displayed the physical attributes of the mammy trope combined with

characteristics of the sapphire trope. The character, who was voiced by African American actress

Lillian Randolph, was featured in various *Tom and Jerry* episodes over an eleven-year period, till

growing protest finally caused MGM to not only replace her in future episodes with a white

woman of Irish descent but to also go back and redraw her out of the previous episodes. As you

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[77] Castañeda, Mari (2018)

[78] "Tom and Jerry." Tom and Jerry Wiki. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://tomandjerry.fandom.com/wiki/Tom_and_Jerry.

can see depicted in the side-by-side screenshots depicted below, the character of Mammy-Two

Shoes was literally at one point, "whitewashed" out of history[79].[80]

Saturday Evening Puss. Dir. Joe Barbera and William Hanna. MGM, 1950

In 2005, a collection of the original Tom and Jerry's early cartoons was released on DVD by Warner Brothers featuring the original Mammy Two Shoes character. The only changes made were the re-dubbing of her character's dialog to remove the racial-stereotypical dialect and mispronunciation of words. This re-issuing was preluded by a disclaimer given by Whoopi Goldberg, which states that some elements of the program "accurately reflect a part of our history that cannot, and should not be ignored.[81]" Sadly this disclaimer was met with backlash on social media with many people - the majority of whom were white or not well informed of American race relations, claiming that it was unnecessary and people were being overly sensitive

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[79] This was done by use rotoscoping techniques, which is when animators use a rotoscope projector trace over motion picture footage, frame by frame. "Rotoscoping." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, May 6, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotoscoping.

[80] Here, Enter Your Name. "The Ultimate Mammy-Two-Shoes Website." Two. Accessed May 11, 2020. http://mammytwoshoes.tripod.com/.

[81] Sbs. "Mammy Two-Shoes, Cannibalism and Blackface - Tom and Jerry Gets Racism Warning." SBS News, May 11, 2020. https://www.sbs.com.au/news/mammy-two-shoes-cannibalism-and-blackface-tom-and-jerry-gets-racism-warning.

and politically correct [PC]. Which could maybe be open for discussion if it weren't for the fact

that the Mammy Two-Shoes character wasn't the only racist imagery presented in the show.

Multiple episodes throughout the years have shown Tom and Jerry imitating racial

stereotypes for laughs. Most notably is when Tom appears in blackface at the end of the episode

entitled "*A Mouse in the House*" [MGM, 1947] with hair resembling the racist caricature of

"picaninny children". And to drive this point home, while conducting research for his book

Lehman interviewed animator Jack Zander, who worked on the early episodes of the show.

Zander had this to say about Mammy Two-Shoes character "Now the mammy was an outright

racist cartoon character. She had the typical negro voice and served as a foil for the two animal

characters. Showing just her feet and lower body kept us from worrying about her face and

making her another "character" to give personality to."[82]

The Mammy Two Shoes character is usually depicted on screen either carrying out

servant tasks [cleaning, cooking etc.], yelling at Tom or getting hurt as a result of Tom and Jerry

shenanigans. The pain she endures at the hands of Tom and Jerry's fighting, illustrates the abuse

and trauma imposed on the black female body through the cinematic gaze. While Mammy Two

Shoes can often be seen reprimanding Tom for all the mess he makes [which she has to clean],

mirroring the way the character of Sapphire Stevens, from Amos 'n' Andy reprimands her

husband George, the two characters diverge in that, there's never a relation on Georges part to

"get her back". On the hand, Lehman notes that the violent acts done to the Mammy Two Shoes

character sends a message that even when black women attain a position of authority [Mammy,

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82 "A Letter From Jack Zander." A Letter From Jack Zander |. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/a-letter-from-jack-zander. /

being human, has authority over Tom, a cat/house pet] she is still rendered disposable and

worthy of mistreatment, even by her subordinates.[83]

Reality-TV:

"Real radicalism implores us to tell the whole ugly truth, even when it is inconvenient. To own

the hurt and the pain. To own our shit, too. "

— *Brittney Cooper, Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*[84]

Throughout the 1990s, the tabloid talk show format of shows like "*The Jerry Springer

Show*"[NBC, 1991], "*Ricki Lake Show*"[Sony, 1993] and "*Maury*"[NBC, 1991] helped reinforce

the racial stereotype of black women as angry, loud and over-sexualized. Often depicting

animalistic portrayals of Black women. I'm sad to say not much has changed today. As the

fictional TV shows seem to have grown more diverse in their depictions of black women and

have moved away from stereotypical images — shows like "*Black-ish*"[ABC, 2014],

"*Insecure*"[HBO, 2016], "*Black Lightning*"[CW, 2018], and "*Queen Sugar*"[OWN, 2016] — the

reality tv realm has fallen behind, recycling the same imagery of black women as short-tempered

and confrontational. What makes today's reality tv landscape worse is that this stereotypical

portrayal is being propelled by Black women ourselves.

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[83] Lehman, Christopher P. 2007. The Colored Cartoon: Black representation in American animated short films, 1907-1954. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

[84] Cooper, Brittney. 2018. Eloquent rage a black feminist discovers her superpower. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Unlike the genre's 90's iteration stereotyping low-income black women, today's iteration shows that middle- and upper-class black women are not exempt from these stereotypes. One of the first major examples of this was Omarosa Manigault-Stallworth from "T*he Apprentice*," Vanessa E. Jones, from the Boston Globe, had this to say "almost always referred to by the single name Omarosa, was portrayed (and intentionally acted) as a cross between a Jezebel -- a hyper-sexual flirt and seductress -- and a bitter, aggressive Sapphire. She rode the angry-black-woman stereotype to the covers of People and TV Guide magazines even as she made fellow African-American businesswomen wince.[85]"

This was reinforced by later shows such as "*The Real Housewives of Atlanta*"[Bravo, 2008], "*Basketball Wives*"[VH1, 2010], and the multiple iterations of the "*Love & Hip*"[VH1, 2011] series. The latter of the three is Executively Produced by Mono Scott, a fellow black woman. In these shows, upper and middle-class black women are consistently shown fighting and engaging in heated disagreements in which drinks, wigs, and expletives are thrown at each other as if they were weapons.

The Real Housewives of Atlanta [RHOA], the only Housewives spin-off to feature a predominantly black cast, is not only the franchises' highest-rated installment but Bravo's most watched show on the air. What's interesting to note about RHOA is the way Bravo initially marketed the series in online campaigns. On Bravo's websites and social media pages, RHOA was once pushed as "The series that delves into the lives of six sassy women from Atlanta's social elite." Bravo has since moved this description from their RHOA homepage after fans on

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[85] Jones, Vanessa. "The Angry Black Woman: Tart-Tongued or Driven and No-Nonsense, She is a Stereotype That Amuses Some and Offends Others." The Boston Globe, April 2004.

social media spoke out against the association being made between "sassy" and "black women".

It's important to note that even though all installations of the Real Housewives franchise exhibit

the same behavior [fights, throwing drinks, etc.] it was only Atlanta that was described as

"sassy".[86]

    The rise of reality TV has also transformed the way viewers perceive on-screen

depictions of various racial and ethnic groups from being rooted in fiction, into "possible

reflections of society". They have grown to view the images produced by reality TV shows as

reflecting the ways things (and people) truly are.[87] This line of thinking is dangerous, especially

when it pertains to the way black women are depicted and being perceived through these shows,

ultimately leaving the viewer with negative associations about black women that color the way

they interact with one in a real-life encounter.

    Unfortunately, this notion is not new in relation to taking on-screen depictions of

minorities at face value. One of the earliest examples of this is MTV's mega-hit show called

"*The Real World*" [MTV,1992], which premiered in 1992 and is still airing new episodes to this

day. The show's famous tagline says it all " This is the true story of seven strangers, picked to

live in a house, work together, and have their lives taped. Find out what happens, when people

stop being polite, and start getting real… The Real World!". People loved it!

