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Twice As Good

Lauren Gissentanna

Long Island University, Lauren.Gissentanna@my.liu.edu

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Twice As Good

A Honors Program Thesis

By

Lauren Gissentanna

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Theatre Department

Advisor, Professor Reinhard

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Reader, Dr. Attie

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examine the intersections of race, class, and gender; specifically, the three components that affect the lives and livelihood of black women. The intersections, though they affect each other, must be considered alongside the means of oppression. The oppressive states of patriarchy and racial hierarchy contributed to each factor of intersection. More specifically, it contributed to the caricaturization of Black women; these false personas contributed to the skewed perceptions of black women. By means of public and private resistance, also known as hidden transcripts, I examine the ways that black women gain their agency. Though there are many forms and variables that contribute to many different types of oppression, this paper examines matters that pertain to the Black community, and more specifically, Black women. This paper discusses issues such as patriarchy, very narrow scopes of femininity, the male gaze, obscure caricatures of black women, and finally ways to rebel from these oppressive systems.

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INTRODUCTION

There is an “adage commonly stated in the African American community that ‘Blacks have to be twice as good to get half as far’” as stated by Mavis Sanders in 1997 “Overcoming Obstacles: Academic Achievement as a Response to Racism and Discrimination” (85). This saying flew out of the mouths of elders and parents, and into the ears and impressionable minds of young African Americans. As difficult as this may be for a child to conceptualize, Sanders says that studies “show that many African American men and women have been empowered to succeed academically, economically, and socially, partly due to their awareness of racism and racially discriminatory practices in education and employment” (Sanders 84). This common adage primarily applied to younger members of the African American community who found themselves immersed in Western educational systems. But this adage, as well as the implications behind it, quickly spread to describe other areas of life. According to her research, Sanders discovered that “the positive racial socialization practices that teach Black youth about racism and discrimination and that expose them to constructive ways to respond to each may be important to the educational and personal success of the African American child” (Sanders 91). Therefore, the success, and furthermore, the identification of the child is simply predicated how much they can achieve. The achievement of the African American child in an inherently racist and discriminatory society can be seen as a form of resistance.

This resistance, as well as the primary idea that lead this thesis, maybe considered a form of a hidden transcript. Hidden transcripts is a phrase coined primarily by James Scott and can be best defined as small modes of resistance, that are concealed and submerged within the culture in which they are created; because they are shrouded in the culture of their formation, they are nearly

undetectable to the outside eye. In his book, Scott discusses and researches hidden transcripts in a more universal sense, specifically what was “drawn from studies of slavery, serfdom, and caste subordination” (x). In the preface, Scott states his primary focus: “to suggest how we might more successfully read, interpret, and understand the often fugitive political conduct of subordinate groups” (Scott xii). In "We Are Not What We Seem" by Robin D. G. Kelley, he expounds off of this idea and examines and explains hidden transcripts in the 1930s and 1940s. He also tries to “examine how class, gender, and race shape working-class consciousness; and to bridge the gulf between the social and cultural world of the ‘everyday’ and political struggle” (Kelley).

These “hidden transcripts” include the creation of Black dance halls and jazz clubs, wearing of Zoot Suits, and small acts of theft at people’s places of work. Kelley notes that “theft in the workplace was a common form of resistance” (90). Other work-related hidden transcripts included rigging clocks, agreeing to unanimously decrease production, stealing merchandise and selling it independently, and breaking tools (Kelley 90); hidden transcripts can also include “daily conversations, folklore, jokes, songs, and other cultural practices” (Kelley 77).

When reading about hidden transcripts that Kelley described, my partner and I began to think of ways that we could make hidden transcripts performative. It is an act of resistance, and though it is “hidden” within the community of those who carry it out, we started to conceptualize ways to highlight and share these hidden transcripts. As stated in the previous paragraph, a hidden transcript could include attending a Black dance hall or jazz club. Simply being black, or even dancing at these kinds of venues was a hidden transcript. Appearance was another type of hidden transcript that Kelley spoke about in "We Are Not What We Seem". He spoke about deviant appearance, that was specific to that time in the black community. The appearance may have

changed, but dress and appearance still act as hidden transcripts in the black community. One hidden transcript is the pride and acceptance of natural hair. An entire movement has emerged out of this pride and acceptance for natural hair. The entire cast also share an affinity for natural hair. This relation required to be acknowledged in the piece, because it was such a large part of our lives. Simply wearing our hair in its natural state was not enough, we felt the impulse to verbalize our experience, and create a physical structure based on the experiences we shared. Attending Black settings, and embracing a socially deviant behavior are only two of the examples that Kelley gave, but there were parts that we extracted and adapted to our piece. This piece was shared with the Post Theatre Company during the Spring Thesis Productions.

In addition to pride, and an increase in self-esteem, Kelley believes that “these daily acts have a cumulative effect on power relations” (78). By this, Kelley means that the empowerment and continued resistance of the African American community during The Harlem Renaissance, the era he was writing about, gave them a sense of agency. Additionally, when the hidden transcripts began to become more blatant, both the oppressed and privileged parties, understood that the power dynamics to which they had once adapted were now changing. The oppressed party receives more agency, and the privileged party loses a portion of their power. Kelley believed that “everyday forms of resistance ought to be ‘diagnostic’ of power” (Kelley 78). By means of “every day forms of resistance” carried out by the subordinate party, both the dominant and subordinate parties would be able to discover how much power they truly possessed.

When speaking of the subordinate and dominant groups in a society, there are a few similarities between both groups . First is that of a “public transcript,” or “a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate” (Scott 2). This

transcript occurs when more than one culture and power dynamic are present. The public transcript displays how both the subordinate and dominating parties conduct themselves around one another. By defining what a public transcript is, we can better identify evidence of hidden transcripts.

Scott comments on the idea of public and private transcripts saying, “transcripts of dominant and subordinate are, in most circumstances, never in direct contact. Each participant will be familiar with the public transcript and the hidden transcript of his or her circle, but not with the hidden transcript of the other” (15). There can be exemptions, but for the most part, hidden transcripts occur in the comfort of the perpetrator’s cultural circle; this is a similarity of subordinate and dominant groups in society. The secretive transcripts of both parties are never shared because of the preexisting power dynamics of society. If the hidden transcripts of the subordinate party were discovered by the dominant party, it could result in violence or increased socio-economic oppression. The danger and risk of resisting are what keeps the public transcript and hidden transcript dissociated. Scott suggests that “Personal terror invariably infuses these relations- a terror that may take the form of arbitrary beatings, sexual brutality, insults, and public humiliations” (Scott xi). These are only a few of the many terrors that the dominant party has the power to utilize, in order to further suppress the subordinate party. The examples of terror listed by Scott are the reason why hidden transcripts are “typically expressed openly- albeit in disguised form” (Scott xii).

