

The Black Star



Journal



The Inaugural Issue

Issue #01

February 22, 2022

From Us To You

The idea for The Black Star Journal was born in the fall of 2021 - conceived out of the need to preserve and create Black history at Brown University - a university that, like other colonial institutions, began its history with violence. Specifically, the violence of silencing and diminishing Blackness through physical enslavement and bondage. Black people were forced to be silent: physically, mentally, spiritually. But those who came before us refused. This refusal to be silent is to be Black and alive against the odds.

This newspaper is a product of that refusal.

We believe that refusal has the power to turn into possibility. We want the Black Star Journal to be an extension of the Black diaspora, and showcase the numerous aspects of Blackness that make our community who we are. Often, people forget that Blackness is not just something that comes with suffering. To be Black is to feel joy that was once crafted out of a life intended to be painful; to light your own way with joy; a joy that came from refusing violence. We felt that when other publications were tasked with representing Blackness on campus, they did not understand this. When we saw ourselves reflected in publications, we only saw tragedy. But along with the painful elements that still exist because of this nation's violent conception, we wanted to tell the world about joy.

We wanted to tell the world about the happiness that comes from being outside of the Harambee House when the fraternities and sororities start strolling and you can smell food roasting.

We wanted to tell the world when one of our own accomplished something. We wanted to showcase celebration.

We wanted to tell the world about Black dance, Black music, Black writing, and Black art.

We wanted to honor those involved with Black storytelling at Brown.

We wanted to speak in African American Vernacular English and not have it edited as a spelling mistake.

We wanted to tell students and the professors and the people that there is a vibrant Black community just minutes from this campus filled with those who, like us, have their own stories to tell.

We wanted to use our positionality as Brown students to highlight that community.

Months later after the initial idea, these "wants" are happening within this inaugural publication. This is what the BSJ will provide. The newspaper will exist to give Black students a place to share, and our aligned community members a listening source. We owe this to the refusal to stay silent performed by the Black people at this university that came before us.

From us to you, this newspaper should be transformative and healing. Be open to learning from it.

From us to you, this newspaper should be a light that shines on Black people. We have so much of it to share.

From us to you, enjoy learning about our history, beauty, triumph, pain, and joy through the power of words, art, and visuals. This is the beauty of refusal. This is the joy of possibility.

From Us to You,

Welcome to The Black Star Journal.

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Forward: What Black History Means To Me

Words by Abani Neferkara

For me, Black history is about honoring all our ancestors from previous generations, as well as the hard work they have done to give us the opportunities we have today. Whether that's talking about historical figures who have changed the lives of Black people everywhere, or remembering relatives from our own personal families. I think of all the previous generations in my own family, and how they've played such an important role in creating the opportunities and experiences I've attained up to this point in my life. With this poem, I wanted to reflect on how I follow in the tradition of my family members before me, working towards creating a better future for those who follow me. I think the garden is a great metaphor for this idea, as it is a space that takes a lot of time and effort to maintain, yet through that care can bear all sorts of fruit. In this poem, I want to pay homage to all the members of my family who have made my life possible. Both those who I know now, and those who I will never know.

Legacy

The river's churning stream
Brings life
Into the garden

It is the garden
of your mother's mother
And hers before her
And hers before her
And further back than you
remember

There, ancestors who you
will never know
faces lost in the mist of
memory
Channel tumultuous waters
Into still ponds
Watering the first seeds

Their paths are etched
Into the soil of the garden
Lessons learned
Battles fought and won
Cultivate burgeoning crops

Now
Your hand moves as theirs
once did
Following spoken teachings
Kept alive by your mother's
tongue
Guided by wisdom
You will one day call your
own
You

And each before you
And those before them
Have worked in this gar-
den
And it IS work
Plucked masses of angry
weeds
In the waves of summer
heat
Waded through the mud
In the wailing downpour
of winter storms

Until the sky breaks
Sunlight shines on your
hard work
Dew glistens on the new
growth
With time
Buds flower and turn to
fruit
Freshly plucked from the
branch
You finally enjoy the prod-
uct of your labor
Under pearl white clouds
dotting clear sky

But you never forget that
fruit
Is the product of the labor
of
All
Who came before
You
You sit among the flower
beds

Hoping that in the garden
of
Those who will come
after you
The soil will be a little
richer
The planters, a little
deeper
The fruit, a little sweeter

And that when they taste
it
They taste the work of all
those
Who have come before
them
Just like you have

From that fruit
Planting the seeds
For all those who follow
Us

The Black Star Journal

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Black Visuality in the Arts: *Agency in the Unseen*

Portraiture have been foundational in making a person visible and recognizable. In creating portraits, Black artists are able to make their experiences legible, to enforce into the viewer's imagination aspects of who they are, who they want to be, and what they desire. However, this Black legibility in artwork is vigorously policed and bounded by expectations and white consumability. Black artists are pressured to create not for themselves but for the world. Their artworks are often misconstrued, categorized, surveilled, and forcibly labeled to cater and pander to wider, often white, audiences. Under capitalism, Black artists are constantly contending with the fact that what they produce becomes commodified, further hindering creative self explorations and imaginations. So, what does it mean for Black artists to deviate from white expectations of consumability? To redefine and reclaim their art by resisting the traditional practice of legibility, portraiture, looking and knowing? It were these questions that came to mind when I went to see Defying the Shadow last semester.

Defying the Shadow was an art exhibit displayed at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (RISD Museum) exploring the interiority and non-legibility of Blackness and Black life through anti-portraiture and visages. The exhibit featured photography, etchings, screenprint, lithograph and paper collages, incorporating the works of well known artists including Kara Walker, Gordon Parks, Lorna Simpson, and Roy DeCarava. Many pieces displayed in Defying the Shadow spoke to me in its refusal to be perceived and consumed. The exhibit's lack of labels represented the rejection of categorization and white access, formulating a Black visuality that resisted the white gaze and encouraged a deeper engagement in Blackness itself. One piece that does this effectively was captured by Black American artist Roy DeCarava. DeCarava was a critically acclaimed Black photographer known for developing Black and white fine-art photography. This type of photography uses Black and white imaging of a person, place, or object to enunciate emotional expressions, interiority, and creative sensibilities. Using this technique, DeCarava captured the lives of African American jazz musicians, local res-

idents of Harlem, and the environment that reflected racial and social inequality during the mid 20th century.

What drew me to DeCarava's piece - titled Untitled - was how he utilized this technique to create a Black gaze. Tina Campt, the current Owen F. Walker Professor of Humanities and Modern Culture and Media at Brown University, explored this gaze in her book entitled *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See*. In *A Black Gaze*, Campt articulated that in reconceptualizing and transforming a white, colonial lens to a more nuanced, complicated lens of Black interiority and depth, Black artists produces a "Black gaze" that shifts "the optics of 'looking at' to a politics of looking with, through, and alongside another." A Black gaze disrupts normative, compulsive notions of looking, giving care and meaning to bodies that have been historically dehumanized. It is this disruptive gaze that I would like to explore in Untitled.

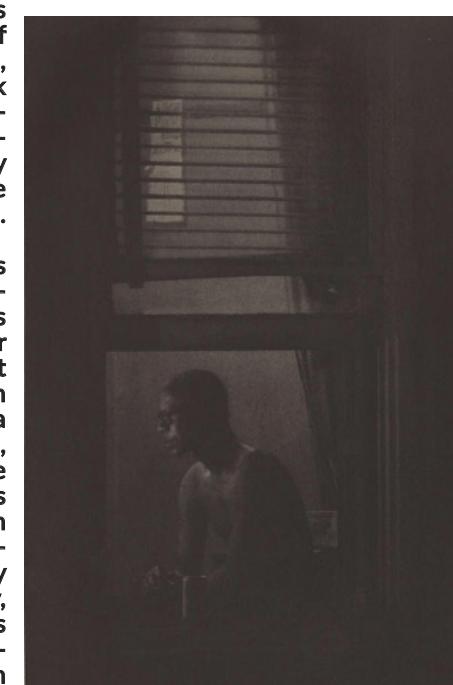
Untitled portrays a shirtless Black man with glasses sitting down looking to the left side of the frame. He is sitting in a space that may be a living or family room and his shoulders are bent over, as he leans in a curved position from his chair. Behind him resembles a windowpane, and within it, a reflection, perhaps of what is on the opposite side of the room. His facial expression reveals conflicting, deep emotions that one can not translate into words. He remains inaccessible, hidden, refusing to be fully seen. Shadows linger across his body, troubling the viewer's perception. It is this refusal to be made legible in which symbolizes the unknown man's agency from the onlooker. This agency, cultivated in inconspicuousness, produces a Black gaze.

Interestingly, DeCarava's work in Untitled made his subject, a Black man, unreadable for his viewers. What does this do for the viewers who can not make sense of the piece? How are we supposed to feel after engaging with a photograph that refuses to follow the conventionalities of perceiving? In viewing this piece, I

Words by Nicholas Amuh

stopped for a moment and questioned why I was working so hard to understand Untitled. What about it made me want to ask what's this piece trying to say? What agency is created when Blackness becomes non-legible to the viewer? In what ways does Blackness become readable and unreadable simultaneously? I traversed these questions in my mind, coming to the notion that Blackness constitutes the seen and unseen, the visible and invisible, the said and unsaid. These dichotomies persistently divest and defy stereotypical perceptions of Blackness, rather, transcending the viewer to a visuality undergirded in Black gaze. Defying the Shadow expanded the ways of exploring Black visuality and interiority through a Black gaze, beautifully portrayed by Roy DeCarava's piece Untitled. Black artists have creatively engaged in new means of expressing themselves and their bodies that contest oppressive notions

of perceiving and capitalistic expectations of consumption. Experiencing this exhibit last semester enriched my knowledge of Black visuality and agency through the unseen and non-legible. I find inspiration and power in not 'looking at' Black bodies as objects but 'looking with and through' these bodies as beautiful, complex, beings of life.



Bisa Identity Bulter: Through Exploring Quilt Black Portraiture

I saw myself mirrored in fabric and what a marvelous moment it was. Last spring at the Art Institute of Chicago, I had the opportunity to visit quilt artist Bisa Butler's exhibition on Black portraiture. While wandering the halls of Bisa Butler's Portraits, I found a new appreciation for textile art. Enamored by the everflowing tides of color behind each corner, I slowly made my way through every quilt on display. Each subject of Butler's quilt portraiture commanded my attention; as I met every black individual's gaze, I was consumed by waves of emotion. Embodied feelings of joy, grief, pride, and love guided me through Butler's exploration of black identity and its history through portraiture. Through her navigation of the dynamics of texture, vibrancy, posture, and music, Butler challenged my conception of the possibilities of black portraiture. Her work has an element of fluidity and depth that, to me, created a resonating symphony of blackness. Butler's inclusion of an interactive playlist for the exhibition echoed this sentiment. Through engaging with her work, I found myself asking critical questions on the representations of black identity: What is the significance of Black portraiture? How do we revisit black portraiture to illuminate the vibrancy and richness of black life?

Butler's use of black portrait photography as an artistic base, cultivates a noticeable familiarity in her artwork. One of these pieces that continues to flit through my mind is titled South Side Sunday. This is Butler's rendition of photographer Russell Lee's Negro boys on Easter morning. Southside, Chicago, Illinois. Recognizing the photographic roots of her rendition reaffirmed for me the beauty in the atemporality of black art. The photo was originally taken in 1941, but this timeless image has been given a new space and meaning today due to Butler. The five boys depicted in the original black and white film photo are adorned in suits, some with matching hats, and are posing on the hood of a car. They look squarely at the camera, assertive and enduring. In her quilt, she removed the original

Chicago cityscape background and filled it in with orange and blue chevron fabric. No longer limited to hues of gray, the boys bloom on the tapestry in swirls of blue, pink, yellow, red, and green. These colors bring new meaning to their posture and expressions. Butler's rendition, infused with color, thus becomes a piece bigger than its inspiration—these boys become both larger than life. Seeing the exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago reconfirmed the fact that these boys are tethered to Chicago and its history; Butler's art actively refuses for them to be forgotten or misplaced by history. Moreover, in this rendition, they are reassured as resonant representations of black boyhood. Through her immortalization of familiar feelings of black pride and beauty in this quilt and others, Butler sews the past to the present.

Bisa Butler's portraits embark on a journey to stitch together the intergenerational ties of Black identity. In a promotional video released by the Art Institute of Chicago, Butler remarked that "when people look at my works, they tell me that they feel the spirit of that person. And I'm hoping that when they look at that image, they realize that the people they pass every day are just the same as these images from the past." Similar to her methods of layering vivid fabric to simulate the vibrancy of blackness, Butler layers the historical contexts of her subject with the contemporary context of her viewership. Despite recognizing those five boys in Southside Sunday from their infamous photo, I found myself seeing people I knew in them. On the hood of that car, I could see my younger self in my Sunday best leaning there beside my younger cousin, dressed dapper just like those boys. While retaining their individuality and historicity, the boys of Southside Sunday echoed familiar feelings of black boyhood and childhood I could recognize and relate to. Through her use of dynamic visual textures, she allows her subjects to exist in their fullness and multiplicity beyond the confines of the photo frame. Furthermore, her commitment to making the subjects of her quilts life-size reanimates them—they become timeless. This stylistic choice allows them to serve

Words by Caitlin Anasi

as a glimpse into their past as well as into our present as viewers. Butler emphasizes this intention stating that "when black people see my work, I'm hoping that they see reflections of themselves, like a mirror, but the self that you want to be, and the self that you really are." Experiencing her exhibit that day, I felt this sentiment. Her dedication to convey the complexities of black pride, love, joy, defiance, and determination through a kaleidoscopic palette refuses to let viewers flatten the subjects of her portraiture. The vibrant and prideful world of blackness she centers her work around pushes her black audiences to re-imagine themselves.