    "It was this show [The Real World] that re-introduced the black women as Sapphire",

making this a great example of how racial and ethnic stereotypes often don't die, but instead,

evolve and re-package themselves to fit the time and genre they're infiltrating. As stated above,

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[86] Allison, Donnetrice (2016)

[87] Castañeda, Mari (2018)

what makes this repackaging more dangerous than that of the Sapphires found in 1950's sitcoms, is that this time, the trope is directly stated as being "reality", which many viewers interpret as "truth." Throughout the show's 33 seasons, nearly every black woman who was casted has been described by their housemates as "controlling, harsh, overbearing, bossy, quick-tempered, independent, diva, and outspoken." [88]

"Reality TV: Entertaining...But No Laughing Matter" [case study][89]

In the spring of 2015, professors at the University of Missouri, the American Advertising Federation (AAF) and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. (Zeta), through its "Get Engaged" social action initiative, co-sponsored a case-study to see if portrayals of black women on reality TV were realistic, stereotypical, helpful or harmful. They achieved this by conducting a series of "watch parties". During the watch parties, participants examined the state of images in the media, their effects on public perception, and the role that people of "goodwill" can play in driving change. 500 black and white women were surveyed, with a follow-up survey conducted that included another 500 women of other racial backgrounds. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 24. The survey found that 72 percent of black women perceived depictions of themselves in the media negatively compared to 46 percent of white women. When asked about what

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[88] Allison, Donnetrice.(2016.)

[89] Case Study: Reality TV: Entertaining...But No Laughing Matter" [case study], American Advertising Federation and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated (2015).

descriptors they'd use to describe the way black women are depicted on reality TV, 53 percent of

black women and 37 percent of white women said "argumentative." [90]

Despite feeling that many of these shows were "on-screen spectacles", many of the

participants stated that they have a "love and hate relationship" with the images and storylines

on-screen, and mostly watch for the drama[91]. Across the board, three key themes arose that the

researchers believe were seen as "directly affecting the way Black women are viewed and

treated" within their community, and the broader U.S. society:

1. The Reduction of Black Womanhood: Many reality tv shows are filled with stereotypical

images that while might exist in some form, do not represent the entire or majority of the

spectrum of black womanhood.

2. Diminished Respect for Black Women: The popularity of the shows with harmful and

stereotypical images has influenced the way men and women from other ethnic groups view

black women in the workplace, and in other social situations. It is believed that non-blacks

typically expect the worst, and anticipate the most outrageous behavior as the norm whenever

they interact with a black woman.

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[90] This is in line with the results from Weitz and Gordon's study on how white college students perceive images of black women. They found that the students viewed black women as primarily "loud, aggressive, argumentative, stubborn, and bitchy. Concluding that the constant negative depictions of black women in popular media are in direct cause and effect with them being negatively perceived by others, which ultimately results in wrongful treatment and biases in school, at work, and within their own community.
Weitz, Rose; Gordon, Leonard. / Images of black women among anglo college students. In: Sex Roles. 1993; Vol. 28, No. 1-2. pp. 19-34.

[91] According to the 2013 Nielsen report, blacks are the primary audience of reality TV shows. The report states that blacks watch 37 percent more TV than any other group and that black women make up the bulk of the viewing percentage. Six of the top ten shows watched by black viewers were in the reality TV shows, with *Love and Hip Hop Atlanta* ranked number one among blacks between the ages of 18– 49.
Nielsen African-American Consumers Report 2013. 2013

3. The New Road to Success: By default, reality television actors have become role models for

some black teenage girls and young adults who aspire to emulate their lifestyle. Participants,

many of whom were educators, shared that the emergence of reality television stars has made it

harder to inspire black girls to try and attain success primarily through school and hard work.

Reality Show Name	Audience Analysis	Creators	Channel	Synopsis of Clip Shown
Love & Hip Hop: Atlanta (2012)	Harmful/ Stereotypical	Brad Abramson, Mona Scott-Young, Danielle Gelfand, Nina L. Diaz, Stefan Springman, Susan Levison, Toby Barraud	VH1	Chrissy explains that her, fiancé Jim Jones, can cheat; just do it respectfully.
Real Housewives of Atlanta (2008)	Harmful/ Stereotypical	Glenda Hersh, Lauren Eskelin, Megan Sanchez Warner, Omid Kahangi, Steven Weinstock	Bravo	Phaedra confronts Kendra about her spreading rumors that she is having an affair.
The Apprentice (2004)	Unsure	Mark Burnett, Donald Trump	NBC	Omorosa is having an altercation with her teammates.
Deion's Family Playbook (2014)	Helpful/Realistic	Deion Sanders, Eli Frankel, Ro Cornick, Tracey Edmonds	OWN	Deion is preparing for a daddy-daughter dance, and goes to rehearsal to show off his moves.
Raising Whitley (2013)	Helpful/Realistic	Craig Piligian, Kym Whitley, Melodie Calvert	OWN	Kym's babysitter is late, so she spends part of the morning dealing with her son, Joshua.
6 Little McGhees (2012)	Helpful/Realistic	Joe Sorge, Phillip Sternberg	OWN	The parents are dealing with six kids during their bath time.
Thicker Than Water (2013)	Unsure	Rebecca Toth Diefenbach, Valerie Haselton Drescher, Lucilla D'Agostino, Renard Young, Darren Toon	Bravo	Marcus and Tish Tankard are revealing the sex of their baby to the family.

[92] The chart pictured above is the results from how the participants from the watch parties felt the clips shown to them impacted the way black women would be perceived.

The results pictured in the chart, coupled with the case study's primary findings, leads me

to deduce the following. It seems that, despite the fact many black women find shows such as

Love & Hip Hop and RHA to ultimately do more harm than good, those are the shows, according

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[92]Case Study: Reality TV: Entertaining...But No Laughing Matter" [case study], American Advertising Federation and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated (2015).

to the Nelson reports, are the most-watched by black women themselves. This, to me, speaks to how these images have become normalized by the dominant ideology over time through the bases of Falcults' concept of the gaze. That these harmful stereotypical images have become so ingrained and normal to black women, that we began to negotiate with the harm and pain they cause.

Today's generation of black women spectators have negotiated with the images of the black female body on reality TV, in the same way, past generations of black women have negotiated when watching Sapphire Stevens on Amos 'n' Andy. The key difference between past generations and the one today is that in the past black women were essentially being forced to make these negotiations at the hands of the white men in power, who controlled the images. Today, those same negotiations are mainly having to be made at the hands of a fellow black woman [Mona Scott]. Making today's generation of the repackaged Sapphire trope all the more harmful. This shows that some black women have normalized the ideology of their oppressors [the dominant white patriarchy] to the point they have internalized and therefore reinforce this oppressive ideology onto other black women.

Reality TV marks the most modern re-packaging of the "angry black woman" /Sapphire trope on television today. Thankfully, despite its negative portrayal and impact on black women, reality TV isn't the only representation of black women on the small screen. Today, thanks to more black women gaining access to behind the scenes of the entertainment industry, we now have more black women as writers, directors, producers, and showrunners than ever before. This is not to say that there isn't still work to be done, for as you can see from the examples brought

forth in my introduction, the misrepresentations of the past still cause harm to many black women today regardless of their class, status or income within society.

It is my belief that in order to truly conquer and overcome these negative images, we mustn't try to bury them - leaving them to be dug up, discovered and defined by the dominant power structures. More importantly, by trying to bury these images, we are simultaneously burying our fellow black women who portrayed them. We are rendering these women who sacrificed, withstood racism from the dominant powers and prejudice from within the black community, and fought inch by inch for black female representation - invisible. These women, whom without, characters such as Julia Baker [Julia, NBC 1971], Clair Huxtable [The Cosby Show, NBC 1984], Gina Waters-Payne [Martin, Fox 1992], Maxine Shaw [Living Single, Fox 1993], Olivia Pope [Scandal, ABC 2012], and Molly Carter [Insecure, HBO 2016] would not exist today. With this in mind, I say, it's time for black women to reclaim, re-appropriate, and re-contextualize these images. "To own the hurt and the pain. To own our shit, too."[93]

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[93]Cooper, Brittney (2018).