The dominant party, like the subservient party, also possess a hidden transcript of their own. It is one that “represents the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed” (Scott xii). The specific modes of resistance may change, but the risk that comes with hidden transcripts remains. Unlike that of the subordinate party, the dominant party will not face the threat

of personal terror, violence, or increased socio-economic oppression. Unless there is a more powerful group present in this society, the main risk that the dominant party may face is one of revolution. Revolution would only occur if the dominant party fails to maintain its seat of power. The risks connected to the hidden transcripts of each party are immensely different. However, the subordinate and dominant parties both share the fact that there are public and hidden transcripts within their communities.

While discussing the public transcripts of both parties, Scott writes, “The greater the disparity in power between dominant and subordinate and the more arbitrarily it is exercised, the more ritualistic cast. In words, the more menacing the power, the thicker the mask” (Scott 3). The interaction between both communities is a dance that is performed on the floor of very high risk. The mask is required to maintain the appearance of a specific group of people. For instance, those who belonged to the dominant party must always appear to be in absolute power. Meanwhile, “subordinates offer a performance of deference and consent while attempting to discern, to read, the real intentions and mood of the potentially threatening power holder” (Scott 3). The societal confinement placed on them by the dominant party is the reason that the subservient party needed hidden transcripts that allowed them to “insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct” (Scott xiii).

There are three characteristics of hidden transcripts, according to Scott. “First, the hidden transcript is specific to a given social site and to a particular set of actors” (Scott 14). By actors, Scott does not mean actual actors, rather, he is speaking about those participating in hidden transcripts. Referencing Scott’s mention of a “mask”, he uses the metaphor of masks and actors on a stage. In this regard, there are many similarities between the subordinate group and actors upon a

stage. Subordinates while navigating through the world with their public transcript, are expected to perform. For example, in *Living with Jim Crow*, authors Leslie Brown and Anne M. Valk speak about a specific public transcript, one that was not favored by African Americans in the Jim Crow South, but was mandatory, simply because of the risk of violence from the dominant party. “If you walked down the street... a white person could be grown up and would push you off the sidewalk in the mud. And when they pushed me in the mud I’d make sure they got some mud on their leg pants or something” (Brown and Valk 23). The public transcript, when encountering with white Americans on the sidewalk, required African Americans to move out of the way for white Americans. Even a simple interaction on the sidewalk could exemplify the power dynamic if those of the dominant party so chose. In this particular instance, this unnamed member of the dominant party, a white man, chose to exercise his power by pushing a young black girl into the mud. She chose not to concede to this public transcript, and still found herself in the mud. Her response could have invoked violence, but this time, it did not.

The second characteristic of a hidden transcript is that it “does not contain only speech acts but a whole range of practices” (Scott 14). While the essence of resistance may be in the context of speech, the power of resistance lies in the full execution of the act. If the subordinate party only resists in speech, then the social space in which they perform these acts may not be as hidden as we think them to be; if this is the case, the hidden transcript in question is, in fact, a public transcript. Scott concludes his understanding of what a hidden transcript is by arguing, “it is clear that the frontier between the public and the hidden transcripts is a zone of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate” (Scott 14). Power, like many things in life, changes and adapts to the world around it. The “zone of constant struggle” between the two parties is what creates the

public and hidden transcripts. If there was no struggle, there would be no need for a hidden transcript or a space to carry out these forms of resistance. By the same token, public transcripts wouldn't exist if there was no struggle for power. The need to perform in a way that adheres to the societal and cultural expectations (both in public and hidden transcripts) would vanish and power would be disbursed on a more equitable level.

Hidden transcripts can exist in cultural, social, political, economic and academic realms. Specifically, the hidden transcripts that are of interest to this thesis are those that exist among younger members of the African American community. By means of art and research, I have chosen to create a synthesis of both my own and the hidden transcripts of others to create a piece that examines issues that matter to me. Thus, I decided to create a piece that discusses hidden transcripts, as well as the potential intersectionality that may affect be embodied within them. More specifically, this paper will deal with the intersectionality of race, gender, and class within the black community and how to use hidden and public transcripts to resist from the oppressive systems that we encounter.

BLACK WOMANHOOD: A GRAY AREA

Intersectionality was a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in the 1980s. In her 1989 article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics", she explicates her journey to intersectionality. In addition to her journey to this idea, she shares her thoughts on what the full understanding and acceptance of this theory will combat. Crenshaw is a Black woman, and in her academic career of gender studies, she chose to establish her research and theory on Black women. She says, "I will center Black women in this analysis in order to contrast the multidimensionality

of Black women's experience with the single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences”

(Crenshaw 139). By “single-axis analysis”, Crenshaw means the defining quality of persons in a society that many perceive to be “mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis”

(Crenshaw 139). In this examination, Crenshaw’s primary focus is on the intersection of race and gender and how these intersections affect Black women. Though Crenshaw is theorizing with the very narrow scope of race and gender of Black women, she acknowledges how problematic that can be. She adds, “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (Crenshaw 140). In addition to the intersection of race and gender, Crenshaw also factors in the intersection of class and how it would further affect the experience of Black women. One example that Crenshaw used was Sojourner Truth’s “Ain't I a Woman?” speech. This speech was delivered at a women’s conference in 1851, a time where the terms “feminism”, “intersectional feminism”, and “black feminist” did not exist. In this speech, Truth speaks about the intersections of race, gender, and class that she was born into:

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not

to let me have my little half measure full? (Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" 1851).

Crenshaw comments, "by using her own life to reveal the contradiction between the ideological myths of womanhood and the reality of Black women's experience, Truth's oratory provided a powerful rebuttal to the claim that women were categorically weaker than men" (153). Like Crenshaw, Truth found herself at the crossroads of race and gender. But, she also found herself at the crossroads of race, gender, and class. In speaking of having kids born into slavery, and having to work, she specified the low class in which she was unfairly placed. Truth was the essence of the otherness of being Black. Crenshaw sums it up perfectly by stating that, "black women encounter combined race and sex discrimination implies that the boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by white women's and Black men's experiences" (Crenshaw 143). The intersection of being both Black and a woman has created a grey area of otherness that many face day after day. By delivering this powerful speech, Truth "challenged not only patriarchy, but she also challenged white feminists wishing to embrace Black women's history to relinquish their vestedness in whiteness" (Crenshaw 154). The duality of being both Black and a woman is the experience of being forced to choose between two exclusive groups.