Portraiture is everywhere. Even places you'd never suspect. Walking down Thayer Street you may spot the famous portrait Girl With A Pearl Earring plastered on someone's T-Shirt. Passing by dorm common rooms you could see a self-portrait made from Expo markers. Whether we're aware of it or not, we are constantly interacting with forms of portraiture. In our efforts to make representative configurations of ourselves through outfits, playlists, and much more, we're engaging in portraiture. Think of it as an ongoing effort to understand ourselves, others, the world around us. I believe that my portrait lies in books—if you squint, the stacks in my room morph into a personal mosaic. My question to you is: how do you see yourself and how do you see others? What's your portrait? Bisa Butler isn't the only black artist pushing audiences to think critically about portraiture as well as how it relates to black identity and experience, but, in her quilts' stark contrast from traditional forms of portraiture, she's pushing people to look differently. So, look. You might just start to see yourself and the world around you in a completely new way.

Blackness in Classical Music

Words by Samantha Buyungo

"That Bach and Beethoven stuff? I don't know... I just don't really see the need to listen to it. Isn't that kind of music for white folks?"

This response is among one of the more common ones when asking black students on campus if they (unironically) listen to classical music. It seems as though black composers and musicians are absent in the world of classical music. And they would be right. I remember going to my first ever piano recital after I had only been playing for a few months and realizing, with dismay, that no one in the audience looked like me.

Similarly, I watched each and every performer, hoping that there might be one with skin of a darker hue—perhaps someone who could validate that being black and being a musician didn't have to be mutually exclusive. Engaging in classical music not only as an audience member, but as a piano performer felt like I had been granted access to some secret, off-limits world where black musicians seemed to be rarer than four-leaf clovers. Where I was taught by white folk on how to interpret musical pieces composed by white folk to perform for mostly white audiences. Even as I continued learning piano, dutifully repeating the finger exercises crafted by Austrian composers, practicing the waltz and dances written by German and French musicians, and studying the music theory dating back to Greece in 600 BCE, I became more painfully aware as the years went by, that I had yet to interact with black music in some way.

As a black musician, despite the lack of black representation, classical music has had a huge impact in my life. Learning and performing this kind of music has not only given me an immense appreciation for the genre, but also an unmatched sense of confidence, dedication, and tenacity. I love Mozart as much as I love Megan Thee Stallion and will be just as likely to queue up Bach during my daily listening as I am SZA. My love of classical music is one that I know is uncommon and I would be the first to acknowledge that at first glance, it doesn't seem like a welcoming space for blackness.

It seems that no matter where you look, whiteness as the standard is reinforced in the world of music. Due to the fact that much of the major institutions responsible for establishing the norms of classical music were founded on white European models hyper focused on the past, it has been difficult for black musicians to feel like they belong. Black musicians make up less than 2% of the orchestras in the nation and prestigious opera houses, such as the Metropolitan Opera have still yet to showcase a piece written by a black composer. Despite this insistence on erasure, time and time again, black musicians have proven their ability to overcome even the most challenging of obstacles and carve out a place for themselves in the world of music.

It is crucial to realize that black people and black experiences are woven into the fabric of American society, with classical music being no different. Talented and prolific black musicians like Scott Joplin, Florence Beatrice Price, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor can be compared to the household names we all know such as Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Dvořák. In fact, Czech composer Dvořák himself, after coming to New York in the early 1890s to serve as the director of the more progressive National Conservatory, declared that "Black melodies should be the foundation of future American music". Despite his statement, classical institutions of the time denied themselves a huge reservoir of native-born talent and the rich harmonies and melodies of black composers.

For example, the aforementioned Florence Beatrice Price was an African American composer whose collection of works for solo piano, "Fantasie Nègre" (composed in 1929) blended the European Romantic techniques of the time while also combining aspects of African American traditional music. In "Fantasie Nègre", she pioneered a new musical style by adapting the melody of the expressive, soulful spiritual, "Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass" and challenging the definition of what 'classical music' should sound like. She belonged to a prolific legacy of black composers who fought to infuse their African heritage into classical music in an effort to one day see black works and pieces earn the same recognition as ones written by white composers. While she remains the first African American woman to have her pieces performed by a major US Orchestra, much of her music and influence is lost under the weight that recognizable names like Mozart and Rachmaninoff carry.

It's important to note that the blending of classical music with traditionally black styles to create a new form of music is something that has transcended the passage of time. The next time you listen to Kendrick Lamar's critically acclaimed album "To Pimp a Butterfly", see if you can pay special attention to the addition of the National Symphony Orchestra, which adds a different color and texture to his usual style. Or to the use of Mozart's "Requiem" and Dvořák's "New World Symphony" in Ludacris' "Coming 2 America" to generate a unique sonic experience.

It is essential to recognize that classical music has been adopted as a "badge of whiteness" when in fact it owes much of its traction to black folk. Classical music is not, inherently, a "white" art form. The history of classical music in America belongs to black individuals as much as it does white individuals, and this story showcases the resilience and ubiquity of blackness and black greatness in American culture. At the end of the day, the goal is not to have black students racing to queue up Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" at their next function, but to acknowledge that classical music has a place in black culture—in their culture, and they deserve to see themselves represented in these spaces.

The Rise of Polo G: Why Now?

Words by Evan Gardner

In the words of author Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Evil does its business in the shadows, ever-fearing not the heat of the Great Fire but the light."

Polo G became a rap star in 2020 at the same time the Black Lives Matter movement gained traction because his music brings the quotidian evils of white supremacy into the national consciousness. Black Lives Matter is a movement dedicated to shining light upon evil. The movement gained traction via social media. People used their iPhone cameras and hashtags to capture and reveal state-sanctioned violence against Black people to the world. However, the shadows fight on. The shadows are a system of oppression: white supremacy feasts on them and grows. Because Polo G performed at Providence's Strand Ballroom February 24th, I thought I would reflect on the music and social commentary that has crafted the star that he is today.

Brought up in the shadows of Chicago, Polo G is "from where we unheard and we can't speak" (Polo G, Wishing for a Hero). He evokes the radical speech of Malcolm X in his songs and preaches about the value of his people: "R.I.P. Malcolm, I promise to conquer and fill them gaps" (Wishing for a Hero).

War imagery is ubiquitous in the United States, as we saw the summer of 2020 when the national guard and police in riot gear clashed with protesters across the country. Polo G, however, reveals the more subtle war behind the tanks and shields. Redlining, poor education systems, and a host of other systems of oppression have plunged many Black communities into a war for survival. His own community, Chicago, engages in this war against white supremacist structures that negatively impact everyday life. The New York Times has published dozens of articles detailing the gun violence statistics on the South Side, but numbers are impersonal, and thus easy to dismiss.

Enter Polo G: in his song Epidemic, he says, "Remember every line from that obituary, poetry." Polo G's music is exactly that: a poetic obituary. His lyrical language clings to listeners' ears and hearts, refusing to be dismissed. He describes his death-ridden environment as a "nightmare" in I Know, and his imagery describes the nightmare in rich detail: "I'm from Chicago where it's normal to hear .40's clappin, all you hear is them shots let off, that door slam, and them tires scratchin" (Effortless). While he calls the violence normal, he doesn't let it disappear into generalizations; he gives us a sensory vignette that we can see and feel. He also manages to balance descriptions of events and people in his song Deep Wounds, singing, "Heard he went unidentified, them hollows chewed his face." While the first clause of this line highlights the anonymity and disposability of Black lives in this country, the second is a gory reminder that despite their dehumanization, Black bodies remain an unerasable part of our society. Furthermore, in Wishing for a Hero, he captures the systemic nature of this violence, using the lingering power of puns to remind the world that white supremacy is at fault, not Black morality: "It's all a set-up, no wonder why they call this b*tch a trap".

However, Polo G recognizes that uncovering the violence is not enough: "Cops kill us and we protest, what type of shit is that?" (Wishing for a Hero). George Floyd's murder was over a year ago, yet Black Lives Matter protesters are still in the streets calling for justice for many other victims. People like former president Trump still refuse to condemn white supremacy.

We've become numb to the suffering of Black bodies, and some people even enjoy it (the same people who treated lynchings as a public spectacle). Thus to combat dehumanization in its entirety, Black emotions must also matter. Polo G breaks the "emotionless thug" stereotype by presenting his mental health struggles to the world: "It don't matter what this money and this fame can give, I've been hurtin', tryna smile through the pain and tears." (Wishing for a Hero). The trauma of his nightmare follows him on tours, private jets, and even into relationships. He raps, "Lovin' me ain't easy, if you leave, I don't blame you Trauma got me fucked up, so I'm mentally unstable" (I Know). The years of internalized violence inhibit his emotional availability, damaging his relationships as well as himself.

At this point, hope is on the brink of death. Both Polo G and the listener crave a solution, a way out of the physical and emotional pain. For Polo G, as the song Wishing for a Hero suggests, the solution is a hero. Unfortunately, growing up "It wasn't no heroes so we looked up to the villains" (Finer Things). So what might this hero look like? Who embodies Black humanity in its entirety, from bodily autonomy to a full spectrum of emotions?

Luckily, we get two: Martin & Gina. This song references the iconic couple from the Black sit-com Martin, and it has all the language of a love story. When Polo G raps, "I get this feeling in my stomach when you next to me," and "Love the way you smell I'm addicted to your fragrance, It's somethin' bout you but I really can't explain it," I feel like a fifth grader with a crush, or a protagonist in a

Taylor Swift song; however, the most inspiring part of this song is that it retains Polo G's identity. To borrow from A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie, this love is distinctly Thug Love. In this song, Polo G reclaims the word "thug," so to speak: "I know what you chasing, you can only get this feeling from a thug." He continues, "Beauty and the Beast, pretty girl with a gangster." In these lines, he embodies the titles society has given to him while still asserting his right to love. Martin and Gina are heroes because their love doesn't succumb to racism, but instead thrives in its face. With this track, Polo G shows that no matter what you believe about him, you can't take away the power of his love.

Polo G is not alone in his belief in love: the former Boston Celtics' (and now Knicks') point guard Kemba Walker played in the 2020 Eastern Conference Finals with "Love Us" on the back of his jersey; scholars write works about radical Black love theory; and, most importantly, I see the power of Black love on my family's faces every night at the dinner table. In Poetry is Not a Luxury, Audre Lorde writes, "Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought." In Polo G's music, he uses his poetic talent to challenge America to think new thoughts about what it means to be Black: the pain, the death, and the love.

On January 13th, 2022, British Vogue released a historic February 2022 cover photo. The composition showcased nine dark skin supermodels dressed head to toe in black designer suits. They sit in front of a neutral background on a Tiffany blue bench; Vogue superimposed in large typeface. This photo is the first of a series shot by Afro-Brazilian photographer Rafael Pavarotti and styled by British Vogue editor-in-chief Edward Enninful. This project was created in an effort to celebrate the contributions of African models to the high fashion and modeling industry.

After its release on Instagram, Vogue described the shoot with words like "momentous," "iconic," and "world-shifting." In a recent interview, stylist and editor-in-chief Edward Enninful stated that these women "are redefining what it is to be a fashion model." In some ways, he is correct. These nine women have headlined some for some of the most exclusive high fashion brands. Most recently, top models like Adut Akech Bior closed for Saint Laurent's Paris show, and Anok Yai was the first Sudanese woman to open for Prada. But for a photo that is getting such buzz, what about this image makes it so revolutionary?

In some ways, one has to recognize the positive aspects of a cover like this. Model Adut Akech stated that this cover represented some of the significant strides black women are making in the industry. "My message for any little black girl reading this - remain in your essence, never conform, and don't dare shrink yourself." A moving remark from a model that has truly overcome incredible odds in the fashion world, one can see how an all-black cover is an important step towards diversifying the industry. Other celebrities and members of the fashion industry also praised the image for its beauty and significance. But despite the admiration, the public response to this shoot reveals a more complicated story.

The first issue with this cover photo was the lighting composition. At first glance, the muted tones and dark clothing make the bright blue bench and boldface "Vogue" more pronounced than the models themselves. On a cover meant to highlight the black women in the industry, the poor lighting washed everyone out, making each silhouette indistinguishable from the other.

Hair choices were another hot button issue. Vogue placed these models in strangely stiff wigs ranging from updos to lace presses. For an issue meant to celebrate African beauty, people were disappointed natural hair wasn't a prominent feature of the photo. In defense of the stylistic and hair choices, artists spoke about how 1960s civil rights styles inspired the hair as an ode to "unapologetic blackness." But these hair choices didn't reflect the models' backgrounds that Vogue so ardently commented on.