Part 2: Curation "I can't be a singular expression of myself, there's too many parts, too many spaces, too many manifestations…" — Solange, Can I Hold the Mic [Interlude]

At its most basic functions, a film curator is simply "a person who selects films for public screenings, using various criteria, to be held either in a film theatre, at a festival, in a film archive or elsewhere." While this is accurate, it also fails to communicate the weight of importance in terms of the film selection process and the effect that a curated program can have on an audience, positive or negative. Instead, I choose to view the role of a film curator as that of a gatekeeper to what Bosma calls "film heritage". One's position as a film curator makes them, to the general public, the authority on what films are deemed culturally, historically, and artistically important. Meaning, that any film a curator selects to screen, subconsciously sends a message to the audience that this film is of importance and worthy to be watched over the one's note chosen. [94]

With this view of the film curator in mind I now turn to Paolo Cherchi Usai who in his essay, *A Charter of Curatorial Values* (2006) states this: "The ideal goal of the curator... is to draw an understandable compelling portrait of the society where he or she lives, giving appropriate weight to the mainstream and the independent, to the consensus and the creative marginality, to the canon and its meaningful subversion." When we tact this definition onto the analogy of the film curator as a gatekeeper, then we can more clearly understand just how important it is to take care of the deceivingly simplistic tasks that are required of a film curator.[95]

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[94]Bosma, Peter. Film Programming: Curating for Cinemas, Festivals, Archives. LONDON; NEW YORK: Columbia University Press, 2015. Accessed May 11, 2020. DOI:10.7312/bosm17459.

[95] Paolo Cherchi Usai, "A Charter of Curatorial Values," NFSA Journal 1.1 (2006): 1-10.

It is my hope that as a film curator of my own soon to be film program, that I am able to organize inspiring programs that are a catalyst for discussion and dialog, between the audience and films, the audience among themselves, and the audience and society. I want to achieve this by programming films that give visibility to the populations of the world that have been rendered invisible, forgotten, or lost. Creating a space that "enables exchanges and encounters" that will add cultural, social, educational, and artistic value to the people who attend them. I want to create programs that will challenge the audience's preconceived biases and prejudice that will hopefully lead them to make new associations that lead to a more radical, non-binary, and inclusive understanding of the world.

Chapter 3: Evening Film Program "The Re-appropriation Will be Televised"

"*The Re-appropriation Will be Televised*" is a short form - evening film program that will offer a re-contextualization of the negative stereotypes and tropes imposed on Black women by the mainstream media. This film screening is a direct response to the current discourse surrounding Black feminist thought, cinematic trauma of marginalized and/or underrepresented groups, and Hollywood's representation, or rather, blatant misrepresentation of Black women. In a moment in time when many women feel their experiences are invalidated or silenced, especially Black women who are part of a subset minority within the greater marginalization of gender discrimination, the films that will be screened act as a powerful conduit for solidarity, expression, and representation of trauma vs truth. As more Black women curators rise, we are able to re-claim, re-appropriate, and re-contextualize our images.

I believe that "Black Joy" and "Black Pain" are two sides of the same coin, in constant dialogue with one another. It is my hope this film program will open a discussion on how black women in particular deal with the duality of these intersectional forces as it pertains to the image of the black female body in mass media.

Venue/Space

Located in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York, the Weeksville Heritage Center is the historical site of one of the earliest community settlements of free African Americans post-civil war, established in 1838. Today, Weeksville Heritage Center is a multidisciplinary museum

dedicated to preserving the history of the 19th century African American community of

Weeksville, Brooklyn. Their mission is to document, preserve, and interpret the history of free

African American communities in Weeksville, Brooklyn, and beyond. They strive to create and

inspire innovative, contemporary uses of African American history through education, the arts,

and civic engagement. "Using a contemporary lens, we activate this unique history through the

presentation of innovative, vanguard, and experimental programs[96]

As black women living in a rapidly demographically changing Brooklyn, a borough that

has been both a victim and beneficiary of gentrification with its double-edged sword, it was

important to me that I found a local venue dedicated to the black community. A place where my

ancestors planted their roots and Weeksville offered me that. Before discovering Weeksville

other venues that I considered were the *Schaumburg Center for Research in Black Culture*, *New

York University* [Cinema Studies/Tisch], and *NMAAHC*. In the end, what pushed me to choose

Weeksville besides their historical significance and beautiful venue, was their Weeksville

Wednesday Grant.

In alignment with their commitment to providing a place for residents of Central

Brooklyn to engage and come together, on Wednesday evenings they offer their spaces to local

black artists, educators, and community organizations to use their facilities to plan and present a

public program that "provides much-needed services, or outlets for artistic expression in our

community." As a way to move this mission forward, they have an open call for Weeksville

Wednesday's programming proposal, where locals can propose any of the following: performing

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[96] "What We Do." Weeksville Heritage Center. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.weeksvillesociety.org/our-vision-what-we-do.

arts events, workshops & classes, rehearsals, critical information sessions, and community

meetings.[97] If your proposal is selected then Weeksville will "donate" one of their spaces to you,

for you to host your program. There are three spaces grant recipients can choose from: the

Multipurpose Space (80-150 depending on setup), Workshop Space (15-30), or the Café (10-20).

Chairs, tables, and digital audiovisual equipment will be provided for all three spaces. The

stipulations of the grant are that your program must be "free of charge" for admission and that it

must take place between the hours of 5 pm - 9 pm on a Wednesday.

After coming across this grant I submitted a proposal for my film program in February

2020. In March 2020, I was informed by Weeksville via email that they were interested in

moving forwards with my proposed program, and that I was a grant finalist. Unfortunately, two

weeks later the COVID-19 pandemic had reached New York and everything was put on hold. As

of now, May 2020, Weeksville has stated they are still interested in my program, but they can not

say when or how this will move forward at the moment. My program was originally proposed for

July 11th, 2020.

Program Timeline/Breakdown

Given that one of the grant stipulations is that the hosted program must take place

between the hours of 5 pm - 9 pm, that gives me four hours to incorporate time for networking/

light refreshments, screenings, and a panel discussion with a Q&A session. Needless to say, I

97"Weeksville Wednesdays." Weeksville Heritage Center. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://
www.weeksvillesociety.org/weeksville-wednesdays.

had to be really intentional in planning how those four hours would be used. Some of the things

that were taken into consideration were:

- Being a Wednesday, people will most likely be coming from work, and most people work till 5 pm.
- Who is my target audience? What's the target age-range? [More on this in Chapter 4]
- What forms of moving images am I going to show? Shorts? Episodic? Feature-Length? [More on this in Chapter 4]
- Location of venue - getting to central Brooklyn at 5 pm might take a bit longer due to rush-hour [people might be late]
- Respecting the time of my panel participants?
- How much time is needed between screenings? [switch overs, film introductions, bathroom breaks, etc.]
- Padding time for any unforeseen setbacks

This is the breakdown I decided on:

5:30 PM - 6:00 PM - Light Refreshments provided by Brooklyn-based Black-owned restaurants

6:00 PM - 6:02 PM - Program Introduction

6:02 PM - 6:04 PM - Introduction to the first round of films

6:05 PM - 6:38 PM - Beulah: *"Beulah Goes Gardening"*[25min.] & *"Daydream Therapy"*, Bernard Nicholas [8min.]

6:38 PM - 6:40 PM - Introduction to the second round of films

6:40 PM - 7:11 PM- *"Four Women",* Julie Dash [7min.] & A Different World: *"Mammie Dearest"* [24min.]

7:11 PM - 7:13 PM - Introduction to the third and final round of films

7:13 PM - 7:50 PM - *"An Ecstatic Experience"*, Ja'Tovia Gary [6min.] & *"I Am Somebody"*, Madeline Anderson [30 min.]