Shortly after Truth delivered her "Ain't I A Woman" speech, a black woman named Eliza Cobb was born. She faced years of abuse, rape, and eventually charges of infanticide. Though the evidence was "circumstantial," and the coroner eventually corroborated her story, she found herself imprisoned in the following years. After being imprisoned, Cobb was forced to work so much that she acquired scars of disfigurement. While begging for her clemency, "the warden, matron, guards, and prison physician wrote" to the Prison Commission saying that Cobb was "very badly burnt about the face"(Haley 22). In addition to describing her bodily damage since the time

of her incarceration, they also depicted Cobb as a completely moral and ethical in the prison. Despite their best efforts, Cobb was denied clemency twice. Although she was denied twice, Cobb continued functioning in the area of convict labor and created revenue for her society even though she was a prisoner. “Her sentence was commuted in September 1910” (Haley 23).

A white woman, named Martha Gault was given a five-year sentence in 1923 for “an offense so grave it colloquially signifies the worst sort of theft and criminal behavior: she committed highway robbery” (Haley 23). In this instance, it was clear that “she beat the driver of the car with a pipe before she and her male accomplice stole the vehicle” (Haley 23). This case was different from Cobb’s because Cobb had suffered years of sexual violence; additionally, Cobb’s sentence was based on questionable evidence. In Gault’s case the evidence was unwavering. The first time that her sentence was appealed in a letter to the Prison Commission, she was met with kindness and favor. “Her sentence was commuted to present service in December 1825, after she had served two years of her five-year sentence” (Haley 24). Both women eventually got their sentences commuted and found freedom, but the means in which they found it was very different.

Both Gault and Cobb had advocates who wrote letters to the Prison Commission on their behalf, however the manner in which they advocated for each woman was very different. On the topic of her portrayal to the Prison Commission, “Gault was cast as the victim of bad male influence” (Haley 24). Therefore, the portrait painted was one of coercion and naïveté. The fact of the matter was, Gault was not naive, not coerced, and she was most certainly not a victim. In her advocacy, “her future environment mattered. Circumstances, conditions, and domination all mattered in Martha Gault’s case” (Haley 24). The “prison matron” described her as “bright”

(Haley 24), she also said that she “deserved to be in school” and had “no bad habits” (Haley 24). Based on her past, it would be logical to assume at least one of those statements is inaccurate. Even though there might be a few inaccuracies in the previous statements, “the judge conceded that she was worth redeeming on the grounds that it might be possible to make her a ‘good and useful woman’” (Haley 24). The prospect of virtue and potential use were determining factors for Gault in the eyes of the judiciary body.

In addition to the presumably inaccurate statements made by Gault’s advocates, there were also pictures that perpetuated “her submissive character necessary to counter the aggravated nature of her crime” (Haley 23). The beauty and gentle nature of the woman in the picture, could not be the woman who was given five years for highway robbery. She could not be guilty of one of the most egregious crimes of her time. The picture highlights “Gault’s humanity” (Haley 23). The ideas that this picture expresses are what granted Gault her freedom. Cobb’s picture, on the other, was not as pretty.

Eliza Cobb was portrayed as someone in need of pity. Her advocates reported to the Prison Commission that “her mind was not as strong as the average negro’s” (Haley 22). In their letter, they also said that “she lacked the essential traits of personhood and normative femininity—a capacity for language, beauty, consciousness, submissiveness, maternalism, purity, and moral deliberation” (Haley 23). Cobb was presented as a pitiful individual who possessed no affiliation to her race, gender, intellect, and socialization. Rather, she was someone who was intellectually and physically jolted so badly by the evils of life that she did not deserve to serve her sentence. Based on the way she was portrayed the court saw her as someone whose mental capacity deserved the

utmost compassion and mercy. The reiterated “lack of intelligence and homeliness” were absolutely necessary for “the process of her ‘freeing’” (Haley 23).

Though these matters of Cobb and Gault, might appear to be two contrasting concerns, they are not. Gault's case and the advocacy for her clemency were predicated on the necessity to “rehabilitate her womanhood” (Haley 24). Cobb’s advocacy based her need for freedom upon her “physical depravity”, “monstrosity”, and “idiocy” (Haley 24). At that time highway robbery, assault, and infanticide were considered to be “heinous.” But only one of two women were considered to be redeemable; that woman, Martha Gault, was one that possessed the most privilege, even in the prison system. By means of intersectional ideas, Gault’s privilege, in the American prison system was much greater than Cobb’s. Gault, even after being held as a prisoner for an extensive amount of time, still possessed her humanity and femininity. Though she may have been considered “low class”, and only slightly above the line of poverty, her race and gender allowed her an advantage. Meanwhile, Cobb was identified by her advocates as a “horribly-looking person” (Haley 22). Of course, her disfigurement was the result of unrelenting work that her class and imprisonment afforded her. Cobb was America’s perception of Black women. “Black women’s bodies were portrayed in letters from convict lease guards and overseers as well as journalistic descriptions and cartoons” (Haley 22). The “physical depravity”, “monstrosity”, and “idiocy” that was illustrated, found a way to attach itself to America’s perception of Black women, even if that was not the case (Haley 24). According to the author of “No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity Account,” “perceived ugliness was one attribute that defined Black women’s deviance from the category ‘woman’” (Haley 22). Not only did it invalidate black womanhood, it also “justified their

imprisonment and assault during the nadir of American race relations, from the end of Reconstruction through the Progressive Era” (Haley 22). If Black women inhabit the grey area between their race and gender, it is easier to subjugate them. This grey area makes Black women harder to defend.

Black women, if harder to defend, are, therefore, easier to subjugate. Haley comments, “Eliza Cobb was real and she was also an invention. She was the deviant body required to make Martha Gault’s idealized body real, to give it political, cultural, and social meaning” (Haley 26). If the basis of womanhood encompassed many different types of women, Gault would have had to face the same difficulty that Cobb faced while trying to gain her freedom. If Cobb did not inhabit the space outside of fragility, domesticity, and intellectual promise, then she would have achieved her freedom much sooner. The persecution that Cobb faced was not predicated solely on her womanhood, it was also predicated on her blackness. Since she was also Black, she could not stand in her womanhood, in its totality. She was a Black woman but was subjugated to work much harder than many other women in prison during that time, simply because she was Black. Not only was she exploited physically, but she was also exploited financially. In the midst of her work in the years that she was denied her freedom, Haley never mentioned the accumulation of the most minute wealth. Simply put, “Cobb’s body was inordinately useful. It served the economic project of white supremacy by performing physical labor” (Haley 26). It is possible that Cobb faced two denials prior to the commutation of her sentence in order for the prison system to fully utilize and capitalize off of her labor. If they let Cobb go prematurely, the free labor coming from the prison might have been affected. Her productivity might have been the only factor that kept her imprisoned. Haley adds, “the South’s economy was built upon the cultural project of racial

differentiation, and Cobb's representation provided the material otherness upon which the iconography of white supremacy and white womanhood rested" (Haley 26). Cobb's otherness was essential in this instance. And furthermore, the otherness of the Black woman in America, at the time, was absolutely essential to at least one economy. The otherness leads to subjugation. The subjugation leads to "racial differentiation". The "racial differentiation" laid the groundwork for white supremacists and white women to profit off of. This "racial differentiation" also led to Black people being "disproportionately arrested, forced to work under heinous conditions, and subjugated" (Haley 26). The addition of the intersection of gender only made matters worse and allowed privileged Americans to blame and subjugate them for their inability to be a white woman. After all, "excessive, disfigured, and incorrigible" bodies and perceptions of Black women cannot compare to feminine, domestic, and beautiful standards that are held by white women (Haley 26).