However, most controversial of all was the role of skin darkening in these images. Many remarked that the editing made the models look "cold" and "alien." British Vogue emphasized in many following articles that it was important to showcase the variation of both "blackness" and "African-ness." But the stylistic vision and photo editing choices made these women look less like models and more like mannequins. On a cover meant to be so influential, these issues of editing, styling, and aesthetics become more significant issues of diversity and representation. Media moguls like Vogue have shaped public perception of trends, fashion, and larger ideas of beauty since its founding in the late 1800s. Most if not all of these ideals have been exclusionary to black women and black beauty. So when a cover like this drops in 2022, I wonder why British Vogue is trying to create revolutionary representation for African models. As a company that has historically prioritized a eurocentric gaze since its inception, why do these institutions try to create images that speak to black women and black beauty?

For one, the fashion industry has been notoriously slow to recognize the importance of diversity. A painful look into colonial history reveals the ways that black beauty has been systematically and purposefully devalued through white supremacy. But in the past few years, Vogue has tried to highlight more BIPOC creators. The appointment of Edward Enninful to editor-in-chief of British Vogue was a step in the right direction. But covers like this don't erase the legacy of racist beauty standards that the fashion industry has solidified over the past centuries. A recent New York Times article about editor and chief of American Vogue, Anna Wintour, exposed the racist and exclusionary tendencies of the high fashion industry. In his memoir, the recently departed André Leon Talley stated, "Dame Anna Wintour is a colonial broad. She's part of an environment of colonialism". I find it particularly odd that the

magazine of arguably the largest colonial empire is now deciding to highlight African and black beauty. Issues like these make me even more skeptical of the revolutionary quality of images produced through these institutions.

Vogue's history of tokenism is also a significant issue with this shoot. In article after article, British Vogue emphasized the African ethnicity of each model. "Awash with dark-skinned models whose African heritage stretched from Senegal to Rwanda to South Sudan to Nigeria to Ethiopia



pia." While I believe it is essential to celebrate the ethnic backgrounds of high fashion models, this kind of hypervisibility was odd in the context of this photoshoot. In questions about the styling of the photo, Edward Enninful stated that he wanted this cover to represent his interpretations of African elegance and "highlight their natural beauty." He specifically emphasized wanting to stay away from tribal imagery and preconceived notions of the African experience. But while his team tried to avoid stereotypes, they reduced the definition of elegance to what? A Prada suit and a blowout? This issue is heightened by the role of skin darkening in these images. An emphasis on "African beauty" paired with these models' digitally altered skin tone quite literally created a singular idea of "African elegance."

But a much larger issue with this cover photo is the emphasis on its "revolutionary representation." In a comment on the issue, casting director Katherine Mateo commented on the state of diversity in the industry. "For many years, we have been stuck on what society has trained us to believe is the 'perfect' skin color, size, age, height. But the fact of the matter is people want to see the world that reflects their reality." Despite being black, all of these models are still tall, thin, and young. So in what ways do nine black models with digitally altered skin tones, expensive designer suits, and stiff wigs represent a "reality" that black and African women live in today? Tone-deaf comments like these reveal precisely what is wrong with British Vogue, the fashion industry, and greater society. The emphasis on body image and age in the fashion industry is a Eurocentric tradition that has been upheld for decades. This series does little to challenge the preconceived ideas of beauty in the world we live in today.

As diversity in fashion is becoming more important, media conglomerates will attempt to create their own ideas of Blackness and African-ness. But there is no form of representation more accurate, more authentic, and more important than the images that black women themselves create.

We Don't Represent Afro-Latinos Enough

Words by Nathanael Perez

2021 marked a pivotal year for Afro-Latinx representation in Hollywood in both animation and live-action media following a long history of Afro-Latinidad exclusion from American media. The releases of Encanto, In the Heights, and West Side Story,

, have made undoubtedly large strides in Afro-Latinx representation warranting applause while also prompting necessary discourse around representation and Latindad's intersection with blackness.

To fully understand and appreciate the nature of this progress in media, the historical absence of Afro-Latinx representation must be explored. Whitewashing, or white actors inappropriately depicting different races and ethnicities, has been present in media for centuries. Through voice impressions, skin tone alterations, and general stereotyping, these acts of erasure trace back to minstrel shows and movies of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The prevalence of blackface as performance began to decline during WWII as a result of rising Civil Rights efforts that condemned the practice. However, though blackface was reduced in the industry, yellowface, redface, and brownface soon took its place. East Asians were mocked by characters such as Mickey Rooney's Mr. Yunioshi in 1961's Breakfast at Tiffany's, Native Americans were falsely portrayed in mid-20th century Westerns, and Latinos and Afro-Latinos were misrepresented as most notably seen in 1961's West Side Story.

Under the backdrop of an emblematic teenage street gang rivalry between Puerto Ricans and white teenagers in the 1950s Upper West Side, West Side Story follows the romance between a Puerto Rican, Maria, and a Polish-Irish boy named Tony. In the movie, a Russian-American, Natalie Wood, would star as Maria while Greek-American, George Chakiris, would play Bernardo, head of the Puerto Rican gang and Maria's older brother. Rita Moreno would later men-

tion in a 2017 podcast how all the actors depicting Puerto Ricans in West Side Story, including herself, one of the few authentic Puerto Ricans on the cast, were placed in extremely dark makeup. A light-skinned Puerto Rican, Rita Moreno's character, Anita, finds herself in a scene where she is almost sexually assaulted by the white gang and mocked for being "too dark to pass." Though both Rita Moreno and Anita are boriqua, even she is guilty of falsely representing an Afro-Latina. Considering the fact that the movie specifically takes place in San Juan Hill, a predominantly African American, Afro-Caribbean, and Puerto Rican community, these cases of miscasting were beyond tone-deaf. It not only illustrated the widespread discrimination existent in the movie industry, but narrowed Latinos to a singular shade. In this, there is not only a failure to acknowledge the racial diversity amongst Latinos, from black to white but also an inherent disrespect and erasure of the Afro-Latinx perspective through insensitive misrepresentation.

Steven Spielberg's 2021 West Side Story immediately addresses the inaccuracies of its predecessor through the proper casting of Latinos for Latinx roles and especially with the casting of Ariana DeBose, an Afro-Latina who perfectly represents Anita's character. However, while watching the new West Side Story I could not help but feel that the tone of the film was apologetic rather than emphatic. While its messages of white flight, displacement, and racial discrimination in New York City still rang true as I watched in a South Bronx theatre, I could not help but think of the generations of BIPOC from San Juan Hill, Williamsburg, and the Lower East Side who deserved and could have benefitted from this proper representation. Nonetheless, the apology was still needed and the movie is in fact necessary as the appropriate treatment of Afro-Latinidad is something the movie industry still struggles with today.

These struggles are most evident in last summer's In the Heights. With addictive musical numbers that span across several genres and styles, choreography and visuals that satisfy the eyes, and an all BIPOC, predominantly Latinx cast, at first glance the movie seems flawless. However, as the plot unfolds and the senses get accustomed to the film's exuberance, several issues with Afro-Latinx representation begin to arise. As a film representative of Washington Heights, In the Heights fails to accurately portray the neighborhood's and Latinx community's blackness. Though some Afro-Latinos are noticeable as extras and background dancers, in the primary

British Vogue's Revolutionary

Attempt at Representation

Words by Eastlyn Frankel

Get Out: The Past, Present and Future of Black Horror

Words by Ania Briscoe

Illustration by Praises Amponsah

In 2018, writer, director, and actor Jordan Peele made history at the 90th Academy Awards when he became the first Black screenwriter to win an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay for his film *Get Out*. But even before the honor was bestowed upon Peele, the impact *Get Out* had on film and culture alike was already cemented in history. *Get Out* was chosen by The Writers Guild of America as the greatest script of the 21st Century. It was already being regarded as a modern horror classic after its initial release. Its cultural impact was also incredible: if I said someone was in the Sunken Place or if the vibe was feeling like *Get Out*, you know exactly what I mean. But it is important to note that Jordan Peele's work does not exist in a vacuum; it fits into a longstanding tradition of Black Horror films. Peele's work revitalizes this genre, and creates a resurgence of filmmakers using the horror genre to tell Black stories.

But first, what is Black Horror? Is it just horror - but with Black people? There are many ways to describe the genre of Black Horror, but this quote by Tananarie Due from the documentary *Horror Noire: A History of Black Horror* says that "Black History is Black Horror." In a panel discussion about Black Horror, specifically the 1992 horror classic *Candyman*, Robin Means Coleman, author of *Horror Noire: Black in American Horror Films From the 1890s to Present*, expands on this quote saying that "Black History is Black Horror, it's not Blacks in horror." Horror films are often filled with archaic stereotypes of Black people, including the sacrificial Negro - the black character that dies first or dies to save someone. The point of Black Horror is to situate experiences through the perspective of Black people; something that many horror films fail to do. In situating the film through the Black perspective, a different kind of everyday horror that Black people experience is exposed and explored. These films are often also usually made for black audiences - so it is clear that these films are meant to relate to the experiences of Black people.

The first movie that could fit into the tradition of Black Horror is the 1940 film *Son of Ingagi*, directed by Richard C. Kahn and written by Spencer Williams. Featuring the first all-black cast of a science fiction film, this film tells the story of a couple after they inherit the house of a scientist and discover a monster created by the scientist within the home. The film does not particularly touch upon deep themes of race, but it is very influential in breaking stereotypes usually depicted in cinema at the time. The scientist, played by Laura Bowman, is a Black woman, which largely departs from depictions of Black women as sexually deviants or mammies.

After the Civil Rights Movement and amidst the Black Power movement, there was an increased desire for Black representation in the cinema - specifically representation that was made for and by Black people. This led to the creation and rise of blaxploitation films. Blaxploitation films were films that first began being made in the 70s; these films featured an all-black cast and were made by black filmmakers, were usually made with a low-budget, and oftentimes featured many stereotypes of Black people. But despite the prevailing stereotypes in these movies, it was also the first time that Black people were able to achieve more representation, and actually see Black heroes and Black leads on the screen. Blaxploitation films spanned many genres, and in 1972, expanded to the horror genre with *Blacula*. *Blacula* tells the story of an African Prince who was turned into a Vampire after being bitten by Count Dracula. He is then locked in a coffin for two hundred years until a couple buys the coffin. Although this may sound a little outlandish, the film also touches on many social themes. The couple in the film is an interracial same-sex couple in a time, which was very progressive for the time considering the racism and homophobia of the era. *Blacula* also comments on the slave trade, as *Blacula* initially goes to Count Dracula asking for him to stop the slave trade, and with Count Dracula laughing in his face and refusing to, a representation, perhaps about how white people viewed the slave trade as beneficial and would not stop it if they had the power.

Blacula was the beginning of a long list of blaxploitation horror films, and from their influence, more diverse stories and storytellers are put into the public sphere, including the 1992 classic *Candyman*. *Candyman* tells the story of a white graduate student researching the urban legend of a monster named Candyman, a son of a slave who, if you say his name five times in the mirror, will appear and kill you. In the panel discussion entitled "Summoning Candyman: A Panel Discussion of the Cinematic Urban Legend," scholar Sonia Luper says that *Candyman* is "one of the first horror films to talk about racism as horror, or segregation as horror and the racial implications of history." The film deals with the systemic issues that came from the aftermath of slavery such as policing, segregation, segregated housing, lynching, incarceration, etc. Mainly, this is a film that deals with Black trauma.

After *Candyman*, the Black Horror genre stalled out. Now the genre is having a resurgence after Jordan Peele's 2017 film *Get Out*. Without spoiling it (but honestly, who hasn't seen it by now!) *Get Out* follows Chris Washington as he travels with his white girlfriend to meet her parents, and discovers something wicked about their family that puts his life in danger. *Get Out* is a perfect example of a film portraying this everyday horror that Black people have to navigate the world with. What makes this film so great, is that it takes these fears and it takes the history and it takes the systemic racism and manages to create a film that addresses these issues, but does not revel in Black trauma. In the years after *Get Out* was released, many films tried to recreate the same horror that Peele emulated, specifically media like *Antebellum* (2020) and *Them* (2021). However, these films focused on re-creating the violence and trauma against Black people, instead of using the history to create speculative commentary as Peele does.

Despite the many films that tried and failed to fit into the Black Horror genre, there was still a resurgence after *Get Out*'s success. Jordan Peele wrote and directed another film, *Us*, in 2019, and is planning on releasing another film, *Nope*, later this year. The television series *Lovecraft Country* (2020) is a great example of "black history is black horror." Nia DaCosta also directed a re-telling of *Candyman* that was released in 2021. These films are evident that the Black Horror genre is back and here to stay.



cast only two out of over a dozen characters are identifiable Afro-Latinos, both of which are supporting characters who lack any arcs. Dascha Polanco, who plays Cuca, a hairdresser decked in long acrylics and tons of jewelry, is introduced in the first five minutes of the movie by flirtatiously purring at the protagonist in a way that's clearly meant to be ghetto and undesirable. Meanwhile, Noah Catala plays "Graffiti Pete" a graffiti artist who in the opening scenes is shewed away from graffiting Usnavi's bodega and just minutes later steals from it while unattended. With this exclusion and degradation of Afro-Latinos in *In the Heights*, criticism regarding the film's colorism began to spread and when questioned about it Rita Moreno responded, "It's like you can never do right it seems... can't they just wait a while and leave it alone; they're really attacking the wrong person."