7:50 PM - 8:00 PM - BREAK

8:00 PM - 9:00 PM - Panel Discussion and Q&A

Unfortunately, my decision to move the starting time from 5 PM to 5:30 PM meant I had to cut one of the films I was hoping to show in order to build in break time for people to use the bathroom and stretch between the screening block and panel discussion.

Proposed Panel

As I stated previously, it's important to me that my programs offer a safe space for open dialog, learning, discussion, and healthy debate. Especially when my targeted audience is other people of color and minorities. Since this particular program was specifically coordinated with black women in mind, it was important to me to have a panel made up of women who identify as Black and come from diverse professions. It is with that in mind, my main goal for the panel is to help foster a discussion about the ethics and emotions behind the re-appropriation, re-claiming, and re-contextualization of harmful ethnic stereotypes as it pertains to black women. I will also love to converse about the importance of having more black women film curators, so they can continue to open the gate for all women of color and the work they are already doing.

Brianna Jones | Program Curator. Influenced by her undergraduate studies in Cultural Anthropology, Brianna's research focuses on the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality and how these 'identifiers' shape the metadata of and access to audiovisual materials within

archives and streaming platforms. She's mainly interested in uncovering, preserving, and

providing access to audiovisual and audio collections of Color.[98]

Syreeta Gates | Moderator. Hip-Hop Archivist, Art Collector, and founder of The Gates

Preserve, a multimedia experience company that preserves and archives hip-hop in such a way

that lasts forever. She curates innovative experiences like Shaping The Culture, a documentary

series about the writers and journalists that created and shaped the language for hip-hop

culture.[99]

Jenna Wortham | Panelist. Award-winning staff writer for The New York Times Magazine. She

is the co-host of the podcast "Still Processing" and co-editor of the forthcoming visual anthology

"Black Futures," with Kimberly Drew, out in 2020 from One World.[100]

Ja'Tovia M. Gary | Panelist. Artist and filmmaker, Gary's work seeks to liberate the distorted

histories through which Black life is often viewed while fleshing out a nuanced and multivalent

Black interiority. Through documentary film, experimental video art and installation Gary charts

the ways structures of power shape our perceptions around representation, race, gender,

sexuality, and violence. Gary is the director, writer, producer, and editor of *"An Ecstatic*

Experience", which will be screened today[101].

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[98]

[99] "Syreeta Gates." Syreeta Gates. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://tisch.nyu.edu/cinema-studies/miap/student-bios/syreeta-gates.

[100]"About." ⬤ Jenna Wortham ⬤. Accessed May 11, 2020. http://www.jennydeluxe.com/about-1.

[101]"Biography." Ja'Tovia Gary. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.jatovia.com/about.

Ina Archer | Panelist. Media Conservation and Digitization Assistant at The Smithsonian

National Museum of African American History & Culture. Ina is a filmmaker and visual artist

whose multimedia works and films have been shown nationally. She is the former co-chair of

New York Women in Film and Television's Women's Film Preservation Fund. Ina earned a

Master's in Cinema Studies at NYU focusing on race, preservation, early sound cinema, and

technology.[102]

As of May 2020, besides myself, I have secured Syreeta Gates to moderate the panel. I

corresponded with Jenna Wortham over email back in early March 2020 [pre-COVID-19], who

at the time stated "Thank you for reaching out. What an exciting program and event. I'm still

sorting out my summer travel plans, but let's loopback in a few months and touch base then. If I

can be involved, I'd love to! Thank you again." So while not a "yes", also not a "no". Perhaps, if

this program moves to an online screening, it would make it easier for more people to get

involved. I have yet to reach out to Gary or Archer about participating in my panel.

Marketing/Merchandising

As I stated before, the stipulation of receiving the Weeksville grant is that the event has to

be free admission and no sales or fundraising is permitted. So with those set parameters there

will be no merchandising for sale or free for this event. If I do decide to offer anything for free, it

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[102] "Ina Archer." Black Portraitures V Memory and the Archive Past Present Future. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.blackportraitures.info/?person=inaarcher.

will most likely be small buttons with the program's title on them to hand out to people as they

exit. When it comes to refreshments, I will be reaching out to local Brooklyn-based Black-

owned restaurants/cafes to donate food in exchange for the exposure and tax write off.

　　　In terms of marketing, Weeksville handles most of the marketing. I will provide them

with sample flyers and programs, and they will post across all of their social media platforms

[Instagram, Facebook, Twitter], as well as feature it in their monthly newsletter and on their

website. I will also be advertising via social media, mainly Facebook since that is the only form

of social media I currently possess. I will turn to family, close friends, and the panelist to help

share their networks on whichever platforms they use.

Chapter 4: Moving Image Selection

I believe it should be considered best practice for every film curator that before selecting their slate of films to exhibit, they ask the following questions: Who is going to be doing the looking? "the writing?" or "the speaking? Both within the films and in the space the curator creates [audience included][103]. This forces the curator to take into consideration their own looking relations to both the films selected and that of the audience. It is for that reason when deciding which films I would select to screen, my number one concern was that of ethics. The ethics behind the exhibition and viewing of past images that have caused many black women [myself included] pain, abuse, and exploitation in fear that it might reinforce what I am aiming to criticize, re-contextualize, and re-claim.

It's important to keep in mind that the ethics surrounding such misrepresentation and harmful images is larger than one's own intentions, however good-willed when contemporary experience daily confronts the misrepresented group with the problematic legacies of the images of the past. With that in mind, it was very important to me that I selected these films with great care. That I created a space and selected films that aimed to offer a visual counter-narrative, in juxtaposition to the negative stereotypical images of black women created by the dominant white patriarchy.

At the same time, I want to offer a selection of films that will challenge the established looking relations of the audience. Films that will foster conversation and debate surrounding how the films selected are in dialogue with one another while creating awareness for the viewer.

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[103] Larkosh, Christopher, Mário Pereira, and Memory Holloway. 2018. Transnational Africas: visual, material and sonic cultures of lusophone Africa.

Awareness that what they are viewing is complex, and needs to be dissected, and criticized beyond its place of homogenizing. That the racist ideologies these stereotypical images were created should not prevent us [the viewer/audience] from seeing other things that might also be there. Things like resistance, subjectivity, and self-consciousness which I argue is something that the black actresses on early television, attempted to bring [albeit subtly] to the stereotypical roles they played.

Paolo Cherchi Usai states in his book *A Charter of Curatorial Values* (2006) that "A curator who is not keen to acquire, preserve or give access to an audiovisual work because he or she is afraid of being identified with the ideology portrayed in it does a disservice to the field and to society." With all the above in mind, I moved forward with my film selection process.[104]

In his book, *Film Programming: Curating for Cinemas, Festivals, Archives*(2015), Peter Bosma offers a set of criteria film curators should keep in mind when building out a film schedule. The criteria are as follows:

"● Popularity: striking a balance between films in distribution and film heritage.
● Social Engagement: the films exhibited fulfill a social/political purpose to the audience.
● Diversity of Audience: the ability to reach a wide scope of viewers from different social, economic, ethnic, and political backgrounds.
● Diversity of films: Exhibiting a wide scope of films in terms of one or more of the following - ethnicity, gender, genre, theme/tropes, "populist", and heritage.
● Uniqueness: "focusing on offering films that have the greatest possible degree of rarity, unveiling films which are rarely seen or which are unjustly unknown and forgotten."
● Excellence: "presenting the highest artistic quality of cinema, measurable in degrees of craftsmanship, or innovative style." [105]

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[104] Paolo Cherchi Usai (2006)

[105] Bosma, Peter (2015)

With Bosma's criteria list as a guide here is how my program "*The Re-appropriation Will be Televised*" will or will not address each of those areas [listed to reflect my priorities]r:

● Diversity of Audience: My main target audience is black women and other women of color. While women who do not identify as any of the above are welcomed, the program's goal is to create a safe space where women of color can come and discuss the pain and oppression they have felt at the hand of negative ethnic stereotypes in cinema. So while I do not foresee diversity in terms of ethnicity or gender, I do expect diversity in terms of social, economic, and political backgrounds amongst the women of color who attend.