After the Civil War the intersection of femininity took a turn. Black women were emancipated from subjugation in the most apparent manner: they were released from slavery. Even though they came out of slavery with little to no property or education, Black women were no longer the property of their masters. If Black women were no longer slaves, their value decreased along with the white need to preserve the bodies of Black women. Though America's economy would capitalize off of the physical labor of Black men and women after slavery, the recognition that they would not produce as much of a profit made Black bodies more disposable to the white eye. At the same time, white society produced a sharp demarcation between the value of white and black women Haley comments, "While the Civil War might have produced an opportunity for new definitions of gender and gender roles, the narrative of exceptional white feminine vulnerability became critical to the maintenance of white supremacy through the dissemination of discourses of

virtue and domestic order” (Haley 26). Post Civil War America had a chance to change the intersection and construct the female binary. In order to maintain the system of white privilege after the emancipation of slaves, something different had to be done. Now that Black women received agency, subjugation would have to encompass race, class, and gender. “For Black women, the construction of their bodies as monstrous meant not only that their political and economic power would be limited, but also that they would be subject to disproportionate arrest and imprisonment” (Haley 26). The depiction of grotesque bodies of Black women was necessary in order for white women to be accorded additional privilege and validation based on their Eurocentric standards. The perception of Black women being physically misshapen, quickly evolved into the idea of mental misshapeness. Under this notion, the collective ugly, mentally inadequate, masculine Black woman was placed in poverty or a very low class. This idea made it easy for Americans to believe that Black women were less than human. It made it very easy for Americans to view Black women as “negresses, crazy negresses, leather-skinned negresses, and jet black negresses” (Haley 36). The insanity and deviance made it easy for Americans to believe and demonize Black women for doing things like “carrying out immoral, insane, and atrocious acts, such as luring young white girls into sex work and stealing and brutally whipping ‘blue-eyed’ white babies” (Haley 32). This idea made it easy to justify the subjugation of Black women. Sadly, this perception is not the only one of its kind.

CARICATURES OF BLACK WOMEN

Merriam-Webster describes a caricature as an “exaggeration by means of often ludicrous distortion of parts or characteristics” (Merriam-Webster). The idea of the “ugly”, “misshapen”, “immoral”, “insane”, and “monstrous” Black woman, that Eliza Cobb is framed as, is, in fact a caricature. This is only one of the many caricatures as which Black women have been characterized and recognized.

In “Nigger and Caricature” David Pilgrim explores perceptions that eventually became caricatures. Pilgrim says, “no American group has suffered as many racial epithets as have blacks: coon, tom, savage, picaninny, mammy, buck, sambo, jigaboo, and buckwheat are typical. Many of these slurs became fully developed pseudo-scientific, literary, cinematic, and everyday caricatures of African Americans” (Pilgrim 3). These perceptions, in addition to the perception of “monstrous” Black women, are not the only ones. Some of the caricatures dwell in the intersections of race, class, and gender, while other caricatures are more general, or only encompass one of the intersections. Arguably, the perception and eventual, the caricature of the “nigger” is the most general. This specific perception is first of many that came after it. Before we examine the implications and evolution of this word, we must first examine its origin. Pilgrim states, “the etymology of nigger is often traced to the Latin niger, meaning Black. The Latin niger became the noun negro (Black person) in English, and simply the color Black in Spanish and Portuguese” (Pilgrim 2). Primarily, the word that evolved into the word “nigger” first only commented on the color of dark skin. Then, Pilgrim adds, that the “Early Modern French niger became negre and, later, negress (Black woman) was clearly a part of lexical history” (Pilgrim 2). At this point, and in the Early Modern French, the intersection of gender helped differentiate the subcategories that this very broad term may consist of. While still referring to “Early Modern French”, Pilgrim mentions

that the word “can compare to negre the derogatory nigger” (Pilgrim 2). At this point, the word had evolved from a description to a tool in which to degrade those of darker skin. Specifically, in “the early 1800s it was firmly established as a denigrative epithet” (Pilgrim 2).

This “denigrative epithet” in addition to its transformation to a tool to ostracize those of darker skin, became a word to describe the interior. “Whether used as a noun, verb, or adjective, it reinforced the stereotype of the lazy, stupid, dirty, worthless parasite” (Pilgrim 4). When “nigger” is found next to any word, it decreases in value. For example, the term “nigger rich” is an adjective used to describe someone who is “deeply in debt but ostentatious” (Pilgrim 4). The word “rich,” by itself, has a positive connotation, one that shows off affluence and power. But, when the word “nigger” is placed next to it, the wealth, affluence, and power are diluted. Rather, the positive connotation of the word is invalidated because the person in question is not one that is actually a member of the upper class. A “nigger” cannot be a member of the upper class, simply because they are “lazy”.

Other caricatures emerged for the continued marginalization of Black women, specifically, those of a lower socioeconomic status. One of the most common caricatures of the Black woman is the Mammy. Since the day of her creation, she found her way into popular culture. Her disposition of “wide grin, hearty laughter, and loyal servitude” were offered as evidence of the supposed humanity of the institution of slavery. After her formation, she became known as Aunt Jemima, the woman who has this exact disposition of boxes of pancakes. Mammy was often depicted as a “desexualized” being who “‘belonged’ to the white family” (Pilgrim 2). Her value and agency were given to whichever white family she worked for. Since this character is “desexualized” it made it easier to assume that her sole purpose was work. Her “desexualization” ultimately meant

that Mammy had absolutely no desires of her own, outside of her desire to do the bidding of her white employers. Pilgrim states, “the mammy caricature was deliberately constructed to suggest ugliness” (Pilgrim 4). This ugliness was often illustrated “as a dark-skinned, often pitch Black, in a society that regarded Black skin as ugly, tainted. She was obese, sometimes morbidly overweight. (Pilgrim 4). If Mammy was understood to look a very specific and unappealing way, then it justified the degradation all black women to positions of servitude. Pilgrim adds, “the mammy caricature tells many lies; in this case, the lie is that white men did not find Black women sexually desirable” (Pilgrim 4).” This caricature, according to Pilgrim, also, implies the forced understanding that women that may be perceived as a Mammy “Black women were only fit to be domestic workers” (Pilgrim 4). “Domestic workers” were subjugated “to menial, low paying, low status jobs.” Because of this perception and expectation Mammy’s field of work, there was a direct correlation to the socioeconomic class which she should inhabit. With this caricature, we can see the clear intersections of race, class, and gender. Mammy is subservient, docile, awfully chipper, and palatable enough for white people to feel comfortable. Mammy was “religious”, “politically safe”, and “culturally safe” (Pilgrim 5), she was perceived to be somewhat human, and acceptable enough to be present in the South during and after slavery. If Mammy had a private transcript, it would still cater to the needs of white people. It is evident that she is a caricature because she doesn’t exist without the white family who has her in their employ.