Unlike the original *West Side Story* or other works of the past, this stereotyping and restriction of Afro-Latinx representation is not coming from white people but rather at the hand of BIPOC, specifically other Latinos. While it is disheartening to see Afro-Latinos treated this way by other Latinos with whom they share culture and ethnicity, it is not surprising. Colorism has existed within the Latinx community for as long as the Latinx community itself. Unfortunately, it serves as one of the many factors that unify Afro-Latinos across several ethnicities and backgrounds. Therefore, when a film about Latinos made predominantly by Latinos is colorist against Afro-Latinos, it is not ironic, but rather poetic and expected. In fact, this is not new to the Latinx community at all as Univision, Telemundo, and novela after novela have abundantly made clear that light-skinned reporters, artists, and actors are to be prioritized over their Afro-Latinx counterparts. Thus, the disappointment that comes with *In the Heights* is not its ultimate adherence to these colorist tendencies, but rather that the perceived progressivism of our American generation was not enough to overturn them.

Considering the precedent set by *In the Heights* for Afro-Latinx representation in 2021, I was both excited and apprehensive for the release of *Encanto*. Already ambivalent over representation in *Soul*, I wondered if Disney's Colombia would be authentically Afro-Latinx or authentically colorist. However, I was ultimately charmed by Disney's racial portrayal of Colombia, a portrayal I fear would be far lighter if it were made by Colombia itself. While I do appreciate Disney's racial depiction of Colombia, as a Colombian, I believe more could have been done in culturally representing the country aside from subtle flags, arepa de queso, and buñuelos. Grossing over \$237 million in theaters and with "We Don't Talk About Bruno" now as the longest-running Disney song in Billboard Hot 100 history, *Encanto*'s success is undeniable. It is a story of magical realism based in Colombia and focused on a family's struggle with generational trauma. While the movie's impressive soundtrack and stunning visuals are definitely notable, it is *Encanto*'s Afro-Latinx representation that has arguably been its most revolutionary aspect. Prior to *Encanto*, 2017's *Coco* was the only other Latinx-based animated Disney movie and upon its release would join the very limited group of Latinx, American animations which predominantly include *The Book of Life*, *El Tiempo entre Costuras*: The Adventures of Manny Rivera, and *Dora the Explorer*. All based on Mexican culture with Mexican characters, with animated representations of non-Mexican Latinos having been few and far between prior to *Encanto*. As a result, US studios have hyper-generalized Latinidad with Mexican culture, which has only served to contribute to the already existent American generalization of Latinos as Mexicans. This filtration of Latinx culture is not only harmful in its narrowness and exclusion of other Latinos, but also in its resulting restriction and even erasure of much of Latinidad's blackness. Through its portrayal of Colombia and inclusion of several black characters, *Encanto* will hopefully serve as the catalyst and standard in including more of Latinidad's ethnic and racial diversity in American animation.

Notes on the Sanctuary:

Harambee House Moves to 315 Thayer

Words by Brayson Freeman

Harambee House, Brown's program housing for black students, has remained a part of the Chapin House residence hall for over 25 years. Since Harambee's inception in 1993, hundreds of residents have entered and exited the space and found a sense of belonging within its four walls. However, as of this year, it has been revealed that Harambee House is officially moving to 315 Thayer Street, making this transition nothing short of monumental.

Harambee is the black program house on campus; a residential and communal meeting space for black students, by black students. Harambee is neither a gorilla, nor a person, but rather a Swahili word meaning togetherness or synergy. From the 1870s, the time black people were first admitted to Brown, to 1993, there was not a physical space for black students to unite on campus. There was not a place where black students could celebrate black life. There was not a place where black students could laugh, cry, or grow together. When black students were antagonized and told to go back from whence they came or marginalized in classrooms and residence halls, there was no central hub to find solace in. There needed to be a change. Thus, the Organization of United African Peoples rallied to create Africa House in 1993. Initially met with backlash that it would disrupt University pluralism and facilitate separatism, the official name, Africa House, was later changed. Harambee was born.

While Harambee became a pillar for the black community at Brown and beyond, the program house still faced many challenges throughout the years. Harambee was even threatened to be removed from the official program house list on campus due to fluctuating membership. In the 2018-2019 school year, Harambee almost lost its program house status due to a lack of enrollment and interest in the community. This caused black residents and faculty to work tirelessly to recruit and to fundraise; to eliminate the possibility of losing the program house black alumni and faculty worked so hard to obtain. This work paid off. Last year, Harambee House managed to receive a record-breaking number of applicants, retaining its program house status.

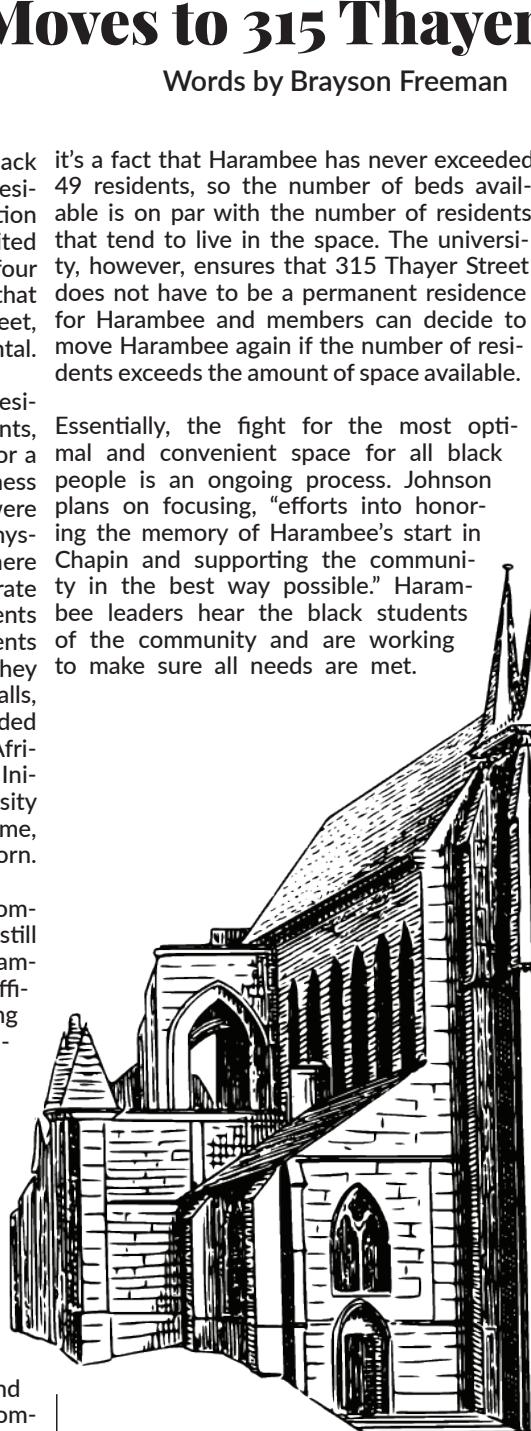
Harambee is easily regarded as the heart of the black community at Brown. Here, black students can culturally express themselves, process stress and grievances together, and become leaders in their communities. For some, living in Harambee has been "the best decision I've made for my mental health. Since I've been here, I have fostered so many relationships that I foresee existing for a long time," says Lyric Johnson '24, Harambee House Co. President. Others say that Harambee is "a safe place. A place where I can connect with people who understand me, my identities, and my culture" says Nick Gibson '24. The house is undeniably an essential space to the black students of Brown's campus.

With this new move to 315 Thayer Street, Harambee can now host newer and more frequent events which were limited due to the space in Chapin. The majority of residents currently living in Harambee revealed that they would not opt to live in the house another term if it remained in Chapin. Additionally, according to a poll conducted on the Harambee House Instagram, there are many reasons why people would have decided to move out of Harambee: the lack of single rooms, the communal and unkempt bathrooms, the lack of facilities, and the lack of accessibility which are all structural/foundational issues, further prompting the need to relocate the program house. This move promises a larger lounge space, in which renovations will take place over the summer. There are more singles. And the facilities are overall more up-to-date than Chapin (built in 1950 in contrast to 315 Thayer Street built in 1902 and renovated in 2012). Along with this, there are promises of new furniture, decor, and technology.

Now, let's be clear: this move will not solve all of the problems with the space on campus. Nor will it absolve all other complications. There are still many concerns accompanying the transition, such as the new location on Thayer St. being far from the central part of campus, the small quantity of beds (59), and regards to safety. 315 Thayer Street is a long walk from the central part of campus and some students, such as Dena Salliey '24 believe that Harambee would feel "removed from campus..." and that they "... might stop seeing people who look like me." To address this, Harambee faculty and leaders are ensuring that there will be efforts made in order to host frequent events closer to central campus in order to prevent exclusion. There are also propositions of vouchers for restaurants on Thayer Street. With respect to the minimal number of beds available,

it's a fact that Harambee has never exceeded 49 residents, so the number of beds available is on par with the number of residents that tend to live in the space. The university, however, ensures that 315 Thayer Street does not have to be a permanent residence for Harambee and members can decide to move Harambee again if the number of residents exceeds the amount of space available.

Essentially, the fight for the most optimal and convenient space for all black people is an ongoing process. Johnson plans on focusing, "efforts into honoring the memory of Harambee's start in Chapin and supporting the community in the best way possible." Harambee leaders hear the black students of the community and are working to make sure all needs are met.



hold. She remembers attending Sunday school and bible studies as weekly obligations in her home.

Growing up as a member of two churches, undergrad student Brayson Freeman '24 has similar memories of home, such as attending church retreats and big hats every Sunday. Both Freeman and Johnson recounted the beginnings of their religious disillusionment and described how in the months prior to their freshman year, they began to question their faiths. Johnson explained that at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic her church began to conduct virtual services. Without regular in-person services, Johnson slowly stopped engaging in church events and ultimately stopped attending these virtual services. In the absence of these religious obligations, Johnson began to imagine a life for herself outside of the constraints of organized religion. Now in the second semester of their sophomore years, Johnson and Freeman no longer consider themselves Christians. Upon arriving at Brown, Freeman was not only confronted by his own inner religious conflict but also by the diversity of religious traditions practiced by Brown students. Even away from their religious homes, both Freeman and Johnson still feel an attachment to Christianity. Freeman admits that he cannot forget the emotional trauma he carries from the Christian church, however, abandoning it feels like a betrayal of his home and family. Remembering the group prayers before a cookout in the summertime, Johnson adds that as a Black Christian, her faith and cultural practice have always been closely intertwined. As a result, relinquishing her Christianity identity, in turn, can feel like relinquishing a piece of her cultural identity as well. Furthermore, it is these cultural identities that many Black students turn to when faced with erasure in predominantly white spaces. To Johnson and Freeman, then, rejecting their religious identities feels like a rejection of themselves.

This internal struggle resonates deeply with Jemima Alabi '24, who is finding ways to engage with her faith in ways that are enriching and life-affirming. After experiencing an initial crisis of faith upon her arrival at Brown, Alabi says "I am the closest to God I have ever been." Alabi believes she is now able to experience "life more fully" as she has begun to consider her life experience as a spiritual text worthy of consideration. Furthermore, as a Black woman, Alabi has always felt this tension between her undeniable lived experience and the biblical texts that are meant to take priority over it. Through her new perspective, however, Alabi can begin to filter her spirituality through her own experience as a Black woman rather than obscure religiosity. In *Poetry is Not a Luxury*, Audre Lorde writes "The white fathers told us, I think therefore I am; and the black mothers in each of us-the poet whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free." Here, Lorde captures the essence of the spiritual journey Alabi has embarked on, one that affirms her emotional experience of life and does not try to deny it in the name of rigid religion.

As suggested by Alabi, the experiences of these students are not fruitless, in fact, they are generative. PhD Student in Religion and Critical Thought and graduate of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Donnell Williamson, remembers one of his earliest religious conflicts as a dispute over Harry Potter. Given the material about witchcraft and sorcery, Williamson's pastor told his family not to allow him to read the Harry Potter books. Obviously, Williamson was upset and felt it was unfair that he could not read the books. Looking back, Williamson says it was Harry Potter that inspired his love for reading and put him on the path he is on now. Even Williamson's small resistance here was generative even as trivial as it may seem. The growing pains of Alabi, Johnson, Freeman, and Williamson remind us that these moments of spiritual crisis and questioning are part of a process of self-discovery and the building of distinct personhood.

Spiritual Growing Pains: How Students' Religious Practices Change on College Hill

Words by Grace Ermias

As they arrive on College Hill in the fall of their freshman year, many students find themselves away from home for the first time. For some, this means newfound independence from overbearing parents and late nights out. Others, however, while enjoying these new freedoms, find themselves in a spiritual crisis. Some students begin to reevaluate their spiritual upbringings and question if their religious attachments are genuine or simply reflections of their parents' beliefs. This internal conflict, however, is only one piece of their new spiritual questions. At predominantly white, academic spaces like Brown, many students of color begin to see how their religious practices are disregarded as naive remnants of outdated tradition.