● Social Engagement: I believe that premise and goals of my program automatically make it in alignment with what Bosma regards as filling a social and political purpose for the audience.

● Diversity of films: It was important to me to juxtapose any film that seemed to perpetuate the reproduction of negative stereotypes with a film that offered an oppositional view of that same stereotype. For, again, the goal of this program is not inflecting or re-open painful wounds for black women and other women of color, but instead, empower them to dig deeper through an oppositional gaze and create new associations.

With that said, the films I have selected are diverse in terms of directors [male & female represented], form/genre [short-form narratives, short-form documentaries, experimental, populist, and episodic]. Where I fall short in terms of diversity is in theme, length, and actresses represented. The films I've chosen all deal with ethnic stereotypes assigned to black women, and all-star black women. Due to the time restraints of the Weeksville grant, in order to maximize the impact, I decided to program multiple short-formed films, rather than screening only one or two feature-length ones.

● Uniqueness: A lot of black independent films tend to go unnoticed by the general black

population. It was my aim to choose films that would introduce a more general/populist film

based audience to a variety of what black films can encompass. Some of the films and episodes I

have chosen, also have rarely, if ever, been in exhibition and are not easily available for home

viewing.

● Excellence: It's important to me when choosing an exhibition copy that it's of the highest

quality available since it has a great impact on the way an audience experiences a film.

● Popularity: As with "uniqueness" I aim to select one or two films that are more widely known

within the black community. This will help bring into populations of black women who might

not consider themselves "cinephiles".

        The next and final step I took during the selection process was to think about which films

I would be able to easily attain rights and permissions. As Bosma states, a large portion of

archival films is not available for public exhibition due to copyright and license limitations. In

most cases, if a film has an active distributor, a curator can purchase/rent the public screening

rights directly from them. If the film is no longer in circulation or release, the rights usually

revert to the producer, which can be a person [more straightforward] or a production company

[more complicated].[106]

        After the films have been selected and the rights and permissions researched, the next

step is to think about the arrangement of your selected films. 'Will you program in blocks or

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[106]Bosma, Peter. "THE NETWORK OF INTERMEDIARIES." In Film Programming: Curating for Cinemas,
Festivals, Archives, 33-50. LONDON; NEW YORK: Columbia University Press, 2015. Accessed May 7, 2020.
DOI:10.7312/bosm17459.7.

pairs?', 'Will the films be spread out over multiple days or just one? "What order will you

arrange and curate for the viewing experience?". The best way for me to tackle those questions

was to watch all my selected films straight through several times. Each time, watching them in

different orders and pairings to determine which films were best in alignment or direct

opposition to each other and will inspire the best discussion.

With all the above in mind, the remaining subsections of my final chapter will introduce

you to the films I have chosen for the exhibition, in the order and pairing they will be screened.

There are three pairs of films, for a total of 6 shorts I will be screening. Under each of the film

pairs subsection, I will be addressing the following: brief historical background, a brief synopsis

of the film or episode, exhibition history, rights and permission status, potential exhibition

copies, and the significance of the films in relation to each other and the program.

Beulah: "Beulah Goes Gardening" & Daydream Therapy, Bernard Nicholas

Beulah: "Beulah Goes Gardening" [Season 3, Ep.4] | *Dir. Richard Bare | B&W | 25min | Air Date: August 12, 1952*

Starring Academy Award winner Hattie McDaniel in her last starring role, *Beulah* [ABC, 1950] was a half-hour situation comedy about Beulah, a black housekeeper who works for a white family, the Hendersons, in the suburbs. Storylines included: Beulah saving her employers, cooking for the Hendersons and their guests, teaching Donnie [Henderson's son] how to dance, and giving Henderson's marriage advice. To round out the cast was Beulah's boyfriend Bill, and her best friend Oriole, who worked for the white family next door. Beulah ran on ABC from October 1950 - September 1953, Tuesdays nights at 7:30.

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[107] Screengrab. "'The Beulah Show' - Beulah Goes Gardening: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming." Internet Archive. Roland Reed Productions, January 1, 1970. https://archive.org/details/The_Beulah_Show.

[108] "Beulah Goes Gardening." Narr. Hattie McDaniel. Writ. Nathaniel Curtis. Dir. Richard L. Bare. Perf. Hattie McDaniel, Enerst Whiteman, David Bruce, Stuffy Singer. Prod. Hal Roach Studios. The Beulah Show. ABC. Los Angeles Affiliate. KECA-TV (MLA Format)

Sadly, according to Archive.org, only seven episodes of the show have survived today, despite the fact it ran for three years. Thankfully, one of those surviving episodes in season three, episode four entitled "*Beulah Goes Gardening*". The description follows:

> "In an effort to save money, Harry [Mr. Henderson] fires his gardener and divides his tasks amongst the rest of his household - he'll mow the grass, his wife will water the lawn and his son will weed the garden. When the day to do the yard work arrives the Hendersons all have previous engagements and leave Beulah to do all their outdoor chores [in addition to her own]."[109]

Given that only seven episodes exist, finding a source copy for the screening was a bit challenging. Archive.org does have the full episode available on its website, and since the licenses for this show have expired [date of expiration is unknown], there would be no issues regarding rights and permissions, but the quality of the video is low.

When researching if Beulah was previously exhibited I came across a film program entitled "*Changing the Picture: The Emergence of African Americans in Television*" that took place at the Museum of Moving Image [MOMI], from January 9th to March 28th in 1993. According to the New York Times write up, the program was a look at the history of blacks on television with the premise being "television images not only reflect but also help shape racial attitudes in this country." to which the article's writer noted, "The premise is particularly thought-provoking given the current state of race relations in New York City." Noted in the programs' outline, still available on MOMI's website, is that they screened episodes of Beulah

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[109] 'The Beulah Show' - Beulah Goes Gardening: Internet Archive. Roland Reed Productions, 1970. "The Paley Center in New York." The Paley Center for Media. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.paleycenter.org/collection/item/?q=Beulah&p=1&item=115489.

during its one. As of May 2020, I have yet to reach out to the curators at MOMI to inquire about,

what format was screened, which episodes, and if they are still in possession of it.[110]

Another possible screening source I found is from an independent movie seller on

Amazon, who created a DVD featuring four of the seven existing episodes, including *Beulah*

Goes Gardening. The issue with this source is that the seller is currently out of stock, and won't

be able to fulfill new orders until after the COVID-19 quarantine. The specs of the DVD are as

follows: Black & White, NTSC, Alpha Video; Release date August 28, 2007; English.[111]

Despite the popularity of McDaniels, the show still received criticism from the black

community for making the character of Beulah a post-civil war version of the mammy

stereotype. In his book "*Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of*

Blacks in American Films", film historian and professor Donald Bogle notes that McDaniels

added more traditional characteristics often associated with the Mammy stereotype, such as

broken dialect and self-sacrificing loyalty to her white employer family.

It is that criticism that led me to pair this episode with the short film "*Daydream Therap*y

[1977]". Where the character of Beulah is depicted as self-serving and willing to sacrifice her

own happiness for that of her white employers, *Daydream Therapy* depicts a maid losing herself

in the fantasy of black resistance to the mistreatment and exploitation many black women maids,

housekeepers, and servants truly felt at the time.

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[110] Kolbert, Elizabeth. "From 'Beulah' to 'Oprah'." The New York Times. The New York Times, January 15, 1993. https://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/15/arts/from-beulah-to-oprah.html. & "Programs - Past Programs - Past Programs - 1993." Museum of the Moving Image. Accessed May 11, 2020. http://www.movingimage.us/programs/archive/1993.