Another caricature, one that is completely antithetical to the Mammy, is the Jezebel. The Jezebel was seen as scandalous, she was “seductive, alluring, worldly, beguiling, tempting, and lewd” (Pilgrim 2). Jezebel was a threat to white women and white womanhood. Jezebels were perceived as women that threatened marriages. White women, like Martha Gault, were chaste,

bright, and pure, even if they went to prison for an egregious offense. The Jezebel was a threat to the alleged essence of white womanhood and threatened the advancement of sexual immorality. Jezebel was “often portrayed as innately promiscuous, even predatory” (Pilgrim 2). The perception of “lewdness” was not a new one. When speaking of African women, specifically in Guinea, William Bosman described them as “fiery”, “warm”, and “so much hotter than the men” (Pilgrim 3). Due to culture and socialization of societies that Bosman could not comprehend or understand, Black women, were seen as hypersexualized beings.. A woman who was perceived as a Jezebel might be caught in an unbelievable circumstance. “A slave who refused the sexual advances of her slaver risked being sold, beaten, raped, and having her ‘husband’ or children sold. Many slave women conceded to sexual relations with whites, thereby reinforcing the belief that Black women were lustful and available” (Pilgrim 5). Though Black women might have been forced to surrender to difficult consent-less circumstances, surrender might have been necessary to keep her family together and save her from additional violence, and possibly death. This perception of Black women, though it existed through slavery, “did not stop their sexual victimization” afterward (Pilgrim 7). Black women often fell prey to the wolfish white man who felt need to exercise his power; even when raped, Black women “had little recourse” afterwards (Pilgrim 5).

After slavery, the Jezebel caricature, was further distorted. She became “physically unattractive, unintelligent, and uncivilized” (Pilgrim 9). Pilgrim notes “her lips are exaggerated, her breasts sag, she is often inebriated”, “she is a sexual being, but not one that white men would consider” (Pilgrim 9). This version of a Jezebel was one that helped alleviate the fears and anxiety of Black women. It portrayed Black women as other than feminine and made them appear to be ugly and foolish. If Jezebel was unintelligent and possessed no power over white men, and she was

not desired by them, then she had absolutely no ability to accumulate wealth or influence. In direct contrast to this ugly, sloppy, “uncivilized” Black woman, the white woman appeared to be even more feminine, bright, domestic, civilized, and desirable. This caricature was the candle used to illuminate the phenomenal white womanhood. The Jezebel doubled as the counterpart of the perception of the ravenous Black man, as well. “The Black male (was portrayed) as brute and potential rapist; the Black woman (was portrayed) as Jezebel whore” (Pilgrim 3). Both threatened white womanhood and the white family. Both were dangerous in society and full of sexual immorality and corruption. This caricature still finds new ways into pop culture, though slavery and Reconstruction met their ends a considerable amount of time ago.

Another caricature of Black women is that of the Angry Black Woman, also known as Sapphire. This caricature classifies Black women as “rude, loud, malicious, stubborn, and overbearing... she is tart-tongued and emasculating, one hand on a hip and the other pointing and jabbing violently and rhythmically rocking her head” (Pilgrim 1). This caricature is the one most commonly found in current popular culture.

Sapphire found her essence in a very specific depiction of “sassy mammies”. These “sassy mammies” were mammies who were not docile and had desires. They “ran their own homes with iron fists, including berating Black husbands and children” (Pilgrim 2). These “sassy mammies” were “allowed to pretend-chastise whites, including men” (Pilgrim 3). This depiction is obviously fictional and would have resulted in Black women being “beaten, jailed, or killed” (Pilgrim 2). Pilgrim comments, “their sassiness was supposed to indicate that they were accepted as members of the white family, and acceptance of that sassiness implied that slavery and segregation were not overly oppressive” (Pilgrim 3). Based on this idea, mammies were now granted the opportunity to

possess desires and opinions. These desires were allowed to be so fully cultivated that they were allowed to disagree with the opinions of the white families for which she worked. If she was allowed to have opinions that disagreed with her white employers and was given the opportunity to express them, then the weight of oppression must be lifted. Of course, in these fictional situations, the “sassy mammy” would only dissent in ways and portions that were still palatable for white Americans. Out of this subcategory of another caricature, the Sapphire caricature was formed.

There were also times, and specific depictions of Black women that consisted of the amalgam of two others. For instance, during the infamous “blaxploitation” film era in the 1970s, Black women were often portrayed as both “hypersexualized” yet angry enough to “fight injustice” (Pilgrim 9). One famous actress who found herself playing this specific amalgam is Pam Grier. In movies like “Coffy” and “Foxy Brown,” she is seen playing this sexually driven, yet angry and fiery Black women who is often prepared to be violent. “Their characters resembled those of the Black male superheroes: they were physically attractive and aggressive rebels, willing and able to use their bodies, brains, and guns to gain revenge against corrupt officials, drug dealers, and violent criminals” (Pilgrim 9). Though their motivation and intentions were usually morally sound, the characters attained these goals by questionable means. The situation usually resolved in the desired way, but at the cost of fulfilling the caricature of being deviant and deplorable.

The Sapphire caricature is one that is profitable, and somewhat palatable, in an area where Black women have gained more agency in America. Sometimes, Black women are portrayed this way for comedic purposes, like Aunt Esther in *Sanford and Son*. But, the reality is not as light-hearted as some of the comedy that stems from the Sapphire.

The purpose of this caricature was to create “a social control mechanism that is employed to punish Black women who violate the societal norms that encourage them to be passive, servile, non-threatening and unseen” (Pilgrim 2). In terms of the most palatable caricature, the Mammy is specifically that. She is present to soothe the anxiety of white Americans. If a Black woman did not cater to and reduce herself down to the hireling of white Americans, she could find herself being punished for simply standing her ground. This mechanism is one that invalidates the feelings, passions, and desires of Black women for simply not adhering to the public transcript that they were given. This idea of Sapphire, also known as the Angry Black Woman caricature is also seen outside of popular culture; it is seen in government, politics, and many other areas of American life. In issues that pertain to women, there is a double standard that Pilgrim addresses:

“‘Where white women are said to be 'independent,' Black women are said to be 'emasculating,' robbing their men of their sense of manhood. Where white women are said to be standing up for themselves, black women are seen as wanting a fight. And so on. The same actions are read differently.’ Being an articulate foe of injustice may be seen as a praise-worthy trait among whites; however, Black women with similar traits may be seen as bitter, selfish complainers” (Pilgrim 14).