In the midst of this, however, many Black students reject these white supremacist narratives of rationality and overcome their spiritual growing pains.

Undergraduate student Toni Johnson '24 was raised in a very religious Nigerian Christian house-

Exploring Black Culinary Heritage in America

Words by Helena Bates

This collard greens recipe is one of my most nostalgic family recipes, as I have fond memories of preparing and washing the greens with my grandmother. We would spend hours scrubbing each individual leaf relentlessly until it was free of grit and sand, and boil the greens for hours to ensure nothing but the silky and smoky aroma of the ham hocks were left infused into the once bitter leaves. This time intensive process is what first lent me a greater appreciation for cooking and the time that goes into preparing a dish for your loved ones. Another aspect that I love about this dish is that my Grandma, Aiko, tweaked some of the ingredients in the classic southern recipe that my great



Instructions

Preparing the Greens:

First, gently pull and tear greens away from stems. Then take a hand full of separated greens, roll them up, and cut the rolls horizontally into small pieces.

Next, add the greens to an empty clean sink or a strainer and wash them thoroughly with cold water to remove all the grit, sand, and debris.

The cooking process:

Rinse the ham hock thoroughly and then add it to a large pot along with enough water to fully submerge it. Cover with a lid and cook over medium high heat for roughly 45 minutes or until the ham hock is near tender.

Once the ham hock is almost tender, add the greens and 4-5 additional cups of water (or enough to just barely cover greens to the pot).

Add the rest of the ingredients to the pot and cook the greens down while covered for at least 2 hours or until completely tender. Most of the water will have evaporated, and you should be left with just enough to barely cover the greens.

Let the greens cool for a bit before serving. Enjoy!



grandma, Sally, taught her, imbuing it with Japanese flavor. My grandmother's alterations to Sally's recipe add immensely to the complexity of the flavor profile and create an incredible batch of greens that are the highlight of every meal they are a part of.

Ingredients:

- 6 small bunches collard greens**
- 1 extra large smoked ham hock**
- 1 tbsp granulated sugar**
- 1 tbsp bacon grease**
- 1/2 tbsp salt**
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce**
- 2 tsp soy sauce**
- 2 tsp apple cider vinegar**
- ½-1 tsp crushed red pepper flakes**
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder**
- 1/4 tsp paprika**

Reflecting on the Month of February

Words by Octavia Rowe

This month was a month of extremes and excess. You might've found yourself saying yes to too many parties when you knew you had your first midterm in the third week of class. Or just the opposite, alienating yourself from your friends with excessive studying, refusing to leave your floor of the sci-li, or spending more time in the BCSC than should be allowed (yes, you can stay after 5pm, but really, should you?)

Basically, you let yourself get in the way of your life. The same Taurean stubbornness that makes you refuse to give up, might be the same thing that backs you into a conversational corner. You shouldn't argue just to refuse someone the satisfaction of being right. And who knows, that person might think a little less of you because of that. The same for the rest of the signs, who suffer from the same hubris.

Some of the worst aspects of yourself have jumped out, especially for those possessing strong placements within earth and water signs. You've let your emotions get the better of you. Like the Taurus in the example above, each characteristic of your sign, your chart, yourself, can turn both ways. Emotional awareness can turn into over-awareness, anxiety, and outbursts. All this leaking out of you and your mouth: sharp, cutting, bitter, self-loathing, unsure. Saying the wrong things to all the wrong people. Exposing your bad side to the people you hold dear. It was bad.

But you rebounded, and as the month drew to a close you made it all work for you, pushing through your struggles to build something new. I would say, as the month draws to a close, reflect on what you want from your relationships with friends and lovers. Your friends are there for you, not for you to tear them down or vice versa. With regards to romantic pairings, think really hard on whether or not they're benefiting you. Not in material ways, but feeding your soul and your spirit. Is it truly worth it to drag yourself to dates with people who don't care, nor understand, the importance of the summer internship where you'll be spelunking through desert water reservoirs and cataloging blind fish? If that's you, (and I hope not) you have my permission to cut yourself loose.

Reading Black History

Maya Angelou was an inspiring woman, and an important Black female poetic figure. She lived, she wrote, and she died, having lived as an artist several times over. Dancer, poet, and activist, she made her mark while she was here. Here, we'll take a look at her chart, and see the influence the planets had on her life.

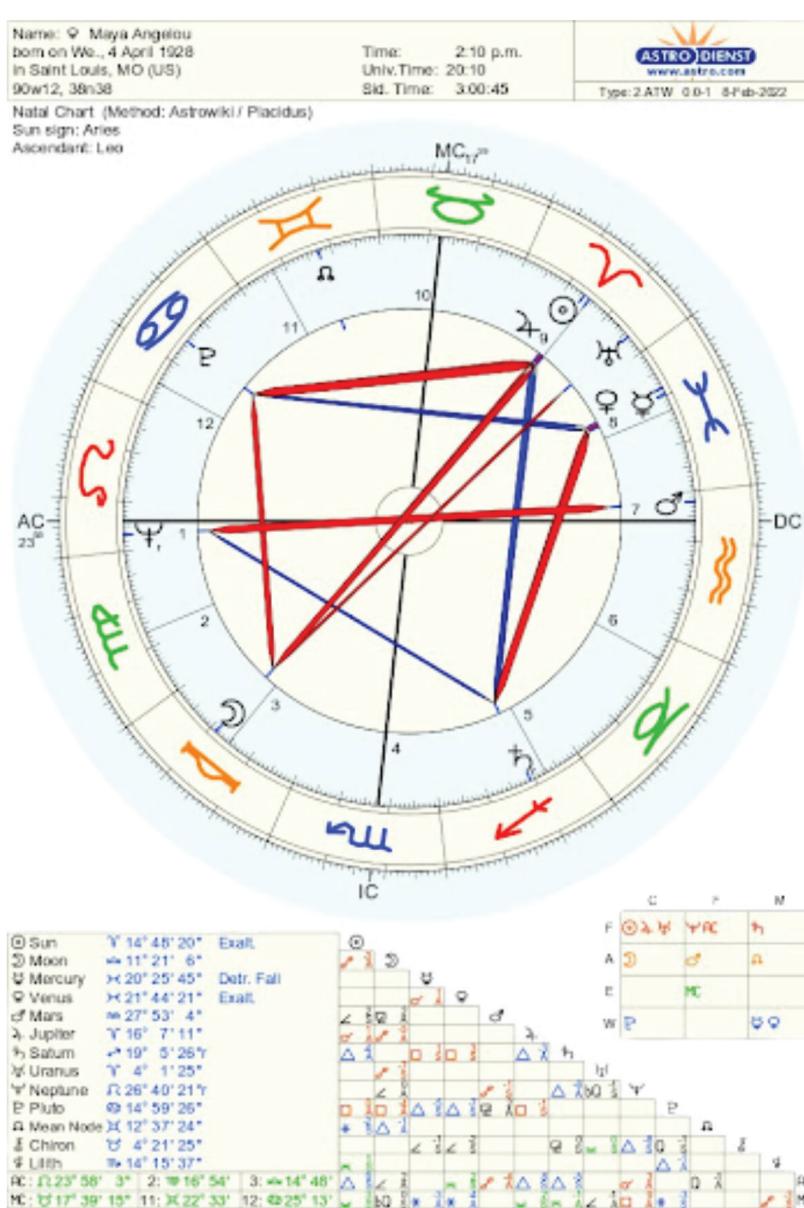
To begin with, what jumps out at me is the not-quite-a-stellium grouping of most of her inner planets. It gives a certain theme to how events in her life would play out. She had a strong venus aspect almost overwhelming her ability to communicate. It's no wonder that in her earlier career, Angelou was a singer, dancer, and entertainer (all art forms that have minimal and meaningful use of words, if they're being spoken at all). Mercury residing in a Pisces lends itself to a certain mystery, crypticness, or appeal to spiritualism in communication.

Another influence on this aspect is Uranus, an outer planet influencing change and maturity residing in Aries. Aries is the best of the fire signs, lending an intensity or action. This aspect also lent itself to her preference for poetry as she matured, rather than the Calypso music and songs of her early career, and grew into the changes that Uranus can bring.

Mars in Aquarius lends itself to a sound and active mind, which Angelou kept into her old age.

All of this is brought together by Jupiter, in conjunction with her Sun in Aries. Again, the inciting active energy of Aries together with the fortune wrought on by Jupiter and a strong sun sign to amplify both. What this means is that she had an ability to generate great luck and opportunity through her confidence and action. Jupiter is a generally benefic planet, and the sun will intensify the activity or expression of an aspect. It's just that this conjunction is highly beneficial for the right person. In life, Angelou was confident, strong willed, and always willing to do the work, so, clearly, she made the most of this aspect in her chart.

All of that in opposition to her moon in Libra in the third house! The third house being the house of gain, a hard opposite aspect like this could be just as harmful as it is helpful without effort put in to make something bigger. She did, however, put in the effort, consistently throughout her lifetime. She was an amazing singer, poet, performer, actor, activist, and all around artist.



Glossary:
Stellium - A collection of three or more planets in the same sign
Conjunction - When a planet rests in the same place of another planet
Opposition - When two planets are opposing each other

On Tuesday February 1, former Miami Dolphins head coach Brian Flores filed a class action lawsuit against three NFL teams for discrimination in hiring practices and raising larger questions about the role of white power structures in furthering racism. Flores was fired by Dolphins owner Stephen Ross on January 10, 2022, despite leading the Dolphins in their first back-to-back winning seasons since 2003. Flores claims that Ross attempted to bribe him to lose games throughout the season to secure a better draft position and orchestrated a meeting with a "prominent quarterback" against Flores' wishes. As a result of refusing to follow Ross' wishes, Flores alleges that he was treated as "someone who was noncompliant and difficult to work with." Insinuating that Flores was disobedient and "noncompliant" with the wishes of the white owners has compelling parallels to the history of using racial tropes to systematically push Black people out of positions of authority. The role of the team owner in dictating how free the coach is to make decisions, spend his time, or disagree with white management without fear of retribution is reminiscent of the power of whiteness in the NFL. Within the larger context of a predominantly white-managed league, Flores is one case study of many that displays the role of race in decision-making, management, and exploitation in sports.

White-run institutions such as the NFL, whose administrative structure has been nearly all-white since its inception in 1920, are able to capitalize on the diversity of their players in order to mask the institutional racism embedded within the organization. With Flores' absence from the league, there are only two Black head coaches remaining in the NFL, in contrast to 30 white head coaches. This disparity extends beyond the head coaching positions to general administrative hiring practices: between February 2019 and February 2020 the NFL filled 31 open positions for head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, and general managers. Out of these 31 open positions, 24 of them, 77.4%, went to white men.

This white majority in general administration extends further, most importantly even, to team owners, who are nearly all white. There is only one majority owner of an NFL team that is not white, Jacksonville Jaguars' owner Shahid Kahn, a Pakistani-American. The dynamics of majority white owners and white-run teams, staffed by white coaches and administrators, who dictate the actions and commodify the performance of ma-

jority Black men, indicate that the threshold for Black success rarely extends beyond athletic performance in professional sports. When Black individuals attempt to fill managerial roles, there is a distinct glass ceiling that keeps white people in and Black people out.

Hiding behind the misleading statistic that 70% of NFL players are Black, white fans of the NFL milk visibility politics as indicative of true representation and ignore the lack of diversity in coaching, staffing, and ownership, in addition to the drastic inequity in financial contracts. Out of a list of the 10 highest paid NFL players as of September 2021, all ten were quarterbacks; despite comprising 70% of players, Black athletes comprise only 17% of quarterbacks. These larger inequities in salary and representation exist behind the recognizable names and faces of extremely successful Black football players. Therefore, it's not enough to have Black players make up the majority of NFL players, or a few Black coaches, when the entire structure of the organization is built to keep Black people in limited roles and financial standings. Flores and other Black individuals who have tried to climb their way to managerial or ownership positions are attempting to break these existing barriers, yet they are met with animosity from those who want to keep these positions predominantly white.

The ability of white coaches and owners to commodify Black athletes and their performance for financial gain is only made possible through the strong foundation of whiteness upon which professional sports rests. The NFL brought in a total of \$12.2 billion in revenue in 2020, which is a drop from \$15.2 billion in 2019. This exorbitant amount of money would not be possible without Black athletes.

Capitalizing upon the entertainment value of Black players, the white-run NFL sells their jerseys, their likeness, their talent, and their labor in a repeated cycle that still limits Black mobility to rise to the higher echelons of the league. By restricting positions of power—whether in coaching, in ownership, or in the organization—the NFL can tell their majority white fan base that racism disappeared with Russell Wilson's meteoric rise or Cam Newton's success as a quarterback while still retaining white control over Black bodies. Additionally, the exploitation of Black performance was brought to bear by Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka, who have taken time to focus on their mental health despite the pressure to perform. The back-

Eric Adams: *How Representation Becomes Meaningless*

NFL Lawsuit Reveals that Racial Power Structures Still Dominate Black Performance

Words by Kara McAndrew

lash that both Biles and Osaka received for taking a break from performing is indicative of the underlying power structure that demands black performative labor in exchange for granting reputational and financial success.