[111] https://www.amazon.com/Beulah-Show-1-Hattie-McDaniel/dp/B000SSONJ8

Daydream Therapy [*1977*] | *Dir. Bernard Nicholas | B/W & Color | 8 min.*

Activist-turned-filmmaker Bernard Nicholas's short film is about an unnamed black hotel maid who uses revenge fantasy as a brief escape from the oppression and horrors she faces at the hands of her employer. Set to Nina Simone's haunting rendition of "Pirate Jenny" And Arche Schlepp's "Things Have Got to Change". This short is an early student film, Nicholas' made while at UCLA.[113]

Besides Nicholas' poetic use of color, what really makes this short special is that the message of the film is enhanced by the music choice. The use of Nina Simone's powerful rendition of Kurt Weill's song, Pirate Jenny, from his 1928 musical from "*The Threepenny*

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[112] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EotxDfPIEd8

[113] "Daydream Therapy." Daydream Therapy | UCLA Film & Television Archive. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/la-rebellion/films/daydream-therapy. & "Striking L.A. Rebellion Short Film Of Note - 'Daydream Therapy' (Chicago Screening w/ Gerima's 'Bush Mama')." SHADOW&ACT Home. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://shadowandact.com/striking-l-a-rebellion-short-film-of-note-daydream-therapy-chicago-screening-w-gerimas-bush-mama/.

Opera" which tells the story of a hotel maid imagines exacting revenge on the cruel

townspeople, with the help of Pirates who come into town and bomb her place of work.

This is a direct parallel, not only to the fantasy of the main character in Daydream, but also to the

cruelty, oppression, and longing for a way out, that many black women in servant positions at the

time felt.[114]

     In terms of the film's exhibition history, from my research, I found that the film was only

screened during UCLA's *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema* [2011] film program that

toured around the country for a year in 2011. The program was co-curated by UCLA and

Professor, Author, and TCM host Jacquline Stewart. The film was initially rediscovered as a part

of UCLA's restoration project and is available via a digital copy that was transferred from the

original 16mm print, from UCLA's Film and Television Archive.[115]

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[114]"Pirate Jenny." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, February 19, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirate_Jenny. & https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7awW5nrDHk

[115] "Daydream Therapy." Daydream Therapy | UCLA Film & Television Archive. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/la-rebellion/films/daydream-therapy.

An Ecstatic Experience, Ja'Tovia Gary & I Am Somebody, Madeline Anderson

An Ecstatic Experience [2015] | *Dir. Ja'Tovia Gary | Color & B/W | 6min.*

Brooklyn based artist and filmmaker, Ja'Tovia Gary's work seeks to liberate the distorted

histories through which Black life is often viewed while fleshing out a nuanced and multivalent

Black interiority. Through documentary film, experimental video art, and installation Gary charts

the ways structures of power shape our perceptions around representation, race, gender,

sexuality, and violence.[116] Gary's 2015 short film "*An Ecstatic Experience*" is an experimental

piece that incorporates animation, and archival footage to explore the reimagining of the black

body within moving images and the "feminine subjective gaze".[117]

The film's central performance is given by actress, playwright, and civil rights activist

Ruby Dee gave a dramatic monologue of a former slave narrative. This particular account is an

[116] "Ja'Tovia Gary: An Ecstatic Experience." Colby College Museum of Art. Accessed May 11, 2020. http://www.colby.edu/museum/exhibition/an-ecstatic-experience/.**&** "Biography." Ja'Tovia Gary. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.jatovia.com/about.

[117] Gary. "Artwork Profile." Art Basel. Galerie Frank Elbaz, January 1, 1970. https://www.artbasel.com/catalog/artwork/74806/Ja-Tovia-Gary-An-Ecstatic-Experience.

excerpt from a formerly enslaved woman named Fannie Moore, whose story was preserved and

recorded through the Library of Congress's Federal Writers Project. Frannie Moore's narrative

tells the story of her watching her mother praying for slavery to end.[118]

The rights and permissions for screening belong to Ja'Tovia Gary, interested parties are

required to contact Gary via email to inquire about obtaining a screening copy.

The film has previously been in exhibition at the following institutions and festivals:

Uppsala Short Film Festival, Sweden [2016]; Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur,

Switzerland [2016]; New Orleans Film Festival [2016]; Edinburgh International Film Festival

[2016]; Haverhill Experimental Film Festival [2016]; Stockholm Animation and Experimental

Film Festival [2016]; ATHENS ANIMFEST [2016]; Maryland International Film Festival

[2016]; Athens Film and Video Festival [2016]; Ann Arbor Film Festival [2016]; Newark

Women in Film Festival [2016]; Atlanta Film Festival [2016]; Tampere International Film

Festival [2016]; Gdansk International Animation Festival [2016]; Black Star Film Festival

[2016] ; Rooftop Films; Anthology Film Archives; MoMA PS 1; The Schomburg Center;

NMAAHC and MOCA LA.[119]

[118]"Biography." Ja'Tovia Gary. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.jatovia.com/about.
 & Gary, Tovia. "AN ECSTATIC EXPERIENCE Trailer (2015)." Vimeo, May 9, 2020. https://vimeo.com/188073363.

[119] Gary, Tovia. "AN ECSTATIC EXPERIENCE Trailer (2015)." Vimeo, May 9, 2020.

[120]

I Am Somebody [1970] | *Dir. Madeline Anderson | Color | 30min*

Recently inducted into the Library of Congress's National Film Archive, and preserved

by the National Museum of African American History and Culture [NMAAHC], Madeline

Anderson's "*I Am Somebody*" is about the 1969 Charleston, South Carolina hospital workers

strike that was organized by 400 black women for union recognition and a wage increase. Racial

tensions rise as the women find themselves turned away at every corner by both the local state

government and the National Guard. The film was funded and produced by Charleston's local

1199 [the New York's Drug and Hospital Union] and features appearances by Coretta Scott King

and Andrew Young.[121]

When asked in interviews about why she made the film Anderson said she was tired of

seeing black people depicted as "savages" or "lazy and shiftless" servants. "She wanted to show

another side of Black history, and make films about the achievements of contemporary Black

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[120] "Three Films by Madeline Anderson." Three Films by Madeline Anderson | Wexner Center for the Arts. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://wexarts.org/film-video/three-films-madeline-anderson.

[121] Icarus Films: I Am Somebody. Accessed May 11, 2020. http://icarusfilms.com/if-iams.

Americans." For the Smithsonian's Oral History Project NMAAHC recorded and interviewed

Anderson who said this: "I wanted to show that we were people. People who were people of

accomplishment, people who were fighting for our rights. Not just teach it, but to record it so that

they can see it and believe it. Because sometimes you can read a book and people would say 'it's

not true' or you could tell somebody something and they could still say that [it's not true].If you

saw it, then maybe you had a chance of 100% belief in what you were looking at."[122]

Anderson is not only credited with being the first black woman to produce and direct a

documentary film for TV, but she is also the first black woman to produce and direct a

syndicated tv series [Sesame Street].[123] Her film, I Am Somebody is an essential historical record

of activism and bravery in the face of misogyny, racism, injustice.

Over the last few years, since NMAAHC's digital restoration, this film has garnered large

interest and has been exhibited as part of numerous film series, festivals, and retrospectives.

Some of the most notable are: the 21st American Black Film Festival in Miami; Metrograph;

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA; Play-Doc Festival; Jacob Burns

Film Center; The Harvard Film Archive; and NMAAHC.

I Am Somebody is currently under the distribution of Icarus Films. Curators can purchase

a DVD copy of the new digital restoration along with a license for institutional use and Public

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[122] Materre, Michelle. "Madeline Anderson: African-American Trailblazer." SFFILM, April 1, 2019. https://sffilm.org/madeline-anderson-african-american-trailblazer. & "Filmmaker Madeline Anderson." National Museum of African American History and Culture, August 22, 2017. https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/filmmaker-madeline-anderson.

[123]"Filmmaker Madeline Anderson." National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2017.