This double standard is predicated upon the caricature of the Sapphire. Since Black women are perceived to be innately angry and aggressive, every action or reaction that stems from her must also be angry and aggressive. One example of this was the forty-fourth First Lady Of The United States, Michelle Obama. When speaking at a political rally in Milwaukee, she expressed opinions of pride after a long period of frustration and difficulty with it. Shortly after she used her platform to share the experiences and feelings of many in the nation she was reduced and perceived by

many as a Sapphire. She was recognized to be “angry, obstinate, (and) mouthy” in the eyes of other people (Pilgrim 14). As the First Lady and the first First Lady of color, Obama had experiences and ideas with which the other forty-three Presidents and First Ladies could not identify.. Obama, like many First Ladies who preceded her, simply gave voice to particular circumstances that grieved a portion of the country. But, instead of being called brave or inspirational, she was painted as an angry Black woman. Based on the status of the First Lady, at the time, it is logical to deduce that Sapphires can be of any socioeconomic class.

While the caricatures of Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire are the most widely known, they only a few of the many caricatures of Black women. In Mammy, the intersection of low class, gender, and race met. Though her gender was identifiable, she was stripped of her sexuality and any sexual agency that a fully realized person would possess. In Sapphire, the intersection of class may not be present depending on the specific circumstance, but the intersections of race and gender are definitely present. Sapphire was only reduced down to her emotion and negative disposition. Like Mammy, Jezebel was founded on the intersection of race, low class, and gender. The only differences between Mammy and Jezebel are that Jezebel is hypersexualized and morally corrupt, while Mammy is admirably docile deprived of her sexuality. Though the images and essences of these caricatures were built into items such as “ashtrays, souvenirs, postcards, fishing lures, detergent, artistic prints, toys, candles, and kitchenware” many Black women have found themselves reduced to these very caricatures (Pilgrim 1).

THE BLACK WOMAN: A “SLAVE OF A SLAVE”

Aside from the unrealistic caricaturizations that Black women combat, they must also combat oppression from a misogynistic and racist society. In “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female. Black Women’s Manifesto. Sisterhood is Powerful,” author Frances Beal speaks about the intersection of race, gender, and class. She describes the Black woman as a “slave of a slave” (Beal 21-22). Beal believed that “by reducing the Black man in America to such abject oppression, the Black woman had no protector and was used, and is still being used in some cases, as the scapegoat for the evils that this horrendous system has perpetrated on black men” (Beal 3). Being relegated to caricatures is only one way black women are blamed for the outcome of the black man’s American experience.

By expressing the idea of Black women being “slaves of slaves”, Beal expresses that women are subjugated by Black men, white men, and white women alike. Black women, by means of this idea, are subjugated by the subjugated. In a racist and patriarchal society, Black men rank higher than Black women when assessing power dynamic. In order to be feminine, women were socialized to believe that “staying at home”, “caring for children and the house”, and “lead her entire life as a satellite to her mate” was the largest aspiration in life (Beal 2). When, in reality, this “sterile existence”, hindered those who were considered feminine (Beal 2). As quoted by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, “If a woman had a problem in the 1950s and 1960s, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself” (Friedman 19). Based on the ability to adhere to sociological fantasy, one was considered feminine. Inability to construct this fantasy, and successfully turn it into reality must be the woman’s fault. If those of lower incomes, required more than one source and required the woman of the house to work, she was viewed as

less than feminine and lower class. If a Black woman is less than feminine and lower class, she is just her race, which is perceived to be less than human.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir compares the experience of Anglo-Saxon women to the overall African American experience. She speaks, first of Anglo-Saxon women, by explaining that “they have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and unlike the proletariat, they have no solidarity of labor or interests; they even lack their own space that makes communities of American Blacks, the Jews in ghettos” (Beauvoir 28). Beauvoir makes the subjugation and communal oppression based on race sound like a fantasy when describing the confinement of Anglo-Saxon women. “As bourgeois women, they are in solidarity with bourgeois men and not with women proletarians; as white women, they are in solidarity with white men and not with Black women” (Beauvoir 28). She states the whereabouts of white feminine allegiance. The syntax of this statement suggests that their allegiance should lie with other groups of oppressed people. Then, she compares the experiences and oppression of “women and Black”. This differentiation specifies that race and gender are two mutually exclusive categories. The syntax in those three words makes it appear as if it was impossible to be both Black and a woman (Beauvoir 33). She says,

“There are deep analogies between the situations of women and Blacks: both are liberated today from the same paternalism, and the former master caste wants to keep them ‘in their place,’ that is, the place chosen for them; in both cases, they praise, more or less sincerely, the virtues of the ‘good Black,’ the carefree, childlike, merry soul of the resigned Black, and the woman who is a ‘true woman’—frivolous, infantile, irresponsible, the woman subjugated to man” (Beauvoir 33).

Beauvoir, in an attempt to connect two detached groups, fails to understand that being a minority woman requires twice the strength and resilience. Beauvoir fails to understand that a minority woman has to combat two modes of oppression that are at work. Beauvoir also attempts to understand the oppressions that come with being an African-American woman; additionally, she compares them to her alleged comprehension of the oppressions of misogyny. The simple misrepresentation and voicelessness of these minority women in *The Second Sex* show the exclusivity of the era in which this work was written. Rather than allowing other women who have experienced things such as the Jim Crow Era speak, Beauvoir speaks for these women and states their alleged opinion. Beauvoir's work, however, required revision because she was French and was sharing her opinion of oppressive systems in a country in which she did not abide. But, her ideas made way for more progressive ideas. Her inability to speak for more marginalized groups of women created the need for other voices. Voices that do not sound or speak like hers.

In isolating the other two intersections of class and race, Dr. Noam Shpancer writes about competition between women whose primary goal is to find a "suitable male" (Shpancer). He quotes the idea of a fellow psychologist, David Buss, who explained that "intra-sexual competition takes two primary forms: self-promotion and competitor derogation" (Shpancer). After a woman attains this goal, Shpancer says that she is rewarded with the "evolutionary prize", or someone with whom to procreate. A woman may compete for many different reasons, even if it is not for the purpose of procreation. The threat of another woman attracting as many "suitable mates" as possible, can be threatening to other women, even if it isn't causing harm to anyone. This competition also transcends class and status and isolates and separates woman from woman. He adds, "in extreme cases women may guard against potential competitors by means of social

exclusion” (Shpancer). These extreme cases include the subjugation of different types of women. In an attempt to find a “suitable mate” who is also the most privileged in a racist and patriarchal society, white women aided in the persecution of women of color. Rather than siding with women who were oppressed more than they were, they sided with their privileged counterparts. The need to persecute other women, in terms of advancing their means to compete by leaps and bounds, contributed to the formation of the malicious caricaturization and perceptions of black women. As Shpancer puts it, “female competition has a price, and not only on the political level” (Shpancer). The price of which is advanced marginalization of groups of other women, “stress that interferes with the happiness of many women”, and wavering self-worth (Shpancer). Such significance placed on the “male gaze” of white men in America has done astonishing amounts of damage. It has subjugated every other group of people that did not fully adhere to the rules and public transcripts that they have created in this country. This “gaze” was handed to all other women that were considered outsiders to white, male America.