Similarly, the talent and labor of iconic Black musicians such as Stevie Wonder and Whitney Houston was used by white managers and audiences to further their own profit and enjoyment. Stevie Wonder has a net worth of just \$110 million, despite being in the spotlight for decades. Whitney Houston died \$20 million in debt to Sony records despite selling over 200 million albums in her lifetime. Signed by largely white record companies that controlled Black artists through financial means, promises of fame, and legal contracts, both Wonder and Houston were used by white executives to bring in revenue, then discarded once their worth ran out.

Research conducted by The University of Southern California (USC)'s Annenberg Institute found that across 119 companies in the music business, 86% of executives were white men. Despite people of color making up 47% of the credited artists behind the top 900 pop songs since 2012, just 19.8% of executives were from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Only 7.5% of those executives were Black. The dearth of Black representation in executive spaces is not accidental. By reinforcing this power structure that enables white male control over Black production and labor, the entertainment industry furthers the racial inequality in positions of executive power.

In order to truly change the narrative and reclaim Black labor and profit, Black people need to be in the room where decisions were made. Not only do they need to sit at the table, but they must make up a proportional number of the people in charge. Until decisions over Black production are made by Black people, the cycle of inequality in the entertainment industry will continue to repeat itself, lining the pockets of white executives at the expense of Black performers. These structural issues are larger than football or the entertainment industry and prompt larger questions of how to reclaim Black agency and possession over our own work and talents.

Words by Karma Selskey

As a major metropolitan area of the United States, New York City is constantly being watched by the rest of the country, and the world at large, particularly when it comes to electoral issues. In 2021, New York City had a plethora of local elections from City Council to Borough President. However, everyone's eyes were mostly glued to the mayoral Democratic primary, where some of the most progressive mayoral candidates the city had ever seen were now in the running with the moderate Democrat Eric Adams, who eventually won with 50% of the votes. He went on to beat Republican candidate Curtis Sliwa in the general election and was officially sworn into office at midnight on January 1, 2022, during the Times Square New Years' celebration.

Immediately following his entry into office, news headlines emphasized the triumph of Adams becoming New York City's second Black mayor in History. While electing a Black person to such a position of power for only the second time in history, especially given the diversity of this city, is a significant event, the heavy focus on Adams's racial identity overshadows his core values and policies. As a former police officer, Eric Adams supports initiatives that bolster the negative impacts of the prison industrial complex on his Black constituents. Additionally, he often uses his affiliation with the New York Police Department to claim complete expertise on these issues and assert dominance over his critics, even if they are Black themselves. His election stresses that representation alone is not enough; if the person in said position will actively cause harm to the community they represent, why should we label their election as a true achievement?

Eric Adams served as a police officer with the NYPD for 22 years and has continued to display strong support for the police officers of New York City. His unwavering commitment to reforming rather than working to eliminate the city's manifestations of the prison industrial complex has been met with much pushback, most notably his stances on stop-and-frisk and solitary confinement. Stop-and-frisk—or Stop, Question, and Frisk as the NYPD calls it—allows police officers to stop anyone on the street for “reasonable suspicion” and has wreaked havoc on Black New Yorkers.

According to the New York Civil Liberties Union, reported by the NYPD in 2019, 59% were Black or Hispanic. While being frisked, people are subjecting their personal belongings to search without probable cause. Walking down the street moments prior, the police officer acknowledged the racial disparities in who gets stopped and frisked. According to the New York Daily News, "The question is whether stop-and-frisk should be allowed; it was how the police officer responded that he believes that stop-and-frisk is imperative, even though the evidence says otherwise. The police officer said that stop-and-frisk doesn't work very well: 2019 data from the NYPD showed that 59% of people frisked that year were innocent Black or Hispanic people."

The fight to end solitary confinement well. Just last year, a plan was passed by end solitary confinement in New York

Rikers Island in 2019. Similarly, Kalief Browder committed suicide in 2015, two years after being released from spending three years in solitary confinement on Rikers Island; he was sentenced to Rikers for allegedly stealing a backpack. Adams has made it clear, throughout his mayoral campaign and subsequent tenure as mayor, that he does not at all support this plan. He intentionally refers to solitary confinement as punitive segregation in an attempt to distance himself from complicity in the cruelty associated with solitary confinement, even though the Board of Corrections itself uses the two terms interchangeably. Many City Council members agreed with the plan and have recently been urging Adams to rethink his efforts to keep solitary confinement alive. In response to these council members, Adams said, “I wore a bullet-proof vest for 22 years and protected the people of this city. And when you do that, then you have the right to question me...” in an attempt to ignore pleas for justice and assume ultimate authority over the issue. Not only do Black people account for a disproportionate amount of the general prison population, but they are also overrepresented in solitary confinement (62% of the SHU population in Upstate and Southport facilities as of 2011, the NYCLU finds). Further, his presumed sense of superiority presents the ways in which his identity as a Black man is being used to push problematic narratives to the forefront. He weaponizes his identity to push an agenda that is not helpful to the majority of Black people who will be affected by this system.

Eric Adams does not care to listen to New York's most marginalized community members. Although the excitement over having another Black mayor of New York City is understandable, it is clear that support for Adams means support for inherently racist policies that will perpetuate systemic racism and cause massive amounts of damage to the Black community. The safety of Black New Yorkers is at risk with someone like Adams as mayor, and that should be what's making news headlines. Representation means more than having someone who looks like you in office. It means being heard, fought for, and protected, not having lived experiences and hard data dismissed out of arrogance and a hunger for power.

ties Union, of the 13,459 stops re-Black (compared to 9% white).
ed to being patted down and hav-
ed, often suddenly, when simply
Even though Adams has acknowl-
stopped, he wrote in a 2021 op-ed
was never whether stop, question,
it should be done." He firmly be-
to stopping crime in New York City,
wise. Frankly, stop-and-frisks sim-
the NYPD found that 66% of neo-

has caused conflict with Adams as the NYC Board of Corrections to jails, citing the death of Layleen Polanco in solitary confinement on

On November 23, 2021, Pervis Payne was removed from death row after being incarcerated for 34 years on the basis of having an intellectual disability, rather than his actual innocence in a case where he was accused of two counts of first degree murder and one count of assault with the attempt to commit murder. Just one month ago, a Tennessee judge was praised for shortening Payne's sentence, making him eligible for parole in five years. While Pervis Payne's lawyer, Kelley Henry, emphasized that the day the decision was announced was "a great day for the Payne family and for Pervis Payne," the reality for him is that, even if he is granted parole by the parole board, the restrictions placed on him will be anything but the justice and freedom he has been denied for the past three decades.

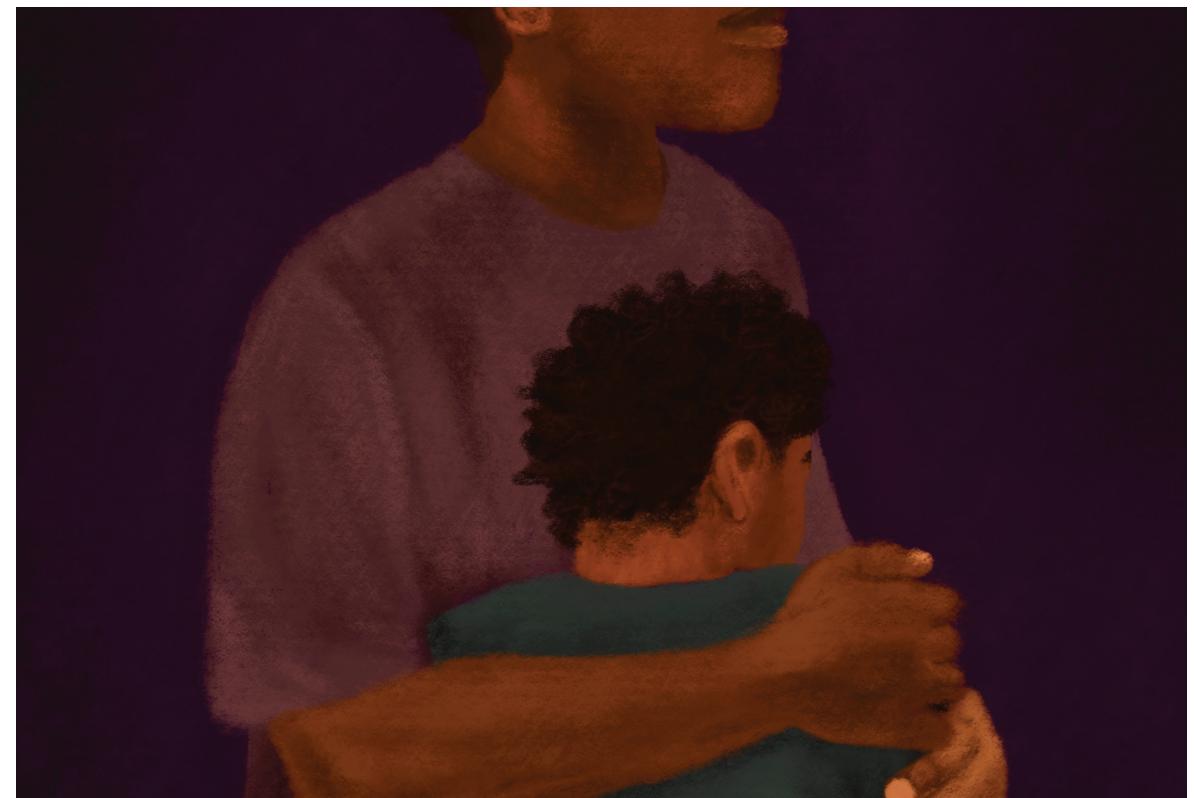
To "grant" an incarcerated individual parole may resemble freedom, but this freedom is still characterized by being heavily policed under the U.S. carceral system. Finding and maintaining a job and residence after being incarcerated is difficult when applications for both require criminal background checks, which often denies formerly incarcerated individuals the ability to obtain these resources. Additionally, "staying away from 'disreputable people,' submitting to warrantless searches," and paying court debt are equally absurd requirements. When the majority of incarcerated people are from over-policed, low income neighborhoods, 'disreputable people' is often defined as: people of color whose behaviors (even ones as nonsensical as loitering – the legacy of vagrancy laws – or being 'defiant' in the classroom), have been criminalized and these violations could occur just by virtue of re-entering and living in one's community. Needless to say, these are only some of the rigid requirements of maintaining one's parolee status, where the slightest perceived violation prompts the risk of being returned to prison.

In Pervis Payne's case, parole was granted to him as an option only because of how those who have advocated against his imprisonment have been forced to acquiesce to the norms of court by justifying his existence, only to be painfully denied justice for 34 years. The truth is that going through 'due process' – the 'fair' norms and procedure of the criminal legal system that every person is entitled to – requires Black trauma, as if it is the gear that keeps the criminal justice system turning. For Pervis Payne, 'having your day in court' demands that he lays out all the private reasons why he is deserving of humanity – besides his innocence (since officers of the court have never deemed it relevant). Additionally, during Payne's trial, he and his advocates were expected to articulate the challenges of existing with an intellectual disability as evidence that he is deserving of their humanity. The implication is that, for Black people, our humanity does not necessarily grant us equitable treatment – evidenced in the fact that even after reliving everything that the court wants to extract, it can still deem your testimony and evidence of it irrelevant.

However, in the cases where the court admits some wrongdoing or corrects its ills, it's praised for its generosity, rather than recognized as doing less than the bare minimum. Henry made a statement after the judge shortened Payne's sentence stating that: "We are profoundly grateful to Gov. Lee, Rep. GA Hardaway, and the Tennessee Legislature, for answering the call of the Tennessee Supreme Court to modernize our state's intellectual disability law which paved the way to removing Pervis from death row." Rather than emphasizing that Payne's sentence should never have been imposed, lawyers and organizations advocating on his behalf felt the need to pander to those in power in order to do their jobs and enact a diminished form of justice. This behavior speaks to an age-old reliance on the criminal legal system and the 'generosity' of its mostly white authority figures to minimize – but never entirely put an end to – the dehumanization of Black and Brown

The Story of Pervis Payne: Becoming Proximate to Freedom in the Afterlife of Slavery

Words by Sarah Ogundare
Illustration by Sarah George



people. While there are recognizable wins resulting from cases that have been rightly overturned, our celebration of Black incarcerated people getting one step closer to freedom should be kept in the context of a carceral institution whose overarching goal is punitive, isolating and dehumanizing. Put differently, our justified enthusiasm for the freedom of the few shouldn't distract us from the incarceration of the many.

Ultimately, at the root of this case are the ways Black people must navigate an inherently racist and dehumanizing U.S. prison system that continues to exploit the members of society who have historically been (and continue to be) oppressed. But, as we rightfully criticize the U.S. prison system for its systematic ills, there must be a recognition that these institutions will not liberate and remedy the structural issues extracting Black people from their communities and into its cells. While Pervis Payne is an anomaly in that he may live outside the confines of a prison in a matter of years, most individuals who are wrongly convicted will not face the ability to become 'free' and will have to continue proving their humanity in the process. So let's recognize the U.S. prison system for what it is – "the afterlife of slavery."