Performance rights for $248.00. A 16mm print is also available for screening from the New York

Public Library for the Performing Arts's Reserve Film and Video Collection.[124] [125]

The reason I choose to pair the two films together, "An Ecstatic Experience" and "I Am

Somebody", besides my personal love for both, is mainly because the former tells the story of

black women praying from freedom and justice when it seems like all hope should be lost, and

the latter tells the story of black women who fought for justice and their rights when it also

seemed all odds were against them.

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[124] "Reserve Film and Video Collection." The New York Public Library. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/circulating-collections/reserve-film.

[125] Icarus Films: I Am Somebody

Four Women, Julie Dash & A Different World: Mammie Dearest

126

Four Women [1975] | *Dir. Julie Dash | Color | 7min.*

Julie Dash's *Four Women* is an experimental short dance film set to Nina Simone's song

of the same name ["*Four Women*"127] which poetically explores the ways stereotypes have been

used to reduce, commodify, and minimize the contributions and significance of black women.

Each of the song's four verses tells the story of one of the four main stereotypes imposed on

black women through four women: the Mammy [Aunt Sarah], the Tragic Mulatto [Saffronia], the

Jezebel [Sweet Thing], and the Sapphire [Peaches]. The dancer, Linda Martina Young plays all

four characters, each depicted by a wardrobe change to match the time periods when a particular

stereotype first appeared.128

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126 Dash, Julie. "FOUR WOMEN (1977)." Vimeo, May 11, 2020. https://vimeo.com/74869216.

127 Despite Simon's intentions to highlight the injustice and the suffering of black women, some listeners interpreted the song as racist and caused the song to be banned on several major radio stations in the Northeast. Sullivan, James. "In 'Nina Simone: Four Women,' the Singer, the Song, the Outrage - The Boston Globe." BostonGlobe.com. The Boston Globe, February 6, 2020. https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/02/06/arts/nina-simone-four-women-singer-song-outrage/.

128"Four Women." Four Women | UCLA Film & Television Archive. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/la-rebellion/films/four-women. & "Four Women (Song)." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, April 1, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Women_(song).

Dash is the first African American woman filmmaker to receive a wide theatrical release

in the United States for her critically acclaimed, and audience beloved film, *Daughters of the*

Dust (1991).[129]

In terms of screening copies, there are currently three possible options:
1. UCLA Film and Television Archive holds a digital copy, as well as a newly scanned 16mm answer print made from the original 16mm color negative A/B rolls and the original 16mm track negative. [1 reel of 1 (ca. 800 ft.)]; Color; 1975; 7min.[130]
2. National Museum of African American Heritage and Culture [NMAAHC] holds a 16mm film answer print. acetate film [300 Feet].Which they were able to scan from a film print provided courtesy of the Black Film Center/Archive at Indiana University.[131]
3. Third World News, the official distributor of the film offers the screening license and a DVD rental for $150 - $200.00. All films must be requested 8-weeks in advance.[132]

The film has previously been in exhibition at the following institutions and festivals:

NMAAHC; Cinema Remixed and Reloaded Exhibit, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art,

[2007]; African-American Women Behind the Camera series, Brooklyn Museum, [1993]; One

Way or Another: Black Women's Cinema, BAMcinematek, [2016]; L.A. Rebellion: Creating a

New Black Cinema Exhibit October 7,[2011]; Tate Modern,[2015]; We Wanted A Revolution,

Brooklyn Museum,[2017].

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[129]Four Women." Four Women | UCLA Film & Television Archive. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/la-rebellion/films/four-women.

[130]UCLA Library Catalog Holdings Information. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://cinema.library.ucla.edu/vwebv/holdingsInfo?searchId=380&recCount=50&recPointer=1&bibId=191450.

[131]"Four Women." National Museum of African American History and Culture. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2012.79.1.40.1abc.

[132] Four Women - Available from TWN. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.twn.org/catalog/pages/responsive/cpage.aspx?rec=751&card=price#Screenings.

After watching Julie Dash's film and learning the meaning behind Nina Simone's song, the Season 5 episode of the hit show *A Different World* [NBC,1987] entitled *"Mammy Dearest"*[1991] immediately came to mind.

A Different World: *"Mammie Dearest"* [Season 5, Ep.11] | *Dir. Debbie Allen | Color | 24min | Air Date: December 5, 1991*

In one of the show's more notable episodes, the show's central character Whitley tries to get over a recent breakup by throwing herself into planning an exhibit on notable black women in history "From Mammy to Angela Davis". Her friends, especially Kim [Whitley's former roommate], are uncomfortable with the display of Mammy objects. But Whitley insists that Mammy be accepted as part of their past. That is until she discovers her family once owned slaves. She then feels she no longer deserves to be the one to put on the exhibit. Meanwhile, Kim struggles to distance herself from the image of the Mammy.

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[133] Screengrab - A Different World Cast Momodu, Samuel. "A Different World (1987-1993)." Welcome to Blackpast •, February 8, 2020. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/different-world-1987-1993/.

When it comes time for the exhibit Whitley friends [including Kim] put on a performance showcasing the images of black women through history. Kim dresses as Aunt Jemima, Freddie as a Mammy/Pickaninny caricature combo, and Lena as an African tribal dancer, wow the audience and helps Whitley and the girls find peace with their ancestral past and the way Black women have been represented.[134]

A Different World [spin-off of *The Cosby Show* [NBC,19] was the first sitcom to solely focus on the daily lives of young black college students. It aired for six seasons on NBC from September 24, 1987, to July 9, 1993, on Thursdays at 8:30 PM. The show followed the life of students at Hillman College, a fictional historically black college [HBC] in Virginia. The show is most notable for tackling controversial subjects such as pregnancy, date rape, racial discrimination, and HIV/AIDS as they relate to and affect the black community.[135]

According to a Deadline article, in 2005 the show's former distributor, Urban Works, released Season one in Region 1 on November 8, 2005. There were several announcements made by Urban Works on the remaining five seasons DVD release, but nothing came of it. In 2006 Urban Works was brought out by First Look Studios in 2006, and the distribution rights for the show reverted back to the original production company Carsey-Werner TV Distribution/Carsey-Werner Productions. Last year Amazon Prime Video obtained the streaming rights for the show,

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[134]"The Paley Center in New York." The Paley Center for Media. Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.paleycenter.org/collection/item/?q=bell&p=71&item=T:23527. & "A Different World." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, May 7, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Different_World.

[135]"Different World, A." Television Academy Interviews, July 31, 2019. https://interviews.televisionacademy.com/shows/different-world-a. & "A Different World." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, May 7, 2020.

anyone with an Amazon Prime subscription can view all six seasons of the show. [136] Besides

Amazon Prime, the other place this episode legally exists is in the Paley Center for Media's

television archive. It's not clear for their catalog record what format is available for viewing.[137]

Like Dashs' *Four Women* [1975], this episode of *A Different World*[1987], and this film

program are about taking the images which have harmed and oppressed black women and re-

claim and contextualize them through our own gaze. Making this the perfect pair of films to end

on.

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[136]Andreeva, Nellie. "Carsey-Werner Seeking New Streaming Deals For Library In Current Comedy Boom, Starting With 'That '70s Show', 'Roseanne' & 'A Different World'." Deadline. Deadline, November 21, 2019. https://deadline.com/2019/11/carsey-werner-seeking-new-streaming-deals-library-current-boom-starting-with-that-70s-show-roseanne-a-different-world-1202790486/.

[137] "The Paley Center in New York." The Paley Center for Media. Accessed May 11, 2020.

Conclusion

"The voice of a Black woman should always be HERSELF ...
No edits - no erasure - no pressure - no expectations - no additions - no intruders"
— Malebo Sephodi[138]

In Audry Lorde's June 1981 keynote speech at the National Women's Studies Association Conference, she stated: "Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change[139]." This, I believe, is the work of re-appropriating the harmful, racist, images. It can be dangerous work. It involves digging up the pain and trauma they have inflicted and forcing them to be in conversation with the ripple effects seen in the daily lives of Black women in both subtle and obvious ways. It takes Black women on the front lines, such as Issa Rea, Lena Writhe, Shonda Rhimes, Ava DuVernay, Debbie Allen, and many others, creating and producing new works and images that put forth a new narrative by, for, and of black women.

