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IB English 11

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Written Task 2 Outline

*Predescribed Question:* If the text had been written in a different time or place or language or for a different time, how and why might it differ?

*Title of the text for analysis*: Beyoncé- Formation

*Part of the course to which the task refers:* Part 2- Language in Race and Privilege

*My Critical Response Will:*

* Highlight the importance of the video’s setting being in the New Orleans, a southern town that is predominantly black,
* Show the importance of the video taking place during the Black Lives Matter movement and Beyoncé’s support for it,
* Explain the music video’s response to the government 10 years after the abandonment of poor people of color after Hurricane Katrina,
* Point out the video’s confrontation of police brutality that people of color face and how it reflects real life.

Word Count (137)

Now Let’s Get In-Formation (About Black Culture)

Beyoncé chose New Orleans as the setting for her “Formation” music video because it is essentially the epitome of black culture and community, coming together after the effects of Hurricane Katrina. The main purpose of the video is to show Beyoncé's pride of her creole heritage, something very prominent in New Orleans, showcasing elements of cultural voodoo and “soul” food. The video is also meant to reference police brutality towards people of color and Beyoncé’s support of the Black Lives Matter movement, making New Orleans the ideal setting. If the “Formation” music video took place before Hurricane Katrina in a city other than New Orleans, it would lose its political messages surrounding people of color and credibility of references to black culture.

By the video taking place in New Orleans, it allows for references of the effects of Hurricane Katrina and black unity to come naturally. The video starts with a voice asking, “What happened at the New Orleans?” and then flashes to scenes of flooded streets and water damaged buildings. Attention is called to the fact that effects of Katrina are still making daily life in New Orleans deadly 10 years after it occured. In addition, it suggests that America did not care enough to help the poor areas destroyed by the hurricane, mostly with people of color, right after it occured. It exposes how currently, the government has avoided giving financial aid to fix damages even though they are clearly present. The video calls to mind the dark period of the nation where people of color were suffering in the south and the government regarded them as the least of their worries. Beyoncé also references her creole culture and reveals that New Orleans is the root of it, which can be seen through scenes of black churches worshipping mass, marching bands walking throughout the streets, and a voice singing, “I like cornbread and collard greens, bitch.” As the video progresses, more specific references about New Orleans are added, including voodoo magic and the tradition of wearing all black clothing, which is still practiced in creole culture. These scenes show how Beyoncé is unapologetic about her identity and proud of her race, encouraging other people of color to do the same. New Orleans is the only credible option for the video’s references to be effective, not only because it went through Hurricane Katrina, but because it has elements of black culture embedded inside the history of the city.

The timing of the video, which was released in the midst of black history month at the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, amongst the police brutality attacks on people of color, has allowed for it to make a strong political stance..In perhaps the most dramatic scene, Beyoncé is on the roof of a police car that is seen slowly sinking into one of the areas flooded by Katrina. She is in the position that Jesus was on the crucifix, symbolizing the innocent people of color who have died at the hands of police and the effects Hurricane Katrina. In the scenes where Beyoncé is dancing, she is always accompanied by other women of color, setting an example how they need to stick together since no one else, not even the government, is keeping them in their best interest. Going along with this theme, a young black boy in a black hoodie is seen dancing in front of a line of armed white swat officers, on alert as if there was a riot in front of them. It is important to notice how the swat officers are armed, riot shields and all, showing that people of color are always seen as a threat to police, even if they are only dancing. The black hoodie is crucial due to how it references Trayvon Martin, a teenage person of color that was shot by a white man because he looked suspicious in his hoodie. When this scene finishes, the video flashes to a wall with “Stop Shooting Us” spray painted on it, reminiscent to the Black Lives Matter movement, calling attention to the shootings of innocent people of color, most recently being Mike Brown at the time the video was released. If the video was set in the past when these events did not yet take place, these powerful references would devolve into black people ramping the streets insinuating violence, which is the opposite of its intention. The lyrics of the song do not reference police brutality, only the video, which enhances the meaning of the song. If the time setting were to be switched, then the video would lose its dramatic effect.

The “Formation” music video specifically references the unity that the black community formed after the abandonment after Hurricane Katrina, which would not have the same effect if setting took place anywhere else. It also references how that same unity has evolved throughout all the recent police brutality attacks on people of color and how it has turned into the Black Lives Matter movement. The time in which this video takes place cannot be altered because of the references that it makes to modern day police brutality, which caused the Black Lives Matter movement to be heightened and thus, inspired this music video in itself.

Word Count (876)

Works Cited

beyonceVEVO. *YouTube*, YouTube, 9 Dec. 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDZJPJV\_\_bQ.