Resources

National Incarceration Resources:

prisonactivist.org/resources

insidebooksproject.org/resource-guide/

fairshake.net/reentry-resources/search-for-a-resource/

Ways to get involved in Rhode Island and on campus:

Railroad PVD

DARE PVD

Decolonization at Brown

Transformative Justice Initiative

Brown Center for Slavery & Justice

Professor Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve

Professor Brad Brockmann

The Continued Relevance of the Legacy of Angela Davis

Words by Gustav Hall
Illustration by Malika

After nearly 50 years since its original publication, activist, scholar, philosopher, and author Angela Davis' 1974 autobiography, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*, has been reissued. Written at the young age of 28, Davis' account of her formative years provides a framework for the development of her famously revolutionary, and distinctly intersectional, political and philosophical ideologies. In this reissue, Davis presents a newly written introduction. With a slight air of self-critique, Davis points towards some of the limitations in her 28-year-old self's political and intellectual maturity. She places emphasis on a failure to recognize the magnitude of patriarchal and misogynist frameworks, and similarly regrets her lack of attention to the pervasiveness of sexism and homophobia. Nevertheless, her younger self's ability to hone in on the connection between the struggles of both African-Americans and the working class, as well as her maturation into linking these struggles with other oppressed peoples around the globe, is of the utmost importance in our current day. Indeed, a large portion of her new introduction is dedicated to the application of her politics to the set of issues we face in 2022. Taking a look at some of the subjects of her advocacy, we can see a number of directions our political attention can and should be pointed.

In the new intro to Davis's reissued autobiography, she notably critiques her 28 year old self's lack of attention to the magnitude of restraint discerned by patriarchal and misogynistic frameworks. However, since the writing of her autobiography, Davis has become a prominent feminist scholar, producing distinctly intersectional works of literature on the topic. In writing books such as *Women Race and Class*, *Women Culture and Politics*, and (her most recent work, with Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth Richie) "Abolition. Feminism. Now.", Davis has managed to implement her crucial understandings of intersectionality into feminist thought and theory. With a keen focus on the shared struggle of oppressed peoples, Davis' feminist insights stand in an apt position to be utilized by a growing field of scholars and activists who are looking to emphasize an intersectional approach.

Prison abolition, which has a relatively mainstream topic of debate, has been on Davis' agenda far before it had anywhere near the level of traction it has garnered in recent years. Davis herself famously spent roughly 18 months in prison from 1970-1972 under charges of murder. She asserted her innocence, and was ultimately found not guilty. Many have seen her imprisonment as an example of a long line of politically motivated arrests, targeting Davis on the basis of her Leftist ideologies (as, at the time, she was a member of the Communist Party USA). Her experience within the prison system (which she recounts in great detail throughout her autobiography), helped influence her later scholarly and activist work, which largely focused on prison abolition. She published a landmark book on the topic in 2003, "*Are Prisons Obsolete?*" With a growth in popularity of books such as Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, public recognition of the horrors of mass incarceration has begun to see a steady increase. This increase in recognition may allow for a more main-stream discussion of prison abolition to follow. The research and literature that Davis has already produced (years in advance of this increase in recognition) will surely prove vital to young scholars and activists looking to push the needle on topics pertinent to modern race relations and human rights as a whole.

Almost more so than anything, Davis might be best recognized as an avid critic of modern capitalist structures. Indeed, she was a member of the Communist Party USA from 1969-1991, and had a distinctly stronger focus on economic plight and politics than many of her Civil Rights Movement predecessors (who tended to focus more on racial segregation under the law as opposed to theories of wealth distribution). Whether one agrees with her Marxist proclivities or not, it is certainly difficult to deny the realities of our country's decrepit wealth gap that Davis has so eloquently described time and time again. As is commonly documented, the gap between upper-income and lower and middle-income households is rising, with an increasingly diminishing middle-class. Future activism and political action will certainly need to find a way to recenter itself around the reality of our pressing economic issues. Presenting a legacy of radical economic and capitalist critique, Angela Davis' past and present teachings can prove vital to movements intent on both pointing out and radically shifting these economic realities.

Although it may have been 50 years since the first publication of Davis' autobiography, her political, social, and philosophical views remain markedly relevant. In moving forward, we can only hope to build onto her legacy of activism in a way that can negate the amalgam of threats we continuously face. As these organizational structures continue to develop, the core of Davis' worldly philosophies must continue to be heeded: a shared global struggle of oppressed peoples will, undoubtedly, require a shared global resistance. As such, the freedom-fighting fervor of Angela Davis finds itself in the masses and is heard in every revolutionary cry.



The Art of Antagonizing Black Women

Words by Aicha Sama

For the most part, Mary and Kayla were good friends. They liked a lot of the same music, had fun conversations at Friday night dinners, and generally had good laughs together. However, every now and then, Mary would make problematic and tokenizing comments that made Kayla, and other people of color in their friend group, uncomfortable.

When Mary made statements like "I've been supporting the Black Lives Matter movements for a really long time!" or "I did projects on the American prison complex in middle school!" or "I always add my own commentary when I repost infographics about social injustice, unlike other people," Kayla felt like she needed to be congratulating Mary for not being racist. Despite her good intentions, Mary's comments made Kayla feel like the token Black friend who could be used to make her white counterparts look like better, more inclusive people.

Kayla wanted to be more comfortable with sharing her own experiences and stories, but whenever she mentioned her time living in West Africa, or anything that had to do with her identity as an African American, Mary took it as an invitation to flex her knowledge of the African countries or talk about her extensive past in supporting the Black community.

After talking with the few other people of color in the friend group and realizing that she was not the only one who was starting to feel tokenized and uncomfortable, Kayla decided to bring it to Mary's attention. She tried her best to be polite yet firm when she confronted Mary on her problematic behavior. She explicitly said she wasn't angry, and that she didn't think Mary was a bad person. Kayla was still more than willing to be friends with Mary, as long as the tokenizing comments ceased.

Suddenly, Mary and every other white person in the friend group stopped speaking to Kayla. It was clear that Mary felt extremely guilty about her comments, and she cried to her friends about the confrontation. She broke down in tears after simply seeing Kayla in public. In turn, her friends began to antagonize Kayla. In their eyes, Kayla bullied Mary. Kayla was actively working to hurt Mary. Kayla was the angry Black woman. Kayla was perceived as a villain for causing the tears of this white woman.

Hearing that you have exhibited some problematic behavior may be difficult. Being the re-

cipient of said problematic behavior is worse. Mary's white guilt is not Kayla's problem. Mary's inability to accept constructive criticism and acknowledge her own problematic behavior is not Kayla's problem. Antagonizing Black women for addressing problematic behavior and their discomfort cultivates a hostile environment for all members of marginalized communities and upholds the notion that white comfort and ease should be put above all. It is clear that though many white people may perceive themselves as great allies to communities of color, this is not always the reality. When 7,400 adults in the United States were asked about their perceptions regarding allyship in the workplace in a survey conducted by Lean In, just 45% and 55% of Black and Latina women felt they had strong allies, respectively, while a whopping 80% of white employees viewed themselves as strong allies to women of color at their workplace. This is precisely why it is crucial to center the voices of the marginalized, because even self-proclaimed white allies may be the ones committing micro-aggressions, or talking over less-privileged voices.

If people of color are intimidated into being silent, and white people are unable to address their own role in harm, any commitment to becoming aware of how to support Black people is unfulfilled. Everything remains stagnant, and everyone loses.

Further, the idea of "one up, one down identities" illustrates the way that privileged and marginalized identities can exist within one being. People that are a part of one marginalized group may have less privilege than the white man, but be significantly more privileged than someone who is part of the same marginalized group in addition to another disadvantaged identity. The privilege any individual has is centered around one's proximity to whiteness, masculinity, and straight/cis-gendered identities, and can lead to the quantification of privilege and the co-opting of identities. White women are "one away" from the highest form of privilege, and thus play a unique role in simultaneously upholding, being harmed by, and benefiting from systems of oppression. This allows the white woman to easily shift from being oppressors to victims, whether intentional or not. Unlike white men, they live in a gray area that allows them to easily escape binary views of the oppressed vs the oppressors, and enjoy the benefits of being white while maintaining some authority to act as a voice for disempowered groups. Ultimately, the unique position of white

womanhood presents a complex dynamic that gives rise to victimization, rationalization, and the oversimplification of crucial discussions pertaining to race.

This is precisely why the tears of white women can be a powerful tool of privilege. White women routinely gain sympathy like no other group. In the media, in classrooms, and in day-to-day life, they are centered in conversations that are not necessarily about them, and nuanced dialogues about race and privilege can be oversimplified and "softened" due to this frequent practice. We also see more widespread sympathy for white women, because their white male counterparts are usually very willing to rally behind them and attack others for simply speaking up in the name of "protection." Therefore, white women are positioned as people who transcend the idea of race privilege, especially when their so-called "good" intentions and history supporting social justice causes are made to be the central focus of crucial conversations.

Black women easily become antagonized in these situations because their perspectives, feelings, and struggles are consistently put secondary to the feelings of white women. This, combined with the difficulty that many white people have with addressing and being aware of their own problematic behavior, creates a hostile environment for people with multiple marginalized identities. This is particularly true for Black women, whose voices are rarely, if ever, highlighted.

From the American criminal justice system to college dorm rooms, it's strikingly clear that these principles govern the way that Black women are forced to contort themselves to reach the very delicate, near-impossible balance of maintaining the comfort of white people and speaking out on the issues that impact them.

For all of the white woman tears that we see, we need to remember and recognize the tears that Black women are not allowed.

We must do a much better job of recognizing when the wrong people are being centered in conversations surrounding privilege and discrimination, and create environments that allow for the cultivation of healthy, yet difficult dialogue. White people must be willing to hear and learn from direct criticism, especially when they are so willing to call out other white people for similar problematic behavior. In the pursuit of creating environments for positive social change, it is up to us to center the experiences of those with marginalized identities, especially those at the intersection of these identities. Further, it's time to actively renounce and decenter the White Woman Victim Complex.



L H O I J J C E M O Y O L N M
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T T O C Y O B S S E N I S U B

acceptance
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love
powerful
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activism
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afro
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I first read *Between the World and Me* in my high school English class. The memoir, written in 2015 by American cultural critic Ta-Nahesi Coates, is written as a letter, as Coates describes his worries for his son who is growing up Black differently than he did, with far more hopes and dreams, which makes him all the more fragile. Coates laments for the loss of his son's innocence as he grappled with the shooting death of Michael Brown, "You knew things at 11 that I did not know when I was twenty-five...Perhaps you were crying because in that moment you understood that even your relatively privileged security can never match a sustained assault launched in the name of the dream" (130). The book opens with a quote from the 1935 poem by the same name. This poem, penned by Richard Wright, recounts the narrator stumbling into a clearing and onto the scene of a lynching:

There was a design of white bones slumbering forgottenly upon a cushion of ashes.
There was a charred stump of a sapling pointing a blunt
finger accusingly at the sky.
There were torn tree limbs, tiny veins of burnt leaves, and
a scorched coil of greasy hemp;
A vacant shoe, an empty tie, a ripped shirt, a lonely hat,
and a pair of trousers stiff with black blood.

Words by Maya Avelino

This Black History Month I've been thinking about how, although they are written over 80 years apart, both texts take deeply intimate looks at the Black experience as the authors know it, but from largely different temporal standpoints. Holding these two in conversation lets me not only acknowledge what's grown and changed in the Black literary canon over time, but what's also stayed the same.

What is most interesting to me is that both texts address what I refer to as the Black Tax -- or the concept that one's suffering is experienced by many several times over-- in two markedly different ways. The term is usually used in economics, but in the texts, we can take it to refer to the intergenerational trauma one carries as a Black person that never stops collecting interest. In the poem, the narrator is never given characterization outside of the lynched man's pain. The lynched man paid the ultimate price, and yet a complete stranger, who happens to stumble upon his bones, so long after his death that the bones are dry, aches with him. He burns with him. He suffers from the same hands. The poem tells the reader that as a Black person, your suffering is never truly yours alone, it is a burden that is not made lighter by sharing, but instead multiplies. Coates writes on this same concept, but in the context of fear for his son. Coates writes of the pain he feels hearing of the innocent deaths of Black youth by the hands of the police in the United States. He notes the pain his son feels at this as well, knowing that no matter how much more privileged he is than Coates was at his age, he is still not safe. He even suggests that this privilege hurts his son more because he has seen what there is to lose; it is more painful to have freedom snatched away than to have never had it all.

Whereas Wright's poem remains very singularly focused on the lynched man's suffering as a moment in time, the book has the freedom to take a step outside of one point of view. Without condescension, Coates warns his son not to be blinded by the progress and tolerance he may see, "What I am saying is that it does not all belong to you, that the beauty in you is not strictly yours and is largely the result of enjoying an abnormal amount of security in your black body" (130). He puts it plainly that modern liberalism and exercises in tolerance are not a buffer for today's youth and the far-reaching effects of cross-generational inequality and racism. *Between the World and Me* is the literary equivalent of tough love -- it may be difficult to hear, but it comes from a place of wisdom gained over time.