It's in the everyday discussions and experiences that are brought to light within black women's' homes, jobs, and educational institutions. It starts with a conversation around the dinner table, in the break room, in a classroom or at the screening. But in order for that spark of change to catch fire, the black community as a whole must make themselves vulnerable and

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[138] Fievre, M."*Badass Black Girl: Questions, Quotes, and Affirmations for Teens (For Fans of Black Girl Magic)*".Mango Publishing. 2020

[139] BlackPast. "(1981) Audre Lorde, 'The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism.'" Welcome to Blackpast •, September 24, 2019. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/speeches-african-american-history/1981-audre-lorde-uses-anger-women-responding-racism/.

speak their own truth on the situation, no matter the stance. For it is when we speak our truth, we are at our most vulnerable. Truth equates with vulnerability. Getting at the root of our individual truth allows us to open ourselves up to the oppositional gaze and reject anything that is not us [black women]. I'm not saying that this type of discussion is pretty or easy, and it shouldn't be. These issues should and do evoke strong emotions.

Future Research

I want to take this time and acknowledge that there is still more research to be done. While my thesis presents a high-level overview, there are some areas that can still be further explored. Given the scope and timeframe I was not able to address the topics and questions listed below, but feel it's important to note them.

- Looking into how, and if, the same ethnic stereotypes that have been imposed on black women, extend to other women of color groups. If not, what are the ethnic stereotypes imposed on them? How do they compare or diverge from the ones of black women?

- How are the shows and movies that depict such images and promote them, cataloged in the archive? What metadata terms do archivists and librarians use to tag them?

- Conduct a case study on how Black men respond to ethnic stereotypes of black women, do they agree or disagree with these depictions?

- How do both black men and women feel about the "black male mammies", i.e Big Mamma, Medea, and Rusputa

- Black women representation in Blackexploitation Films or Black Action films of

  the '70s

Sample Program & Advertisement Flyer

Program [Front]

This film program will offer a re-contextualization of the negative stereotypes and tropes imposed on Black women by the mainstream media.

In a moment in time when many women feel their experiences are invalidated or silenced, especially Black women who are part of a subset minority within the greater marginalization of gender discrimination, the films that will be screened act as a powerful conduit for solidarity, expression, and representation of trauma vs truth. As more Black women curators rise, we are able to re-claim, re-appropriate, and re-contextualize our images.

5:30 PM – *Light*
6:00 PM   *Refreshments*

Light refreshments provided by
local Black-owned restaurants

6:00 PM – *Film Screening*
8:00 PM

Frannie's Film; Beulah; Four
Women; A Different World; I Am
Somebody; An Ecstatic
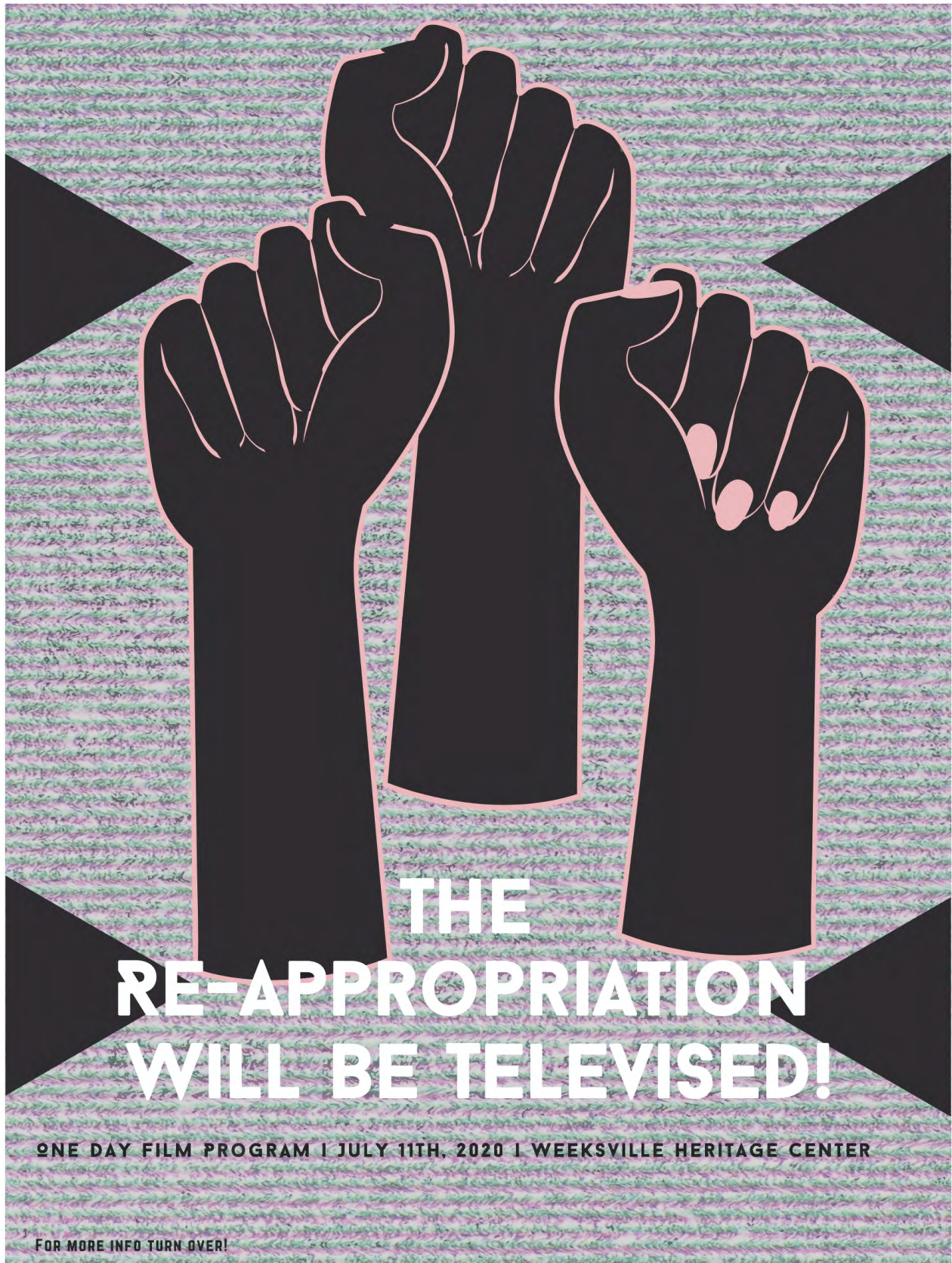Experience; Day Dream Therepy

8:00 PM – *Q&A/Discussion*
9:00 PM   *Panel*

Jenna Wentworth; Syreeta Gates;
Ja'Tovia Gary; Ina Archer

THE
RE-APPROPRIATION
WILL BE TELEVISED!

ONE DAY FILM PROGRAM | JULY 11TH, 2020 | WEEKSVILLE HERITAGE CENTER

Program [Back]

Flyer [Front]

This film program will offer a re-contextualization of the
negative stereotypes and tropes imposed on Black women by
the mainstream media.

This film screening is a direct response to the current
discourse surrounding Black feminist thought, the cinematic
trauma of marginalized and/or underrepresented groups, and
Hollywood's representation, or rather, blatant
misrepresentation of Black women.

In a moment in time when many women feel their
experiences are invalidated or silenced, especially Black
women who are part of a subset minority within the greater
marginalization of gender discrimination, the films that will
be screened act as a powerful conduit for solidarity,
expression, and representation of trauma vs truth. As more
Black women curators rise, we are able to re-claim, re-
appropriate, and re-contextualize our images.

Flyer [Back]

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