RESEARCH IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Junior year, my partner, Aaron Cooper and I were introduced to the idea of hidden transcripts. We were introduced to this idea by means of Kelley’s “We Are Not What We Seem”, that spoke about hidden transcripts in the Harlem Renaissance. My understanding was that hidden transcripts consisted of ideas and concepts that transcended a specific period of time. In reading the book by Scott, I discovered that this was accurate. I also discovered the clear distinctions of public and hidden transcripts. From this point, my cast and I took the time to conceptualize a few of the ways that we resist. These ways, unlike the ideas and mentions of Kelley, were specific to our time, and slightly more relevant.

I decided to devise, and furthermore, write large portions of the thesis, simply because of the time constraint. Devising can be defined as an artistic theatrical process where someone can find text or create their own, and then expound off of the ideas found. It is important to be in the space, on your feet, and open to expanding ideas and impulses received. Devising is a process where the ensemble creates the script as they continue in the process, rather than working on a script that was previously written. We chose to do this because we had a few ideas about what we wanted the piece to say before we entered the process, but weren't definitively sure. We had the shortest month of the year to create a performance, and we didn't want to take up too much time discussing and doing research. In addition to the time constraint, most of the text that we found wasn't as specific as we would have liked it to be. A lot of text touched our topic but didn't really examine it with the depth and poignancy that we were searching for. In twenty minutes, we had to find or write poignant text, stage it, and make sure that there was a through line for every component of the piece. Devising the "what" of our piece, staging it, and then writing a script that articulates what we were trying to say was the overall process in chronological order. Devising was necessary because that wouldn't have necessarily happened in the organic, and specific way that it did. Discovering the "what" took time, and a lot of reworking if the primary idea didn't work. Devising provided us the freedom to take those chances and really play with all of the options and tools offered to us.

One of the ways in which we communally resisted was with our academic experiences. Going to a predominately white, private university could be considered a hidden transcript in the minds of others. When discussing this idea, we recalled the old adage of being "twice as good to get half of what they get". Since we all identify as black, we thought that this adage is one worth

researching, because it is common and widely known in the African American community. From there, I searched for scholarly sources that reinforced our experiences. In the research that I used at the beginning of my paper, it begins with dealing and mentioning the difficulty and expectation of Black youths in academia. Since we felt so strongly about this particular topic and were performing it here, we decided to make it a section of our thesis performance. The process of creating this piece was a brief one, so we had to find common ground that we all were familiar with and could build upon. Since we all found ourselves at LIU Post, the topic of Black academics in a predominately white school, is not a topic that we needed to explain to any other member of the cast. We all understood it because we were currently experiencing it. Before this piece was created, Aaron brought in an interview that he did with his Aunt, who happens to be a librarian. This was so important in our examination of Black academia, especially in a predominately white private school, because it was once illegal for African Americans to be educated. When looking at the lives and education of our ancestors, we had to recognize and acknowledge that having the most basic education and the ability to read was a hidden transcript. By using the knowledge that Aaron's aunt provided, and using the research about hidden transcripts, we were able to build a piece about our common experience. Since our ancestors were barred from the most basic education, we have been fueled to be "twice as good", by the generational oppression of Black scholars. This idea, in my mind's eye, presented itself as a library. The first version of this idea consisted of very clean aisles filled with books where each actor navigates through their own world. When working through this idea, something didn't feel right. All of the actors in the space wanted to connect with each other because we were all in the throws of white academia in real life. So, we decided to connect with one another while organizing the chaos of having to be "twice as

good”. This idea took too much time, and was very disorganized. It also took away from the text. So, we decided to place the burden of Black success in educational settings on one actor, until she became absolutely overwhelmed and needed our help. We unanimously landed on this idea because the expectation of black excellence in the classroom, in our opinion, was standard. And in our everyday lives, it seemed as if all the black peers we encountered faced no difficulty maintaining this academic standard. So, the idea of needed help and encouragement from black peers was one that we could all identify with. At the end of that specific piece, we all related to the black peer who became overwhelmed and needed help. Encompassing the communal success and need for black peers in white academia was so important to us, because it was what helped us through our college experience.

Like the idea of hidden transcripts, Aaron and I were also introduced to the stories of Eliza Cobb and Martha Gault. Eliza Cobb, though deformed and misshapen, the other young woman in the cast and I identified more with her than we did Martha Gault. In comparing and contrasting the differences, and the femininity of both women, we considered using white paint or white masks to distinguish between the two women. Based on the amount of time allocated to building our piece, we had to cut the idea of creating something that examined the similarities and differences of Black women. Eliza Cobb was a woman that intrigued us so because she was described as being “real” but also “an invention.” This reminded us of the many other caricatures of Black women. This is where I decided to do research about the caricatures and perceptions of Black women. By means of physicalizing the adjectives used to describe these different types of women, we found a physical score that filled the silence in the Black women piece of the thesis. The idea of comparing and contrasting the women stuck, even though we did not intend to distinguish between white and

Black women. Instead, we decided to show the differences and similarities of Black women. The one-dimensionality of the caricatures I found, was something that we wanted to comment on, and disagree with. The architecture utilized in this section of the piece was supposed to be one dimensional and confining, just like the caricatures. It was also considered to be the “male gaze” and the competitive society that we were born into.

This piece found its resolution with both women, who were different, but also very similar, refuting the area of confinement in which we found ourselves. By refuting these ideas, and the competition in which we found ourselves, we found unity and beauty in the identification of ourselves in each other. I wrote the text in a way that clearly stated the multi-dimensionality of Black women. It resolved with a piece that I wrote about Sapphires, the specific perception of Black women that is also known as the “angry Black woman”. In need of text or a through line, I did extra research to discover the elements that the actual Sapphire element possessed. The recurring theme, in all of the elements that Sapphire was composed of, was that of immutable strength. To the naked eye, Sapphire gems are just beautiful, but when dropped or placed in a tight situation, they can also scratch almost any surface they come alongside.