While Coates prioritizes lessening the burden for future generations and looking forward, in Wright's context, the wound is still too fresh to begin moving past. The poem impresses upon the reader a prediction of the future; that this tragedy will have infinite repercussions. After he experiences the lynched man's death, the tone shifts to a glassy, shocked state, and repeats the imagery of "yellow surprise" in the man's decomposed skull. The same image is seen in the onset of the poem, except now the victim is the narrator. By using this cyclical format Wright maintains that no matter the brevity of the wickedness, its implications for the future, and other Black people, are long-lasting, even if their exact nature cannot be determined yet. He establishes that I am you and you are me and our suffering is that of one. The horror of the image he sees before him consumes him, metaphorically and physically, "The grey ashes formed flesh firm and black, entering into my flesh". After the narrator is retraumatized, the poem offers no hope for an improved future for tomorrow's youth. It ends with acceptance of his fate, "now I am dry bones and my face a stony skull".

Reading it now, I find the poem comforting. It lets me know I do not grieve in secret. In such a violent time and space for Black people, Wright stood as a figure who weathered the storm and knew the suffering of others as his own. At the same time, to me, Coates's letter also feels intimate in his guidance as he passes down lessons he hopes to impart upon the younger generation-- without them having to be learned the hard way. The works show the progression of Black cultural criticism as well as the continuation of the written tradition. Although a lot has changed with time, much of these commentaries are timeless. Separated by era, they are united by cultural experience.

Between the World and Me: Black Art over Time



The Historical Hiatus

Words by Kevin Carter
Collage by Ayana Boyd

"I can't do this anymore!"

I exclaimed from the top of my lungs, a cathartic release of the volcanic emotions that had been bubbling up ever since the start of the second semester. Given my location on the fourth floor of the Rockefeller library, this disruptive outburst normally would have elicited a range of responses, the least serious being a few turned heads, and the most being a security guard and a couple of triggered students confronting me. However, it was near midnight on a Friday evening. I practically had the whole floor to myself. To put it in simple terms, I was down bad. Older peers, professors, and advisors always tried to reassure me that my struggle was normal, scoffing as if I was being facetious when I told them that I had considered giving up on my pre-med aspirations at least a few times a week, responding with dismissive remarks like "oh you'll be fine. That's the same struggle everybody experiences." This advice stung like a bee. When I observed the rest of my non-black peers, it was evident that they weren't enduring the same struggle, and when I asked them about it they told me that their experience with classes was fun, feasible, and stimulating. Something just didn't add up. My best guess, although it was a mindset I tried to avoid as I never wanted to give myself an excuse, was that this was attributable to the disparities in our upbringings and how they influenced our opportunities and exposures. Not only did we differ racially, but we came from different socioeconomic backgrounds. I never made that connection until I recalled an event from the past.

Back at home, my dad would tell me, "you've got to work twice as hard as the white man, and even then the levels still won't be even." My mom would add, "this country may have abolished slavery, but black people have yet to experience true freedom." True Freedom. A professor once told me that there is no freedom without equality. I wondered how true freedom looked, felt, smelled. That evening at the library, I turned to look out the narrow rectangular window beside me and spotted a flock of birds flying past in the night sky. Seeing them fly made me recognize that this was the liberated state of being that I truly craved. Longing to procure this same feeling and relieve my stress I relinquished myself from the responsibilities that called me to spend half the night studying at the Rock and retreated from the building. The temperature had risen since the previous snow-storm, and it summoned a thick veil of mist from the melting snow that made campus feel like a literal ghost town. My field of vision was minimized to a five meter radius so I took every step with caution. The air was cool and crisp, and it filled my lungs with the taste of the spring dew that would cover the resurrected blades of grass at dawn. A few minutes had passed when I finally found myself on the quiet green, wandering aimlessly, following the voids within the walls of mist that offered the tantalizing chance of escape from this labyrinth of obscurity. For a moment, it was as if a passageway suddenly opened up in the mist, conjuring me on a straight path towards something—the slavery memorial. I was always intrigued by it; for some reason I had strong, visceral reactions to it that seemed to change every time I saw it. While I scrutinized the monument, I felt a vibration from my pocket and reached to check my phone. The time was midnight, and the notification was from my calendar, alerting me of the first day of black history month. I sighed and put my phone in my pocket. The night has been long enough already—I might as well cut myself some slack and call it quits, I thought to myself. And so I turned to make my way back to the Rock to retrieve my belongings and head back to my dorm, but before I made it past the Van Wickle Gates the clocktower rung, a resounding sound that couldn't have been more eerie as it echoed through the foggy winter night. What happened in the next few moments is hard to explain—and believe. Suddenly my anxiety spiked and it felt like the environment around me started to change—except, it actually was. From the murky fog

appeared a silhouette of a man. Then another one, and a third, until the entire Quiet green was filled with them. Slowly the mist faded, and what I saw before me left me paralyzed. Before me stood hundreds of chained up slaves. And I was one of them.

Shackles were tightly clasped around my wrists, digging into my flesh,



incarcerating my soul. Although I could see that there were men and women around me, their faces were indistinguishable. I wanted to cry out for help, pinch myself to wake from this terrible nightmare, but I couldn't move. Fortunately, I didn't have to. My surroundings did. The mist thickened and a strong breeze passed that nearly knocked me over. When I opened my eyes, my hands were no longer shackled, and the slaves had disappeared from before me. Instead, there were dozens of students walking past, as if it was a normal weekday afternoon and people were commuting to and from class. As I observed the sight before me, I realized a recurring theme. All of the students were white. Suddenly I felt out of place, searching for a shade of black that would give me a sense of familiarity and comfort. Then I realized that I was standing next to a black man that looked oddly familiar. He sat on the bench across from me, gazing into the mist which had now become very faint once again. His eyes were a soft, dark brown, and through them, I could see that he was contemplating. They channeled intelligence and intricacy, but also an emotion that seemed lonely and despondent. Maybe, I wondered, if it had to do with the fact that he had yet to spot me, even though I saw him. Through those eyes he only saw the piercing stares from the people around him who spoke through their glares, chiding things about how he didn't belong. I felt the empathetic urge to reach out and grab his attention, but before I could move my environment began to shift yet again. I was beginning to believe that I was surely asleep at my desk at the Rock. Just as suddenly as the mist had hidden my surroundings it revealed a new set of surroundings. Now I was in a large mass of people, black people, marching down what had to be College Hill. Their faces were filled with passion, and they shouted chants for equality and inclusion. Immersed in the events around me, I tripped and lost my footing. I hit the ground hard and for a minute I feared that I was going to get trampled over. However, I wasn't crushed by a foot, but greeted by a hand. Cocoa-colored skin complemented by a radiant smile and thick, curly hair, the lady before me was a true beauty, but a warrior at the same time. Gratefully, I accepted her grasp, and as soon as our hands touched I felt a shock go through my body. Her momentum helped me up but as I regained my footing the mist was back at it again, washing over the crowd of black students and carrying them away. This time, I knew my ride had come to an end because the mist completely cleared, and I found myself back where I had started, on the quiet green, as if I never left. But now, my anxiety was gone, and suddenly my overwhelming load seemed like not so big of a deal. My current issue no longer had to do with academics, but the fact that what I had just experienced wasn't a dream. So forth came the emerging question: what did it mean?

Words by Caziah Mayers

Caziah's Eyes Wide

Close your eyes.

Picture how your peace feels.
Picture the sound of your sigh of relief.
Picture a lush, green field,
homes made of mud and palm oil,
savannahs that stretch out infinitely.
Picture family structures that suit your gender expression.

Picture a home you'd want to return to,
praying to gods that look like you.
There is no searching.
Rites of passage pass you into adulthood
knowing,
knowing,
knowing,
that home is where the heart is
and your body
is finally familiar.
There is no searching.
There is only home,
where tongues don't cut on foreign languages,
where intuition is holy,
where living isn't a burden on your body.

Am I lying to you?
Am I projecting onto a false past?
Grasping for a ghost,
an ancestor that doesn't
truly guide me.
Are we lying to ourselves with this picture?

No.

Because my ancestors' smiles are carved
onto my face,
and their pain is seared into my bones.

Open your eyes.
Recall chains that stretch into a
horizon flattened future.
This isn't the kind of weight
that makes you stronger.

This chapter ends with us crumbling,
splinters from wooden ship floors forced into
our backs.
Below deck,
Hold hands
because we are chained together.
Hold hands
because Venus has entered the ship captain's
ledger.
Hold hands
because we still have hands.

Picture jumping from the ship's deck
to find freedom in water filled lungs.
Open your eyes
as wide as you can,
fill them with a sky you aren't sure you'll ever
see again,
as your vision is blurred
by wood and by water
you

Corner: Shut

Close your eyes.

Picture homes built with fragile, metal walls
and wooden floors.
Picture roads thin enough to fit one car and
dozens of bare feet.
Picture salty ocean air floating through the
island trees.

Picture the cast iron pot that fed generations,
smell the lentil peas, sweet corn, and dump-
lings,

system
that colonizes our bodies.
Systematic cremation
meaning
they would turn us to dust to fuel their civilization.
Trust me, it's a simple calculus.

Close your eyes.
Picture a wide, gray city street city street.

Picture your breath visible as it leaves your mouth.
Picture your Grandma's apartment building
on one side,
and hipster coffee shops on the other.
No number of Biggie Smalls murals can
hypnotize you,
but

I still want you to picture your new home.
Picture cast iron pots full of your favorite food.

Hear a language you aren't fluent in
but understand intuitively,
and respond in
English.

Hear Grandma saying "Take your durag off
when you go outside."
You say it's a fashion statement,
She says it's a death sentence.
In the end,
we both know
there isn't really a difference.

Open your eyes.

Picture June 2020
Black fists
Black masks
Black bodies
Picture knees on football turf
knees on necks
necks

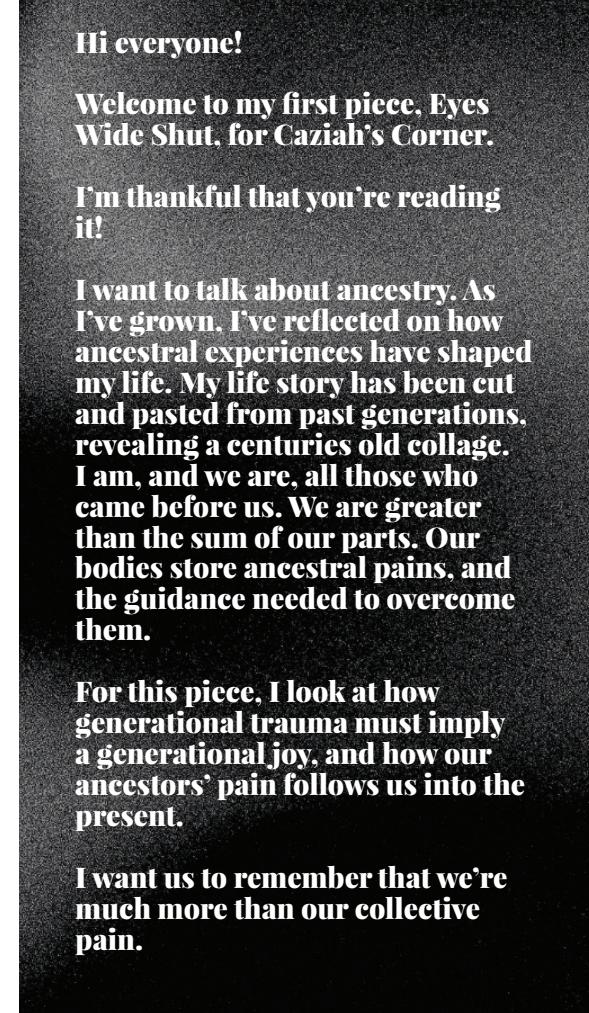
hung
from
business casual,
white society
- I mean -
high society ties.
These are dark times,
but if love burns brightest in the dark,
consider us blind.

Consider our skin sick with a permanent
fever.

Consider our collective consciences
wrapped in
Black wrapping paper and Black bow ties
because we are the gift that keeps on giving.

Keep your paddy wagons and your slave
ships
Because home is where the heart is and you
won't steal ours again.
Home is where the heart is,
but they'll take your heart if you let them.
So sleep with one eye closed and one eye
open.

Just make sure you pick the right one.



hear the sound of your stomach rumbling,
feel stuffy clothing during church services.
Picture your new home.

Now, Open your eyes.
Picture a mother, maybe yours or mine or
neither,
who has bleeding on the inside.
She needs an MRI, but can't afford the rich
hospital on the island.
The one she can afford is in Puerto Rico.
Imagine signing her death certificate
because a pilot was out
sick or on vacation
because someone couldn't be bothered to
write a check.
because checks and balances don't apply to a

Here, we wanted to reflect on and honor the intimate history of our immediate Black storytellers at Brown. We present to you, archives from The Africa Sun, The first Black play at Brown - Clara's Old Man, and The Black Lavender Experience.

#BlackstorytellingisJOY

#BlackstorytellingisLOVE



#BlackstorytellingisRESISTANCE

#BlackstorytellingisVULNERABLE

#BlackstorytellingisSTRENGTH

#BlackstorytellingisHEALING

#BlackstorytellingisINFINITE



Mahogany
Universities

THE
BLACK
LA
VENDER
EXPERI
ENCE

Archival Research by Charlinda Banks
Images courtesy of John Hay Library

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