The largest challenge I faced with the Sapphire piece was the writing. I was unsure why it was such a challenge until I discovered that I was unsure about what I was trying to say. So, when I hit a dead end, I brought in research about the many caricatures of black women. After reading, and further researching with the other black woman cast, I decided to take the time and physicalize them; this step helped me figure out options for staging the piece. We all had the same physical training to draw from. Over the years, this training has helped our bodies become more expressive. In areas where many would sit around and hypothesize, the training helped us get on our feet and

try a couple of different things. For instance, when creating the black woman bit, one of the actors and I hit a wall. We had copious amounts of research but we weren't sure of what to do with it. Then, we decided to put our training to use and physicalize all of the information that we had just received. The process of physicalization, in this particular instance showed me all of the many ways that one caricature could be physicalized and personified. In one iteration of the script for this specific piece of the performance, the black women fought with each other and then found solace in one another. In the second iteration, one black woman took the time to speak to and get in touch with the reflection of herself. In the third iteration, a black woman struggles with her mental health and finds comfort in healing in her fellow black woman. In the last version of the black women piece, we cut the competition and the mental health and decided to emphasize the commonality between black woman rather than finding the dividers that help separate them. I would love to examine all of the components that were cut, but in this process there wasn't enough time for it. It took about four different versions of the piece and plenty of time on our feet to definitively land on something effective.

Another piece of outside information that inspired me was a speech made by Mario Savio in 1964 during the Berkeley Free Speech Movement . It is not mentioned in this paper. The most influential piece of his speech was:

“And that -- that brings me to the second mode of civil disobedience. There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart that you can't take part! You can't even passively take part! And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus -- and you've got to make it stop! And you've got to indicate to the people

who run it, to the people who own it -- that unless you're free the machine will be prevented from working at all!! (Savio)”

Though this student was speaking about corruption at his university many years ago, this part rang particularly true to me. It was relevant because taking the resistance and disobedience out into the public area, an area where these things don't normally exist is exactly what “Twice As Good” did. The imagery in this segment of Savio's speech gave me the idea to start the piece with a clear physical distinction or boundary that separated where we were and where we were not. Obviously, it is left up to the interpretation of the audience; but, in my mind, the distinction and clarity provided by the cast's physical location at the top of the show was the where their their comfort zone. This idea resolved at the end when the actors unanimously choose to step out of it. I also had the idea to physicalize and open the show with the “machine”. Though Savio is speaking about a different machine, the one being examined in our piece is the machine of the public transcript that has been handed to us by the racist and patriarchal socioeconomic climate that we were born into. Eventually, this idea became the counterclockwise revolution on the edge of the gradually expanding light at the beginning of the piece. This was a difficult piece of material to implement. Since it was the opening, and then the foundation that the closing was built atop, this moment of the performance was paramount. If it was too mechanical, it could have been interpreted, in the larger scale of the piece, as the introduction to the large, and imperfect system of black society in America. My primary idea was to distinguish between the known and the unknown, as previously stated, without utilizing the text. Based on the demographics of the audience, recognition of this text could lead to the memory of the War in Vietnam. This is why I decided not to use it. There wasn't enough time to repurpose and recontextualize the text from Mario Savio's speech. So, I

decided that the cast come up with judgments that have been placed on us by society. These judgments, paired with the physical action, in the light of our comfort zone, represented us abiding properly in the society that we were placed in from birth. As we abide by the societal expectations, the realm on the known would expand, to overwhelming proportion. This resulted in the simple resolution of us stepping outside of the societal expectations placed on us, and stepping outside of our comfort zones, and redefining blackness for ourselves. The primary difficulty that I faced when building the beginning of this piece was the image, and verbiage that I wanted to use in order to introduce all the following pieces. If it wasn't personal, it would have felt very unspecific and out of place based on the story we were trying to tell. Based on what the staging and premise of the opening was, it was important to synthesize text that would help inform the audience of what the staging was saying.

I also researched the Tignon Laws that took place on the French side of early America. The law is valuable to and found its way into my piece because it led to the requirement of Black women to cover their heads when undergoing the compression of public transcripts. This research found its way into *Twice As Good* when the text directly mentioned it. It also surfaced with the gradual unwrapping of a headwrap on stage, during the same section. The piece started with a specific actor's head tied in a headwrap. Its intended purpose was to show the public transcript, and then come off while two actors were on stage speaking about the difficulty and oppression that comes with Black hair. The piece of fabric went from being a headwrap to being a tool used to tie a specific actor's hand, and then using it to cover both the actors who were speaking about Black hair. The evolution of being unsure and abiding by the public transcript, to fully embracing Black hair and refuting the public transcript was the most important part of the piece.

Conceiving a way to actually convert the information about the oppression of natural hair into a performative state was fairly easy. My first idea was that of a hair salon since the subject matter was that of my hair. The cast and I experimented with the idea of the two persons involved styling each other's hair. This idea took away from text and the actor utilizing the text to express their idea. So, instead of that, my next instinct was to split the room and focus the attention on the actor speaking the text. My text spoke about the matriarch of my family not approving of my hair, so I also found the need for the other woman to join me on my side of the space. This was also beneficial because of the transition and architecture that needed to be moved between pieces. The other actor in the space utilized the information and research about the Tignon Law, and took their time in the space to cycle through the use, and undoing of a headwrap. They used the arc of the text and the actual fabric to untie themselves from societal constructs and views about natural hair and then utilized the fabric as a means of empowerment.

Aside from the caricatures of Black women, there was also the umbrella of the "nigger" caricature. It was very general but possessed a negative connotation. It also decreased the humanity of anything attached or adjacent to it. It was general, so I asked the cast what they thought the specific terms of this caricature are. From there, I got the idea to ask the cast to write about what they thought it meant to be properly Black. After collecting and reading each person's submission, I asked them to write on how they chose to adhere to or refute the ideas stated in the two previous submissions. Because of these entries, a lot of *Twice As Good* is the gradual journey of discovering the public transcript, as well as the expectation that was placed on each actor, and their decision to abide by or refute these ideas.

Since my paper spoke mostly on intersectionality and the experiences of Black women, there are parts of the performance that stepped outside of this realm. It also examined queer violence and discovery. It also dealt with the gradual transition from microaggressions to macroaggressions.

CONCLUSION

The patriarchal society in which we currently find ourselves is one that still adheres to the public transcript that was prescribed by the white, male “gaze”. In attempts to find value, the white male gaze encompassed their counterpart: the white woman. The gaze of the white woman only scrutinized on what white men saw. But, in attempts to maintain power, white women subjugated and ostracized all other women for being outsiders in a society in which they held copious amounts of power in. Outside of the gaze of the privileged, groups that were considered outsiders formed hidden transcripts. These hidden transcripts act as forms of resistance, and solace, in a society that ostracizes them. In the African American community, the gaze has been sharpened to subjugate the women in their societies. Images and caricatures of Black women that have existed in the white gaze have been inherited by the Black male gaze and used to further scrutinize and deduce women into one-dimensional people who lack aspects of their humanity. This matter lies at the crossroad of race, gender, and class. This is why many still believe the following statement by Malcolm X to be true: “the most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman.”

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